

Draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Open Meeting
held on Friday 25th April 2014 at Cross Memorial Hall

Present: Cllr S M Passmore (Chair of the Parish Council), Cllrs A Campbell, K Mace, R Parker, M Rolfe, C Woolley, R Woolley, T Munt (MP) together with 15 Members of the public.

- **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies were received from Mrs S Acland, Mrs J Craig, Mr P Passey, Mr I and Mrs S Tabrett, Mrs R Tyas, Mr J and Mrs P Warner, Mrs A Wood (Clerk).
- **Minutes of the 2012 Open Meeting:** The minutes were accepted as a true record and duly signed by The Chair.
- **Matters Arising from these minutes:**
 - The 'No Cold Calling Zone' scheme had been delayed with the absence of permanent signs at each access point to the Parish. These have now been erected and new stickers provided which are available from the Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator, Mr Eddie Farley.
 - The request for a 30 mph limit on the Webbington Road, from Rackley to Webbington had not progressed and is a continuing Highways project.
- **Cray Charity Report: Mr James Warner** (report read by Cllr Sue Passmore)
An outline of the history and purpose of the charity, set up in 1723, was given with the explanation of the origins of the fund and the sale of land and subsequent investment of the proceeds. The poor rates of return show some improvement. Those parishioners who have children entering Higher Education could be assisted by the Charity and he urged anyone wishing to make an application to contact Jim Warner.
- **Neighbourhood Watch Report: Mr Eddie Farley** reported that Mr Alan Truman has volunteered to oversee the western end of the Parish and can be contacted at alan.truman@btinternet.com or 732374. A request for deputies to assist co-ordinators was made and an appeal for email addresses for receipt of information was made to speed and ease administration. Fortunately the level of crime in our area is low.
The new telephone number for non-emergency calls to the police was "101", and seemed to be working well. This should be used for non-urgent calls where a "999" call was not necessary.
- **Parish Council Report by Chair: Cllr Sue Passmore** reported that the Council had previously had three Chairs on rotation. With the resignation of Annie Vickerstaff, this has been reviewed and the Chair is Sue Passmore and the Deputy is Allison Campbell. This has been a very busy period with large changes in legislation, replacement of one councillor and the resignation of the Parish Clerk, Mr Paul Passey. Paul has been unavailable because of leave and operations. We thank Cllr Parker who performed Clerk duties for three months. We welcome Cllr Ken Mace who joined us in November 2013 and Ann-marie Wood who joined us on 1st April as our new Clerk. We thank our 6 co-opted members of the Council and Mr David Windmill, our Internal Auditor of Parish Council accounts.
- **Reports from Advisory Group Leaders and Liaison Representatives:**
- **Finance and General Purposes: Cllr Sue Passmore**
There will be a minimal increase of 1.91% to the Council precept despite cuts in public funding. This low level may not be possible with future cuts planned until 2016/17. We are continuing to reduce ongoing costs and were some £740 under budget for the year, largely due to Cllr Parker performing Clerk duties.

The Clerk's salary continues to be our major cost. We contribute to local costs, for example, Contact magazine, verges and Churchyard grass cutting. We have a £5,000 set-aside fund for major beneficial projects for the Parish.

We were pleased to nominate Cllr Parker for the Somerset County Council Chairman's award for his contributions to the community.

- **Local Choices: Cllr Caroline Woolley**

Local Choices Initiative was introduced in 2012 by Somerset County Council for devolving responsibilities to local communities such as Community Wardens, for parish and highways maintenance, youth services and voluntary help for, e.g. rural libraries.

The latest briefing was for 'Helping Communities Help Themselves' with initiatives such as welfare cuts mitigation, dementia friendly communities, community car sharing and Parish Plans. Further work and guidance will be made available.

- **Planning: Cllr Mike Rolfe**

There have been 15 planning applications and two appeals since last year. The group analyses each application against Sedgemoor District Council's Core Strategy, Compton Bishop's Village Design Statement and, where appropriate, National Planning Policy. The Village Design Statement is a document prepared by the parish community for the community setting out parishioner's views of development within the parish and endorsed and adopted, by the planners, as a supplementary planning document. Together with the Core Strategy and National Planning Policy, Council therefore has a fairly comprehensive basis for analysing planning applications.

Parishioners' views are taken on board and site visits are made. On average each planning application consumes about 27 hours of the group's time, which, since the last Open Meeting has resulted in around 460 hours of work.

All applications and comments are posted on Sedgemoor's Planning website as soon as they are accepted by the planning department and are available for the general public.

- **Highways: Cllr Robert Woolley**

Last winter's heavy rain tested our drainage systems and, apart from one blocked drain in Vernon Lane, there were no major problems. We have arranged a mobile safety camera in Cross to deter those exceeding the speed limit where the average speed exceeds 35 mph. We are not provided with the results of the speed check. Suggestions for speed reduction measures in Old Coach Road would be welcomed. We are continuing to pursue a reduction in the speed limit for the unrestricted section of the Webbington Road between Rackley and Webbington.

We undertake an annual review of the condition of our highways each year and are currently evaluating the priorities. The report will be sent to Somerset Highways for attention.

The perilous conditions in Cross Lane are being addressed by The Coffin Lane group.

- **Environment: Cllr Richard Parker**

The place we chose to live is special and has a protected landscape with restrictions on buildings, changes of use and conversions. The demands on our area from social issues, farming methods and changes to national infrastructure are forcing change.

Hinkley C Connection - National Grid is planning to upgrade the electricity network to support the Hinkley C power station and will replace the existing overhead pylons in the Lox Yeo Valley. The new route will be placed underground from Biddisham to Sandford. Local farm land will be taken out of use for at least four years for the installation. A 65 metre road

will be built the length of the total installation to accommodate 38 ton lorries and excavators. A sealing end compound will be installed by the M5 at the Ham Lane footbridge. The Parish Council has been fully involved in the consultation and considers that National Grid has failed to address socio-economic issues such as: the majority request for sub-sea or undergrounding for the whole route; the transport and travel plans of workers, supplies and equipment; and the disruption during site restoration. We will continue to represent the parish to the end of the consultation process. Construction is scheduled to start in spring 2015 and will take four years to complete.

Quarrying - Both National Grid and EDF (for Hinkley C construction) intend to use locally available crushed aggregates for roads and building. It is possible that Cheddar may be a source and this could increase quarry traffic on the A371 Cross Lane.

Other environmental issues may include the extraction of shale gas. Licences have been awarded for exploration in an area of the local Mendips.

Cross Lane – Since 1962 the Parish Council has been pressing for safety improvements for pedestrians and cyclists in Cross Lane. We now have a community-led project which is working hard to get this underway.

Litter Picking – 17 volunteers carried out the annual litter pick on 15 February throughout the parish and collected 25 bags of rubbish and other discarded items.

Sewage problems – Investigations into an incident of sewage overflow have shown that the influx of surface water overloaded the sewage system. Surface water, from roofs, drains and springs should not enter the sewage system. Wessex Water is investigating and would appreciate information on where this water enters the system.

Broadband – We are waiting for the Axbridge exchange to be upgraded to facilitate this publicised upgrade for rural communities. However, the initial planning and survey work has not been started and no dates are available.

- **Footpaths Liaison Officer: Ian Tabrett** (report read by Cllr Parker)

Last summer's glorious weather meant our footpaths were used probably more than ever before. However, the wettest winter on record caused great problems, with many routes either unusable or very difficult because they were under water or mud, while gales brought down trees blocking the way or making passing difficult. The County Council reminds the surrounding landowners of their responsibility to remove the obstructions and maintain footpaths. Somerset County Council footpaths officer Chris East has replaced a number of old stiles with gates to make the paths more accessible. A small number of vandalised signs have been replaced. With the National Grid work, Footpath AX21/7 will be closed, and AX2/15 and AX/21/3 will be temporarily closed.

- **Springfield Wildlife site: Dr Sarah Ayling**

Despite the cold spring there were plenty of tadpoles in the pond, and at least two clutches of moorhen chicks. Once again the nest boxes were all used. Volunteers are sought to replace these in the winter. This is an excellent habitat for tawny owls, verified during the summer when tawny owl chicks and adults were on the branches of the alder trees for all to see. If anyone would like to make a tawny owl box to put up on the site, plans can be provided. During the winter we continued with the programme of cutting the entrance hedge and coppicing or pollarding of trees on the site (thanks again to those of you who came and helped with this). About half of the hedge on the eastern boundary has been laid, and hopefully the other half will be done in the next two winters. In October strong winds caused a large poplar tree in one of the gardens in Springfield Close to snap near the base and fall partly across the wildlife site pond and adjacent rhyme. Thankfully the tree missed the house and no one was hurt. This delightful site needs volunteers to help and working parties are held on the third

Sunday of each month from 10 am. The work is not onerous, it is a good way to meet people and the more people who come the more we can get done.

- **Communications: Cllr Richard Parker**

Parish Council communications are published on the four Parish notice boards, Website, in Contact and on inserts. Parishioners were asked to suggest how best the Council could improve its communications, particularly regarding newcomers to the Parish.

- **Date of next meeting: Friday 24th April 2015**

- **Public Open Forum**

1. The Village Hall commemorates its 60th anniversary soon as it was given, by deed of gift of Sir Nigel Mordaunt on 30th April 1954. We continue to be grateful for this generous donation to the community.
2. Elections will be held on 7th May 2015 for Compton Bishop Parish and Sedgemoor District Council as well as the parliamentary elections.
3. Tessa Munt reported that she had 86 contacts from people of this Parish during the year, down from 117 last year.
4. Mr Roger Veal suggested that acronyms, as used in Parish Council minutes, were confusing to the general public.
5. Mr Stephen McColgan stated that Cllr John Denbee had agreed, at the last Open Meeting, to investigate :
 - a. The possibility of improving the surface of the footway from Weare to Shute Shelve on the east side of the A38 as it was overgrown and dangerous.
 - b. Whether Community Infrastructure Levy money could be channelled into making significant improvements at the A38/A371 junction.

Mr McColgan had received no feedback and assumed that no action had been forthcoming. The Chair agreed that Council would write to Cllr Denbee to request details of any actions taken.

6. Mrs Delia McCarthy raised the issues concerning the 'rat-run' from the A38 through Compton Bishop. The volume of speeding traffic, particularly on the unrestricted Webbington Road where there are no verges or footpaths, represents significant dangers for residents living on this road. Mrs McCarthy questioned the policy of making country lanes and roads unrestricted when these roads are unsuitable for volumes of fast traffic. Meetings were being arranged with Somerset Highways and Mrs Munt MP wished to be informed of progress and offered her support. Cllr Woolley suggested utilising the Speed Indicator Device scheme to gather data on volumes and speed of traffic to provide the necessary evidence.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2135

Signed as a true record:

Date:

**NOTE : Minutes will be approved and signed at
the next Annual Open Meeting – 24th April 2015**