

## Councillors Chronicles No.4 - Uses for Telephone Boxes

A few weeks ago, a parish council in Hampshire made the headlines when the Chairman asked whoever was leaving adult fiction in the parish telephone box to please “find another outlet for your collection”. He added that the community knew who was responsible and that “they aren’t very well thought of”.



Thankfully, FMPC doesn’t have that situation to contend with but does have one parish owned telephone box, bought from BT and put to healthier use. It houses the as yet unneeded defibrillator at Bedchester crossroads which is monitored by a nearby resident in generous community spirit.

Another box, just outside the parish boundary by the old school at Bleax Hill, is the property of East Orchard. It also has a defibrillator, deployed a while ago and doubles as a rather active library. Books in the box change often, well, most of them do, and all are wholesome. It is satisfying to think that this exchange system is appreciated, facilitated by a few shelves and not too much effort. A rota of local people checks the defibrillator on a weekly basis and cleans the box half yearly, offering six months of respite to the resident spiders. In an emergency, a team of volunteers who live in both Hartgrove and East Orchard is available to transport the device to wherever it is needed including to parts of our parish. They have just four minutes to do this.

Fontmell Magna’s other defibrillator has its own cabinet on the wall of the school building and it is monitored by councillor Annie Newbury.

Here are some alternative ways inventive owners have found to utilise redundant phone boxes: mini medical centre, art gallery, display case for flowers, booth bar (with alcohol), Disney store, toilet, picnic store, being available for wedding photos, canvas for children’s art, hot drink dispenser, booth for grocery essentials, pop-up art exhibition complete with on-line monitor, costume changing station, bird cage, fish tank, weighing station, rinse and spit facility for oral hygiene, hair drying salon, juke box, cakes in a callbox. And, intriguingly, casing for a cooling device for easing hot flushes.

Outside Fontmell shop and post office, the telephone box which does not belong to the parish, is owned by a non-resident and not for sale. This is a pity with all those potential uses for us to think about.