Chair's Report – Pensax Parish 2025/26

Cllr. Andy Gillett– Outgoing Chair

Clerk to the Parish Council

The council continues to retain the service of Carole Hirst as Clerk of the Council and Responsible Financial Officer. Carole continues to ensure that the Parish Council meets its regulatory and administrative requirements. The external audit was carried out by Gill Lungley which found that the records of the council accounts and governance procedures to be well kept but with a few minor suggestions on improvements. Thank you, Carole, for your hard work over the past year.

Precept and Finances

The parish council reserves are improving slowly but we would still like them to be in a stronger position. The main reason for the improvement over the year was the lack of grants not awarded but budgeted for. Due to increasing costs of the council it was decided that an increase in the precept was needed again to ensure that reserves are retained.

The precept was increased by 4% a rise of £1.55 on Council Tax Band D. This should ensure that reserves remain suitable in the coming year but this will stay under review bearing in mind rising costs.

The council still retains a significant amount of Restricted funds from the sale of the Village Hall. Although some of these funds have been allocated to improving the public footpath infrastructure the council is still struggling to allocate funds on capital projects. In the meantime the £170,000 of the funds have been placed on higher interest paying deposit accounts and the interest form these, which is unrestricted, is being used to supplement the annual council budget.

Parish Councillors

There are currently four Parish Councillors and three vacancies. The Parish Council would like to attract others to join the Parish Council in the coming year. Anyone wishing to join the Parish Council should contact the Clerk in the first instance.

Highways and Flooding

There has been quite a bit of work throughout the year on the roads in the Parish predominantly resurfacing work. The Council is pleased to confirm that Worcestershire CC Highways Dept have now carried out work to rectify the frequent flooding at the Junction of Pensax to Stockton Road and its junction with Penn Hall Lane. The Parish Council would like to thank WCC Justin Bowen for his assistance in resolving this matter.

The Parish Council continue to liaise with local police about speeding in the Parish and have this as one of their stated priorities for the police to address.

Highway speed calming measures.

After feedback from the parish and observations of councillors a number of speed calming measures have been agreed.

The parish council has arranged and funded for two VAS signs to be purchased and erected at either end of the village on the B4202. We very much hope these will have the desired effect of reducing speed along the road. The VAS signs have the ability to collect anonymised traffic data and this will be reviewed periodically by the parish council.

In addition, the Parish Council has agreed to purchase Village Speed Calming gates and these will also be located at either end of the B4202 in due course in a further effort to reduce speed along the road by clearly marking that motorists are entering the village. These should be erected shortly.

Finally, the Parish council have agreed to pay for additional Roundels (these are the painted circular markings on the road used to indicate speed limits) on the B4202

We hope that these combined measures will have the desired effect of reducing speed along the B4202 and would like to thank Cllr Pederson for his work on these matters.

Parish Paths

The parish council are keen to ensure there is good access to the footpath network in the Parish and have earmarked some of the restricted funds to provide landowners with new gates to relace styles to improve access for all. Several gates have been funded over the year and we will continue to ty and encourage more landowners to take up this offer. If you would be interested in changing your styles to gates then please get in touch with the Clerk in the first instance.

There does continue to be some problems with the footpaths in the Parish with some of the following being observed by the footpath officer prior to his resignation.

Some are blocked by landowners, some unsafe Bridges, overgrowth and tree fall, litter, waymarking of trail heads (posts), rotten stiles and path deterioration.

Stuart Meese has resigned from his post as WCC footpath officer and there is a vacancy if anyone is interested. Please contact the Clerk for more information.

Funding

The council is in a position to offer small grants to organisations in the Pensax Parish. If any organisations would like to apply for a grant then in the first instance can they get in contact with the Clerk.

We were pleased to be able to award a grant of £900 to Menithwood Community Association to assist with the cost of installing Wifi at the Chappel In Menithwood. We hope this will be able assist the groups and organisations that already use the Chapel but also encourage and facilitate others to do so.

War Memorial

A memorial service was held this year for Pensax and Stockton. It was quite well attended.

If you would like to get involved with the parish council or the community there are vacancies for Parish Councillors and the footpath officer currently so please do get in touch. The outgoing Chair would like to thank his co councillors for their efforts over the last 12 months.