

SEEND PARISH COUNCIL
Annual Parish Meeting –
Thursday 5th May 2022

Present: Mr Terry James (Chairman), Mrs Anita Heatley, Mrs Georgina A'Bear, Mrs Pam Akerman Mr William Lack, Mr Springate and Mr John Williams.

Also Present: Chris Stirland (Clerk) and 16 Parishioners

Apologies: Mr Martin Wiltshire, Mrs Jackie Hamblin, Seend Play Group, Cllr Tamara Reay

To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous Annual Meeting

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

Annual Report of the Parish Council presented by the Chairman

Introduction

Welcome to this year's Annual Parish Meeting. It is good that we have been able to hold this in public for the first time since 2019. Last year's was held using zoom and there wasn't one in 2020. So, it is good to see so many familiar faces and some new.

We have a few new faces on the Parish Council. The first to mention is our new Clerk, Chris Stirland. He has taken over the role from Sue Bond who stepped down at the end of April. He has made an excellent start to the job and has been touring the Parish to ensure he familiarizes himself with all aspects of the parish.

We have held our Annual Parish Council meeting just before this one, and I am pleased to announce that myself and Anita Heatley have been re-elected as chairman and vice chairman.

In May 2021, the Covid Act legislation allowing for meetings to be held virtually was not extended after 7th May and therefore since last May, we have resumed holding our parish council meetings in public back in the Community Centre. There were some advantages to holding the meetings on ZOOM in that it encouraged greater public participation. This was particularly seen in our meetings when the Melksham bypass was discussed. There has been some lobbying by local government and the National Association of Local Councils to give town and parish councils the choice, as it was recognized that on-line meetings were well attended compared with public meetings. But to date, there is no change in the law.

In the May elections, we had 3 councillors step down: Paul Manning, Barry Nicholls and John Padfield. As there were no new candidates, our election was not contested, but we remained 3 councillors down. In September, Phil Springate and Jackie Hamblin were co-opted onto the parish council. At the beginning of this year, Carole Vince moved away from the Parish and so resigned as councillor. So, we are still two councillors short. So, if there is any of you out there interested in becoming a Councillor, then please get in touch with the Clerk.

With the Unitary elections in May last year, we welcomed our new County Councillor Tamara Reay, who in her first year has already provided us with a tremendous amount of help on highway and rights of way issues. So, I would like to thank her on behalf of the Parish Council for all her help in supporting us at the CATG and Area Board meetings, and lobbying on our behalf.

I would also like to thank all of our Parish Councillors for their work during the year and for their unstinting commitments to our parish and its community. In particular Anita Heatley and Georgina A'Bear who have stepped up to the role of Acting Chairman and Acting Vice Chairman at times when I have been away.

The last two years have been very tough on our country and our community, but there have been many examples of fantastic community support. So, I would like thank the many unsung heroes in our Parish, who, in these difficult times have rallied to the aid of our more vulnerable parishioners.

Move into the Devizes Community Area

Following the Local Government Boundary Commission in 2019/20, Seend was moved into a new ward, named Devizes Rural West. We have been grouped with Bulkington, Poulshot, Potterne, Erlestoke, Marston Worton and Coulston. This came into effect from the May 2021 elections and so we have moved from the Melksham Community Area into the Devizes Community Area. We have already participated in the Devizes CATG meetings and attended the Devizes Area Board.

Neighbourhood Plan – Georgina will say more about this in her report. But you will know that the Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan is now “Made” following the Referendum in May. There were 421 votes in favour, and 47 against, with 7 void. The Plan is now a legal document and already being referred to by Wiltshire Planning. The steering committee, headed by Georgina A’Bear, have worked tirelessly over several years to get our Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan Made, and the Parish owe a great deal of thanks to the committee for their work in producing such a fantastically comprehensive document. As a result, some other Parishes have used our NHP as a template and Georgina has been asked for advice to assist with theirs?

