

KINGTON ST MICHAEL PARISH

Draft Minutes

Annual Parish Meeting

held on

Thursday 7th April 2022

at

Kington St Michael Village Hall

Kington St Michael - 7.30pm

Present: Parish Cllrs Gerry Gamble (Chairman of the Parish Council), Alex Hall, Victoria Ingham, Peter Macdonald, William Roe, Emily Hocking and Fiona Twisse. Mr V Vines Clerk of the Council, Wiltshire Councillor Howard Greenman and 6 members of the public being Chris Southam, Claire Marlow, Linda Durno, Robert Durno, Alistair Morelli and Ian Pitman.

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received from Cllrs John Newton and Elizabeth Allen and from Parishioners David West and Diane Allen.

MIN 1. Minutes:

Draft Minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 4th April 2019 were tabled.

It was agreed that the Minutes should be accepted and signed by Cllr G Gamble, the Chairman of the Meeting.

Proposed Robert Durno, seconded Gerry Gamble and **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**

MIN 2. Matters Arising from the Minutes:

There were no matters raised that were not covered by later Agenda items.

MIN 3. Chairman's Report:

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Gerry Gamble, provided a report on behalf of the Parish Council. He advised that it was a pleasure to be here for the first Parish Meeting since April 2019 and that hopefully circumstances would remain so that public events could continue. Much had changed for everyone during the last 3 years. Indeed rapid change now seemed to be the new normality such was its' pace.

This Parish Meeting was a chance for everyone to celebrate the many things that hadn't changed within the village whilst also recognising the positive developments that had occurred. The wide range of Groups and Clubs that existed in the village represented that night either in person or through their reports demonstrated the strength of the whole community. The volunteers that kept things going, despite the difficult times, had helped to make Kington St Michael a special village to live in. They all should be appreciated and applauded.

His report focussed on the 12 months during which the current Parish Council had been formed following the Parish Council Elections held in May 2021. The Parish Council for Kington St Michael could have 9 Councillors and as only 7 residents of the village stood for election they were all elected unopposed. Since then the two remaining vacancies had been filled by co-option.

The Parish Precept in both 20/21 and 20/22 had been increased in-line with the need for the Parish Council to maintain and develop services within the village. The precept for 22/23 had been set to reflect inflation.

In regards to the QE2 Recreation Field he reported that recent development had been focussed on repairs and improvements to playground equipment. The installation of the Cone Climber and the Outdoor Table Tennis table had provided something for both older children and their parents.

The fencing around the main Play Area would need to be replaced this year (following the Rospa report 2021) whilst some other play equipment would also need to be upgraded. The Kickwall area had been regenerated, by building the existing wall higher and adding a new wall at the other end. The next phase would be to reinstall the fencing and to provide a range of playground markings for activities such as football, basketball, and short tennis.

New gates had been installed at the entrance to the Recreation Field and an off-road parking area had also been created. Most recently a new notice board had been installed. In addition a rubbish bin and poo bag dispenser had been installed just inside the gate.

Moving on to the Tor Hill Footpath Project he reported that progress had now been made toward improving the existing path on Tor Hill (which is currently very steep toward the village end of the path). Progress had also been made towards providing the remaining planned section of footpath necessary to make a safe footpath for pedestrians.

In regards to speeding issues he remarked that of growing concern for many villagers had been the speed of vehicles into and through the village. The Parish Council had been working hard on this problem and had developed a three-point plan to reduce the speed of vehicles.

- A Community Speedwatch Group of volunteers had being formed who would be trained in the use of "handheld" speed detectors. This would allow the speed detection (guns) to be used by the Group at published points approaching and within the village.
- In addition the Parish Council had invested in the provision of a Speed Indication Device (SID). These were solar powered radar speed signs to flash a hazard warning to drivers approaching the village and at the Advisory Pedestrian crossing within the village.
- Autospeedwatch Devices. These would be at fixed points also solar powered to provide data on vehicular speeds, which would be sent to Wiltshire Police to inform the deployment of mobile speed detection units.

Additionally the data collected from the above devices would inform the Parish Council's efforts to have the speed limits in and around the village reduced to safer levels for all.

