

**SEEND PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Annual Parish Meeting –**  
**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021 by Zoom**

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

Cllr Jonathon Seed, Tessa Doe, Frank Teasdale, Penny England.

Apologies: Mr Martin Wiltshire and Mr Barry Nicholls (Parish Councillors) and Sue Bond (Clerk).

**To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous Annual Meeting**

The minutes had been circulated to all Councillors<sup>x</sup> and were available for all those attending on the Parish Council website. Mrs A'Bear 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**

Welcome to this year's Annual Parish Meeting. We were unable to have an Annual Parish meeting in 2020 because of the Covid 19 lockdown restrictions. Government legislation in the form of the Coronavirus Act, allowed for the deferring of the Annual Parish meeting and for the election of chairman to be carried forward to 2021. The Act also allowed for Council meetings to be held virtually.

The legislation allowing for meetings to be held virtually is not being extended after 7<sup>th</sup> May, so we have brought the Annual Parish meeting forward so that it can still be held virtually. It was felt that there would be many parishioners still nervous about attending a meeting in public. As you will see from the agenda, the chairman and vice chairman will not be elected at this meeting, but will be at the separate Annual Parish Council meeting which legally has to be held after the 6<sup>th</sup> May local elections and is set for 7pm on 18<sup>th</sup> May at the Community Centre. This will still be a meeting open to the public to attend.

From March 2020, we began<sup>x</sup> holding our parish council meetings on-line using Zoom. Although there were some technical teething problems at the beginning, most Councillors and interested parishioners were able to attend the monthly meetings on-line. I was even able to attend the meetings from Canada.

For the 2020-21 year, we have had our full complement of 11 Councillors. We have continued to have the support of our County Councillor Jonathon Seed. He has, as always, offered sound advice on many parish issues, such as the electoral boundary review, the Melksham bypass consultation, various planning and enforcement issues. And he has represented us fairly at the Area Board and CATG meetings. So, on behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank Jonathon Seed for his attendance and unstinting support for our work over the many years he has been our County Councillor. Following tomorrow's unitary elections we will find out who our new County Councillor will be.

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 stepped up to the role of Acting Chairman and Acting Vice Chairman whilst I was stuck in Canada for several months, unable to return until the lockdown restrictions eased and I could fly home.

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I would also like to thank the many unsung heroes in our Parish who, in these difficult times, rallied to the aid of our more vulnerable parishioners. During the first lockdown, the clerk co-ordinated prescription collections for many self-isolating parishioners. This was only possible with the help of many volunteers who offered to help with this task. We were also grateful to the Melksham Community Support Team who collected and delivered prescriptions either direct to parishioners or via the Clerk who collected from a central point.

Throughout this most difficult of years and the continued lockdowns, there have been many countless acts of goodwill as friends and neighbours did shopping, delivered prescriptions and walked dogs for some of our more vulnerable parishioners. It makes me feel very proud to be part of such a wonderful community minded parish.

Electoral Boundary Review The Local Government Boundary Commission undertook a review of Wiltshire's electoral boundary in 2019, the result of which is that Seend has now been moved into a new ward, Devizes Rural West. We have been grouped with Bulkington, Poulshot, Potterne, Erlestoke, Marston Worton and Coulston. Following this review, Wiltshire Council undertook a review of the Area Board boundaries, and again, despite the Parish Council arguing that it would prefer to stay in the Melksham Area, we have been moved into the Devizes Area Board Area. These changes take effect from these elections. The Parish Council has not yet attended any of the Devizes Area Board meetings or the Devizes CATG meeting, but we hope that we will be treated as fairly as we have been under the Melksham Area Board.

Following the electoral boundary review, Wiltshire Council undertook a Community Governance Review which invited parishes to suggest changes to their governance. Melksham Without Parish Council submitted a request to move their boundary so that it extended to the canal and would have incorporated Giles Wood and the neighbouring farmland. We submitted a robust defense of this area of our parish and I am glad to say that Melksham Without withdrew its request.

Neighbourhood Plan – Georgina will say more about this in her report. But as you know, the Neighbourhood Plan Referendum takes place tomorrow alongside the council elections. All parishioners need to vote. The steering committee, headed by Georgina A'Bear, have worked tirelessly to get to this stage and the Parish owe a great deal of thanks to the committee for their work in producing such a fantastically comprehensive document. If you have not already seen the Referendum version of the Plan, you can find it on the Neighbourhood Plan's dedicated website [www.seendparishplan.org](http://www.seendparishplan.org) or the PC website [www.seendparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.seendparishcouncil.co.uk).

