

SEAGRY PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes

of the **Annual Parish Meeting** held on

Tuesday 22nd April 2025

in The Goss Croft Hall, Upper Seagry SN15 5HD at 7.30pm

Present: Parish Cllrs M Barber (Chairman), J H Crosland, A Ball, R Barr, N Hutton, Emma Sorrell and K Taylor. Wiltshire Cllr H Greenman, Avis Ball, Jo Crosland, Alan Bentley, Brian Zehetmayr, Graham Holiday, Eleanor Horner, Steph Hammond, Sue Bond, Martin Foot, Brenda Foot, Martin Ryall, Debbie Short, Maureen Whitehall, Ian Whitehall, Nigel Watson, Karen Watson, and Mr V Vines Clerk of the Council.

MIN 1. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Richard Vivash and Sam Austin (Seagry School).

MIN 2. Annual Parish Meeting 2024:

Draft Minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 16th April 2024 were circulated to those in attendance and had been available online.

Cllr J H Crosland proposed, Cllr N Hutton 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. Matters Arising from the Minutes:

There were none raised.

MIN 4. Chairman's Report:

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr M Barber, reported on Parish Council activities for the past year and starting by saying that the past year had been his eleventh year as Chairman of the Parish Council and that he could safely say that it had been the most eventful.

Even so, there was only one place to start his report, and that was by paying tribute to Cllr John Crosland, who had made the decision to stand down from the Council at the forthcoming Elections after many years of service. He didn't think there was anyone who had done more for the community over the years than John, and not just through his Council work. While he knew that John would continue to support Seagry in many different ways, Mike for one, would miss his wisdom and experience on the Parish Council.

However, all was not lost, as he was delighted that Nigel Watson would be filling John's undoubtedly large shoes on the Council, and he was certain that Nigel would do a brilliant job.

Mike wished to thank his fellow Parish Councillors, who gave up a huge amount of their time to do what was an increasingly difficult job, and that had never been more true than in the past year. He also wished to give special thanks to Council Clerk Viv Vines. The Parish Council benefited hugely from Viv's valuable knowledge, experience and professionalism. Thank you Viv.

Looking back at the last year he commented on the following;

Gypsy and Traveller Plan – it was rather a shock to find that the field next to the Goss Croft Hall had been included as one of the proposed new sites in Wiltshire Council's Gypsy and Traveller Plan. He was incredibly proud of the way that the community responded, articulating our objections in a rationale and ultimately effective manner. It did go down to the wire, with a huge amount of behind-the-scenes activity right up to the last minute, but in the end we got the result we wanted, and the draft Plan was withdrawn from the Wiltshire Council Meeting at which it was going to be considered for approval. There will be a new Gypsy and Traveller Plan put forward at some point after the Local Elections, and we needed to remain vigilant, but he was confident that Seagry had made it's point successfully.

Flooding – some of you in attendance may have noticed that we had an issue with flooding over the Autumn and Winter period, and you might also have noticed that extensive highways engineering works had been ongoing over the last few months to remedy the situation. He knew that the road closures would have been frustrating for many, but he was convinced that the temporary inconvenience of the road works would be worth it. He referred to the fact that all should also remember the context in which the works were being done, which was that Wiltshire Council had limited resources and many demands on those resources across the County. He firmly believed that we were benefiting from the extensive remedial works in no small part because of the strong and tenacious representations made by our community to Wiltshire Council.

Traffic Calming – sticking with our roads, after a long and rather arduous process, we have finally had the 20mph advisory signs installed outside the entrance to our school, the new gateways installed at the entrances to our village, and we have also been able to install the two Speed Indicator Devices, which allowed us to provide data on traffic speeds to Wiltshire Police. These measures were intended to help reduce the speeds of traffic through the village, but the plan was to do more.

BKVC - Finally, he did need to mention that Seagry, of course, was successful in winning the Wiltshire Best Kept Village competition, in the medium-sized village category. The Parish was now automatically entered into the Lawrence Kitchen Award, where we will be pitched against Ashton Keynes and Hankerton, who won in the large and small village categories, and he was sure that further glory would be forthcoming.

When he reflected on the events of last year one thing stood out, and that was the strength and cohesiveness of the community. The real test of a community was how it dealt with the challenging times, rather than the good times, and over the past year there had been more than our fair share of challenges. He was incredibly proud of how all had responded to those challenges, and as a result he believed we were stronger than ever.

