

SEAGRY PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes

of the **Virtual Annual Parish Meeting** held on

Tuesday 12th April 2022

at 7.30pm

Present: Parish Cllrs M Barber (Chairman), J H Crosland (Vice Chairman), A Ball, N Hutton, Emma Sorrell and K Taylor, Mr V Vines Clerk of the Council, Wiltshire Councillor H Greenman, Jo Crosland, Julia Harle, Kevin Pearce, Ruth Pattison, Avis Ball, Celia Harbour, John Harbour and Christopher Sorrell.

MIN 1. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Cllr R Barr, Tim Harle and Ian Blackmore.

MIN 2. Annual Parish Meeting 2021:

Draft Minutes from the Virtual Annual Parish Meeting held on the 13th April 2021 were circulated to those in attendance and had been available online.

Cllr M Barber proposed, Cllr Emma Sorrell seconded and **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to receive, approve and sign as a true record the Minutes from the above Meeting. The Parish Council Chairman duly signed the Minutes.

MIN 3. Chairman's Report:

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr M Barber, reported on the Parish Council activities for the past year and hoped that in the future, all would be able to look back over the past year and see it as the time when we began to learn how to live with Covid-19, largely thanks of course to the success of the vaccination programme. As a result, the Parish Council had been able to resume holding face-to-face meetings during the year, but of course the fact that we had recently returned to holding virtual meetings in response to very high infection rates was another sign that the virus was still with us, and he was sure it would continue to have an impact for some time to come. However in the past year there had been a return to a semblance of normality as the focus of the Parish Council had been able to shift from supporting those in our community who were sheltering or impacted by lockdowns, to its' more usual business.

In particular, he reported that the Council had made it a priority to address the challenges relating to the local roads, and in particular the speed of traffic through the village, the large volume of heavy vehicles and the condition of the highways.

In doing so, the Council had installed solar powered speed cameras, which allowed them to monitor the speed of traffic, and the Council had assembled a group of volunteers to form a Community Speedwatch Team, which once the relevant training had been received from Wiltshire Police, would allow the Council to write to persistent offenders with warnings of fines.

He advised that the Council had also ordered a movable Speed Indicator Device, or SID, which were the digital boards placed at the entrances to villages and which flash up the relevant speeds to passing vehicles – he was sure these would have been seen operating in other villages. He hoped that the SID would further serve to reduce traffic speeds and so look out for them being installed shortly.

And the Council has also initiated the process with Wiltshire Council which will aim to reduce the speed limit through Upper Seagry from 30mph to 20mph, which he thought was particularly important for the road which passes the entrance to the School. At this point he thanked Councillor Neil Hutton for his hard work and perseverance on this matter, not least in attending a large number of interminable Wiltshire Council meetings in order to champion our cause and navigate through the hugely bureaucratic process. The Council had high hopes for success in the coming year.

He reported that highways issues were particularly highlighted in recent months during the closure of the A429 for around four weeks, during which high volumes of traffic used the Parish's roads, causing significant disruption, damage to roads and verges and indeed incredibly dangerous conditions – to the extent that he was amazed and incredibly grateful that the Parish did not have any serious accidents. The Council was very disappointed that they had no prior warning of the road closure from the Highways department at Wiltshire Council, and equally disappointed by the wholly ineffectual response of the Council to both the Parish Council's representations, and the representations of countless of our Parishioners. At the very least, the Highways department had acknowledged the failings, and had committed to remediating and repairing the damage. Of course the Parish Council will be intent on holding Wiltshire Council to that commitment in the coming months.

He commented that if there was a silver lining, the sorry episode had served to highlight the challenges relating to the speed, size and volume of traffic through the village to Wiltshire Council, which he hoped would help with efforts to get the speed limit reduced.

On more cheerful matters, he said that we had much to look forward to this year, including the Parish's Jubilee celebrations taking place over the first weekend of June. It was a wonderful opportunity for all to come together as a community in a way in which we had not been able to in recent years due to the pandemic.

It had been another busy year for the Parish Council, so he wished to thank his fellow Parish Councillors, who give up a huge amount of their time to do what is an increasingly difficult job in order to support their community. He also wanted to give special thanks to our Clerk Viv Vines. The Parish Council benefited hugely from Viv's valuable knowledge, experience and professionalism.

