

GREAT SOMERFORD (INCORPORATING STARTLEY) PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting - ~~DRAFT~~

21 May 2025

Community Room @ 7.30 pm

Present

Cllr T Barker
Cllr H Gravell
Cllr M Griffiths

Cllr J Harper
Cllr T Sturgis

In attendance

Cllr E Threlfall, Wiltshire 7 members of the public
Clerk, H Wallace

Intro

Cllr Griffiths welcomed everyone and introduced that the Chair's Report would be read out loud and that various Cllrs and village groups would be invited to present during the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Cllr H Evans, Cllr T Harrison, Cllr T Phillips, Cllr D Todd

Declaration(s) of Interest

None declared

Minutes

Minutes and Matters Arising from the 2024 APM

To **approve** the Minutes of the 8 May 2024 Annual Parish meeting & consider Matters Arising.

Note: These minutes will not be read out – copies have been on the PC website for 12 months or can be obtained from the Clerk.

The Minutes were signed as a true and accurate record. **Proposed** Cllr Sturgis, **Seconded** Cllr Barker

Chair's Report

The Chair's report – Cllr Meriel Griffiths

This report includes resumes by each of the Councillors on their responsibilities and actions they have undertaken during the year.

The Chair commenced with reading of her written report a copy of which is an Appendix to these Minutes.

Parishioners were urged to sign up to the Parish Information Email (PIE) system at the Parish Council website

Parishioners were encouraged to complete the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaires that have been distributed. It can also be completed online at

Questionnaires need to be returned by 1 June 2025.

Please see The Chair's Report for further details.

Village reports **Village Matters**

Report from the Free Gardens – Included in Appendix 1

Parishioners were asked to keep dogs on leads and it was reiterated that all are welcome to the Free Gardens and there are currently 12 plots available. Contact Cllr Barker to ask about a plot.

School Report

SHASA provided a slide on their activities which was read out and is included in Appendix 1.

Parsloe Pantry Events (formerly Great Somerford Events)

Parishioner Mrs Loader read out information about the events that had taken place locally in the village. This report is also included at the end of the Chair's Report. There is a Plant Sale from 10am-1 pm on Saturday 24 May.

Wiltshire
report

Wiltshire Council Report – Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall

Cllr Threlfall congratulated the parish councillors on their elections and thanked them for the work for their community that they continue to do so diligently.

Liberal Democrats were able to get the numbers to take control of the council so the direction of policy may be changing.

Careful oversight over recent years has ensured that the Council's finances are sound and this has supported the delivery and management of the wide range of services performed by the Council, even despite the recent loss of £9m Rural Delivery Grant from the government.

In Children's services, performance was strong and the Ofsted inspection in September resulted in an Outstanding grade which reflected the significant investment in a preventative family support approach. The Special Educational Needs service was also rated as Outstanding.

Cllr Threlfall held a portfolio in Adult Social Care, the sector which represents the highest percentage spend for the council and a statutory activity. The 2% Adult Social Care Levy will raise £7m and will help to fund the £20m inflation and demand growth. This year the CQC inspection awarded Wiltshire a Good rating, and no other council has yet achieved higher - with the acknowledgement that staff go 'above and beyond' to support people in the community.

Wiltshire Council has not had to close any libraries or leisure centres and has been investing in them to support the health and wellbeing of all residents with a growing range of activities.

The Environment Act 2021 will require our Waste Services to make substantial changes over the next three years, including the separate weekly collection of food waste from August 2027. Councils must also reach a target of 60% recycling by 2030, so additional changes will need to be made to the kerbside collection of recyclable materials. The last administration had decided that 10 different containers was too many and that 5 was a balanced number but this may change.

People are often unaware of the huge range of services provided by the Council, but everyone uses the roads in one form or another. Not everyone is aware that the government is meant to provide the funding for highway maintenance, but this has not been enough and Wiltshire Council has added an additional £20m of funding over the last two years to improve the quality of the road network. Furthermore, additional funding of £1m for highways preventative flood maintenance was added in 24/25

The work at Lyneham Banks is magnificent and work on Seagry Road means in turn that the necessary work should proceed on West Street, now that the CCTV survey has taken place. Please do keep reporting potholes through MyWilts App.

