

SOMERTON- ANNUAL PARISH MEETING Draft MINUTES

Tuesday 7th May 2024 at 7.00pm.

1.Attendance and apologies for absence:

10 members of the public, including 5 councillors

Apologies received from James Bensly, Noel Galer and Billy Lecomte

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 23rd May 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting

3. Report received from County and District Councillor James Bensly, not present.

4. Police representative not present.

5. Reports received from representatives of voluntary organisations within the Parish

a) Somerton Poors Trustees by Mr Lees (see appendix)

b) Somerton Staithe and Boat Dyke Trustees by Mr David Shuker (see appendix)

c) Somerton Village Hall by Mrs Stephanie Whitehouse (see appendix)

The Chair expressed her thanks to those presenting reports and to those attending.

6. Parish Council Chair's Report:

Another year of change and resettlement:

- The parish Clerk, Clare Rouillier resigned in June, and Nicola Ledain was appointed clerk in July.
- Richard Walters resigned as Chairman and as a Parish councillor in September: I would like to thank him very much for all his hard work during his term of office. I became the acting Chair before being elected Chair at the November meeting.
- At the July meeting, Penny Beard was co-opted to the vacancy left by the elections.
- Peter Young was co-opted in November. I am very pleased to welcome them both to the Parish Council.
- As promised, this year's precept was less than last year's by £1000, and there are now built in reserves.
- On financial matters, after a lot of effort, issues with Barclays bank signatories seem to have been resolved. Apologies to those who had to wait too long for payment.
- Dog waste continues to be an issue varying in intensity, mainly on the footpath to the north of the staithe. The purchase price of a dog waste bin would be reasonable, but the costs of emptying what is considered hazardous waste are considerable and would involve using a private contractor and raising the precept. It is permissible to dispose of dog waste in domestic bins: this could be a cost-free option if any parishioners were willing to put waste from the dog-bin into their domestic bins from time to time.
- Benches: the bench across the river was in poor repair, was removed on safety grounds and proved to be beyond repair. Permission to install a bench in memory of a parishioner was given: many thanks to the family for installing the new bench on the staithe, and for moving the existing bench from the staithe to the other side of the river.
- Thanks to the two councillors who re-stained one of the bus shelters. There is a rota to clean the shelters each month. Extra volunteers for the rota are always welcome.
- The grass cutting contract was given to Ross Bird again: it was agreed that some areas on the staithe and by the war memorial would be left uncut to encourage wildflower growth. The areas round the village sign and the war memorial will be uncut again this year,
- One litter pick took place during the year: many thanks to all those who volunteered to help collect the 15 sacks of rubbish

- Traffic and highways: the issue with the drain cover on Horsey Road has been raised several times with NCC by the PC and by individual parishioners. I understand that there is a court case between a motorist and the county council to be resolved, and that the issue is below thresholds for action by NCC who will monitor via routine inspections.
- The state of the Horsey Road has been raised, as well as the level, size and speed of traffic passing through the village. We have asked for a review of possible solutions for our traffic concerns. James Bensley has agreed to highlight this to highways and the police. The introduction of a 20mph speed limit through the village would require a Traffic Regulation Order, a very long legal process, nevertheless the Parish Council will press for proper consideration to be given to this.
- The lack of signage indicating that Low Road is a restricted byway has been acknowledged, but the response, putting another small (3 x 3 inch) sign on the finger post, is not satisfactory and cannot be seen by vehicle drivers. The PC will continue to push for the provision of more visible and larger signs.
- Footpaths and permissive paths: the application for a public right of way by foot only linking the northern end of Coronation Lane to the east end of the wind turbine track and thence to Mill Lane has been lodged with the County Council.
- The initiative to have the missing footpath no.8 (Hundred Stream path) reopened continues. Reinstating this path would recreate the circular route from Somerton to the border with Horsey and across to the coast and back to Somerton without walking along the often-busy road.
- We had some useful group training sessions from Norfolk Association of Local Councils, and some of us used their services for other training on Zoom. Much of it was free. The annual subscription is good value and help and advice is readily accessible.

7. To receive questions on any item/subject

- A parishioner reported that a fellow parishioner was concerned about the grass cutting around the war memorial. Discussion ensued. The situation will be monitored.
- Roadside verges have orchids and rare plant species: liaison with borough council suggested re keeping sections uncut.
- A parishioner expressed concern about traffic speeding past the Lion, past The Street towards Winterton and along Collis Lane. School coaches travel fast along Collis Lane. Pedestrians are at risk. This will be raised with other traffic concerns when Highways next visit the parish.
- Concerns raised about dark skies and lights left on all night. Parish Council would speak to the environment officer at GYBC. Planning authority have tight specifications. Parish Council to establish facts with GYBC re light shining into someone else's property.
- A parishioner wondered whether the Parish Council had over budgeted this year. The concerns were noted. The council now has appropriate reserves. If there is a surplus at the end of the financial year, next year's precept could be lower. The parishioner said that there should be a financial statement at every meeting, and that annual accounts should be published on website. This was noted.
- A parishioner was concerned about the workload and hours of the parish clerk, and suggested timesheets might be used and monitored. This was noted.

- Concerns raised and discussion about the pub closure. At this stage, there is little that the community can do. Parishioners felt that the pub was an important community resource and should not be lost.
- Community fund: a parishioner expressed concern that the fund was not being spent, and that the policy should be looked at. Contribution to a community celebration suggested.
- A parishioner asked why there was no report from the Church. The new vicar, who was present, is happy to provide report for the church as a community group at next year's meeting.