Planning

During the last financial year, the PC has discussed and voted on 43 planning applications. Out of this number, the PC approved 33 and opposed 10. The vast majority were discussed and voted on at a PC meeting, but there is a delegated planning sub-committee of the Parish Council and this committee occasionally agrees a response if it is between PC meetings. This is as long as the application is fairly straight forward, otherwise an extension is requested so that it can be discussed at a full council meeting. With the “Made” Neighbourhood Plan, we are hoping that all applicants will refer to the policies in the Plan and enter into a Pre-App community engagement if the applicant is for a new dwelling. Wiltshire Planning also have a duty to refer to it when making their assessment as to whether to approve or refuse an application. We have begun an assessment spreadsheet so we can monitor each application and note whether the Neighbourhood Plan has been referenced.

Highways

We continue to have dialogue with Wiltshire Highways on various highways issues. And our Councillor Tamara Reay has been very supportive of us, initiating meetings with highway representatives.

We have submitted a Highway Improvement Request to either get a high friction surface painted at the dropped kerb crossing point between Inmarsh Lane and Spout Lane and or pedestrian warning signs. This was approved by CATG last Autumn and is in the system to be installed. We have also requested an extension to the 30mph limit to include the new Park Farm development when it is built.

We have recently submitted 3 new requests:

- To reduce the speed limit to 30mph by the Seend Cleeve junction on the A361.
- Horse rider warning signs on the A365 by Redstocks.
- Further road safety improvements at the Bell cross roads.

These were discussed at the April CATG meeting. Further site meetings with Parish Councillors and residents, Tamara Reay County Councillor highways representatives are to be arranged for the Seend Cleeve Junction and Bell crossroads, further analysis needs to be carried out as to the requirement for horse signs on the A365 Redstocks junction.

A police report is produced at every meeting but the police only log and report accidents when there has been injuries but our Clerk keeps a register of ALL accidents (injuries or not) so we can use this when trying to make a point. So, if you see or hear of any accidents in the Parish, please report it to our Clerk who can also log it.

Rusty Lane – At the beginning of the year, we had a site meeting with the Rights of Way Warden in the hope that we can get this repaired as soon as possible. The Parish Council has offered to help finance the repair in the hope of bringing it higher up the list of paths repairs on Wiltshire Council's list. The latest news on this is that they are hoping to get some scalping to do the repair in the next couple of months.

Melksham Bypass Consultation

Following the initial public consultation in November 2020, Seend Parish Council sent in a robust response against the proposed Route D which would have crossed the canal and into our Parish. This would have been the most devastating routes for us. Thankfully with the 2nd consultation in August 2021, this route was dropped in favour of Route C. Seend PC sent in a full response to this 2nd consultation.

The update on the Melksham bypass proposals is that Wiltshire Council has agreed to delay the submission of the Outline Business Case for the Melksham bypass until the Summer, whilst it waits for the initial results of the National Highways' M4 to Dorset Connectivity study. There will be a further public consultation later this year.

We are aware that Michelle Donelan MP has been lobbying against this bypass and the impact it will have on Melksham.

Physical Assets

In September last year, following a successful Area Board grant bid, we got the bus shelter near the top of Bollands Hill repaired. This had been damaged in 2017 following an RTA. We were able to get the shelter repaired rather than being completely replaced which meant it was more affordable to do. The grant was £1,000 and the PC paid the balance of the cost.

The Sandridge Solar Farm Community Benefit payment for 2021 is going to be spent on the installation of some cycle racks by the Pavilion and the Community Centre. This is a work in progress. We also purchased two new flags for the Church.

We have also made a commitment to contribute £5,000 towards the purchase of a new mower for the Lye Field. Whilst this purchase has been deferred until next year, the money will be kept earmarked for when it is needed by the Lye Trustees.

