

**SEAVINGTON ST MARY / MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT THE SEAVINGTON MILLENNIUM HALL
ON TUESDAY 17th March 2020**

ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

Present Mr A Doble, [acting Chair in absence of Councillor Loxton] Mrs J Ash, Mrs E Edwards
Mr N England, Mrs P Parsons, Mr C Reyland,
Apologies Mr A Dance (County/District Councillor) Mr Crispin Raikes (District Councillor)
Mr N Loxton [Chair], Mr & Mrs D Froome, Ian Gibson, Mrs S Gough, Mr & Mrs D Bennett

Also Present 7 members of the public

ANY QUESTION TIME – No questions had been submitted to the Parish Council and none were raised at the meeting

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 18th March 2019 were agreed as correct and signed.

CHAIRMAN’S REMARKS

Vice-Chairman – Andrew Doble welcomed all present and introduced Parish Councillors to all present.

4.Chairman’s Remarks

Planning

Last year it was reported that there was quite a number of applications within our parishes, and this year has been no different, and of course some projects have spilled over from last year to this:-

- A development of eight houses at the top of Upton Lane has been given Outline consent
- The highly controversial application by Ilminster Carnival Club for a new Maintenance/Construction facility in Longforward Lane, (strictly not in our Parish, BUT directly impinging upon us) is still under discussion
- The Ferne Animal Sanctuary application for 13 houses to be built on land to the east of Seavington House has gone quiet, with no further enquiry as far as we are aware
- Immediately after the Annual Parish meeting last year, we attended a presentation given on behalf of a village resident for a development of properties effectively extending the line of Winchester Cottages in Water Street, has recently been approved in Outline
- The prolonged debates of the Planning Applications/Appeals/Enforcements at 2, Southernaways in St Mary continue, currently the Appeal for the controversial shed to remain in situ has recently been upheld, but the District Planners have recently highlighted further issues at the property with the potentially unapproved removal of a hedge and erection of a five-bar gate within the curtilage of the Listed Building.
- And other smaller applications that have been considered by your parish council.

As can be seen there have been many planning applications for your Council to peruse and discussions have been long and varied, not to mention The Parish Council raising a complaint recently against the Planning Department of the District Council for its inconsistencies that we felt were very viable in even our few applications within our village.

Highways and Speeding Issues within the Villages

As a council we are still continuing to hold conversations with the developer of Falcon Close, the planning department and of course liaising with residents of Falcon Close. The area outside the close needs to be put as a footpath as per the planning application that was approved as this will stop cars parking outside the houses in the highway.

The C5021, Also known as the ‘old A303’ has received much attention this year.

County ‘Signs and Lines’ eventually came up trumps with relining the road, erecting the gates, moving the signage – well most of it. But it is right in the end after some secretive workers sorted the problem.

SID has been in place for 3 weeks now. There were talks of getting one for a while, but as a council it was agreed we would wait until the lines and signs had been completed. SID has been busy collecting data for us. SID is not designed to permanently control traffic speed in the village. It is a data gathering device. That works 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The data can then be used to try and improve traffic calming measures. Without the data there is no evidence that measures are needed.

The data will be discussed in the normal parish council meeting following this AGM.

Numerous instances of potholes, road edge erosion, drain problems and flooding in areas of the villages have all

been reported in the past to Highways. We would like to thank Frogmary Green Farm for their continued support to the village especially putting right a lot of the problems just mentioned.

The Village Aesthetics

I hope you would agree with me that the village looks great despite the harsh wet winter we are having. The gardening club have done an excellent job with troughs and daffodil bulbs whilst the ranger; Karen, has been busy clearing drains, cutting hedges and grass banks along with other tasks set on her by the parish council. I believe that Karen is a true asset and that she takes real pride in the work she carries out.

There exists within our villages a very positive community spirit that is commendable and unique, and with the forthcoming celebrations of the anniversaries of VE and VJ Days later in the year, I'm sure we will all want to participate to the full and make our commemorations ones to cherish.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Once again Parish Councillors unanimously agreed that they would continue to increase the Precept slightly as there were still a concern that works that had been carried out by both District and County are gradually being passed over to Parishes.

