
GREAT SOMERFORD (INCORPORATING STARTLEY) PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 5 May 2021 at 7.30 p.m. via Zoom

Present	Cllr S Mansfield (Chair)	Cllr A Gravell	D Cain (School Governor)
	Cllr S Binstead	Cllr M Hourigan	T Sturgis (Wiltshire Councillor)
	Cllr C Blount	Cllr M Griffiths	(from item 7.3 only)
	Cllr D Butcher	Cllr F Hyde	
	Cllr H Cole	T M Chapman (Clerk)	8 members of the public

Copies of all reports marked # are available on the Parish Council website
www.greatsomerfordparishcouncil.co.uk

21/05/APM/0. **Presentations**

i **Retiring Councillors**

Cllr Gravell proposed a thank-you to Councillors Binstead, Blount, Cole, Hourigan and Hyde who are not standing for re-election. Cards will be given to all five and small leaving gifts, paid for out of a collection amongst Councillors and members of the public, will be given to Cllrs Cole and Hourigan outside this virtual meeting in recognition of their long service. 1980 (Cllr Cole) and 2012 (Cllr Hourigan).

ii **Winkins Lane Play Area**

Cllr Meriel Griffiths informed the meeting that, since the last APM in 2019, the following items of equipment had been, or were in the process of being, added to the Play Area: Zipwire, Spinning Bowl, Monkey Bars, Pick UP Sticks style Climbing Frame and two extra picnic benches. A Gazebo Shelter had been ordered and would be installed this summer plus an extra two benches.

iii **Community Infrastructure Levy monies #**

Cllr Stephen Mansfield led a discussion on spending plans. The village stands to receive approx. £65,000 from the new housing developments at Broadfield Farm and Brook Farm (Somerbrook). The Parish Council has already budgeted to use up to £5,000 on Footpath Improvements.

Other suggestions were made by Parish Councillors included the purchase or lease a field for a recreation ground, a MUGA (multi use games area) outdoors, a pedestrian footpath on West Street running between the bad bend opposite the Manor to the footpath on the bell mouth entrance to Manor Park or a Water Pump in Free Gardens to serve the allotments. A member of the public suggested traffic calming safety improvements on Winkins Lane by the entry to the Play Area such as a 20 m.p.h. sign, pavement, speed bumps, chicanes or restricted access signs. Another proposal was a hard surface path around the perimeter of the Free Gardens.

After a discussion of the options it was felt that all had merit but the most popular two (based on the small numbers of members of public present) were a recreation ground and the West Street footpath. It was **agreed** that the Parish Council be asked to consider the options in more detail.

**Action: Councillors
Agenda June**

iv **Neighbourhood Plan #**

Cllr Mel Hourigan reported on progress against the four sites identified for housing development therein complete with details of houses built, sold and reserved. Site NP1 Broadfield Farm – 20 being built.

NP2 Dauntsey Road – outline planning for 9.

NP3 Frog Lane – 2 built and sold.

NP4 Brook Farm Somerbrook – 38 being built.

Neighbourhood Plans (NP) are also under threat from the National Government. It has decided that any NP older than two years should be reviewed. There are also issues re Wiltshire Council's lack of five year land supply has been used as the rationale for granting planning permission outside NP areas as in Malmesbury recently. Additionally Gleeson, a land speculation company, has applied for planning permission on land adjacent to the existing development at Broadfield Farm for another 21 houses on Grade 1 Agricultural Land outside the Settlement Boundary.

v **The Covid 19 Support Group**

Mark Hammond took the opportunity to thank the 47 persons who volunteered to help during the pandemic with particular emphasis on the 22 Street Champions who became the "eyes and ears" of each road in the village. This was co-ordinated by Cllr Griffiths. Tasks undertaken included picking up and delivering shopping from the village shop, helping people set up online orders and collecting for them (Click & Collect rather than home delivery), prescription runs, dog walking, regular phone calls to sole householders, delivery of the village magazine to homes without internet access, cooking meals for neighbours and gifting Xmas biscuits and cards (drawn by the primary school children) to the over 70s.

It was a tremendous effort and it is hoped that this spirit of kindness will live on when the pandemic is under control.

21/05/APM/1. **Apologies for Absence** – None.

21/05/APM/2. **Declaration(s) of Interest** per the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007. There were no declarations.

21/05/APM/3. **Minutes and Matters Arising from the 2019 APM**

The minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish meeting were **approved** and signed by the Chair. Proposed: Cllr Butcher; seconded: Cllr Cole. There were no Matters Arising raised. *Note: Due to the Pandemic Lockdown there was no APM in 2020.*

21/05/APM/4. **The Chairman's report #**

Cllr Stephen Mansfield advised those present that the Parish Council had met monthly, except August, during the past two years and members of the public and press had been welcome to attend. Since April 2020 with the onset of the first National Lockdown (pandemic) meetings have been via Zoom video conferencing software.

He thanked Councillors and various members of the public for their work during the past year and stressed how fortunate the village was to have a shop and a pub in the centre of the village.

Key activities during the year had centred on grant funded upgrades to the Play Area, professional cleaning of the War Memorial, purchase of a replacement Defibrillator funded by Malmesbury League of Friends, cemetery gates painted, trials of the AutoSpeedWatch roadside camera, works to the verge in West Street, the launch of the Parish Information Email and, sadly, theft of the post box in Startley. He urged parishioners to use the Wiltshire App reporting system for potholes and the like. It is available on the web and on mobile phones.

