

WEST DOWN VILLAGE FORUM

A Village Forum Meeting was held on Tuesday 17th September 2019. It was attended by members of the community and also representatives from the following organisations:

West Down Parish Council
West Down Community Shop
West Down Gardening Club
St Calixtus Church
West Down Village Green Field Association
West Berry Federation
West Berry Federation PTFA
West Down Parish Hall Management Committee
West Down Women's Institute

Apologies were received from Pippa Stafford, David and Ronnie Maidment, and John Stainer and Cllr Sue Ayre.

They reported as follows:

West Down Parish Council – It was noted with regret that the Parish Clerk, Dave Lewis had retired after 22 years' service. The new Parish Clerk, Vanessa Hunt, was welcomed. It is hoped that a new Parish Councillor will be co-opted in the near future. It is hoped that the Dog Poo Drama has now been solved, as the Parish Council is paying for the four bins in the village to be emptied. Residents are reminded that the defibrillator is situated in the porch of the Community Shop; it is suitable for use by adults and children and is maintained and monitored by the Parish Council. It was noted that new signage for the defibrillator was needed. There had been a number of problems with the collection of litter from the village bins, but Councillor Sue Ayre had been active in informing the District Council to rectify the situation. Footpath maintenance is ongoing, overseen by Councillors Oades and Drew, there is a map on sale in the Community Shop which details all of the local footpaths. It was noted that the village is very fortunate in District Councillor Malcolm Wilkinson, who is vigilant in protecting the interests of the village, particularly on planning issues. There was discussion on possible resources that would be good for the village to be purchased with a grant, it was felt that trees were readily available and a large map showing village amenities might be more useful. County Councillor Andrea Davies has also been an asset for the village and has been particularly helpful on highway issues. The Parish Council is intending to introduce an Award Scheme, which would recognise contributions made to the welfare of the village. Everyone was asked to consider this and to make nominations in readiness for a presentation at the next village fair. A welcome was extended to all the new residents moving into the village and everyone was pleased to note that three of these had already volunteered to help in various organisations. Cllr Roy Drew reminded organisations that the Fire Service is losing stations and urged them as individuals and organisations to oppose these closures. He gave details of a speaker who would address meetings and visit houses to check on fire safety. The email contact is: sfisher@dsfire.gov.uk It was also noted that a representative from Devon Communities has offered to give the community a talk on Emergency Planning. The school already has such plans and it was felt that it would be useful for the community to have this information and it will be organised by the Parish Council.

West Down Community Shop – This is well managed and has an active team of volunteers. There are volunteer opportunities in a wide range of duties and it is an excellent way of getting to know people. The stock is varied and includes local produce. Revenue has not been so good this year, there is a dependence on the tourists and there were fewer this year. Fund raising has to be done to sustain the business and a curry and quiz night is planned for March. A Christmas party will be held for volunteers, and will be self-funded. The Committee that manages the shop needs new members, particularly as one of the long serving members is retiring shortly.

West Down Gardening Club – This has 66 members and welcomes new members, particularly younger ones who might enjoy some help and advice. It has an interesting programme of speakers and a holiday is organised every year, the most recent one was to the East Midlands and was greatly enjoyed. The club meets on Thursdays and welcomes visitors. Further details are on the village website.

St Calixtus Church – The representative was unsure about the possibility of the usual Nativity Walk, but welcomed the suggestion that carols would be sung around the tree outside the Parish Hall. There will be Christmas services in the church and these will be shown on the village website.

West Down Village Green Field Association – The two recent events, the Village Fair and the Late Summer Fun Day had been very successful and had raised useful funds as well as providing great entertainment. The aim of the association is to provide facilities that will encompass the needs of all age groups and abilities and after seeking

information from residents, it is planning to provide an all-weather track around the field, with outdoor gym equipment placed at intervals. This will open up the field to buggies and wheelchairs. To help to raise the necessary funds there will be an expanded village fair next year, with opportunities for local organisations to have stalls. The provisional date for this is June 20th. The provision of all-weather facilities that would enable events to be held in adverse conditions is under investigation. It was felt that the field is an important asset and is very well maintained and those responsible for grass cutting and general maintenance were thanked for their efforts.

