



**Choppington Parish Council
Chairman's Report
Annual Assembly**

Report for 2025–26

This year has been one of significant change, progress, and opportunity for both the Parish Council and our wider community. We have welcomed new faces to the Council and staff team, while also saying farewell to long-standing colleagues and friends whose dedication and commitment have helped shape the area we are proud to serve today. Throughout the year, the Council has continued to focus on improving local facilities, supporting community organisations, and creating opportunities for residents of all ages to take part in community life.

New additions



Cllr Allan Cottrell



Cllr David FitzGerald



Cllr Martin Jackson

Following the May 2025 elections, we were pleased to welcome three new Councillors to the Parish Council. Councillor Allan Cottrell was already a familiar figure in the community through his work maintaining our green spaces. Few people know the history, character, and wildlife of the neighbourhood's open spaces as well as Allan. We also welcomed David FitzGerald and Martin Jackson, both of whom also serve as County Councillors for the area. All three joined the Council with enthusiasm, a willingness to embrace new responsibilities, and a genuine eagerness to learn. One year on, that enthusiasm remains as strong as ever, and they now bring valuable knowledge, experience, and fresh perspectives to the wider Council.



Rob Delap

We also welcomed a new member of staff, Rob Delap, with whom we first worked during the refurbishment project at Cleaswell Park. We were fortunate that Rob chose to remain with the Parish Council as our Operations Manager, where he has overseen the successful installation of the PlayZone and continues to lead and support several exciting projects planned for 2026.

Activities for Families, Young and Old

The Parish Council continues to promote and support activities for residents of all ages. We work in partnership with a range of local organisations, including schools, youth groups, sports clubs, community groups, and Stakeford and Bomarsund Welfare, to deliver a varied programme of activities throughout the year.

The Council is pleased to provide grant support to the youth section of Bedlington Brass Band, as well as to a local parent and toddler group. We also provided a grant for a local Children's Christmas party and are pleased to ensure that these valued activities can continue.

The Parish Council's youth club at Holy Family Church takes place every Thursday at 5pm for children aged 9–11 in school years 5 and 6. Led by local youth worker Maria Oliver, the club offers a wide variety of games, crafts, and activities in a safe and welcoming environment. During the year, members of the youth club visited the Parish Council and impressed Councillors with a presentation that was both creative and informative.

After a long search, we were delighted to begin working with local craft provider Melanie Fox, who delivered creative activities for children during holiday play sessions. We hope to expand this partnership in the coming year by developing crafting opportunities for older residents within the community.

The Parish Council has also been fortunate to secure accommodation in Guide Post, allowing us to extend community activities across the area. We are pleased to support the Wesleyan Church coffee morning on alternate Wednesdays, and we are also renting accommodation at the Guide Post Scout Hut. Activities at both venues will be advertised throughout the year, and we encourage residents to support and participate in them.

A wide range of activities for older residents continues to be supported through Parish Council grant funding, and we remain open to assisting new groups and initiatives. During the year, the Council supported the veterans' league snooker teams and the Ashington and District Male Voice Choir.

The Parish Council also continues to provide annual grants to Wansbeck Food Bank and CVS in recognition of the vital support they provide to residents across the area.

West Sleekburn Village Hall

The Parish Council installed the existing village hall at West Sleekburn in 2019. The hall is managed by a dedicated group of Trustees, including Parish Councillors Lynne Watson, Hilary Allsopp, and Kath Burn. The building is available for private hire and is situated within a large green and paved area, making it ideally suited for outdoor games, community events, and barbecues.

This year has seen the continued success of the FareShare Pantry alongside the popular Social Saturday sessions. Both activities take place every Saturday morning from 10.30am to 12.30pm and provide an important opportunity for residents to come together socially while also accessing practical support. Everyone is welcome to join in.

I began this report by welcoming new members to the Council; it is equally important to recognise and thank those who retired at the last election — Councillors Paul Vaughan, Arthur Iley, and Aaron Hart. The Parish Council is stronger because of the commitment, hard work, and service they each gave to the community.

Finally, I would also like to thank David Nicholson, who retired in March this year. David was Choppington Parish Council's first Parish Clerk and, alongside the first Chairman, Ray Butler, laid the foundation for the Council it is today — one that works with the community, for the community, and by the community. His contribution and influence across the area are widely recognised and deeply appreciated. We wish him a long, happy, and well-earned retirement, although, retirement is unlikely to mean slowing down. He continues to serve as Secretary of the Welfare and remains actively involved in a wide range of community organisations and activities, continuing his long-standing commitment to the community he has served so well.

Cllr Jackie Rowell
Chairman
Choppington Parish Council
18 May 2026