He concluded by saying, as every year, that the community had huge amounts to be thankful for in their Parish - the beautiful recreation ground - the lovely Church - the brilliant Goss Croft Hall – the great village pub the New Inn – the fantastic school - the list goes on and he wished to thank everyone who devoted their energies in supporting the whole community.

There were no questions raised.

MIN 4. Parish Council Budget 2022-2023:

A copy of the Parish Council's Adopted Budget and proposals for the year 2022/2023 was circulated to those in attendance.

There were no questions raised.

MIN 5. Reports from Parish Council Sub Groups and Committees:

There were no Reports.

MIN 6. Reports from Local Organisations:

- a) **Goss Croft Hall:** Avis Ball, in the absence of Ian Blackmore, provided a Report and advised that this month marked 10 years since we opened the Hall and throughout this time, it had always received critical acclaim of which we should all be proud. Much of this had been down to the dedicated band of volunteers who keep everything in good order, and we thank them all.

Up until this last two years the Hall had always made an excess of income over expenditure but as may be expected with the Covid-19 lockdown, use of the Hall ceased. They were however awarded (as with most similar facilities) set government grants to cover losses so their reserves effectively remained. 2021 accounts were not yet clarified but they were expecting a neutral figure overall. This year there would be no further grants available.

She was pleased to report that bookings had largely recovered this year so far leaving them optimistic that 2022 will not be badly affected despite not having the level of weddings that they would like given their importance to their income. Nevertheless, they were seeing an increase in forward interest that should benefit them next year.

Unsurprisingly, they are now seeing an increase in maintenance / replacement needs, however these can be met by using their discretionary funds in the short term. Further on there may be a need to look at hire rates, something they had not increased, except for weddings, since the Hall was opened.

Overall, they are happy with the condition of the facilities and the financial position going forward. Their only disappointment was the lack of community-based events given that the Hall was ideal for them

This year they had relaxed their rules and conceded the request of the Women's Institute to plant a suitable tree to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee year.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Avis Ball for her report.

In response Celia Harbour commented that it was a great pity that the local Seagry community was not using this impressive facility.

- b) **Friends of Seagry CE Primary School (FOSS):** Ruth Pattison, provided a Report that advised that the COVID-19 pandemic had continued to impact on FOSS activities in the past year, and in particular many of the larger school events which FOSS would typically have supported did not go ahead, including the local schools sports tournaments and the autumn conquer competition.

However there were signs of returning to normality as they were able to re-start the Friday ice-cream and tuck shop, the annual litter pick around the village, and they hoped that in the coming year they would be able to return to their normal timetable of events. In particular they were looking forward to supporting the Jubilee celebrations in the first week of June, where they will be providing a BBQ, cakes, ice lollies and other refreshments.

They had needed to think differently about fundraising, and in that they had been very successful. In fact despite the continued impact of the pandemic, FOSS had had its' most successful year of fundraising ever!!! This had been mainly down to applying to local business and other organisations to ask for support, including Wiltshire Council, the Malmesbury Carnival Committee, the Malmesbury League of Friends and others.

As a result of these efforts, FOSS had managed to raise over £17,000 for the year, which was a huge amount of money. This had allowed FOSS to make substantial contributions to the school, where they had contributed £17,000 to the renovation of the playground, and further amounts for the school library and other educational materials.

While they can't guarantee that level of success every year, they do intend to continue to apply to local organisations for donations, and combine that with fund raising through holding events, which of course does more than just raise money, as they provided an opportunity for everyone to get together as a community.

There was a need to say a huge thank you to the Trustees and FOSS supporters who have spent many hours applying to organisations for donations, as well as committing significant time to running the tuck shop and supporting other school events.

In particular, they had some long-standing Trustees stand down this year, so Ruth particularly thanked Alistair, Chrissy and Su for the huge amount of work they had done over the years. And they were very excited to welcome Kathryn, Harriet and Helen as new FOSS Trustees. Kathryn had taken on the role of Chair of FOSS from Alistair and they know she will be brilliant.

So overall, she reported that they can look back on a very successful year for FOSS despite the significant challenges posed by the pandemic, and that they were looking forward to the coming year with lots of exciting events planned.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Ruth Pattison for her report.

