

Froxfield Parish Council News

NOVEMBER 2022

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Playground Swings must be replaced...

Sadly, the playground swings have been removed for safety reasons.

The playground equipment is checked annually and the recent inspection found the wooden frame had deteriorated and become dangerously weak. The council had no alternative but to immediately remove the swings.

The Parish Council carries out monthly visual checks of the equipment and had raised concerns about the timber frame rotting, then after an annual inspection by Wickstead Leisure the equipment was condemned as falling below safety standards. The Council is now seeking quotes on replacing the swings. The playground is a great asset to the village which was originally funded by a National Lottery grant and we will make it a priority to ensure it is maintained to a high standard for all to enjoy.

The matter was discussed at the recent meeting of the Parish Council on Monday 21st November where we made the commitment to replacing the swings as soon as possible. However, after contacting a few playground equipment manufacturers, the initial indications are that we may be facing a cost of up to £5000 to replace the swings with something similar. We don't have the funds and would need to look at a number of options to replace the swings quickly:

- ☼ **Seeking grants** — the playground was originally developed with a Lottery grant
- ☼ **Sponsorship** — financial support from local businesses
- ☼ **Raising Funds** through a community event such as a fête
- ☼ **Raising the annual Precept** to cover this one-off cost — the Precept is the money given to us by Wiltshire Council as part of the Community Charge and spreads costs evenly across all households. [see green box below]

There are other playground equipment manufacturers yet to be investigated and the Parish Council will make it a priority to get the swings restored by the spring.

If you have any inspirational ideas for raising funds or information about playground equipment which you feel might help, please contact the Council Clerk Esther Cope on clerk@froxfield.org

Slow Down on the A4 - 40mph limit demanded

For the last 10 years the Parish Council has been working on ways to slow traffic through the village. The width of the main road in particular seems to encourage speeding.

There is an active **Community Speed Watch** group in the village. Across 25 sessions volunteers recorded 208 speeders doing 47mph or more. The Police won't let them report any speeding less than this!) and resident organiser Sarah Whatley reports there are many, many more drivers recorded travelling at 45 mph inside the 40mph zone.

From this sample, the Police sent out 112 '1st' offence letters and 3 '2nd' offence letters which are for those that have been caught more than once. The Community Speed Watch teams are not allowed to record speeds within the 50mph zone – being restricted to the 40mph – so mostly tests traffic outside The College. It is clear, however, from Sarah's reports that traffic is already travelling in excess of 50mph at this point and fails to slow down.

This has become a particular concern as the footpath towards the Pelican is narrow and traffic passes very close at excessive speeds.

Because there is a feeling that it is only a matter of time before there is a serious accident, Froxfield Parish Council would like to see the speed limit lowered to 40mph between the two sets of village gates so that this 40mph zone covers the entire village. We are actively investigating other measures to encourage compliance, including SIDs. Ideally we would see 40 roundels on the gates so that traffic knows to slow immediately on entering the village envelope.

Meanwhile, we have written to the Wiltshire Road Engineers and have gained the support of our Wiltshire County Councillor Cllr Stuart Wheeler.

At the time of construction of the village gates, The Froxfield PC asked to have the 40mph speed limit extended to the eastern gates. This was refused for reasons we found incomprehensible at the time and still do. It simply defies common sense, particularly as there are four homes directly opposite the Pelican pub – as

SIDS options

Drivers will be familiar with the 'smiley face' **Speed Indicator Devices** (SIDs) which have sprung up in many local villages in response to residents' increasing despair with speeding drivers.

These act as a visual reminder that motorists are going too fast and particularly useful for those who have just not reacted fast enough to a change in speed limit. The Parish Council hopes this will be the case here!

We have identified two possible providers of devices and the preferred option is for a UK-developed device which will cost £2,600.

Both devices record information, which can be accessed and presented to Wiltshire Highways to support our requests for action on speeding.

However, this also needs to be installed by Wiltshire Council contractors and the process must be authorised by the Local Highways committee for the area.

We are proceeding with the application to purchase a SID device and have this positioned in the area close to the start of the 40mph zone in the east of the village, near The College.

