

**Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on
13 March 2024 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall**



Present.

Councillors P Smith (Chairman), R. Bruges, M. Carberry, S Chown, J. Hailey, W. Scott, and C. Wade. Cllr. Scott took the minutes in the Clerk's absence.

There were two members of the public present.

1. Apologies.

Apologies were received and accepted from C. McGarvey and the Clerk.

2. Declaration of Interests.

There were no interests declared.

3. Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 17 February 2024.

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

4. Wiltshire Council Report.

Cllr. Seed reported that a new round of Area Board funding was available and urged an early application for grants. He encouraged the reporting of pot holes and blocked gullies through the My Wilts app, and asked for details of the Pound Close gully that had been reported but not properly dealt with. Cllr. Hailey will forward details. The Council congratulated Cllr. Seed on becoming a member of Wiltshire Council's Strategic Planning Committee and looked forward to Wiltshire maintaining its current housing land supply numbers. Cllr. Seed said that he would write to Highways asking when the Parish Council's December questions would be answered. Cllr. Seed noted activity on the village Facebook page concerning unlawful parking and traffic hazards at the school when children are dropped off and collected. He offered to contact the school to establish what measures are in place in the School Transport Plan to address these problems.

5. Community and Communication.

- a. In a discussion around the purposes of the semington.org.uk website, it was agreed that it is owned, funded and managed by the Parish Council and its primary function is to publicise the work of the Council and act as a channel of communications with the village community. That is: run by the parish Council for the village.

The Council **resolved** that the existing Parish Council website should remain classified as the Parish Council website.

The Council **resolved** that village organisations (clubs, societies, etc) will be encouraged to use it for promoting how they contribute to the Semington community.

Cllr. Chown will write to clubs, societies, etc asking whether they wish to update the text on their part of the website, requesting that any new text be forwarded to the village webmaster. If any such web pages remain blank at the end of April, they will be removed from the website. Any new clubs etc that are created will be invited to have a page on the website.

- b. The Chairman reported that the only development relating to the Post Office had been a phone call from Mr McCormack complaining that nobody in the village was using the service. The Chairman said that he had replied that this was not surprising given how unreliable the service had been for so long.

The Council noted that the Platinum Jubilee Fund had been given £5m in the budget for the refurbishment of village halls. It hoped that the Village Hall Management Committee would consider bidding for these funds.

April 24 has been identified as the date for the Annual 2024 parish meeting. A working group is meeting to finalise plans for the event with the purpose of making this a community focused event where groups and clubs can share what they have been doing and their plans for the future.

6. Recreation and Wellbeing.

- a. Cllr. Wade reported that allotment tenancy agreements are now in place and that all allotment holders have paid their subscriptions.

Cllr. Wade noted that, like much of the land surrounding the village, the allotment ground remained very wet. By contrast, however, the water flow to the tank had stopped. The meeting agreed that the Clerk be asked to contact Wessex Water to ask what the problem was, and whether they understood that the Parish Council was now the owner of the land.

Cllr. Wade noted that there was continuing uncertainty around the parking at the allotments with some residents still using them because they think that they are entitled to. This is not the case as has been confirmed by solicitors during the transfer of assets. The Clerk was asked to contact Newland Homes in order to make sure that the new management company understands that the parking spaces are Parish Council property, and to clarify why the maintenance company still seems to have these spaces on its maintenance map.

- b. Cllr. Wade reported that he was still trying to identify a suitable 'Allotment Community Shed', but that it was proving difficult to get current prices.
- c. The Chairman updated the Council on the progress of the Wessex Close Play Area asset transfer from Wiltshire Council. There had been a very positive meeting with Wiltshire Council officers and contractors with all outstanding issues either having been addressed or reported to be in process. At this meeting the village group was shown how a routine inspection is carried out. The asset transfer will take place when Wiltshire Council has taken all the necessary steps. This is now likely to be after Easter and Cllr. Chown will write to Craig Campbell asking for a list of outstanding issues. Regular maintenance will continue until then.

Cllr. Chown reported on good progress in relaunching the Friends of Wessex Close Play Area group with 25 volunteers now in place. A group of 9 villagers have come forward for inspection training and this is now taking place.

- d. The Chairman confirmed that a neighbour proposed to clean the surface of the Tennis Court soon, and Cllr. Carberry reported that he and Cllr. Hailey has successfully tightened up the wires supporting the netting round the court.