Planning is a big concern as the Government has determined that Wiltshire should provide 81% more houses than originally planned for, rising to 3,476 per annum. This, combined with a dramatic fall in housebuilding activity in recent months has meant that we do not have a Five-Year Housing Land Supply, and leaves the county vulnerable to speculative development in unplanned areas.

At the same time renewable energy schemes are being prioritised and the bases on which to object weakened. While the proposal for a solar farm near Dauntsey Lock was refused by committee, it may well go to appeal. Also Lime Down might not be in the parish but if approved it might bring more construction traffic to the area as well as potentially worsening the flood risks. Wiltshire Council's previous Cabinet issued a statement strongly opposing the plans for Lime Down.

These policy changes, together with the removal of farming subsidies and tax reliefs, is putting more pressure on our farms and the countryside which is such an important part of our communities. The future is full of challenges to preserve the unique character of our communities and allow them to flourish. Speeding traffic is a problem common to all the rural villages in the division so it's good to see that the Startley SID is now in place.

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Public
Questions and
AOB

A chance for the public to raise any questions or queries on issues relating to the parish.

A Parishioner said that they hadn't been able to get a bus to Great Western Hospital on Wiltshire Connect. **Action:** Cllr Threlfall will investigate

A Parishioner thanked the councillors and thanked Cllr Sturgis for providing bags and moving leaves away at Manor Park.

The verge at West Street was discussed. This is an issue that the Parish Council have looked into. Although the PC could use CIL funds to do works, it would need collaboration from Wiltshire highways and would be prohibitively costly as well as not being high on their priorities. A parishioner noted that the kerb on Dauntsey Road is very low and that if work can ever be done at West Street it should ensure that the kerb is a suitable height.

Flooding and drainage was discussed and it was confirmed that five drains will be investigated and pumped in the parish. Cllr Threlfall asked if the Top Street drains had been marked for the vector to clear. Cllr Sturgis will be helping to nominate the drains that are most in need of work.

The group discussed communications which are currently via the website, noticeboards, articles in the Signpost, Parish Information Emails, flyers and Facebook. Parishioners mentioned that it was worth posting on Facebook and adding links to the website.

The Neighbourhood Plan was discussed and it was confirmed that the questionnaires sent out are part of the early stage of forming the new plan. Once the deadline for questionnaire responses has passed on 1 June, a report of the feedback will be put together by the consultant. At that point they can plan the next steps. It would be expected that there will be a public consultation meeting further on in the process. **Action:** Cllrs to check that all areas have received the questionnaire.

Cllr Griffiths confirmed that PIE is a Parish Information Email which goes out with useful information for the Parish. **Action:** Cllr Griffiths to send link to Parsloe Pantry Events.

A parishioner asked about CIL money and if any would be held back in case of need for items raised during the Neighbourhood Plan process. The PC have planned some further CIL expenditure but were confident that further monies would be available in this instance.

Action: Clerk to check if any more CIL monies are expected from developments.

The meeting closed at 8.38pm

Approved  Vice-Chair

Date 6/05/2024

Chair's Report to the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting
Wednesday 21st May 2025

Part I

Great Somerford Parish Council Report

1. Introduction – Cllr Griffiths

The Parish Council has met every month this year, apart from August and December. Parish Council Meetings continue to be held at 7.30 pm on the first Wednesday of each month with the exception of the January meeting, which remains as the second Wednesday. There will be no meetings in August or December unless otherwise notified. All members of the public and press are welcome, and the first 10 minutes of each meeting is scheduled for any questions or issues to be raised by members of the public.

We are once again fortunate to have a "full house" of nine parish councillors, having welcomed Cllr Phillips earlier this year. All nine parish councillors were re-elected at the recent Parish Council Election on 1st May this year.

2. Best Kept Village Competition – Cllrs Evans and Harrison

The village seems permanently clear from litter so residents must be kind enough to pick up what they can see, and a special thanks to the villager and his family who regularly clears the road between Great Somerford and Startley of all litter.

