

SEEND PARISH COUNCIL
Annual Meeting – Tuesday 20th May 2019

Present: Mrs Georgina A'Bear, Mrs Pamela Akerman, Mrs Anita Heatley, Mr Terry James (Chairman), Mr William Lack, Mr Paul Manning, Mrs Carole Vince, Mr John Williams and Mr Martin Wiltshire.

Cllr J Seed, Mrs Sue Bond (Clerk), plus members of the parish, and representatives from clubs and organisations in Seend.

Apologies: Mr Barry Nicholls and Mr J Padfield (Parish Councillors), Mrs P England (Seend Ramblers), Mrs S Ewin (Theatre Club & Book Club), Mrs H Stafford-Charles (Community Centre), Mr G Reason (Seend Link), Mr R Whitehead (Community Centre), Carola Thorpe, Ann Salter (Parishioner)

Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the coming year

Mr Terry James was proposed as Chairman by Mrs Akerman, seconded by Mr Wiltshire. There were no other nominations. Councillors voted unanimously to elect Mr James as Chairman for the coming year.

Mrs Anita Heatley was proposed as Vice-Chairman by Mrs A'Bear and seconded by Mrs Vince. There were no other nominations. Councillors voted unanimously to elect Mrs Heatley as Vice Chairman for the coming year.

To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous Annual Meeting

The minutes had been circulated to all Councillors and were available for all those attending on the Parish Council website. Mrs Vince proposed that the minutes be accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Mrs Heatley. The minutes were approved unanimously. The Chairman signed the minutes as a true record.

Annual Report of the Parish Council presented by the Chairman

The Chairman begun by welcoming our newly co-opted member of the Parish Council, Mr William Lack.

He then began his report by welcoming everyone to this year's Annual Parish Meeting and continued as follows with his report.

This has been my first full year as Chairman, and it has been an interesting one. And I thank the Councillors for voting me in again for the forthcoming year.

We had one Councillor resignation in April, when Jo McManus sadly stood down. The vacancy remained unfilled despite advertising until very recently when we co-opted Mr William Lack to complete our full quota of 11 Councillors.

We have continued to have the support of our County Councillor Jonathon Seed. He has offered advice on many parish issues, including highways, the electoral boundary review, matters of planning and enforcement, and much more. He has fought our corner at CATG and the Area Board meetings. So, on behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank Jonathon Seed for his attendance and unstinting support for our work. My thanks also go to all of our Parish Councillors for their work during the year and for their unstinting commitment to our parish and its community.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank some of the unsung heroes who live in the parish. For instance, I know that there are many people who regularly pick up the litter as they go on their walks. Some have planted bulbs around the village. In particular, I would like to thank Fritz Schruff who has been carrying out some routine maintenance jobs on the village noticeboards and benches. And Tessa Doe for her production of the Seend Leaflet.

Planning

During the last financial year, the PC has discussed and voted on 45 planning applications. Out of this number, the PC approved 36 and opposed 7.

Amongst these planning applications are a fair number relating to trees. As part of Seend is in a conservation area, any trees, within the conservation area, that residents wish to prune or fell have to go through the planning process. The majority of these applications do go through unopposed, but it is important for the parish council to look at each application to ensure that any tree felling is not to the detriment of the parish.

There were only a couple of planning applications that were seen as controversial.

All planning applications relating to properties and land in the parish are put on the Parish Council website on the planning page. Once the deadline for comments has passed then they are taken off.

Highway Matters

Highway issues continue to be a major concern for Parishioners. With two A roads cutting through our Parish, volume of traffic and perceived speed are a particular concern. Frustratingly in both cases, there is little that the parish council can do to alleviate these. The Parish Council is fairly represented on the Community Area Transport Group meetings, which meets 4 times a year, where we have to compete with the other town and parish councils for support for highway issues. We also regularly seek the advice of the Highway engineers about the feasibility of some highway improvements.

We have secured a number of highway improvements, including the Church Crossing and the Bell Hill Crossroads road safety improvements.

Church Crossing – Work to install the dropped kerbs took place in July over a 3-day period. Dropped kerbs were created on each side and a tarmaced path leading from the end of Church Walk to the crossing point. Whilst sympathetically done, Councillors felt that the crossing was not visible enough, and had expected it to have bollards and a coloured road surface that would warn drivers of the crossing. We went back to CATG to ask for further work to be carried out. It was agreed that a coloured high friction surface could be added. We have agreed this with CATG and now await the work to be carried out.

