

PUXTON AND HEWISH COMMUNITY NEWS

Life At the Heart of the North Somerset Levels

OCTOBER 2016

A PARISH NEWSLETTER?

Puxton is a Civil Parish of some 360 residents, living in 130 homes. Of the residents, 30% are under 25, 47% are aged between 25-59 and 21% are 60 plus. The average age is 42. Some 50% of homes are along Bristol Road and Palmers Elm, 11% in Mays Green, 25% in Puxton, 8% in West Hewish, 6% in E Hewish. There are also a large number of business sites as well as a lot of people working from home. We have pub, a restaurant, a school, Holy Saviour Church and a village hall as places to meet. We have no clubs, activities, events or publications to bring us together. We would love, somehow, to stir this disparate and scattered grouping into a cohesive and vibrant community.

There may not be a buzz of village social activity at the moment, but there are several concerns - addressed below - that already unify our community.

We hope to keep everyone in touch with these and other concerns and to share news of social activities, by issuing periodic Newsletters such as this. If it is to be a genuine community newsletter it will need community involvement. Individuals or groups of residents will need to contribute pieces about the area - the good things, the bad things, the things we need to do something about. News on the social front will be particularly welcome - gardening, local history, sports clubs, young farmers, church activities... who is doing what?... how can I become involved?

With the advent of the Hewish and Puxton Community Fund, and with the huge problems of poor broadband... and the huge benefits of a Village Hall... there is no better time than now, to get the social juices of the community moving.

HEWISH AND PUXTON COMMUNITY FUND

The monies donated to the parish by the solar farm projects in Wick Lane amount to £41700. This is being held in the Parish Council bank account while the 'Hewish and Puxton Community Fund' is set up to administer it. We hope the Fund will be able to grow year-on-year by attracting grants and donations to get things done that the Parish wants done. The most obvious immediate examples of where to allocate money are broadband... and the Village Hall... the parish's most significant asset. It is anticipated that these projects, and other deserving projects that emerge, will be able to apply for funding assistance from a robust Fund, run by the undoubted entrepreneurial skills that reside within the Parish. Anyone who is interested in being part of the Community Fund project should urgently contact Cllr Katie Wilson, via the Clerk - see bottom of page 2 - so that the setting up of the fund can be speedily progressed.

THE VILLAGE HALL

(an unofficial pondering)

The Village Hall and its future weigh increasingly on people's minds in the knowledge that two of the stalwarts of its Committee have announced their intention to retire in November. As a registered charity it is run under a constitution approved by the Charity Commission. Halls always need work; they are far more complicated to run, keep up to standard, and to attract users to, than most of us realise. However, there are many examples of great successes in developing the uses of halls... even of re-building them!

Village Halls run under Charity Commission rules are not usually the responsibility of their parish council. However, there are - even local - examples of where a parish council has been obliged to 'cover' for the lack of a quorate hall committee. This is often implicit within a hall's constitution. Whilst Puxton Parish Council is hoping that this situation will not arise, it has to be prepared! As with everything local, it depends on volunteers coming forward to be trustees.

FASTER BROADBAND

Most people will be aware that broadband provision in the parish is less than optimal. BT will not be delivering fast broadband (fibre) to the parish any time soon - legally they don't have to until 2020 - which means that if any of us in the parish want better internet speeds in the meantime, we will have to rely on applying individually for the £500 grant available to households with less than 2Mb/sec connection speeds, or by getting together as a community to apply for a wi-fi installation or a BT 'Gap Funding Scheme' for fibre.

The individual grant scheme can be accessed via <http://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/cds-broadband-voucher-scheme/>. The approved suppliers for this scheme mostly offer satellite broadband. Those that also offer wi-fi (a more satisfactory supply than satellite) require a community application, towards which we understand the individual £500 grants may be pooled.

Wi-fi or fibre options require investment from the community. If faster broadband is supplied via wi-fi or fibre, the supplier will need some 30-60 subscribers before they will install the needed equipment to the Parish.

Cllr Wilson is investigating a range of possibilities that might reduce the overall cost per subscriber, but essential to progressing any of the community initiatives is the assembling of a list of interested residents.

If you are interested in joining a Community Broadband Initiative for the parish, please e-mail the Parish Clerk (clerk@puxtonparishcouncil.org.uk) with your name, address and landline telephone number; this information is needed by the suppliers to prepare accurate estimates of what supply to the parish will cost. Once we have 30-40 interested parties we can approach suppliers for estimates, and planning and installation timetables.

CRIME

Probably due to the closeness of the motorway junction, there tends to be a regular level of opportunistic crime along the A370. Do be sure to keep street-facing doors and windows locked if you are at the back of your home, and put garden tools and valuables away under lock and key when not in use. Always try to report suspicious incidents to the police. Although they are not staffed to respond to every incident - particularly if there is no assault or theft - your reports help build a more complete picture of criminal intent in the area, which gives us a chance of improved drive-by police surveillance than we will otherwise enjoy.

COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

SpeedWatch volunteers are police trained; they monitor motorist speeds with specialist equipment. The police define safe locations from which to operate. Volunteer groups can go out at any daylight time of their choosing, to any of the designated locations, giving as much or as little time as they can manage. This irregular operating pattern provides an element of surprise to the unsuspecting speeding motorist.

Information gathered is used to contact offenders by letter to warn them against speeding and encourage them into better driving behaviour. Persistent offenders can expect further Police action.

We presently have a co-ordinator and one other volunteer. We need at least four more volunteers for the project to start. You are probably interested... Please contact The Clerk (see below) in the first instance.

WANT TO BE A PARISH COUNCILLOR?

There are two vacancies on the Parish Council. The Council is passionate about increasing the sense of community within the villages of Puxton and Hewish. The Community Fund, broadband and the Village Hall present starting points from which to achieve a great deal. Impetus from the Parish Council will be key to kick-starting the community effort. Apply to join the Council to be part of this effort by contacting the Parish Clerk (see below). He will explain what is involved, can share your interest with the existing Councillors and can handle your application should you decide to make one.

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