Chairman's Report

Annual Parish Meeting – 12th May 2026

Ewyas Harold Group Parish Council

It is my pleasure to present this report covering the work of the Parish Council for the past 12 months.

This has been a particularly active and challenging year for the parish, marked by significant community engagement, major environmental concerns - most notably flooding - and continued investment in local facilities and infrastructure.

Flooding and Environmental Response

The most significant issue faced this year has been the severe flooding experienced in November 2025, which affected a substantial number of properties across the parish. It was reported that over 50 homes and businesses were internally flooded, many for the first time.

The response from the community was exceptional. Local volunteers, organisations, and contractors worked tirelessly to assist with clean-up operations, supported by Herefordshire Council and partner agencies.

In response, the Parish Council:

- Established a Flood Working Group to develop local mitigation strategies
- Secured and distributed aquasacs and grant funding for emergency response
- Continued to press the Environment Agency, Herefordshire Council, and Welsh Water for action
- Engaged with organisations such as the Wye & Usk Foundation to explore natural flood management solutions
- The Parish Council was instrumental in pushing for the Property Flood Resilience survey to be undertake free of charge by the Environment Agency.

Progress from national agencies has at times been slow, the Council remains committed to ensuring that Ewyas Harold remains a priority and that long-term solutions are pursued.

Kemble Centre - Community Consultation

A major focus this year has been the future of the Kemble Centre, a key community asset.

During the year, the Council:

- Continued work through the Kemble Centre Working Group
- Developed and approved a parish-wide consultation, distributed to all households
- Put in place multiple response methods, including drop boxes and freepost returns

This consultation represents an important step in ensuring that future decisions about the Centre reflect the needs and wishes of parishioners.

Recreation Ground and Community Facilities

The Parish Council has continued to invest in maintaining and improving community facilities, particularly the Recreation Ground and Pavilion.

Key achievements include:

- Completion of legionella prevention works and toilet repairs
- CCTV installation to address anti-social behaviour and vandalism
- Continued development plans for play area improvements
- Installation of a new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), generously funded by Mr Jeremy Hickman, providing a high-quality space for a range of sports and activities for all age groups
- Ongoing maintenance supported by the Lengthsman and volunteers

The introduction of the MUGA represents a significant enhancement to the parish's recreational offering and is already proving to be a well-used and valued community asset.

The Council also worked with the community to tackle littering issues, with local volunteers playing an important role in maintaining the area.

Highways, Footpaths and Drainage

Improving infrastructure has remained a priority throughout the year.

Progress includes:

- Completion of public rights of way (PRoW) works and footpath maintenance
- Submission of drainage and footpath grant applications amounting to £34,000.
- Development of plans for white gates and speed indicator devices (SIDs) to improve road safety
- Ongoing work to map and improve drainage systems across the parish

Despite these efforts, concerns remain around highway safety, speeding, and drainage, which continue to be raised with the relevant authorities.

Planning and Development

The Council has considered a number of planning applications during the year.

In particular, the Council:

- Supported appropriate local developments
- Raised strong objections to proposals where there were concerns about infrastructure capacity, flood risk and drainage, highway safety, and lack of community benefit

The Council remains committed to ensuring that any development within the parish is sustainable and appropriate to the character of the area.

Community Safety and Engagement

Working with the Safer Neighbourhood Team, the Council has addressed issues including:

- Anti-social behaviour and vandalism at the Pavilion
- Speeding through the village
- Rural crime and theft

Priorities for the coming year have been agreed as:

- Speeding
- Anti-social behaviour
- Rural theft

The Council continues to value strong engagement with residents, with regular opportunities provided at meetings for public participation.

Finance and Governance

The Council has maintained sound financial management throughout the year.

Key points include:

- Completion of the 2025-26 accounts and internal audit
- Continued use of grants to support local projects, including flooding and infrastructure works
- Careful monitoring of budgets in response to rising costs, particularly energy and services

The Council acknowledges concerns raised by residents regarding the increase in the parish precept and will continue to ensure transparency and value for money.

Looking Ahead

As we move into the next year, the Parish Council's priorities will include:

- Continuing to pursue flood mitigation and drainage improvements
- Acting on the results of the Kemble Centre consultation
- Enhancing community facilities and recreation spaces
- Improving road safety and infrastructure
- Maintaining strong engagement with residents and partner organisations

Thanks

I would like to thank:

- My fellow Councillors for their commitment and hard work
- Our Clerk for her professionalism and support
- The Lengthsman and contractors for their ongoing efforts
- Mr Jeremy Hickman for his generous funding of the new MUGA
- Local volunteers and community groups for their invaluable contributions
- All parishioners who have engaged with and supported the work of the Council

Cllr Malcolm Watkins

Chairman
Ewyas Harold Group Parish Council