Bell Hill Road Safety improvements

These were carried out in November over a period of 3 weeks. This resulted in Seend High Street being closed to through traffic. Residents of the High Street enjoyed a period of tranquility, whilst Seend Post Office suffered from a dearth of customers.

The work carried out included a number of improvements that have made a difference.

- Increasing the 30mph speed limit further down Bell Hill and Trowbridge Road has helped reduce the speed of cars as they enter the village.
- The removal of the right turn facility has taken out the uncertainty at this crossing point, as drivers behind have to wait for the car in front to make the turning before continuing.
- Visibility at the give way line from Bell Hill was enhanced by the repositioning of the Bell Hill give way line to improve inter-visibility on the A361. So it is easier to see when exiting from Bell Hill.
- The repositioning of the pedestrian refuge and crossing point closer to the School Road junction has been helpful

Despite a number of comments on the village Facebook site, I do feel that the road improvements have helped.

Metro Count – Following concerns raised by High Street residents, a metro count was undertaken between 4th and 10th February 2019 along the High Street between the Lye Field and the Manor House. Speeds for a total of 28,962 vehicles in free flowing traffic in both directions were recorded. Total traffic volume during this period was 47,519 vehicles (this figure may be higher than above due to congestion when 'free-flowing' speeds cannot be recorded. The 85th percentile speed was 34.6mph (the speed at or below which 85% of the traffic is travelling). The average speed was 30.6 mph.

The results mean that because the speeds were under 35mph, the criteria for taking further action, there can be no community speed watch or police enforcement. We will not be able to install a speed indicator device.

The Parish Council appreciates that the results would be disappointing for residents, but we cannot request any further action to be taken by Wiltshire Police or Wiltshire County Council Highways regarding speed enforcement or management based on these results.

Neighbourhood Plan – Georgina will say more about this in her report, but suffice to say, all is progressing well. The NPSG managed to obtain a grant of £7,300 from the Groundworks Trust, which helped enormously with the costs of employing the consultants Place Studios. The NPSG will be applying for a further grant in this coming financial year.

Electoral Boundary Review

The Local Government Boundary Commission England is undertaking a review of the electoral divisions and division names in Wiltshire. This will affect Seend Parish. Our first submission, requested that we remain within the Melksham Area, but the LGBC in its first draft has supported the recommendations made by Wiltshire Council to put us in a new Division. It has made changes to Seend's electoral boundary, as they have created a new Seend, Poulshot and Potterne Division that includes the villages of Bulkington, Poulshot, Seend, Potterne, Erlestoke, Marston, Worton and Coulston. Jonathon Seed reckoned there would be no point challenging this as it was unlikely to change. So from 2021, Seend Parish is likely to be moving into the Devizes Area Board area.

Other Projects

Parish Steward – The Parish Steward scheme has been working well. Each month, the Clerk meets with the Parish Steward to discuss the tasks that need doing. As well as filling potholes, clearing gullies and rodding some of the drains, he has focused on clearing the footpath from the Stocks to Seend. This is a mammoth task, that will be extremely difficult to keep on top of as the grass and weeds grow through the summer. It is important for residents to let the Clerk know of any problems so that it can be put on the list.

Defibrillator

In November, we purchased a third defibrillator and cabinet that is now installed in the red phone box by the Three Magpies Pub. This was paid for with the monies received from the Sandridge Solar Farm Community Benefit, as well as a donation of £273 from the Three Magpies Pub. This was raised from the sale of a donated barrel of Wadworth 6X.

The phone box needed to be renovated first before installing the defibrillator. The cleaning and painting was carried out by a small team: John and Kate Williams, Sue Bond and myself.

This now completes our planned purchase of 3 defibrillators to be placed in the three parts of our parish. Weekly checks are carried out by Mark Wood (Community Centre) and Sue Bond (Seend Cleeve and Sells Green).

WW1 Commemorative Bench

Seend Parish Council wanted to find a way of commemorating the 100th anniversary of the ending of the First World War, and had hoped to join Wiltshire Council's Tree planting project to plant a tree for every soldier in the County of Wiltshire who died in WW1. For Seend, that meant 25 trees. But unfortunately, the Parish Council were unable to find a suitable location for 25 trees to be planted in one place. We then struck upon the idea of a commemorative bench, with a particular one in mind that the Clerk had seen in the SLCC magazine. This was a very striking painted steel bench depicting soldiers and the red poppies. We felt that this would be a very fitting way for Seend Parish to remember with gratitude the 25 men who gave their lives for us. We applied to the Area Board for a grant of £400, and with the help of Jonathon Seed, this was approved. Donations from the Seend Branch of the Royal British Legion and from Seend WI helped the Parish Council with the remainder of the cost. A short service of dedication was given by the Rev'd Joshva with representatives of the parish by the War Memorial which is where the bench has been placed.

