
PRIDE IN PORTBURY

PARISH NEWSLETTER NO.8 – OCTOBER 2017

INCORPORATING NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH



Summer has come and gone so quickly! It's time for another short update on a number of topics. Please note too that we need to give some thought to Fracking in our area. Please take note of the short item below.

Diary Dates – Community Cafe is now on its winter run. Good to see a good number of people at the Village Hall recently. It will continue in the Hall until March when it will then return to the Church. Keep a note for the first Saturday of each month.

Note too that the next Parish Council Meeting will be on the 7th of November – as mentioned above if you have views on Fracking please feel free to come as we will be discussing this in an open forum.

The AGM of the Social Club and Limited Company will take place at 7.30pm on the 20th of November. Please come along and share your ideas about events for the Village.

Neighbourhood Watch – Whilst the Parish itself continues to be “quiet”, hoping that I am not tempting providence by saying this, there is more disturbing news about fraud in our area. I attach here the exact report on the matter received from the Police.

Police have had a number of reports of fraud where people have been duped out of cash or coerced into purchasing items from fraudsters posing as police officers.



The latest scam involves people being contacted by a man posing as a police officer who is investigating a fraud at their bank. The victim is then persuaded to take part in an undercover investigation by obtaining cash from their account or by purchasing high value items including Rolex watches.

Arrangements are made for the victims to attend a meeting to hand over the cash or goods – the meeting point is sometimes a railway station.

A police officer, or any other official, will never ask for money or bank details over the phone or on the door-step or ask you to arrange to take them to a pre-arranged location. If you are unsure if the person is who they say they are, ask for identification such as their collar number and call 101 to check the name and the authenticity of the caller.

If you want to report being a victim of this type of fraud call 101, quoting reference 5217219020

Please be vigilant concerning any suspicious people knocking on your door or telephoning you out of the blue. Villains are trying all sorts of ways to pursue their “trade” as it's getting more difficult for them to break in to our houses and cars.

Village Green – I want to update you on the village green as there has been a lot of posting on Facebook about this which some may not have seen. To summarise, we were planning to renew the centre path in limestone gravel that would compact down and give a good hard





wearing surface for the future. This was a lot of money, nearly £8000. There was a body of opinion, expressed over Facebook, that this was not a good idea. As it turns out the contractor we had selected for the work declined to take the contract, we think because he was concerned about taking liability for the “sinking” area in the middle which may continue to be a problem. We think therefore that we may not have enough money in our budget to take on this work and have therefore suspended the project for now. Other types of surface were investigated and found to be just as expensive for something that wouldn’t last as long as the gravel chosen, see photo left. We are open to further views on this topic; the green remains a key asset for the Parish which we want to look after and will need work in due course. I want also to pick up on the use Facebook, please read on.

Access by the stream at the Portbury Lodge – we have been asked by a number of people about the area near the stream where cars often park for access into the woods. The residents at the Lodge suffer difficulties when cars being park there and worse difficulty when cars overspill to their frontage and even block access completely. The residents at the Lodge have legal rights to keep this area free of cars and so they have taken steps to try to achieve this. We ask therefore that residents understand this and understand why action has been taken. There are a number of areas like this in the Village where parking can cause problems with manoeuvring and sight lines – I have a similar problem at my own house and have had a white line installed by North Somerset Council. White lines like this have been installed at a number of properties now; if you feel you need one then apply to us and we can give you the necessary forms. The lining costs £90 per property, payable to North Somerset Council.



Facebook – the 2 issues above were the subject of a lot of posts on Facebook and whilst I don’t want to rake over that I would like to make a few points here. The Parish Council often gets queries about things that go on in the Village and we are expected to explain what is happening or take action. We always things up impartially else we could be accused of being biased in favour of some and not others. Most often these queries relate to issues about planning permission or possible illegal building activity. We are very sorry that this can result in an upsetting experience for those who get contacted by us, and you may feel angry about this. Please be aware that we are in this difficult position; we are “damned if we do and damned if we don’t”. We always make contact directly and never use Facebook or any Social Media to publicise anything. Our recent experience however was that Facebook became a vehicle for airing some views and the Parish Councillors were the target for some very critical comment. We felt that this was unreasonable, and one Councillor has resigned as a result.



Unfortunately therefore we have withdrawn from Facebook indefinitely and won’t be monitoring the Village Notice Board in the future. We have posted our direct e-mail address on Facebook so that any issue residents may have can be sent directly to us. Meanwhile we are looking into a more appropriate means of us putting information out to residents, perhaps by a restricted Facebook page or Blog that all can access.

Traffic matters – our project to get traffic calming for the Village has, I am pleased to say, taken a step forward into the design and legal stage. 4 villages are being progressed in parallel and the legal steps to secure traffic orders will begin soon.

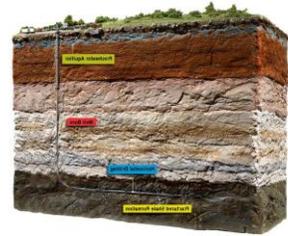


Fracking – at our last Parish Council Meeting in October a resident briefed us about the situation with Fracking in the Region, ie North Somerset. Whilst in Portbury we are not likely to be affected directly by any Fracking activity we will be close to some potential sites that have been highlighted elsewhere in our region, mainly along the coast – see opposite. We didn’t have time for a full deabte on this topic and decided that we should open the subject up to the whole village for discussion at our next meeting on the 7th of November.



To re-assure you, we are not suggesting that either Fracking rigs will appear in our Parish or that pollution and other geological effects are likely, but residents may wish to send a message out to North Somerset Council about this controversial subject. Our options aren't many, perhaps limited to

1. Doing nothing – being neither for nor against
2. Declaring a position re Fracking in our emerging Neighbourhood Plan – again either for or against
3. Supporting whatever other Parishes decide who may be more directly affected by Fracking in the future
4. Delivering a message to North Somerset that we wish our Region to become a Frack Free Zone



Other options may exist subject to the discussions we have.

Please have a look at the copious press on the matter and then come along at 19.30 at the Village Hall if you want to have a say in what position we take. These two websites offer views on either side of the debate. There are other articles that give a wide voice to the issues around this topic.

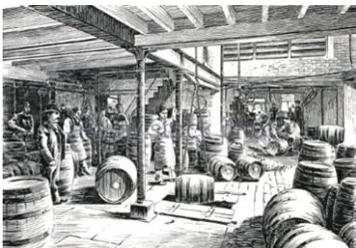
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/14/opinion/global/the-facts-on-fracking.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-17448428>

Mike Phipps – Chairman Portbury Parish Council

And read on for Village Hall News from Sharon

The Village Hall – As ever the Village Hall thrives as result of all your support for the various events we run, backed up by a team of stalwart volunteers.



We are delighted that grant for work at the Hall has now been fully confirmed and in the next few months work will begin. We will see a new door fitted to the lounge bar, a new skylight above the stairs, upgraded door closers compliant with fire regulations, new lights in the Hall and finally the Hall floor will have a long overdue refurbishment including a vision panel to show off the old well which dates back to the time there was a brewery on the site. This year we also tackled a lot of exterior pointing in an attempt to hold back the inevitable damp problems. All this work puts our Building in excellent shape for the future.

Just a reminder that membership of the Club is now due, as from the 1st of October. It's a very modest cost but from that source alone we raise nearly £1000 which goes a long way to ensuring a surplus to invest in the building each year.

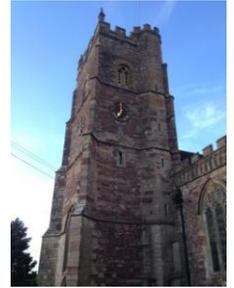
Our AGM will be on the 20th of November at 7.30 in the Hall – please come along and give your support to us. Even better, if you have a little time to give then you'd be welcome on the Club Committee which runs the Hall and arranges social events. If you have your own ideas for an event we'd also love to hear from you. The Company that oversees the Club also needs helpers in the form of Directors. It's not an onerous task, only a couple of meetings a year, but the oversight from people with experience of Company matters is very important to us, and you never know you may learn some useful stuff too.



Sharon Worthy – Chair of the Village Hall and Social Club

And Church news from Ann

St Mary's Church – Big things are happening! We need to carry out some urgent repairs to the church walls, Berkeley Chapel and its window, and also plan to develop our new heritage centre, which now houses both church and local history material. We are delighted to announce that Heritage Lottery have awarded us a first-round pass of up to £235,000, which represents 69% of our total project costs of £342,209.



This sum includes a development grant of up to £25,100 (87%) of the total eligible development work cost of £29,015 towards developing our project to Round 2 submission. Some of you may have noticed our new 'Brown Sign' pointing to our church, in readiness for our centre. In assessing our application, we really impressed the assessors with the band of volunteers, both from the church and the wider community, who contribute so much towards the upkeep of the church and graveyard – and may I take this opportunity to say a huge THANK YOU to everybody who gives their time and skills in support of the church, especially those who tirelessly give behind the scenes.



We aim to keep the church more open and to use it for other groups, including an art group to start shortly. The toddler group is going really well – on Tuesdays from 9.15 to 11am. Everybody invited.

And watch the church notice board for some new services mid-week.

Ann Longstaff – Church Warden

Councillor Vacancies – a final word from your Parish Council. We are in urgent need of more Councillors to contribute to running of the Council. At present we are a team of only 4, 3 Councillors having decided to step down recently for various personal reasons. With this number of Councillors we are only just sustainable; we need a minimum of 3 just to have a valid meeting. Anyone who has an interest in contributing to the running and development of the Village would be welcome as a Councillor. No experience is needed, nor is the role very onerous, but we do expect you to read up before a meeting and contribute to discussion.

Please contact our office if your are at all interested in a position or have other queries you wish to put to us.

[Portbury Parish Council@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Portbury.Parish.Council@hotmail.co.uk) or telephone 815012

MAP –10th October 2017