

**SEAVINGTON ST MARY / MICHAEL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT THE SEAVINGTON MILLENNIUM HALL
ON TUESDAY 22nd March 2016**

ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

Present Mr N Loxton [Chair]
Mr N England Mrs P Parsons Mr C Reyland Mr D Smith Mr C Turner

Apologies Mrs E Edwards Christopher Le Hardy (County Councillor)
Mr Crispin Raikes (District Councillor) Mr A Dance (District Councillor)

Also Present 12 members of the public

ANY QUESTION TIME – The question was raised as to what The Seavingtons may have planned to celebrate The Queen's 90th Birthday. Councillor Turner replied that he was hoping to do something in the summer.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 24TH MARCH 2015 were agreed as correct and signed.

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS (Summary of Year)

Planning Over the past year, there have broadly been two planning permission applications within our Villages and two outside which have, would have, or will have made a significant impact on our community.

Dealing with the external planning applications first, your Council recently made renewed representation opposing the proposed large scale housing development on Shudrick Lane in Illminster, mainly on the basis of a perceived large increase in traffic through the Seavingtons not only through Seavington St Mary, but also down Park Lane to Boxstone Cross and then eastwards along New Road and through the village, both these routes emanating from Kingstone/Illminster. It was announced last week that Illminster Town Council has reversed its original decision and has voted by 8 to 4 to turn down the application.

The planning application re Frogmary Green Anaerobic was passing between County and District over who would have the responsibility for considering and deciding about an amendment. In order to understand the issues more fully, your Council invited the applicant to a recent Parish Council meeting to discuss the perceived impact on the Seavingtons'. In a very candid discussion, we learnt that yes there would, at some times of the year, be a small increase in vehicular traffic both delivering and removing matter from the Plant. Whilst this is still of major concern, it was accepted as a fact of life, BUT, that maybe it could be used along with our views closer to home (the former Lift West Site and our concerns with entry/egress from the many junctions both new and old along New Road to persuade Highways to modify the approaches/exit from the Villages along the C5021.

The following is part of the Parish Councils renewed comments on the planning applications at Shudrick Lane, the former Lift West Site and Frogmary Green Farm.

We wrote "It is again the suggestion of Seavington Parish Council that:-

- the current western 30mph limit and sign should be moved further to the west giving increased safety to entry/egress from the completed Lift West Site (this was previously suggested when the Parish Council formerly responded to the original Planning Application)
- the eastern 30 mph sign and limit moved further up the hill to the east from Seavington House, also affording a greater level of safety and protection to vehicle entry/egress at David's and School Lanes.
- the existing westerly middle-of-the-road bollard be moved (to the west) much closer to the planned entrance to The Lift West development."

It is believed that this will have the double effect of not only producing a perception to approaching traffic of a need to slow down, but also by removing and moving the existing bollards, producing a greater width of carriageway to facilitate a larger vehicles' ability to negotiate the curve opposite The Volunteer Inn. In turn consideration might also be given to moving the eastern bollards for similar reasons.

The road surface through Seavington St Michael [along the C5021] is poor; Cats eyes were removed some years ago when the road was resurfaced but the remaining holes were not filled in properly and are getting deeper, causing residents who live in the cottages alongside the road often to complain that they feel their properties shake when these holes are hit, particularly by larger vehicles. This road surface needs to be inspected and repaired where necessary as well as some improved white lining provided.

The Parish Council finds it increasingly difficult to persuade County Highways to work on this road as it is only classified as a C road but perhaps these 3 planning applications could be used as the catalyst to make the safety-related improvements suggested.

The Parish Council is aware of the renovation work being carried out at the westerly half of Southernways in St Mary, and their need to have access to the rear of the property. We are aware that there is currently no

permanent vehicular access permitted to the rear of the property, as is the developer, but as at today there is no application for permission to create a vehicle access before the District Council.

There has also recently been an amendment to the planning application at Pond Farm concerning ridge levels to which the PC has no objection, but it did prompt two councillors to go and review the site again in the light of the ability of the site drainage system to cope with recent very heavy precipitation. A letter has been sent to the planners urging them to look again at the storm water drainage of the site, and give us their assurance that it can cope with the increased load of four extra roofs.

Village Car Park

Within our villages we have an ever increasing number of cars to park and unless we take action now, the problems that we are encountering are certainly going to get no better and almost surely get worse.

Within the villages there are a number of areas that now have more cars to park than ever, and no change in the dimensions of the available areas in which to park. These areas can broadly be listed as:-

The Parish Council owned car park opposite the Volunteer, Water Street in the vicinity of Winchester Cottages the junction of West Street and Townsend.

