

**Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held
on 18 January 2023 at 8.00pm in the Village
Hall**



Present.

Councillors P Smith (Chairman), R Bruges, S Chown, J Hailey, M. Kasasian, W Scott, C. Wade and the Clerk, Roger Coleman.

Wiltshire Council, Cllr. J Seed attended and gave his report prior to the meeting but it is recorded here in the formal minutes to accord with the Agenda.

There were three members of the public present initially.

1. Apologies.

There were no apologies. All councillors were present.

2. Co-option of a New Member.

The Council **resolved** to co-opt Catherine McGarvey as a member of Semington Parish Council.

Catherine McGarvey signed the Declaration of Acceptance to Office which was countersigned by the Clerk. The Clerk explained the requirement to register interests within 28 days and he handed Cllr. McGarvey a copy of the Wingfield Code of Conduct.

3. Declaration of Interests.

There were no interests declared.

4. Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 16 November 2022.

The Council **resolved** that the minutes were a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the minutes.

5. Wiltshire Council Report.

Cllr Seed gave the following report:

MP (M Donellan MP) Public Meeting – 14 January 2023.

There was a good attendance from members of the public who raised a number of matters, relating to local issues, with Ms. Donnellan. These included the speculative housing developments that have been prompted by the absence of an agreed Wiltshire 5-year Housing Supply and the proposed changes in the legislation, travellers and their different treatment compared to the settled community, especially in relation to planning applications and the importance of promoting and maintaining the existing 'No Entry Watch' scheme on the (old) A350 road immediately north of the village. Cllr. Seed explained that in respect of the latter he had spoken to the Wiltshire Council Cabinet member and requested the occasional deployment of the PNR (Car Registration Number recognition) system and he had been encouraged by the decision of the Police and Crime Commissioner to prioritise enforcing the speed limits that may also include more active policing of the 'No Entry Watch' scheme.

Planning Application PL/2022/09397.

Cllr. Seed acknowledged the Parish Council's opposition to this planning application and commented that he supported the Parish Council wish to 'call in' the application. He added

that he was currently having discussions with the planning officer to decide how best to proceed.

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Seed for his contributions to the meeting.

6. Chairman's Report.

The Parish Council Chairman, Cllr. Smith commented on his recent absence in New Zealand and thanked Cllr. Scott for acting as Chairman of the last Parish Council meeting and for taking the initiative over a number of issues whilst he was absent. He added that there were no additional matters to report that were not covered by the Agenda.

7. Community and Communication.

a. The Chairman invited Paul Chown to present a report on the current management and status of the Parish Council website and to identify existing problems with it.

Mr Chown gave a detailed and comprehensive report of the current website and, its existing problems and he identified a number of key issues that needed to be addressed to ensure that it operated in the manner required by the Parish Council. The Parish Council endorsed his report and accepted his offer to develop and to propose acceptable solutions to enable the website, and associated email, to operate satisfactorily. The Chairman thanked Mr Chown for his report and for the detailed technical work that he had undertaken on behalf of the Parish Council and commented that any costs that he has, or is likely to, incur in undertaking this work should be referred to the Parish Council for reimbursement.

b. Cllr. Chown stated that the initiative by Steeple Ashton Parish Council to improve the BT Open Reach internet connection speeds was in progress but a formal response was awaited from BT Open Reach.

Cllr. Scott commented that the recent 'Crime Bulletin' issue by the Wiltshire Chief Constable relating to the Melksham Community Area (and thereby including Semington) was disappointingly uninformative. The Parish Council confirmed its support for Cllr. Scott to respond appropriately to the Chief Constable.

8. Recreation and Wellbeing.

a. The Parish Council noted the responses from Wiltshire Council regarding the possible future management/ownership of the Wessex Close Play Area and it **resolved** that a key element of any future management/ownership of the Wessex Close Play Area was that the local community and not the Parish Council must take the initiative in this project – albeit supported financially by the Parish Council. It was agreed that in order to advertise this approach and to garner support the local St George's School PTA would be contacted and an article would be included in the Newsletter and on Facebook. Cllr. Scott agreed to write to Wiltshire Council (Craig Campbell) to inform him of this decision.

b. Cllr. Wade explained that the work is continuing to identify a possible 'allotment management structure'. He added that there were elements of the s106 Agreement between Wiltshire Council and Newland Homes that needed careful examination, including the legal status of the transferred land and proposed maintenance of the parking spaces, and that he would support legal advice being sought. The Parish Council **resolved** to seek legal advice and the Clerk was asked to make the necessary approaches to Forrester, Sylvester & Mackett (Solicitors).

c. Cllr. Wade, on behalf of the Parish Council, expressed grateful thanks to all who were involved in the erection and decoration of the Christmas Tree and the associated Christmas Celebrations in the Village Hall.

9. Environment and Streetscene.

a. Rights of Way.

The Clerk reported that the latest response from Wiltshire Council regarding the SEMI9a/HILP22/10 'Cycleway' Safety Audit indicated that the Safety Audit Report had been completed.