For the financial year 2019-2020 the Precept applied for was £15,750. There are no longer any monies under the Government Support Scheme. Monies spent this year on day to day maintenance of the villages to date are just under £13,800.00 [including VAT]. There is, however, some £1,200.00 due for Ranger costs for February and March and an outstanding amount for works to village footpaths. This will probably mean that the Parish Council has maintained day to day costs within the anticipated budget. However, we have spent almost £6,000 from reserves – the two largest items being £3275.00 for the SID, and £1,970 on CCTV for the Shop/Millennium Hall. [Both of these figures are net of VAT]. There will be a small amount of Interest due on the Business Reserve at the end of March.

At present the Current Account stands at £1,024.09 and the Business Reserve at £16,878.96. Total monies spent this year to date are £19,758.92 but there will be £2,745.12, VAT to be reclaimed. [Both these figures will change at the 31st March should the invoices for Ranger work be received.] Overall this will mean that there will be a fall in our Reserves.

The Ranger Scheme costs this year are some £6,400 – allowing for the outstanding invoices. [Costs for the coming year will be increased due to an increase in the hourly rate paid]. However, I am sure you will agree that buying into this scheme is worthwhile. Gang mowing of the main playing field was some £2,500. Maintenance of the footpaths is not yet known but the Parish Council is very grateful to Phil Gordon-Smith for all the work he does on maintaining our footpaths.

The grant paid to Seavington Parochial Church Council remained at £1,250 towards Churchyard maintenance. Other grants paid were - £1,000.00 to the Community Shop/Cafe and £200 to our Tree Wardens.

My thanks go to Tony Beresford who has agreed to continue to be the Internal Auditor for the Parish Council

Pauline Parsons [Responsible Financial Officer].

REPORT FROM VILLAGE TREE WARDENS –

The tree wardens have done little in the way of actual tree planting in and around the village; basically it is difficult to find land to plant on as most is in private hands. However, there has been some maintenance work on some trees, in and around the village.

The biggest involvement, for the tree wardens, this season has been with the playing field association in locating grants and giving help in planting a new hedge along the "western" edge of the field. Over 300 whips have been planted in this area, plus a specimen oak, in an area where it will not interfere with the inner line of specimen trees. Also managed, with the cooperation of Simon Madge, to have the field boundary fence moved back to its, roughly, original line.

A project has been considered to help replace the massive destruction of very mature trees along Longforward Lane and the road to Castle Hill in Allowenshay. Initial discussions have taken place, but at this stage it looks unlikely that this project will get off the ground this year.

REPORT FROM PARISH PATHS LIAISON OFFICER

Whilst most of the routes on the "southern" side of New Road, (this side is where most of the maintenance work is concentrated), have remained passable this year, there were some problems with crops "blocking" the passage of the footpaths. There were also some trees down due to the winds during this autumn and winter. Places still need some clearing up and these will be attended to in due course.

Two new gates in the field above Dark Lane have been installed, one pedestrian gate, from a heavy old wooden gate to a lighter galvanised one, and a Bristol gate almost next to the gate mentioned.

There appears to be two reoccurring problems with the footpaths. One is the usual old chestnut of dog mess and the

other is the lack of reporting any problems with the paths, ie, blockages, missing signs and so on. It is hoped that an article will appear in the April edition of the Seavingtons News trying to spread this information and giving contact numbers to report any issues.

Thanks again to Phil Gordon-Smith and Andrew Gillard for this work.

VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS REPORTS

(i) *Seavington Playing Fields Association and Millennium Hall* – The SPFA would like to start by thanking the Parish Council for its continued support and assistance over the past year and hopes that this will continue going forward.

When I took over the Chair of the SPFA in 2017, one of my stated objectives was to develop closer collaboration between all village organisations, and in particular with the shop. From feedback I regularly receive, I'm very pleased that this is happening to the benefit of our local community.

As far as the SPFA is concerned, I'm pleased to report that the Hall has been in use most days until this last week when virtually all future bookings have been cancelled as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. This will almost certainly mean that the Association will have an operational loss for this current year. As a committee we have been prudent in our financial management in that we are holding contingency reserves to tide us through difficult times such as these. We now need to do some further work to see just how long we can continue to operate before running out of funds but anticipate that it will be at least 6 to 12 months.

