Fiddington Parish Council – Chairman's Report 2019/21

The Chairman's report this time is covering a 2 year period.

This period has been totally influenced by the Covid situation and in everyday life we have had to go about our business in a very different manner and this has been the same for the function of the Parish Council, District Council in fact all authorities.

This meeting is our first meeting in person since January 2020 between times meetings have taken place using Zoom video link or meetings have been cancelled. Again thanks to all the councillors for sharing in the responsibility of taking part in all the external meeting held by zoom.

Covid has been for the bigger part a frustration and of course a personnel opinion an excuse as almost everything has taken longer, that said, as a community we have got to this point pretty much unscathed and hoping this continues.

For many years we have not had any major issues regarding planning applications and this is mainly due to pre-application discussions or well thought through applications, this situation has slightly changed over the period of this report.
In 2019/20 we received 5 applications, 4 supported and 1 withdrawn.
In 2020/21 again 5 applications, 4 supported and 1 due to a revised application from a past withdrawn application the council offered no comment, the decision from District Council was to reject the application.
In recent months the Parish Council have had verbal and written communication with the Enforcement Officer from Sedgemoor district council with regard to the activity on the site of Keenthorne Nursery, this situation is on-going.

A real positive has been the installation of the 2 defibrillators one at Coultings and the other in at Fiddington both positioned in the old telephone kiosks. Thank you Tina for your persistence with this protracted project.

There are a number on on-going matters of which the council persist in securing a positive outcome. The 3 main issues is the damage to the coping stones and wall along the stream in church road, road flooding at Bonson Mill, updating / repair to finger posts and general upkeep of footpaths and rights of way.

Thank you councillors, District Councillors Julie Pay and Mike Caswell and of course our clerk Tina.

2021

Fiddington Village Hall Report

In the 2020 report, I wrote; -

"Sadly, it is very unlikely that there will be any activity in our hall, for the rest of this year and the early part of 2021.Your committee will keep the hall in good order whilst this happens, by continuing to check the fire alarms, the electric equipment and that there are no infestations. We will keep enough heating on to prevent any burst pipes during cold periods."

-and that is exactly what happened!

Thanks to the £10,000 small business grant from Somerset Council our finances actually improved during the lockdowns. Perhaps the only advantage of having the hall closed for almost all the period was that we could judge exactly what it costs to run the hall with no activities happening. The answer is £5,500pa in round figures. This has led us to reduce our reserves to £11,000 – our policy is to keep 2 years costs in reserve.

During the summer of 2020, the hall did tentatively reopen in full compliance with regulations. The Art Group and the Home Education Drama Group all used the hall either outside or at a safe distance inside. Normal village events such as Book Swap and the Flower Show did not happen, because they were outside regulations.

The Committee met on Zoom when it was thought necessary. Careful reopening is planned as lockdown regulations are eased. The Art Group and the Home Education Drama Group have used the grounds during April and May. We are planning a reopening lunchtime bbq party on July 11th and the Flower Show on July 18th. How these events will take place will depend on regulations and, of course, the weather.

Passers-by will have seen the completed painting of the container by Juliet Harkness and Richard Brazier. It looks great and has achieved a small article and picture in Somerset Life.

The hall committee is determined to reopen the hall and to hold events only when government regulations allow and when we think it is safe. There are several enquiries and reservations for the hall in the months ahead that we hope we can honour. We cannot wait to resume our role as the centre of the village and its activities.

Finally, my thanks to all the committee for their commitment and to the various committee members who have dealt with mice (Heather Hawley), checked the fire alarms (Richard Brazier) and to Wayne Hawley, who has successfully avoided being a committee member and has kept the grounds looking good. Thank you all.

Fiddington Parish Council AGM – 18th May 2021

From Fiddington PCC

Since the last report in 2019 the Quinquennial Inspection of the church building has been completed by an architect specialising in ancient buildings. Although the report included twenty-nine recommendations and observations the overall result was that the fabric was well kept. Apart from two issues that will require specialist contractors to complete the task, the remainder will be overseen by Clive Cridge and David Scott.

During 2020 with the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic the Archbishops ordered the national closure of all church buildings. This is something that as a Churchwarden I found very hard. As the situation developed and with a better understanding of the virus, we were allowed to open the church for two four-hour periods each week for individuals to enter the church. Later in the year we were able to hold services during October, but the worsening situation caused a second closure. However, unless there is significant change in the infection rates we now plan to restart our normal service schedule from the beginning of June. Throughout the pandemic it has been heartening to see the many acts of kindness from those in the community able to offer help in some way to others who had been forced to isolate or shield themselves.

Like many organisations, the adoption of on-line resources by parishes was quickly employed to maintain contact, hold meetings, and to provide services transmitted either from Rectories or from within church buildings. These were widely appreciated.

Apart from running our Spring Sausage Sizzle and Quiz in early March, the pandemic stopped any further social events, which reduced our income and support for some charities. Overall, thanks to the generosity of our congregation, we ended the year with only a small deficit.

Looking to the future the PCC will be reviewing how we manage the churchyard in two ways. Firstly, we are reviewing how we can continue to provide for members of our community to be buried here with the number of spaces available being limited. Secondly, with regard to wildlife, and for this the Diocese of Bath and Wells has teamed with the Somerset Wildlife Trust to run a course on how to monitor and improve churchyards for wildlife.

For the church to be open, safe and function properly requires the effort of many people from our community, be it risk assessments, cleaning, security, flower decoration, and much more. For this support, the PCC is most grateful. Thank you.