

MINUTES OF THE KINGSDON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY MAY 18th 2017 IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7.45pm

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:

Achievements this year have been the purchase of the playing field. It has taken a long time due to bureaucracy but it has come to fruition and the process is now on the way.

Also the tree planting in the village field. This has been two fold – to provide screening for play equipment and develop a habitat for animals which is working. Hedgehogs and other animals have been seen.

The litter pick, last June and another this year went well but more parishioners attending would be good.

A great deal has been done on footpaths, driven by Ian, but a lot of help by Guy and Austin. This has included opening up of gates.

Ian is asking where next with the paths? Any advice from parishioners and feedback welcome. It will all be on the website.

Accounts will also be fully visible on the website.

Work has also started on the village plan. It was updated a couple of years ago but now needs a thorough update. It is a big job and we are taking advice from a number of organisations. This will lead to a questionnaire around the village – what are we looking for in the village? Are you looking for specific things? It is important to get it in place as it will help with future planning applications, a weight of evidence. So look out for the questionnaire, we want your honest views.

Other things in the future – S106, planning regulations. If people build a big development, they have to put money aside to the local area to provide something for the community. We have money available for use in the village hall and also to do something with the play equipment in the village field. We have had a number of ideas, it is for the use of the field, e.g. we could provide a power point or water for when we have functions. We have a ten year period. It is fairly tightly controlled and we are seeking guidance.

It was asked if it can be used on the new field? We are looking into this as it would help. We own the school field but only lease the village field.

The future of the village hall. It is creaky a bit like David!! It's a question of whether we spend money now or look to building a new village hall. It is a big decision. Before the current hall can be disposed of we have to have 50% of village support as this is stated in the covenant.

Mrs Neal who own most of the village, died ten years ago and all of her estate passed to her daughters who continue to manage it, they are now in their 70s, and they are looking to sell the land. The tenants are aware. The potential for development is enormous. There are not many boundaries on planning now, the government took it away.

Talking to Mr Biffin from Greenslade Taylor Hunt, who manages the estate for them, he says a developer could in essence buy the whole lot.

South Somerset have identified areas that could be used for development this is nothing to do with The above but means they would be looking favourably on planning applications.

If you Google search 'Strategic house land availability assessment' you will get maps for the whole east area.

If a developer wanted to put in a bid it would be looked at in favour because the council have independently already identified the areas as viable.

The estates responsibility is to make a lot of money. But Mr Biffin and one of the owners are keen to keep the character of the village. They are keen that we suggest development that we would be happy with. The estate is prepared to give us a piece of land to build a new village hall, which bit of land is almost our choice.

The village field and allotments, they are prepared to offer us a much longer term lease to use, so we can preserve the character within the village, this gives us long term security. But they would like to do limited development in some areas as compensation. But they want it to be in keeping. They are looking to help us build our village a new hall if we consider where they want to build, where we do have a measure of control. It is amazing that they are offering the field, allotments and another piece of land. The current village hall land will remain ours.

We will now need a parish council meeting to discuss the issues. There will also be open meetings to involve everyone. It will also be in the questionnaire.

A parishioner asked if the around a 1000 acres that they own will be sold as a whole or separate blocks? They haven't finalised their process in that yet. Someone may offer to buy all lots of blocks of land.

They would like us to consider it as soon as we can. We need to act quickly. We need massive villager input from this, please don't sit back. D.Beswick cannot at the moment give more detail on which land and where, but he will as soon as he can.

Report from Dean Ruddle (County Councillor)

It has been a pleasure for me to represent Kingsdon at county hall. I have enjoyed attending your parish council meetings, which keeps me fully briefed on what's going on in the village. I am very pleased that you have finally secured the old school field.

Over the last year it has been necessary once again to make savings to public services due to increasing government cuts. In endeavouring to maintain current spending on education and welfare the county council and the District council have had no choice but to put up council Tax to maintain much needed services.

I continue to work closely with our MP David Warburton and District Councillor David Norris on many local issues.

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.

I would like to thank you all for your continuing support over the last year.