- c) **St Mary the Virgin Church PCC:** Jo Crosland, on behalf of the PCC reported that Covid-19 had continued to challenge them but with Zoom coming to the fore, Online services were the order of the day for a time but it was lovely when they could once again open the doors and worship together in person. As always they were so fortunate to have Geraldine Couzens to play the organ and sing for us.

Rev Alison Love left them in January 2021 after 6 years to go to her new Parish in the Gloucester Diocese. Rev Mark Siddall their Curate became Curate in Charge to lead them through this time of vacancy not forgetting Tim Harle and Katherine Bloomer their licensed lay readers who together with the 2 retired clergy had been able to provide service cover and much else besides.

When the new Omicron variant took hold before Christmas 2021 they had to take the difficult decision to cancel the crib service, which was a huge disappointment. However they were delighted that a family from Lower Seagry who had gathered together for Christmas practised and performed the Christmas story for their Grandparents and others with the backdrop of the crib under the altar. Other services went ahead albeit under the shadow of Omicron which meant the carol service was not well attended but the Archdeacon came to lead them on their Christmas Day service, which was indeed a joyful one.

There had been many meetings as the process of seeking a new Priest in Charge takes place. The community (not just our congregation) confirmed that knowing that the Church building, and surroundings were there and active was reassurance to them.

Sadly the first time of advertising for what was to become a part time post did not bring any candidates forward. Further advertising some months later and

with new criteria for the post did bring a candidate to interview but it was felt by the interview panel that the candidate was not suitable for ministry in the Draycot Benefice. Again, they were so grateful to Tim and Katherine for their leadership over this time and for their endless work.

Their final goodbye to Rev Mark is this Easter when he leaves them to take up his new appointment at Quedgeley in the Gloucester diocese. They wish Mark and his family well as they move to pastures new. They now await and pray that a new Priest in Charge will come to lead the Benefice forward.

The Triennial inspection took place last November when all the Church records were inspected by representatives of the Diocese. There was considerable checking and paperwork involved and they were pleased to report that any small details on the formidable checklist were attended to and they were praised for our organisation. They could not do this without help from all the PCC, and a special mention was given to Sheena Tilley their Treasurer who kept them all on track with her attention to detail.

Turning to practical matters, she hoped the community might have noticed a beautiful new gate in the Churchyard wall. The Rights of Way Officer at Wiltshire Council had told them that he had been advised that the footpath was blocked and had requested that a gate should be installed in accordance with the Right of Way on the map. So, they have reinstated the gate, which they have named the "Ramblers Gate."

Much maintenance was currently needed on the Church and was in process at considerable expense. As always they were so fortunate and grateful to have the generous legacy from the 1980s, which has been very well invested and which has enabled them to carry out this work. The gutters needed replacing and also the stone chimney. Following this the chimney lining was found to be faulty so a new flue was in process of being replaced. Also unstable headstones have been attended to. As a result the Church insurers are happy that all is in order.

Again, they thanked Sheena who has been especially vigilant in seeking permission from the Diocese for the work and organising the contractors and supervising the work that has and continued to be on going.

The Churchyard is a place of quiet contemplation and has been enjoyed by many with the wildlife a major factor in its' maintenance. They had achieved their silver award from the Eco Church project. She thanked all those who had helped with the maintenance of the Churchyard. John Crosland for his continued commitment to St Mary's and the Goss Croft Hall team for their help in caring for the Churchyard. It was a wonderful place. She also offered thanks to all PCC members and especially their Chairperson Julia – they couldn't manage without them all. She also thanked Eleanor Horner the other Church Warden who was especially good at the administration. They are both most grateful for the help and support of the PCC.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Jo Crosland for her report.

- d) **Seagry CE Primary School:** Julia Harle, provided a Report from the Local Governors. She advised that School had received a **Siams Grade** – Good and an **Ofsted Grade** – Good.

She advised that the Vine Schools were a group of the Diocese of Bristol Academy Trust Schools comprising of Christian Malford, Seagry and

Somerfords Walter Powell. The Schools act as one and are part of Diocese of Bristol Academy Trust. Ofsted and SIAMs (C of E education) Inspections are done separately. She mentioned that Seagry School had used to be the smallest but is now the biggest, rising from 25 children to 72 children.

