

8th May 2019

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

Jane Smith Dudley Ibbett Mike Westwood Jill Matthews Eric Matkin
Carl Hempshall Ros Hallam

The composition of the council remains as before, with two members representing Ashleyhay and five members Idridgehay and Alton. Councillor Hempshall, who represents Idridgehay and Alton, was co-opted onto the council at our September meeting, filling the vacancy caused by the death of Councillor White. I must congratulate my colleagues on our unopposed election to the council on 2nd May and we are now due to serve for the next four years. Congratulations also to Councillor David Taylor on being re-elected to Amber Valley District Council for Alport Ward. David also serves on the County Council and we are all very grateful for how active he is on our behalf.

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 the Community Police Officer, Paula Bennett, also attends on occasion

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 our Neighbourhood Plan and it has been referred to by them in some of their decisions and apparently ignored in others. In particular the non-implementation of the landscaping scheme at the pig farm off Wirksworth Road where the farmer appears to have been successfully running rings around the council has caused us

great concern. Notwithstanding that, it is heartening to report that Amber Valley have just refused the two latest applications for the pig farm and state that our Neighbourhood Plan and the Special Landscape Area were both taken into consideration when reaching their decisions. This has to be good news and hopefully bodes well for the future. In the meantime we have great sympathy with the frustration expressed by Crich Parish Council over a recent decision by Amber Valley's Planning Department and have written to them expressing our support as they attempt to get the matter referred for a judicial review.

A first, and a very unwelcome one for Ildridgehay, was the arrival one Thursday evening in late August of a number of travellers' caravans on the playing field. Local residents expressed concern and the police notified and two caravans were moved on straight away. On the Friday morning both Amber Valley and the county council were contacted to ask what assistance they could give and for advice as to what to do. The Parish Council is not the owner of the playing field, which is leased from Fields in Trust, but is responsible for its maintenance and upkeep. Neither Amber Valley or the county council would offer any official assistance but Councillor Taylor was able to put our parish clerk in touch with a helpful Amber Valley official who suggested we contact a local legal firm who specialise in these matters. Derbyshire Legal Services were duly approached and for the sum of £420 plus vat served a notice to quit on the group. Much to our relief they moved away on the following Tuesday, saving the council a further charge for employing bailiffs. The four days they had occupied the site had not resulted in too much mess, and they had bagged most of it up themselves, so with the help of my colleagues on the council we were able to clean up and take the bags of waste to the tip at no cost to the council.

This left us with the problem of how to prevent a re-occurrence. After some discussion amongst ourselves and with Steven Bowler who maintains the field for us we settled on blocking the entrance to the field with about a dozen very heavy lumps of limestone from Longcliffe Quarries for £520 plus vat. Steven Bowler then positioned them to deny access to any more travellers and their caravans but in such a way that he can still get on the field with a tractor and trailer. Hopefully this will be the end of the matter. I must gratefully acknowledge the receipt of a grant of £200 from Councillor Taylor's DCC Leadership scheme which was used to partly defray this expenditure

After a couple of quite successful sessions our Community Speed Watch scheme was suspended last summer, due to irregularities elsewhere, and we are still awaiting for its reinstatement. In February there was a free refresher training session for local residents in the use of the defibrillators. 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. We have a smart new grit bin on the bend on Cliffash Lane and the snow warden scheme remained in operation, many thanks to Hazel and Michael Haslam who again volunteered as wardens, and the free supply of grit was once more received. Luckily this winter was virtually free of snow.

I must, as always, 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 whole community.

It is encouraging to note that there is definitely more of a community spirit about than a few years ago. More fund-raising and social events happen and they are generally well supported. We had a highly successful Village Fete in July with a profit of nearly £3,200 (we were again blessed with excellent weather). The Quiz Night in the autumn in the Church and the Christmas Social at the Black Swan went very well, as did the Beetle Drive – I think another first for Ildridgehay.

I am not claiming that these events are organised by the Parish Council, indeed most are organised by and run mainly in aid of the Church. But the Council and its individual members work closely together with the church to support community events, as do the group of volunteers who maintain the church and churchyard and others the millennium garden. I have certainly said this before, but it does bear repeating, we may be only a very small and spread out community, but at least we are all singing, with some enthusiasm, from the same hymn sheet!