He closed by offering thanks to the Goss Croft Hall Trustees for allowing this Annual Parish Meeting to be held in our wonderful Hall, and indeed for allowing the Parish Council to hold all of their Council Meetings throughout the year in the Hall. He concluded by mentioning that Mary Kemp, a community stalwart and former Parish Council Clerk had recently passed away and that she would be much missed.

There were no questions raised.

MIN 5. Parish Council Budget 2025-2026:

A copy of the Parish Council's Adopted Budget and proposals for the year 2025/2026 was circulated to those in attendance.

There were no questions raised.

MIN 6. Reports from Parish Council Sub Groups and Committees:

There were no Reports.

MIN 7. Reports from Local Organisations:

- a) **Seagry C of E Primary School:** Sam Austin, Co-Headteacher and Anthony Slack, Chair of Local Governing Board, provided a written report that was read to the attendees.

It reminded all that Seagry C of E Primary School was a proud member of The Vine Schools, now operating under Blue Kite Academy Trust following their transfer from DBAT on 1st January 2025. They shared a common leadership team and Local Governing Board and remained committed to providing a nurturing and engaging environment for our children.

Currently, the school had 31 pupils. Thirteen of these pupils were in the Reception/Y1/Y2 classes, with the remaining children in Years 4/5/6. Recently, two pupils had transferred to their school from another Chippenham institutions, further enriching their small but vibrant community.

A recent SIAMs inspection had gone very well and a separate report was available on this, and it was clear that their pupils continued to thrive in a positive learning environment. Extra-curricular activities and trips remained a valued part of the school experience, contributing to their reputation as a happy place where children loved to learn.

Since their transition from DBAT to Blue Kite Academy Trust on 1st January 2025, their leadership had been delighted with the smooth process and renewed energy for future development. The school was now led by Headteachers Mr Sam Austin and Mr Shaun Carter, whose collaborative approach was bringing fresh ideas and steady guidance. Additionally, Assistant Head Debbie Brown played an essential role in supporting the school's day-to-day excellence. Together, they ensured stability and a focused vision as they continued to improve and celebrate their successes.

They are extremely fortunate to have an active Home and School Association, which was central to their fundraising efforts and support for various school initiatives. A particular highlight had been the complete redecoration of our library (seen in the local press) – a project driven by their dedicated parents and expertly executed by FOSS. The result was a beautiful, welcoming space that the entire school community enjoyed (and which occasionally doubled as a quiet spot for a cheeky coffee break!).

Volunteers had also played a pivotal role in enhancing their outdoor spaces. Their ongoing contributions had transformed their playground and garden areas, creating vibrant environments where the children can play, learn, and explore.

In regards to current and future requests, funding was required for additional topic books to support their foundations subject learning, needed to ensure their curriculum remained diverse and engaging for their pupils. As their dedicated volunteers continued to enhance their outdoor spaces, further support in the form of resources or funding would be greatly appreciated to expand these initiatives and they were exploring investments into their IT technology to enhance learning and administrative efficiency. Any support or advice in this area would be welcomed.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked the School for their Report.

- b) **Friends of Seagry C of E Primary School (FOSS):** Nigel Watkins (FOSS Treasurer) on behalf of FOSS, provided a Report that advised that in the last year a small group of Mums had been successful in fund raising. This had meant that £3k had been available to purchase interactive whiteboards and £3k to assist in funding of School trips, a library transformation with new books, improved facilities and a chill out area.

He praised the work of the FOSS Volunteers as reduced numbers of School children had handicapped fund raising but the volunteers had found imaginative ways of raising fund and the passion and enthusiasm was still evident with a large number of events for the forthcoming year planned.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Nigel for the Report and input.

- c) **St Mary the Virgin Church PCC:** Jo Crosland representing the Churchwardens' provided a Report for the last year.

She reminded all that St Mary's Seagry was one of the 5 Churches in the Draycot Benefice that was part of the North Wiltshire Mission area. St. Mary's usually had a service once a month on the fourth Sunday with the Summer Service held outside if practical.

They were pleased to welcome many people from across the village to the 80th D Day anniversary service in June and plans for a similar V E Day commemoration were going well. The Christmas service was well supported but "village flooding" had discouraged some from attending.

St Mary's was an eco-Church and the Churchyard was part of the Living Churchyard Scheme, which involved leaving certain areas to grow wild. They had been part of this scheme for over 20 years and the Churchyard was a much-loved area for many people who visit and enjoy it.

