**Chairman’s 2025 Annual Report for Boxley Parish Council**

Before I get down to specifics I would like to place on record my humble gratitude for the platitudes and wishes paid to me by many of you following my decision to tender my resignation with effect from the 1st May 2025

It has been a very eventful last few months where all tiers of Government are facing new challenges as devolution takes shape and who would have believed Reform would have a landslide victory in the last ever Kent County Council elections held last week. Boxley Parish Council have had great support from our local County Councillor and former leader, Sir Paul Carter who lost his seat. We wish Sir Paul and his family best wishes for the future

In so many ways the past year has been full of highs and lows. Not least following the resignation of Vic Davies the previous year . This has been followed by the loss of Chris Sheppard and Kaz Macklin. Their contributions to the Council should be recognised, applauded and remembered as being instrumental in the Council upholding high principles and integrity on behalf of our residents.

Their loss was compounded by the necessity to disqualify Councillor Stephen Thompson due to the legislation regarding non attendance at meetings over a six month period. However I was pleased to see him gain sufficient support in the subsequent By-election in the South ward to enable him to return to the fold. He was elected along with Councillor Jeeva Sampangi who we welcomed following her success in the same By-election. At the time of writing, we have no successor to fill the vacancy in the North Ward and are still waiting to see if another By-election will be held at a cost to the Parish Council.

The development of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) for the new Lidsing Garden Settlement have commenced and has consumed a lot of Councillor’s time and effort due in no small way because MBC set a very short timescale for their preparation and approval. My thanks here must go to Councillors Brindle Thompson and Jones.

All Committees have had full agendas throughout the year covering all aspects of the Councils work and responsibilities - sometimes at very short notice when Emergency meetings have to be set in order to ratify decisions.

The Personnel Committee were kept very busy dealing with internal adjustments regarding staffing issues including contractual details. Unfortunately they also spent time and Council funds dealing with a formal complaint from office staff regarding alleged instances of harassment and bullying by a Councillor. An outside body had to be engaged and financed to deal with this, but I have to report that although a satisfactory outcome was achieved, this was subsequently withdrawn by the Councillor concerned.

Regarding our office staff may I thank them sincerely for their diligence and hard work throughout the year. They tolerated my many and extensive visits to the office and always maintained a very professional approach. We have seen many changes and upgrades to systems introduced particularly in the financial area which assisted us to be able to produce an Audit and End of Year Report that indicated that the Council has no matters of concern.

Two other notable events that occurred I would like to put on record.

Firstly we had the 10th anniversary in August of the opening of the Dove Hill allotments - what a wonderful event opened by the Mayor Councillor John Perry followed by a barbecued feast organised by our dedicated office staff. All commented on how it generated a wonderful social gathering and I hope that was the start of many more to follow. I am still amazed that 10 years have passed since Ivor, John Brooks and myself spent many hours creating what is now a wonderful example of an asset to the community and the Council enjoyed by all the Allotmenteers.

Secondly my sincere thanks to Martin for his wonderfully creations for celebrating Christmas and the enjoyment he gave to many young children- again I hope this will be repeated in the future and other new innovative ideas come forth.

My thanks go here to the people who have contributed to the Parish in many ways- to list them all would mean we would be here till midnight - you know who you are and we deeply appreciate you.

Finally I wish to pass a personal comment regarding what I feel to be a crucial and important aspect of having the wonderful opportunity to be a Parish Councillor.

A meeting to be successful must be one where all members can freely state views and opinions without the thoughts in the back of their minds that there could be serious consequences of what they say. This is not to say that obviously one does need to be careful in not uttering slanderous or incorrect statements but the introduction of recordings of meetings by Councillor Jones I feel has had a very serious effect on the whole atmosphere of our meetings. She has the right to do so and I am not saying that right should ever be withdrawn but I would ask for serious consideration by her of the effects this has had on the Councillors. If the recordings are merely to be used for recollections of matters dealt with, then I see no problem with that but it has been stated to me by members that they are unwilling to comment on occasions because of fear it may be used against them in the future. May I sadly say that it did have a profoundly negative effect on me in the manner in which I was able to conduct meetings.

I wish you all well.

Thank you and goodbye

Bob Hinder

Chairman Boxley Parish Council

7th May 2025