Planning During the last financial year, the PC has discussed and voted on 40 planning applications. Out of this number, the PC approved 35 and opposed 5.

The most controversial one of these applications has been the Park Farm planning application for the development of 10 affordable houses and one self-build on land at the bottom end of Seend Cleeve. This application divided the parish and placed the parish council in a difficult position as it had to weigh the need for affordable housing against the concerns of those parishioners who were against the site location. In the end the parish council had to come down in favour of the application being approved. This application has yet to get formal approval from Wiltshire Council, but we understand that there is a hold-up with the signing of the S106 agreements, and once signed the application will be approved.

The other planning application that evoked a great deal of public response was the application to convert The Brewery pub to a farm shop and restaurant. This resulted in an overwhelming number of responses sent to Wiltshire planners. The PC opposed the application. Fortunately, the owner withdrew the application and we hope that he has realized just how much support there is for this community pub.

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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. With the new website, we have added a list of applications for 2020 and 2021 and their outcomes.

Highways We have continued to seek a number of highway improvements through the Melksham Community Area Transport Group. The high friction surface and pedestrian warning sign completed the work at the Church Crossing point. Further improvements were made to the signage at the Bell Hill crossroads, and new signage at the Seend Cleeve junction on the C20. A new slow road marking and sign at New Buildings have been installed at our request. A metro count was carried out on Bollands Hill. The results have been put on the PC website. We supported a parishioner's request to have white parking restrictions lines to be painted on their driveway near the Post Office.

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 request will now be considered by the Devizes CATG. As you can see, we do have dialogue with Wiltshire Highways on various highway issues, but sometimes the improvements that we request are deemed not feasible or don't meet the criteria for intervention. It can be a bit frustrating at times.

Melksham Bypass Consultation As you know, Wiltshire Council are planning a bypass around Melksham. Their first public consultation was launched in November 2020. The Parish had been made aware that a new route had been added to the list of proposed routes being considered. This new Route 10d would have the most impact on our Parish. Prior to the consultation launch, we were lucky to get Stephen Wilson, Wiltshire Council's Major Highways Project Engineer to attend our October meeting and give a slide presentation to the meeting. This meeting was listened into by a large number of interested people. Following the Consultation launch on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, the Parish Council held a separate on-line meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November, to specifically elicit the views of parishioners. This was well attended and the feedback from this meeting helped the Parish Council formulate a robust response which was submitted to Wiltshire Council. A report on the consultation has now been published on the Melksham bypass website which summarises all the responses. We understand that route 10d was the least favoured by the respondents. So thank you to all those parishioners who submitted their comments. We will not know until the early summer which routes have been dismissed as least viable and which have been shortlisted.

Consultation responses Seend Parish Council has submitted formal responses to a number of other public consultations from Wiltshire Council: Changes to the Planning system and the Local Plan Review. We raised concerns about the proposal to do away with the green planning notice and stressed how important these were to communities. The Local Plan Review, which proposed revisions to the Wiltshire Core Policy, including the setting of indicative housing requirements for rural communities. This suggested that for Seend 30 new houses should be built between now and 2036. The Park Farm planning application for 11 houses would be included in this number.

Avon Needs Trees Project Last Summer the woodland charity Avon Needs Trees contacted the parish council to tell us of their plans to purchase 3 plots of agricultural land totalling 19 acres in Seend for the development of a community woodland, orchard, meadowland and ponds. This was met with an enthusiastic response by the PC and the community as ANT showed off their plans at an open day last October. This project would have had huge benefits for the Parish. However, following the required routine archaeological surveys, it showed evidence of potentially significant magnetic anomalies that required further investigation. This would have necessitated a

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great deal more expense to further investigate and if more significant evidence found it would limit the amount of trees it would be able to plant. Sadly, we heard in late March that ANT were pulling out of the land purchase as the Seend project.

Physical Assets Over the last year, the Parish Council has renovated 3 of the benches by replacing the slats with new oak slats: bench at the entrance to Dial Close, the bench in Bradley Lane and the one opposite the Barge pub. The bench at the top of The Pelch was renovated in August 2019. I would like to thank Frank Teasdale and Nathan Hamblin for designing and making a new sign at Love Walk. We have also replaced the circular bench at the top of Love Walk with a new one. The Evenden family of Seend Park made a generous donation for the circular bench that covered the bulk of the cost. We have also replaced the noticeboard by Rew Farm in Seend Cleeve with a new man-made timber one. We have just ordered another one to replace the one by the red phone box in Seend Cleeve.

The monies used for the renovation of these assets came from the Sandridge Solar Farm Community Benefit payments from 2019 and 2020. We have also used some of the money to make a £500 contribution to the repainting of the Church Clock.

