A few notes on the running order before I start:

For clarification, there are two meetings tonight, this is the Annual Parish Meeting which is then followed by the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council which starts at 19:30.

The Annual Parish Meeting is a meeting for the parish, that is facilitated by the council. Anyone present is entitled to speak during the proceedings, the Parish Council are here and listening, so, if anything is raised, we will endeavour to discuss it further.

Chair's Report for the Annual Parish Meeting – May 2025

Good evening, thank you for attending this year's, Annual Parish Meeting.

As Chair of the Parish Council, I am pleased to present a summary of our work over the past year, and to reflect on some of the progress, challenges, and ongoing priorities facing our parish.

Community & Engagement

One of our continued aims is to continue to strengthen communication with residents. We've continued to issue regular updates via Unity, as well providing other updates on the Parish Council website and social media. We continue to offer opportunities for parishioners to engage with us at monthly meetings as well as via post and email and on a one-to-one basis. Public participation remains vital for the Council — your concerns, ideas, and local knowledge continue to help and guide the Council's discussions and decisions.

Council Membership

The Council currently sits at 11 members with no vacancies. During the last 12 months we have seen a resignation from Arron Smith who we thank for his time and efforts, at the last meeting we welcomed Cllr Mark Grayson to the membership.

If you think you can help the Parish Council or would like to register interest for any future vacancies, please contact the Clerk.

Projects and ongoing maintenance

During the past 12 months, the Council has accomplished the following:

- Provided support as well as organisation for some of the events commemorating the 80th anniversary of D-Day and VE Day.
- Funded a new bench to be cited the Church grounds commemorating these important historical events.
- Introduced a new Bio-diversity policy.
- Generated and submitted a response to the GNR Solar Park, a NSIP affecting Sutton-on-Trent and many of our neighbouring parishes.
- Submitted a planning application and determined the location for a proposed War Memorial.
- Planted new trees, painted railings and provided a green disposal capability within the Cemetery.
- Introduced Cemetery regulations.
- Made a commitment to improve the noticeboard located on Main Street.
- Continued to support the Falls Group to ensure this essential community service can continue.
- Renewed the grass cutting contract for a new 3-year term, one of the Council biggest outgoings.
- Resurfaced the Playground at Sternthorpe Close improving the appearance and making the facility safer for our younger residents. Note that we have also made a commitment here to install new benches, add a picnic table, replace some of the swing seats, display new signage and to replace the ageing goals found on the playing field.
- Progressed discussions relating to a proposed Village Hall to gain a clear understating of what can be achieved in the future.
- Successfully lobbied the County Council to carry out much needed road repair works on Crow Park Avenue and The Meerings.
- Lobbied the County Council to complete the long awaited double yellow lines on Hounsfield Way.
- Formalised a community flood warden scheme that includes training.
- Lobbied for flood alleviation schemes which I will discuss later.

Whilst some of these may seem like small things individually, collectively I hope that you agree that together they make a genuine difference to the quality of life within our parish.

Planning and Development

During the last 12 months we the Council have considered approximately 100 planning applications. We have responded where necessary, always with the aim of ensuring that development is appropriate and reflects the views of the parish (where applicable).

We continue to monitor the largescale NSIP that is the GNR Solar Park, which will affect the village of Sutton-on-Trent and our neighbours.

Flooding

Following the substantial flooding to the north of the village in 2018 and the events of Storm Babbett and Henk it is pleasing to see that the IDB have completed phase 1 works along the Bullham Dyke after continued lobbying by the Parish Counil. These works aim to smooth the flow of water along courses by restricting flow and storing water alongside the banks during peak flow. It remains to be seen how successful these works will be, but the Council remains optimistic after a period of high engagement with the TVIDB. Phase 2 will see similar works alongside the Cuckstool Dyke with Phase 3 allowing for a water attenuation pond upstream on the Cuckstool Dyke near the A1 and further discussions for phase 4 which could increase the holding capacity near the pumping station, enabling optimal pump throughput. The Council offers it's thanks to Cllr Michaels and the TVIDB for progressing these much-needed works.

Environment and Amenities

We've continued to look at local initiatives to protect green spaces and promote biodiversity — Cllr Tyers has taken the lead here on this important subject and will be working on several initiatives in the coming months.

Our thanks are offered to the numerous volunteers who give their time so generously to help keep the parish looking its best.

Finance and Governance

The Council has continued to manage its budget responsibly. We recently set a modest precept rise for the 2025/26 year to ensure we can meet rising costs while continuing to deliver essential services.

Our internal and external audits last year were completed successfully. We remain committed to transparency and sound financial management.

As I write the Council sits on a healthy reserve as we continue to understand the next steps ahead for the aforementioned Village Hall Project.

Looking ahead

Key priorities for the Council will include:

- Grouping and re-aligning Parish Council responsibilities thus ensuring that our community can quickly identify a responsible Cllr that they can liaise with.

- Monitor and lobby the IDB (where appropriate) to ensure works are continued/completed to protect our village from flooding.

- Continuing to listen to and work with residents on the issues that matter most

- Progress the village Hall conversation, ensuring that we meet the objectives laid out by providing a facility that is owned by the village, for the village that can provide:

    - A meeting place for our smaller groups.
    - A home for core services such are library and the mobile post office.
    - An internet capability for those that do not have access to this essential service at home
    - A warm place during exceptionally cold periods
    - A safe place in the event of flooding

- Review our website capability and determine what options there are to improve this capability.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank all my fellow councillors for their commitment and service. The role of a Parish Councillor is often a thankless task. That said the correspondence, discussions, and work that goes on behind the scenes serves to remind me that this is a good group of people working outside of meetings for the benefit of our entire community.

I'd also like to thank our District Councillor Sylvia Micheals and County Councillor Bruce Laughton for their input and the assistance that they provide to the Council, the Parish and it's residents.

Finally. to our clerk, who, in an ever increasingly complex landscape makes our day to day lives as simple as possible. Jayne, you are essential to our accomplishments and I'm sure that everyone around the table will join me in saying thank you.

I now invite reports from community groups and an open discussion on matters you wish to raise.