

- 2.6 **Leigh-on-Mendip First School** – the children were able to return to school in March and the journey to being a primary school approaches completion. Planning has been approved to extend the main building and provide an additional classroom. The Governors wish to thank everyone for their ongoing support.
- 2.7 **Quarry** – the new tarmac plant is now fully operational and the enlarged quarry development is under way. The village school continues to enjoy the outdoor classroom facility which is to be expanded. Sadly the information boards around the perimeter were recently destroyed but will be replaced soon. Coronavirus has delayed the start of the Community Support Fund which will support local village organisations. Strict rules are in place to prevent lorries from Halecombe using the village street. Any lorries seen should be reported to Halecombe who will check to see if it came from there.
- 2.8 **Planning** – in terms of planning purposes Leigh-on-Mendip is an isolated settlement where all development is strictly controlled. However whilst MDC cannot demonstrate a five year supply of housing there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. At present the major application for outline planning permission for up to 40 dwellings is pending decision. Another major application pending decision is for various commercial and industrial activities at Barns Close Quarry involving partial infilling. The Parish Council thanks everyone who shared their views and commented on the MDC planning website; both applications were recommended for refusal. The Council have been consulted on and responded to MDC on several smaller planning applications during the year. The Council is keen that any new development follows the Village Design Statement which is available on the website.
- 2.9 **Footpaths** – a team of volunteers continue to supervise our footpaths and report problems. If you would like to supervise a footpath please contact the Council.
- 2.10 **Parish Rangers** – our small but active band of Rangers contribute to the care and maintenance of the village. Activity this year has been restricted by

COVID but some work continued and is much appreciated. Special thanks go to Chris Ingreem who paints the heritage fingerposts as required. Many thanks also to our litter pickers who work to keep the street and lanes clear of offensive litter of all kinds. If you are interested in becoming a Ranger please let a Councillor know. Please inform the Council if you know of a job which needs doing.

2.11 **Report problems when you see them** – most issues can now be reported directly by the public, e.g. www.fixmystreet.com (potholes, street lights, fly-tipping) or by speaking directly to those present (drivers, etc) contacts can also be found on the village website.

2.12 **Leigh-on-Mendip Website and Facebook** – both are exclusive to Leigh-on-Mendip to stay in touch and communicate your events, lost/found, sales/wants and information/contacts. There are also the two Parish Council Noticeboards and the old telephone box (which anyone can use).

2.13 **Getting Involved** – contact a Parish Councillor if you are interested in any of the following

- **Being a Councillor** – the Parish Council will have vacancies in the coming year and volunteers to join the Council are welcome.
- **Land** – the Council is keen to plant more trees do you have a spare corner of land which could be developed as a coppice or orchard
- **Neighbourhood Watch** – several areas in the village have co-ordinators to send you messages about recent incidents, warnings and security hints. If you are not receiving these messages then you are NOT a member of a Neighbourhood Watch School. Check with a Parish Councillor or the PCSO

2.14 The Chairman concluded by thanking his fellow Councillors for their enthusiasm and efforts, the Parish Clerk for her communications and organisation and to all those who work to keep the village organisations running smoothly. Finally the COVID pandemic is still affecting our lives. The Council liaises with the various village organisations and with local care and wellness organisations supporting villages so if you need help contact a Councillor.

3 REPORT FROM THE MEMORIAL HALL COMMITTEE

3.1 In the absence of Sue Vaughan, Vicky Taylor presented the report from the Memorial Hall Committee. Since last May events around the Hall have often been more about keeping up to date with the COFID rules than any function held in the building. The booking Clerks have been busy make sure there is an understanding of what is needed and getting the appropriate paperwork out to the hirers. The role of the Chair has to do with making sure the premises were safe during the period when opening was allowed on a restricted basis. Grateful thanks are extended to Emma Brooks who took over the cleaning at this difficult time due to the ill health of Mr Rabbitts We were pleased to be a le to hire the hall to the school for some weeks in September as they needed the space whilst building work was carried out at the school, an arrangement which worked well on both sides.

