

**MINUTES OF THE KINGSDON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON
Thursday MAY 19th 2016 IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30pm**

Present: Mr D. Beswick (Chairman); Mr B. Paine (Vice-Chairman); W.Elliott, G. Osbourne, S. Mackay, I. Dibben and P. Waters (Parish Councillors); Mrs. K Hatt (Parish Clerk) plus 12 parishioners.

Apologies: Mr D.Norris and Mr D Ruddle

Chairman's Report.

The Chairman, Mr D. Beswick , gave the following report:

In the past, this meeting has been held at the same time as the Annual Parish Council Meeting, effectively the council's AGM and the first of the year's now monthly council meetings.

Given everything that is going on that arrangement did not seem to give enough time to this meeting which is an opportunity for organisations, groups and clubs within the village to give everyone an update on what they have done over the last 12 months and possibly an indication of what they hope to be doing this coming year and in the future. It's an opportunity for people to get more involved if they wish and perhaps to celebrate the diversity of activities within the community.

I am sure that those people who are representing their groups tonight will be able to answer any questions you may have.

We have also taken the step of making the meeting a less formal and more sociable occasion, perhaps to encourage people to chat about the various activities. But please remember that we need to hear the speakers and it is a structured meeting. I'm required to chair the meeting so in the unlikely event that anything gets a bit heated, I hope you will acknowledge that role.

Let me kick off then with a brief review of what we as a council have been up to.

As you can imagine this first year has been a bit of a baptism of fire having 6 new councillors. We decided from the start that we would hold meetings monthly rather than bi-monthly because we anticipated a fairly steep learning curve and probably a lot to do as a result. It seems to have worked well in that it has kept the momentum going and we have got a number of things done.

The biggest item on our schedule was the purchase of the school playing field across the road and we are now within a gnat's whisker of signing the contract. It has been a bit of an uphill struggle with the legal obstacles that needed to be addressed and some stop start negotiations with Somerset County Council, all of which Brian has pursued with dogged determination, helped by members of the original working committee set up by the previous council. Almost there now and then we need to think more deeply about what we are going to do with it. If you have any ideas, let us know and we can discuss them in council later in the year.

The other outstanding issue that we took on was the children's play equipment in the recreation field. There were some understandable worries from local neighbours about the noise coming from the field and the loss of privacy for their properties to children and of more concern, adults standing on the equipment and staring into homes. Thanks to some sterling efforts by Phillip and a team of helpers, we now have a variety of bushes and trees around the equipment which will not only help to screen it visually but should cut down some of the noise. I would also like to acknowledge those parishioners who gave donations to buy some of the trees but wish to remain anonymous. In addition, the type of planting used will eventually provide a habitat for birds and other wildlife that can only add to the enjoyment of the field.

Ian and Guy, again with a team of helpers, have done a lot of work on the footpaths in and around the village and will shortly be replacing some older broken styles with kissing gates that should be easier to

manage for those of us who are less mobile. I'm told that kissing is not compulsory. Please take advantage of the good weather that I'm assured is coming to walk as many as you can.
(NB Ian corrects that this has now been altered to Marlow gates.)

The village web site has been extended in content and various links added to make it easier to access and more useful to users. As well as routine stuff like the accounts I understand there are or will be maps of the village showing amongst other things all the footpaths. I won't attempt to say any more because I have very little understanding of how these things work. As far as I'm concerned, Twitter is something birds do and a Facebook is something the police use to identify criminals. If you would like to know more, have a word with Ian after the meeting.

For the immediate future, we will be updating the village plan to keep abreast of the many changes that are taking or have taken place and you will all be invited to make whatever contribution you wish to that process. Having an up to date plan will help in any negotiations we may have to do in the future about building or other development. Details will be out later in the year

There are lots of things going on in the village again this year, all of which will be advertised in the Chronicle so do keep a look out and come along and support where you can.

That's enough from me so we can now move on to the first of our individual reports, the County Council report from Dean Ruddle, our county councillor.

Report from Dean Ruddle (County Councillor)

It has been 3 year since I was elected to represent Kingsdon, Somerton, Compton Dundon, Keinton Mandeville, The Charlton's, Barton St David, Long Sutton and Kingweston on Somerset's County Council.

