

FRESHFORD PARISH COUNCIL

NOTES FROM THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held at 7pm on Wednesday 18th May 2022

Freshford Village Memorial Hall

Cllr John Adler, Chair of Freshford Parish Council, welcomed everyone and introduced the meeting.

Representatives from local groups then gave short presentations:

David Wright, Chair of the Freshford Village Memorial Hall Committee

- That £250,000 had been raised to reclad, reglaze and replace the heating system in the Hall.
- This was Stage 1 of planned works to the Memorial Hall, taking place from July-September 2022, timed to minimise disruption to the pre-school.
- These measures should reduce the carbon footprint of the Hall by 90%, with the benefit of reduced energy costs.

Patrick Dawson, Business Manager, The Galleries

- Explained that the parent company of the Galleries, FLiSCA, was run as a charity with money awarded as grants to local groups and projects. Over 12 years £63,000 had been awarded in grants.
- The Galleries was run by a five-person Management Group, including the shop and café managers.
- It was likely to be a financially challenging year ahead, given the general economic outlook with rising prices and increasing energy costs.
- Government grant money received during Covid had been spent on new floors and new chiller cabinets.
- A planning application had been submitted to extend the café area, increase storage and add a pedestrian walkway. A planning decision from B&NES was awaited.

Richard Blamey, Chair, Friends of Freshford

- The FoF main fundraising activity was a twice-yearly village quiz. Money raised had been used to support local groups and projects such as the Hop Pole, FLiSCA, Freshford Village Memorial Hall and the recent Lego Challenge group from Freshford Primary School.
- FoF had, with support from the Parish Council and residents, embarked upon a project to increase biodiversity on The Tynning, planting trees, hedges, bulbs and wildflowers. Nearly £6000 had been spent on the project with additional money raised from sponsorship and grants.

Chantal Young, Village Agent

- Explained that she had recently been appointed as Village Agent for Freshford and surrounding parishes, to help rural communities access health services.
- That Village Agents provide a triage service to anyone with health issues or concerns at home and help to keep people supported and healthy at home.
- Village Agents could work with individuals to help identify and apply for health services and support.

Richard Tibbles, Member of Freshford and Limpley Stoke Home Energy Group

- The Group had been set up in November 2021 in line with the Parish Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency.
- FLHEG had undertaken a survey to gauge interest in home energy measures such as heat pumps, solar panels and heat surveys. Eighty-seven responses had been received.
- FLHEG ran talks on energy issues, the next one would be on heat pumps on 20 June 2022.
- They provided information on the Community website (under the Parish Council's Climate Emergency page) on a range of energy saving measures, including case studies.

Anthea, Nature Chain

- The Freshford Nature Chain group had been running for a couple of years with the aim of encouraging residents to establish wildlife corridors by making gardens more wildlife friendly.
- The group organised talks and were willing to give people ideas on ways of improving the biodiversity of their gardens.

Rowena Wood, Freshford Station Gardening

- Provided a history of the garden at the station.
- The current garden had been professionally designed to be organic and sustainable, to exist without watering and to provide colour and shape throughout the seasons.
- Volunteers worked on the garden with supervision from a paid gardener.
- Funding for a gardener had previously come from the Community Rail Partnership and from Friends of Freshford. The Parish Council were currently funding the gardener.
- New volunteers were welcomed; volunteer days took place approximately six times a year.

St Peter's Church

- The Church was currently being redeveloped, with works due to be completed in early autumn.

Parish Council Activities

Councillors introduced themselves and provided updates on activities.

Communications

- The Freshford Community website had been redeveloped in 2021, improving the accessibility, navigation and ease of maintenance of the website. Some work was still ongoing to update the some areas of content of the site.
- During Covid a new email management system had been introduced which had proved a success, with over 400 people signing up to the email list.
- Work had started on re-launching the Bulletin in some format to provide a local newsletter.

Transport & Highways

- The Parish Council had held a Community Transport and Highways Meeting in April and had considered the issues raised by residents and suggested solutions at the May Parish Council meeting. A Working Group, which would include residents, was being set up to take forward actions.
- New surfacing by the relocated bus stop at the front of the Galleries had just been laid and a new bench was on order.
- Footpaths were monitored to check they were maintained and to identify any that needed improving.