Well before any knowledge of the Covid 19 pandemic affecting us, we as a committee we took the decision to undertake some major renovations and enhancements to our facilities this year and these include:

Installation of the fully grant funded path around the playing field which has been very well received judging by the number of positive comments I have had. This path has allowed easy access around the field for people with disabilities, children in pushchairs, joggers, dog walkers and of course gives young children a safe place to learn to ride bicycles etc especially with the wet weather we've had this winter.

Completion of the field boundary work with significant support and help from Phil Gordon-Smith, our Seavington Tree Warden.

Completion of the fund-raising phase in respect of upgrading the Children's Play area. Equipment orders have now been placed and installation is due to start week commencing 20th April.

The next major project area that we shall be tackling will be to renovate and upgrade the facilities, contents and fabric of the Millennium Hall itself, as the building is now some 20 years old and showing signs of its age due to its constant usage. As the SPFA has now spent or committed all of its excess reserves we will actively seek additional financial support from external sources such as grant funding bodies to deliver this project.

Seavington Millennium Hall is registered with the Civil Contingencies team at Somerset County Council as a "Place of Safety" for use during emergencies. We have already offered the use of our facilities to the County Council if there is a need during the current crisis. During this period, we will also make our facilities available to local organisations and families in our community providing it is feasible and safe to do so.

Christopher Gough SPFA Chairman

(ii) *Community Shop*

The shop has continued having a good trading year showing overall profit. This remains relatively small but at least a profit. The biggest expenditure outside of our salaried staff remains the equipment we use – it's expensive to buy and service the chillers and large cookers we have to use to keep the shop and café going.

We have been fortunate to have been able, this year, to pay back the bonds we sought at the start of the life of the store. Those who gave us the initial start up funds are thanked for their generosity which allowed us to build up to the present success.

The shop values the customers who come and spend time and money in store – we still get more clientele from outside the village than in but that doesn't matter too much, though of course we hope to attract parishioners a well! The initial aim was for local users after all.

The shop and café offer a full changing range of food and goodies alongside the staples of everyday life. We also recognise that many local people use the shop and café for social interaction- a need we happily fulfil.

We thank the Parish Council for their ongoing support of this local venture especially over the past year with extra expenditure on the security of the store. We hope to continue to thrive.

As an addition, because of the continuing uncertain times with regard to Covid-19 the Shop will be reducing its opening hours from Monday 23rd March 2020 to 8.30am – 3.00pm. Monday to Saturday. Hours have had to be reduced because many of the volunteers are over 70. Hopefully the cafe will remain open. Some stocks have been reduced because of people from out of the village coming to purchase things. Already a decision has been made to reduce the number of certain products that can be purchased. Some difficulties have also been found with supplies from our suppliers. However, the Shop/Cafe is planning to remain open for as long as possible. The Cafe will be offering hot take-away food. Volunteers are willing to take orders to those confined to home. Provision has been

made so that card payments can be made over the phone.
Ian Gibson Chairman

(iii) The Seavingtons' News – Last year's change of copy date to the 20th of each month has been absorbed satisfactorily although we have had to be much firmer about accepting late contributions.

My thanks are due to Brian and Elaine Edwards for absorbing the reduced flexibility on production timings and to our street distributors for responding as soon as they receive their bundles. Without this cooperation we would need to revert to the old, earlier, copy date.

We continue to have difficulty in persuading many villagers to contribute articles for publication but the magazine has remained at 28 or 32 pages in most months.

The annual accounts will be available in April after the end of the financial year.

The News continues in a healthy financial position and has been able to give grants totalling over £1000 in the financial year to date and to commit to further grants of another £1000.

Income from the monthly skip and receipts from advertising remains steady but there are concerns over the future of the skip as we have been unable to get Viridor to commit to collections beyond March.

After allowing for a reserve for equipment replacement there are currently funds available for further grants but we will need to review the capacity for further grants if we no longer have regular income from the monthly paper and card collection.

David Froome, Editor 17th March 2020

As there was no other business the meeting closed at 7.40pm

Signed

Date