

Ide Parish Council

Report by the Chair for the year May 2021 – May 2022

[Edited version of text delivered to Ide Parish Council's Annual Meeting]

Parish Council Meetings.

In July we reverted to meeting as a Council in person in the village hall. There was some resistance nationally to this; but the temporary Covid legislation was lifted, meaning that the full council and the planning committee must meet in person. The working groups still value the option of meeting remotely on Zoom. Thank you to Carol Whitehart who is always on hand to book, open or lock up our fabulous village hall.

Parish Council Membership

In November we welcomed Nick Creasy as a new councillor, bringing us back to full strength. Nick lives in The Hams and works as a painter, decorator and shop fitter. He has experience in youth work, and has worked for Devon Young Farmers in establishing the Rural Hub at Cheriton Bishop.

Parish Clerk

The council employs one member of staff, the parish clerk and responsible financial officer (RFO), Mel Liversage. On Mel rests the efficient running of parish council and planning committee meetings, and the supporting paperwork to go with them. With support from Ben Ervine, she operates the website, posting all documents, and keeping it current. As RFO she must keep accurate and retrievable financial records, set a budget, and manage the council's four bank accounts. She prepares the annual statement of accounts, and liaises with our auditors during March and April to ensure our governance systems are working properly. This has been the Council's busiest ever year financially, with donations and grants flowing in from our summer appeal (see below); spending the funds; operating the online banking facility; keeping track of transactions and associated VAT; and reclaiming the VAT due back to us.

Our finances are sound; and the council functions well.

Mel also attends the Weir Meadow and Orchard working groups, without the onus of doing the agenda or minutes, to keep abreast of developments, and, with the kind assistance of Phil Willcock, track the money.

Thank you, Mel, for your great commitment and good humour throughout the year.

Audit

In April 2022 we commissioned our fifth annual internal audit by the independent professional, Alison Marshall. She reviewed the administrative functions of the council, its policies and records, to assure the quality and probity of the council's operation. Following recommendations made in her 2021 report, we:

- Clarified the amount of the annual Precept in the budget statement;

- Updated the website by posting all approved minutes; adding Privacy clearly to the GDPR and Privacy (General Data Protection Regulations) policy; and posting the full Annual Governance and Accounting Report (AGAR) documents;
- Increased the number of authorised cheque signatories and online banking authorisers to 4 councillors. The clerk is allowed to write out a cheque but not sign it; and to create an online payment but not authorise it. Alison Marshall's full report for this year appears on the website as part of the Annual Parish Council meeting papers.

Planning Committee

Tracking and commenting on planning applications in and near to the parish is one of the Council's main functions, conducted by the Planning Committee, to which the Council partially delegates its function. Pete Bishop continued to serve on the committee as chair until September, so that new committee member, Ben Ervine, could learn the ropes before he took over as Chair from October. Laura Bell has joined the committee, which, with Rachel Herbert and Mark Thomas, now numbers four councillors, supported by Mel Liversage.

Ide Neighbourhood Plan has determined the outcome of several applications, in particular:

An application for five houses at Chillies Copse on College Lane was refused after over 60 objections from village residents, and objections by this council. The applicant went to appeal, which was dismissed on 2 February.

An application to use the strip of land between Ide Village Road and the A30, west of the entrance to the village, for storage of inert building materials by a large industrial construction company, was withdrawn after the committee objected citing the Ide Neighbourhood Plan and the Ide Gateway Enhancement Area.

This month the committee objected to a request by the developers of Springwell Nursery to remove condition 5 of their planning permission, which requires them to upgrade and widen the combined foot and cycle path alongside Ide Village Road from the footbridge to the A30 roundabout.

The company currently storing plant and containers in Round Field without permission were ordered, after the committee's intervention, by TDC to submit a planning application to regularise its use. An application was submitted this month, but has yet to be formally published. The parish council's current understanding is that such a use lies well outside the terms of Ide Neighbourhood Plan.

My thanks to all four members for their thoughtful and detailed work, often at short notice.

The Cemetery

Sarah Tiley kindly continued to serve as cemetery co-ordinator, working closely with Mel Liversage to maintain the fabric and the function of the cemetery; responding to enquiries; and liaising with the churches, celebrants and funeral directors. The grass was cut monthly by contract with Paul Tonkin. There have been less interments than usual this year. A sign barring dogs from the cemetery has been fixed to one gate; another will be fitted to the top gate. Thank you to Sarah and Mel for their valuable work.

Play Area

The Play Area is now free of covid restrictions on its use; and is in good order following some minor repairs advised by the ROSPA inspector in March. Thank you to Mark Thomas and Laura Bell for overseeing its running.

Defibrillator

Thank you again to Brenda Mosedale for looking after the machine outside the shop and performing the monthly check on its battery and housing.

Road Safety

The temporary closure of Doctors Walk under covid emergency active travel measures was upgraded to a permanent closure, with the necessary funding to implement that, by Devon Highways in January. Vehicular traffic along Balls Farm Road has decreased significantly since the original closure, with more people walking and cycling. This simple measure has created a permanent safe route for pedestrians and cyclists into Exeter.

