

Somerford Keynes Annual Parish Meeting 2020

We are in a most unusual situation due to Corona Virus. The Parish Council are coping with this unique situation by continuing to meet on-line and have decided to post as much information for the Annual Parish Meeting on the Parish website: www.somerfordkeynes.org.uk as possible. If you have any questions, please email the Parish Clerk and we will respond.

Chairman's Report

We have a newly elected Council this year and we must thank the four Councilors who stood down after many years service: Karen Mogridge, Ron Monroe, Mike McKeown & Sarah Powell. All have served several terms in office and two were past Chairmen of the Council. They have all contributed greatly to the life of the Parish. Karen has continued her work on the second defibrillator in the Phone Box (which is now active) and Ron and Sarah have continued to guide the Neighbourhood Development Plan through its final stages. We must also welcome the new Councilors, Richard Eley, Mandy Keegan (Shorncote), Angela Stradling & Graham Valentine (LME). They have all added enthusiasm to the work of the Parish Council in this difficult time.

Planning, as always, has been one major matter considered. There have been many changes in the permissions at Lower Mill Estate, mainly to allow year round occupancy but also house design. The houses are still limited to a maximum stay of six months in any year; they are still classed as "holiday homes" and not permanent residences. Two other notable applications, one for the reopening of the gateway into Yew Tree Farm which was given permission in spite of village opposition and the building of five new houses in the field behind the houses in The Street and Water Lane. This has now been withdrawn.

One major success is the improvement to the footpath between Kennel Bungalow and Little Steadham, our thanks to John Searle. This has now had major reconstruction including a new surface allowing much improved access into the fields beyond.

The NDP is still going through the process and is almost complete. When finally agreed it will go out to a Parish Referendum which cannot be completed until the lockdown is over. It is however at such a complete stage that the provisions laid out in it will be considered as part of any planning issue.

It has been agreed that SK village will get new signs with funding both from the Parish Council and Highways at the road entrances. The old signs were showing their age and were in need of replacement. This will happen in the next financial year.

The Village Lake (Lake 99) is proving to be a valuable village asset with many parishioners enjoying its serenity as well as contributing to numerous volunteer mornings held through the year. The team led by Michael Wilding have done an excellent job of tidying up the lake assisted by a £5000 Grant from Calor. The pathway around the lake is proving a popular walk especially during the current crisis, so much so, that a one-way route is recommended to avoid meeting on the narrow walkway between the lakes. To enhance safety Helen Sweet in memory of her husband John is to fund a rope handrail along that walkway. This will be installed once the current restrictions are lifted. A big thank you to all involved.

It is pleasing to note that the Baker Arms has new tenants who have already contributed to village life. In spite of the current lockdown they are providing a meal service to houses in the village and we thank them.

The Parish Council have established a good relationship with Highways and several improvements have ensued. The Tree near Neighbridge which was overhanging the roadway was pruned: the footway along the by-pass was repaired: Spine Road flooding alleviated, potholes filled in: road signs reinstated: blocked drains inspected and cleared and "yellow lines" repainted. All of which herald a better future and very welcome.

You will note that our accounts (see separate brief) are in good order and we have not increased the precept this year. Our thanks to Roger Duckett for the internal audit. The Parish Council also undertook a detailed questionnaire survey of Parishioners' wishes for potential village projects which has proved to be highly helpful for considering future needs.

Finally, a big thank you to our Parish Clerk, Wendy Cartwright, who has become the lynchpin of all activities during the virus lockdown. Hers is a vital role which is essential to the wellbeing of our community. A thank you also the volunteers who are shopping for those unable to do so in this crisis time.

Stay Safe.

Roger Sleeman, SKPC