

Great Longstone Annual Parish Meeting

Wednesday 29th April 2026

Chair's Report

Good evening, and welcome to this year's Annual Parish Meeting.

My name is Jane Rigby, and it is a privilege to be here as current Chair of Great Longstone Parish Council to reflect on what has been a busy and, in many ways, significant year for our community. I took on the role in May 2025, following the retirement of Cllr Wendy Long, who served this council for 18 years, including 10 years as Chair. We owe her an enormous debt of gratitude, and I know the community shares that sentiment.

This evening, I want to give you a clear overview of what your Parish Council has been doing over the past year, the challenges we've faced, and where we are heading.

One of the most visible achievements has been the resurfacing of the tennis court. With generous support from Little Longstone Parish Meeting and external grants, the court has been fully refurbished, with new seating and clear rules for use. It's a valuable community asset, that we hope will be widely enjoyed.

The recreation ground itself continues to benefit from our partnership with LASRA the Longstone Area Sports and Recreation Association. Under their stewardship we have seen an exciting increase in the use of these facilities and have secured their future use. We would like to thank the LASRA maintenance team for their diligent upkeep of the recreation ground, it looks smart and tidy.

It is encouraging to see the growth of the cricket club and their programmes to widen participation with young people and women. The council were able to approve the Cricket Club's request to host visiting teams from Buxton and Sheffield University during summer 2026, bringing additional activity to the site.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been the Council's largest area of work this year. Led by a volunteer Steering Group under the guidance of Cllr Douglass, it has seen strong community engagement, with well-attended meetings and high response rates to surveys. This is a plan being shaped by the village, and while there is more to do, the progress so far is very encouraging.

The allotments have required careful management this year following concerns about lead levels in the soil. Advice from Environmental Health and Public Health concluded that while levels are elevated, they reflect the underlying geology of the area and do not meet the legal definition of contaminated land.

The allotments reopened in the autumn with appropriate guidance in place. As the growing season gets into full swing, it is nice to see the allotments being used again and the plots back to their former glory. In recognition of the disruption, the Council waived all fees for 2025/26 and a new, fairer system for plot charges will be introduced from later this year.

We have continued to look after the Village Green and other public spaces. Our annual inspection identified a range of maintenance priorities, including necessary tree works, repairs to the Gilder Quarry wall, repainting the telephone kiosk, and refurbishing play equipment, benches and noticeboards.

We would also like to recognise the excellent work of the Churchyard Volunteer Group, whose efforts to increase biodiversity and maintain areas of the closed churchyard make a real difference.

The Village Hall has seen both challenges and progress. Drainage issues at the front of the building have been reported to the County Council and we await resolution. While the Village Hall Trustees have secured funding to improve the electrical system and purchase new chairs—an important investment in a well-used community building.

Christmas events once again showed the strength of community spirit in the village, with a well-supported carol service and a much-appreciated tree on the green donated by Wendy and Jim Long. Looking ahead, planning is well underway for Village Week in July, with a wide range of events being organised by local groups including open gardens, a fête, well dressings, a sports day, and a programme of activities throughout the week.

The Parish Council currently has five members. We are a small but committed team, and I am grateful to all councillors for their contribution, as well as to our Clerk, Simon Headington, whose work underpins everything we do. We currently have vacancies for parish councillors and are keen to fill these. If you are interested in getting involved, please do speak to us.

Great Longstone is a special place, and it continues to thrive because of the people who care about it and contribute to it.

Thank you for being here this evening. We welcome your questions, your views and your ideas.

Cllr Jane Rigby
Chair
Great Longstone Parish Council