The Parish Council paid for the War Memorial to be given a good clean by James Long stone masons. This was in readiness for the planned ceremony that was due to take place in February to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War Memorial being erected. Unfortunately, this had to be cancelled, but it is hoped it will take place in September.

New Website In line with the accessibility requirements that came into force in September 2020, the Clerk has created a new website, which I hope that many of you have looked at and found useful. Whilst it contains all parish council documents that are statutorily required of the PC, it is much more informative with links to a lot of Wiltshire Council information, as well as useful information about Seend Parish including a gallery of photos. The PC now has a facebook page which is linked to the Seend Village Facebook.

#### The year ahead

As we move forward with this year, and the easing of lockdown restrictions, it is hoped that we can resume our normal way of life in the community. We hope to have our Parish Council meetings in public from the end of this month, if not by June. We understand that there should be a Seend Open Gardens on 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> July and the village fete is set for 14<sup>th</sup> August.

We know that Seend Parish Council elections will not be contested as there were only 8 candidates. Mr John Padfield, Mr Barry Nicholls and Mr Paul Manning have not put themselves forward again. There are no new councillors. This means that we have 3 councillor vacancies which we will advertise in the next month or two and will hope to co-opt new members of the Parish Council.

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, Sue Bond who can be contacted by email at [clerk@seendparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:clerk@seendparishcouncil.co.uk) or by telephone 07706 850859.

Finally I would to thank Sue for her dedication to her work for the Parish Council, Sue goes over and above in her duties and the parish council would not operate as efficiently as it does without Sue's input.

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### **Report from Councillor Seed**

Cllr Seed said this would be his last appearance at Seend. It has been a difficult year not only nationally but also for the County and the Parish, but Seend has stepped up to the challenge admirably and looked after its residents well. Seend should be proud of what they have achieved.

He said it had been a real pleasure to represent Seend over the past 12 years. There are still some issues outstanding and he is deeply unhappy about the boundary change – Seend lies in the middle of the county and it appears it has been looked at last. He hopes Seend will be as well served by the Devizes Area Board as it has been on the Melksham Area Board.

He thanked Mrs A'Bear, Chairman of NHP and her committee for the exemplary work they have done on the NHP. They have spent a lot of time and hard work in presenting a first class plan.

The A350 decision is still outstanding and if he is re-elected in an area outside Seend, he will try to look after our interests.

The CLT site may not have met with everyone's approval and there are ongoing issues but Seend Parish Council is exemplary in the way it has conducted its business and should be proud of this initiative.

Cllr Seed thanked Mr James, Chairman, and previous Chairmen, Councillors and parishoners for their support and friendship over the past 12 years.

Cllr Seed wishes Seend well for the future.

### **Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan** **Chair, Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

This report covers the last two years due to the cancelled meeting last year in line with Covid-19 restrictions.

Following the Annual Parish Meeting held on 21st May 2019 the Steering Group continued to work on the plan and the various evidence based reports. Work undertaken at this stage was reported in our Spotlight magazine article Dec.'19/Jan.'20.

After almost 6 years of consultation events/surveys and work, it has been good to see our Neighbourhood Plan progress and finally be signed off for the statutory consultation stages, starting with the Regulation 14 consultation between 15th February - 28th March 2020. Over twenty responses were received, to which the group responded and where applicable amended the Neighbourhood Plan along with help from our consultants. The main body of this work was a comprehensive response from Wiltshire Council whose responsibility it is check that all our policies are in line with the Local and National Government guidelines and is called the Regulation 15 stage.

The work took several months and on completion the Draft Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan was again put out for consultation by Wiltshire Council for the Regulation 16 Stage, between 5th October - 30th November 2020.

There were responses to this stage but fewer, as we had addressed the majority of the issues raised at the Regulation 14 stage.

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At this point we did not make any amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, as these responses were to be reviewed by the Examiner along with the independent examination of the Draft Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

The Independent Examiner completed his report on 11th February 2021. Wiltshire Council were then able to issue the Decision Statement (Proceeding to Referendum) dated 18th February 2021.

Final amendments were made to the Plan as recommended by the Examiner. Wiltshire Council had a tight deadline of signing off the Referendum Version of the Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan so that it would be available to view from the 24th March 2021 for a 28 working day period with the aim of the Referendum taking place on the 6th May 2021 along with other elections being held on that day.

This all fell into place as anticipated and I am very pleased to say that the Referendum on the Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan will take place tomorrow.

I would like to finish by thanking all those Steering Group Members who have remained committed to bringing the Seend Parish Neighbourhood Plan to fruition and for the work they have undertaken. Georgina A'Bear.