7. Environment and Streetscene.

- a. It was noted that a traffic survey had been undertaken on Paths SEMI9A/10 and HILP22/10 / HILP21/10 prior to the route being subject to an experimental road traffic order (ERTO). The Chairman reported that he had written to Kirsty Rose enquiring about the criteria to be used in making a judgement about whether the ERTO had been successful. The response was that, at this stage, it was not possible to state what level of reduction would constitute a success. She implied that this would be possible once new baseline data had been collected. The Clerk was asked to write to Ms Rose asking for a copy of the baseline data.

- b. Cllr. Carberry reported on Litter Bins and their respective locations in the village, noting that the map of village bins is inaccurate. He confirmed that Wiltshire Council will only pay for and install and empty new bins where there is a demonstrable need. They will, however, install and empty appropriate bins that a Parish Council has purchased with their approval. The Parish Council can ask Wiltshire Council to move an established bin. Cllr. Carberry will bring proposals about a strategy for village bins to the next meeting.
- c. Cllr. Scott reported on the latest news about the Melksham Link. Consultants continue to work with the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust to overcome the Environment Agency's objections. There is no date set for a submission of a revised planning application.

The Council considered a letter from a parishioner about dog dirt in the village which queried whether the problem was everywhere in the village as intimated by a post on the website. They suggested identifying areas where the problem was particularly acute and instigating an information campaign to try to reduce this. It was decided to combine any action on this with a litter bin strategy once that had been agreed.

Cllr. Hailey reported on recent activity in relation to path clearance and stile refurbishment. She thanked the Ramblers footpaths working group for its continuing efforts on our behalf, particularly in relation to SEMI 10 and SEMI 14 and GHIN 6. SEMI 38 had been cleared by the Canal & Rivers Trust.

No Council members had had a response from Criterion, the owners of the Somerset Arms about the sewage spill, but Cllr. Bruges reported on a call he had with a spokesperson from Criterion, about the sewage overflow. Criterion confirmed that there could be no sewage outflow from the pub and so Cllr. Bruges requested that Criterion tell Wessex Water this. He added that sewage from The Orchard flowed under pub land before joining the main High Street sewer although the Wessex water map does not show this. Cllr. Hailey said that she is going to contact Criterion to request a response to her question and if none is forthcoming she will report the problem to the Environment Agency.

- d. The Chairman reported that the next meeting of the Working Party to continue the refurbishment of the Pill Box and the immediate surrounds, will take place on Saturday March 16th starting at 10am. Progress has been made towards getting metal grills to block the entrances with details still to be confirmed.
- 8. Transport and Traffic.**
- a. The Chairman updated the Council regarding the provision, installation, and use of an ANPR Camera at the Bus Gate. He said that a recent Metro Count of usage has shown that current traffic levels are such that a camera can be justified. He thanked Cllr. Wade and Wiltshire Councillor Cllr. Seed, and also Mike Sankey and Melksham Without Parish Council for their stalwart efforts in pushing for progress over the past year. A quote has been received for the installation and running of a camera. The installation cost, payable by the LHFIG, is £11,071 with Semington PC's contribution being 25% of the total (£2,767.75). There will be a financial contribution of £1,000 each per year as a share of running costs unless revenues are sufficient to cover all the running costs. The Chairman noted that should we wish to withdraw funding at any time, there will be no penalty for so doing. Fines income will go to Wiltshire Council's Parking Services until it has covered its costs. The Chairman said that he felt that this was likely to be the best deal the village was likely to get to resolve this long-standing issue noting that not everyone in the village is against the illegal passage through the gate.
 - b. This item was covered under 8a above.

- c. It was **resolved to** make a financial contribution of £2,767.75 towards the ANPR installation. It was further **resolved** to make a financial contribution of £1,000 each per year as a share of running costs.

Melksham Without Parish Council will decide whether to match these figures at its April meeting.

- d. There were no other matters raised.

9. Planning and Development.

- a. There were no planning applications received after 7 March 2024 for consideration by the Parish Council.
- b. One other matter was raised. Cllr. Scott noted that an objection had been raised by Wiltshire Council's Urban Design team to the current plans for the 26 house development to the west of the tennis court. The objection stated that the design does not accord with the high quality of design and place shaping required by Wiltshire Core Policy 57 and National Planning Policy Framework 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places.