The year ahead

The Parish Council will continue to look at what Highway improvements can be done but we are advised by Highways on the criteria that has to be met. However, we attend the Community Area Transport Group meetings to support our suggestions. We also attend Melksham Area Board meeting to ask for funding support. The Parish Council will continue to assess all planning applications but, at the end of the day, it is Wiltshire Council who has the last word.

Finally, I would like to thank our Clerk for all the hard work she puts in, mostly behind the scenes, whether it is liaising with other village organisations, responding to correspondence, attending meetings, researching and obtaining quotes, monitoring Parish Council assets eg. Allotments, benches, war memorial etc together with keeping our website and policy papers up to date. Our Parish Council meetings are held on the last Tuesday of every month (except December). All are welcome to attend. We will continue to work hard for the benefit of the residents of Seend Parish.

Report from Councillor Seed

It has been another difficult year for Wiltshire Council, with budget efficiencies needing to be made of £23 million. There have been some successes at County level and locally.

After having a terrible time over the past year, Salisbury will host National Armed Forces week in early July and this event will be attended by the Princess Royal.

Wiltshire Council will be entering an era of change as its Leader Baroness Jane Scott will be stepping down in July.

The recent Boundary review means the Council division which contains Seend will change in 2021. The new division will include Seend, Bulkington, Potterne, Worton, Erlestoke and Coulston and will move to the Devizes Area Board. However the Melksham Area Board continues to support both the town and local villages and has supported Seend well over the years. I am due to resume Area Board Chairmanship next month.

In Seend I continue to attend your Parish Council meetings whenever I can. Many of you here tonight know that I get involved wherever I can and also where I am asked. I remain a member of the Community Land & Asset Trust Board and support the CLT both at meetings where I can attend and behind the scenes in County Hall

On a personal note I have been your County Councillor for ten years, but I have been selected to be the Conservative candidate for Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire and Swindon for election next year. This means I will remain as your Councillor until elections in 2021, but I am unlikely to stand for re-election at that time.

I really enjoy my connection with Seend and look forward to not only the next two years as your Wiltshire Councillor but also continued friendships in the village. Finally I would also like to thank Terry James as PC Chairman and Anita Heatley as Vice Chairman for their help to me, but particularly for their strong leadership of the PC and steering the good ship PC into calmer waters.

Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – Chairman's Report (Mrs Georgina A'Bear)

The group started the financial year (April 2018) with a new grant application to Locality to enable us to continue our work with Place Studio Ltd. The grant was successful and has meant we have now had a full year working with our consultants and feel we have made significant progress towards completing our Neighbourhood Plan.

Throughout last year, to promote various consultations we are in the process of undertaking, we attended many events in the Community. We started in March 2018 with the Lock Open Day in Seend Cleeve and also took part in the following events: Seend Beer Festival, Seend School Fayre, Seend Breakfasts and the Flower Show. The main points of consultation at these events have been on Local Green Space and Community Facilities. At the Seend Flower Show one of our consultants came along and was able to engage with parishioners on any points raised.

The group started off the New Year with a Consultation/Coffee morning and this gave the group the opportunity to present work done to date on:-

Draft Vision & Objectives, Heritage Assets, Local Green Space, Parish Landscape, Character & Design, Valued Views, Community Facilities, Green Infrastructure & Routeways and Highways, plus Future Development in the Parish. A table was also displayed listing the Land Sites put forward to date.

The above consultation material was then made available on the website and has been taken to Seend School for display. There are also paper copies of this material available in a booklet in The Three Magpies, The Barge, The Brewery and the Seend Community Centre.

This event was well attended and those present spent time looking at the display boards and engaging in discussions with the consultants from Place Studio, SPNPSG members and Vicky Burvill, our Link Officer from Wiltshire County Council. Many contributed ideas and their views on the various topics.

Following on from the January Consultation morning a new site for potential Local Green Space was identified, the green area with trees at the entrance to Dial Close, and we are currently consulting on this site.

As part of the plan we can create a non statutory element called Community Projects.

Highways issues can also be included in this part of the plan along with other projects put forward from the community. If any parishioners have ideas on other projects please let us know.

