

Corfe Castle Parish Council

Annual report 2021-2

1-It has been another busy year for the Council with some major activities being discussed and many completed.

2-The largest project was the installation of the wooden play structure in the playground –the “Castle” -and the repair of other equipment. The children of the village and visitors seem to love it. The replacement of the adult keep fit equipment remains a project to be funded.

3-This is the first full year of having 5 hours a week caretaker, Tim Lee, and by common agreement the parish is much tidier. Tim has carried out a number of repair jobs, which have saved money on contractors, and he is restoring parts of God’s Acre. Many thanks Tim. Our toilets continue to be praised by visitors for their cleanliness and we renewed our agreement with JD Facilities Services for another year

4-The residents car park opposite God’s Acre has new drainage and the surface was restored. As it is a sand surface it will require regular maintenance but hopefully at less cost in the future. We are investigating the provision of electrical charging points.

5-We have sought to carry out repairs as soon as they are needed to keep the village safe and beautiful. One of the playground fences has blown down three times in two years and we will need to think of a stronger solution as “unusual “weather events seem to occur more regularly. The need to fund projects to a standard, which requires less maintenance, was one of the factors behind increasing the Council budget so that it could cope with expensive repairs.

6-We deliberated at length on the budget for 22-23, as it was a large percentage increase on a small budget. We realised that our budget could not fund core activities such as repairs without drawing on reserves. Inflationary pressures have hit everyone hard but our budget is no more per head than neighbouring Councils.

7-We held a special village and Council meeting to consider the application by the Corfe Castle Community Land Trust for 16 social and 4 market houses in West Street. There were strong opinions on the proposal but after discussion the Council decided to support the proposal. The Council has recently learnt that the application has been withdrawn and a revised proposal for 22 houses will be submitted without the open market housing element.

8-A community speed watch was started this year, which complements the Speed Indicator Device, which the Parish funded and is maintained by Richard Sedgley & Dave Picksley

9-The Environment Group in the village has carried on with projects such as encouraging wild flowers and seed swaps. The group has pursued tree-planting possibilities and with others over 2000 trees have been planted in the parish. There is greater interest in solar panels for homes where the regulations allow it. A proposal for the Council to take on the Secret Field near the Commons allotment did not proceed as there was local opposition and the National Trust with local volunteers will pursue other ways of improving the site for biodiversity.

10-The Council asked Crazy 4 Corfe to set up a Platinum Jubilee Committee at short notice. The Committee has done a remarkable job and our Jubilee weekend programme must be one of the most intensive of any village of our size. Parish organisations, business and individuals have contributed generously and it demonstrates what a wonderful place our Parish is to live in. There will be legacy projects and the Council has agreed to site a semi mature oak tree in God's Acre as a lasting memorial to the Queen.

11-In addition to undertaking a host of projects and God's Acre our Clerk undertook a large programme of study to achieve the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA) qualification. We thank her for all her work for the Council and for achieving the award in April. Many Congratulations. One side benefit of the course is that the Clerk is aware of the policy expectations on the Council and she has prepared all the required policies for a modern Council.

12-We welcomed two new Councillors this year>: Melanie Roberts after a by-election and Helen Sumbler by cooption. We said farewell and thanks to Rachel Fooks who had campaigned for the new playground. I have not singled out individual councillors by name as all have contributed to the best of their circumstances and we would not have achieved much of the above without considerable work by councillors.

13-On wider issues the impact of the Covid virus has been with us for over two years and is still affecting the health of all of us. It has meant more people opting for UK holidays and Corfe Castle seems busier all year round. There have been problems for businesses in recruiting staff to meet the demand. The whole area has seen large increases in house prices as people see the attractions of Purbeck for living and home working. Affordability for locals becomes ever more distant. The council has a policy of discouraging the growth in second homes and there is much more interest nationally in discussing policies, which will reduce second home demand.

14- The train service from Wareham to London is being restored to twice hourly from May but the Swanage to Wareham trial service originally planned for 2015 has been delayed again for staffing and financial reasons. We are frustrated by the delays in improving cycle and pedestrian routes in the peninsula in particular the Purbeck Park link to the village which does not have a firm implementation plan after 13 years of discussions. Walkers and

cyclists have discovered the joys of our area but some routes feel unsafe. We will continue to press these issues.

15-We supported the campaign to save the Swanage based ambulance car and the campaign was successful. Unfortunately a new multi purpose health hub at Wareham will not proceed as promised.

15-The Parish Council published a Parish Action Plan listing all the projects we are working on and this is on our Website. We also have a Facebook page.

Steve Clarke
Chairman 21-22