3. War Memorial

There has been significant landscaping work carried out at the Great Somerford War Memorial this year. With the help of Cllr Dave Todd and a number of village volunteers, the memorial area has now been gravelled, a new iron surround to secure wreaths installed, two new shrub planters created and a York Stone path laid. A wreath laying ceremony to celebrate the 80th anniversary of VE Day was held on 8th May.

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4. Communications – The Parish Information Email (PIE) System – Cllr Griffiths

The Parish Information email system is used to convey any generally useful information to those that have signed up – this includes local road closures and community events. It is very easy to sign up – just click on the “Sign Up to the Parish Information Email” link on the Parish Council website.

No personal details that you enter will be shared with any third party.

We are grateful to former Cllr Stephen Mansfield who has continued to maintain the PIE system for us, as well as the Parish Council website.

5. Defibrillators – Cllr Todd

GSPC owns two Defibrillators: The first is located in the former public phone box outside the Volunteer Inn in Great Somerford, and the second at The Grove house by the T-Junction in Startley, with the kind permission of the owners. Should you need to use a defibrillator during an emergency, the instructions are spoken automatically, as soon as you open up the defibrillator case. Note: Both Defibrillator storage box ‘Access Codes’ are now on display at each location, and/or available when you call 999.

There is a third defibrillator located outside the St Peter & St Paul’s C of E Church.

A well attended First Aid and defibrillator course was held in October 2024. A Pediatric First Aid course has been organised by the Parish Council and will be held at Somerfords Walter Powell School assembly hall, Dauntsey Road on Monday 23rd June from 7.00-10.00 pm.

6. Emergency Plan – Cllr Gravell

The Emergency Plan has been updated. It provides a framework for the basic outlines of parish response and following consultation with the relevant bodies. A confidential version is held by the Parish Council and by Wiltshire Council. A non-confidential version (omitting certain personal contact details) is available on the Parish Council website. We are also preparing a Flood Plan.

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7. Financial Update for 2024/25 – Cllr Harper

Great Somerford Parish Council finances continue to be robust. Total income during the financial year was £58,225, of which £16,450 was the annual precept from Wiltshire Council and £40,917 from the latest tranche of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

The Parish Council's main operating expenses include paying the Parish Clerk, running the Community Room, cutting the grass in the parish's public spaces and Startley cemetery, maintaining the Winkins Lane Play Area and emptying the dog waste bins. The Parish Council also makes grants to various community causes, such as the "Signpost" newsletter, the Church, the Free Gardens and Somerfords Walter Powell School. For the full year the Parish Council made a small operating surplus, in line with expectations.

CIL money is provided to help to fund community capital projects when new houses are built in the parish, as they have been recently at Somerbrook, Broadfield Farm and Demainbray Close. CIL receipts over the past few years totals c. £162,000. Total CIL money spent to date amounts to over £41,000, with further projects in the pipeline. In previous years the levy has funded several Speed Indication Devices (SIDs), a number of public footpath gates and stiles, noticeboards outside the School and at the Startley Cemetery, new picket fencing around and pieces of equipment in the Winkins Lane Playground and the replacement post and chain fencing around the wedding tree in Winkins Lane. Projects recently completed or currently underway include a SID for Startley, refurbishment of the Startley Cemetery, new bus shelters for Gt Somerford and Seagry, replacement of the ageing climbing frame and roundabout in the Winkins Lane Playground with an agility trail, and potentially water harvesters for the Free Gardens.

The balance of CIL money at the end of the year was c. £121,000. Of this, c. £50k has been committed (e.g. for the new bus shelters) or earmarked (for play equipment), leaving c. £70,000, which needs to be invested over the next 2-3 years. The Parish Council is currently exploring various options and would welcome more ideas from villagers, with the caveat that any proposals have to comply with the CIL money regulations. Parish Councils must use the CIL receipts passed to it to support the development of a Parish Council's area by funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or anything else that is concerned with addressing the

demands that development places on the area. Details are available on the Government website at the link below:

Interest earned on CIL balances is put towards Parish income, which has helped to keep the precept essentially flat. This effect will start to unwind in the next couple of years as interest rates fall and the CIL balance is spent.

