

Somerford Keynes Parish Council

NEWSLETTER

February 2014

Clerk: Muriel Watkins 861614

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Councillors Tessa de Bertodano, John Brailey, Mike McKeown, Karen Mogridge, Ron Munroe, Sarah Powell (Chair), Roger Sleeman

Your Parish Council

The full list of Parish Councillors appears at the head of this newsletter and all are happy to listen to any comments or problems you may have – you can obtain their telephone numbers from the Clerk if you don't know them.

Annual Parish Meeting

This will take place on **Friday 11th April at 7.30pm in the Village Hall**. The Annual Parish Meeting is your chance to hear and comment on what the Parish Council has been doing over the past year, and to set its priorities for the future. Your County and District Councillors will also be present which will enable you to hear and question their actions. Please try to come.

Water

The Parish Council continues to communicate with the appropriate bodies about the risk of flooding in the Parish.

So far this year the Thames flood defences at Neigh Bridge and Lower Mill have operated as they were designed to do. Ground water in Water Lane continues to be a concern, however, with some houses being close to water ingress, and some suffering septic tank problems.

The engineer at CDC is as helpful as he can be given that much more severe flooding has been experienced elsewhere in the District. He has made it clear, however, that we cannot expect any assistance from CDC unless we demonstrate our commitment to helping ourselves. This will need to come in the form of both Parish Council funds and community involvement.

As a first step there will be a meeting of those residents of Water Lane who are most likely to be affected by drainage problems, or by attempts to overcome them, on **Monday February 24th at 7.30pm in the Village Hall**. At the meeting we will report on our talks with CDC's engineer. Affected households have each received a separate invitation. However, anyone who wishes to do so is welcome to attend – further info from the Clerk or the Parish Website.

As in previous years, we would like to remind you that if there is a ditch on your property you are almost certainly responsible for its upkeep.

We urge you to familiarise yourself with any watercourses on your property and to ensure that they are kept clear. Remember that even 'dry' ditches might have a use in times of high rainfall.

Insurance

We are aware that there are households in the Parish that have had a problem in obtaining

household insurance to cover flooding, despite never having flooded. It appears that a significant cause of this is the flood risk maps produced by the Environment Agency. These show huge swathes of Somerford Keynes village at high or medium risk of flooding from the River Thames, and there appears to be no right of appeal, even when evidence shows the EA's risk assessment to be inaccurate or outdated.

The flood alleviation scheme, built in 1998, is designed to protect the village from a 1 in 50 chance of river flooding (i.e. medium risk). However, this assessment does not take into account how well the flood defences have performed during recent very heavy, or record, rainfall. Since the scheme was put in place there has been no significant river flooding.

The Parish Council has also learned that the Lower Mill Estate, only a short distance downstream and with, we believe, at least as high a flood risk, has had its risk considerably lowered by the Environment Agency.

We recently wrote to our MP, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, asking him to take the matter up with the EA; this he has done, and the EA has replied as follows:

"We are currently remodelling the Upper Thames, which includes Somerford Keynes, and this will give us an even better understanding of flood risk in the area. We are aiming to update our Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea map with this new data before the end of the year. This ... will hopefully address the concerns raised in the parish council's letter.

In the meantime, we can produce an insurance letter (known as an IRR) for individual residents, which can be supplied to their insurance company. This letter will provide the National Flood Risk Assessment and details of any historic flood events for the land on which a property lies. Residents can contact us at WTenquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk to request an IRR."

Our County Councillor, Shaun Parsons, has also taken up the issue of insurance. If he is to make any headway he will need to have examples of households who have either been refused insurance or whose premiums or excess amounts have been greatly increased. If you are willing to let your name be put forward, please can you contact the Clerk (details at the head of this Newsletter). Conversely, if you believe your insurer is operating under a more enlightened regime, please let us know that as well so that we can pass the insurer's name on to other householders.

The website <http://nationalfloodforum.org.uk/> has a section on insurance and is good for general advice on flooding. For excellent advice on preparing household emergency plans for flooding, go to <http://www.marydhonau.co.uk/>.

