

Ide Parish Council

Chair's report for the year 19 May 2022 -17 May 2023

Delivered at Ide Annual Parish Meeting 17 May 2023

1. Parish Council Meetings.

We held one additional meeting during the year, an extraordinary meeting on 30 May. On 19 May, the Secretary of State had approved our request to apply for a loan to buy Weir Meadow and the Northern Fields. At the meeting on 30 May the Council resolved to apply for the loan; and exercise the option to purchase agreement with the Church Commissioners.

Our September meeting was cancelled to observe the mourning period following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The Council met instead on 12 October. All other bi-monthly meetings were held as scheduled.

On 3 March we called a public meeting to hear details and question planning officers about the proposed development of a 900 house village at Markham Farm. 83 people attended.

2. Parish Council Elections and Membership

On 4 May 2023, four-yearly local elections were held. Andy Swain stood down as a parish councillor. He continues to serve as a district councillor, now for the Teign Valley ward where he won his seat by one vote after three recounts. I take this moment to thank him for his outstanding ten years on Ide Parish Council. He worked thoughtfully, carefully and with great commitment to the community. He also gave me important support and sound advice at several key periods since I have been the Chair.

All other eight parish councillors stood for re-election – Laura Bell, Paula Burton Perrett, Nick Creasy, Ben Ervine, Rachel Herbert, Jessica Paine, Mark Thomas and were elected unopposed. We have one vacancy on the Council, which we will fill by co-option over the next few months.

3. 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, Mel 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 with Lloyds. Online electronic banking has continued to work well: thank you to Rachel Herbert and Jess Paine for acting as payment authorisers along with me, while Mel has created the online payments.

Our finances are sound; and the council functions well. Agendas were prepared and published on time, accurately and with appropriate supporting papers. Minutes have been produced accurately and published on the Ide website, along with council documents and policies.

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

Thank you, Mel, for your great commitment, often over and above the call of duty, throughout the year.

4. Audit

In April 2023 we commissioned our sixth 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. Her full report for this year appears as part of the Annual Parish Council meeting. It reflects well on the standards and performance of the Council.

Following the recommendations made in her 2022 report we have during this year:

- adopted the updated 2019 version of NALC's Financial Regulations;
- confirmed that all councillors use bespoke, dedicated email addresses for their PC work;
- itemised spending made under discretionary expenditure powers such as the purchase of a Remembrance wreath, which are for the direct benefit of the parish, under the provisions of Section 137;
- completed and published the outstanding March 2022 Statement of Internal Control;
- ensured that Extraordinary Meetings are called (and documented as such) by the Chair or by two councillors;
- noted the reasons for councillors' absences, and whether they were approved by the meeting, in the minutes;
- confirmed that the ROSPA inspection of the Play Area took place, and published the report;
- add the total sum of the value of the council's assets at the foot of the asset register;
- increased the number of banking authorisers and signatories to four.

5. 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. My thanks go to Ben Ervine, who chairs the committee, and to councillors Rachel Herbert, Laura Bell and Mark Thomas, supported by Mel Liversage, clerk, for their exacting work, often at short notice, on this committee. The Committee met on 16 June, 14 July, 7 Sept, 30 Nov, 11 Jan, 29 March and 17 May (earlier this evening).

I'll mention three particular planning items which will be especially important for the village.

Last year the committee objected to a request by the developers of Springwell Nursery to remove condition 5 of their permission, requiring them to upgrade and widen the combined foot and cycle path alongside Ide Village Road from the footbridge to the A30 roundabout. Despite additional representations from the Council, TDC allowed the removal of this condition, meaning that the path will not be upgraded if the Springwell development goes ahead.

The company currently storing plant and containers in Round Field without permission submitted, by order from TDC, a retrospective planning application to regularise its use in May 2022. Despite several letters to the planning department, and a significant and challenging representation made by our district councillor, a planning decision has yet to be made. The parish council's understanding is that such a use lies well outside the terms of Ide Neighbourhood Plan.

In January, TDC published its draft Teignbridge Local Plan 2020-2040 Submission version. The plan contains a proposal to build 900 houses on agricultural land in the eastern half of Ide Parish, to be called Markham Village, after the farm whose land would be sold for the development. Local opposition from Ide and Alphington is strong. We objected to the original proposal in 2021. And, following an open public meeting on 3 March, where TDC planning officers presented their reasons for choosing this site and described some of the details of the scheme, the council set out its objections in a formal representation on 13 March.

