

**SEAVINGTON ST MARY / MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT THE SEAVINGTON MILLENNIUM HALL
ON TUESDAY 24th March 2015**

ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

Present Mrs E Edwards (Acting Chair)
Mr N Loxton Mrs B Lake Mrs P Parsons
Mr B Walker (District Councillor)
Christopher Le Hardy (County Councillor)

Apologies Mr S Madge Mr D Smith Mrs R Turner

Also Present 15 members of the public

ANY QUESTION TIME – Taken at end of Meeting. **Progress on the up-dating of the Parish Plan / Neighbourhood Plan.** Councillor Loxton advised that the up-dated document was almost ready to be approved and published. He explained that the hold-up had been that Councillors had felt that it should ‘butt together’ with the SSDC Local Plan and this had only just been approved by the Inspector and adopted by SSDC. Councillor Walker explained the difference between a Neighbourhood Plan [which would be a legal document and would involve some costs] and a Parish Plan. It was agreed that The Seavingtons did not want a Neighbourhood Plan at this stage. It was also advised that South Petherton is about to apply to put together a Neighbourhood Plan and that Councillors would be kept advised of this.

A question was asked, after the SPFA Report, regarding Bookings in the Hall. Councillor Parsons advised that although some regular bookings had been lost a new group was about to meet on a Tuesday afternoon on a trial basis – Sport 50. Initially this is being sponsored by SSDC but if enough interest is shown could continue on a regular basis. After the meeting Councillors were also advised that a ‘Home Educating Children’ group will be using the Hall all day on a Friday during term time. A booking has been confirmed for the Summer Term and may continue into the future.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 25TH MARCH 2014 were agreed as correct and signed.

CHAIRMAN’S REMARKS (Summary of Year)

- (i) Planning – Applications at Pond Farm [for provision of 4 residential units] and Lift West [for 13 residential units] have now been approved, but to date neither developments have been commenced.
- (ii) Village Car Park – Registration of the Car Park in the name of the Parish Council has finally been obtained and a Deed of Easement has been agreed between the Parish Council and Mr & Mrs Dicker giving ‘Rights to Pass Over the Car Park to access their property’.
- (iii) Highways – Contact with Highways still proving difficult. Following a meeting at David’s Lane where residents raised concerns over parking and the junction with the C5012 some white-lining was agreed but to date this has not been carried out. The blocked drain in School Lane has been re-routed but there are still problems with blocked drains in Townsend and West Street. Some potholes have been filled. However, the patching of the lower end of Upton Lane has not been carried out. Hopeful this will happen in the new financial year. A good meeting was held with Gary Warren from County Highways re concerns over the speed of traffic along the C5012 in the light of the fatal crash recently at Boxstone Cross. Several suggestions made which hopefully will be completed during the coming year.
- (iv) Speeding – SIDs are still being erected on C5012 and some laser boxes to be fitted when the next date for the SID in April. These will be sited close to Boxstone Cross, St Mary’s Church and Sunnyside Farm. 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. Councillor Loxton to enquire whether other areas of the village could be used.
- (v) Footpaths – Andrew Gillard, Parish Footpaths Liaison Officer, reported that the paths within the villages are well sign posted, well managed and well used. However, some problems are being reported directly to County and Mr Gillard requested that he becomes the first point of contact for any concerns re footpaths in the villages. 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 – It was reported that the Lengthsman Scheme formerly managed by South Petherton Parish Council had finished and the Parish Councillors had decided to join the Ranger Scheme run by SSDC. This seems to be working very well.
- (vii) Broadband – Parish Councillors were as concerned as residents that the provision of a faster Broadband service was not happening and that the South Petherton exchange would be ‘dropped off the list’. However, assurances had been obtained from Somerset County Council that this would not be the case and the a faster system would be in The Seavingtons by 2017.

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. I think we are all well aware that this is already happening. This financial year the Precept applied for was £13,000 but because of the Council Support Grant paid by South Somerset District Council the actual amount received was £13,930. As stated previously these monies stay within the Parishes to be spent on local projects. Having no paid Clerk for a number of years means that the Council's financial situation is very good. At present the Current Account stands at £2,206.27 and the Business Reserve at £12,287.84. Total monies spent this year are £14,096.95. However there are outstanding invoices due for grass cutting which could amount to £500 and ring-fenced monies of £2,600 grant to SPFA for paths project, £1,000 for the Cafe towards the purchase of the new cooker and £300 for a blue plaque sign for The Volunteer Inn. So you can see that we are beginning to eat into the reserves that have been building up over a number of years.

The main areas of expenditure are - The new Ranger Scheme has cost some £2,300, the SSDC have been paid £1,664 for cutting the Playing Field, and other grass cutting around the village totals some £2,745. The PCC receives a grant of £1,000 towards Churchyard maintenance. Other grants paid have totalled £1,800 to the Shop/Cafe and £1,000 for the Millennium Hall. The Parish Council also paid £847.50 for the new sign that has recently been installed in the Hall car park. Some £400 was also paid for the re-siting of the World War I plaque to the top of the playing field. However, there is some £1,120 of VAT to be reclaimed at the end of the financial year. A Deed of Easement over the Car Park was finally agreed with Mr & Mrs Dicker and at present Parish Councillors are considering whether any restrictions should be put in place on the Car Park.