Frank Teasdale commented on the high level of work and time involved in preparing the NHP and thanked Mrs A'Bear and her team for all their efforts over the last few years.

#### **Statement of the Parish Council's accounts to 31st March 2021**

This report was read out by Georgina a'Bear on behalf of the clerk.

Income and expenditure for this financial year has not been as high as the last financial year. The Precept for 2020-21 was £ 20,381. There was only a marginal increase from 2019-20 which was £20,013 an increase of £368. The precept worked out at about £38.34 per band D household. Income for the year was a total of: £24,410.41. In addition to the Precept, we received a Sandridge Solar Farm Payment of £1,202.27. A donation of £832.50 from the Evenden family of Seend Park which made up the bulk of the purchase cost for the new circular bench. Because we changed the rental period for the allotments from April to September, there is 18 months worth of rental income, so £776.25. This will go back down to £517.50 for the 2021-22 rental period. Plus the VAT refund for the previous year's expenditure £1,203.78. Interest was a meager £14.61.

#### **Expenditure**

Expenditure totalled £18,484.94 inc VAT (17,440.91 ex VAT).

The Neighbourhood Plan costs were not as high as the previous year (£1,740.27 compared to £8,058.53) as the main tranche of the work was undertaken in 2019-20.

There were no great overspends in the budget. We did not spend the £700 in the Winter preparations budget as there was just one weekend of snow.

Our meeting room hire costs, because we were unable to have physical meetings, were reduced to just a monthly subscription to Zoom, totalling £143.88 ex VAT. But it was agreed that the Parish Council should donate what they would have paid to the Community Centre for room-hire had the meetings taken place. A contribution of £500 was made.

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

**Renovation of street furniture.** We have replaced all the slats in 3 of the old benches with oak slats (Dial Close, Bradley Lane and by The Barge) and replaced the rotten circular bench at the

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top of Love Walk with a new bench. The bulk of the purchase cost of the bench was donated by the Evenden Family. A new noticeboard was purchased for Seend Cleeve and has replaced the old one at Rew Farm. We will also be replacing the one by the phone box as another is on order. We made a £500 donation to the Parochial Church Council to go towards the repainting of the church clock. We spend £750 ex VAT of renovating the War Memorial.

The monies used to pay for the benches, noticeboard and clock has come from the Sandridge Solar Farm Community payments. There is a stipulation that the monies must be used for community benefit which we feel all of the above is.

At the end of this financial year, we have a healthy balance of £25,574.88 in the bank and building society. This is the highest it has been for a while as our income has exceeded expenditure. We have earmarked over £4,641.14 for any ongoing costs of the Neighbourhood Plan such as reviews and the updating of the website. A further £300 has been earmarked for new signage at the crossing point between Spout Lane and Inmarsh. And £635 for the cost of another noticeboard that was agreed at the 30<sup>th</sup> March PC meeting

With a VAT refund due of £1,044.03, there is approximately £19,998.74 left of general reserve. You may wish to know that the Precept for the forthcoming 2021-22 financial year is the same as the 2020-21 - £20381.00.

The Accounts balance sheet is attached as an appendix.

#### **Reports from village organisations**

Seend Footpath Working Party (Penny England)  
Seend Fawltly Players (Tessa Doe)  
Seend/Bulkington Spotlight (Tessa Doe)  
Seend Poetry Group (Tessa Doe)  
Seend WEA/Day Schools (Tessa Doe)  
Seend Fund (Frank Teasdale)  
Seend Royal British Legion (Robin Heatley)  
Seend and District Ramblers (Carole Vince)  
Seend Community Bus (Anita Shea)  
Friends of Seend School (Nicholas Collinge-Cubberley)  
Seend Play Group (Liz Futter)  
Seend Holy Cross Church (Anne Ewing).

All reports have been collated on a separate document as an appendix to these minutes.

#### **Any other business**

Mrs A'Bear explained that the solar money must be used towards a community project so if anyone had any suggestions, to let Clerk know.

Mrs Heatley said that our PCSO was Janet Gould and her contact details can be found at the back of Spotlight.

Mrs Heatley mentioned that Seend will be taking part in the Best Kept Village Competition and the first round of judging will take place mid-May to mid-June so if anyone sees any posters or notices that are out of date to take them down and pick up any litter to try and tidy the village.

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Mrs A'Bear reminded parishoners that there will be 3 vacancies on the Parish Council and there may be an opportunity before our June meeting for anyone interested in putting their names forward to come along for a chat to find out what we do and/or attend some meetings. Further info, will be made available.

**Close of Meeting**

The meeting closed at 8.02pm.

*T. C. James*

CHAIRMAN

Date: