**Clerks Report for Mere Town Council meeting 6.12.21**

Agenda Item:

***5b) To consider permanent fixture for the town to commemorate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee*** – We have been approached by the Platinum Jubilee Committee who would like some funding towards their event proposals for which they are applying for an Area Board Grant (I have included this for discussion as agenda item 10e). There is also an expectation for a permanent Platinum Jubilee commemoration – we have received a suggestion from the Platinum Jubilee Committee for the planting of an oak tree at the bottom of the cemetery with benches and a possible new opening into this area, making it more of a memorial garden. My own suggestion that I made to the Budget Committee is to plant an oak tree at Duchy Manor near the site of the swimming pool and create a plaque using the swimming pool mosaics (using a local mosaic artist, if possible) stating that this oak tree has been planted to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth (on one side) and on the other side stating that on this site once stood the old Mere Swimming Pool which was created as a World War II memorial? (check detail) and… we could call the new gym area on the swimming pool site the Jubilee Gym! Or…. We could plant a tree at Jubilee Gardens……. Or we could go out to public consultation. My main concern is that this should be a celebration and not a memorial! I have been given the following information [The Platinum Jubilee Fund | The National Lottery Community Fund (tnlcommunityfund.org.uk)](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/the-platinum-jubilee-fund#section-3). This fund is for projects that will create a lasting legacy and it seems that their preference is for them to be led by the youth. I have forwarded the link to Seeds4Success to see if there are any ideas or opportunities that the youth might like to lead on.

***8c) Frome Bus Service - We received an email from the Passenger Transport Department at Wiltshire Council in October informing us that due***  due to several bus drivers leaving the profession or moving into heavy goods work, bus companies are experiencing issues covering all their bus services due to a shortage of bus drivers. At that time the FromeBus was not be able to cover their village shoppers’ trips to Frome, Trowbridge, Warminster, and Salisbury as they simply did not have enough drivers to drive buses. Despite attempts to cover these trips using other operators, it was not fruitful as there was no spare drivers available to help. Therefore, a decision was taken and regrettably these trips would not operate. I am not sure if the service to Frome has resumed but have been asked by the representatives on the Transport Forum to send in a letter expressing the importance of this service and urging Wiltshire Council and the bus operators to continue all efforts to resume the service a.s.a.p.

***8d) S W Rail & Great Western Rail cuts to timetable –*** I have received the following email: *“As clerk to Mere, please may I bring a matter to your attention, and ask you to share them with your councillors, and wider as appropriate. It could affect travel to or from your parish or town next month, or in the future.*

*Through trains from London to Trowbridge and Bradford-on-Avon are being withdrawn next month. The direct service to Warminster is being reduced to just one a day. Other service reductions by both South Western Railway and Great Western Railway next month effect Tisbury, Grateley, Salisbury, Dilton Marsh and Westbury. Most of the trains withdrawn have been very busy and offer through journey opportunities, journey time choices and crowd-busting capacity into Clapham Junction and Waterloo, into Bath Spa and Bristol, and on journeys within the county. For example, seven services are lost from Salisbury to Warminster and on via Westbury, each day.*

*There has been no consultation on the changes. and a strong letter of protest has been sent formally by Wiltshire Council amongst many other complainants, who see this as a perverse step. It's an odd thing to do at a time when people should be encouraged to use greener public transport in lieu of private cars where appropriate. With Wiltshire's Bus Service Improvement Plan looking to improve connections from the buses (which provide a lifeline in many of our parishes) into our trains, it's not much good if the trains people want are not there!*

*I would like to ask you even at this 11th hour to write to your MP. There is a template letter at* [*http://www.passenger.chat/mpletter.html*](http://www.passenger.chat/mpletter.html) *. And I would like to ask you and each of your councillors to take a look at, and sign if they agree, a petition running at* [*https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/598397*](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/598397)*. We have over 6,000 signatures already and the depth of feeling is being noticed.*

*We only found out about the cuts from deep inside a document from another area, about plans for 2023 which said services from our area would be gone by then and were not up for discussion! A Freedom of Information, answered last month, last month, shows an internal decision on minimal data and has large sections redacted. They would appear to refer to other services under threat, but we don't know which they are. Whilst there ARE services that could cease to run, it would be a dangerous precedent to allow them to go without local input - so even if you and your parish are not directly affected by this current cut, please consider signing to help us avoid an easy precent being set for the culling of train and bus services at the behest of "Whitehall".*

*There's much more information available online at* [*http://www.passenger.chat*](http://www.passenger.chat) *and an up to date (well, yesterday!) summary at* [*http://waterloo.savethetrain.org.uk/stat\_20211122.pdf*](http://waterloo.savethetrain.org.uk/stat_20211122.pdf) *. Please feel free to pass this email on, and to get in touch by email to ask any questions. And, thank you, for giving this matter your attention*.”

I have forwarded this email to our MP Dr. Andrew Murrison to ask if he has any more information about this.

***11a) Vacancy on the Mere Charities committee for Town Council representative*** – Mrs. Myrene Coward has informed me that she has stepped down as one of the Town Council’s nominated trustees on the Forest Charity. Would the Town Council like to nominate a replacement Trustee? Also, thank you to Mrs. Coward.

Background: There were 6 nominative trustees (4 from Mere Town Council and 2 from Zeals Parish Council) and a further 2 co-opted trustees (appointed by existing trustees).  Our four trustees do not have to be Town Councillors but need to be appointed by the Town Council.  The only obligation of the Forest Charity to the Town Council is to present the annual accounts.  There are three charities - the Forest Charity has 100 acres of land and a farmhouse.  The allotment charity has a 20-acre field at Horsington Lane (near Hincks Mill) and the United Charities which have very small assets in Zeals.