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 THE POLICE – Our new Community Support Officer attended the February meeting of the Parish Council. 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. Enquiries were made with regard to the fire in the waste paper skip.

REPORT FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH CO-ORDINATOR – Fortunately there have been no real issues that have involved the NHW this year. Increasingly the reports from the police have been highlighting internet/telephone scams that are doing the rounds and where applicable these have been reported in the Seavington News. Crime reports generally summarise the minor crimes that have been reported for the whole South Petherton & Hamdons area. These seem to run at 15-20 per month and there have been no specific reports for the Seavingtons. While the group does not have a need for a high profile it is reassuring to know there is an established communications network should the need arise.

The Parish Council expressed their thanks to the Co-ordinator and her team for all the work done.

REPORT FROM VILLAGE TREE WARDENS –

Unfortunately the wardens have done very little this last year as both Alan and I have struggled to find working slots around our day jobs which have been full on this autumn, probably due to a milder and dryer season. However, we have acquired and planted a Hawthorn at the end of Dark Lane to replace the vandalised tree. Dark Lane has also received some work on some of the trees planted some time ago. The hedge in front of the children's play area, at the rec. has had a start made at replanting gaps in it. There areas which have been pin pointed for attention but as the planting season is disappearing fast it will mean we will have to address these at a later date. We are also aware that we need to attend to areas in the playing field where trees are being restricted or damaged due to netting and stakes.

Parish Councillors thanked Phil Gordon-Smith and Alan Graham for their work

REPORT RE HISTORY PROJECT –

This year has been fairly quiet for the web museum although are still getting regular contact from abroad with people researching their family histories and also others offering information about the lives of local people once they had relocated to Australia. It is very good news for the project that Michael Harrison has agreed to join the team which will be a great bonus with his local knowledge and interest in village history. He initially contributed a detailed timeline of the villages which he had spent a great deal of time researching and will no doubt have many other snippets that can be included. He has already met with Eugene Mulligan to understand some of the more technical details and will become more involved this year.

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.

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 as indicated last year this is becoming more and more difficult without new members joining the Committee. The present Committee have indicated that several of them will resign at

the next AGM. 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 only paid for the small play area, behind the Hall and Cafe picnic area to be cut. The Association are in the process of trying to get the Constitution changed so that the Committee will be made up of 5 representatives [one each from The Gardening Club, The Youth Club, St Michael's Church, The Community Shop/Cafe and The Parish Council, and then 7 elected members. The 5 organisations have been asked to provide the name of their representative by the date of the AGM.

Hall The Hall is mainly self financing. The Parish Council did give £1,000 grant this year to help go towards day to day maintenance costs. The new entry system is now fully working and thanks go to our new bookings clerk, Ken Osborne, for the work he has done in achieving this. We are also confident that with the co-operation of both Ken and Eugene Mulligan the village diary, which can be found on the village web-site, is as up-to-date as it can be. Thanks go to Kath who cleaned the Hall for several months but left the area at the beginning of the year. However, we were very lucky to find a replacement almost immediately and our thanks go to Jackie Priddle for all the work she has done in keeping the Hall clean and tidy. As you can probably see the Hall is being redecorated at present. The screen that was originally installed so that the tables and chairs were hidden has been taken down, and our thanks go to a group from the Country and Western fund raising team that use the Hall once a month. They had asked if this could be removed for a number of years and the Committee finally agreed to this as it has been some time since the screen had been used, was difficult to close and in fact was damaged.

Field – The Football pitch has been used by the Portuguese team from Chard and for the last few games of the season Crewkerne Reserves will also be using the pitch as theirs is unplayable at the moment. A grant from Awards 4 All, totalling £10,000 has been received for the tarmac path project and another £6,000 promised from the District Council as well as a grant from the Parish Council, once works have been started. Due to Ry Coffman, who has been the driving force behind the project, being away for the winter and the bad weather the project has been put on hold, but the Committee are hopeful that works will begin shortly. Peter Ash has offered to manage the project. The Old Shed that was partly blown down during storms in 2013 has finally been flattened. My thanks go to Steven Ash who arranged for its clearance and taking down. A shed was acquired as a replacement and thanks go to Tony and Shirley Farrington for donating the shed, to a number of people who helped to take it down and re-erect it on the field, to Roger Clampitt for doing some repair works and to Steve Day, who was volunteered to paint it [which will happen now the weather is improving]. This enabled some items to be removed from the garage and allowed the Shop/Cafe to store items in the Garage.

