

2023 Chairman's Report to Parish Meeting

The past year has been a very busy and varied one Nationally and Internationally. This has influenced the finances of the Country and has spread itself all the way down to our Parish Council finances and on into our home budgets. Our costs have gone up and, in some cases, over our budget as we had been very prudent last year with little or no increase in precept. This will not be the case this year as those of you who have seen the precept in the latest edition of the magazine and on our website will know. We did ask if we should cut some of the expenditure by reducing grass cuts etc. but we only had one response and that was not to reduce our current standards and so that is what we have done. Wages, fuel and contractors costs have increased significantly.

Your Parish Council work hard to take advantage of grants and other means of revenue to provide services and facilities within the village. On top of this we have generous support from companies and organisations within the village and the prime example of this is the support for the Christmas lights. The detail of all these funding streams are published in the magazine and on the website.

We hope that we have kept the village informed as to what has been going on in the interim with the publication of minutes of the meetings, website, Facebook and the Willand Magazine. That being the case I shall not repeat all of them here but will willingly answer any questions if I am able.

Last year I reported that we had a new Parish Clerk in Barbara Bodkin but regrettably Barbara gave up that post at the end of February. Thank you Barbara for your service and we wish you well for the future. I am sure contact will remain as Graham, her husband, has been stepping into various breaches with the village hall and litter picking covering for illness and holidays. We were fortunate in finding a replacement by appointing Mrs Clare Dalley but regrettably she is having to leave us at the end of the month for personal reasons. We are having to start the process of recruitment over again. We wish Clare well for the future as she has been able to review many of our policies and procedures in her short time with us.

During the year we lost Bill Tobin from the Parish Council due to illness and sadly he died shortly afterwards. The Parish were well represented at his funeral as he was also a stalwart of the Composting site and involved in a number of other organisations. We have a full compliment of Councillors at present but some have had to miss a few meetings due to family and work commitments.

The order to completely refurbish the Chestnut Drive play area has been placed and we are awaiting the contractors to start. All the ring fenced funding is in place and in our bank account.

Planning permission has been granted for the pump track in the Jubilee Field. The order has been placed and a start date is scheduled for some time in May. The funding is with Mid Devon District Council and the application for its release has been accepted. There is enough funding left to make improvements to the small skateboard ramps and we are seeking quotations at the moment. An application is also with MDDC to release the funding made available for the Gables site which will see improvements made there for the Preschool Nursery and Community Centre. The ring fenced monies are also being supplemented by the Preschool Trustees to make even more improvements. Watch this space as they say.

Work is ongoing to try and make our village a safer place to live with a particular emphasis on traffic safety. Our Neighbourhood Planning Group have given much time and effort to preparing a plan for the future of our village. Regrettably your District Councillors were unable to achieve much movement to increase the Parish boundary as Halberton fought hard to retain their current boundaries. Believe you me it was not for the want of trying.

Gerri Taylor is only committed to producing one more edition of the magazine and sadly no one is coming forward to take the helm. The Parish Council are looking at other options BUT the bottom line is that we may lose it. Thank you Gerri for all you and your team have done to keep the magazine an integral part of our Parish communication system.

To all those involved with organisations around the village who work to provide many activities in the village I say a big thank you. It is these volunteers who go toward making our community what it is. Thank you all.