

**2024 Chairman's Report to Parish Meeting**  
**14<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

The Willand Magazine has had some changes with those volunteers running it responding to issues which have been necessary to avoid problems with VAT advertising and the like. Each issue contains an article from the Chairman of the Council and so this keeps the readership pretty up to date with the goings on in the village. Minutes of meetings are put on notice boards around the village and they are published on the website. It saves me having to repeat it all in this report.

The Parish Council section of the Council Tax has been set and the full detail will be available on the website and the magazine. There will be a very small rise in the Parish charge due to some prudent adjustments in contract costs and the generosity of a number of our local businesses particularly with regard to the cost of the Christmas lights. As always, if you have a question about anything, please come along to a meeting and ask or else contact the Clerk.

The new housing estate off Meadow Park is building and the public contributions the developers have made for use within the Parish is beginning to show within the village. Works are happening at The Gables site with the Nursery and the Willand Health and Community Centre. The Pump Track is up and running in the Jubilee Field and one could say that at the beginning it was oversubscribed in use. The order has been placed for the skate jumps to be replaced and hopefully that facility will be ready for use by the school summer holidays. We do have some money available to provide some more 'teen facilities' and so if you have any ideas please let the Clerk or one of your councillors know.

Other improvements and functions that have happened or are to happen in the village are that the Chestnut Drive play area has been taken on lease by the Parish and refurbished. We are purchasing training aids to assist David Maynard to train more residents in the use of the defibrillators situated around the village and also to train in CPR. We hope to encourage businesses in the village to fund defibrillators on their premises to also have public access like Pencarrie have on their site. We are also looking at working with the Village Hall Trustees to replace and upgrade the CCTV cameras to improve security and safety of our residents when using the site and the adjoining area. The VAS speed warning system is up and running again thanks to Jason Scott and his little helpers. The results are published on the Parish website for all to see. Why would someone want to drive at 60mph+ along Silver Street?

As the Willand population is growing we are now entitled to have 12 Parish Councillors. We only currently have 10 and so if you feel that you could help with your community there is room for 2 more. If you wish to find out more please contact the Clerk. There could be room for more if younger people wish to get involved as I for one will reach the young age of 80 years later in the year so could do with putting my feet up.

I have mentioned the Parish Clerk a few times already and it is time to wish a very belated but warm welcome to Mrs Debbie Bird as our new Clerk. She has a wealth of experience and could be said to have come out of retirement to take the post. I would also express our sincere thanks to Barbara Bodkin who came back to us for a while as we sought a replacement Clerk.

Our thanks also go out to the team of volunteers who have worked to produce our Neighbourhood Plan which has now been completed as far as we can go and it is with Mid Devon District Council for the 'finishing process'. Then there will be referendum held in the village. Please make sure that you participate when the time comes as it will affect the future of our community.

We have a change of Headteacher at the Primary School and we have had a wonderful working relationship with Ann Hawkins and I for one will miss her and her cheerful and helpful responses when approached. Having met the new Headteacher I am hopeful that we will be able to continue with a very positive relationship for the benefit of our community and particularly the children.

Our village is blessed with many individuals and organisations who work for the benefit of the community as a whole. How many villages have their own thriving theatre company who can put on a pantomime as has recently been enjoyed by many?

I finish by expressing my personal thanks for the time, effort and support given to me by my fellow councillors and particularly our 'support staff' of Debbie our Clerk, John our ever faithful man in the yellow jacket litter picking and keeping a safety eye on all the play equipment as he does his rounds. When he is not about his duties are covered by Graham. We must never forget David the Handyman who never fails to turn up with a spanner, grass machine or whatever when called upon.

Let us hope that the next year is a good one for our community.