I am sure there are others I should thank, but if I have forgotten you I apologise but the Committee are thankful to all who help

PAULINE PARSONS – Chair

(ii) Community Shop

Our volunteer run and led village store continues to exist almost 5 years on and is testament to not only the confidence of those who set it up but also to the ongoing commitment of villagers to seeing it survive.

As I mentioned last year, the level of commitment of our longer serving volunteers is waning slightly after 4 ½ years and to counter this we have taken on paid staff in the café to compensate. We have employed a full time chef as well as a part time chef to cover holidays. This allows us to run the café with at least two people and even more during busy periods and events. This has seen a dramatic increase in turnover in café sales which although end of year accounts are not yet final, is likely to be up by over 40%. We also have a paid cleaner 6 days a week to keep the building spruce and tidy. As we had anticipated, I am pleased to report that the profit from increased turnover in the café has met entirely the cost of wages of café paid staff.

That said our volunteer pool remains buoyant and we are seeing many newcomers to the village using till or café volunteer service as a means to get to know their fellow villagers quickly. We have had 2 D of E students and 3 other students using volunteer service as their community time as well as 1 foreign student using volunteer service to learn our language and ways better. We have also had individuals using volunteer time as a means of getting back their confidence before going on into full time employment.

Shop turnover is up again this year yet only slightly and not nearly as much as we need if we are to be able to fund a full time manager without the need for financial support from grants and donations. This is particularly so since we are from years 5 to 10 looking to repay a number of bondholders who took out bonds at the outset and without whose support we would have been unable to fund the shop in the first place. They and our major loan providers will be serviced by the bulk of our profits over the next 5 years. That said, several villagers have decided to donate their bonds to the shop and for these kind donations the shop is truly grateful.

On the fundraising front we continue to work hard, again thanks to the goodwill and time of many of our villagers. Since January we have replaced our craft-fayres with a more permanent monthly changing display of both art and craft-work. Fundraising activities such as the book exchange, raffles, craft fare, calendars, evening talks, parties, grants and others will account for almost £8k of our turnover this year.

We continue to look to increase the services we make available to residents with photocopying and laminating now regularly used by many. We have recently introduced a postal service for villagers which is proving popular, not least because I understand it is very competitively priced but also because we offer a good parking facility for drop off and pick up of post.

We remain committed to work closely with other village organisations and this year will work on several joint

fundraising opportunities. We feel we have a good relationship with our landlords (SPFA) and are already jointly committed to hosting some events. A good example of this will be the village celebrations early this summer.

In summary, the shop and café continue to grow and have had another good years trading.

Mark Ellis Chairman

(iii) The Seavingtons' News –

As in previous years the Seavingtons' News Team has produced a monthly issue which has been delivered free of charge to every household and business in the two villages.

The team itself has seen David and Wendy Eliot retire from their rôle of collating, stapling and delivering the finished magazines to the street distributors. We are lucky that Roger Clampitt and Brian Edwards readily agreed to take on the job and are now well into their stride. I would like to place on record my thanks to David and Wendy for their support over the past few years.

We have not needed to make any capital purchases during the year and our new printer, purchased last year, has reduced our outgoings on equipment maintenance.

In 2015 we have increased our advertising prices slightly, the first increase in ten years. There are currently no signs that this is likely to cause a drop in advertising. The incomes from the monthly waste paper collection just about covers our production costs and were we to lose this we would have marginally to manage on advertising revenue alone. However, we would then be unable to make capital investments such as replacing our collator when this becomes necessary.

As reported last year, Martock Waste withdrew the second monthly waste paper skip and the average monthly total of paper collected has reduced by 15% to just 2 tonnes per month with a consequent reduction in income. Recently the single skip has provided insufficient capacity and some villagers have been forced to take their waste back home. There has been discussion with Martock Waste on how to deal with this problem and it has now been agreed that we will be supplied with an open-topped skip which should be easier to fill it to the brim than the current lidded skip.

At the request of the SPFA, to conserve parking space, we have changed the position of the skip in the Millennium Hall car park. In March this caused some difficulties with access which will be overcome by bringing the skip slightly forward. There was also an issue with a fire in the skip; it is not clear if this was caused by vandalism or carelessness.

During the past year we have made only one donation - £300 to the Community Shop to purchase tables. This was a "self-interest" donation which allowed us to transfer the collation and stapling from the Eliot's workshop to the Shop's office. As we rebuild our capital reserves after last year's replacement printer purchase we will soon be in a position to offer further grants to village clubs and organisations.

Speaking more generally, as I compile the monthly "Village Diary" it is most noticeable that there has been a significant drop in the activities of village clubs and organisations over the past year or so. Whilst this falls outside the responsibility of the Seavingtons' News I would like to draw it to the attention of both the Parish Council and the SPFA.

David Froome,
Editor.

(iv) Youth Group –

The Youth Club has not met during the year, but Councillors were pleased to learn that the Club is about to be re-started. Initially it may not meet every Monday but will develop as the need arises.

As there was no other business the meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed

Date