Please contact Cllr Meriel Griffiths () if you have any suggestions for CIL funded projects within the parish that you believe to comply with the required criteria.

8. Footpaths – Cllrs Barker and Gravell

This year has been a quiet year in terms of issues and apart from the removal of the odd blown down tree, there has been little change on the footpaths and access arrangements for our rights of way. The programme to install new stiles and kissing gates using CIL funding is now complete. The 2025-26 inspection will start in May. It is expected that some of the more far flung stiles that were previously passable, may well need some care, and this will need communicating to local landowners. A full report of findings will be made at the June PC meeting.

9. Highways – Cllr Evans

Flooding – particularly in West Street and Frog Lane – has been a major issue during this wet winter. Cllr Sturgis has spent a considerable amount of time in identifying the root causes of the flooding, encouraging landowners to make preventative measures and working with Cllr Threlfall and Wiltshire Council to identify the remedial and preventative measures to be taken by the Highways Department.

Potholes also continue to be a problem across the parish as well as the wider county. We would encourage everyone to report potholes, and any other local hazard on the My Wiltshire app (see link below):

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10. Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Sturgis

The Neighbourhood Plan is being reworked and submitted, ahead of the next planned review date of 2026. The Parish Council is starting that consultation process, with a working group comprising both parish councillors and volunteers, in order to create the next Neighbourhood Plan out to 2033. We have secured a grant to pay for a specialist consultant to assist us with this. A Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire will be issued to all parishoners shortly.

11. Planning and Housing Developments Report – Cllr Sturgis

Great Somerford & Startley Parish Council acts as a statutory consultee for any application for planning permission that is made to Wiltshire Council in respect of properties located within the parish. The Parish Council is able to comment on those applications and take into account the known views of any residents of the parish. Comments are restricted to commenting on whether the Parish Council feels the application will meet the various national and Wiltshire Council planning standards. The Parish Council does not make a decision on whether an application for planning permission should be granted or refused, this is undertaken by Wiltshire Council. Residents are encouraged to seek the advice of the Parish Council if they are considering undertaking any work that may need planning permission to be sought. For properties that are located within the Great Somerford conservation area, this includes work to trees and some hedgerows. Properties that are located within the Great Somerford conservation area also do not have the benefit of the "permissive rights" that other properties have, which allows certain types of works to be completed without planning permission e.g., the construction of small extensions, erection of temporary structures such as garages and large sheds etc

Road Safety & Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) – Cllr Harrison

Solar panels were fixed to the 2 existing SIDs to ensure their continuous operation. A third SID and solar panel was installed in Startley facing traffic arriving from Rodbourne. We hope these measures will reduce the incidence of speeding traffic and the Council continuously reviews whether further measures are needed

12. Startley Cemetery – Cllr Harrison

A substantial refurbishment of the cemetery access has just been completed. This involved the removal of 3 trees causing root damage to the paving and gate columns. Concrete paving has been replaced with York stone and root protectors have been installed to prevent further damage. The gates and railings situated at the entrance have been refurbished. The bench will be replaced and in the autumn new blossom trees will be planted. The graveyard is now in good order, with the grass and hedging regularly maintained to ensure they are neat and tidy

13. Telephone Box Library – Cllr Todd

As ever, the Telephone Box looks smart after its recent repaint. The Library is well used as a village library/book swap, and the Parish Council would like to thank the volunteers who help look after it and update the library shelves from time to time.

14. Winkins Lane Play Area – Cllr Phillips

The Winkins Lane playground continues to be a much loved and well-used amenity in the village.

So this year, with the help of the CIL money, we have replaced the old toddler climbing frame . We plan to replace the old Moonscape and roundabout with new modern equipment

Cllr Meriel Griffiths

Chair of Great Somerford inc Startley Parish Council

May 2025

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Part II

Village Matters - Great Somerford Community Groups' Reports

1. Free Gardens CIO

The Great Somerford Free Gardens were established in 1809 by the Reverend Steven Demainbray and are the oldest allotments in England. The Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status has now been established. This has meant that the charity has been bought in line with modern legislation and regulation, to continue to preserve this important historic space for future generations.

The seven Trustees for the CIO comprise three parish councillors - Meriel Griffiths (Chair), Tim Phillips (Treasurer) and Tracy Barker (Operations), three allotment holders - Rob Millar (Secretary) Jake Vale and Lizzie Russell, and one parish resident Mr Chris Blount Village representative.

In terms of operations, the Free Gardens allotments currently have 64 plot holders. We are most grateful to the Allotment Holders Association for their continued support, and for the extremely useful volunteer working parties that they have organised to help keep maintenance costs as low as possible. There are 12.5 plots that are currently vacant and an advert has gone into "The Signpost". There have been some requests from outside the Parish current policy is that only residents of the parish are eligible for new plots.

There are 6 plots that are too dry for successful vegetable cultivation and have been put aside for a community fruit tree project. This project is still waiting for a person to take forward as lead tenant. The project for water harvesting, a sustainable solution for collection of water, has been designed and priced by a small working party. Wiltshire Council has determined that planning permission is required, so the cost of the application and required studies is currently being ascertained. Fingers crossed that they could see that these systems are to benefit food production but also minimising the pressure on water supplies on a local scale.

Lee Butcher is continuing with the mowing contract for this year. This contract will be under review at the end of the 2025 mowing season, which now starts earlier and finishes later than in previous years. The Dauntsey Road Hedge was very kindly cut again by Mr T

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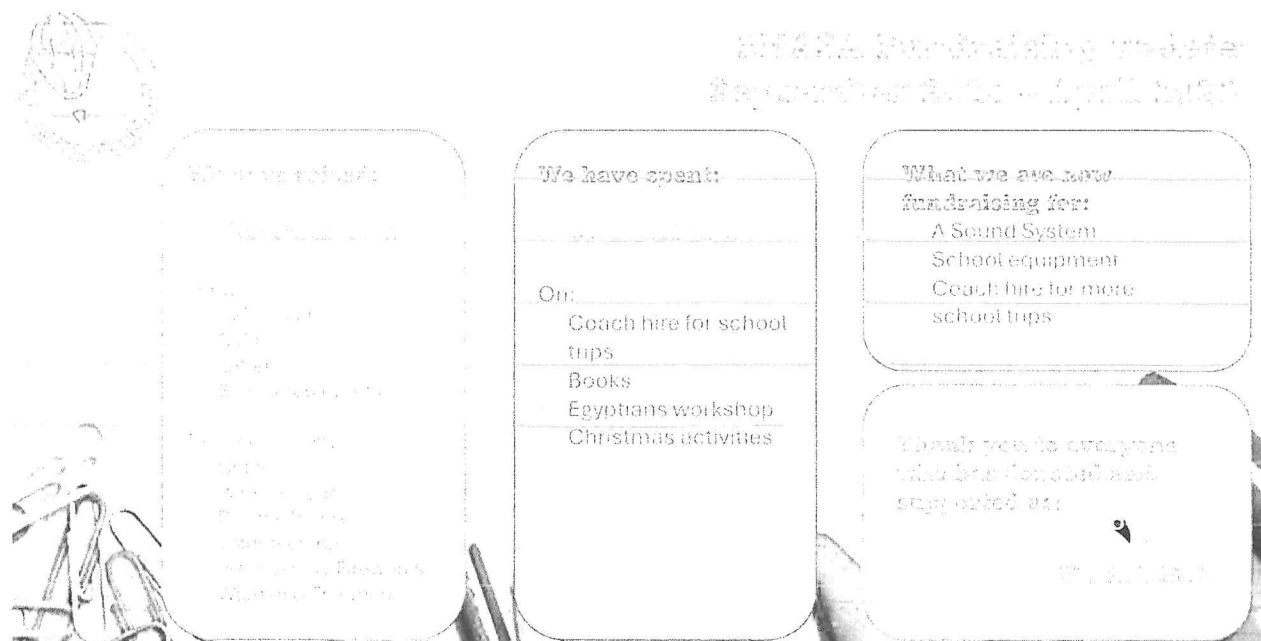
Sturgis, free of charge, for which we are most grateful. The hedge on the Moor Lane and the trees in the Jubilee Gardens arboretum will need to be considered for maintenance in the medium term but as of the last meeting of the CIO this was decided against in the short term, since it is not long since this was carried out by Acer tree specialists.

