

INKPEN PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 26th APRIL 2018

Thank you all for coming to our Annual Parish Meeting - The format of the meeting will be the same as in previous years and Volunteers from each village organization or group will give a short report on activities over the past year.

The current Parish Council, is in their third year of elected office and have had to engage with a raft of new issues this year:

1. The pressure of the numerous planning applications and changes in Planning Policy as well as government legislation, administered by ever decreasing staff at West Berkshire Council.
2. Numerous consultations from West Berkshires Council, who are attempting to redress the shortfall in their budget covering essential services, and the wholly unfortunate decisions in relation to cuts in the public bus services, the future of our library network and mobile library that serves Inkpen.
3. Supporting organized groups within Inkpen that provide service to the wider community.
4. Providing updated information on line service to enable residents to know what is happening in Inkpen
5. The second year Village Triangle wildflower patches at Lower Green, near the Swan Public House.
6. The implementation of Superfast Broadband for the village

2. Planning remains a very tough issue: In particular as frequently the Parish Council's recommendations are ignored or overlooked by the planning department in Newbury.

- We continue to keep the 'saved' planning policy of no more than a 50% increase in the size of a given dwelling – to retain a balance in the village of small and larger dwellings.
- We are trying to protect our village from **light pollution** as the darkness is essential to our birds and wildlife and for residents to be able to continue to see the dark starry sky at night , - we are now adding a request for this condition to be added to all planning applications to restrict the use of inappropriate external lighting and also to restrict the hours a building contractor is allowed to work - to protect the amenity and tranquility of the village.

Sadly on numerous occasions our recommendations are overlooked by the planning section at WBC although clearly supported by Government and stated in the NPPF (National Policy Planning Framework) and the WBC Local Plan.

3. Our District Councillors Anthony Stansfeld and James Cole, have bravely flown the Inkpen flag to represent our views, especially on planning issues however the severe cuts demanded by the Government have impacted severely on all types of public services.

Our Annual Precept, for funding the essential work in the Parish is £13,000 this year. We received a small grant to improve services this year, but we have no build up of Reserves when an unexpected event happens. The annual parish budget is available on the website, but there is nothing like hard words to state the situation, which is very difficult to manage especially as WBC are seeking to off load the cost of many public services.

4. We rely on a number of supporting groups and Volunteers to keep the village active and vibrant including the monthly **Inkpen Market**, which after all costs are met the funding is distributed to various groups in the community. **The Poor's Allotment Trust** is another Charity which seeks to identify individuals in need of financial support. Parish Council grants are invited annually from village groups if funds allow, who need support – the details of this grant application are displayed on the Inkpen Website. Some of the village volunteers are represented here tonight, and I wish to thank them for the time and effort it takes to keep these Groups going. We are always looking for new volunteers to help with a raft of issues and I would be happy to hear from anyone who would like to take on some work, and Gloria Keene, our Clerk, or I will put you in touch.

5. We are indebted to our former Chairman David Thomas together with our **Parish Clerk** Gloria Keene, who continue to keep the website up to date with village issues. With such a far flung sprawling village this, together with the Inkpen & Combe Bulletin, edited by **Gerald and Elsa Atkinson** are vital to Inkpen's Village life.

6. The Lower Green Triangle is land owned by the Parish Council and was purchased in 1986. At the request of the Lower Green residents this year we are now into our second year trial period of a year for wild flowers to be grown at the same time as maintaining the area for those who wish to sit and enjoy the countryside. Over 40 types of wild flowers were identified.

Bernard and Mary Harris of the Swan supported this enterprise in practical terms and undertook to supervise and insure the work undertaken there. Health and Safety and Environmental Protection Regulations must be observed at all times. The trial period will be reviewed again at the end of the year. Please take an interest in the trial and let us know what you think.

We are all very worried about the forestry work that has been and still is continuing. The Parish Council were not told about the work, as the Forestry Commission had given their approval despite the impact and environmental damage to the wildlife at this time of the year .

A number of people have spoken to the CEO of Mendip Forestry. It is hoped that the woods will be sorted out by thinning the number of trees felled and the paths reinstated.

We are this year asking the village organisations to read short reports. Everyone has a badge with their name on and we urge you to mingle have a drink and learn what so many of them do and have to offer and what you can do to participate.

Vanessa Tomlinson MBE
Chairman, Inkpen Parish Council
26.4.18