However, ideally these SIDs are moved around for maximum impact and we plan to identify two potential sites – another near OKA. This would also need to be authorised and carried out by Wiltshire CC contractors. We will report back on progress.

SLOW DOWN

**THIS IS A
NEIGHBORHOOD
NOT A RACETRACK
THANK YOU :)**

THE PELICAN INN

well as a reasonably busy turning to Oakhill to the south of the A4 just before the gates. Everyone is aware of the speeding traffic and it is a blight on the eastern end of the village.

We have requested a new **traffic speed survey** from Wiltshire Council. There is a hold up as council is seeking a new contractor to carry out these surveys (the two rubber lines across the road type).

We had one carried out in 2014 and this showed excessive speeding which led to the plans for the gates and future Speed Indicator Devices. We understand there is currently a backlog of more than 100 requests for traffic surveys across Wiltshire — so this could seriously delay plans, but we will continue to apply pressure on Wiltshire Council to reduce the speed limits at the eastern end of the village.

Vanya Body, Chair Froxfield PC

- We are also supported by Pelican publican Martyn Driscoll who created his own sign for the side of the road imploring everyone to slow down and recognise that Froxfield is a community and not a racetrack!

New approach to Parish Council communication emails

For the last five or more years the Parish Council has operated a dedicated FroxfieldPCNews email address but this is now being discontinued.

We are committed to continuing to communicate with our residents via email and have migrated the existing mailing list over to our dedicated Parish Council email system — which is more secure — and which is linked to the website (www.froxfield.org). Using this system has the advantage that it is more regularly monitored and can take two-way conversations more effectively.

We have some 90 people who have signed up to receive updates about Froxfield and if you would like to join this network for bulletins, email to v.body@froxfield.org with your permission to be added.

Meanwhile, if you have an issue which you would like to raise with the Parish Council please email either the Parish Clerk Esther Cope on clerk@froxfield.org or the Council Chair — currently Vanya Body on v.body@froxfield.org.

Job Vacancy

CLERK TO FROXFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Froxfield Parish Council is seeking a Parish Clerk who will also be the Responsible Financial Officer, starting 1 April 2023. The role of Clerk is part time, at 5 hours per week. The pay rate is £11.63 an hour, fixed in accordance with the National Association of Local Council's approved salary range at Level 7. This will be reviewed annually with scope to advance to Level 12 dependent on training and qualifications undertaken. The job is home-based.

Froxfield has 299 residents registered on the Electoral Roll with an annual 'Precept' (annual budget) is £11,000 for 2022/23. As Clerk, you would administer the financial affairs of the council.

A full job description is available on application, but the successful applicant must have good computer, administrative and communication skills; be competent in bookkeeping (we use the Scribe accounting package), and should be confident with minute taking and dealing with correspondence.

A working knowledge of Parish Council procedures and/or public administration is desirable, but not essential, as training is available.

However, a successful Parish Clerk must have personal qualities of integrity, discretion, objectivity and impartiality.

You will attend all the Council's public meetings, held on or around the second Monday of alternate months — normally in the Froxfield Memorial Hall — with the occasional extraordinary meetings as required.

For more information about Froxfield Parish Council, including minutes of past meetings, our website is www.froxfield.org

For further information prior to applying, including a full job description, contact the Chair of Froxfield Parish Council Vanya Body on v.body@froxfield.org.

Closing date for applications is Monday January 30th.

- Our current Clerk Esther Cope has moved to a full-time clerking role with a much larger Parish Council at Bray, West Berkshire. She turned what was a desire to 'try something new' into a completely new career.

Froxfield today... tomorrow, who knows!

Jargon Buster

Parish Council language can be a bit baffling. Here's two which are worth explaining!

Precept — this is the money which comes to Froxfield Parish Council from Wiltshire County Council to pay for what we look after in the village. Last year the Precept was £11,000. This paid for the final installation of our village gates, the maintenance of the village green and safety inspections on the playground equipment and trees on the public spaces and any work required (including on the PC-owned water meadow), amongst other outgoings.

This is the only reliable source of income for the village. We are encouraged by WCC to fund any improvements to the village facilities from the annual Precept fund, but often need to look at other methods of raising money such as grants. The Precept for 23/24 will be decided at the January meeting of the Parish Council. This year the precept equated to a charge of £73.71 for a Council Tax Band D property, incorporated within your overall Council Tax bill.

