

## **Affpuddle & Turnerspuddle Parish Meeting**

**5<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

This has been quite a year, and tonight I want to reflect on the response of our small community to the crisis of the pandemic. It will be very clear to everyone that the Parish Council have many to thank on behalf of the whole Parish.

On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020 I contacted all organisations in the Parish inviting them to offer a representative to join a Parish Council Covid-19 Response Group. By the end of the following day the Group's inaugural meeting had taken place and a response plan had been outlined. We will hear later from David Griffiths about the significant contribution and achievements of the Group and its many and willing volunteers. However, I would like to take this opportunity to thank David for leading the Group. His experience in the Police helped enormously, but more important was his enthusiasm for the task in hand and his warmth when it came to motivating everyone to work together as a team. David thank you for your efforts.

Briantspuddle Village Shop and Post Office rose to the challenges posed by Covid 19 in the most extraordinary way. I have lost count of how many people have gone out of their way to express their gratitude for the efforts of the Shop and Post Office Committee and its army of volunteers. We will hear later from the chair of the Committee, Ali Chorley, about what has been achieved, but it my pleasure to offer the thanks of the whole Parish to the Committee and its volunteers for making the Shop and Post Office quite literally the heart of our community.

One particularly notable feature binding the Covid-19 Response Group and the Village Shop and Post Office has been the contribution that young people of the Parish have made over the last year. Very early on they set to work in a variety of guises by delivering shopping and newspapers, serving in the shop, and using

technology to connect the parish in the form of newsletters and social media. The determination to celebrate VE Day in a meaningful and lasting way in difficult circumstances was a tribute to those who fought so hard to safeguard the communities we continue to treasure today. Thank you to all our young people who stepped forward during the last year.

The Village Hall Committee has adapted to difficult circumstances and Trustees have done all they could to support the Village Shop and Post Office by keeping the Hall open to facilitate a safe and socially distanced one-way system to the shop. Indeed, when lockdown rules permitted, they were able to go further by establishing a café in a brave attempt to offer some sorely missed social gatherings.

Christmas was also well catered for with the Shop spilling into the hall to bring some cheer to long winter days. This was helped along by the Community Group continuing to offer preserves and chutneys. I am sure we all look forward to a time when the Village Hall can open and the whole community can once again enjoy one another's company and be entertained together. I am sure Chairman Stuart Chorley will tell us more this evening.

During such difficult times the Church continues to be a source of inspiration and comfort to so many. Church Warden Liz Whatley will speak on behalf of Affpuddle Precocial Church Council. I am, however, aware just how much the Zoom services have meant to Parishioners during such difficult times and I know how much it will mean as the Church opens its doors again to all of us.

The task of keeping us all engaged and having something positive to focus on during difficult times is a real challenge and enrichment can come in so many ways. The Wildlife Newsletter has so far offered up 318 examples of just this throughout 2020 and up to now in 2021. Speaking personally, I enjoyed the editions, learnt a lot and been

inspired to take more of an interest in our rich local wildlife. Thank you to all involved including the many contributors.

The huge amenity value our parish has to offer with its rich and diverse landscape and many footpaths has been another blessing of this pandemic. We will hear what the Erica Trust has achieved since 2019 but I am sure Parishioners will be particularly grateful for the addition of permissive routes through the heath and woodland.

In thanking the organisations that have all contributed so much in response to the challenges the pandemic has posed to our community during the past year, I am only telling part of the story of our Parish during these difficult times. There have been many acts of individual help and kindness between neighbours and friends which we will each remember and cherish. Taken together we will all recognise that we live in a very special community and we can be grateful for this.

I'd like now to invite the organisations of the Parish to address the meeting.

- Covid – 19 Response Group – David Griffiths
- Briantspuddle Village Shop and Post Office - Ali Chorley
- Briantspuddle Village Hall Committee – Stuart Chorley
- Affpuddle Precocial Church Council - Liz Whatley
- The Erica Trust
- The Community Group
- Bladen Social Club

Sue Jones  
Chairman  
Affpuddle & Turnerspuddle Parish Council