The PCC held April, July and October Meetings and the Parish Share had been agreed and Policies up to date. The energy audit had been carried out and the boiler needed to be run at a hotter temperature to avoid rusting and funding was required to draught proof doors. The Quinquennial (building) and Triennial (contents and management) Inspections had been carried out with successful outcomes.

Sadly, the PCC Treasurer was leaving and she was thanked for her service.

Jo closed by commenting that although the Church was in Lower Seagry, St Mary's was there for everyone and there was always a welcome and they looked forward to seeing more people over the coming year.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Jo for her Report.

- d) **Recreation Ground Trustees:** Maureen Whitehall reminded all of the history of the Recreation Ground and that the Trustees had no income other than raising funds through events and that the Trust had had another difficult financial year.

Fund raising had continued to be relatively successful, the car wash particularly, but donations in real terms continued to fall. Electricity costs continued to be a great problem, particularly the standing charges, coupled with insurance costs.

Sadly they had had to adopt a make do and mend policy and there were several outstanding repairs to complete such as the repair of the perimeter fence and replacement of play equipment. If matters remained unresolved there may be a need for a crisis meeting to review structures but the fight continued. It was important that the whole Seagry community supported the Trust and additional Trustees would need to be found.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Maureen for her Report and it was suggested that the Parish Council should consider how they might help in attracting community involvement at a future Council Meeting.

- e) **Goss Croft Hall Trustees:** Ian Whitehall reminded all of the history of the Hall which was now 13 years old and still receiving critical acclaim. The Hall was financially sound with stable reserves and the installation of an audio-visual system was now complete. A £5k donation had allowed the Trustees to consider security improvements to include CCTV at the entrance and an intruder alarm system.

There had been reviews of Health and Safety and Terms & Conditions. Two community events were being planned with an Arts & Crafts event and an Xmas Fayre. The Tuesday volunteer maintenance team was highly regarded and also helped on many Parish works.

Sadly, the Hall was losing 4 Trustees through age and health reasons and there was a need to recruit replacements with effective skills and possibly younger with greater energy.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Ian for his Report and it was suggested that the Parish Council should consider how they might help in the recruitment of Trustees, at a future Council Meeting.

MIN 8. Report from Wiltshire Council Representative:

Wiltshire Councillor Howard Greenman reported and commented that this had been a year of change and challenges not least because of the changes brought about by a change in Government at the General Election in July 2024.

The immediate impact of the change in Government to Wiltshire Council is the exponential proposed increase in housing targets. Wiltshire Council had secured a 4 Year Housing Land Supply over which he had personally engaged with the last Central Government, and that was a target Wiltshire Council had met. Due to recalculation of that figure however, by the Government, a recalculation he believed to be incorrect that figure was now stated to be 2.08 years. It was looking increasingly likely that the sheer numbers of housing units to be delivered would be significantly increased. He was hopeful that the Local Plan, yet to be ratified will provide some protection against this. The issue he had with this was that Wiltshire Council had issued planning consents for over 19,000 properties, which the developers had failed to deliver, preferring to 'land bank' rather than build.

There was also increasing pressure to deliver Solar Farms, and the north of the County particularly falls prey to this. Whilst accepting the need for renewable energy, there has to be a balance too with the need for food security, and the current proposal for Lime Down, which will have an impact on 2000 acres in close proximity to the Kington Division with a further 2000 acres being affected just outside of Melksham. He had spoken against this at a recent meeting in Malmesbury Town Hall and will continue to lobby against it.

An additional pressure locally is that of the delivery of Gypsy and Traveller pitches. Wiltshire, and north Wiltshire particularly due to the M4, is a particular target for the G&T community and we have a responsibility to accommodate them. However, we have also been subject to a large number of un-authorised pitches, which have as yet crept in under the radar and which he believed should be added into the number the Government require Wiltshire Council to deliver if they are policy compliant. As such he is actively resisting 'new' pitches that have been identified in unsuitable locations and will continue to do so.

The Community Area Parish Forum he Chairs, continued to go from strength to strength and the most recent Meeting was attended by the Wiltshire Chief Constable, who found the Meeting very invaluable. This gives the sixteen Parishes in the Chippenham Community Area an opportunity to meet in a venue, typically a Village Hall, kindly hosted by the Parishes in turn and discuss issues such as speeding which they may have in common and to share experiences and intelligence. The Neighbourhood Police

Team was regular attendees too and equally finds the Forum very useful.