Clerk's Note.

The latest missive from Wiltshire Council is shown below:

"The Wiltshire Council Consultant (W S Atkins) has confirmed the Road Safety Audit is in the final stages of sign off and will be issued to us shortly. It will be forwarded as soon as we receive it. I would confirm that an order has been placed with our Contractor for some additional signing and road markings in the area of concern."

b. The Parish Council wished its thanks to be recorded that the gates on Bridleway SEMI8/10 are being kept open by the landowner.

Other Matters.

c. Cllr Wade reported that two designs of Noticeboards have been identified as possible candidates for replacing the existing obsolescent Village Hall noticeboards one type costing £356; the other £425 – the latter also including the header and lettering. The Council **resolved** that the preferred design would be agreed ex-Committee via email and Cllr. Wade was asked to send details to councillors when available.

On a related matter, the Council **resolved** not to accept the offer of sponsorship for the Noticeboards from a local firm.

d. The Chairman requested that the subject of the Queen's Canopy project be deferred until a subsequent meeting.

e. As (e) above.

f. Cllr. Hailey reported that the replacement stile on Path SEMI28/20 was broken and needed attention. She agreed to contact Wiltshire Council and to report the matter.

Cllr. Wade stated that a date had not yet been published for the Melksham Community Area Local Highway and Footpath Improvement Group (the 'renamed' CATG) meeting.

The Chairman invited councillors to inform him of possible tasks for the Parish Steward whose visit was scheduled for 25/26 January but he understood that existing Parish Stewards have currently been deployed to assist in repairing potholes.

10. Transport and Traffic.

There were no current issues to note.

11. Planning and Development.

a. The council noted the status of extant planning applications thus:

PL/2022/01367	Land off St Georges Road, Semington	Residential development of 18 Dwellings with associated works including vehicular access and parking.	Pending
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PL/2022/02656 Amended Plans	Littleton Mill, Littleton, Semington, BA14 6LQ	Proposed wooden hut to house and protect turbines	Approved
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The Council examined the following planning application:

PL/2022/09397 Outline planning permission: All matters reserved	Land south of Pound Lane, Semington, BA14 6JP	Residential development of up to 30 dwellings (of which 30% will be affordable) with associated car parking, access, internal roads, public open space, landscaping, drainage and other associated infrastructure.	New
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The Parish Council **resolved** to send the following comments (shown in italics) to Wiltshire Council in respect of Planning application 19/07938/REM:

The Parish Council opposes this application for the following reasons:

- 1. Core Policy 1 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy sets out the Settlement Strategy for the County, and in doing so identifies four tiers of settlement– Principal Settlement, Market Town, Local Service Centre, and Large and Small Village. Within the Settlement Strategy Semington is defined as a Large Village. As such it has a defined boundary beyond which is countryside. Thus, the application site lies beyond the limits of development of Semington in the countryside.*
- 2. Core Policy 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy sets out the Delivery Strategy. It identifies the scale of growth appropriate within each settlement tier. The policy states that within the limits of development of those settlements with defined limits there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development; but, outside the defined limits – that is, in the countryside – other than in circumstances permitted by other policies of the Plan, development will not be allowed. The policy further states that the limits of development may only be altered through identification of sites for development through subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Documents and Neighbourhood Plans. The application site is not identified for development in a Development Plan Document. Neither has it been put forward for development through Semington’s emerging Neighbourhood Plan as the landowner / developer ignored the ‘call for sites’ invitation to do so.*
- 3. Core Policy 12 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy sets out the Spatial Strategy for the Melksham Community Area in which Semington lies. It states that development in the Melksham Community Area should be in accordance with the Settlement Strategy set out in Core Policy 1.*
- 4. Semington does not need any more market houses or affordable ones at this time, as evidenced by the 2022 Housing Needs Survey. Currently, planning permission already exists for 51 new properties (19 affordable / 32 market) in the village. Any additional development proposed should be taking place in market towns where there are appropriate facilities, and sustainable development is possible.*
- 5. The parish council has not been consulted by the developer prior to the application thereby denying the community any opportunity for comment. This was the case with the previous applications to build 20 and 26 houses in the southern part of the field. The developer has declined to respond to overtures from the parish council about*

development in this field and has simply no idea about any preferences the local community might have about any aspect of the development.

6. We also note the comments from Urban Design on this application, namely that the applicant did not positively engage early on with Wiltshire Council “in regard to the design quality of their Outline scheme, as expected by NPPF 132”. The Urban Design comment concludes: “I cannot support this application and there is grounds within NPPF 134 to refuse it”. We agree.

7. No attempt has been made to apply for full planning permission for either of the two outline permissions (20 houses / 26 houses) that already exist for this field.

8. Bats and owls feed along the hedgerows that border this quiet piece of land but they will not be doing this if the building takes place. Given these losses, it is hard to see how the necessary 10% biodiversity gain that will be needed from November 2023 under the Environment Act 2021 will be possible.