Concerns were raised over the behaviour of irresponsible dog owners who allow their dogs to run free, often fouling the children's play area and intimidating children. Because of this, Cllr Mike Reeves requested that the children's play area was fenced off. This issue had been raised before and the representative agreed to raise it at the next meeting. The issue of dog fouling, which occurs in other areas of the village as well, was discussed at length and dismay was expressed that such a simple problem should be so unsolvable.

West Berry Federation – The school is very full and cannot accommodate many more children, but priority will be given to local children. The last academic year had been very successful and the performing arts in particular had been extremely gratifying. As well as the end of year performance that had been held in the Landmark Theatre in Ilfracombe, a wonderful recital had been held in Exeter Cathedral. All members of the community are welcome at these events and a noticeboard will be erected outside the school and the village newsletter will also carry information. The school is very keen to work with the community, especially as many of the children do not have an extended family and community relationships are very important. It is understood that parking can be a problem for local residents, as many children live outside the village. Residents were urged to inform the school regarding problem parking and speeding cars. Bikeability training had just been completed and Cllr. Sue Squire expressed concern about the over confidence of some children who underestimate the dangers of traffic. The school has been producing a map of 'safe' places within the school and plans to produce a similar map of the village and residents were asked to identify traffic danger spots around the village. It was suggested that the 'Parish-on-line' map would be helpful and Cllr. Keith Oades agreed to send this to the school. There was a general feeling that parents should be aware of the dangers faced by children, in the car park and around the village, as although it is usually quiet, cars and tractors are about and children should stay alert. The school greatly appreciates the Balfour Beatty 'Boots on the Ground' initiative which has created a track around the field that will enable the children to use bikes etc. Parents and small children/babies are welcome to attend Stay and Play at the school on Friday mornings during term time..

WestBerry Federation PTFA – welcomed the information about the Christmas Celebrations and gave details of the forthcoming events that they are planning. These include a jumble and bric-a-brac sale on 9th November, starting at 12.00, there will be a Christmas Fair on 29th November, from 3.10 until 5.00 and on the 3rd December, it will be the 'Senior Dudes' Christmas Dinner. Information on all these events will be on the school website.

West Down Parish Hall – Gaynor Isaac explained that a series of events is planned for Christmas, starting on 7th December with an 'Old Fashion Christmas' theme. It will include a Christmas Party, and a competition for the best house decorated with Christmas lights. The date for judging this has yet to be decided and it was suggested that Cllr. Andrea Davies was invited to judge it. There will be a Christmas tree outside the hall and carols will be sung around it. The hall has recently been re-decorated, it was felt that it looked much fresher and more pleasant, but the absence of the clock was noted. (Now replaced!) The current plan is to replace the toilets that are currently inadequate, but this is a major undertaking and is expected to cost in the region of £90,000. This requires a huge fund raising effort and it is hoped that grants will be obtained to help with this. It is also hoped that arrangements can be made to offset the VAT which will make a big difference to the costs. The running costs of the hall are covered by the bookings and the events that are planned raise funds for improvements. A meeting had been held with the Outreach Post Office and it was explained that the costs of providing this mean that it is running at a loss. It is unusual for a village the size of West Down to have 9 hours a week and they are hoping for a £300 reduction in costs, which would mean a loss for the hall. Customers are reminded that banking can be done at this facility and it is important to make use of it. Forthcoming events are the Ferret Race, 9th November, Evening with Rick Tucker, 30th November, the date for the annual Quiz in January is yet to be finalised. Organisations were reminded that for some volunteers their Food Hygiene Certificates would be out of date and it would be economical to put a group together, anyone wishing to participate should contact the Parish Hall Committee. It was also pointed out that it is possible to do this on line.

West Down Women's Institute – is now 71 years old and still focusses on education and giving opportunities to women that would not otherwise be available. Forthcoming events include an outing to hear the Military Wives Choir and there is an extensive programme of outings and visits to theatres etc. The WI supports the shop and helps to raise funds for other village initiatives such as the Air Ambulance. Every year they attend a remembrance ceremony with children from the school, at which poppies that the members have made are placed on the graves and memorials of men who have died or served in both world wars. They meet on the afternoon of the second Thursday of every month, members from other villages belong and newcomers are always welcome.

General points – Cllr Sue Squire reported that the road sweeper had been to the village, but was unable to clean all areas because of parked cars.

The school was thanked for sending Christmas cards to residents last year and the school said that they are happy to send postcards to anyone who is isolated or lonely.