LHFIGs — This is the Wiltshire Council Local Highways & Footpaths Improvement Groups — which is a series of local committees comprised of Wiltshire highways engineers and parish councillors, meeting quarterly to discuss and approve ANY NEW expenditure on local roads and footpaths. Froxfield sits in the Pewsey Vale East district and PC chair Vanya Body usually represents our council at these meetings, normally face-to-face, but currently still online.

The budget for all projects in PVE area this year is £26,712. However, this funding covers only small projects and councils seeking big developments must apply for 'substantive funding' direct from Wiltshire CC. This spending must still be given the go-ahead by the local LHFIG. There is about £250,000 available across the whole of Wiltshire for substantive roads and footpath improvements. Massive roads infrastructure projects remain the remit of WCC.

This year Froxfield asked for new white lines painted around the village green — which cost £400 and we contribute 25% of this. Next year we will be requesting the poles for SIDs devices to be put up and it is not yet clear how much this will cost the village.

Be considerate in your parking

The council has now completed its work to restore and rebuild the edge of the village green. Workers from the Probation Service's Community Payback team did a fantastic job in installing special reinforcing webbing under the surface of the edge of the green along Church Lane, laying new top soil and re-seeding the grass. This was a big job as the ground had become tremendously compacted due to parked cars riding up onto the edge of the green. The grass established well and we placed traffic cones along the length to help keep cars off the area during the summer months.

It is inevitable that cars will still occasionally park with their tyres up on the edge of the green but we do ask that, if at all possible, people do not park on Church Lane adjacent to the village green regularly. The ground is already becoming churned up and despite the reinforcing, risks quickly becoming a quagmire!

The road is particularly narrow and badly parked cars can also block the access for the emergency services as well as large farm vehicles — such as tractors, and council refuse and recycling trucks.

Bollards were installed by the CP team at either end where inconsiderate parking was causing serious visibility and safety issues. These have now been backed up with white lines painted by Wiltshire CC, to indicate where parking is not acceptable.

We realise that parking is always an issue and that some non-residents had been using Froxfield for convenient free parking during their working day, compounding the congestion.

In general, across the village, if you have off-road parking, please use it rather than parking on the roadside. Don't park on the corners of junctions where your vehicle can become a hazard to other road users.

Let's look after our environment!

The Coronation of King Charles III

Although this is some way off, you should be aware that the Coronation of King Charles III will take place on Saturday May 6th 2023.

There will be an additional Bank Holiday on Monday May 8th so the 'King's subjects' can enjoy a relaxed weekend — and this normally means a good excuse for a party!

Having rolled out the barrel for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee — in association with the annual Froxfield Beer & Music Festival — next year it might be easy to become a bit jaded and overlook what a memorable and potentially 'once in a lifetime' event the coronation will be.

The Parish Council helped organise a 'street party' on the village green this year to mark the Platinum Jubilee and planted a commemorative tree to honour the late Queen's 70 years on the throne.

How should we mark the Coronation? If you have any ideas or would like to help form a committee to help organise some village event for the Coronation weekend please email the Parish Clerk on clerk@froxfeld.org We will discuss this further at the Parish Council meeting in March, but unlike this year, we are unlikely to have substantial funds to help support an event... so this would rely on Froxfielders stepping up to get involved!



LET'S TALK ABOUT NOISE...

The Parish Council is sometimes approached by residents concerned about perceived excessive noise within the village. This can be from one-off events such as parties or live entertainments, but sometimes is related to on-going low-level irritating sound — for instance from machinery operating around the clock.

The Parish Council can be sympathetic to these concerns but has no power to evaluate or enforce rules on noise.

This is the role of the Wiltshire Council enforcement officers.

The best advice is to start with the Council's website: <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/1830/Noise-nuisance>

The council says: "Tell us what type of noise it is and how it is impacting on you, where and when can you hear it. If the the time of the noise varies or changes, for example loud music, parties, noise from sporting activities or DIY noise then please complete one of our **Noise Monitoring Sheets**."