

INKPEN PARISH COUNCIL – ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2021/22

It's been another year of Covid-19 and again it's disrupted some council business and activities. However, all planning applications get debated and recommendations made.

I'm sure that residents are well aware that we live in an AONB which means that some planning guidelines don't apply by default. You may also be aware that Inkpen has no settlement boundary and that Inkpen is classed as 'open countryside'. These three conditions have protected Inkpen from excessive development. Protection for our AONB is set down in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) and LPPF documents which can be found on the internet.

Over the last two years, and as part of the Inkpen History Group, I have formed a relationship with the history group in Flackwell Heath which is close to High Wycombe. Both Inkpen and Flackwell Heath were very similar both in origin and structure up until the end of the second world war. If you were to visit now you would find it hard to see any similarity. Flackwell Heath has lost most if not all of its visible heritage and is extensively developed. It has a population of nearly 6000 residents.

The cause of Flackwell Heath's demise is clear, land owners keen to sell off or partition small plots of land for what initially seemed like insignificant and small scale development. These created precedents which allowed for larger and larger developments until there was little left to save. Your parish council is particularly mindful of applications which would appear to set a precedent.

A work group from Flackwell Heath visited Inkpen last September and was in awe of the quality of life, the quiet and tranquillity, the nature and visible history, and the amenities of Inkpen. Our children's play area got a special mention and I was asked how such a small village could afford such a well-stocked and high-quality facility. Apparently, it is much better than anything similar at Flackwell Heath.

Over the past few years we have obtained the highest quality broadband enabling residents to work easily from home. We have a high-quality children's play area for young family members and we have a state-of-the-art pavilion and playing field facility to enable adults to take exercise and enjoy their surroundings. This together with the many walks and trails makes Inkpen ideal for an active family life. Its clean air and peacefulness make for healthy living.

At this moment Inkpen offers a great package of activities and amenities for all age groups. Inkpen's village hall, it's playing field etc. are for all residents to enjoy. Help us to keep Inkpen a place where you can enjoy living and that is both climate and family friendly.

In the coming year, on the 4th June, we will be holding a number of events at the playing field to celebrate the Queen's jubilee. A beacon will be lit on Walbury Hill on the 2nd. During April the playing field hard surface will be resurfaced. And all being well, in September/October we'll see parts of Inkpen Geophysed. A Conservation Area Appraisal for Inkpen will also start this year with the aim of protecting our AONB for the future.

The parish council aims to keep residents fully informed and supports both the inkpenvillage.co.uk website and the Inkpen and Combe Bulletin. The website is updated frequently during each month whilst the bulletin is a monthly snapshot. The council also has notice boards around the village, displaying paper copies of important news and events.

The parish council also supports Inkpen groups by means of grants. These grants enable a range of activities to remain viable, for both young and older (but young at heart) residents. The grants are made each year and are considered on a merit basis.

Inkpen Parish Council has worked with other nearby parish councils over the past year to help highlight the plight of Afghans (2021) and now, Ukrainians.

Covid-19 brought an explosion of community spirit to Inkpen and we want to keep it that way. Volunteers continue to create a wide range of activities and services and they also help keep the parish precept part of your council tax fixed – it hasn't gone up for several years even though out costs have risen. Please join in, volunteer and help keep Inkpen as a special place to live. Don't just leave it to someone else.

David Thomas, Council Chairman