

## **Fovant Parish Council report** to Fovant Annual Parish Meeting, 19 April 2023.

Helped by the return to face to face contact with the Wiltshire authorities and the 'portfolio' division of tasks among our Parish Councillors, Fovant Parish Council – FPC - has been able to work more effectively this year. The new Parish Clerk Tim Culver-James settled in, and an appraisal system for him has been established. The 2021/22 AGAR was accepted by the External Auditors, and preparations are in hand to appoint an Internal Auditor for FY 2022/2023.

A description of the main Projects in Progress appears on the Parish Council part of the Village Website. In the list of projects the heading 'Defibrillator' has been broadened to Health & Wellbeing – and Derryn has opened a folder with that title in the Resources section of the main Website.

So the PC list is :

Website.

Health & Wellbeing.

Highways improvements.

SIDs, metrocounts and the police.

Road drains.

Working group among the (14) Ward parishes.

Interaction with County for road safety and footpath grants.

Emergency equipment and planning.

Updating of footpaths and planters.

I don't need to replicate the detail here, but there are some highlights. First the village website. Thanks to webmaster Derryn Hinks' skill and dedication, the website is not only pleasant to view and use but is a comprehensive resource that you know is kept up to date – no mean task for Derryn. Its importance has increased since the demise of the Three Towers Community magazine, following an amazing commitment by Pauline Story for over 20 years. However, sustainability of the Website will have to be addressed just as it became an issue for the 3 Towers. Our Website also contributes to a statutory obligation for Parish Council information to be published. For this

reason and the broader value to the community, financial support from taxpayer funds will become increasingly relevant.

Not everyone has digital access or wishes to use it to search for local news. So FPC worked hard this year to see what could be done to produce a monthly printed newsheet to fill the gap left by the 3 -Towers magazine. The Village Buzz magazine now serves 11 villages, and their management team were keen to include news from Fovant. Unfortunately, in December 2022 increased printing costs forced the Village Buzz to cease their printed version and convert to digital only. Derryn Hinks provided several pages of Fovant news into the first few digital months of the Buzz. In parallel, the Parish Council examined the idea of paying to have those few Buzz pages extracted each month and perhaps 50 copies printed, assuming enough people in Fovant would pay a small subscription. The potential costs and complexity killed this idea. The best compromise so far is that Martin Wallis offered to extract 2 pages of news from the Fovant website, each month, and arrange for 20-30 copies to be printed and left for collection in the Village Hall and the Waterside. We would welcome ideas from residents as to how to do more to help households who simply won't be able to see these newsheets unless they can be delivered to them.

In parallel with all this, we agreed with Derryn that she now cease the considerable effort of sending our news to the digital Buzz – this would only serve as duplication of the Fovant website, which is the one we want outsiders to use!!

Secondly, our focus on Highways matters continues. Data from the three Speed Indicator Devices in the 20 mph limit roads confirm the results from metrocount tubes two years ago - that more than 50% of vehicles exceed the speed value of 25 mph, which is when the police can enforce. Its obvious from the illuminated speed numbers that that some vehicles do slow down but many simply do not. David Horne has extracted the SID speed data into a bar chart format easy for the police to interpret, and we have argued this with the Community Police Team in Warminster that serves our area. Our presentation to a recent Area Board meeting was well received by the police. As a result this police team does seem to be listening, and two officers came to the village recently to discuss our speeding problem. The County is running a pilot study of SID data, and will shortly open that to receive data from SIDs throughout the

County. Our main worry is that Fovant data and needs will get buried in the huge mass of County wide information.

There is no doubt that the police will continue to rely heavily on reports of vehicle speeds detected by yellow jacketed teams of Community Speed Watch - a volunteer effort in which Fovant has fallen behind some other local villages. The lack of a CSW puts us at a disadvantage.

Work with the Highways Engineers continues through the Area Board committee system but it was difficult to get used to the changing working practices. We await engineer drawings for a possible buildout footpath on the bend leading into the west side of High Street from the A30. *Pedestrian in the Road* signs have been agreed for four entrance roads to the village. As County funds can now be sought for footpath repairs, we obtained grants for a contractor to build steps on two of our footpaths. Other footpath work was carried out by the youth charity Seeds for Success. The most difficult project involved steps and a kissing gate on the very steep footpath from East Farm leading up the Down. We procured two more litter bins that the County was discarding; these will go at the northern end of the village.

Determined documented contact with Highways officers in the last two years about persistent blockages and flooding of several of our road drains has paid off, with a comprehensive clean out by teams from the County and the local depot.

The effort put into liaison with the Parish Steward, now taken on by Martin Wallis, is worthwhile because the Steward often provides alerts to the County 'system' about new issues with drains etc. A word of warning. We have learned that My Wilts complaints about flooding are not prioritised for non-A roads unless property is flooded, and those reports then tend to be dropped off the digital system. The Parish Council therefore remains a last resort for residents not satisfied through a My Wilts report.

After the use of our generators in the aftermath of Storm Eunice, we took advice on how to optimise the Parish's emergency protocols. Courtesy of the Youth Club Trustees our emergency equipment is now kept in a secure storage area at the Waterside.

Grants made were:

- £800 to the 3 Towers magazine towards costs of publishing Council information.
- £1000 towards the new noticeboards on the Village Hall
- £1000 to construct for emergency equipment store at the Waterside building.
- £400 towards burial ground maintenance

The Parish Clerk acted as 'banker' to handle the Wiltshire Council grant obtained by Diana Rae to cover warm space/foodbank costs, and the Parish Council contributed a further £218. Reflecting the increased public debate about health matters, the Council will pay for any further awareness raising courses on first aid and defibrillator use.

At the invitation of Christine Brown (Wiltshire Council Estate and Development Team), FPC set up a subcommittee to work with her on options for the redevelopment of the Clays Orchard site.

FPC played a minor role in a group of seven villages that raised concerns about a proposed development at Tisbury Station – a large housing development, a care home, and narrowing of the road bridge to a single archway that would need to be traffic light controlled -- all inconsistent with the Tisbury Neighbourhood Plan. The decision from an Appeal is awaited.

The Electoral Review Committee had not yet dealt with a 2019 request for the number of Councillors to be reduced. FPC reviewed this and decided to keep to the present maximum number of nine councillors.