At its regular March meeting, the Council decided to engage a planning expert to advise us on how we might best present our case against such a new 900 house village at Markham Farm at the Examination in Public, due to be held in November 2023. Having taken advice from planning consultants and lawyers known to the Council, we have made arrangements with a consultancy named Viable Placemaking to review all the current and historic documents of relevance, meet on line with the council, and produce a report advising how we can elevate our arguments to present at the Hearing. We are in the process of appealing to local residents to raise the funds for the consultant's fee, before formally instructing them in July, when the revised and final version of the Local Plan will be published.

6. The Cemetery

Sarah Tiley has 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 is cut monthly by contract with Paul Tonkin. Unusually, there have been no interments in the last year. Thank you to Sarah and Mel for your valuable work.

7. Play Area

The Play Area is in good order, and we received a good annual report from the ROSPA inspector in March. Thank you to Mark Thomas and Laura Bell for overseeing its running.

8. 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. We bought a new battery and a set of pads this year.

9. Road Safety

The permanent closure of Doctors Walk to vehicles was completed with the installation by Devon Highways of definitive bollards. This simple measure has revolutionised the safety and usage of Balls Farm Road for pedestrians and cyclists.

It is now three years since Devon Highways agreed to a minor amendment to the double yellow line layout in Fore Street, which will have a major impact on preventing obstruction by parked cars to large vehicles at the pinch point just east of Drakes Farm entrance. Despite assurances in January this year that the work would be completed by the end of March 2023, it has still not been done.

Following two instances over the winter when emergency vehicles could not get to houses in The Hams due to obstruction by parked cars, Devon Highways agreed in February to extend the double yellow lines opposite 3 The Green. In the meantime, we have placed traffic cones and explanatory notices there to prevent further obstruction.

10. War Memorial

Five metal bollards were installed in early May by the parish council to protect the grass and verge surrounding the memorial. The grass had been cut up by vehicles driving up over the curb stones onto the grass. Our overdue go to Chris Jeans, who has mown and tended to the memorial grass for many, many years, unsung but greatly appreciated.

11. Emergency Planning and flood resilience

Thank you to the working group of Paula Burton Perrett (chair), Ben Ervine, Dave Black and Ian Campbell for continuing to refine and apply the Ide Emergency Plan. This has also involved liaising during the year with Devon and National Highways in response to the air and noise pollution suffered by residents of The Cherries after the overenthusiastic tree thinning along the border between Ide Village Road and the A30.

12. Allotments

The council leases land at the rear of Ide School from Devon CC, and rents it under licence as eight allotment garden plots to allotment holders, who must live or work in Ide. Two allotments – one of which was the plot rented by the school - became vacant this spring, clearing the waiting list. The average length of wait for an allotment is around 11 months. Our thanks to David Farrow, the Chair of the Ide Allotments Association, for his work taking on that role. A full annual report on the allotments appears in the meeting to follow this one.

13. Ide Times

Ide Times drops through our doors, free, at the start of every month. Reassuringly analogue, screen free, but also available online on the village website where it is archived, it's the principal way the parish council communicates with residents. Thank you from all of us in Ide to the Times editors, Ann Boyce and Brenda Spivey, and their volunteer delivery crew.

14. Weir Meadow and Northern Fields

Purchase of the Meadow, Northern Fields and Triangular Field for £178,000 plus fees was completed on 23 September 2022, using donations from residents alongside a 50 year fixed rate loan of £152,282 from the Public Works Loan Board.

With the excellent pro bono land agent services of Peter Skinner, the Council entered into a two year Farm Business Tenancy with Richard Parr from 29 September 2022, for the two Northern Fields, at a rent of £1100 per annum. The tenancy provides for public access round the perimeter of N Fields East, and along the southern border of N Field West to Oak Bank, an area of steep scrub overlooking the current cricket pitch, which is not part of the tenanted land.

Weir Meadow is available to pedestrians at any time between dawn and dusk. Signage is in place at all points of entrance the meadow and fields, advising residents of the conditions of use, and setting out how we expect owners to manage their dogs. Commercial dog walking is prohibited. New dog waste bins have been installed at the entrance to Weir Meadow, and at the bottom of College Lane.

A 12 year old boy was attacked by a dog in Weir Meadow in January. The owner was reported to the police, who have interviewed the owner and taken steps under the Dangerous Dogs Act. The Council contacted the owner by phone and subsequent letter, instructing them that they may never walk a dog on Ide PC land again.

A galvanised steel, locked barrier was installed at the entrance to Weir Meadow, to prevent unauthorised vehicular access. Richard Parr is a key holder and has access across Weir Meadow to the N Fields for his machinery, by prior arrangement with the council, via Peter Skinner.

A wooden stile and a kissing gate have been installed at the NW and NE corners respectively of N Field East onto College Lane, providing access to new open green space, and a footpath between Halscombe Lane and College Lane.

The WMWG won a £9,825 award from the National Lottery Fund to plant 500 trees; install fencing next to the brook, and to demarcate pitches from play area and car park; bird boxes; and two benches on Oak Bank. The Woodland Trust also donated 500 trees. Winter working parties have planted 600 trees so far along the east margin of W Meadow, and in Oak Bank.

The group has also been active, of course, raising funds for Weir Meadow and The Orchard. The St Ida's village fete bar in June, a pancake breakfast in March, an

upcoming fashion show and a concert by Police Dog Hogan concert planned for 8 July 2023, involving Rachel Herbert and Cheryl Haddy of the WMWG, and Richard Sharman of the Orchard group.

Test holes were dug in February to sample the land stratification and sample the soil, with a view to deciding if and what drainage might be needed.

The old stone and brickwork pedestrian bridge into the Meadow was uncovered in February, a beautiful, elegant structure. After pro bono advice from an architect experienced in restoring old buildings and structures, we have put a restoration spec out to tender to reinstate the stone masonry and brickwork, and have applied to the Twinning Group for assistance with the costs.

The working group's next challenge is to decide how best to prepare the Meadow as a suitable and appropriate grass playing surface for football, cricket and recreation. There is about £18,000 available for this next phase, and the group is currently debating whether, where and when to apply to sporting associations for additional funds.

I serve on the group, and convey our thanks to Richard Cottle who chairs it, and to the other members Andrew Ash, Stuart Brooking, Rich Cloke, Cheryl Haddy, Rachel Herbert, David Howe, Mel Liversage, Charlotte McGregor, Peter Skinner, Mark Thomas and Phil Willcock.

15. Ide Community Orchard

The Orchard is thriving. It has been carefully managed by the group chaired by Peter Cloke, and members Andy Bragg, Richard Cottle, Mel Liversage, Jess Paine, Julian Perrett, Alice Purcell, Richard Sharman, Mark Thomas, Phil Willcock, and myself. My thanks to all those on the group.

A storage shed was erected in June, with expert help from Kevin Taborn. The grass has again been cut without charge by James Romain from Whiddon, and by Michael Radford from Westown. The northern hedge along St Ida's Close was cut in the autumn under paid contract. Apples were available to the village freely in the autumn as windfalls. Bags of apples were taken to some elderly residents. Four new apple trees were planted in March to replace ones which had perished over the last three years. Monthly Sunday volunteer mornings have been held throughout the winter and spring to plant daffodil bulbs, clear scrub, prune trees, and mulch the young trees.

The orchard is well used and enjoyed by residents, and has become a cherished village asset for exercise, dog walking, relaxation and horticulture.

Two donors continue to give money on monthly standing order, which allows the group to meet the costs of proper land and tree management.

On 5 February at sunset we held a Wassail, with around 80 residents, to awaken the trees to bear fruit, with singing, music, dressing up, processing amongst the trees, drinking juice and cider, and eating apple cake.

16. Coronation

Finally, thank you to the organisers – Charlotte McGregor, Rachel Herbert, Paula Burton Perrett and a team of friends - of last week's Coronation big lunch, a memorable, relaxed and joyous afternoon of picnics, cream teas, crown competition, tug of war, egg throwing and music.

This concludes my report

17 May 2023

Nick Bradley, Chair of Ide Parish Council