# Did we plan for this emergency?

When, in 2015, the Parish Council asked me together with Mick Fletcher and Clive Dennis to plan how the village might cope with an emergency we did not really think it would ever have to be used. Nor did we expect the type of emergency that occurred five years later.

The three of us went through pages of guidelines suggesting all the types of problems that might occur -

*Natural events;**Severe weather or flooding: Animal Disease; Major Accidents; Major Transport Accidents; Malicious Attacks; Non-conventional attack; Human Disease; Electronic Attack*

Pandemics came low on the list as you can see.

We got some things right. Our communication tree was invaluable in helping get messages out quickly (though we might perhaps have updated addresses and telephone numbers more frequently.) Some things were more surprising – our plan for emergencies envisaged men wielding chainsaws and generators: in this instance it was more useful to have ladies (and some men) wielding telephones.

We had, I think, expected rather more official guidance on what to do and when to do it. In fact, we mobilised when Paul Wylie our local Paramedic alerted us to the potential seriousness of this new disease. Thanks to Paul we were ahead of most other communities and ready to handle official advice when it came.

Our communication tree became our Eyes and Ears, a network of locals that has been invaluable in keeping the village in touch with each other and passing on news efficiently.

The Village shop have been amazing- stepping up their role to add an ordering and delivery service. Huge thanks go to the "backroom" volunteers for their part, along with those who have organised our Prescription and Shopping Services, all helping those members of the community who needed to self-isolate or shield during a lengthy lockdown .

A Friendship Line has been well used by people needing a chat, and we have dedicated lines for a Listening Service and Confidential Medical Helpline, all run by village people.

A Basic Mobile and Computer Support service was started, though Zoom coffee mornings were not so popular. We worked with the Friendly Society to publicise their scheme of emergency financial support for residents. Along with these, we have investigated all sorts of ways of bringing the community together and hopefully making smiles appear by including poems and butterfly posts in the email updates.

Initially we had a hot line between Medlar House and Old Ditch Farm, which at last is cooling off, but it has been a challenge at times to keep up with relevant news. At the latest count government has sent out over 3000 emails about the pandemic! Each week we have gone through Government, Somerset and Mendip advice, spoken to our cluster group of other parish councils, and talked with villagers about their concerns.

It has been a really interesting experience. We had over 100 volunteers come forward; for most of them we found a role. We have discovered unexpected skills and talents in the village. Mostly we have been grateful to everyone in Westbury for their support for each other, keeping the community safe during a time of national emergency.

Sue Reece on behalf of Westbury Parish Council Emergency Planning team.