

Chairman's Report – Tidenham Annual Parish Meeting 2023

I am pleased to report to you after another busy year for Tidenham Parish Council.

During the year Bethan Kotecha and Jane Edwards resigned as Parish Councillors – thanks to them for their work for the Council. Clive Russell has joined us as a new Councillor – welcome to him.

At the elections on 4th May Maria Edwards, Liz McBride and Helen Molyneux stood down as Parish Councillors. Many thanks to them for their hard work and contribution to the Council.

I am delighted to announce that Tidenham Parish Council has received a prestigious Foundation Award as part of the national Local Council Award Scheme. This award recognises that the Council achieves good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement. Moreover, it recognises that the Council goes above and beyond its legal obligations, engaging with the community and continuously seeking opportunities to improve and develop even further. Achieving this award is a fitting way to mark the end of the four year Council term and recognises the hard work undertaken by councillors and staff to meet the standards required to achieve it.

The Youth Project, under Emily's management, has gone from strength to strength with positive outcomes being noticed in the community. During Emily's holiday clubs 240 young people have attended and enjoyed a wide range of activities. Emily has also worked closely to support young people experiencing difficult times. Following a survey and talking to young people in the community, a Youth Club is planned to start shortly at Sedbury and Beachley Village Hall. Thanks to the Church youth worker who works with Emily on many of these activities.

Volunteers continue to take part in regular community Speedwatch sessions in the Parish – thank you to those involved and we would welcome more volunteers. Training is provided by the Police.

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. The Council will be carrying out an assessment of the village hall to assess ways it can be run in a more ecologically friendly way.

The Parish Council marked the sad passing of HM the Queen in September 2022 by providing a Book of Condolence so members of the community could leave messages in a quiet local place. This will be kept in the District Council archives.

The Community garden is still in its early planning stages. Various groups in the community are interested in being involved and it is hoped the garden will be started in the next few months as part of the funds now set aside to mark the coronation of HM King Charles.

As part of the Coronation projects the Parish Council has distributed commemorative mugs to primary aged children through schools in the Parish and these are available to children who live in the Parish but attend school elsewhere.

There were many positive comments from residents on the wild flower planting on Wyebank Road in 2022. Local experts are monitoring the site which may take a few years to fully establish, but there are early signs that many of the native plants planted have survived. Thank you to members of the community who have helped with the project and the Council will be considering introducing other areas of wild flowers over the coming years.

The Council has continued to host regular Community Development Hub events where members of the community can meet organisations that are active in the Parish. Please come along and meet your parish councillors and other volunteers who work in your community.

In recognition of the need to upgrade the Sedbury hall facilities to better meet the needs of its users, grants were obtained to install a fully equipped kitchen with oven and storage for all users of the hall to use, particularly those providing warm spaces and events for members of the community. The Council has now also arranged installation of internet access in the hall, provided initially for free for one year by Gigaclear as part of its community hub provision.

The Council, in conjunction with Sedbury Space, is launching a Community Champion Award Scheme. If you know of anybody that works hard for their community and/or goes above and beyond to help those around them, please look out for the nominations forms that will be in lots of venues throughout the Parish.

Following a survey by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council on housing needs throughout the Parish, the Council has met with them to begin exploring possible ways it may work with other partners to provide affordable housing within the Parish. This is in the early stages and the Council will engage with the community as the process continues.

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

- The Planning and Highways Committee considered a total of 64 planning applications 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 road safety measures to be introduced throughout the Parish. Over recent years better signage has been erected on the A48 on the approach to the Sedbury Lane crossing point and there are ongoing discussions regarding a more robust solution. Red markings showing 30mph speed limits have also been installed on approaches to villages following campaigning by the Committee and further improvements to Castleford Hill for pedestrians are also being considered.
- The Amenities Committee continues to manage the facilities in the Parish with a total budget for last year of over £44k. Essential work has also been carried out on some trees during the year. The fencing alongside Offa's Dyke path has now been erected making safe an area near the river bank that residents had inappropriately cleared. The committee manages the ongoing maintenance of the play equipment and emptying of litter and dog waste bins in the Parish. The Committee now has the permissions required to install new chat benches in the Parish and the Council has been in discussion with Two Rivers Housing for a further one on its land.
- The Finance Committee has carried on its business through quarterly meetings, part of which involves scrutiny of the accounts and payments. Grants have been awarded to SARA for clothing and helmets to equip 2 new recruits and to Sedbury Space for the provision of a Christmas Day lunch to members of the community.
- The Mopla Cottages Committee has continued to maintain the cottages. The Committee has also awarded grants during the year to The Rising Sun Community Pub for equipping its community room, to Sedbury Space and towards the community kitchen facilities at Sedbury Hall.

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.

Following the local elections on 4th May, the Parish Council has vacancies for 3 parish councillors. If you are interested in your local community, willing to commit time to the Parish Council and its committees and be actively involved in community projects, you may be the sort of person we are looking for. If you are interested in being considered please apply in the form of a letter or email giving details on what you feel you can offer the Council, your particular areas of interest and why you should be considered for co-option to one of the vacancies by 30th June. Councillors will consider applications at the meeting on 19th July 2023.

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 as well as those having served the community as councillors during the past 4 years of this Council's tenure.