

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to our Annual Parish Meeting.

*I introduce myself and members of the council*

When I originally wrote this I was going to say that there have been no changes in the membership of the council since last year, with two members representing Ashleyhay and five representing Idridgehay and Alton. However, I'm very sorry to say that Frank White, one of our Idridgehay councillors, sadly died recently. He had served on the council for about five years in spite of recent ill-health. A naturally courteous and very pleasant man who had farmed in Idridgehay since 1979 up to his retirement in 1993, when his son took over the farm, we shall all miss his always pertinent contributions to our meetings. I must also record the death of Mick Frith who died in March. Mick was a parish councillor for donkey's years, well before any of us current councillors were elected. We and the parishes owe them both a debt of gratitude for their contributions to our community.

The council has followed its customary pattern of meeting bi-monthly on the second Wednesday, normally at the village Corn Store. Members of the public are very welcome to attend to observe and there is fifteen minutes available for public speaking at the start of each meeting. Councillor David Taylor regularly attends in his capacity as our District and County Councillor, and is very active on our behalf. The Community Police Officer also attends when she can.

Again this year, planning matters have figured largely on our agenda. Amber Valley District Council notifies our parish clerk of all planning applications in the parishes and the council then considers each one on its merits, and if necessary comments appropriately. Without going into the details of individual applications, I think it would be fair to say that we often disagree very strongly with some of the decisions Amber Valley reach and it is quite apparent that whilst we are most anxious to uphold and protect the integrity of the Special Landscape Area, which covers most of the parishes, and likewise the Conservation Area in Idridgehay, the same cannot always be said for Amber Valley. We are attempting to monitor how Amber Valley implements the Neighbourhood Plan and it has been referred to by them in some of their decisions and apparently ignored in others. There are occasions when their decisions appears so contrary that we don't know whether to laugh or cry, but it

can safely be said that if our valley does survive in a fairly unspoilt condition for the next twenty years, it will be in spite of rather than because of the planners.

On a much more cheerful note it is a pleasure to report that The Black Swan, which has figured largely in previous reports, was purchased by a new owner in the summer, duly refurbished and re-opened before Christmas. All comments about it are positive and it appears to be keeping nicely busy. We are all very pleased. I don't think the Council can take much credit for this excellent outcome, but we did what we could and did get the Community Asset Order imposed which may well have helped.

I mentioned last year how two residents of Idridgehay, Bev Webster and Hazel Haslam, on behalf of the Parish Council, had obtained and were organising the installation of three defibrillators in our parishes. Two defibrillators have now been installed in Idridgehay (one at the Church and the other near the Village Stores) and the third is up at Spout in Ashleyhay. With the help of Peter Matthews two free training sessions for local residents were held in the Church in the autumn and we are now up and running. Well done to all concerned.

During the year two parish newsletters have been produced and distributed and the parish website has been updated. We are very grateful to Councillor Ibbett for editing and creating the newsletters and for the work he does in tending the website. The snow warden scheme remained in operation, with Hazel and Michael Haslam as wardens, and the free supply of grit was again received. This winter, unlike recent ones, we actually had some snow.

I must as usual thank our excellent Parish Clerk, Ros Hallam, for the highly efficient and enthusiastic way she does her job! We are very fortunate to have her and she is a real asset to the council and the community.

To finish, I want to say again how very encouraging it is to see the ongoing high level of support shown by residents, and particularly participation by newer ones, in village events. The Village Fete in July was our most successful yet with a profit of just over £3800 (we were blessed with excellent weather). The Quiz Night in the autumn in the Church and the Christmas Party at the Corn Store went very well and the Christmas and Spring Fayres in

the Church were highly successful. Very recently a Wine Tasting evening in the Corn Store was well supported and if enough support is forthcoming a revival of the Neighbourhood Forum, which worked so successfully on the Neighbourhood Plan, is on the cards. Only last weekend a number of volunteers took part in a training session run by the police on using radar guns to monitor speeding motorists and we are now looking forward to our first day in action and have the village stocks refurbished for their first victims.

I am not trying to claim that all these events are organised by the Parish Council, indeed most are organised by and run mainly in aid of the Church. But they are typical of the way the Council and the Church work closely together to support community events, as is the informal group of volunteers who maintain the church and churchyard and others the millennium garden. As I have said in previous years, we may be only a very small and spread out community, but at least we are all singing, with enthusiasm, from the same hymn sheet!