Re-Dedication of the War Memorial – Royal Visit

Seend was honoured with a Royal visitor on 2nd December when a special memorial service was held to mark the 100th anniversary of the War Memorial. This had been delayed from February because of the Covid restrictions that were in place at the time of the true anniversary date. The Duchess of Cornwall attended in her role as Patron of the War Memorials Trust. As well as being presented to Robin (and Anita) Heatley, Chairman of the Seend RBL and a number of civic dignitaries, she was presented to 8 parishioners, some of whom had named ancestors on the war memorial. I was unable to attend, but by all accounts, it was a magnificent event, the organization of which was down to Robin and Anita Heatley. It will be remembered by all those who attended for a long time.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Community Centre has organized the lighting of the village beacon which will be preceded by a barbeque and band on the Thursday 2nd June. The Parish Council is making a small contribution towards the cost of the entertainment. The Parish Council has given a commitment to purchase a number of trees from the Woodland Trust to be given to those parishioners wishing to plant trees on their land. This is in support of the Queen's Green Canopy Project. The WI is hoping to organize a picnic on The Lye on the Sunday instead of the Big Lunch. The WI is organising a bring your own picnic on the Lye Field on the Sunday.

The Year Ahead

We hope as we move forward, and the full easing of the restrictions we have had with the Covid lockdowns, we can fully resume our usual day to day lives in this wonderful Parish.

Seend has again entered the CPRE Best Kept Village Competition. John Williams is co-ordinating taking the lead on this. It is important that we ensure our Parish is kept tidy, litter is collected and flyers taken off lamps and trees. Judging will take place, I believe, sometime I believe in May or June.

We look forward to the Seend Fete and Flower show which is taking place on 13th August. There will be Open Gardens in The Cleeve on 11th June.

The Parish Council will continue to work on behalf of the Parish, and thanks the Parish for their continued support. The first port of call should be our Clerk, Chris Stirland who can be contacted by email at clerk@seendparishcouncil.co.uk or by telephone 07706 850859.

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sue our retiring clerk for all the hard work and commitment she has put in over the last 5-6 years, she has gone above and beyond in her dedication to the parish council. She will be sorely missed and hope she enjoys her well-deserved retirement.

Report from Councillor Reay

Thank you for your support over the past year. It has been a pleasure to represent you all and to play a small part in your vibrant community.

Wiltshire Council set a 2022/23 budget and 10-year Business Plan to focus on the future, while maintaining a long-term strong financial footing. The council's budget for the next financial year is just over £417m and with more than half (£235m) on support and social care for adults and children. Around £92m will be spent on day-to-day services such as waste management, road maintenance, leisure and library services, as well as the council's carbon management and climate change work - which recently saw the council ranked as the fifth best unitary authority in the UK for its response to the global challenge.

Alongside this, the council's capital programme is £307m for projects to improve and maintain the county's infrastructure - including leisure services, council house building, schools' maintenance, footpath and highway improvements, high streets of Salisbury and Trowbridge.

The 10-year Business Plan outlines the council's guiding themes, which are prevention and early intervention; improving social mobility and tackling inequalities; understanding communities; and working together.

As Wiltshire Council Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, I was pleased to lead the development of the Climate Change strategy which underpins the Council's ambitions to reduce emissions and to make the county more resilient to climate impacts. A good number of projects are now underway including a Solar Community Scheme for residents, businesses and community buildings, which will launch in the next few days, and the development of a Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan for the Devizes area.

Locally I am very aware that traffic and road safety issues are critical in Seend, and I am working with Seend Parish Council and Seend School to secure further improvements – in particular at the Bell/Bollands Hill junction of the A361 and at The Stocks. You have my assurance that this is one of my key priorities for the year ahead.

Finally, I should like to thank Seend Parish Council for all their hard work and commitment to ensuring that Seend is such a brilliant place to live, and in particular the wonderfully efficient Sue Bond who has sadly stepped down as Parish Clerk. Sue – I hope you enjoy your “retirement”.

Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Following the Annual Parish Meeting held virtually on 5th May 2021 I am very pleased to announce that the Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan is 'Made'.

The vote took place the next day on the 6th May and the result was Ballot papers issued 475, Yes vote 421 , No vote 47, unmarked 7. This was reported in the June Spotlight.

During the year the Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan has been referenced in many planning applications but as yet it has not encouraged pre-application engagement which is disappointing.

From the Projects List (pg 57) the Parish Council are progressing with the installation of bicycle racks in the Village Hub. The Lye Field Trust are investigating grants and support available from Wilts. C.C. to create electric vehicle charging points.

