

## **Annual Parish Meeting 2023.**

### **Inkpen Parish Council**

This is the annual parish statement covering the activities of Inkpen parish council.

You would perhaps expect this statement to be similar year after year, and you'd be right. Planning seems to dominate and for some residents, it does. Ultimately the most challenging planning applications require residents to be focused and supportive of the parish council, just as the parish council is supportive of residents.

For example, a recent planning application was brought before and approved by WBC Planning committee, with fewer than a dozen Inkpen residents turning up to oppose the plan. It was a plan where **six** 4,500 ltr liquid natural gas tanks are filled, up to 4 times a year – an average of 94,000 ltrs of liquid natural gas each year – enough to heat up to 50 normal homes – and all for the sake of someone's personal recreational facilities. WBC Planning committee passed the application in spite of their own LPPF 2018 and in spite of climate change issues. It was beyond comprehension. If we had managed to get more residents to attend the meeting the outcome might have been different as election votes seem to count above all else. We and residents need to work together to get the result Inkpen needs and our climate change emergency demands. More about Climate change later.

We're here for an annual parish statement but the problem with an annual statement is that it doesn't give perspective or show how, in the longer term, your parish council has made a difference to you. More importantly, it tends not to show how Inkpen, as a community, has come together and worked through its parish council and vice versa.

Inkpen has a lot to be proud of. From time to time, we have had outstanding residents. For example, more than a decade or so ago, Eilene Nightingale stood up to development along Folly Road. If the development had been granted further development plans would have been presented for up to 200 houses, straddling Folly Road and Post Office Road. A mass turn-out of residents at the WBC planning meeting helped the parish council get this application rejected.

In 2009, the parish council worked with the playing field trust management committee, to put the trust onto a sustainable and long-term footing. The result was the parish council becoming the corporate trustee whilst keeping its role as custodian trustee. The benefit of this decision is self-evident. Just look around you.

The parish council worked with the community in 2012 and again in 2022 to put on very successful jubilee events. Something for all ages and for all residents.

In 2013, the parish council asked residents to support a fund raiser to get superfast broadband into Inkpen, as we risked getting left behind. A good many residents supported

this through donations to a Greenham Trust account. This was ultimately scuppered by an intervention from BT which seemed to be designed to obstruct any third-party opportunity. All supporters of the fund raiser got their money back.

BT's offering proved to be very poor. So, in 2016, John Bryant and I started work on behalf of the parish council with the aim of getting Gigaclear to provide Ultra-Fast Broadband access to every property in Inkpen and Combe. This meant that those properties already served with SF broadband by BT, and ineligible for further grant subsidy, were provided with an alternative at Gigaclear's expense. People can now properly and reliably work and socialise from the comfort of their home, something of immense value during the covid lockdown.

The covid years have shown the most total and compassionate response I have ever witnessed in Inkpen. Residents that weren't normally visible in the scheme of village life, joined in to make sure everyone in need had help, and lots of it. Who could be other than proud to be part of such a community. The village website provided daily updates on the progress of covid, and who to contacts if in need. The Poor's Allotment Trust helped those in financial need, and others made sure that foodbanks were resourced. Additional help was targeted by the parish council. Residents rose selflessly to the cause.

During the pandemic, work also started on renovating this pavilion, again with the support and help of the community. More about this in the IMPFT report.

So, the parish council is NOT separate from the village, it is part of it. A necessary administrative function that connects us to WBC and to our neighbouring village communities. It facilitates when it can. It supports those village groups that need financial support. It stands by residents in need. For the parish council to continue and to provide you with the help you want, we need your continued support. We need your involvement in the parish council and in the life of the community. You are what keeps the community alive, both individually and through village groups.

Now, new and bigger challenges are presenting themselves and these can only be solved by our working together. This includes the Conservation Area Appraisal which the village has to complete by 2026, and much more importantly, Climate Change where we all have to step up to the plate. Climate change is clearly a bigger issue than just Inkpen and we need to work with other communities in order to make a difference. Any ideas must be considered and your input will be truly valued. Thank you.