D.Beswick added that Dean Ruddle has been helpful to us; he comes to most meetings, gives good advice, a positive input, and is a calming influence on occasions.

Report by District Councillor David Norris:

The past 12 months have been a difficult period for South Somerset District Council. The main areas of concern have been the state of the Local Plan and the Council's finances.

Local Plan South Somerset has failed to meet the level of housing development set out in the Local Plan. Because of this it is deemed out of date and little weight can be given to it when determining planning application which has left the whole of the District vulnerable to unwanted development. With an out of date Local Plan planning committees must revert to the National Planning Policy Framework which states there will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. That said, recent appeal decisions have made it clear that some weight can be given to policy SS2 in the Local Plan which does give some measure of protection for rural areas such as Kingsdon. The root cause for the Local Plan being deemed out of date is because it calls for a near unachievable level of development, a level that has only been achieved once in the past 10 years. Because we have 'persistently' failed to meet the requirement we must now achieve a level of development 20% above that in the plan. This is an impossible target so there is no short term solution to the matter. The only solution is to resubmit the local plan with an achievable level of housing based on the latest census figures and accurate population growth assessments for South Somerset.

Finances The central government rate support grant settlement for local authorities for the next 4 years is a reducing amount and in the fourth year means local authorities such as South Somerset must return money to central government. While this is not good news, it is not quite as bad as it sounds because coupled with the new settlement is a provision for local authorities to keep more of the business rates collected. However, substantial savings must be made in the way it conducts its business if it is to achieve a balanced budget. To achieve this the Council is going through a transformation process.

Transformation The jewel in the way SSDC conducts its business is the Area system. The good news is that there are no plans at present to move away from this. Transformation is a root and branch change the the way the council conducts its business using a web based IT system to make the work processes much more efficient. The IT system will also be the main way residents contact council staff for services. The result is savings will be made by a substantial reduction in staffing, reduced numbers of senior managers and reduced numbers of specialists. These redundancies are happening now. The objective is to achieve savings of £4M per year in the cost of running the council. Coupled with the Transformation process, the council has established an Income Generation team who have the brief to come up with projects that achieve a 7% return on investment. No projects have been approved yet but it will certainly mean that the council will be entering into new markets such as property development.

D.Beswick added that, David over the year has pointed out financial difficulties in the future. But has also pointed out grant opportunities and been at most meetings.

Senior's Club by Brian Paine

Kingsdon Village Senior Club is a long established organisation providing friendship, information, learning and as such contributes to the cohesive and caring reputation of the village.

Meetings are usually held in the village hall on the fourth Wednesday of the month.

The Club has nearly forty members, an average attendance at meetings of twenty four, and we have managed to retain membership fees to just £10 per annum, per person.

Activities comprise eight meetings per year with guest speakers and recent topics have included:

- World Horse Welfare/Glenda Spooner Farm
- The Battle of Jutland
- How Parliament Works
- The Nobel Awards

Each December we hold a Christmas Luncheon at the Kingsdon Inn, a summer outing (although probably in September this year) and in July a Garden Party.

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 has been meeting regularly. They have identified the need for replacement windows, as they are nearly falling out, and an upgrade to the heating which may be carried out using the S106 money from the Manor Development. We have had the annual electricity check and the necessary work is being carried out by Winslow Bassham. The winter months are still problematic with condensation and areas of the floor becoming uneven, but not as bad as the previous year.

There have been favourable comments on the condition of the hall thanks to the caretaking. A new cooker and hob has been installed along with a microwave and toaster. Thanks to Guy Osborne who looks after the floor really well, but we need new stoppers on the chairs to prevent scratching. The hall continues to be used on a regular basis by various clubs and organizations as well as for private functions. During 2016, the hall was used on 326 occasions, a little up on 2015. The coloured lights are very popular, especially for children's parties, people from all over are booking parties with us.

There is a new cooker and microwave. The Scouts had a lovely time, including cooking a Christmas dinner for 40. The website is providing us with some bookings.

At a meeting of members of the sub-committee with Matt Day from the Community Council, we were informed that the National Lottery has put a stop on grants towards new halls in Somerset due to less people participating in the lottery. This will make raising funds for a new hall more difficult. There are other grants available but the big lottery one for halls has gone.

