Northfield and Willowbrae
Community Council

Chair's Report on the Year 2025-26

I would like to start my annual report by thanking our members. We are a small group of volunteers, with some still working and with families, and I am grateful to everyone for their input and hard work over the past year. I would also like to thank our local councillors, Cllr Danny Ashton, Cllr Alex Stanforth and Cllr Joan Griffiths, for their unwavering support and hard work. We are very lucky to have three such active ward counsellors supporting our work.

We said goodbye and thank you to our Community Police Officer, PC Ania Morrison, in November and welcomed PC Jill Bonthron as her replacement. We are looking forward to working with Jill going forward.

This year, we have worked with a new membership, and some of us, including me, have been on a steep learning curve, helped along the way by the more experienced members.

Our mission as a community council is to enhance the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the area. We do this by engaging with the community, influencing decisions on planning and services, and acting on local issues. We act as the voice of the local area, ensuring community views are expressed to local authorities and other agencies.

Our finances have been well taken care of by our Treasurer, Chris Alcorn, and we thank him for keeping everything in order. Community councils get only a small budget to support their work engaging with the community and we rely on additional grant funding for some of our bigger initiatives. I will leave it to Chris to detail this in his Treasurer's Report.

Our secretary Lauren Kennelly had to step down at the start of the year, and we are currently looking for her replacement.

Since our last AGM, we have had a number of successes, which our Engagement Officer, Margaret Bennett, has detailed within her engagement report, so I won't repeat them here.

Margaret has left me space to say that this year we had our most successful Community and Environment Fair to date, with ~400 visitors and a wonderful community atmosphere, helped by the participation of so many local businesses and local enterprises. Marionville Fire Station brought one of their engines to showcase their vital role in our community, and children from St John's RC Primary School came to sing to us; their energy and beautiful singing really lifted the event. They were

rewarded with free pizza which we gave out to any child attending the event (~180 slices in total!). We also received generous raffle prizes from several local businesses, notably Abercorn Sports Club, the Beefeater at Willowbrae Road, Giovanni's Italian Takeaway and the Scottie pub at Northfield Broadway, Paws Perfect at Jock's Lodge, Amber's Hair & Beauty at Mountcastle Drive Nth, and the Friends of Meadowfield Park. These donations were much appreciated and helped add to our funds to continue our work.

Our plans going forward will be influenced by the findings from our Local Place Plan. We will need to identify priorities whilst allowing for other projects that may be brought to our attention by community members as the year progresses.

If we are to achieve these priorities, it will be essential for us to have more members. We currently have nine members, all willing volunteers with varying amounts of free time to donate beyond their work and family commitments. We currently have space to co-opt five new members and would particularly value nominations from younger people and those from different cultural backgrounds. The only requirement is that you are over 16 and live within the boundaries of the community council … and that you have endless enthusiasm and energy to get involved!

We continue to struggle with lack of communication and meaningful engagement from CEC. This is incredibly frustrating as everything takes a great deal of time and repeated effort to make any progress with the issues we raise. I have made it a personal challenge to tick items off the agenda that repeatedly appear under matters arising due to lack of progress.

With only limited resources, we continue to find communicating our work to the public a challenge. We currently have 1,600 people following our Facebook page and a similar number subscribing to our website, but we would love to see these numbers rise to reflect the number of residents in our area. Social media is the most cost-effective means of communication; our budget from the council to engage with the community is only £522 plus an additional 2p per resident, which means mailing or dropping fliers simply isn't feasible with a population of over 12,500. We continue to put information in Piershill library and on local noticeboards; however, many of these are in poor condition, due to age and graffiti, and may not be easily seen by passers-by. For larger events this year, we have placed banners on major traffic junctions to try to draw attention.

We are grateful for the support given to us by everyone in the Northfield and Willowbrae community, and we look forward to reporting on another successful year at our 2027 AGM.

Ruth Pearson
Chair – Northfield & Willowbrae Community Council
May 10^{th,} 2026