Climate and Environment

- In light of the Parish Council's Climate and Nature Emergency declarations an online community meeting had been held in 2021, with support from B&NES. From this meeting work had started on help with home energy improvements (through FLHEG). There had been clear interest in the idea of a community renewable energy project and the Parish Council was working with Bristol and West Community Energy (BWCE) to investigate the potential for a community solar panel project to cover local energy needs. A location had been identified and information was being sought from SSE on the capacity of the grid. There was a need to build a plan of further actions arising from points made at the community climate meeting.
- Trialling of changes to the mowing regime to improve the biodiversity of the Cemetery had caused some concerns last year. In light of resident feedback and experience gained, changes had been made to the mowing regime this year. A Working Group, which included some residents, had been established to consider and review proposals for maintenance of the Cemetery. The Parish Council had arranged for the Cemetery to be 'tidied up' at the end of 2021 and this had been well received by residents.
- The Parish Council had recently organised a professional survey of the trees on Parish Council land (The Tynning and Cemetery). A significant amount of tree works had been identified and the Parish Council was engaging contractors to undertake the critical works as a matter of urgency. Other works would be looked at in the longer term. Consideration would be given to minimising the ecological impacts of all the tree works required and to appropriate replanting.

Lighting and Other Assets

- A project to replace the current street lamps with LEDs was being embarked upon. Initial investigations into possibilities and costs were being undertaken.
- The old, enamel, Freshford Station sign had been deteriorating and a project had been undertaken to replace the sign with an exact replica. This had been mostly funded by GWR and Severnside Rail Partnership, with some additional funds from FLiSCA and the Parish Council. The old sign was in storage with the proposal that it would be installed in the new Galleries café extension.
- The Parish Council had worked with B&NES to have replacement bins installed across the village. Several new bins had also been proposed.

Financial

- The final instalment, out of a total of £30,000, had been given to Freshford Village Memorial Hall from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies held by the Parish Council. A further £10,000 had been given to the Hall towards Stage 1 of the redevelopment works. £3500 had been committed to the Galleries extension project once planning approval was received. The Parish Council would consider whether more money could be granted to the Galleries once other major project costs were known.

Other

- A revised Bathavon Forum had been launched, with a remit to help parishes and B&NES to work together on projects and local matters. A Climate Group had been established as part of the Forum.
- The Freshford Jubilee Picnic would be held on Thursday 2 June.

Question and Comments from Residents

- It was suggested that the Parish Council should consider switching off some of the street lights in Freshford as part of the project considering moving to LED lamps. There had been some support for this when the Neighbourhood Plan was being developed. Safety risks would have to be considered but there might be particular lights that could be switched off.
This idea would be considered as part of the street lamp project, but that any proposals to switch off some street lamps would be put to residents for consultation.
- It was reported that it had not been possible to access the Freshford Parish Council noticeboard on Midford Lane since the noticeboards had been repaired last summer. All noticeboards had been fitted with locks and it was not clear where the key for this board was.
It was agreed that this situation needed to be resolved as soon as possible and that councillors would look into this.
- A broken bus stop sign was reported.
The Parish Council would look into contacting the bus company for a replacement.
- Bags of rubbish were continuing to be left next to the public bin at the front of the Galleries. The Chair of the FVMH Committee reported that he was aware of the problem and looking into resolving the issue.
- Issues with parking outside and around The Inn were reported, creating problems driving down this road on busy days. Difficulties in resolving this issue without causing parking problems elsewhere in the village were noted. It was suggested that providing information on train services to Freshford could help reduce the number of people visiting the village by car.
- Concerns about the temporary closure of the B3108 between Winsley and Bradford on Avon from 25 July to 2 September 2022 were raised.
It was reported that alternative arrangements were being made for the D1 bus and that the diversionary route would not direct traffic through Freshford. Information on the road closure was available on the Wiltshire Council website under 'Active Travel Schemes'.
- It was reported that the Parish Council previously alerted residents to local road closures but did not appear to do so anymore.
It was confirmed that the Parish Council still emailed residents with details of road closures where these had been received – sometimes details of short notice closures were not sent to the Parish Council in time. Details of all road closures in Freshford and the surrounding areas were available at: <https://one.network/uk/bathnes>