8. Date of next meeting : TBC

The meeting finished at 8.20pms

Appendix A-Poors Land Trustees Report (Mr M Lees)

Shooting and grazing rent increased from £795 to £875

Bank interest increased from £17 to £52

Donations were £19, and insurance costs were unchanged at £96.

Net income approximately £850.

Contingency for expected imminent expenditure on marsh £300.

Available: £550

Distributed: £625 (utilising reserve funds)

Appendix B- Staithe and Boat Dyke Trustees Report (Mr D Shuker)

In December 2023 Paul Rouiller was nominated by the Parish Council and became a trustee.

The trustees have met on four occasions since the last report and held an open meeting in October 2023. Seven boat owners out of 28 with assigned moorings attended the open meeting.

In March 2024 a new mooring agreement was sent out to all boat owners with moorings.

Further to discussions at the open meeting, boat owners were requested to make a donation to the upkeep of the staithe and boat dyke. As of the date of this meeting, 16 boat owners out of 24 have returned their agreements and paid contributions. During 2023 one cruiser mooring became vacant and was assigned to a boat owner at the head of the cruiser waiting list. Since January 2024, four dinghy boat owners have relinquished their moorings, and we are currently notifying those on the dinghy waiting list of available places. Overall we will reduce the waiting list from 9 to 3 or 4- a more healthy list than for many years.

In the autumn of 2023 encroaching reed and weed growth was cleared by a boat owner at a charge to the trust as we had been unable to coordinate this clearance with the Water Management Alliance when they had their digger in the vicinity. We will endeavour to arrange this for the autumn of this year.

As presented to the open meeting last October, the trustees have adopted a policy of maintaining a reserve to cover the running costs (insurance, maintenance and repairs) for one year of £1000.

An additional cost to the trust this year will be the replacement of the broken fence at the entrance to the north bank. The trustees also decided to gradually build up a capital fund to be used for major work. The trustees are exploring the possibility of quay heading along the north bank of the boat dyke. The heavy rainfall over the past winter and spring, combined with mole activity has made the lower bank increasingly treacherous. The bank near to the oak tree was particularly bad, being almost waterlogged for several months. The majority of funding sources require some kind of matched funding, and the one we are looking at, The Hornsea 3 Community fund requires 20% matched funding. We estimate that the quay heading project

costs will be in the order of £40,000 costs-requiring the Trust to find £8000. Hence the need to have funds available. The Hornsea 3 community fund will be running two funding rounds per year over the next ten years, the first being this year.

The trustees will be convening an open meeting of boatowners and residents in October 2024 at which, among other things, the proposed works will be presented.

Questions from attendees:

- Had the Broads Authority been consulted re planning permission for the proposed quay heading? Not yet, the process is just beginning.
- Would those who had not paid be followed up? The secretary was not over concerned, and believed they would pay. The small excess in the income account would be allocated to capital the fund
- Was the waiting list adhered to? The secretary reported that prospective moorers were told where they were on the list
- What was happening about the damaged posts by road? Two quotes had been invited for post and rail fencing
- How safe is the oak tree by the road at the entrance to the dyke? The trustees had sought advice and been informed that the tree was stable. They intend to seek permission to remove the bottom two branches

Appendix C- Village Hall Charity Report (Mrs S Whitehouse, Treasurer, on behalf of the chair Billy Lecomte)

As the football saying goes “it’s a game of two halves”. For the Trustees of Somerton Village Hall (VH) it’s been a year of two halves. Steve Ashton remained chair for the first half of the year and stood down in December 2023, prior to this announcement, Billy Le Comte the vice chair had informed Steve that he would be standing down at the end of the year for personal reasons, but agreed to be temporary chair until the AGM in June 2024.

The year started on a very positive note with the village fete raising almost £4,000 which was divided equally between the VH and the Somerton Church fund. The VH required repairs and modernisation, so trustees applied for grants to make the improvements which successfully raised approximately £19,000, comprising the community Fund £10,000, Bernard Sunley Foundation £5,000 and Geoffrey Watling Charity £4,000. The work was carried out by local tradesmen and included a new floor, new ceiling and lighting, plus new electric eco heaters, all now completed. Outside the Hall, the grant included provision for new fencing to comply with safety regulations for playgrounds. The work was completed by a local tradesman in April 2024. Contact has been made with GYBC re replacing playground equipment: this was said to be low priority.

Steve Ashton has been instrumental in co-ordinating and overseeing the work being undertaken, and I would like to record the thanks of the village hall trustees for his hard work and dedication over many years.

At the start of 2024 other trustees stepped down, and the committee is seeking replacement trustees. Current vacancies include Chair and a Village Hall booking officer. We hope to fill the vacancies by the AGM.

Preparations are underway to organise the 80th anniversary of D Day 6th June celebrations which we hope will be well attended by people in the village.

It has been challenging organising this year’s fete, with fewer trustees and volunteers to help put tents up and run stalls and games. It has been decided to change the format of the fete. Fliers will be circulated to encourage new people to come forward to help. The hall is very important to all

the local organisations who use it regularly- coffee Morning, Parish council, Hobby Club, Friends of Horsey Seals, Food for Thought suppers, the Staithe trust, Village Venue, Bongo, National Trust, the band. This is one of the last centres of the community, so we very much need new people to join the team managing and caring for the hall. Billy would like to thank all the trustees for their time and support in the brief period he has been chair. We are all volunteers who give up so much of our time for the community.