During the last 2 years there has been almost a complete change of staff. This was to do with Covid-19, raising standards and restructuring. There had been many challenges over the last 2 years but Seagry had managed to stay open and to try to meet the ever-changing needs of the children. The Executive Headteacher was Christina Brugger, who was head of Seagry School and became Executive Head in Summer 2021. There were 2 assistant Headteachers – Shaun Carter and Alex George.

It had been an enormous task to restructure the Schools to work together, improve standards and to cope with Covid-19 but the Schools were definitely moving in the right direction. The School was supported by the improvement team from DBAT. There had been a number of improvements made both inside and out of the School and a great deal of support both financially and with work teams, from the friends of the School. The School leadership team were very grateful for all they do to make the School a lovely place to learn and play. The vision of the Schools is that they are joined together like a vine with the vine being their Christian faith and values. The Draycot Benefice team had continued to support the Schools with collective worship throughout the pandemic and were now in School regularly and running the Worship Councils.

The Academy Council (similar to Governors) was always looking for new local members and would love to hear from anyone wishing to support the School in this way.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Julia Harle for her report.

MIN 7. Report from Wiltshire Council Representative:

Wiltshire Councillor Howard Greenman was pleased to attend and that it was good to be able to report on this, his 13th Annual Parish Report, although life continued to present its' challenges.

A year ago, he had reflected on the blight that Covid-19 had become on life and society in general, hoping that we'd soon be through the tunnel, and yet a year on albeit with a different variant Omicron, we continued to be beset with it, with spikes in different parts of the country and in fact in Wiltshire too. Although as a County we seem to have been spared the worst outbreaks. Covid-19 had put significant strain on Wiltshire Council health budgets and on wider health service provision too, with the SWAST, South-West Ambulance Service Trust reporting numerous instances of inundation of their services. The NHS too, had valiantly soldiered on in the face of seemingly endless pressure on their expertise and care also. We owed them all a debt of gratitude. His thoughts continued to be with those of who had lost loved ones due to this pandemic. Even for those who hadn't lost loved ones, the aftermath would be felt for a long time to come.

He advised that he would come to some Wiltshire Council budgetary pressures, but that it was worth reflecting too on the utterly tragic situation being played out in the Ukraine. Who could have foreseen this ugliness just a few months ago? The impact of this, hot on the heels of Covid19 has been, and would be further felt by everyone no doubt, but he also knew that a number had offered accommodation to those displaced from the Ukraine, and everyone is to be applauded for that. He was hopeful that in the short time the bureaucratic obstacles to putting the kind gestures

into practice will be overcome, as only too soon, everyone would need to 'step up to the plate' in this very practical way of fulfilling need. Within Wiltshire Council they were doing all they could to facilitate this.

Moving on to Wiltshire Council budgets for the following fiscal year he reported that, it's a bit of a mixed bag really, although happily not as painful as he once imagined it would be. Wiltshire Council had needed to plug a £27m shortfall in the budgetary provision, through £3m on the Adult Care levy, and £24m in savings. There had been a sharp increase in adult care and social services requirement necessitating some very careful and imaginative handling of fiscal priorities.

Broadly speaking he advised that the revenue spend for 2022/23 would be £417.703m, to be spent as follows;

35% caring for adults,
20% spent on supporting and safeguarding our children and young people,
10% on managing Wiltshire's waste,
9% funding the investment in Wiltshire's schools, new roads and housing,
9% on maintaining Wiltshire's highways and subsidising local bus services,
7% on running the council and local elections,
4% on our property,
3% on our online and digital services,
2% on Wiltshire's leisure and libraries, and
1% on improving Wiltshire's economy.

He continued to chair the Strategic Planning Committee for Wiltshire Council and beyond the clear environmental pressures of some planning applications, was often faced with the tensions between Neighbourhood Plans and government targets for housing delivery. He was proud then of our Parishes that have completed the Neighbourhood Plan process, such as Seagry and urged others to continue to bring theirs to fruition.

He hoped soon to revitalise the Rural Parish Forum too following the break due to the pandemic, and would be focusing on fly-tipping once again as the scourge in our countryside and environment it was, and also hoped to bring back the Cyber Crime expert from the Wiltshire Constabulary to heighten our awareness of the increase of cyber crime, as it was now the fastest form of crime our police forces face.

