**SOMERTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON**

**TUESDAY 5TH MAY 2015 IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

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| Cllr R Starling (Chairman) | Cllr T Jones (Vice Chairman) |
| Cllr J Clift | Cllr B Barker |
| G Lack (clerk) | Cllr Van De Bulk  Cllr D Crane |
|  |  |

The Chairman welcomed one resident to the meeting together with PC Cook. Cllr Grayling had sent his apologies.

1. **Minutes of Previous meeting held on 6th May 2014.**

The minutes had previously been approved and signed at the Parish Council meeting held on 1st July 2014.

1. **Matters arising from the Minutes not covered on the agenda**

No matters were raised.

1. **Somerton Parish Council Minutes and Accounts**

The minutes and accounts were presented to the meeting. No comments were noted.

1. **Statements and reports from representatives of voluntary organisations within the Parish:**

* Somerton “Poors” Trustees Minutes Book. Minutes and accounts were circulated. No comments were noted.
* Somerton Staithe & Boat Dyke Trustees Minute Book & Accounts and to receive Trustees Annual Report. Minutes and accounts were circulated. No comments were noted.
* Somerton Village Hall Accounts. Accounts were circulated. No comments were noted.

1. **Chairman’s Report**

The following points were noted:

* The Parish Council commented on a total of 10 planning applications during the last year, 3 within the Broads Authority area and 7 in the Borough Council area. The year marked the end of the long standing planning issue at The Firs, Staithe Road which lasted almost 20 years. Planning matters can be difficult at times but the Parish Council advice to applicants remains unchanged in that they should always consult and seek the advice of the planning departments at the Broads Authority and Borough Council before submitting any application.
* The Staithe project, namely the timber piling, bollard & mooring post replacement plus the provision of an information board has been completed successfully. The Staithe Trustees continue to look after the Staithe & Boat Dyke very well.
* Litter & occasional fly tipping remain a concern but the two organised litter picks do help to keep Somerton clean for most of the time. We were also able to undertake a litter pick along the north end of Collis Lane during the Spring thanks to 2 more volunteers. Anyone encountering a fly-tipping incident should immediately inform the Borough Council who remain responsible for collection.
* The Community Fund is now up and running following receipt of the first £2,500 payment after the installation of the new wind turbine along Collis Lane. Separately administered by the Clerk, this funding will support a variety of projects and improvements in Somerton. It is possible that a funding reduction will take place with the Borough Council’s Concurrent Function Grant 2015/16 which the Parish Council uses to pay for grass cutting. At this stage it is possible that payments to the Parochial Church Council towards the grass cutting & hedge cutting costs at the church together with cutting 2 footpaths etc may be impacted. Representations have been made to the Borough to continue this funding but perhaps a contingency should be made from future community fund payments just in case.
* Highway matters continue to be dealt with satisfactorily despite some delays in resolving issues at times. A small section of road side kerbing will be placed this month following concerns for stones placed close to the edge of the highway along Horsey Road.
* Last summer the Broads Authority removed the 2 litter compounds used by visiting boats. Despite fears, there has not been any major problems with rubbish left in the river and staithe areas.
* Environmental issues and concerns have been raised on several occasions during the year. The installation of solar panels at Bloodhills and the proposal to construct a new forestry road for the removal of trees on the Burnley Hall Estate caused concerns to some residents. Likewise, the threat to lower dyke water levels was avoided following an independent report and a meeting with interested parties in the village hall on the 13th October 2014.
* The recent fish deaths in the Thurne system, caused by an outbreak of prymnesium on Hickling Broad, resulted in many thousands of fish congregating at Somerton. This clearly demonstrated the justification and need to keep a good water quality supply flowing into the local river. It is, however, extremely disappointing, although not unexpected, that one major environmental improvement in Somerton will probably not take place - the under grounding of the electric line from the Staithe across the grazing marsh to Somerton South Pump station. The minutes are a record of the history of Somerton and future generations will be able to establish the true facts behind this lost opportunity to improve part of the local open landscape.
* Hope was expressed that the Parish Council would continue to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity even though this is now a statutory duty under The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.
* Thanks were given to Barrie Sharrock for his work as Internal Auditor for the Council, the Clerk for her hard work as Parish Clerk, our County Councillor and Borough Councillors for their attendance at meetings and assistance throughout the past year. PC Dick Cook has always been welcome and we thank him for his care and support.
* Parishioners soon, hopefully, will have better access to Parish Council matters with agendas and minutes being displayed on a website. This should avoid any confusion on just what is taking place on the Parish Council.

Finally, the Chairman thanked Parish Councillors for their time and dedication in attending meetings this past year.

1. **Vice Chairman’s Report**

The following points were noted:

* Everything was in sound order including the war memorial; the bus shelters were in reasonable order but would be repainted as would the bench seats.
* NCC Highways had look after the Parish throughout the year and there were now no major issues.

1. **Consideration of any resolution on which written notice has been given.** None given
2. **Members of the audience – questions on any item/subject.** Nothing noted.
3. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 3rd May 2016 in the Village Hall at 7.00 p.m.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 19.18 p.m.

*The meeting was followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting.*