

## **Lilford cum Wigsthorpe Thorpe Achurch Parish Council Chairman's Report – 2024/25**

It gives me great pleasure to present this annual report summarizing the work of Lilford cum Wigsthorpe Thorpe Achurch Parish Council over the past year. As always, our councillors and clerk have worked hard to support our communities and ensure the effective operation of the Council.

### **Governance and Administration**

At the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, in May last year, I was re-elected as Chairman, with Cllr S Moffat as Vice Chair. The Council approved all statutory governance documents, including Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and a comprehensive set of policies and procedures, ensuring we remain compliant and transparent in all operations. A full internal audit was completed with no major issues found, and the Council resolved to declare itself exempt from external audit due to being under the £25,000 threshold.

### **Financial Oversight and Budgeting**

The Council has remained in a sound financial position throughout the year. Regular internal control checks and bank reconciliations have been completed and verified. We set the 2025–26 precept at £7,190, mindful of delivering services while maintaining value for money. Expenditure included contributions to local initiatives, defibrillator maintenance, village gate installations, and ongoing clerk support.

### **Community Projects and Infrastructure**

One of the year's main undertakings has been the successful installation of one set of traffic calming gates in Achurch, supported by grants from the Safer Roads Scheme and the Members Empowerment Fund. The Council has worked persistently on the restoration of the Achurch Dew Pond, continuing to liaise with the land agent. The defibrillator network across the parish was further strengthened, with Oundle First Responders carrying out routine checks, and thanks to the generosity of a Lilford resident a power source for the Lilford cabinet has been provided.

### **Planning Matters**

The Council has reviewed and responded to multiple planning applications, ensuring community concerns, particularly regarding development in Lilford, are properly represented to North Northamptonshire Council. Objections were raised when necessary, especially where issues of safety, access, or impact on the character of the area were identified.

### **Environment and Biodiversity**

This year saw the adoption and initial implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan. Although the Council does not manage land directly, we have committed to supporting environmentally friendly practices. Work continues with local partners to promote wildlife and habitat conservation.

### **Highways and Rights of Way**

Ongoing issues such as potholes, overgrown verges, and signage obstructions have been raised through the appropriate channels. The Council remains in contact with County Highways and has reported concerns via FixMyStreet. Notably, the Council raised serious concerns regarding the disruption and lack of signage around A605 works, resulting in formal communication with Anglian Water and the local MP.

### **Community Engagement**

The Council facilitated the laying of a poppy wreath for Remembrance Day and supported local celebrations, including VE Day 80 events. We also considered requests for financial support and made targeted grants where aligned with our powers and budget.

### **Looking Ahead**

The Council will continue its efforts to improve infrastructure, support biodiversity, and address resident concerns efficiently and transparently. Projects such as the full completion of traffic calming measures, and progress on the flood survey at Thorpe Waterville remain key priorities.

Finally, I would like to thank all my fellow councillors, our Clerk Mrs. N Phillips, and our Police Liaison Representative Kevin Simons for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. I also extend thanks to the residents of our parish for their continued engagement and support.

On behalf of G Hopkinson – Chair 2024/25