

Chair's Report – 2025/26

2025/26 was an exceptionally busy and challenging year for Chapel, marked by significant pressures on the Council as well as moments of real community spirit and achievement.

Memorial Park and Legal Proceedings

A major focus of the year was the long-running issue surrounding noise at the Memorial Park. Following several hearings at Manchester Magistrates Court, the Council ultimately lost the case brought by Merren Jones and Stephen Covey-Crump, which found that the Council had failed to abate the noise nuisance.

As a result, the Council was required to remove the MUGA and redesign the area to prevent ball games being played there. A budget of £20,000 was allocated for the removal and for alternative provision. Park staff worked extremely hard throughout this process, not only assisting with the MUGA removal but also creating a new five-a-side pitch on the former junior pitch. This new facility has been very well used, even through the wet winter months. My thanks go to Jason for sourcing the football goal posts and Little Cherubs for funding for the line painter and paints.

The sensory garden created on the former MUGA site has received positive feedback from park users and has already become a valued space.

Market Place and Public Realm

We continued to apply pressure on HPBC regarding the long delays to the repairs of the public toilets and the deteriorating condition of the Market Place, including the damage caused by tree roots. This remains a priority for the Council.

Planning Matters

In September, a public meeting was held in response to the planning application for 180 homes at Crossings Road submitted by Barratt Homes. An action plan was developed, and Councillors Adshead, Drabbles and Williams joined me in standing outside the Town Hall to gather signatures for a petition and guide residents through the objection process.

Despite these efforts, and despite my presentation to the Planning Committee in April, the committee voted unanimously to approve the application.

Community Events and Celebrations

Amid the challenges, there were also many positive moments for the town.

- In June, Councillor Foreshew-Cain produced a Parish Council information board for the 800th Thomas Becket celebrations, which is now proudly displayed in the Town Hall foyer.
- In August, the Parish Council hosted a well-attended VJ Day commemoration, where residents enjoyed afternoon tea and shared fascinating memories. My thanks to all councillors who supported the event.

- We were also pleased to serve tea and coffee in the Town Hall following the Remembrance Service in November.

Christmas Events

Due to the ongoing works at the Market Place, the usual Christmas lights switch-on could not take place there. Instead, for the first time, the event was held in the Town Hall following a switch-on at the Methodist Church.

Staff transformed the Annexe into a magical Santa's Grotto and decorated the Main Hall; where mulled wine and mince pies—kindly provided by Melissa and Mark—were served by councillors and staff to the public. The Chapel Ladies Choir added to the festive atmosphere with carols. Special thanks to Emma and Debbie for making it happen at such short notice.

The Assistant Clerk, Caretaker and I also supported the Christmas Luncheon for Tea & Chat, and the Council assisted Little Cherubs with their children's Christmas party by serving food and distributing goody bags.