

Chairman's Report – Tidenham Annual Parish Meeting 2022

I am pleased to report to you after another busy year for Tidenham Parish Council. Face to face meetings resumed for the Parish Council on 23rd June 2021 and with a change of venue to Sedbury and Beachley Village Hall.

During the year Rob O'Toole resigned as Parish Councillor – thanks to Rob for his hard work over the past few years. Liz McBride, Bethan Kotecha and Jane Edwards have all joined as new councillors – welcome to them.

In October 2021 Emily Timmins was welcomed as the new Parish Youth Worker. The Council agreed to fund a two year youth project using the accumulated funds from the Tump Farm Solar Park Community Benefit. Emily has been busy establishing links with many organisations and schools in the Parish and many of you will have met Emily over the past few months. It has been very encouraging to see the interest in activities Emily has provided and the need for her support role in the community.

Volunteers took part in the first community Speedwatch in October 2021 and another is planned shortly.

In September 2021 the Parish Council resolved to recognise the Climate Emergency, pledging to support the Forest of Dean District Council and work with the Tidenham community, FODDC and other parish councils to develop and support local initiatives that will contribute to, protect and enhance all aspects of our locality including the built environment, the natural environment, transport, ecology and renewable energy.

Following requests from several members of the community, and its Climate Emergency pledge, the Council is introducing a Community Garden on its land next to the allotments site on Buttington Road. The Garden will be run by, and open to, the community and is in the early stages of planning. Funds towards the set up costs for the Garden have been allocated by the Parish Council from its 'Funds for Future Significant Projects', some of which has been set aside for projects to mark HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Also from these funds, and in conjunction with The Tidenham War Memorial Hall and Recreation Trust, the Parish Council is hoping to install a bandstand on the recreation ground in Tutshill for community use.

Following a report from a councillor on the sorry state of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Stone on Parson's Allotment, the Parish Council has liaised with Forestry England who have agreed to clear the site around the Stone. As another Platinum Jubilee Project, the Parish Council has agreed to fund a bench and information sign at the Stone which will be installed in the next week or so.

As part of the Platinum Jubilee projects the Parish Council is distributing Jubilee 'medals' to primary aged children through schools in the Parish and to children who live in the Parish but attend school elsewhere.

The Parish Council owns land throughout the Parish on which it pays for regular grass cutting. Having taken advice from local experts, a trial area in Wyebank Road has been planted with native wildflower plug plants. The area will be monitored and if it is successful other areas around the Parish may be introduced. This would reduce the amount of mowing – saving on both the cost and environmental impact – and provide much needed habitats for bees and other wild pollinators. The plug plants were funded by a Build Back Better Grant from Gloucestershire County Council, supported by County Councillor Chris McFarling, and were planted by community volunteers including lots of young people on a sunny day in March.

The normal business of the Parish Council has continued during the past year.

- The Planning and Highways Committee considered a total of 107 planning applications (an increase of 82% on the previous year) and liaised with Gloucestershire County Council Highways Dept. and other interested parties on numerous road and footpath issues. The Committee has campaigned for several years for Castleford Hill to be re-surfaced. The surface was particularly poor with large sunken areas and dangerous for cycles and motorcyles. Gloucestershire County Council Highways Department had agreed to look at re-surfacing. The Committee is delighted that this has now taken place and is a huge improvement.

- The Amenities Committee continues to manage the facilities in the Parish with a total budget for last year of over £39k. Essential work has also been carried out on some trees during the year along with the ongoing maintenance of the play equipment and emptying of litter and dog waste bins – two of which have been replaced and two new ones installed. The Committee is looking to introduce several new chat benches throughout the Parish.
- The Finance Committee has carried on its business through quarterly meetings, part of which involves scrutiny of the accounts and payments. A grant to Transition Chepstow was awarded for a competition in Tidenham and it was agreed by the Council that £1500 of the remaining grant budget for the year be earmarked for essential items for Ukrainian refugees being offered accommodation locally.
- The Mopla Cottages Committee has continued to maintain the cottages. The Committee has also awarded grants during the year to SARA and the Tidenham Parochial Church Council towards the employment of a community Wellbeing Chaplain.

The Council is looking forward to the successful completion of its current projects and will, as ever, be working with the community to identify new initiatives. It will be looking to develop the newly introduced community hub events, along with Sedbury Space and other community groups and is working with Sedbury Space to introduce a community volunteer award scheme to recognise unsung community work in the Parish.

I would personally like to thank all of the Councillors for their support and the time, work and effort that they have given over the past 12 months.