In conclusion he thanked all for their time, with every good wish for the year ahead,

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Councillor Greenman for his advice, continued involvement and assistance during the past year.

In response John Crosland thanked Councillor Greenman for his recent involvement in supporting the request for the Church Road repairs that had now been completed.

MIN 8. Public Questions and General Discussion of Parish Issues:

- a) **CPRE Best Kept Village Competition 2022:** The Parish Council had agreed not to enter the Wiltshire CPRE Best Kept Village Competition. Although Upper Seagry & Lower Seagry had won the North Wiltshire Small Villages Category on a number of occasions it had been felt that the damage caused by diverted traffic in recent weeks had spoiled the chances. The matter would be considered again next year. There were no dissenting voices.

- b) **Keep Britain Tidy – Great British Spring Clean:** As usual the Council had received Keep Britain Tidy information and there was a need to ensure that the Parish was regularly litter picked. Everyone was pleased to hear that FOSS were to organise litter picks throughout the Parish.
- c) **Defibrillator Project – S W Ambulance Trust Training Session:** Part of the 4-year lease agreement had allowed for a yearly training session. With Covid-19 restrictions this had not been possible. With restrictions now lifted it would become possible to make arrangements for a training session later in the year.
- d) **Community Safety/Neighbourhood Watch/Emergency Plan:** The Parish Council was still considering how to attract volunteers to fulfil important roles within the Parish. In the interim a What'sApp solution was proving successful.
- e) **Traffic Speeds – the provision of Autospeedwatch Tools:** The Parish Council had installed 2 solar power Tools. Data was still being collected to identify persistent speeding offenders.
- f) **Community Speedwatch – to consider a Speedwatch Scheme:** As part of the efforts to reduce traffic speeds throughout the Parish volunteers had now been identified to form a Community Speedwatch Team and take the required training.
- g) **Speed Identification Devices (SIDS) - the provision of SIDs:** The Parish Council had agreed to purchase an ElanCity Radar Device and erect around the Parish and had identified "hot Spots" to provide advance warning to drivers and collect data in efforts to reduce speed levels.
- h) **Covid-19 – Impact on the Parish:** The Pandemic and repercussions had affected Parishioners and businesses within the Parish, including the closure of the Goss Croft Hall. Local volunteers had assisted vulnerable people and would continue to do so if and when required.
- i) **Gigaclear- Super Broadband installation and reinstatement:** Seagry Parish was one of the first to be included in the Gigaclear works program and had suffered from overall discomfort as the works were carried out. The works were now complete that would allow Parishioners to take advantage of the high broadband speeds now available.
- j) **Queen's Platinum Jubilee:** The community had come together to organise various celebrations over the Jubilee Bank Holiday period, including the lighting of a beacon at the Recreation Ground on the Thursday night, events and cream teas at the same venue on the Saturday afternoon (with Goss Croft Hall standing by if inclement weather) and a picnic after the Sunday Church Service.
- k) **Seagry Neighbourhood Plan:** The Neighbourhood Plan was a year old and was being used by the Parish Council and Wiltshire Council in decision-making. It was important that the Plan was monitored and reviewed and this would commence over the next 12 months.
- l) **Recreation Ground Facilities:** It was reported that the Pavilion had been spruced up in readiness for the Jubilee celebrations.
- m) **Allotments:** For the first time there was a waiting list for allotments, possibly because of more interest during Covid-19 for growing your own. Kevin Pearce was thanked for managing the allotments on the Council's behalf. Any proposal to raise the charge of allotments would require 12 months notice period.

Although there had been no rise for many years it was felt that at the present time no increase was required. The issue would be raised again in 12 months time.

- n) **Public Rights of Way-Footpath maintenance-Community Warden:** The importance of the designated Rights of Way within the Parish was acknowledged and it was stressed that the Parish Council and volunteers would need to protect and enhance them so that they remained open for use.

CLOSURE OF MEETING:

Cllr M Barber, the Parish Council Chairman thanked all those who had attended the Virtual Annual Parish Meeting and closed the Meeting at 8.46pm.

Signed:

Councillor:

Date: