

SOMERTON- ANNUAL PARISH MEETING Draft MINUTES

Tuesday 13th May 2025 at 7.00pm.

1.Attendance and apologies for absence:

10 members of the public attended.

Apologies received from James Bensley.

2. The **minutes of the previous meeting** held on 7th May 2024 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting and duly signed.

3. Report was received from County and District Councillor James Bensley, who was not present.

4. Police representative not present. The police have regular information sharing meetings for local parishes.

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

- **Somerton Poors Trustees** reported that shooting and grazing rent had increased from £875 to £890; bank interest from £52 to £71; insurance from £96 to £123; available funds £840; distributed funds £800 to 4 recipients.
- **Somerton Staithe and Boat Dyke Trustees** reported that the four-year terms of two of the trustees would end in January. The parish council would look for nominations. There were 7 names on the waiting list for cruisers. Trustees had repaired the broken fence; the Water Management Alliance would weed bucket clear the bottom of the main dyke of accumulated material in September; the slipway end is cleared by hand. Trustees plan to renew signage, to investigate potential repairs to existing quay heading, and, in response to requests, to consult and consider increasing the accessibility of the footpath, and options for collection of weed and weed clearance. Funds stood at £6000, including reserves and provision for planned works. The annual open meeting would be held in early October 2025.
A parishioner mentioned that the sign on the slipway chain was missing
- **Somerton Village Hall** The committee have appointed new trustees and a new chairman: thanks expressed to Billy Lecomte for standing in as chairman until June 2024. The chairman thanked all involved with the 2024 village fete which had raised £2568 to be divided between the Village Hall and the Church. VE day celebrations on May 8th and 10th had been a great success: thanks expressed to all involved, especially to Peter Evans. The defibrillator had been relocated to the village hall, and a training session had been well attended. Redecoration and minor repairs had been carried out during the year, and a maintenance working party was planned for 17th may. Lettings for the year had increased.
- **Somerton Village Association** reported on progress towards securing the future of The Lion pub: no grants towards the purchase were possible, though grants for renovation could become available. The steering group intended to register Somerton Community Benefit Society with the financial conduct authority. This would be a not for profit company which could accept donations and grants and issue community shares. Initially this was to gauge how many people might be interested in raising the funds to buy the pub. The pub, now on the open market, would have to obtain planning permission for any change of use. There would be updates in Somerton News.

A parishioner wondered why the pub would be viable now. The steering group advised that the property needed gutting and redesigning to make use of wasted space; the barn could be converted into a restaurant, and the letting rooms promoted. Views for and against the project were expressed.

- **St Mary's Church:** the PCC secretary reported on the active involvement of the rector in village events. The PCC was looking to open the church building to wider use.

The Chair thanked those presenting reports and attendees.

6. Parish Council Chair's Report

- The chair had assumed office in May 2024; there had been no change in councillors and attendance at meetings had been good.
- A new version of the financial regulations has been approved, and issues with the bank account and signatories have been resolved.
- Year -end accounts had been approved at the May meeting and governance processes had been audited and approved by the external examiner. These would be posted on the parish website , for public scrutiny.
- The Parish precept for 2025/2026 was lower than the previous year, allowing the council to fulfil the grass cutting commitment, no longer funded by concurrent grant. Concurrent funding for cutting the churchyard would continue.
- A dog waste contractor had been sourced: the bin would be placed on the north bank of the boat dyke. The cost of the bin and the first year's emptying would come from the Community Fund. If successful, the council would consider continuing the contract from its annual budget.
- Benches: the bench at the winterton road bus shelter had become unsound and beyond repair. The council has decided to replace it in a suitable style, constructed of long-lasting and repairable materials. The other two benches would need to be replaced.
- The parish notice board had been repaired, revarnished and fitted with a metal board to allow notices to be fixed with magnets.
- There was a rota to clean the bus shelters: extra volunteers always welcome.
- The list of volunteers for litter picking had been updated, risk assessments agreed and signed. Thanks to all involved.
- Traffic and highways: the drain cover on the corner of Horsey Road continued to be an issue. NCC Highways had been informed of the potential danger and had placed warning signs indicating repair work. No work had been carried out.
- The damaged Cottage Road sign had been replaced.
- The speed and volume of traffic through the village continued to be a concern. The council was awaiting a meeting with a highways engineer to discuss options.
- Horse riding: access to certain paths in the parish was restricted to horse riders who had to use parts of the Winterton Road outside the 30mph limit. The council continued to seek ways to improve the situation, through improved access and/or improved signage/speed limits from Dark Lane towards Somerton.
- 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 was currently going through the approval process.

- The initiative to have the missing footpath no.8 (Hundred Stream Path) reopened continued. 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. The council is seeking to determine whether the original decision making which led to the closure decision many years ago was erroneous.

7. To receive questions on any item/subject
No questions were received.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm