

Ide Parish Council

Chair's report for the year May 2023 - May 2024

Delivered to Ide Annual Parish Meeting on 15 May 2024

Introduce and explain format of the evening: Annual Parish Meeting first, then Annual Meeting of Ide Parish Council, then regular bi-monthly IPC meeting.

This Council is a stimulating outfit to work in; and I for one derive real fulfilment and pride from being a part of it. It receives significant support and encouragement from the village from those who serve on working groups, give their time pro bono, or donate to our various projects; and sometimes all three.

2023/2024 Annual Report

1. Parish Council Meetings.

We held one additional, extraordinary meeting during the year, on 9 April 2024, to discuss and formulate a response to Heritage Homes' new full planning application for ten dwellings on Pynes Farm Yard. The Council continues to meet in this terrific, refurbished, village hall, while the Planning Committee and Weir Meadow Working Group meet in The Hub in High Street. Our thanks go to Carol Whitehart and Jackie Chadwick for handling the bookings and being on hand with the keys to open up.

2. Parish Council Membership

We started the year with the eight councillors who had stood for re-election last May. In the autumn, Jessica Paine decided to stand down to make time for her work and family. She served four and a half years on the Council, and was a member of the Orchard and Weir Meadow Groups. Jess's clear head and expertise in finance and management are qualities we shall really miss. In November we welcomed Sarah Tiley back to the Council. And in January Patrick Irwin joined as a new councillor, bringing our numbers up to the full complement of nine members.

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. It's easy to underestimate the value of the website. You may not visit it much; and it lacks the real time life of social media. But the ability to publish and store documents in retrievable fashion, from anywhere, anytime is priceless in running an open, transparent outfit like a parish council.

As RFO Mel 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, Ben Ervine and Laura Bell for acting as payment authorisers along with me, while Mel has created the online payments. We introduced a standardised, online expenses claim form for councillors and working group members to use when claiming for approved expenditure made on IPC's behalf; and this has worked well.

As demonstrated in the annual audit report, 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 all the Weir Meadow and Orchard working group meetings, without the onus of doing the agenda or minutes, to keep abreast of developments, and, with assistance from Phil Willcock, track the money.

In June, I joined Mel in conducting her annual professional appraisal, when we agreed a set of actions for the coming year. In July the Council agreed to proposals to raise her hours of work, holiday entitlement and pay scale to the level now commensurate with her duties and responsibilities, as the scope of the Council's activities has grown.

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

4. Audit and Governance

In April 2024 we commissioned our seventh 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 the year 2023/24 appears as part of the Annual Parish Council meeting. It reflects well on the standards and performance of the Council. We have also fully met the standards of the mandatory Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

Following the recommendations made in Mrs Marshall's April 2023 report we have during this year:

- reviewed the NALC recommendation to adopt bespoke, preferably gov.uk, email addresses for councillors
- whenever possible ensured that invoices are addressed to the Council so that VAT may be reclaimed
- re-allocated purchases of food and drink under Section 137 in the accounts
- confirmed that cover for cyber security is included as part of our annual insurance policy
- accounted for the apparent discrepancy in the figures presented under Reserve Funds in last year's accounts: Orchard and Recreation Ground ear marked funds should not have been tagged as Reserve Funds
- confirmed that the Pensions Regulator documentation is up to date
- increased the number of authorised signatories per bank account to four.

5. Teignbridge Local Plan and Ide 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. The Committee met on 20 Sept, 25 Oct, 7 Dec, 1 Feb and 22 Feb; and the extra meeting on 9 April was dedicated to planning.

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

On 18 May last year Teignbridge refused the retrospective planning application by Mr Alderson for a machinery storage yard and 14 secure containers on Round Field. An appeal against that refusal of permission

was made to the Planning Inspectorate last summer, and we still await the inspector's decision.

On 14 March, eight months later than expected, Teignbridge submitted its Local Plan 2020-2040 to the Secretary of State for examination. This is the plan, of course, that proposes to create a new village of 900 houses on land at Markham Farm, in the eastern half of the parish. We submitted objections in 2022 and 2023, targeted particularly at transport, highways and the environment. An appeal to local residents for funds raised £6,000 to pay for the services of Viable Placemaking, a specialist consultancy in Worcester, whom we formally instructed in March to review the Plan. Adam Place, the planning consultant, has begun by proposing a series of high level headings under which to analyse the plan. He will now produce a draft report for the Council to discuss with him, at a virtual meeting, before producing a final report to assist us in making representations at the Examination in Public - due to run sometime this summer, dates yet to be announced.

Councillors will already know, from Adam's initial communication about selecting suitable headings, that his early opinion is that we have a relatively weak chance to overturn the Plan for Markham Village. His emphasis is likely to be on seeking out opportunities for improving and mitigating the provisions of the plan, whilst still remaining alive to the possibility of a golden bullet to stop Markham Village in its tracks. Time will tell.

Last summer, Heritage Homes bought Pynes Farm Yard from the Church Commissioners. In March they submitted a fresh, completely new planning application for ten homes on the site, two of which will be affordable. However, the housing mix differs from that approved in 2021 by TDC planning, with 1x four bed home, 7x three bedroom homes and only 1 x two bedroom home. This does not fit our Neighbourhood Plan criterion for one smaller (1-2 bed) home for every larger (3-4) home. So while we support warmly the project to build homes on this derelict and decaying site, the Council has objected on the grounds of housing mix; and raised concerns about the capacity of the surface water drainage installation. Last week Pynes Farm House, also in a poor state of repair, but not part of the heritage Homes project, was put up for sale by auction by the Church Commissioners.

And last month we saw off an outline planning application for three dwellings in the field at the end of The College. It failed to meet several of our Neighbourhood Plan criteria, and was refused.

6. The Cemetery

Sarah Tiley 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. There were 6 interments in the last year, a sharp increase on none at all in the previous year. The grass is cut monthly by contract with Paul Tonkin. 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.

9. Road Safety

We received a number of graphic reports from parents with children on foot or cycling, about dangerous and abusive incidents involving cars using Balls Farm Road illegally, especially at the morning school run. To deal with this, last week councillors met officers from Devon Highways and the Police at 08.00 to observe and monitor traffic. Several cars were turned around by the police at the junction of BFR and LJCH. Devon Highways are now re-visiting our request to place extra Access Only signage at that junction. The Police are to liaise with Ide and West Exe Schools; and will return monthly to keep up their monitoring.

In January, Devon Highways completed the amendment to the double yellow line layout in Fore Street, to remove the pinch point for large vehicles.

We have, again, requested that Devon CC paint double yellow lines to protect the curved splay from parking at the very entrance to the Village. We await a response.

10. Flooding and Emergency Planning

The wettest winter ever brought several separate nights of flash floods and torrents of surface water down High Street. The worst incident occurred on Nov 2, during Storm Ciaran, when water from Easterbrook's Field overtopped the ditch, surged down the bare field, over the garden walls at the north west corner, and straight into and through 1 & 3 Fore Street. Serious damage was done inside and outside the properties. Had it happened when people were downstairs or in the gardens, serious injury would have been likely. The Hall and Sculpher's Studio, and the house in the NW corner of The Hams, were also flooded.

A PC flood subgroup formed - Paula Burton Perrett, Ian Campbell and myself, assisted by Dave Black - to bring together the landowners of the catchment, tenants, Devon CC, The EA and Natural England to devise a plan for preventing or mitigating future flooding. So far, it has not been possible to get a commitment for action or funding from any of the organisations designated to assist with flood.

And thank you to the working group of Paula Burton Perrett (chair), Ben Irvine, Dave Black and Ian Campbell for continuing to refine and apply the Ide Emergency Plan.

11. War Memorial

The new metal bollards survived two early encounters with vehicles getting too cosy in the summer. But drivers appear to have got used to them; and they are protecting the memorial and its grass well, in what is otherwise a traffic and parking battle zone. Our thanks to Chris Jeans, for continuing to mow the memorial grass.

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 plots were vacated during the year, and taken up by enthusiastic new gardeners. There is now one person on the waiting list. Our thanks to Dave Farrow, the Chair of the Ide Allotments Association, for his work taking on that role. The gardens

are properly managed, and the Council can be reassured that the land is in good hands.

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

Since September, Weir Meadow has been off limits to allow the expensive sports grade grass seed to flourish and root securely. We expect County Grounds Ltd to hand it over to us for recreational use in mid August.

A contract for a new artificial cricket wicket has been signed, and the money to pay for it transferred to IPC from the cricket club. It will be installed on 12 August 2024.

The Football Association run a funding scheme called PitchPower. We have applied for the first stage of the scheme. If successful it will fund a mower suitable to cut the grass over the entire meadow.

A lease for the cricket pitch section of the Meadow, between IPC and the CC, has been agreed and is ready to sign. The annual rent will be £500. The CC undertake to mow the whole meadow as part of this agreement.