Highway & Pedestrian Safety (Pg 58). The Parish Council has an ongoing list of projects to improve road safety and these can be seen in the minutes.

Community Led Affordable Housing (Pg60) The Park Farm site has now progressed and will be reported on by the Seend C.L.& A.T.

Seend Parish Council has also joined W.A.L.P.A (Wiltshire Alliance Localism and Planning Group) The Parish Council have joined this group to support the work being done to engage with Wiltshire Council on the status of Neighbourhood Plans and currently the serious issue of the lack of a 5-year Housing Land Supply. This issue is causing a lot of inappropriate planning to be passed by the Planning Inspector and is undermining the work undertaken by local groups on their 'Made' Neighbourhood Plans.

I would like to finish by thanking all those Steering Group Members who have brought the Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan to fruition and for the work they have undertaken. The group is also looking for new members who would be interested to help in the future when the plan will need to be reviewed.

Georgina A'Bear

Chair, Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Statement of the Parish Council's accounts to 31st March 2022

The Precept for 2021-22 was the same as the previous year at £ 20,381. The precept worked out at about £38.63 per band D household.

Income for the year was a total of: £24,127.65. In addition to the Precept, we received a Sandridge Solar Farm Community payment of £1,179.57. A grant of £1,000 from the Devizes Area Board to help pay for the repair of the bus shelter. The allotment rent remained the same as the previous year and brought in the same income of: £517.50. Plus, the VAT refund for the previous year's expenditure £1,044.03. Interest was £5.55.

Expenditure

Expenditure totalled £19,099.12 inc VAT (£18,072.97 ex VAT).

The biggest outlay for the parish council is the staff costs. This year it has covered the salary of 2 clerks for the month of March.

The Neighbourhood Plan costs were minimal this year at £600.

The repair of the bus shelter at the top of Bollands Hill was the biggest outlay at £2,657 but with the grant from the Area Board of £1,000, our contribution was £1657. Other unexpected expenditure put in our contingency heading was our membership of the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils: £285.86, the engraving of the war memorial (£590) a new laptop for the new Clerk (£200), the Remembrance Sunday wreath (£20), Flags (£166.10).

Our donations to village organisations remained the same as the previous year at £1775.00.

New Purchases:

A second new noticeboard was purchased for Seend Cleeve and has replaced the old one by the phone box. The bulk of the monies used for the purchase came from the 2020 Solar money. We have purchased two new flags for the Church using the 2021 Sandridge Solar Community payment. The remainder of this money is going to be used to purchase and installed some bike racks at the Community Centre and Lye Field.

At the end of this financial year, we have a healthy balance of £30,603.31 in the bank and building society. However, we have earmarked £21,491 of this money for projects to be carried over into the new year:

Item	Amount
Neighbourhood Plan Reserves	£5,541.14
Highways - High friction surface & signage	£650.00
Highways - Further road safety improvements at Bell Crossroads (CATG HIR)	5,000.00
Seend Lye Field Trustees - Mower contribution	£5,000.00
Rusty Lane - Bridleway repair	£4,000.00
Solar Money unspent but retained for the cycle rack community project	£1,000.00
Platinum Jubilee Band 'People Like Us'	£300.00
Total Earmarked Reserves:	£21,491.14

This leaves us with general reserves of £9,112.27 plus the £1,026.15 VAT refund. As the Internal Auditor was slightly concerned about the amount of general reserve in the previous financial year, they should be much happier with this year's results.

Reports from village organisations

All reports have been collated on a separate document as an appendix to these minutes and are displayed on the Parish Council's website

Any other business

It was noted the Post office now has a café which is a great addition to the shop and a reminder was given to encourage everyone to help keep our village clean and tidy over the coming weeks whilst judging takes place for the Best Kept Village competition. The Parish Steward was commended for his recent work around the village including the cutting of the hedges and litter clearing between the Bell Crossroads and The Stocks.

Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

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Terry James (Chairman)

Date: 16th May 2023