At present within these areas, parking of vehicles is at best described as haphazard at worst irresponsible and in some instances downright dangerous. Not only is the use of these areas as just described, but also there have been many instances of verbal abuse not just to other local motorists but also to totally innocent members of the public, which doesn't do much for the reputation of our Community. There have also been confrontations, issuing of illegal 'parking tickets', blocking other motorists in, and on some other extreme occasions summoning the assistance of the Police to resolve disputes. NOBODY has a right to park their vehicle in the same place habitually unless they have the landowner's permission, or they own or rent the land on which they intend to park their vehicle. They may have rights ACROSS that land but no right to obstruct it by parking.

Also it is an offence to be parked causing an obstruction.

Moving to specific areas of the Villages, it is apparent that the available spaces in the Village Car Park opposite the Volunteer are not being used effectively, responsibly, or with due regard for other residents. That being the case, it is the parish Council's intention to mark the Car Park in accordance with local government guidelines to promote more efficient use of the available space. This is the first of a number of available measures to ameliorate the current discord in the use of this Village amenity. It is a shame that since the Open Meeting in January, we have seen the instances of irresponsibility increase rather than decrease. We await professional estimates for the cost of marking the Car Park. I expect there will be more about this shortly

Water Street Recent instances of multi double parking in the area of Winchester Cottages on Water Street can and have caused obstructions, especially to larger vehicles, fortunately not yet to any emergency vehicles in the course of their duty, but continued use of the grass verge for parking opposite Winchester Cottages is both unsightly and causes damage to the verges. We don't know what the solution here is, but again I feel there are a number of options to discuss.

Highways In addition to the aforementioned report concerning Highways, the Council is aware and is attempting to persuade County Highways into action in a number of locations within the Community:-

David's Lane white line marking, Water Street Drainage problems, Rooks Mead Lane drainage. The recent allocation by County of extra funding for village maintenance work is being sought.

On a separate issue we are looking at the continuing upkeep and repair of the footpath in Church Lane.

Speeding

Speeding continues to be a problem within our villages despite everyone's best efforts. We continue to make use of the speed detection devices periodically placed in the village, the police mobile camera vans, and as you have heard, constant lobbying of both Highways, and recently the planners to try and get our message across. Unfortunately traffic calming measures such as are in Merriott, do not win the support of Avon and Somerset Constabulary as we are their preferred diversion in the event of closure of the A303.

Ranger Scheme

We have benefitted from (and paid for) the Village Ranger Scheme for over a year now, (this is the replacement for the Lengthsman Scheme which historically we shared with South Petherton) and personally I feel it runs well and we have received excellent service and value from our Ranger. Unbeknown to most of us as well as cutting, clearing and strimming, Phil also does those more unpleasant jobs like removing fly-tipped items, and roadkill from our lanes and spaces, and must be commended for his diligence and divergence.

When we vote for the allocation of monies for the next financial year it is the intention of the Council slightly to increase our spending in this facility, to make better use of his time particularly during the winter months.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Once again 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 to Parishes. I think we are all well aware that this is already happening. This financial year the Precept applied for was £13,750 but because of the Council Support Grant [£770] paid by South Somerset District Council the actual amount received was £14,520. 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 £679.19 and the Business Reserve at £17,797.91. Total monies spent this year to date are £12,910.92. However there are outstanding invoices due for grass cutting and works to our footpaths which could amount to £1,000, and ring-fenced monies of £2,600 grant to SPFA for a new piece of play equipment as the new tarmac

path came in under budget.

The main areas of expenditure are - The new Ranger Scheme has cost some £3,286 [but one invoice remains due for March], the SSDC have been paid £1,870.00 for cutting the Playing Field, and other grass cutting around the village totals some £4,113. This last amount includes the grass cutting of the large play area and other areas of the playing field not cut by SSDC. For the coming financial year the Parish Council has already agreed to pay for the cutting of the small play area behind the Millennium Hall and the outside area of the Shop/Cafe. This will further increase the amount paid in support of the SPFA. The PCC received a grant of £1,000 towards Churchyard maintenance and other grants paid are as follows - £500 [for rent due to SPFA], £300 [for provision of Broadband and WiFi] and £1,000 [towards the cost of a new cooker] to the Shop/Cafe. There is some £1,000 of VAT to be reclaimed at the end of the financial year. At present Parish Councillors are still considering whether any restrictions should be put in place on the Village Car Park but are hopeful that the area will be marked shortly with parking spaces.

A grant has been received totalling £1,000 from Wessex Water for tidying and re-planting of the orchard area behind St Mary's Close. To date some £530.00 has been spent but other costs regarding seating etc will be incurred. The land is owned by SSDC and the Parish Council wish to thank them, and the small group of residents who have co-ordinated this project particular mention to Karen Sutton for obtaining the grant and taking the project forward. During the year the Consolidated Stock that was held in the name of Seavington St Michael and Seavington St Mary had to be redeemed, under a Government initiative. This means that two small credits were received – namely £24.30 for St Michael and £47.63 for St Mary. This means that the Parish Council will no longer receive the quarterly dividends of 15p and 29p. The present Parish Councillors have no information as to when or why this stock was purchased.

