

Report from Cllr Judy Pearce for South Milton Parish Council – 26 July 2021.

- 1 The Council has re-opened in a sensible and pragmatic way from Monday 19th July. Formal meetings have still be held in person and are socially distanced but without the perspex screens which have made communications fairly difficult, mainly because of the problems of seeing who is who through them. We are still unable to use the Council Chamber because it has direct source of fresh air but alternatives are being looked at. Informal meetings will continue to be held on-line and officers and councillors will continue to work from home as far as possible.
- 2 We have received a further tranche of ARG funding, so we shall have about £1m for supporting local businesses in accordance with our policies and BEIS rules. We encourage businesses to keep an eye on our web site and social media and apply as appropriate. This should make noticeable difference to the local economy. We have so far distributed over £80m in government grants to businesses in the South Hams.
- 3 Waste collections: whilst the great majority of recycling problems have now been ironed out, there are still some residual problems, notably with assisted collections. If you know of anyone having problems, please notify Cllr Mark Long or myself as well as reporting it online. Frustratingly there are now problems with the 'street scene' side of things such as emptying litter bins, dog bins, bottle banks etc. Please also report these online and at the same time let us know so we can chase it for you. Due to the 'pingdemic' there is now a significant shortage of drivers and operatives. We have decided to suspend brown bin collections first. At present 2/3 of these are affected daily.
- 4 Localities: we have the team out monitoring things on an extended timetable seven days a week during the high season, but should Covid cases or isolation really become a problem, we may have to put some of them on alternative duties, according to any critical shortages of staff. Already some are helping with litter bin emptying at peak times as FCC simply can't get enough staff. Please bear with us in difficult times and let Mark or me know if you spot any hotspots or other problems.
- 5 Environmental Health are working closely with the Public Health officials and we still have Covid compliance officers out on the ground to help businesses operate safely. It is now up to business owners to do their own risk assessments and so things may vary from one business to another according to the risks involved.
- 6 We offered £50k to our town councils for match funded projects to help opening-up projects until the end of this financial year. These had to comply with the ARG regulations. Three towns, Totnes, Dartmouth and Kingsbridge 'buddied up' with the local Chambers of Commerce to put forward bids. All the projects from Dartmouth and Totnes were compliant and those from Kingsbridge partially so, and so £130k in all has been awarded to these towns. Although officers offered help to all towns to 'get them over the line', Salcombe and Ivybridge did not submit bids.
- 7 The council is in the process of a total revision of its constitution, with the aim of making it far more accessible and on-line friendly. The first three sections were voted through at our Council meeting recently. These now run alongside the rest of the old constitution until that too can be revised. There was extensive consultation with all the political groups of the council to achieve this and it was consequently unanimously approved.
- 8 The new Corporate Strategy called 'Better Lives for All' is out for consultation. We welcome your views. The draft version was also approved by an overwhelming majority at Council.