It has been agreed that a full survey on the building is required, that will tell us what the future holds for the present hall, should 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. While we raise money for a new hall, we have to keep the present hall in a hireable condition.

David Beswick said that we need an item at next meeting to discuss thoroughly the situation with the village hall. Ian is talking to two surveying companies currently. He was encouraged to do this as soon as possible.

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

Once again we have been fortunate, as the only crimes that I have been made aware of during the past year were the theft from a shed in May and the attempted theft from a shed in November.

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 him to add them to his list. E-mail address wallyelliott@hotmail.com Further items of interest relating to Neighbourhood Watch are displayed on the notice board in our Community Shop.

During the year I attended an Open Forum held at the Council Offices in Yeovil attended by the Police & Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens and the Chief Constable Andy Marsh. I also attended an interesting talk on `Cyber Crime` at the Police Headquarters in Portishead.

We must however not be complacent and be always vigilant as to our surroundings. In an emergency dial 999 or if you have information about any 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 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. Hopefully on 1st October we will reach a significant event, with our tenth birthday, something we will be very proud of, especially as we have never missed a monthly copy. The production, editing, printing and delivering has become a hobby I enjoy doing, albeit a very time consuming one.

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 and posted on the Village website.

All copies of the Chronicle are now available on the Village website. They can be found by Googling... 'Kingsdon Chronicle' where they can all be seen in full colour.

The finances remain buoyant thanks to the generosity of some parishioners, £100 annual contribution from the Parish Council and the profit from the 100+ Club which is run in support of the Chronicle. I commenced the year with a fund total of £2,070. The anticipated expenditure for the year is £1,700, leaving a surplus of £370 before any further income for the year is received. A reserve is essential to cover the cost of printer replacement should things go drastically wrong. A new one would be a minimum of £500.

For the information of new comers to Kingsdon, information on joining the 100+ Club, which is the means Kingsdon residents can support the Chronicle financially, will be in the next Chronicle.

Kingsdon Cricket Club report read by Marilyn Elliott:

2016 was another enjoyable year for the club.

The club is indebted to Ben Carlisle who works tirelessly as our groundsman.

The cost of running the club for the year was kept to £2,688 due to the generosity of a member who met certain expenditures out of his own pocket. Income was £3,146. This meant we ended the year with a surplus of £458, giving a bank balance of £2,626. After a lot of deliberation at the AGM, it was decided to keep the player's annual subscriptions to £150 per annum or £10 per match for the 2017 season. Any higher may well deter people from playing.

We are in the process of having mains water connected at an anticipated cost of about £1,000. This cost is due to the strict requirements of the Water Board. There will also be an annual charge, more expense for the club. It had been hoped to put in a request for financial help from Kingsdon Parish Council towards the cost of the mains water installation but, as it was not possible to give an accurate quote prior to the budget being set, this was not done. Currently there is no running water or electricity on the ground.

The club is anticipating further expenditure will be required for the maintenance and or replacement of equipment; most of the mowers are getting old and costly to keep running.

In the 34 years since the club was formed it has been totally self-financing, in its early years it was a substantial charity 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 from outside the club other than a small grant from Viridor towards the cost of the new pavilion and a £500 donation from the Jubilee Fund in 2015.

The club has been fortunate over the years to have vice-presidents whose generous financial support has been much needed. Unfortunately, vice-presidents are becoming harder to find. We would welcome any one who would like to become a vice-president to contact Marilyn.

As can be seen, fund raising this year is paramount for the club. Our first fund raiser will be a village cricket day on 9th July with a BBQ. Later in the year there will be a dance in the village hall, date to be confirmed.

For the 2017 season we have a full fixture list of 18 matches, we started the season on 30th April and our final fixture will be on 11th September. These are displayed in the Chronicle.

It is very pleasing to see some of our youngsters / teenagers taking an interest in the club, Paige Waters (14) have become a regular member and both Matthew Hammond and Jack Constable (both 13) participated in their first match on Sunday 14th May. It was an extremely good match.

Everyone is welcome to come and watch and enjoy some refreshments at half time, we have plenty of seating.

There is a 999 year lease for the land, for £1 a year. The introduction of youngsters is vital for cricket and for applying for grants.

Church Report by Nick Allen

The services have continued almost every Sunday, and attendees are now used to the new service pattern introduced 18 months ago. The Benefice areas are Somerton, the Charlton's and Kingsdon.

We lost the curate a year ago and now have trained lay worship assistants to run services.

Highlights of year were the exciting concert by the masi warriors, which raised funds for the church and their own local communities.

Thanks to Brian and Gill, Richard and Judy for organising the take art ventures.

We will be having the talented choir from Vermont in the USA as the next major fundraising event.

Attendance has increased over the year but still low.

Other highlights have been the Songs of praise service, carol service and harvest.

£3000 came back in the financial year otherwise we would have made an operating loss.

We spent £622 on churchyard maintenance. £550 comes from the parish council. This money covers mowing the grass but not difficult areas which working parties try to help keep under control.

Major fundraising would be needed if repairs are needed. We have rejuvenated the lightening conductor, which cost £800, over 30 years this is not an enormous cost and we are much safer as a result.

Jubilee fund reported by W.Elliott

The fund was set up in 2002 after the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations. Its purpose was to fund events in the village that the parish council did not wish to be involved with, for example the Five-a-side goal posts on the village field, a dinner service in the village hall and a new front door for the school. After making these and other donations a float of £500 was kept for future events

There followed some minor fund raising in the form of Quizzes.

For the Queens Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in 2012, we commenced fund raising 3 years before hand to ensure a sufficient bank balance to be able to fund a big four day event. A grant was also forthcoming from the Lottery which covered the cost of the Marquee. Afterwards we were able to make grants from the profit to various village organisations whilst still maintaining a £500 balance.

In 2015 volunteers came forward to run the jubilee fund, and as a result, the annual three-day village festival commenced. That year we were loaned marquees which meant the cost of setting up and running the event was kept within our means and afterwards were able to make donations to the Cricket Club and Church.

In 2016 a grant was made by the Parish Council for the full cost of the marquee which meant we had a healthy balance afterwards. Following advice taken on financing future events, we were advised to maintain a working balance of £6,000; no grants were made last year. This has meant we started planning for the 2017 festival with sufficient cash in the bank to pay for the marquee without requiring any financial assistance.

Apart from the annual festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend we are also taking part in the national 'Have a Field Day 2017' which is a celebration of our parks and green spaces on 8th July, with an invitation to all in the village and others who use the field to a BBQ with a Bar, Cream Teas and Ice Creams. Hopefully by the end of this finical year

Community Shop report by Eric Russell

Since we moved into the large trading area we have increased turn over and stock. We have achieved the 10% growth figure that was set out in the business plan. This is testament to all the volunteers and their hard work.

In 2016 we have gone from strength to strength. It is moving forward. We recently had an unannounced environmental health officer in to inspect us and he was glowing in his praise, well maintained, well run and cleaned.

Since we have been up and running we introduced welcome packs to welcome new people to the village and try to get help for a couple of hours. This has been well received by the new comers.

Over the next 12 months we are going to be looking to put in a new counter as the current one is no longer fit for purpose (Ethel can't reach!). New heaters have been put in and heating bills have gone down. We now plan to insulate the windows with removable secondary glazing. The planning department are not allowing the building to be insulated.

We are hoping to raise some funds through increased turn over in the shop and along with cream tea Saturdays and toasted teacake Saturdays. In August we are attempting Pimms Saturdays, with strawberries and cream.

Also, we are looking at the outbuildings. First step is to clear all of the junk out of them, anything that is recyclable/reusable we will offer to the village for a small donation.

We are always in need of volunteers; some people have had to step back, even if you can only offer one shift a month, which is two hours.

A massive thank-you to the volunteers for the hard work. Also massive thanks to Tim for the vegetable patch, who grows various items for us.

The profits all feed back into the shop.

David Beswick encouraged them to ask for a donation from the parish council and claim it.

The meeting ended at 8.57pm.