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 – None received. General reports are received which cover the whole of the local area, nothing specific for The Seavingtons. However a PCSO did attend meeting in February and advised on the new rules regarding parking and vehicles causing an obstruction.

REPORT FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH CO-ORDINATOR – No report received as the Parish Council are still waiting for someone to take this over.

REPORT FROM VILLAGE TREE WARDENS –

Apart from assisting with the community orchard scheme, the tree wardens have not done anything major this season. The planned work on the playing field hedges has not happened. This is the only outstanding project on the wardens agenda. Parish Councillors thanked Phil Gordon-Smith and Alan Graham for their work.

REPORT FROM PARISH PATHS LIAISON OFFICER – There was nothing of concern to report. Only one footpath in the villages is not maintained by the Parish. This is Bread and Cheese Lane which leads from Long Forward Lane to Park Lane.

REPORT RE HISTORY PROJECT –

The History Project was formally wound up during the year. Parish Councillors thanked those who had helped with the creation of this. However, it will still be possible to access the site and add to it. This can be done by contacting the Parish Council

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. At present the web-site is undergoing a make-over and should be available soon.

VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS REPORTS

(i) Seavington Playing Fields Association and Millennium Hall – It was reported that the SPFA had gone through a difficult time with the resignation of five members of the Committee in July 2015. It was not until January 2016 that a new Chair was appointed and it is hoped that the SPFA can now be taken forward and faults found rectified. The SPFA is still short of Committee members and some groups are still unwilling to send a Representative as the terms of being a Trustee are not clear. However during the year the following has taken place:-

Village celebrations of the 40 years for the SPFA Charity and 5 years for the Shop/Café. The twin aims of the celebrations were "fun and fundraising". This was a joint venture from the start and numerous comments were received about the pleasure of seeing SPFA and the Shop/cafe working together. The steering group had equal representation from the shop and SPFA and proceeds were split 50/50 of the £3.5k which was raised. In addition St Margaret's Hospice benefited from the collection at the Proms performed by the Caravan Club of Great Britain Concert Band who held their annual rally on the field. They were very appreciative of the facilities offered by both SPFA and the shop/cafe.

The Harvest Supper made a profit of £180 **The Christmas Fair** made a profit of £166.

Bonfire night: At the SPFA Committee meeting held in October 2015, due to the popularity of the village in 2014, it was decided to run it as a joint event with the Shop/cafe for 2015. It was agreed that the Village Shop

would take any profit or bear any loss from the catering as they provided the manpower and facilities, which at that time the SPFA felt it could no longer be able to do this task. The Shop/cafe made a profit of £250 on the night. Bar sales and bucket collections did not cover the cost of the fireworks, so SPFA made a loss of £68. The Shop/Café did offer the SPFA Charity £150, but the vote of the SPFA Committee chose to not accept this generous offer, and not even cover our losses. Improvements have been designed to make it a better organised event for future years.

Thanks were expressed to the following:

Ry Coffman for all the fantastic effort and perseverance in leading/driving the building of the path to completions and the installation those wonderful implanted lights. More lights are to be installed at the bottom end of the path. This path links the 2 SPFA car parks together.

Also all those that have donated funds to the path project.

The Volunteer Inn for the monthly quiz night fund raising event for the SPFA Charity. This has been going on since December 2012. Colin and Ruth Turner have risen over £890 and that is increasing every month.

The Parish Council for the cutting of the grass in and around the playing fields.

For the understanding of the local community, so the Youth Club could use the lower SPFA car park so they could undertake Cycle Proficiency Education and Tests for local children.

David Froome/Seavington News for gifting the SPFA Charity the full cost of £526.30 to cover the shortfall of crockery and cutlery.

Sotoris Yiasoumi Chair

(ii) Community Shop

This year has seen the shop & cafe continue to increase its offering to the village. There has been a steady and pleasing increase in café trade as more and more people get to hear of us, mainly through word of mouth although we do advertise in a small number of publications too. In the last twelve months, café trade has increased by over 18% and we are hopeful that the introduction of the new tables, chairs and curtains will all help see this café use continue to increase. The café is now used not just by individuals and friends but also by many groups to meet and chat (Get together, Stroke club, Cycling clubs, care homes etc.) and is a community facility we should be proud to be able to offer. As a result of its popularity, we have recently introduced an evening supper club which is likely to meet several times a year.

