

Somerford Keynes Parish Council – Annual Parish Meeting 29 April 2019

Chair's Report

I have looked through my report from last year to see what has progressed and what has changed:

LME Cycleway

The Spine Road cycleway, strangely finishes just short of the Thames bridge. An application was made by Lower Mill Estate to put in an entrance halfway down Minety Lane, and contingent on this was the completion of the cycleway. Unfortunately this has come to a standstill and we have no further information on when it is likely to progress.

Planning

This has not been a particularly busy year for planning applications but we have continued to monitor those which come past us.

Highways

Responsibility for Highways repairs has now passed from Amey, a private company, back to GCC who will use a number of different companies to effect their repairs.

Quite a lot of the Clerk's time is spent reporting highways defects. We have pegged away at the problems with flooding which we get on the Spine Road after heavy rain, and have been promised that there will be an attempt to alleviate this in the next financial year. Other defects are reported (sometimes repeatedly) by the Clerk as they are reported to her.

We decided to shelve an idea to instal 'gates' at some of the entrances to Somerford Keynes village. These are meant to remind motorists that they are entering a built-up area but they are expensive and we're not sure they work. If you have strong opinions on this, please let us know.

Footpaths

We believe that the footpath by the Kennel Bungalow, which has been a cause of many complaints, will be resurfaced this year. Most of the expense will be borne by GCC but the landowner and the Parish Council will be making substantial contributions.

We also hope that some stiles in the Parish will be replaced by kissing gates. Again, GCC will be taking on most of the cost but the PC will be contributing.

Cllr Sleeman will be reporting later on the footpaths around Keynes Country Park.

Parish Field

We continue to meet regularly with the tenant. Wendy will continue to send round details of events via the Parish email list – a good reason to be on it!

Telephone kiosk and defibrillator

We have purchased a defibrillator for the kiosk, but work to scrape it down has been very slow due to the lack of volunteers to do it – there are currently three of us. Further volunteers would be very welcome.

Neigh Bridge car parking and usage generally

We have met with CWPT representatives about the horrendous influxes of visitors on hot days – I believe there was another at Easter. They are trying to make changes which will discourage visitors from swimming in the lake, but preventing barbecues and trespassing in the neighbouring field is difficult. They have employed security guards at busy times, because the Trust's own staff received a lot of verbal abuse from visitors who were asked to stop swimming, barbecuing, etc; but although security guards are more experienced in dealing with abusive members of the public, their powers are still limited. Last year the Trust mustered volunteers to clear up after busy weekends; we have asked them to notify us when this is happening, as I think we in Somerford Keynes should be doing our bit to help.

Cullimore gravel extraction, near KCP

We have recently objected to an application from the operator to extend the extraction time from four to seven years.

Commemoration of end of WW1

The Parish Council was contributed to the commemorations of the end of WW1 by organising a barbecue in the Churchyard which around 80 people attended.

The Bakers Arms

We have successfully applied to have the pub designated a Community Asset, which means that if it is put up for sale an opportunity should be afforded, without obligation, to the Parish (not the Parish Council) to purchase it at market value before it is sold elsewhere. This has been done in some communities.

Precept

We again put the precept up this year, as we want our income to match our day-to-day expenditure and we have a number of expenses to come. The increase should make very little difference, if any, to your own Council Tax contributions. However we do intend to make some capital expenditure in the forthcoming year. If you have any suggestions for projects within the Parish please let us know. I will abuse my position standing here in front of you and throw one into the ring purely as a private citizen, not as a Parish Councillor (which I won't be soon!) The Water Park Trust has received a large grant from Hills the gravel company, who have always proved themselves good neighbours in this respect, to construct a new children's play area at Neigh Bridge. The Trust needs a small percentage of match funding. I'd like to suggest to the new Parish Council that it makes substantial contribution to this match funding, since it is the only play area in the Parish and would support our Neighbourhood Development Plan goal of attracting younger people to the Parish.

Please let us know if you think there are more worthwhile things to spend money on!

Thanks

On Thursday a new Parish Council will be elected, and several of the people standing here will have retired. I'd like to wish the new Parish Councillors well; and I would like to thank these current Parish Councillors for all the work they have put in during the past year, and in some cases for very many years. These people make a real difference to our community – thanks to them, and to you for supporting them by coming here tonight.