Whilst continuing to serve as chairman of Somerton Town Council, I enjoy attending similar meetings around my Division to keep me fully briefed on the difficulties and challenges we all face in these difficult economic times.

Again I have had to be party to some very difficult decisions especially in respect of necessary cuts to public services. In endeavouring to maintain current spending on education and welfare we have focused on eliminating waste, and bringing about efficiency savings.

We have maintained a freeze on council tax for 4 year but unfortunately due to increasing government cuts to local authority's, this year the county council and District council have had no choice but to put up council tax to maintain much needed public services.

One of the major factors to the county council problems was the debt left behind from the previous administration of £350 million pounds .This costs the rate payers a staggering £26 million pounds a year. However we have been working hard to reduce this liability, so as we will be able to cope with future cut backs.

Over the last year, I have granted money to many projects within my division. They are as follows:

Kingsdon had funding towards the community shop

Long Sutton had funding for their village hall

Money was given to set up a new citizen's advice centre in Somerton.

Compton Dundon had money towards a muga.

Charlton mackerel had funding towards the sea scouts and the village shop project.

Barton St David also had funds for the village hall.

Keinton Mandeville had funding towards a youth project.

Once again I have successfully put forward 2 more highway improvement schemes.

The one way system in west St, Somerton and the much needed improvements to stockelm in Compton Dundon.

Working together with both parish councils in Charlton mackerel and Compton Dundon I managed to secure from the flood mitigation grant funding towards 2 schemes, totaling £75,000.

In Catsgore, Somerton, the residents and myself managed to get the speed limit reduced to 30 mph. I am continuing to help the parish council to acquire the old school field.

Myself and David Warburton MP have secured the financial backing from the County council towards the new school in Somerton.

This has been a long arduous journey but hopefully we can now see the light at the end of the tunnel.

I hold a morning 'Surgery' on the third Saturday of every month in the White Hart Inn and look forward to touching base with more of you then. In any event, please do contact Anne Yates using her Email address, anne.yates@btinternet.com, or telephone (01458 274 865) and I will be in touch.

It's been a good year for all the parishes in my area and I have totally enjoyed it. Thank you for all your support.

Report by District Councillor David Norris:

First may I apologise for not joining you in person. Unfortunately the SSDC Annual Meeting is also being held this evening and I have a 3-Line-Whip to be there.

This year started extremely well for the District Council with the adoption of the Local Plan. However, things took a down turn soon afterwards when it was determined that we no longer had a 5 year housing land supply. The impact of this was the Local Plan was deemed to be 'out of date' and therefore could be given little weight when determining planning applications. We have seen the impact of this with developers putting forward and getting approval for many speculative applications especially in the market towns. For the rural areas such as Kingsdon it means that little weight can be given to policy SS2 which was in the plan to protect villages such as this. Fortunately, the National Planning Policy Framework does give the villages some protection but not as much as SS2. When will we have a 5 year land supply? Not for some time I'm afraid. Because we set our target in the Local Plan at such a high level, a level we have met only twice in the last 10 years and then only just, we have been deemed to have persistently under performed so now have to show we can achieve a figure 20% higher than in the plan. The worst part is regaining a 5 year land supply is not in the Council's gift. The problem is the developers are not building out there plans but land banking. The policy is set for the urban areas where the Councils are not giving the approvals, but that is not the case in the rural areas. We are giving the approvals but they are not being built as they are not economical. We are working with our MPs to get this policy changed.

On the financial front, the year started with SSDC dropping its Council Tax by 2% just before the election. Since then they have been in saving mode to fill a £4.5m hole in the accounts and the Council Tax was duly put back up again this year. The Council has also looked at sharing services with another local authority to save money. We decided it would not work to share with Mendip District Council as they contract out many of their services, and we went a long way down sharing with Sedgemoor District Council. The original plan was to try to merge at Chief Executive level and work downwards, but this was not going to work so the current plan is to restructure SSDC as its own entity, and then see how we can share services with Sedgemoor at officer level to make the saving needed.

