**Annual Parish Meeting – 5th May 2022**

**Chairman’s Report**

Over the last year we’ve all been impacted by the pandemic, but Ubley has worked well as a community in providing support and a community spirit.

The Parish Council started this year with two new Councillors and no Clerk. The role of Clerk is absolutely vital to the running of a Council, and we had a difficult couple of months until we were able to take on the services of a locum Clerk, Cathy, who had previously been in the role for Chew Stoke Council. Cathy helped us get through the year and then, at last, we were able to appoint a permanent Clerk, Charlotte here joining us at the beginning of December. She has done a great job already and is quickly learning the role whilst improving our organisation and systems at the same time. She will introduce herself properly in her Clerk’s report shortly.

As of January, Yvonne Thompson stepped down from the Council and I’d like to thank her for the 12 years she put in. We are close to identifying a replacement Councillor and there will be more on this soon. We now have a young Council, apart from Andrew and I, and overall the team is dynamic and will continue to take the village forward.

One of the big things we’ve achieved this year is to get the lease on the Glebe Field extended. After a rather protracted process where we had to fund all the legal costs, including those of the Diocese who own the land, we have secured the Glebe Field for another 22 years. Not only did this mean we could go ahead with the installation of the Play Area and continue to provide the school with this important facility but also it gives us a chance to increase its use and value to the whole village. I’d like to thank Ian Goldsmith, a resident who’s a solicitor, for putting in his time for free to help us reduce the overall legal costs of the process.

At the very beginning of the year, we got the new access gates installed for the Glebe. These look so much better and are definitely more pedestrian friendly. A thanks to Vic, our District Councillor, for helping us with some of the costs through his District fund.

A lot of what we do revolves around the maintenance and upkeep of parts of the village. To this end we created a ‘Village Maintenance’ team within the Council led by Jeff Croot.

Jeff is working to get a group of volunteers together who can regularly help with jobs such as grass cutting. By using volunteers over the last year, together with some reduced activity due to the pandemic, we have managed to save a significant amount of money, which is reflected in the strong financial position of the Council. In the past the cost of this work was over a third of the Council’s annual budget so any ways we can reduce that helps a great deal. As an example I want to thank Andrew Cole for his regular cutting of the Glebe Field which has saved the Council several hundred pounds this year already.

Whilst on maintenance, I think everybody enjoyed the Christmas Tree this year. We are also continuing the planting around the Cross although this winter the display wasn’t up to the extremely high standards set by Wesley! We will endeavour to match him going forward.

We have plans to spruce up the area around the Cross this year by painting the Phone Box (in the right colour red!), by painting the finger post and by redoing the planting.

We have continued to employ Ken as our sweeper even though B&NES now does not provide this funding support. I think it’s clear how valuable his work is to the look of the village.

The Parish Council is working with the residents of Innicks Close to see if we can get some of the land there gifted to us from Curo, the Housing Association that currently owns it. More on this as it develops.

Since Yvonne left, we have had a hiatus with Neighbourhood Watch. We do have a new co-ordinator but due to illness her taking over has been delayed. Matt has stepped forward to handle this for us in the short-term so we should start getting reports round again.

We are active in the Climate and Nature Emergency Working Group of the Chew Valley Area Forum. One of the active groups here is looking at rural transport through the valley and we are feeding into this our concerns about the poor and deteriorating bus service.

Finally, there is a working group in the village planning a street party for the Queen’s Jubilee. This is going head on Sunday 5th June, just a month away.

Overall, then, we have survived through this difficult year and look forward to continuing to serve the village and the parish in the year to come.

Thank you.