9. The development of this land will further compromise the setting of the culturally significant St George’s Court and Kennet & Avon canal.

10. Pound Lane cannot safely take any more traffic because of existing traffic use, congestion and routine parking.

11. The density of housing proposed is greater than in the permission granted in the southern part of the field and also in the adjacent housing on Pound Lane. This flies in the face of the need to create a soft settlement edge which naturally feathers into surrounding rural landscape to the west (a point echoed in the Urban Design comment), and towards the nationally important Kennet & Avon canal. What is proposed will be very visible from distance.

b. There were no planning applications received after 11 January 2023.

c. Councillors noted that if the current, proposed, planning legislation becomes law then Wiltshire Council would cease to have the existing problem with the Housing Supply figure.

d. There was no further discussion in relation to the Greenacres site.

12. Finance.

a. The Clerk gave a brief financial report, and the Council noted the following financial position:

Lloyds A/C 2149025

Bank Statement	£	71,802.12
31 October 2023		

Total:	£	71,802.12
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Credits (1 November 2022 to 30 November 2022):

HMRC VAT Refund	£	847.16
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Total:	£	847.16
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Debits (1 November 2022 to 30 November 2022):

Clerk's Salary (October)	£	266.99
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Clerk's Expenses (September)	£	9.14
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St Georges PCC	£	600.00
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HMRC PAYE Month 7	£	178.00
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1413

Place Studios	£	1,169.94
Memorial Wreath	£	23.98
Clerk's Salary (November)	£	345.10
Clerk's Expenses (October)	£	58.80
Clerk's Back Pay (1/4/22 to 30/11/22)	£	242.85
Clerk's Salary (December)	£	311.25
HMRC PAYE (Month 8)	£	230.00
HMRC PAYE Month 9	£	304.40
Web (D Munns)	£	28.78
Wiltshire Council	£	720.00
Dorothy House (Christmas Tree)	£	50.00
Total:	£	4,539.23

Balance at 30 November 2022:**£ 68,110.05****Credits (1 December 2022 to 31 December 2022):**

None	£	-
Total:	£	-

Debits (1 December 2022 to 31 December 2022):

Place Studios	£	2,150.72
Total:	£	2,150.72

Balance at 31 December 2022:**£ 65,959.33****Debits (1 January 2023 to 18 January 2023):**

Rotary Club (End-Polio)	£	100.00
Southview Nurseries	£	200.00
NP Landscape	£	3,400.00
Total:	£	3,700.00

Balance at 18 January 2023:**£ 64,410.05****Lloyds A/C 7754288**

Bank Statement	£	7,725.51
31-Oct-23		

Credits

09-Nov-23	Interest	£	0.83
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1414

17-Nov-23	HMCTS	£	1.16
09-Dec-22	Interest (Approx)	£	1.77
19-Dec-23	HMCTS	£	1.16
09-Jan-23	Interest (Approx)	£	1.50
Total:		£	6.42

Debits

None	£	-
	£	-

Balance at 18 January 2023: £ **7,731.93**

Total Balance in Hand at 18 January 2023: £ **72,141.98**

Payments to be authorised (18 January 2023)

Clerk's Salary (January)	£	311.16
Clerk's HMRC PAYE (Month 10)	£	207.60
Clerk's Expenses (November)	£	17.15
Clerk's Expenses (December)	£	6.60
Office Allowance (2023)	£	200.00
Village Hall Hire (2022)	£	154.00
War Memorial Cleaning (TBA)	£	864.00
	£	1,760.51

The Clerk confirmed that he had undertaken a full Bank Reconciliation for 31 December 2023 and that all financial matters were satisfactory.

b. The Council **resolved** to endorse the recommendation of the Community Development Fund Working Group and to agree the payment of £720 ex. VAT for the refurbishment of the War Memorial. It was noted that this work was to take place in September 2023.

c. The Council **resolved** to make the payments shown under 'Payments to be authorised' above at Agenda item 12a and **resolved** to make the following additional payment: Linda Callaghan (Planters) - £19.94.

13. Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr. Smith reported that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NHPSG) had recently held its fifteenth meeting and that the next Village Consultation was planned for 22 April 2023. He commented that two reports had been received by the NHPSG, namely:

- Advice regarding the SHLAA sites (14 sites).
- Landscape and Visual Assessment Report.

He added that these reports are currently being studied and that it was interesting that a recommendation was to maintain landscape separations and green spaces within the village.

The Clerk stated that a further grant of £3663 had been agreed by Groundwork UK to support the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Chairman requested that this fact be recorded in the Newsletter.

14. Date of the next meeting.

a. The Council noted that the next Ordinary Parish Council meeting would be held on Wednesday 15 February 2023.

b. It was noted that the subsequent meetings would be held thus:

22 March, 19 April, 17 May (also the date for the Annual Parish Council meeting), 14 June, 19 July – All meetings to commence at 7.30pm.

Chairman
Semington Parish Council

15 February 2023