The Council is also looking at how it can save money firstly by charging customers the true cost of services such as licensing, but also the Council is seeking new enterprise initiatives to earn money. The coming year is going to be very challenging, especially for the council staff, who are going to have to find the savings needed to make sure we have a balanced budget in future years.

Former School Sport Field Report by B.Paine

Under the auspices of the previous Parish Council a working party was set up to seek the purchase of the redundant school playing field from Somerset County Council. They successfully negotiated a price of £27500, following support from South Somerset District Council. This will be funded by a public works loan, repayable over ten years, at a low fixed interest rate.

Negotiations with SCC between May and December 2015 proved frustrating, however a change of staff since the beginning of 2016 has resulted in a fruitful dialogue and agreement has now been reached on the contract documentation and it is hoped to have this signed in the next couple of months.

A statutory procedure is necessary prior to contract completion, which may take a further year, but the parish will have immediate access to the field once the contract has been signed. In the unlikely event that the outcome of the procedure was to preclude contract completion there is provision for the Parish Council's legal expenses, incurred since last June, to be refunded.

Senior's Club by Brian Paine

A village club established many years ago, it still meets monthly (except August) and continues in a recognised annual format. There are eight afternoon meetings with guest speakers and typical topics over the past year being Bee Keeping, Battle of Britain, the British Honours System and Scuba Diving. All such afternoons are also social occasions with ample time for a chat over tea and biscuits. The December meeting is a Christmas lunch at the Kingsdon Inn, followed by a visit to a pantomime in early January. June sees an outing, this year to the NT property at Tyntesfield, followed by a garden party in July.

Art Group by Brian Paine

Another village activity that has been in existence for many years it meets every Thursday morning in academic term time. Members use a variety of media e.g. watercolours, acrylics, pastels oils or charcoal and some of their output can be seen on the walls of the village hall. It is a self-help group, rather than a class and members range from beginners to accomplished artists.

Take Art by Brian Paine

There have been Takeart entertainments staged in Kingsdon for many years. These Rural Touring Scheme opportunities are possible because of subsidies from SSDC and the Arts Council. In the past year there has been a Bristol based group called The Schmoozenbergs in the village Hall and a choir from Vermont USA in the Church, both of which were successful and also raised funds for these important village facilities. Provisional plans are in an embryo stage for further concerts in the Church in the autumn and the village hall in spring 2017.

Village Hall Report by Marilyn Elliott.

The full management committee has met twice during the last year to maintain a smooth running of the facility. A sub-committee formed to continually monitor the building and grounds; it has been meeting approximately twice a month. We have had the annual electricity check and are in the process of collecting quotes to do the vital work required. There is a lot to be done. The floor has been given a "makeover" thanks to Guy, Ian and Glenn, and the improvement looks good; the winter months are still problematic with condensation and areas of the floor becoming uneven.

New cleaners have been used, out sourced to a local company, a company of one. There has been a vast improvement and no negative comments.

The hall continues to be used on a regular basis by various clubs and organizations as well as for private functions. During 2015 the hall was used on 315 occasions, a little down on 2014, however, we are becoming the venue for children's parties! The lights are proving to be a success. People from all over are booking parties with us.

The committee has taken the decision to investigate what the future holds for the present hall. The question is, do we continue to spend on the present hall with more and more problems arising as the

years go by or should we be looking at a new hall in the not too distant future. Some builders have looked at insulating and have all said it's not worth it – it couldn't be done and not worth the money. With this in mind we are enlisting the help of the Community Council for their advice as to the best way forward.

David Beswick added: looking at the future of the village hall is a big decision for us all and impacts us all. We need to give it great consideration as to what works for the village. There will be many more discussions about the future in other meetings, so if you have ideas or views please do let us know.

Neighbourhood Watch Report by Martin Singleton, Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator:

During the last year crime has remained very low in our village, with only to my knowledge, the theft of a box of fish from outside Kingsdon Inn in June and on two occasions in June and September, the theft of lights from a pickup. Two vehicles have been burnt out within the Parish, so there are criminals about!

