

Somerford Keynes Parish Council

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2017

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Councillors Mike McKeown, Karen Mogridge (Chair), Ron Munroe, Michele Rigby, Sarah Powell, 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. In particular we would welcome your comments on some of the issues raised in this newsletter.

Co-option of New Parish Councillor

We are pleased to say that a suitable candidate has agreed that their name may be put forward for co-option as a Parish Councillor to fill the current vacancy.

The Council will formally vote on the co-option at its next meeting, 4th September.

Parish Council Elections, 2019

It might seem a long way away, but we are asking you to consider now whether you would like to be a Parish Councillor for the term beginning May, 2019.

Several of our Councillors are likely to be resigning at the end of the current term – and even if they were all intending to stand again, in the interests of democracy we would like to see more than seven candidates for the seven places available. In particular, it would be great to see some younger people standing for election, and some candidates from Shorncote.

Being a Parish Councillor gives you the opportunity to play your part in local democracy, and to ensure that the views of Parishioners are represented. It can be very interesting, as the PC is consulted over a number of matters so you get to see some of these processes in action and occasionally to make your mark on them. It can also, in truth, be frustrating at times.

So why bother? Our views as individuals have little weight with the higher tiers of local government. On the other hand, issues raised by strong Parish Councils force CDC and GCC to consider what effect their policies and decisions will have on local people.

Our monthly Parish Council meetings are open to everyone. If you would like to learn more about being a Parish Councillor please come to one of these meetings, or speak to any of the people whose names appear at the head of this newsletter.

Parish Clerk's Email List

We would like to urge all Parishioners who have email to sign up for the Clerk's email list. This

allows her to notify you about Parish Council meetings, occasional Parish events such as monthly coffee mornings, and one-off external events which might affect you such as Triathlons.

If you would like the Clerk to add your name to this list, please email her. You won't be bombarded with emails but it would be very useful for us to be able to contact Parishioners when there is not the time or manpower to do so by circulating a leaflet.

Please note that the Clerk's list is different from the newsletter list, which we promised would not be used for any other purposes than sending out Parish newsletters. If you would like to be added to the newsletter list, please email the Chair. As Councillors have to deliver newsletters by hand you would be easing their burden somewhat! This is especially true if you don't live in the main area of Somerford Keynes village, which is where all our Councillors live.

Telephone Box

As we informed you in a previous newsletter, we have registered our interest in 'adopting' the telephone box on the Street once BT decommissions it. The effort involved in keeping it looking good will not be large – but what should we do with it? Suggestions have included using it as a second hand book swap, as a temporary exhibition space, as a Thames Trail information point or to house a second defibrillator (but see below). Thoughts to the Clerk please!

On the Subject of Defibrillators...

We are very fortunate in having a Parish defibrillator (situated on the wall of the Village Hall). The routine maintenance of this machine, currently carried out by Des Sheen, mainly involves making short weekly and monthly inspections and entering details on a database.

Bearing in mind that any household in Somerford Keynes village might, at some time or other, need to use the defibrillator, we would be very happy to hear from Parishioners who are willing to share in this responsibility. We have an opportunity to purchase a second defibrillator (to be housed, probably, in the telephone box) at a reduced cost, but there is no point in fundraising for it unless we are assured of volunteers to maintain it. As usual, names to the Clerk please.

Village Lake

We are delighted to say that a management committee of committed volunteers has been

put in place to care for the Village Lake, under Terms of Reference agreed by the Parish Council. The Chair of the committee is Mike Wilding and its volunteer contact is Mike Willis, mikewillis123@gmail.com. The committee has already made some welcome improvements to the seating area, and the remaining benches have finally been put in place.

We are grateful to the Lower Mill Estate maintenance team, who have offered to mow the footpath round the lake on a regular basis. Most other maintenance will be carried out by a contractor. However it is the intention of the committee to hold occasional work parties to do clearing, etc., and there might also be a need for volunteers to take part in projects such as wildlife surveys. If you would like to help with one or more of these, please give your name to Mike at the email address above.

Keynes Country Park

KCP is now under the management of Planning Solutions Ltd, a company which runs other visitor attractions including Conkers in the National Forest.

The MD of the company, Annie Horn, came to the July Parish Council meeting to explain their plans for the future. Whilst we realise that we can't turn the clock back we are still concerned that KCP should remain attractive to local residents as well as visitors.

One particular issue is our outstanding application for the creation of a Public Right of Way around the lakes. PSL, whilst accepting the principle of having free footpaths around the lakes, would like to be able to close off the site completely, even to pedestrians, when it is full. This is for safety reasons – there is a limit to the number of people they can safely accommodate and as we are aware, many people try to avoid charges by parking in the road and entering on foot. Our stance is that PSL only have a 10-year management agreement to operate the site. If we now accept that the footpaths are permissive, a future operator, several years down the line, might withdraw the permission and close the lake completely – something we have been fighting against for several years. We will continue to push our PROW application but we have agreed that we need to meet with PSL at the end of the current season, probably in October, so that we can discuss this and other issues with them. We would welcome comments from parishioners on this subject.

Triathlon and Parking Problems

We understand that PSL are negotiating with a neighbour to acquire land for extra parking. This might help to alleviate situations such as that which occurred earlier this year during the 113 triathlon event. The organiser of the event, Graeme Hardie, came to the Parish Council's June meeting to apologise for the disruption to local residents caused by triathlon visitors parking in inappropriate places. The triathlon organisers had found themselves suddenly without available parking due to the changes at Keynes Park. We normally have good communications with 113 Events so are hoping

this will not happen again. We will post details of any upcoming triathlons known to us on the Parish website, but other organisers do not necessarily notify us when an event is taking place.

Following these parking problems there was a suggestion that we should approach the Highways Department with a view to having the double yellow lines continued from Coke's Pit round the bend of Water Lane. Cars parked here were felt to be a particular nuisance and danger. If you have any comments on this please let us know.

Neigh Bridge

In addition to the problems with parking outside Neigh Bridge mentioned in our last newsletter, we have had complaints about unruly visitors, rubbish and noise – some of which, unfortunately, are beyond both our control and that of the Cotswold Water Park Trust. We cannot prevent people from visiting this lake, especially on hot summer days. Instead we need to start thinking in a constructive and realistic way about how we would like it to be managed.

The Trust receives no funding for the upkeep of the sites leased, like Neigh Bridge, from Gloucestershire County Council. These sites have to pay their own way. Management of vegetation, emptying of bins, path repair – all these have a cost. How should this be met? Are parking charges the answer?

We will be discussing the future of Neigh Bridge at our September Parish Council meeting. Please come along and have your say.

Planning a Party or Event?

Why not use our great Village Hall? It's a fantastic place to hold an event with loads of space, a kitchen, projector, audio/speaker system and plenty of parking if you need it.

Rates are the lowest in the area and that's before the 50% discount for SK residents! For enquires please contact Richard Goldman 861705 or for availability/bookings please contact Des Sheen, 860469.

Dates for your Diary

Sunday 13th August Triathlon from Keynes Park – runners will be using Water Lane and Neigh Bridge, cyclists the Spine Road to North End crossroads.



Karen Mogridge, 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 4th September in the Village Hall at 7.30pm.*