Reasons cited include:

- The dwellings' rear gardens are too small.
- there is an insufficient amount of well-designed useable public open space.
- The linear strip of green space to the western boundary of the site is hidden and not overlooked, which allows for the potential misuse of the space.
- the scheme does not accord with the National Planning Policy Framework, chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places.
- The eastern side of the site, should be included within the red line boundary of this application and identified as new public open space.

10. Finance.

- a. The Clerk's report on the current financial position was received as shown below:

Lloyds A/C 2149025

Bank Statement	£	22,114.07
31 January 2024		

Total:	£	22,114.07
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Credits (1 February 2024 to 29 February 2024):

Forrester, Sylvester Macket Solicitors	£	500.00
Allotment Fees (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7,	£	455.00

A8, A10, A11, A12, A13, A14)	Total:	£	955.00
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Debits (1 February 2024 to 29 February 2024):

Clerk's Salary (February)	1189	£	338.39
HMRC PAYE Month 11	1190	£	225.20

Clerk's Expenses (January)	1191	£	33.98
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Place Studios Ltd	1192	£	1,320.00
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P Chown (File Manager Software)	1193	£	20.47
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Total:	£	1,938.04
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1504

Balance at 29 February 2024 (A/C 2149025):
(NB. Allotment Fees A7, A11, A5, A14 received but not paid in to A/C 02149025 yet.)

£	21,131.03
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Credits (1 March 2024 to 13 March 2024):

None

£	-
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Total:

£	-
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Debits (1 March 2024 to 13 March 2024):

04-Mar **Transfer to A/C 7754288**

£	12,000.00
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Total:

£	12,000.00
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Balance at 13 March 2024 (A/C 2149025):

£	9,131.03
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Lloyds A/C 7754288

Bank Statement

29-Feb-24

£	58,218.26
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Credits

11-Feb-24 Interest - Approx

£	68.00
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21-Feb-24 HMCTS - Approx

£	1.28
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04-Mar-24 **Transfer from A/C 02149025**

£	12,000.00
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Total:

£	12,069.28
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Debits

None

£	-
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£	-
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Balance at 13 March 2024 (A/C 7754288):

£	70,287.54
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Total Balance in Hand at 13 March 2024:

£	79,418.57
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Payments to be authorised (13 March 2024)

Clerk's Salary (March) Net

£	338.39
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HMRC PAYE Month 12

£	225.20
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Clerk's Expenses (February)

£	14.70
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Place Studios (Invoice 6086)

£	1,815.00
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Play Equipment Inspection Training Courses

£	71.82
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£	2,465.11
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b. Cllr. Hailey, on behalf of the Community Development Fund Working Group stated that no qualifying applications for funding had been received.

c. The CIL Receipts and the Neighbourhood Plan Grants and Expenditure were considered and agreed as legitimate CIL expenditure.

Other items were proposed as CIL expenditure. These were: website creation, development, updating and maintenance costs (this is basic infrastructure these days), RoW expenditure on kissing gates and tools, defibrillator costs, and bus gate costs. The Clerk was asked to cost these for inclusion as CIL expenses.

d. The Bank Reconciliation for 29 February 2024 was noted.

e. The Council **resolved** to make the payments shown under 'Payments to be authorised' above at Agenda item 10a.

f. No additional payments to be made were noted.

11. Neighbourhood Plan.

a. The Chairman reported on the positive Neighbourhood Plan Public Consultation meeting held on 24 February 2024 where villagers had the chance to talk about the draft plan and complete Reg 14 questionnaires.

b. The Chairman noted that the Draft Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 period ends on Friday March 15th. He reported a good response rate from villagers. The next meeting of the steering group (March 26th) will begin the task of analysing the data gathered and making any necessary changes before submission to Wiltshire Council. The Parish Council will be asked to approve the submission to Wiltshire Council. Councillors complimented the steering group on the quality of the documentation.

The steering group has commissioned a report from Locality on the financial viability of the site identified for potential development. This is now being used by Aecom in helping the steering group think about the development of the plan.

12. Date of the next meeting.

The Council noted that the next Ordinary Parish Council meeting would be held on Wednesday 17 April 2024 commencing at 7.30pm.

The meeting ended at 10.00pm.