We have now received 'some' guidance from our insurance brokers as to the monitoring regime that might be necessary for the Jubilee trees, and this has been distributed to the CIO Secretary for discussion at the next Free Gardens Trustee meeting in June.

With diligence and lots of challenges being made by allotment holders, the incidence of dog fouling on the site seems to have diminished (please still challenge any dog owners with their dogs off the lead – even if your dog is obedient, it encourages other people to let their dogs off the lead), it still isn't completely dog waste free, but better than it was.

Children are of course welcome under the tree and to play around the allotments, but we have received reported damage as children have played on people's allotments mainly to crops and prepared ground. Children should not be allowed unsupervised on the plots themselves as the plots do have many gardening implements, canes and tools their safety cannot be guaranteed.

2. SHASA



The image shows a fundraising report for SHASA, titled "SHASA Fundraising Report September 2019 - April 2020". The report is divided into three main sections: "What we've raised:", "We have spent:", and "What we are now fundraising for:". The "What we've raised:" section lists various items such as "A Sound System", "School equipment", and "Coach hire for more school trips". The "We have spent:" section lists "Coach hire for school trips", "Books", "Egyptians workshop", and "Christmas activities". The "What we are now fundraising for:" section lists "A Sound System", "School equipment", and "Coach hire for more school trips". There is also a "Thank you to everyone who has donated and supported us:" section with a date "17.12.20". The report is signed by "TS" at the bottom right.

SHASA Fundraising Report
September 2019 - April 2020

What we've raised:	We have spent:	What we are now fundraising for:
A Sound System	Coach hire for school trips	A Sound System
School equipment	Books	School equipment
Coach hire for more school trips	Egyptians workshop	Coach hire for more school trips
	Christmas activities	

Thank you to everyone who has donated and supported us:

17.12.20

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3. Parsloe Pantry Events (formerly Great Somerford Events)

Parsloe Pantry Events is run by Deborah Loader & Jackie Vale. We set it up pre-Covid to raise funds to help provide community support for the village and local community through events such as Soup Lunches in the church, Plant Sales, Concerts and The Community Shelf amongst many others.

The Plant Sale & Cafe - 4th May 2024

Jake's annual plant sale, which gains momentum each year, was held in the car park at The Volunteer Inn, by kind permission of Rianna & Adrian. An increasing number of local growers kindly donated plants and gardeners flocked to buy them. The cafe served bacon rolls, coffee and a few sweet treats, making this one of the first village get-togethers of the year.

Concert in the Church - 5th October 2024

Debs', hopefully, annual concert featured Kiki Dee & Carmello Luggeri who entertained a sell out audience with great music raising money for cancer charities. The 2025 concert will be held in Little Somerford Village Hall, a change of venue due to a prior booking at the church.

Valentine's Feast – 14th February 2025

We served a three-course lunch in the Community Room, not for romantic couples, but for anyone who wanted good food and conversation.

VE Day 80th Anniversary Afternoon Tea – 8th May 2005

Our café in the Community Room celebrated VE Day in advance of the service at the War Memorial. Historian, Sally Macpherson interviewed everyone who wanted to share their stories, her article and ours will appear in the Signpost. The school children made the bunting for the event and some parents joined us for tea or takeaway.

Beneficiaries

Great Somerford Church, The Ridgeway Breast Cancer Support Group, Prostrate Cancer UK, Hope for Tomorrow (a mobile chemotherapy charity), Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, The British Legion (Corsham Branch), SHASA & Somerfords Walter Powell School.

Long-Term Goals

In addition to supporting our usual local causes, our long-term goals are to create a community orchard and an outdoor area for mental well-being.

Email: parsloepantry@gmail.com or Phone: 07727 341055

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