Annual Parish Spring Clean, 29th March

This is the day to put on your wellies, bring your rakes and make a difference to the hedges and verges of the Parish. Black bags, high-vis waistcoats, 'pickers' and generic protective gloves provided. **Please let the Chair know you are coming so that there will be hot dogs for you at the end.** Meet at the Village Hall, 10.00am.

Lake 99

The grant monies for landscaping have finally been received by the Parish Council. Works are about to commence. There may, however, be a delay due to the excessive rain!

Midsummer Festival 21st- 22nd June 2014

This year the Somerford Keynes village fete will be incorporated into a midsummer festival weekend, with a garden party at The Manor House on the Saturday afternoon, 21st June and other events throughout the weekend. This will be a major fund raising event for the Church, which is, sadly, in serious financial difficulties.

The organisers would warmly welcome help, support and suggestions, to make this a fun weekend for the village. Everyone is therefore invited to an open meeting at the **Village Hall on Monday 10th March at 7.30 pm**, to share ideas and suggestions, over a glass of wine. Any enquiries, please, to Ronnie Dunn 01285 861613.

Defibrillator

The Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee are hoping to lead a drive to get a defibrillator for Somerford Keynes village. This will be discussed at the Annual Parish Meeting (see above) when we also hope to find out more from a representative of St John Ambulance.

Broadband Update

Super-fast Fibre Broadband should be available in March - you may have noticed the new BT street cabinets. When ready your Internet Service Provider (ISP) will probably contact you offering an upgrade. Check the latest status at <http://www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/where-and-when/>, enter your postcode and click on the phone exchange icon in South Cerney. When the status says "accepting orders" it should be ready. Most ISPs should offer a super-fast service.

Today speeds in the village are typically between 1 and 5Mbps download and around 0.6Mbps upload - very slow! In comparison, super-fast broadband should be between 20 and 76Mbps download, and 2 and 20Mbps upload - a very substantial increase. Exactly what speed you will get depends on the service you order and how far you are from your BT street cabinet. Most ISPs have an on-line checker tool that will estimate your speed. Your ISP may need to send an engineer to install the service and in most cases a new router will be required as the technology is different (most ISPs include this).

The benefits of super-fast broadband include:

- Everyone in your house simultaneously watching high quality video eg iPlayer.
- Quickly download music and video. For example if you have Sky you can plug your set top box into broadband and quickly view TV and film on demand.
- You can use high quality video conferencing, such as Skype, to keep in touch with family or work from home.

You can get more information here:

<http://www.fastershire.com/faster-home>

If you don't want super-fast broadband you can of course stay on your current service. There is no deadline for when you upgrade.

Village Hall

The Village Hall Committee is looking for a Secretary. This is **not** a time-consuming job - it will take up only a few hours a year. If you are interested please contact the Committee Chair, Chris Isherwood, on 861872. **Please see below for the date of the Village Hall AGM.**

Community Speedwatch

It is hoped that this scheme, to encourage motorists to stick to the statutory speed limit within the Parish, will be up and running by March. Volunteers have been trained, and you might see them with their radar guns and high-vis jackets. Go to the CDC website on <http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/241340/Community-Speedwatch-Booklet.pdf> for a useful booklet explaining the scheme - or come to the Annual Parish Meeting for further information.

Please let the Clerk know if there are any speeding 'blackspots' that you think should be monitored.

Spring Snowdrops

Finally, the snowdrops in the Churchyard are particularly beautiful this year - well worth the stroll to visit them!

Dates for your Diary

Monday 24th February 7.30pm Meeting on groundwater flooding in Water Lane - see above

Monday 10th March 7.30pm Meeting on Midsummer Festival - see above

Saturday 29th March 10.00am Annual Parish Spring Clean - see above

Friday 4th April 7.30pm Village Hall Annual General Meeting

Friday 11th April 7.30pm Annual Parish meeting - see above



Sarah Powell, Chair

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*The unadopted minutes of the Parish Council are displayed on the Parish Notice Board together with bus and mobile library timetables. The agenda for the next meeting is also displayed some days before each meeting. **Parish Council meetings are always open to the public.** The next Parish Council meeting will be on Monday 3rd March in the Village Hall at 7.30pm.*