

## **Chair's Report: AGM 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

Our last AGM was over two years ago on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020, and when we held that meeting did we know that by the end of the month things were going to change, with government restrictions being introduced to stem the spread of Covid-19, to help protect lives and help ease the impact on the National Health Service.

The pandemic tested us all, and Community Association's activities were adapted.

During the early days of the pandemic, the Community Association's ability to communicate with residents was restricted, with us not being able to deliver newsletters. We did increase our online output and we encouraged residents through this media to keep a check on neighbours. Not being able to communicate with residents did mean that for some it meant increased isolation, with them not knowing what was happening within the community, and greater loneliness with little personal contact.

We were contacted by several relatives of older residents, showing concern for their parents, and we were able to put them in contact with residents living near their family member. Being good neighbours was encouraged.

National initiatives were promoted; lighting a candle for the NHS, teddy bears & rainbows in windows, clap for carers and encouraging people to have an 'at home' party to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day. Through our social media sites and e-Circular, residents were able to share their images of all these activities.

We were not able to hold our usual Festive Fairfield activities, instead we organised a village advent calendar, which was a success. Unfortunately, promotion of this activity was, again, via our online presence, which excluded many older residents.

Christmas 2021 saw a rise in Covid cases nationally, and as a precaution, Festive Fairfield activities were greatly reduced; we were able to hold an outdoor Carols Around The Christmas and, following the previous year's success, encouraged residents to take part in another Village Advent Calendar. Unfortunately, the Christmas week film and New Year's Eve party had to be cancelled.

When permissible during the pandemic, litter picking has taken place, planters maintained, and newsletters distributed. By February 2022, all our usual activities were being delivered including our monthly lunchtime gatherings.

Fairfield Flicks, which had been launched in 2019, had to be put on hold at the start of the pandemic, with a very brief resumption in September 2020 for two screenings, it was not until September 2021 that we were able to properly resume our programme of screenings, with Covid-secure protocols in place. By November 2021 we were able to host our first Live Music event, and in January 2022 our first Live Stream.

Current attendance figures at film screenings are below that pre-pandemic, with people having found other things to do whilst government restrictions were in place. The quality of the movie screening is very dependent on the media that has been produced by the distributors, but overall, our screenings are good. The film schedule contains a mixture of genres; however, older films are generally not attracting the same numbers as more recently produced films.

Our Event Cinema included Northern Ballet's 'Merlin', which was well received by the audience, and there has been a decent attendance to Live Music nights, with some quality acts taking to the stage.

Delivering Fairfield Flicks is a partnership of volunteers, audience and Fairfield Village Hall. The Hall committee have applied for a grant to buy blackout curtains, which will eliminate light seepage into the hall, and stage lights. The Hall have also applied for a grant to digitalise the cinema equipment, to enable us to screening recent releases. This will be at a cost of over £30K. We should hear whether our grant application has been successful for the curtains & lights by mid-August and for the cinema equipment by November.

This year has seen two events being delivered in partnership with Woodcote Brewery, who are based in Dodford; first the screening of a Six Nation's England v Ireland rugby match in March and at St. George's day celebration in April.

During Spring 2022, it was announced that the Woodland Trust had finally acquired the land to extend Pepper Wood. The Community Association was thanked by the Woodland Trust for our support and promotion of the project, and for helping to deliver one of the best consultation site walks that they have organised, plus a sizable number of responses to their online questionnaire.

In early June 2022, we celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, hosting three events, plus the launch of our Recording History project. The first, an Afternoon Tea, was a sell-out, the other two events, live stream of the jubilee concert and Big Lunch, did not attract as many people. All three events were enjoyed by people who attended them. The Recording History project, which asks people to photograph themselves outside their homes, has, so far, yielded few responses. We will continue to encourage people to be part of this initiative.

Traffic and highways issues are ongoing, and we continue, along with the Parish Council, to chip away to get improvements. Mobile Speed Enforcement continues, as it is still an issue through the village along Stourbridge Road, and last August, after many years of lobbying, a 40 mph buffer zone was introduced from Stoneybridge Island, and earlier this year the gullies along Swan Lane were cleared and repaired. Responses from residents pushed County Hall to reconsider their proposal to address the issue that there was not a dropped kerb to cross Yew Tree Lane at the junction with Stourbridge Road. Thank to the

community and Parish Council, dropped kerbs have now been installed. Across the whole community, more work is needed to address issues caused by vehicles driving at inappropriate speeds, e.g. Sandy Lane & Money Lane junction.

Fairfield Village Community Association works for the whole community, and we try to include all residents in our activities.

The Community Association has a good relationship with the local police, and surgeries, whether pop-up or on a Saturday morning, have taken place. Earlier this year, the Chief Constable (Pippa Mills) joined residents at a special mid-week social gathering. Our local police officer (PC Lloyd Stone) regularly patrols the community and he even came to our Jubilee Afternoon Tea. Burglaries in the area are low, but we should not be complacent. More often than not thefts are opportunistic, so please continue to review your home & shed security, and don't leave items unattended.

On to the year ahead, with events already being planned, plus a fantastic Fairfield Flicks programme. There will be challenges, such as the proposals to expand quarry sites, plus much work is needed to be done to see if we can establish a Community Shop.

Please encourage your neighbours to support our activities. Across Fairfield, Wildmoor and Stoneybridge there are many examples of good neighbours, but let's also be a vibrant village community. Without the people coming together & supporting life in the village and its environment, community dies.

Delivering the work of the Community Association is a team effort, whether regular or one-off contributions, the list of volunteers is long, and I would like to thank each and every one of you for your time and support. Please keep up the good work that helps make our community a great place to live and visit.

Thank you.