3.2 We are now taking the first tentative steps following the easing of the last lockdown and we have a few bookings in the diary. Hopefully as restrictions ease further from the 17 May and again in June, bookings will continue to increase to pre lockdown levels. We will also be keeping our eyes on the situation with our leaking roof which has been an issue for such a long time. The last “fix” was made earlier this year but it wasn't the comprehensive job the builders had first planned as it became clear more work was involved than they had realised. Financially the Hall is in a good state as we have been pleased to receive several grants from the Government to offset our loss of hiring income. Partly due to this we were happy to agree to cover any losses up to £500 for the planned Village Day in August and look forward to getting together with plenty of villagers to celebrate what will hopefully be the end of the worst of Covid. Finally as always a big thank you to the committee who all contribute in their different ways, without their commitment we could not keep the Hall in the good condition which the village deserves.

3.3 The Chairman thanked Sue Vaughan and the Memorial Hall Committee for their work.

4 REPORT FROM THE RECREATION FIELD MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

4.1 In the absence of Vicky Higgins, David Pattison presented the report from the Recreation Field Management Committee.

4.2 The Recreation field has been a centre point for many villagers since the pandemic restrictions across the country and the “stay at home rule”. There were many people taking their daily exercise and meeting up in groups when allowed and we saw many picnics, book groups, WI, Tai Chi and yoga classes as well as the regular bowls, cricket and football.
Clubhouse

The building is still in reasonable repair and we have painted the outside of the club house thanks to Rose Martin and Frank for their help. We have also upgraded the lighting inside with thanks to Daggs and Lumo.

4.3 **Cricket** - Leigh cricket team are once again getting ready for the season ahead and we wish them every success this year.

4.4 **Tuesday Night Bowls (6.30 to 8.00 p.m.)** - Bowls continued last summer, with a few more members joining in. If you would like to participate it will start in early May

4.5 **Fund Raising events** - This has been a very difficult year. We have continued with our monthly bonus ball draw and we thank everyone that has contributed. Vanessa was able to do a few smaller wreath making workshops at Christmas and we thank her for not giving up in such difficult circumstances.

4.6 **Finance** - We are grateful that MDC changed their mind and decided that we were eligible for COVID related grants to offset our loss of income and extra expense.

4.7 **Village Fair** - this was another event that was not able to take place last year. However a smaller than normal event is being planned for the 21 of August this year so hopefully everyone in the village will support and celebrate the day together

- 4.8 **Grass cutting** - The Parish Council has paid a contractor to cut the grass for several years, but last year we joined funds with the cricket club to buy a bigger mower and now we are working with the cricket club to cut the field ourselves.
- 4.9 **Wild Flower meadow** - we are now into the fourth year and it was lovely to see so many different species of flowers popping their heads up last year.
- 4.10 **Upkeep of the field** - this continues to be a very big task and the committee do their best to keep this in hand. We do however need and accept any help in this area. So if you have any spare time we would be very grateful for any help that is offered. Please just contact any member of the team for job suggestions.
- 4.11 There are a lot of things going on behind the scenes, such as all the secretarial jobs completed by David, financial affairs completed by Denis and general maintenance of the field and club house completed by the committee and fellow villagers.
- 4.12 **Dogs** - A polite reminder that the Field is a DOG ON LEAD AREA ONLY. We kindly ask that all dogs are on leads and any dog mess is picked up and deposited in the dog bins provided.
- 4.13 **Open Space Extension to the Recreation Field** - A plan has been developed of how the area adjacent to the allotments will be laid out. This was as a result of two consultations with villagers. We are hopeful that the lease with the parish council will be finalised very shortly and the process of grant applications will start. We do hope to be able to do some work ourselves so if you would like to be involved in this please let us know.
- 4.14 **Committee** – finally thanks are extended to all Committee members for their hard work over the year.
- 4.1 The Chairman thanked David for presenting the report and extended thanks to Vicky Higgins for all her hard work together with the Committee.

5 **ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION**

- 5.1 VGT gave the report on behalf of the Allotment

Association

- 5.2 The allotments have provided a wonderful resource during the past year of restrictions. Not only have allotmenters continued to be busy in providing food for the table while getting exercise and companionship at a distance, there has been a constant flow of villagers – with or without dogs – passing by and sharing greetings or further chats.
- 5.3 24 villagers are using the 17 allotments and a waiting list has been established. There are five ‘full size’ plots (10m x 10m), 10 half-size plots and 3 quarter size including one comprising raised beds.
- 5.4 People grow a wide range of produce – vegetables and fruit - and flowers. And there is a healthy exchange of ideas and support as well as sharing plants between allotment holders.
- 5.5 The past year has seen two major developments in the schedule of improvements. There is now piped water to the site, thanks to Nick, who connected us up to the mains. This means that we are now independent of the Recreation Field.
- 5.6 Thanks also are due here to John Hitchens of the Bell Inn for providing rubber matting and Frank Higgins for expertly using the matting to make covers of the water troughs.
- 5.7 The second development has been putting a reinforced trackway across the Community Open Space to the allotments and around the raised bed section. This not only allows easy access for vehicles, including wheelchairs and walking frames in all weathers, but will also disappear as the grass grows through it.
- 5.8 We are grateful for much needed financial support in the past year from the Parish Council, Ty Schlechter and Edwina Davey as well as support and encouragement from very many individuals and the Recreation Field Management Committee. The Allotment Association is run by a small committee and each allotment holder is taking membership of the National Allotment Society.

6 COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Chairman

Date

Minutes 17.05.21

6.1 The County and District Councillor reports are attached as Appendices within the attached annex to these minutes.

7 OPEN MEETING

7.1 There were no issues raised from the public.

8 THANKS

8.1 The Chairman extended his thanks and that of the Council to all those who give of their time to making sure that the various organisations in the village run smoothly.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 The next Parish Council Meeting will take place on Monday 21 June 2021 at 7.00 p.m. in the Memorial Hall.

9.2 The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting will be announced early 2022.

APPENDIX TO APCM: COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS

ANNEX A: County Council

Response to the Covid19 Pandemic

This has truly been an exceptional year. There are four statistics that demonstrate just how involved the Council has been in supporting residents:

- SCC's Public Health Team has managed over 1,700 COVID outbreaks and situations, saving lives across the county.
- SCC helped support those who needed it most by working with partners to provide or deliver 500,000 meals or food into our communities over the past year.
- The SCC contact centre has made an over 70,000 phone calls to check on those shielding, to arrange help and support or to make vaccination bookings for the NHS.
- SCC have supported our care providers and schools by spending millions of pounds to secure more than 11m pieces of personal protection equipment (PPE).

Throughout the pandemic **Somerset's Public Health team** has played a critical role in designing and delivering essential Covid-19 services to keep infection rates among the lowest in the country and keep people safe. This has been achieved through support to hundreds of workplaces, care homes, schools and households with outbreaks to minimise the spread. During the last year SCC have managed over 1,700 incidents with more than 20,000 cases being detected within our County boundaries. Somerset was an early pioneer for local contact tracing increasing the number of contacts made based on local insight and helping to reduce spread of the virus.

Adult Social Care mobilised pop-up care homes at the peaks of the pandemic, sourced and provided over 11 million pieces of PPE and supported settings with infection control measures and advice so they could continue to stay open for visitors. Technology innovations have kept them connected while a new app was developed by SCC's own team to support the NHS by revolutionising the way spare beds are tracked. Throughout the pandemic over 700 micro- providers have supported over 5000 people with care and support each week.

Children's Services have supported all schools to ensure they could stay open, coordinating transport, providing emergency PPE and distributing over 850 Dept. of Education devices and 50 SCC devices to enable young people to access virtual learning. Extra funds have been made available to provide families with free school meals and support during lockdown, multi-agency hubs have been established to support vulnerable children who have had to self-isolate and over 220 staff have been trained to support pupil health and wellbeing.

SCC provided funding to ensure all schools in Somerset were able to provide vouchers for children who are entitled to Free School Meals over Christmas,

APPENDIX TO APCM: COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS

February Half-Term and Easter, as well as additional funding so that more families and children in need of support could receive help.

SCC's vital **Communications** role included a new Covid-19 website, social media campaign, Your Somerset Newspaper, leaflets, press, radio and TV messaging as well as a number of informative, timely and accessible news-style videos filmed by ex BBC veteran reporter Clinton Rogers.

Other key achievements in delivering SCC Business Plan

SCC's focus on good **financial management** has continued during 2020/21 including the management of 15 different Covid funding streams and the various reporting and audit requirements around them. Latest budget monitoring reports shows continued tight financial control and a forecast underspend of £6.6m for the year. This will be third year in a row that that authority has come in under-budget, demonstrating financial robustness and resilience.

Investment in infrastructure has included:

- completion of construction work on the iAero Centre in Yeovil which will support innovation and collaboration in the aerospace supply chain.
- opening of the Wiveliscombe and Wells Enterprise centres with a strong take up of space with 90% and 70% occupancy rates respectively. Construction work for Bruton Enterprise Centre commenced earlier this year, while the Digital Innovation Centre at the Firepool site has received planning approval.
- £19million upgrade of Junction 25 of the M5 won three of the five accolades at the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transport Awards including Project of the Year
- continuing crucial work of maintaining the highway network despite the impact of Covid, including repairing 17,947 carriageway potholes, only slightly fewer than in the previous year before the pandemic.