Wiltshire Council finances continued to be strong and are certainly better placed than most surrounding Authorities. For the 2025/26 financial year the revenue budget would be £527m against the £490m for the last financial year. Although the Government had increased social care funding by £4.8m, increases in National Insurance contributions have resulted in costs of £8m. However, unlike many authorities Wiltshire Council had contained the Council Tax increase to just 4.5%, (2.5% basic Council Tax plus 2.0% Adult Social Care Levy), against the 4.99% that was allowed by the Government. This would see an increase of £1.56 per week for those in a Band D property.

The most significant areas of spend outlined in the proposals were;

- Adult Services - £194m
- Families and Children - £75m
- Highways and Transport - £43.4m
- Highway potholes etc - £22m
- Environment (including waste) - £49.5m and
- Education and skills - £38m.

In closing, Howard gave his thanks to all Parish Councils for the hard work they do on behalf of their Parishes, and for making his job so much easier than it might otherwise be. He was standing again in the Local Government Elections on the 1st May 2025 and hoped to be able to continue to work for all.

The Chairman of the Meeting thanked Councillor Greenman for his advice, involvement and assistance during the last year.

MIN 9. Public Questions and General Discussion of Parish Issues:

- CPRE Best Kept Village Competition 2025:** Having won the medium-sized Village Award for Northern Wiltshire it was confirmed that the Parish Council would now be entered into the Laurence Kitchen Award for the whole of Wiltshire.
- Keep Britain Tidy – Great British Spring Clean (Litter Pick):** This would be a chance to tidy up Seagry, particularly as there would be Judges visiting associated with the Laurence Kitchen Award.
- Defibrillator Project – SW Ambulance Trust Training Session:** It was agreed that this should be arranged for later in the year in The Goss Croft Hall.
- Community Safety/Neighbourhood Watch/Emergency Plan (including Flood Plan):** The Parish Council continued in their efforts to support the community and would be grateful of any assistance from the community in fulfilling emergency roles.
- Traffic Speeds- Autospeedwatch/SIDs:** The Parish Council Chairman had commented in his Annual Report on speed reduction methods that had been introduced. Village entrance gates had now been installed. All solutions were still under consideration that may prove beneficial in slowing traffic.
- Community Speedwatch Scheme.** The Volunteer Team was visiting “hot spots”. More volunteers would be welcomed to take the required training.
- Seagry Allotments.** The revised Charges and Terms of Agreement had taken effect and it was reported that there was an allotment available.
- V E-Day Commemoration/Celebrations.** It was confirmed that this would be celebrated with a Service at the Signpost Memorial on the 8th May 2025 at

6.30pm and arrangements would be advertised.

- i) **Seagry Neighbourhood Plan.** The Neighbourhood Plan was now 4 years old and was being used by the Parish Council and Wiltshire Council in decision-making. It would soon reach a stage where less weight would be taken of the policies and it would be necessary to review the Plan. A similar process would need to be followed with a Steering Group taking the lead.
- j) **Recreation Ground Facilities.** The earlier discussions refer.
- k) **Rights of Way – Footpath Maintenance – New Project – Community Wardens:** Andrew Ball and volunteers had carried out a condition survey of most Rights of Way and had identified problem areas. A project had been endorsed by the Council to support, alongside landowners, the provision of new gates and other improvements to ensure the retention of public access. These were early stages but it was hoped there would be progress made during the next 12 months.
- l) **Spitfire Memorial.** Brenda Foot briefly raised the issue of the remaining funds raised for the Project and that the future ownership and maintenance of the Memorial would need to be agreed. It was suggested that the Parish Council should consider this at a future Council Meeting, as they could possibly become the Responsible Body.
- m) **Upper Seagry – One-way road System.** Following a suggestion by a Parishioner the Parish Council had recently considered the potential introduction of a one-way system and had agreed that it was worthy of further discussion with the Highway Authority. No details had been produced to date as practicalities and implications would need to be considered. Should there be any viable scheme possible this would be subject to full consultation throughout the Parish.
- n) **20 mph speed limit introduction.** The Parish Council had achieved some gains in highway safety measures but the ultimate aim was the introduction of the 20 mph limit. The Council would continue to pursue this.
- o) **Gypsy & Travellers Site Allocation Plan.** This had been a major issue during the last 12 months and the whole community had come together to campaign for the removal of a proposed site within the Parish from the Wiltshire Council Allocation Plan. This had been successful to date but the matter was in abeyance and a watchful eye would need to be kept on future proposals.

CLOSURE OF MEETING:

Cllr M Barber, the Parish Council Chairman thanked all those who had attended the Annual Parish Meeting and closed the Meeting at 9.44pm.

Signed:

Councillor:

Date: