

Background report for the Parish Council meeting 15th April 2015

26.15 Election of chairman

As the Chairman is away on holiday, and there is, at present, no Vice Chairman, Council needs to elect a chairman just for this meeting. The annual election of the chairman will take place at the annual meeting next month in May.

30.15 Co-option

Only one candidate, Sarah Strong (nee Penny) has formally applied to be considered for co-option to fill the vacancy on Pitton ward. Mrs Strong has been a parish councillor in the past, and so is experienced, and has some knowledge about the way the parish council works, and the issues currently facing it.

32.15 Reports

b. Pitton VH Management Committee – the next meeting is on Wednesday 29th April.

c. Farley VH Management Committee – nothing to report.

d. Parish website editor – nothing to report at the time of writing.

e. Chairman's report – nothing to report from Cllr Latham at the time of writing.

f. Parish Clerk's report

- The Parish Council has received the annual invitation from the CPRE/Hills group for the two constituent villages to enter the 2015 Best Kept Village competition. The deadline for entries is 30th April.
- The Clerk has been registered as the contact name for information from the Pensions Regulator about preparing for the staging date of 1st April 2017, which is when the parish council must automatically enrol those who are eligible into a workplace pension scheme and contribute to it. The salary paid to the Clerk's post is too low to be eligible (minimum £10k), but the Council will be kept updated.
- The Council has received an invitation to adopt the telephone kiosks in the village for £1.00 each. The Parish Council declined a previous invitation some years ago, and indeed, requested that the Farley box be removed. Mobile phone coverage remains patchy, and the Pitton box should be retained by BT. Boxes elsewhere in the country have been used to house defibrillators, as miniature art galleries, as hot drink/ice cream kiosks, pop up plant shops where pre- school children sell flowers and veg they have grown themselves, book exchanges, libraries, tourist information points.
- The internal audit will take place on April 17th

g. Southern Area Board – Cllr Coppock and the Clerk attended this, where the usual routine matters were discussed and partner reports received. Alderbury PC gave a presentation on the parish, and Highways gave a presentation on litter and an update on the My Wilts app. Community awards were given, grant applications considered (the result of the Parish Council's application is covered elsewhere) and

a lively discussion was had with representatives of BT regarding the delays in installing the fibre optic broadband, and the gaps in the coverage. Items on the police's Community Messaging and an update on the Local Youth Network were deferred to a later meeting. The next meeting is on May 28th in Winterslow Village Hall.

33.15 Flooding in Pitton

The next Wiltshire Flood Ops Group meeting takes place on Wednesday 22nd April in Salisbury.

35.15 Finance

d. Additional expenditure required of £530.00 to cover the cost of the two map lecterns and two noticeboards. You will recall that the total cost for this project was £3546, with the two lecterns costing £1160 and the two noticeboards costing £2237.40. The PC allocated £1856 of its own funds to the project, and applied to the Area Board for the balance of £1690. The AB decided to cover the full cost of the lecterns only, ie £1160, as it felt that the noticeboards should be fully financed out of PC funds. The PC therefore needs to find an additional £530 to complete this project. There is £881 in the contingency fund.

36.15 Highway/Footpath matters

a. Update on AB/Highways issues

3057 – Silted ditches along Pitton/Winterslow Road – no further news.

3429 Flooding/culvert required at Church Road Farley – no further news

3906 – Black ice etc at Lucewood Lane, Farley – the Community Area Manager is consulting with Highways officers.

b. Footpath maintenance issues – I have still not yet been able to set up a meeting with Nick Cowen, the RoW officer. However, it seems that there is a representative of the Rambler's Association who lives in Firsdow, and quite independently, organised a maintenance day with the Men of Pitton quite recently. I recommend that contact be made to see if the PC, on behalf of the parish, can work with the Rambler's Association on this project, and to establish a regular maintenance programme of the footpath network that way.

37.15 Ongoing matters

a. Installation of the parish map lecterns – see 35.15d above

b. Public noticeboards – see 35.15d above

c. Development of an Emergency Incident/Snow Plan – I have spoken to the Winterslow clerk concerning sharing that parish's farmer and snow pough. A working group has yet to be formed to progress this matter.

d. Broadband provision in the parish – there was a robust and lively discussion at the Area Board meeting with BT reps concerning the delays in installing the fibre optic

broadband – due to blocked ducts – and how soon fibre optic broadband would be brought to those dwellings and villages excluded in the first phase of the programme. Cabinet member Cllr John Thompson undertook to respond, and below is his reply sent to Cllr Devine and other AB members:

Dear Councillor Devine,

Southern Area Board Meeting, 26th March

I am writing to you in order to respond to a number of assertions you made at the Area Board meeting on the 26th March where you stated the Wiltshire Online programme of work was being poorly managed.

The council is using BDUK's national framework contract for the rollout of superfast broadband. You expressed frustration at not being able to receive more details of the rollout, however this contract ties us to an approach that limits the sharing of detailed forward plans as this is commercially sensitive and would give other communication providers a commercial advantage if it was put into the public domain. The team has always been keen to share as much information as possible within the constraints of the contract and Wiltshire was one of the first councils to introduce a full 7-digit postcode checker on our website to allow residents to monitor the progress of the rollout in their area. In addition, information is also provided on an exchange by exchange basis and the team is about to introduce a 'Register my interest' option to allow them to contact residents as their fibre service becomes available.

You also were concerned that we did not require BT to complete pre-contract surveying. The framework contract did not stipulate BT to carry out a full survey of its network ahead of planning. This would have been costly and very time consuming as it would have been undertaken across all of the councils and therefore taken several years to complete. Instead, local surveying is carried out ahead of local delivery in each phase of implementation. This provides details to the project team of any remediation work needed, finalises the local network design and confirms the time scales. In some instances this means the initial desk-top plan submitted at the start of the programme will need to be revised with some cabinets being upgraded sooner than anticipated and others later. During the rollout of each phase the team have to manage specific local issues including planning permissions, such as agreeing wayleaves and potentially needing to find alternative locations. By following this localised approach, the team has been able to ensure all of the cabinets in our initial plans have been upgraded and not had to remove any cabinets from the programme.

As you are aware from previous correspondence that you have had with the team, there have been significant issues with blocked ducts across all exchange areas but particularly in the south of the county; blocked ducts can unfortunately slow down progress of laying the fibre optic cables, especially if there is a need for traffic management to resolve the issues. Now that this is a recognised problem, Openreach are proactively mitigating the likelihood of further delays by future proofing the network. Gangs are sent out in advance of the programme reaching exchange areas with the sole purpose of clearing and repairing all the duct routes from the main exchanges to the more local exchanges which will allow us to make greater progress going forward.

The project team work with BT and in particular Openreach, on a daily basis and they also have a very close working relationship with our own teams such as Highways, Finance, Legal and Audit which allows them to closely support the rollout; the team's working relationship with all their stakeholders has been recognised by BDUK as best practice to the management of a complex contract. As well as this day to day interaction, project team members also have a full debrief of every cabinet on a fortnightly basis which allows them to monitor the progress of the rollout and challenge Openreach where necessary.

This is a significant and challenging engineering project across the County which is benefitting tens of thousands of homes and businesses. As you could see from the presentation many communities within the boundaries of the Southern Area Board had already been upgraded and receiving good service, however this was not recognised at this meeting and I believe was a missed opportunity.

I am confident that this project is being managed appropriately and I would look to all councillors to support what will ultimately be an excellent result for the residents and businesses of Wiltshire.
End.

Cllr Thompson also offered to meet representatives of the "not spot" areas in the affected parishes, but at the time of writing, I'm not sure if this is being progressed.

38.15 Date of next Meeting

At the time of writing, this is scheduled for Wednesday 27th May, but at Cllr Latham's request, I have been asked to see if this can be changed to Wednesday 20th May. I will update members at the meeting.