The farm business tenancy of Northern Fields came to a mutually agreed end in September, a year earlier than originally planned. This has allowed us to open up the 17 acres of fields fully for walkers and their dogs. The WG has appointed a landscape architect and woodland designer, Julia Matthews, to manage an application to the Forestry Commission for guidance and funding to design and plant up the N Fields as a community woodland over the next 12-18 months.

Bird boxes have been installed, and picnic tables and a bench have been delivered, from the NL grant, for the meadow and the N Fields.

The concert at Westown Farm fronted by Police Dog Hogan in July was a sell out, and made over £4,000 in profit for the Green Spaces projects. Thank you to Rachel Herbert, Cheryl Haddy, Richard Sharman, Dave and Laura Farrow and all their team for putting on such a great night.

Funded by a donation of £2,100 from the Twinning Group, we have repaired and restored the structural underside of the old stone and brickwork pedestrian bridge, which was until 1985 the only access into the Meadow. It now also has new oak hand railings on each side, and is a beautiful feature.

Richard Cottle stood down as WG chair after two and a half years; and we thank Peter Skinner for taking over as chair.

Harry Studholme joined the group in the autumn, bringing his special interest in forestry and woodland creation. Charlotte McGregor, Mark Thomas and Cheryl Haddy have stood down from the WG. Cheryl will continue working with us on fund raising events.

I convey our thanks to them and the current WG members: Andrew Ash, Stuart Brooking, Rich Cloke, Richard Cottle, Rachel Herbert, David Howe, Mel Liversage, Peter Skinner (chair), Harry Studholme and myself.

15. Ide Community Orchard

Two days after I reported to you last May, tragedy struck in the terrible loss at sea of Peter Cloke. He was a towering figure in the village. We had also been the closest of friends for 40 years. And he was of course a driving force behind the Orchard, which will always be linked with him in our minds.

Our Orchard, Peter's Orchard, is thriving. Mark Thomas has been completely brilliant, stepping immediately into Peter's shoes to chair the management group.

Mark led a midsummer solstice morning gathering. We had a very successful Apple Day in October, with hired pressing and juicing equipment on The Green. We had a Christmas Light event; and we held our second wassail on February 4.

Jess Paine and Alice Purcell have stood down from the group - our thanks to them for their work. We are really thrilled and touched that Sue Cloke has now joined the group; as has James Romain.

The current management group members: Andy Bragg, Sue Cloke, Richard Cottle, Mel Liversage, Julian Perrett, James Romain, Mark Thomas (chair), and myself. My thanks to all those on the group.

And a special thank you to Phil Willcock who assists the Weir Meadow and the Orchard groups in a book keeping treasurer's role, keeping track of the large amounts of money involved.

The storage shed roof blew off in storm somebody, and was refastened by James Romain and helpers. The grass was 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. Four Sunday volunteer mornings have been held throughout the winter and spring to plant daffodil bulbs, clear scrub, prune trees, and mulch the young trees.

My job - the orchard gives me huge pleasure - is pruning old and new trees, mulching the young trees, and doing the labels for the sponsorship scheme. Five trees have been sponsored new this year, at £150 a tree.

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.

16. Finally, the coming year

There are some big moments coming up. The examination in public for the Local Plan and Markham Village, date not yet scheduled, will be a nodal point in the history of Ide. Launching Weir Meadow as a functioning recreation ground will be a fabulous milestone, but is sure to come with surprises and headaches along the way. We will have had the first revival of the Ide Revel. We might have the beginnings of a community woodland planted in N Fields. We might have willows planted in Shooting Range field to prevent flooding. Pynes Farm Yard development might have started. And the containers might have been shifted from Round Field.

But I want to end on a call for action to the Council.

Our Neighbourhood Plan will be six years old in September. It was too far out of date to carry weight in compiling the Teignbridge Local Plan. But it has held sway in several planning decisions since it was made: influencing the housing mix at Pynes Farm Yard; seeing off the a proposal for houses at the top of College Lane on the south side; and last week at the bottom of College Lane on the north side; allowing refusal of permissions for container storage on Round Field; and allowing change of use for recreation on Weir Meadow; and securing the vision to create the Orchard.

It's time to start thinking hard about making a new Neighbourhood Plan. Getting the juices flowing, setting up a working group, and making contact with Teignbridge for their excellent assistance, should, I believe, be a key task for the Council over the coming year.

This concludes my report

Nick Bradley, Chair of Ide Parish Council
15 May 2024