

**SEAVINGTON ST MARY / MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT THE SEAVINGTON MILLENNIUM HALL
ON TUESDAY 25th March 2014**

ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

Present Mr P Ashley (Acting Chair)
Mrs S Cooper Mrs E Edwards
Mrs B Lake Mrs P Parsons
Mr B Walker (District Councillor)
Mr P Thompson (District Councillor)
Apologies Mr S Madge Mrs R Turner
Christopher Le Hardy (County Councillor)
Also Present 2 members of the public

ANY QUESTION TIME – None

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 26TH MARCH 2013 were agreed as correct and signed.

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS (Summary of Year)

- (i) Planning – Provisional plans had been shown to Parish Councillors for the residential development of the Seavington Lift West site. These draft plans were shown at the Parish Council Meeting held in January 2014 and favourable comments were received. A formal planning application has still to be made. Parish Councillors have also seen draft plans for the development of Pond Farm which are different to those approved, on Appeal. A formal planning application has still to be made. Approval for the application to turn the Layzell site in Church Lane to residential use has been approved although Parish Councillors did not fully approve the design and size and raised concerns regarding any impact on the adjacent Listed building.
- (ii) Village Car Park – Registration of the area known as the Village Car Park, formerly the Village Pond, in the name of the Parish Council has finally been received. Negotiations are taking place with regard to the residents in 1 and 2 Winchester Cottages regarding their rights to pass over this area. Any costs regarding Deeds of Easement will have to be borne by these residents. Costs to obtain the registration had been incurred due to the fact that objections were received and were not withdrawn before the application went to Land Registry Arbitration. Up until this point the Parish Council had received help from SSDC to avoid Solicitors' fees. The Parish Council were most grateful for all the help received.
- (iii) Highways – Councillor Ashley is still continuing to liaise with County Highways regarding various issues, particularly, potholes, uneven road surfaces and blocked drains. Works due to be done at Ile Bridge, promised for April 2013 have still not been done. Parish Councillors are also thankful to Councillor Le Hardy who has drawn up a list of outstanding items for all his Parishes and is in regular communication with Highways officers. The answer given in most cases for works not being done is lack of funding. Promises have been made that several of the outstanding items – eg drain in School Lane, drain outside Swan Thatch will be completed during 2014/15.
- (iv) Speeding – SIDs are still being erected on 'New Road' but the one sited opposite The Pheasant in Water Street did not show that there was a speeding problem so will not be repeated. However, Councillors are hopeful that one will be sited near Townsend in the not too distant future. The Speed Camera Van is visiting on a regular basis and Councillors have been informed that it will continue to do so whilst there is a speeding issue.
- (v) Footpaths – Andrew Gillard, Parish Footpaths Liaison Officer, reported that the paths within the villages are well sign posted, well managed and well used. He thanked Phil Gordon-Smith for the work that he does in keeping all paths passable. Councillors agreed that the paths are well used but were aware that some people do walk off of the actual footpaths. A suggestion was made that as there are a number of new residents in the villages that the footpaths maps could be published in The Seavingtons' News. Councillor Parsons will let David Froome have her copies to see if this is possible. Parish Councillors also thanked Mr Gillard and Mr Gordon-Smith for all the work they do and the contact they keep with County Footpaths Officers.
- (vi) Lengthsman Scheme – Councillor Edwards reported that the Scheme that the Parish buys into allows us to have the Lengthsman for 7 hours a fortnight. His main tasks are to clear drains where possible, litter picking (particularly in Park Lane), and maintenance of pavements and paths, particularly the one in Church Lane. He also does some grass cutting in the areas close to the Main Road including the two Village entrance stones. However, the Scheme has been managed by South Petherton and some concerns have been raised recently as to this management. No firm plans have yet been made but it would seem that the Scheme will run for a further year with no further costs to the participating villages as there is a surplus of monies available to pay for The Lengthsman. Hopefully further details will be forthcoming during the year.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Parish Councillors unanimously agreed that they would continue to increase the Precept as there were still concerns that in the future it could be capped by Central Government and that works that had been carried out by both District and County may be passed over the Parishes. This financial year the Precept applied for was £12,750 but because of the Council Support Grant paid by South Somerset District Council the actual amount received was £13,455. As stated previously these monies stay within the Parishes to be spent on local projects. Having no paid Clerk for a number of years this means that the Council's financial situation is very good.

Total monies spent this year is £12,817.48. Some £5,500 has been spent on keeping the villages clean and tidy. This is made up by £1,500 to the Lengthsman Scheme, £1,900 for grass cutting of the Playing Field, £955 on other grass areas and £1,000 to the Parochial Church Council for Churchyard maintenance.

Registration of the area known as The Village Car Park was finalised during this year, but unfortunately this came at a cost as objections made by residents were not withdrawn until the case reached Land Registry Arbitration. Negotiations are still taking place for 'Deed of Easements' to be drawn up to legalise the residents' rights to pass over the area. However, any costs incurred for this will be down to those residents.

A new piece of play equipment was purchased and donated to the Playing Field Association. The total cost was £2,742.00 - £750 had been saved from the Jubilee events and as the Parish Council had made the purchase some £457 VAT can be reclaimed.

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

Pauline Parsons [Responsible Financial Officer].

REPORT FROM THE POLICE – Officers have not been attending Meetings during the past year but Councillors have been advised that they can visit a web site to ascertain any reported incidents in the locality. The PCSO still visits on a regular basis and calls into the Shop if it is open. Officers were in the village on a number of occasions last summer when the Playing Field Association were experiencing some trouble with a number of youths. These visits seem to have stopped the problem escalating.

REPORT FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH CO-ORDINATOR – The Scheme is working well and the co-ordinator receives reports from the Police of any incidents in the vicinity. The Parish Council expressed their thanks to the Co-ordinator and her team for all the work done.

REPORT FROM VILLAGE TREE WARDENS – No tree work of any major significance has been carried out in the villages over the past year. No tree planting has been carried out due to the bad weather during the Autumn and Winter months. The recent storms did not cause too much damage. Some of the apple trees in Rowdells Orchard have been blown down, but the Parish Council are in talks with SSDC Streetscene to see if these can be cleared and the possibility of new ones being planted. Parish Councillors thanked Phil Gordon-Smith and Alan Graham for the work done.

REPORT RE HISTORY PROJECT - For various separate reasons, Carolyn and I have not managed to spend quite so much time this year on the Seavington Web Museum project. However, as donations continue to arrive both from overseas Seavington families and from some nearer to home and from village families, the website is nearing 800 photographs now, which is quite an achievement. We have also been out on 'nice' days taking current photos of Seavington as we were intending to put together a 'Then and Now' album in time for Christmas which we would self-publish. We discovered on the way to that aspiration, that we needed to change the way that some of the photos had been recorded in our archive – a piece of work that we are still wrestling with but hope to complete in the near future. Then we should be able to get back to pulling together the 'Then and Now' book! Extracted material from the Seavington News up to 2007 has now been uploaded on the website and we now need to do the next seven years to bring records up to date. Internet enquiries come in most weeks from families all over the planet that left Seavington in the 1850's for Britain's colonies, we help them if we can and we have shown a few people round the village who have made it here in person. We would like to thank the Seavington families that have thought of us when they have come across interesting records and photographs from the past and let us have access to them. We should also like to thank our webmaster, Eugene Mulligan for all his help through the year and finally we would like to thank the Seavington Parish Council for paying to host our website. Carolyn Farler Nicki Wootton Ry Coffman. Councillors expressed their thanks for all the work done on this project.

REPORT ON VILLAGE WEB-SITE – Parish Councillors expressed their thanks to Eugene Mulligan for all the work he does on the village web-site even though he now lives in South Petherton. The site has been quoted by numerous new comers that it was one of the main things in helping them choose to live in The Seavingtons. During the year new e-mail addresses have been created for the SPFA to use.

VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS REPORTS

(i) Seavington Playing Fields Association and Millennium Hall -

The Association [incorporating the Millennium Hall] has continued to manage these two very important assets of the village during the past year but are realising that this is becoming more and more difficult without new

members joining the Committee. However, that said the Association would like to thank all residents who have supported it through the Lottery and other fund raising events and particular thanks go to the Parish Council who have continued to pay for the grass cutting of the main playing field area. The Association have paid for the play areas to be cut.

Hall The Hall is mainly self financing and no major grant monies are received from the Parish Council. This year has seen the installation of the Solar Panels on the Hall roof and to date some £1,330 has been received through the 'Feed in Tariff'. Thanks go to those, particularly Andrew Harker, who have carried out some maintenance works in the Hall in an effort to keep costs down.

Field – The Field was also registered in the Queen Elizabeth II Fields in Trust scheme which means the area has been protect for recreational use. The new fencing by the side of the Hall to give that Shop a safe outside eating area was carried out during the year and I think much appreciated by all. During the summer a consultation took place with regard to the siting a paths around the field. Most responses were in favour of a Tarmac path to join the overflow car park to the main Hall/Shop car park. An application is about to be made to Awards for All and support has been given by South Somerset District Council and our own Parish Council. The Committee is hopeful that should the Awards for All grant be forthcoming that works will start on the path within the coming year. Thanks must go to Ry Coffman for taking the lead role on this. Thanks also go to the residents who provided the two litter bins that have been sited on the edge of the Hall/Shop car park and also the residents who have donated a shed to replace the one that succumbed to the winter storms. As this shed is much larger it will be sited closer to the Hall. Hopefully this will be completed in the near future.

Committee members are finding it more difficult to carry out many of the manual jobs that need doing and my thanks go to Peter Ash for arranging the soil and team to fill in the large cracks that had appeared during the summer months. Also thanks to Philip Eardley who has spent many hours marking out the football pitch in readiness for Luso-Chard footballers.

Thanks also go to Pauline Eardley for the efficient way in which she has carried out her role as Bookings Clerk, Keyholder and Cleaner for the Association. It is with deep regret that I have to report that she is to relinquish this role at the end of this month.

PAULINE PARSONS – Chair

(ii) Community Shop

May I start by saying that off the 283 community run village stores in England, very few are totally volunteer led, run and community owned and even fewer can achieve this if they have a cafe. Nearly all have at least a part-time manager and most have a full time manager. It is therefore a great testament to the level of commitment within the village that we have been able to staff and run our shop and café for almost 4 years with a totally volunteer force. That said we recognise the strain this puts on our volunteers and supporters along with the inefficiencies it brings and are looking to employ a full time manager as soon as funds permit.

We have again had a fruitful trading year and although our end of year figures are not in yet, I believe we are on course to perform similarly and perhaps slightly better than last year. In 2012/13 the shop and cafe turnover was £74k which after paying loan interest and other outgoings brought in a profit of £11k. We continue to reduce our loans and are on track to have cleared all by 2017. However, we recognise that this profit figure needs to be higher if we are to continue to pay off our remaining loans as well as return funds to our bondholders and I am pleased to say that everyone involved is working towards this.

To this end we are taking on a part-time chef and café team leader in Apr. This will afford us some relief in filling café shifts on the rota which is an area we have consistently found hard to meet. We are hopeful that this appointment will bring us better consistency in the café which will in itself see an increase in café trade. The café operation has long been identified as an area where it is possible to increase custom and thereby turnover and we will put in place advertising and other initiatives and will expect to see café turnover increase in the future. This will also have a spin off in the shop as by bringing additional trade in to the café we will see an increase in turnover on shop products too.

On the fundraising front we continue to perform well, again thanks to the goodwill and time of many of our villagers. Fundraising activities such as the book exchange, raffles, craft fare, Bric-a-brac, local artwork display, evening talks, grants and others will account for almost £8k of our turnover this year.

We are working closely with other village organisations to ensure there are no programming conflicts and that we support each other as best we can. A good example of this is the sign that is being designed for the Hall, shop, café and playing fields.

The shop and cafe continue to provide all the services our residents have come to expect. Not just the provision of general groceries and frozen food stuffs, fresh fruit and veg, Beers and wines etc. but also services such as Dry Cleaning, provision of stamps and stationery and of course the café is regularly used by village groups to meet. We have also introduced several new trading practices in the shop and café over the last year. We have installed Solar Panels (at zero cost) which have reduced our electricity costs considerably, we have restarted the popular Seniors lunches, we have introduced a Cash Back facility, we now provide a free grocery delivery service within the villages, we have recently run a Bric-a-Brac stall in the shop which by the turnover generates was most popular and we are already thinking when to run the next one, the shop now offers itself to residents as a pickup point for mail whilst within the café we are now offering an opportunity for local artists to display their wares.

In summary, a good years trading. As the shop and café trading increases, we will see sufficient income generated to enable us to employ firstly a chef and then a full time manager.

Mark Ellis Chairman

(iii) The Seavingtons' News - Throughout the past twelve months the Seavingtons' News Team has produced a monthly issue of the magazine which has been delivered free of charge to every household and business in the

villages. The team comprises nine “street” volunteers who deliver the magazine, David & Wendy Eliot, who collate, fold and staple before delivery to the street volunteers, Tony Beresford as Treasurer and Maria Potts and David Froome as the editorial and printing group. Tony Beresford took over as Treasurer in early 2014 from Heather Scott who stood down because of work pressures. I ask the Parish Council to recognise Heather’s four years as Treasurer which included a very difficult first few months. The magazine still enjoys a healthy advertising income which, during 2013-14 has covered the productions costs. The monthly village waste paper collection gives a useful second source of income without which we would not be able to make capital purchases. Recently the Risograph printing machine, purchased in 2005, has proved unreliable, the manufacturer no longer supplies spare parts and our service engineers were unable to support it. We have therefore just replaced this machine with an up-to-date model which offers some improved capabilities; over the next few months we hope to improve the appearance of the magazine. We have to anticipate that our other equipment, the collator and the booklet maker, may also need to be replaced over the next few years and will be looking to create a capital fund for this purpose. The Seavingtons’ News has also approved grants, totalling £650 to three village projects during the year, namely, the Youth Club, the SPFA and the Footpaths Officer. The latter grant has, however, not been paid because of issues over ownership of the land over which the subject footpath runs. During 2013 we suffered a set back over the waste paper collection scheme when it appeared that we might lose the monthly skip and its associated revenue. After much work by Heather Scott we have maintained the status quo, albeit with less monthly capacity than before. However, this does illustrate the vulnerability of this source of income which is dependent on a complex mix of local government agencies, central government policies and an element of goodwill from a commercial company. At present the Seavingtons’ News bank account shows a positive balance of about £3,700 which is adequate reserve for day to day purposes but would not allow replacement of the collator.

Parish Councillors expressed their thanks to David Froome and his team for producing the Newsletter on a monthly basis and particular thanks were expressed to Heather Scott who picked up the reins after the death of Peter Longhurst.

(iv) Youth Group -

It is with regret that the Seavington Youth Club will be holding its last session on the 31st March 2014.

Seavington Youth Club was started by village residents in 2008 with the help of the Somerset Rural Youth Project. Sessions for 8-16 year olds have been running every Monday during term time at the Seavington Millennium Hall. The present committee will be stepping down on the 31st March 2014 and following a six month notice period no volunteers have come forward to take over the running of the club, which is a shame as the club is in a very good state being well funded and having a good selection of activities, music and games.

The intention going forward is to leave all youth club assets and money as they are for a period of around 6 months, the intention of this is the hope that the youth club will be re-opened by another emerging committee. After this period the present committee will meet and decide on how the club assets should be disposed of. The proceeds of this disposal will be added to the youth club account which will then be closed with the residual funds to be transferred to the Seavington Parish Council (as per Seavington Youth Club Constitution). The Youth Club would like to meet with the Parish Council at this point to discuss how the funds could be best spent. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Seavington Parish Council for their support and generous grant funding over the last 5 or so years, it has been well appreciated by the Youth Club committee and much enjoyed by youth club members.

Youth Club Committee: Julie Ginno, Jenny Isaacs, Mark Isaacs

Parish Councillors expressed their thanks to the Committee for their hard work over the last six years. Councillors also expressed their disappointment that after the hard work by this committee no volunteers had come forward to try and keep the Youth Club running.

As there was no other business the meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed

Date