PCSO Tim Russell remains our Community Officer and can be contacted on 07889 659275 or by e-mail timothy.russell@avonandsomerset.police.uk

The Kingsdon Chronicle and e-mails have again been used successfully to circulate information to residents, for which we thank Wally Elliott. Anyone who does not yet receive such e-mails and wishes to do so should ask Wally to add them to his list. Further items of interest relating to Neighbourhood Watch will be displayed on the notice board in our Community Shop.

We must however not be complacent and always be vigilant as to our surroundings. In an emergency dial 999 or if you have information about a crime, phone the police on 101 (This has a connection charge of 15p, none of which goes to the police) or you can call anonymously to the independent charity CRIMESTOPPERS on 0800 555 111

Kingsdon Chronicle report by Wally Elliott:

The Chronicle has had another busy year with more and more requests for inclusion of articles. At the end of November; we reached a significant event when our 100th Edition was published. This was something I was particularly pleased about; even after my by-pass op in 2010 we have never missed a monthly copy.

Each month approximately 175 copies are printed for distribution either within the village or being posted further afield. It is also emailed to many people around Britain and to Australia, Canada, USA, Sweden & Italy.

All 105 copies of the Chronicle are now available on the Village website. It can be found by Googling... 'Kingsdon Chronicle' thanks to Elaine Owen.

The question of only email copies has been examined. This has been ruled out due to not everyone being on line plus a lot of people telling me they prefer to have a printed copy to hand that is readily available for referring to.

The finances remain buoyant thanks to the generosity of some parishioners, £100 annual contribution from the Parish Council and the 100+ Club run by the Jubilee Fund in support of the Chronicle. As of 1st May the funds stood at £860 with an anticipated expenditure for the remainder of the financial year of £600. Leaving a surplus of £230 before any further income for the year is received.

Kingsdon Cricket Club report read by Marilyn Elliott:

2015 was another enjoyable year for the club. It is very much a social club as well.

The club is indebted to Ben Carlisle who works tirelessly as the groundsman. The square is fenced off because it is so vital to the game.

With careful watch on expenditure the cost of running the club was kept to a minimum at £3,500. This meant we were able to end the year with a surplus of £400. We were therefore able to keep the player's annual subscriptions to £150 per annum for the 2016 season.

We are hoping to soon have mains water piped in from the new development which will obviously cost for installation and there will be an annual charge, more expense for the club. Currently there is no running water or electricity.

For the 2016 season we have a full fixture list of 20 matches, we started the season on 24th April and our final fixture will be on 11th September. These are displayed in the chronicle and at the shop.

The club is always appreciative of those vice-presidents whose financial support is much needed. We would welcome any one who would like to become a vice-president.

In the 34 years since the club was formed it has been totally self-financing, in its early years it was a substantial fund raiser for various organisations. Upon the closure of the Manor School the cost of running the club has increased dramatically. In all our years we have never received any financial help or support at all from Kingsdon Parish Council or any council. It is concerning because there is a lot of finance needed, particularly during the winter months when things need protected.

Everyone is welcome to come and watch and enjoy some refreshments.

David Beswick explained that if they need some financial support then please do put a proposal forward before the budget is formed.

World Horse Welfare

The CEO of World Horse Welfare would like to invite residents of Kingsdon for a preview of the new visitor centre with morning coffee and pastries at 11.00 on Tuesday 21st June. Please let Wally know if you would like to go so he can inform them of numbers.

Glenda Spooner Farm is now very close to opening up their doors for the public to visit. The plan is for us to be open 25th June (hence trying to get locals in first to have a sneak preview!). This is all of course subject to staffing and making sure all our H&S requirements/assessments etc have been ticked off and approved by local authorities; however this is the weekend they are aiming for.

