

ROUND and ABOUT WEST FELTON

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS

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Report to West Felton Parish Council – April 2021 - *from Colleen Hughes, Editor*

After a hiatus of 6 months prompted by the March 2020 COVID-19 lockdown regulations, publication of the monthly village magazine resumed in November 2020. Pat Mabe expressed the wish to stand down after 10 years' service, and I agreed to take back production.

HOUSE TO HOUSE DELIVERY: I was delighted by the enthusiasm of the volunteer deliverers; most were keen to resume their rounds and several new volunteers came forward, so I have a good list of substitutes for holidays or natural turnover. It was agreed that house to house delivery could be accomplished during the outside exercise periods laid down in the lockdown regulations. Deliveries by Royal Mail, other flyers and parcels were allowed, so we saw no reason why the magazine would be any different.

PRINTING: I was glad to have the assurance of the printers that their terms remain unchanged, for the time being anyway.

DISTRIBUTION: The Bliss family were happy to continue receiving the magazines from the printers and making them ready for distribution. With new houses in the village being occupied each month, the administration of this task requires careful attention. Treasurer Kate and Alan complete the distribution, calling on deliverers throughout the village and hamlets.

ACCOUNTS: Treasurer Kate suggested we could support local businesses in these difficult time by declaring a moratorium on annual subscriptions for advertisers until April 2021 and I agreed. The loss was partly covered by the saving in printers' charges. Invoicing resumes in April. The current and saving accounts show reasonable historical balances. I have signed on several new advertisers since November to ensure that our income keeps pace with our outgoings. This has necessitated an increase in the number of pages by 4 (one A4 sheet). The extra printing charge is more than covered by donations received for one-off 'advertorials' where new businesses tell their stories. I believe the balance of advertisements and other copy is important if the magazine is to be read and enjoyed. The response has been extremely positive.

The annual subscription for advertisers has remained stable for many years. We think it may have to increase, possibly in 2022, especially if the printers increase their charges.

CONTRIBUTORS: The other village organisations were keen to see the return of the magazine. They have all had such a heavy burden of responsibility because of this virus and they need to notify residents and users from month to month of changes in their facilities/services.

ADVERTISERS: I receive a request for space from new businesses about once a month. I maintain a waiting list. Advertisers tell me they are very pleased with the response they receive from their West Felton advertisement; some are amazed by the number of enquiries generated. I spend quite a lot of time during the month liaising with potential advertisers and helping with copy, etc.

WEBSITE: For more than 10 years I have administered a free website provided by BT as a community service. They have notified that this will cease in May 21. Therefore, I spent many, many hours seeking and eventually setting up a new free website. This was major task and I hope it will not have to be repeated. There is very little FREE these days, though they may imply that at the outset. The presence of a simple website is important for those contributors and advertisers outside the delivery area, and of course for friends, family, and ex-pats everywhere. It is important to have an online presence so that we are found by people searching on Google for Shropshire village magazines. This is the source of much of the information included in the magazine from West Mercia Police, Shropshire Healthwatch, and other organisations, as well as potential advertisers, many of whom approach through the new website.

CONCLUSION: It has been a successful half-year for the magazine. Especially in lockdown, our friends and neighbours say they are pleased to feel they are still in the loop of village affairs, and village organisations can be assured the ever-changing rules and regulations as applying to them can be disseminated to every household.

Colleen Hughes, Editor