The junction of Fore Street and Ide Village Road presented a problem for the council. Residents rightly complained about pavement parking there. We placed planters to protect the visual splay, but school drop off and pick up are pressure times. And a truck from Hooke Highways persisted, and persists, in parking on the westerly pavement, despite reports to Devon Highways, the Police, Hooke Highways, and a letter left by the Council on the windscreen.

National Highways removed too much hedge and too many trees along the border between Ide Village Road and the A30 in the winter. Following complaints from residents about noise, pollution and vehicle lights, through the IPC co-ordinated expertly by Paula B-P, they re-planted in May.

Emergency Planning and Covid response

Thank you to the working group of Paula Burton-Perrett (chair), Ben Ervine, Dave Black and Ian Campbell for updating the Ide Emergency Plan; and for their work on flood planning and response in particular. We set an additional sand bag store in the car park of the Huntsman. Unfortunately, our volunteer village Road Warden, Stuart Brooking, was unable to continue with the scheme, set up by Devon County Council in March 2020.

Climate Emergency Working Group. Andy Swain led this working group of Ide residents, which paused its meetings during Covid. The project to re-wild the churchyard continued successfully. The group's posts on the village website have helpful advice on recycling plastic, litter picking, a proposal for EV charging points in Ide, and simple actions by individuals and families.

Ide Times

Every month, lockdown or flood, Ide Times arrived through our doors, free. It's the principal way the parish council communicates with residents, especially those who

don't access the website. Thank you from all of us in the village to the editors, Ann Boyce and Brenda Spivey, and their band of volunteer deliverers.

Weir Meadow and Northern Fields

The two conditions on the change of use planning permission – for a landscape and ecology plan and a drainage plan – were discharged in June following our submission of both plans, written pro bono by Richard Cottle and Rich Cloke.

Tenders were invited from five contractors for the cost of the car park, footpath and landscaping groundworks set out in the planning application. Two firms tendered, both with figures in excess of £100,000 plus VAT, three times our working estimate. In discussion, TDC would be happy for us to instal a greener, non-tarmac, free draining car park surface - cheaper and more environmentally friendly – within the terms of the existing permission.

Of course, we still need to buy the land. In June the Joint Projects Fund Raising Group launched its appeal, posting a “Green Space for Ide” leaflet by hand through every household’s door in the parish. A more detailed prospectus brochure was also produced for grant giving bodies and known potential donors.

Fundraising events included a sponsored virtual cycle ride to Wembley, jumble sale, cricket fun day and calendars. We held an open morning and pancake breakfast on 9 October, with poster displays about the projects, and group members present to answer questions. It was followed by escorted visits for residents to see the Orchard and The Meadow first hand.

The appeal raised £42,700 in personal donations for Weir Meadow. There were no sources of grant funding the buy the Meadow – unlike the Orchard – so the council decided to apply to borrow the balance from the Public Works Loan Board. We conducted a consultation survey during January and February to explain the reasons and the costs involved; and seek the community’s agreement to raising the precept, and in turn the council tax, to pay for the costs of borrowing £152,282 over 50 years at a fixed interest rate: for an average Band D household, the estimated increase in council tax would be £22.68 a year. 87% of the 135 residents who replied supported the proposal to borrow.

We applied for approval to borrow on 14 March; and on 19 May received that approval from the Secretary of State. It’s now a race to finalise the advance before interest rates rise further. My thanks to all those on the fund raising group.

The working group has made plans for levelling and seeding the ground; and installing an artificial cricket wicket in winter 2022/23. It also has a plan for how, when and with what constraints to let the Northern Fields to a tenant for the first 3 years, thanks to the kind pro bono advice of Pete Skinner.

Richard Cottle, the group’s chair, has explored grants from the Forestry Commission and the National Lottery Community fund, for which we will be eligible once we own the land. Thank you to Richard for his work; and to all the group members.

Ide Community Orchard

For the Orchard, the joint projects funding appeal raised £32,136 in donations and tree sponsorship, plus £33,499 in grant from Viridor and £5,000 from the Royal Horticultural Society. We exercised the option to purchase agreement on 4 March, and took possession of the Orchard on 29 April.

The Orchard is now owned and run by the village. It has 7 picnic tables set up around it. The fruit tree saplings planted in Jan 2020 are thriving, now look like proper trees, and are protected by metal mesh guards. Three new wooden gates have been installed. Advisory signage is in place, along with a dog waste bin which will be emptied fortnightly on a Thursday. The orchard is freely open to the public every day from dawn to dusk; and is closed from 10pm. The grass was cut without charge by James Romain from Whiddon, and by Michael Radford from Westown. Thank you from all of us. There will be a grand opening ceremony at 12 noon on June 5 when a parish council tree will be planted.

My thanks to all those on the group; special praise must go to David Howe for hours and hours of pro bono legal work; and to Peter Cloke as chair.

May 2022

Nick Bradley, Chair of Ide Parish Council