It is fair to say that the profit we realize in the café is in part used to improve our offering in the shop. It will be of interest that approx. 75% of trade in the shop comes from village residents whereas in the café it is the other way round with a large proportion of café users coming from outside the village. This has effectively increased shop footfall and has gone a long way to ensure the shop is profitable and thus guarantee our long term survival as a business.

I am pleased to report that the level of volunteer commitment remains high. Without it we would certainly not be profitable and all our thanks should formally be made to the 50 or so villagers who give their time and energy to support the enterprise.

The introduction of My Hermes postal service has been very popular and this is now becoming a revenue stream as well as a service to the village. That said we are still trying to progress Post Office services in the shop which is consistently the most requested service the shop is asked for when we conduct surveys. The regularly changing art and craft displays of local artisans are also proving popular which all adds to increasing the number of people who frequent the shop.

We know we need a shop manager as not having one ensures we are inefficient in a variety of areas and I apologize to anyone who has been let down because of this. Please bear with us as we are still restricted in what we can achieve at the moment because of lower than expected turnover and thus surplus funds. To this end we are actively seeking suitable grant giving bodies that might be prepared to help us. We know from our experience when we introduced a paid cook in the café that the increased efficiency brought about by having a full time manager will mean increased profit for us and a better service for the village.

We are slowly increasing the variety of goods on sale in the shop, but trying to find what goods villagers want us to stock is not that simple. Copying other community shops (and there are numerous in a 10 mile radius) is a mistake as we have long learned that Seavington is unique in what we want and need. Regular surveys are conducted; the last in Oct 2015 showed that shop use is increasing (backed-up by our increasing turnover figure) as was shop popularity within the village compared to the 2012 survey. It also gave us a list of additional goods we should try stocking and we are slowly doing this.

We now stock a variety of specialist food such as gluten free products and Organic produce. Both these ranges are popular with many. Locally produced food is also important to many of our customers and we try to accommodate this with currently over 40 local suppliers.

We are working hard to install a variety of equipment to make our offering to the village better. Aircon, Fridges, Freezers, Bread oven, EPOS system, Bar code scanner are all being looked at. Some of this is merely replacing existing equipment which has deteriorated with age but some is new and will enable us to provide additional stock items. However, although the store (shop and café) is now making a profit each year, we still have loans and bondholders we need to pay back. As a result, this new equipment program is heavily reliant on suitable grants from various charitable bodies. This does however mean that we are not able to move as fast as we would like. However, with now almost 6 years trading experience, we are confident that the village store and café will be able to sustain both a paid manager and paid café staff once our debts are paid.

In summary another good year

.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. We also produced a full colour souvenir booklet of the "Seavingtons Celebrations" week.

I would like to start by placing on record my thanks to the "behind the scenes" volunteers who make the village magazine possible. These include Tony Beresford, our Treasurer and Advertising Manager, Maria Potts who helps with the editing and compilation of the magazine together with Elaine & Brian Edwards and Ros & Roger Clampitt who collate, staple and deliver the finished magazine to our street distributors. The Street Distributors themselves deserve a special mention and thanks because their anonymous work, whilst below the radar in that no-one sees them at work, is vital to our organisation.

We have not needed to make any capital purchases during the year but, in January, our collator required an expensive £500 overhaul which was much less expensive than replacing it.

We are still dependent on a relatively small number of contributors and, during the year, have lost "*Farm Boy*" who has hung up his wellies after being a contributor for most of my tenure as editor. I would like to thank *Farm Boy* and appeal for new contributors. I have tried to find someone to compile a regular village gossip column but, so far, have no takers.

With the agreement of the SPFA we are reverting the waste paper skip to its original position to the left of the community shop. This should avoid congestion at the entrance to the car park.

Our combined income from advertising revenue and waste paper collection has, again, enabled us to both avoid the need for external financial support and allowed us to accumulate a small surplus. We have therefore been able to make a grant of £526 to the Millennium Hall for the purchase of catering equipment.

Last year I commented on the significant drop in the activities of village clubs and organisations which I see when compiling the "Village Diary". This trend has continued during the current year.

David Froome, Editor.

(iv) Youth Group –

The Youth Club meets some Monday evenings during school term time and has just completed its first year after the re-launch. There are 3 DBS checked adults who volunteer each session but more would be welcomed. At present there are 20 registered members of which 13 attend regularly. Each week the costs for the hire of the hall are almost covered but as the former Club left a healthy bank balance there are no financial worries at present. At each session games, crafts and somewhere safe to meet are the main things offered. However, two themed evenings have taken place – bonfire night and Halloween. During the February half term a Bikeability course was run for the older members. During the summer months the Club are hopeful of using the outside space of the playing field. Organisers are mindful that some fund raising will have to be done to update some of the existing equipment.

Janine Lewis – Leader

As there was no other business the meeting closed at 8.50pm

Signed

Date