The group holds open meetings in the Seend Community Centre and we plan to do these approximately quarterly throughout the year. We encourage anyone to come along to these and give us your suggestions & comments. We also have an email address and you can contact us anytime. A report on group progress is also always given at each PC meeting.

The group feel very positive with the progress made on the plan and look forward to continuing our work with Place Studio, after we hopefully secure more grant funding at the end of May. We would also like to thank Seend Parish Council for their continued support and financial commitment again to the S.P.N.P.S.G. in this financial year.

The group is open to any new members, so if you feel you have skills to offer the group please let us know.

I would like to finish by thanking all those group members who have remained committed to the SPNPSG and the work they have done.

Statement of the Parish Council's accounts to 31st March 2019

Income and expenditure for this financial year has been a lot higher than previous years. The Precept for 2018-19 was £17,895. This was an increase of just over £4,639 from 2017-2018. The Precept worked out at about £33.88 per household per annum. It was increased by this amount for a number of reasons, but largely to cover the additional highways costs we knew we would be paying for Bell Hill and the Church Crossing, another £2,000 for the Neighbourhood Plan work, some nominal increases in some of the budget headings, and to correct the budget for the increase in the Clerk's hours from 9 to 12 per week.

Income for the year was a total of: £28,058. This was quite a large jump from the 2018 figure which was 16,874.27. In addition to the Precept, we received a grant of £7,300 from the Groundworks Trust for the Neighbourhood Plan preparation. We also received £475 from allotment rent, about £81 interest from bank accounts, a grant from the Foresight Group for the Community Benefit from the Sandridge Solar Farm of £1,060.07, £400 from the Area Board to go towards the WW1 Commemorative bench. A number of donations received that totalled £611.60 and £235 prize money for our place in the CPRE Best Kept Village Competition. The Sandridge Solar money, along with the £273.60 donation from the Three Magpies was used to purchase the 3rd Defibrillator unit and cabinet which is installed inside the adopted phone box at Sells Green. This completed our planned purchase of a defibrillator for the 3 parts of the Parish.

Expenditure totalled £30,786, again much higher than in previous years. This was due to a number of reasons. The Neighbourhood Plan preparations have begun to require an input of more capital, as consultants were employed to help with its preparation. We also spent £7,432 on the Church Crossing and our contribution to the Bell Hill Road Safety improvements. There were no great overspends in the budget. The only real unexpected expenditure was the £600 given to the West Wiltshire Ramblers as our contribution to the installation of 11 new kissing gates on RoW on the western side of the Parish towards Bowerhill. The WW1 bench, thanks to a £400 grant from the Melksham Area Board, and donations from the Seend RBL and WI, Seend PC only had to pay £218. Small overspends also occurred with fixing and renovation of some of the street furniture, a higher than anticipated water bill for the allotments and a slight miscalculation on the administrative costs as the budget hadn't taken into account the NALC Salary pay scale increase.

At the end of this financial year, we have a balance of £10,013 in the bank and building society. This is the lowest it has been for a while as our expenditure for the first time exceeded income. We have earmarked over £3,272 of that money for the Neighbourhood Plan preparation and £750 for the completion of the Church Crossing with a high friction coloured surface. With a VAT refund of £2039, there is approximately £7,000 left of general reserve.

Reports from village organisations

Seend Community Centre – Report read by Mrs Marion Whitehead
Seend RBL - Mr Robin Heatley
Holy Cross Church PCC – Anne Ewing
Fawly Players –Tessa Doe
Seend WEA Group –Tessa Doe
Spotlight –Tessa Doe
Poetry Group – Tessa Doe
Seend Fund – Anita Shea
Seend Community Bus – Anita Shea
Seend Ramblers – Report read by Carole Vince
Seend Ramblers Working Party – Report read by Carole Vince
Seend Playgroup – Report read by Georgina A'Bear
Seend Link – Report read by Clerk
Seend Book Club – Report read by Clerk
Theatre Club – Report read by Marian Whitehead

Any other business

Mrs Heatley said that our PCSO was still Maggie Ledbury. Her contact details were available on the Parish Council website and at the back of Spotlight.

The next Area Board meeting on 5th June was taking place at the Seend Community Centre. Councillor Seed urged the community to support it by attending.

Best Kept Village Competition – the first round of judging was likely to take place in early June. All at the meeting were asked to help tidy up the village for the judging. Councillor Seed reminded the meeting that it was important for all out of date posters/notices to be taken down.

Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

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CHAIRMAN
Date: 5th May 2021