Opening hours will be 11am – 4pm Wed to Sunday. Initially during this time our café will be open from 11am for 'Brunch through Lunch and Afternoon Tea'. Our chef has now been appointed and is working away getting the kitchen and eating areas ready. Our dishes will be freshly made using the finest local produce where possible but most definitely British! As we get established, we will open up for the finest breakfasts around! Our farm trails will be available to walk around, children's playground in situ ready and waiting to be tested out by energetic young visitors and the picnic area is starting to take shape. Our in house maintenance team have worked wonders with the estate and everywhere is starting to look amazing. The area around the lake is the most beautiful and peaceful walk which we would highly encourage our visitors to see. Of course none of this would be relevant without our most important residents, the horses and ponies. Come and meet them, talk to the staff about their stories and learn more about the work of World Horse Welfare. Our state of the art conference suite is complete and has been tried and tested!! Both this area and our arena will be available for private hire.

Parking and admission will be free and we are dog friendly.

A parishioner queried if the traffic was still going to be guided from the Langport Road, he is going to check on this matter with Planning.

Church Report read by Martin Singleton

Throughout the past year services have been held at Kingsdon nearly every week, however attendances on the whole have been low, apart from the Carol Concert, Christmas Eve and Easter services. Harvest and Mothering Sunday's were disappointing especially the latter when there were no children in attendance. The Harvest Supper provided by the Ladies Club in the village hall lived up to its' usual standard and raised funds for the Salvation Army. On the 10th May a special V.E. Day service was held, inspired by Freda Curtis, who together with Norma Black and her team, wonderfully decorated the church in an appropriate manner.

Due to the shortage of Clergy, the pattern of services changed in the Autumn, which had a detrimental effect on congregation numbers and consequently the income. New Service Booklets were introduced also for Holy Communion, Matins and Evensong. The monthly 'Contact' newsletter produced for the Somerton Benefice continues to be sold through the Community shop for 40p.

During the year the church was involved with the Village Fete in August, with a good Songs of Praise in the Marquee on the Sunday morning and an Autumn/Christmas Bazaar in November in the village hall.

Other points worthy of note are:

The restoration of the Church Clock. Our thanks go to David Beswick and David Ellis for all their time and effort in making it happen.

The purchase of a new St George's Flag.

The performance of 'Northern Harmony' in the church in April thanks to Take Art and the tremendous organisation by Julie and Richard South together with Gill and Brian Paine. The choir from Vermont in the USA helped raise the excellent sum of £700 for church funds.

The lighting again of a beacon on the church tower, this time to celebrate our Queen's 90th Birthday on the 21st April. Again thanks to David Beswick and his team.

On the 17th July our Curate Chris Hopkins will take his final service in our Benefice as he is to become Vicar of the Baltonsborough Benefice. Our thanks and blessings go with him and his family. Recently trained 'Lay Worship Assistants' will be helping at services in the future.

Finally our thanks go to the Kingsdon Parish Council for their grant towards the upkeep of the churchyard which is a facility for all parishioners.

David Beswick is looking for an assistant clock manager.

Table Tennis Club

It has been running for 18 years, every Tuesday, about 16/18 people are on the books. They play doubles on two tables. Subs are very cheap. New members are always welcome.

Kingsdon Boules and Croquet Club read by Brian Paine

The club was started by a group of villagers in the summer of 2013. It was initially funded by a grant from Sport 50 which was a local initiative to encourage the more senior members of rural communities to participate in gentle sporting activities. We were able to purchase a croquet set and pay for some initial tuition.

We were all rather green and hadn't realised how complicated some of the rules of Association Croquet could be. However, there are several different croquet games, one mysteriously called 'golf croquet', which is less complicated and has more appeal for some of our players.

We have no official ground to play on so played in several members' gardens initially but now we consistently play at Sally Smith's as she is the only member having a large enough lawn and room for a second, smaller lawn to be set out as well as space for a boule piste. We are very grateful to Jim for maintaining this for us.

We have averaged 28 games each year and have played away on occasion. Our hope is to join a league once we are a little more competent but the main reason for playing is to enjoy good company out of doors, not to mention the tea and cake at 4 o'clock.

We would welcome new members – tel Nina Carlisle on 840933 or email ninacarlisle@talktalk.net

David Beswick asked about the mower that had been bought by the Parish Council, this will be used to cut the sports field once we own it.

David feels this more informal approach has felt better and we will continue it next year. When you return to your groups, can you encourage a greater involvement from other group members as well as the usual regulars?

The meeting ended at 8.57pm.