School projects completed include the new Hazlebrook Campus at Selworthy School, Nerrols Primary School; extension and IT upgrade at Milborne Port School, seven-class expansion for Willowdown Academy Primary School; the new King Ina Church of England Academy; the £8m expansion of Bridgwater College Academy and the £7m expansion of Bishop Fox's in Taunton. Finally, Polden Bower, a £23m special school in Bridgwater which will cater for 160 students with complex needs in Somerset.

The **Climate Change** response has seen the expansion of Recycle More, initially in the Mendip area; the decarbonising of SCC buildings, promotion and provision of public transport and the enabling of SCC staff to work from home and cut emissions and pollutants as a consequence of fewer commuter miles. A £1 million Somerset Climate Emergency Community Fund was created to encourage innovative community projects that share the Council's vision of working towards a climate resilient Somerset. More than 136 applications were submitted and 40 projects across Somerset were awarded grant funding.

Somerset County Council have invested in 153 **apprenticeships** and have supported 87 staff to complete apprenticeships. In addition SCC have also

APPENDIX TO APCM: COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS

supported 20 small employers throughout Somerset to recruit apprentices into their workforce

Despite Covid-19, the new 'Family Solutions Somerset' approach in **Children's Services** is working in partnership through the Family Safeguarding Model and the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) to support parents to tackle health and wellbeing issues impacting on their ability to parent well.

The Family Intervention Service was also launched and provides a flexible, specialist county-wide service joining up established edge-of-care and complex family needs services with a Rapid Response service at weekends to ensure seamless support. Social Workers in Schools is a ground-breaking initiative to place social workers in schools to help keep children safe from exploitation.

The **Government's consultation** on Somerset County Councils One Somerset proposal and an alternative bid by the four District Councils has just finished and we await the Secretary of State's decision in July.

APPENDIX TO APCM: COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS

ANNEX B: District Council

FULL COUNCIL

An Extraordinary Meeting was held on 30th April to discuss the holding of a further poll on the Unitary proposals for the county. Many of us had already responded to the Consultation published under the Stronger Somerset banner (the blue tear off paper). The Secretary of State had advised against a new poll on the basis that the proposed exercise “risks duplicating and detracting from the consultation to which thousands of people in Somerset have already responded” it would be “confusing” and inconsistent with his published timescales for decision making, ie before the summer recess. Mendip’s share of the costs will be some £65k plus officer time. In addition to the caveats from the S of S, there were warnings of its lawfulness, fairness, value for money and administration of the Council’s financial affairs. Warnings of a potential legal challenge with unquantified cost risk were received from Mendip’s Finance Officer and local lawyers, however a QC advised that such risks were low in his opinion. The Council therefore decided to proceed with the poll giving the 2 options of One Somerset or Stronger Somerset, ie separate East and West Somerset. It will take place between 18th May and 4th June and will have postal and online options.

UNITARY PLANS

Cllrs Ham and Townsend and the Chairman attended a virtual meeting hosted by Frome Town Council on 28-4-21 to discuss with local parishes their views on the way ahead, assuming that one of the two unitary frameworks will be adopted. The principle of removing a level of local government was discussed, with its replacement by Local Community Networks (LCNs). The LCNs would be Town/Parish driven. Mendip’s rural parishes need to consider if we wish to be in an LCN including Frome, or if that would submerge us and a village grouping might work better. The first step is to draft a Matrix listing all the services currently provided by all levels of Councils and then suggest what services are provided at what level. A further meeting is planned for a months time.

PLANNING

Good to see that within the space of 2 months the wishes of Coleford, Leigh and Stoke Parishes have been respected and unwanted planning applications for housing estates outside development limits of all 3 villages have been refused by Mendip. There is a curious degree of inconsistency in the reasons for refusal with different weightings given to Mineral Safeguarding, Highways, Harm to the Countryside and the Local Plan. The Planning Inspector’s final draft of Local Plan Part 2 is scheduled to be issued by the end of May, for debate by Cabinet in July and adoption by Full Council in September. We have contested this relaxed timescale vigorously on the basis that the Plan has been under preparation for some 6 years and we all urgently need a greater degree of certainty on planning policy.