21/05/APM/5. **Financial report for the year to 31 March 2021 & the 21/22 budget #**

In 2020/21 the Parish Council ended the year with a surplus of £8,167 (more income than expenditure). This was primarily due to Community Interest Levy (CIL) money received and not spent in year combined with less in year expenditure on new Play equipment than planned: the purchase of the climbing frame fell into 2021/22. Income was primarily the precept (Council tax) supplemented by donations for the Defibrillator via the Shop for which the Council is very grateful. Its main recurrent costs continue to be grass cutting and salary. s137 (voluntary) donations were made to the Church, the Signpost and SHASHA.

The Parish Council froze its 2021/22 precept in recognition of financial hardship being caused by the pandemic. It is projecting a £23,585 surplus as two grants for play equipment will be received and the bulk of the CIL monies should come in and but these will not be spent till subsequent years. *Note: all the CIL money must be spent within 5 years or returned to Wiltshire Council.*

The main non recurrent expenditure items planned are the climbing frame, gazebo shelter and benches for the Play Area plus litter bins, stiles and bridle gates to improve footpath enjoyment for all. The 2021/22 budgeted surplus will increase the actual bank balance from £22,794 to a budgeted £46,379 by 31 March 2022.

Thereafter the Parish Council expects a couple of years of deficits as the accumulated CIL money is spent.

21/05/APM/6. **Planning Report #**

Cllr Hector Cole reported that there were 35 planning applications in 2020/21, split fairly evenly between work on trees (15 applications) and buildings (20 applications including one outline planning application and two modifications of planning applications. In general the Parish Council's response and the decision of Wiltshire Council have been the same. Only two applications were refused by Wiltshire Council. Six have not yet been decided.

The major planning issue for 2021/22 is the application by Gleasons to build an extra 21 homes on a second site at Broadfield Farm.

21/05/APM/7. **Village Matters**

i **School Report #**

Chair of the Academy Council David Cain reported that the last 12 months have been extraordinary times for schools across the country. The schools in Christian Malford, Somerford and Seagry faced enormous challenges as the COVID pandemic took hold and demanded fundamental changes in the way that the schools educated children with a move to online distance learning whilst children were home-schooled for months.

The schools were able to participate fully in the celebration of Christmas and produced some truly wonderful Nativity presentations and performances. The children were also able to hear the good news of Easter whilst back in school.

The Boards of Governors have become rebranded as Academy Councils. There is a vacancy for a Foundation Council member. The Academy Council has no plans to close any of the three schools under its management. Indeed they are investing in a new Head of Schools and two Assistant Heads of Schools.

ii **Report from the Trustees of the Free Gardens charity #**

Trustee Meriel Griffiths reported that, following a recent review of the 1806 Constitution, the Trustees became aware that the charity had moved away from its original stated objects and conditions (free allotments to poor non-property owning cottagers in the village).

The constitution needs to be updated to reflect the reality of what is happening on the ground today. A Working Group set up in 2020 recommended that the Trustees should set up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), the structure preferred by the Charity Commission. This will enable the Trustees to draft charitable objects suitable for the 21st Century with the primary function remaining the provision of allotments. The CIO can also broaden the trustee base to include non-Parish Councillors.

The Free Gardens Trustees have deferred any decision on the establishment of the CIO until after the Local Government elections this month as these will cause a change in the Trustees. The newly elected Councillors will become Trustees of the Free Gardens registered charity.

iii Report from the Trustees of the Great Somerford Community Fund #

Trustee Chris Blount reported that this fund was set up in 2019 as a tax efficient vehicle for people wishing to donate to good causes in the village such as the upgrade of the Play Area, to which it will be giving £1,350. The principle object of the Fund is to promote for the benefit of residents of the Parish the provision of facilities for recreation and to raise funds to help finance such facilities. It is registered with HMRC and the Trustees are Chris Blount, Meriel Griffiths, Jonathan Henderson and Deborah Loader.

If any resident has an idea that would benefit the local community they are urged to get in touch with one of the Trustees.

iv Others as notified on the night

Nothing else was raised.

21/05/APM/8. **Public Bodies**

i Wiltshire Council Report #

This is Wiltshire Cllr Toby Sturgis's last report as he has not sought re-election in tomorrow's Local Government elections. It summarised the changes experienced by Wiltshire Council during his 25 years' tenure. Structurally these culminated in the formation of Wiltshire Council as a Unitary Council incorporating the former Wiltshire County Council and its four District Councils. Area Boards and Area Transport Groups have been set up to bring democracy closer to local people. Toby encouraged Parish Councils to bid to these Boards for funds.

Wiltshire Council is in a strong position to deal with post-Covid recovery. Its main spend is directed to Adult & Children's Social Care which squeezes the Highways budget.

Cllr Cole thanked Toby for his long record of public service which pre-dated his own as Toby chaired the Parish Council when he joined in the 1980s. Cllr Blount moved a vote of thanks to Toby for his service as our Wiltshire Councillor.

21/05/APM/9. **Public Questions/AOB**

There being no further questions or matters arising the meeting closed at **8.45** p.m.

Approved

Chair

Date