

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL CHAIR'S REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Date: 23 July 2026

Councillor Surgery

The Chair and Vice-Chair held a Councillor Surgery at the beginning of July, providing residents with an opportunity to raise local concerns and engage directly with their elected representatives.

Three residents attended specifically to discuss matters affecting them personally. One resident presented a number of complex issues which required in excess of one hour of discussion and investigation. Whilst this was a significant time commitment, it demonstrated the value of providing residents with direct access to Councillors and ensuring that concerns are listened to and addressed appropriately. A number of matters arising from this discussion remain under review and are being followed up accordingly.

In addition to these formal enquiries, the Surgery provided an opportunity to engage with several other members of the public, including some individuals from outside the Parish. Discussions covered the structure of local government, the respective roles of Chigwell Parish Council, Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council, and the responsibilities undertaken by elected Councillors.

The event was positively received and highlighted both the importance of community engagement and the continuing need to improve public understanding of the Parish Council's role. It remains apparent that a significant number of residents are unaware of the services provided by the Parish Council, the role of Parish Councillors, and the location of the Council's offices. Information leaflets were distributed to assist in raising awareness.

BAPS Temple Charity Event

Councillors were invited to attend the BAPS Temple 10-kilometre Charity Walk in support of the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance, held on 5 July 2026.

The Chair attended the event alongside several District Councillors. The event was extremely well supported and provided a valuable opportunity to engage informally with residents and visitors. It was encouraging to meet members of the community and discuss local issues in a positive and welcoming environment.

The event further demonstrated the important contribution that community organisations make to local life and the value of maintaining strong working relationships across the Parish.

Staff Informal Meetings

The programme of informal staff meetings commenced on 17 July 2026 and will continue throughout August.

These meetings are intended to provide an opportunity for constructive dialogue with officers, to better understand operational challenges, identify areas for improvement and recognise achievements across the organisation.

A summary report, including any recommendations arising from the discussions, will be presented to the next meeting of Full Council following completion of all meetings.

Clerk's Appraisal

The Clerk's probation period review was completed on 17 July 2026.

Due to time constraints and forthcoming annual leave commitments, a detailed report has not yet been finalised but will be sent to HR in due course HE has been notified of completion.

Clerk's Annual Leave

The Chair and Vice-Chair have approved the Clerk's annual leave requests for the following dates:

- 3 August 2026
- 7 August 2026 to 14 August 2026 (inclusive)
- 21 August 2026
- 28 August 2026

Appropriate arrangements will be in place to ensure the continued administration of Council business and the provision of essential services during these periods of absence. Members and residents requiring assistance during these dates are encouraged to contact the Council Offices in the usual manner.

Out of Hours Emergency Incident

On 11 July 2026, an unauthorised gathering was reported at The Paddocks, Chigwell.

The Police and the Clerk were notified immediately. The Clerk was kept informed throughout the incident and subsequently assumed responsibility for managing the matter on behalf of the Council.

A full incident report was submitted, and the matter remains under active consideration. Members are referred to the Clerk's Report for a detailed update.

Councillor Reminders

Attendance at Meetings

I would like to remind all Members of the importance of attending Council and Committee meetings wherever possible.

It has recently become necessary for officers to contact Councillors individually prior to meetings to establish likely attendance and ensure that meetings will be quorate. This places an unnecessary administrative burden on staff and creates uncertainty when preparing for meetings.

Members are therefore respectfully requested to respond to meeting summonses and attendance requests at the earliest opportunity.

Maintaining good communication helps officers plan effectively and ensures the Council can conduct its business efficiently.

Committee Chairs and Annual Leave

To ensure the smooth operation of Council business, Committee Chairs are asked to notify the Administrator of any planned periods of annual leave as soon as possible.

Advance notice allows appropriate arrangements to be made for Vice-Chairs to assume responsibilities where necessary, or for alternative arrangements to be considered should both the Chair and Vice-Chair be unavailable.

Future Councillor Surgeries

The next Councillor Surgery is scheduled to take place on Saturday 8 August 2026.

Should a member be unable to attend their allocated session, it is their responsibility to arrange a replacement and ensure that the necessary cover is in place.

Matters Under Consideration

Joint Meetings of Parish, District and County Councillors

I recently discussed with Councillor Kaz Rizvi the possibility of establishing regular meetings involving Parish, District and County Councillors representing Chigwell.

The proposal has been received positively and, following discussions with the Clerk, all relevant District and County Councillors were contacted. Feedback to date has been overwhelmingly supportive, with Members welcoming the opportunity to meet collectively to discuss issues affecting Chigwell and identify opportunities for greater collaboration.

Subject to further discussion, it is proposed that these meetings take place on either a quarterly or bi-annual basis, depending on demand and emerging issues.

The intention is not to duplicate existing meetings but to create an informal forum through which elected representatives can share information, strengthen working relationships and present a united approach to matters affecting residents.

Such an arrangement would also encourage greater mutual support between all tiers of local government and help ensure that Chigwell's interests are represented consistently across relevant authorities.

Public Awareness and Community Engagement

One issue that continues to arise is the relatively low level of public awareness regarding Chigwell Parish Council, its role, responsibilities and services.

Feedback received through Councillor Surgeries and community engagement activities demonstrates that many residents remain unclear about who their Parish Councillors are, what the Parish Council does and how they can access Council services or contact officers.

Improving public engagement and raising awareness of the Council's activities should therefore remain a priority.

The Clerk has suggested the introduction of regular drop-in sessions at the Council Offices, providing residents with an opportunity to meet with both the Clerk and the Chair of Council to discuss local matters and obtain information about Council services. This initiative would complement the existing monthly Councillor Surgeries and provide an additional avenue for public engagement.

I would be pleased to support and participate in such sessions.

In addition, Members may wish to consider organising a number of community-focused events designed to increase public awareness of the Council. Examples could include community quiz nights, fundraising events at Victory Hall or other initiatives that bring residents together whilst promoting the work of the Parish Council.

Such events would offer dual benefits by increasing visibility of the Council and providing opportunities to support local charities, community organisations or the Community Hub.

However, improving public perception and engagement cannot be achieved by a small number of individuals alone. It will require a collective effort from all Members. I would therefore encourage Councillors to consider potential ideas and initiatives and bring forward suggestions at the next meeting of Full Council.

By working together, we can strengthen the Council's profile within the community, enhance resident engagement and ensure that the valuable work undertaken by Chigwell Parish Council is more widely understood and appreciated.

Prepared by:

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Chair of Chigwell Parish Council