In closing he advised that there were many other examples of the work of the Parish Council available to residents via the minutes of Parish Council Meetings, which were available on the Village Community Website and other village communication platforms.

MIN 4. Finance:

Copies of the Budget proposals for the year 2022/2023 were circulated to those in attendance.

There were no questions raised.

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

The Parish Council had no Sub Groups or Committees during the past 12 months.

Highway Matters & Parish Steward - Cllr Peter Macdonald provided a report as the Parish Council Link Member with the Parish Steward covering the period from the last Annual Parish Meeting in 2019.

Following 5 serious accidents at the Tor Hill crossroads and despite initial resistance from Wiltshire Highways, the Parish Council had managed to get the road markings improved and most importantly, the give way warning sign reinstated on Fowlswick Lane. Going forward, in conjunction with the Tor Hill project the Council will be liaising with the adjacent Parish Councils to control speed along the road.

The pothole on Stanton Lane had now been marked by Wiltshire Highways and would be repaired in due course.

The blocked drain at the junction of Stanton Lane and Honey Knob Hill had been blocked for many years causing flooding and ice on the road in winter. Cement had been removed from the drain, which had improved the flow but it had partially collapsed at some point, restricting flow and still causing some flooding. Post Covid-19, the matter had been raised again with Highways and it was on the list of works for this year.

The Council had successfully engaged with Highways to signpost roads leading to the village during major works on the A350 and other works during this, limiting the traffic trying to find ways around those works.

Unfortunately, the village was seen as a "rat run" to avoid the Chippenham bypass and the Junction 17 roundabout. This situation would only worsen as more goods vehicles are based at the new warehouse complex at Junction 17 and the eastern bypass and new housing feeds more traffic onto the A350.

The roads in and around the village are not seen as a priority by Wiltshire Council who cite financial pressures for the lack of maintenance. The only way to ensure funding was by keeping pressure on the Wiltshire Council and Parishioners can do this by reporting issues to Councillor Macdonald as Link Member, or using the Wiltshire Council website.

The larger verges in the village, including those adjacent to The Ridings, are Wiltshire Council land and maintained by them. In 2000 they were to be cut 12 times a year, this dropped to 9 times a year in 2012 and now the suggestion was for 3 times a year. In truth they had not been cut for nearly 2 years and a letter had been sent to Wiltshire Highways stating that it made the village look untidy, attracted rubbish, and was not a suitable option for the latest "wilding" of verges initiative.

MIN 6. Reports from Local Organisations:

The following provided verbal or written Reports:

Kington St Michael Community Shop

Diane Allen had provided a written report covering the period 2020 and 2021 that was read to those in attendance. She advised that the Committee Members and Shop Manager who were present in 2019 were no longer serving on the Committee.

2020 - had been a bumpy year for the shop. The Volunteer Manager, the Secretary, the Committee Chair had all resigned, along with a few other Committee Members. And of course the whole Country had been coping with the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020. Huge efforts had been put into keeping the shop open during this time and the shop had served the Community exceptionally well, proving its value to the Village. Particular thanks were given to Avril Balmforth and Jill Saunders for keeping the shop open for the village during the most challenging Covid-19 times. Regular volunteers had needed to isolate in view of their age profile. New younger volunteers had stepped forward as they were furloughed from their normal day jobs. The village spirit meant everyone pulled together to keep the shop open and serve the local community. Turnover during the lockdown had increased substantially as footfall and spend increased. Consumers had been avoiding the large supermarkets. The supermarket shortages were not reflected in the shop, Avril's experience meant she was able to source virtually everything.

A new Chair of the Committee had been appointed in June 2020. There had been a high turnover of Committee members for a few months in the middle of 2020, resulting in a delay in the recruitment of a paid Manager to replace the volunteer Manager, who had stepped down after many years of service to the shop.

The summer ended with a 60% new Committee membership and the appointment of a paid Manager from early September. The choice at the time had been the shop closure or a paid Manager. The Committee had been very much aware that to retain a paid Manager would require a substantial increase in takings.

The aim of the Committee was currently outlined in the Shop Plan and all decisions and actions stemmed from this. Turnover needed to increase for the shop to remain open and serve our community long term. The support from Kevin Henderson as Treasurer had been excellent. He had been able to provide a breakdown of figures for almost anything to inform the financial workings of the shop.

During the autumn, the number of volunteers increased and the Staff Handbook and Induction Documentation were updated. A Shop Plan had been written, and small project teams had been formed, to share the workload across the Committee and play on areas of expertise. The Post Point was once again on the Agenda and a business decision was made not to re-open it post Lockdown due to cost and the technology required for most parcels. Planning had also taken place for a potential second Lockdown. The weekly newsletter for Shop Volunteers had been started.

The Shop had been very busy in December and had enjoyed excellent sales. Sadly there had been no summer or Christmas party to thank volunteers for the amazing work they did all year. A Christmas 'voucher' was given instead and this had appeared to be very well received, the Committee had lovely thank-you notes from a number of volunteers.

The financial report at the end of the year had shown a profit of £13,449 before tax, of which £10,000 related to the award of a Covid-19 grant from the National Scheme.

2021 - The Manager had begun trying new products and made many changes to the Shop. There had been constant and close monitoring of wastage, footfall, average spend, comparison with previous years' figures, anything to give insight to improve takings, spend and ultimately profits.

Applications for funding were successful. Grants of £7,800 were received, of which £1,000 was from the Parish Council and £6,800 from the National Lottery. New fridges and freezers were purchased with the Lottery funding. With the Parish Council funding they had undertaken a refurbishment of the shop. This had resulted in new flooring, new storage cupboard inside and a new cupboard outside the Shop.

At the end of the year, the Prince's Countryside Fund confirmed the Shop had been awarded £7,020 towards the Manager's salary from 1st January 2022. As they had to increase the Manager's salary to secure the post, the grant did not cover all, but went a long way towards meeting this cost.

A survey had been carried out in August 2021 to discover what the villagers want from the Shop, this had been informative and had resulted in longer opening hours and new products.

In the autumn the younger members of the Committee resigned, their insight and energy had been of great value to the Shop. The hours they had dedicated had been difficult to juggle with young families. The Shop currently had two vacancies on the Committee.

In November 2021, the Manager had tendered his resignation a recruitment exercise had been undertaken over the Christmas period, resulting in a new paid Manager being appointed in February 2022. As expected, due to having a paid manager, the Shop made a loss in 2021. Further details will be reported at the Shop's annual general meeting later in April 2022.

The Committee had already starting to address this - had revisited the Shop Plan and there had been new energy in the sub-groups. There had been a successful application for funding to cover the Managers salary (as mentioned above), longer opening hours, new products, new marketing, better communication to reach a wider audience and keeping the village informed. And more to come in the pipeline.

There was a huge effort being put in by all volunteers both Committee volunteers and Shop volunteers - who will all do their very best to keep our Community shop open and deliver the services the village asked for.

Book & DVD Recycling Scheme

Linda Durno reminded everyone that the Book & DVD Recycling scheme had run from the Shop foyer for nearly eighteen years, taking donations of adult fiction and children's DVDs (cert. U) which are then sold on for 50p and £1 respectively, with occasional special offers. Revenue from the notice board went into the same pot.

The scheme raised about £150 per year and once takings reached £50 a donation was made to a village organisation. Nothing was wasted, with surplus items being passed on to a local charity shop.

Over £3,550.00 had been raised since the scheme's inception, and Linda thanked all those who supported it.

Kington St Michael Club

Alan Ingham had provided a written report that was read to those in attendance

It had been an unprecedented couple of years in the history of the Club. Covid-19 had a huge effect on the whole hospitality industry, and the Club had not been immune to that. However, despite the difficult operating conditions and the Club being closed for a large portion of the last two years, there were still a huge number of positives.

Strong and stable financial position – the Club had remained financially stable over the last couple of years and continued to grow profits while embarking on much needed investment in renovations. They had been lucky enough to receive a number of grants during Lockdown, which had helped to support finances while the Club was closed.

The Club had invested in a number of renovation projects to not only improve the facilities at the Club but also in its other assets (Melksham flat & new flat above the Club, both of which were rented out) to improve its' revenues. They had also continued to rent out the Kington Cafe, which was an additional revenue stream.

Membership numbers – membership numbers in the Club continued to grow and they were significantly above their 2020 membership numbers.

Events Committee – Following the elections last year, the Club had a full Committee for the first time in a long time and this had allowed the re-formation of the Events Committee, who was now looking to organise more events with even greater variety.

The Events Committee was currently planning for 'Fieldfest', which was a music festival taking place in the village in June. The Club hoped that this would be a well-supported and enjoyable event for the local community.

MIN 7. Report from Wiltshire Council Representative:

Wiltshire Councillor Howard Greenman was pleased to attend and advised 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 seemed 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 had 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 was to be applauded for that. He was hopeful that in the short term the bureaucratic obstacles to putting the kind gestures into practice would 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 was 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 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 Meeting thanked Councillor Greenman for his advice, continued involvement and assistance during the past year.

MIN 8. Kington St Michael Neighbourhood Plan:

Emily Hocking reported on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on progress made over the last 12 months, assisted by Place Studio their consultants.

As a scheduled large Village in the Wiltshire Local Plan, the Parish could not be complacent as there might be future development pressures being situated so close to Chippenham.

The Steering Group had been in attendance at the Summer Fete in 2020 and was now in the process of carry out consultations on Local Green Spaces and also a call for potential development sites to assess their suitability for inclusion if development was needed.

The procedure was a relatively slow process but various stages had to be followed before the production of a draft Neighbourhood Plan containing recommendations could be consulted upon.

MIN 9.

Public Questions and General Discussion of Parish Issues:

- a) **Recreation Ground Facilities** – The QE2 Field Group continued to raise funds and consider the future possibilities that included the possibility of an equipment storage facility.
- b) **Queen's Platinum Jubilee** – Elizabeth Allen, community volunteer co-ordinator, had provided a written report that was read to attendees. She advised that she had already applied for a Road Closure for the Street Party taking place on Sunday 5th June 2022, 11.00am to 16.00pm, as it needed to be done 8 weeks in advance. All residents would be asked to bring their own chairs. She confirmed there would be tables and bunting etc.

The Jolly Huntsman would be running a Pimms Bar and providing hot food as usual with hot roast baguettes and chips. 12-3pm The Kington Cafe were planning a BBQ, during their usual opening hours. The Village Hall would open for use of the toilets. The Kington Club had yet to advise of their involvement.

The intention was that it would be BYO picnic or grab a bite to eat when you get there community event open to everyone in the community. If anyone had visitors that day they were of course welcome to attend.

For interest she advised that Grittleton Parish was running an event on the Saturday night with hog roast and music etc.

Regarding Beacon lighting on Thursday 2nd June – Ian Pitman had volunteered to make a beacon to light at 9pm that evening as part of the National chain..

An update of what people needed to do/ bring would be in the village newsletter along with a count down on the Facebook page in due course.

She advised that she would need volunteers to help decorate the day before, help move picnic tables, and put out road closure signs. This requirement would also be advertised in the next newsletter or a residential leaflet drop.

- c) **CPRE Best Kept Village Competition 2022** – The Council would be considering whether to enter this year's Competition at their next Meeting. The matter had already been discussed by the Council at recent Meetings and they had felt that no entry should be made. Those in attendance shared this view.
- d) **Community Safety/Neighbourhood Watch/Emergency Plan** – The Council was in the process of producing an updated Emergency Plan with Cllr Fiona Twisse the Lead Member. The possibility existed for the storage of emergency equipment/generator etc to be accommodated in any QE2 Field storage building proposals. The three subjects could be interlinked but there was a requirement for community volunteers and involvement. In the interim the Council had set up a database to circulate information that was open to everyone to join. Any volunteer/s would be welcomed to assist.
- e) **Traffic Speeds** – The Council had decided to install fixed Autospeedwatch Devices to assist the volunteer team to gain evidence and data to identify persistent offenders.
- f) **Community Speedwatch** – The Council now had sufficient volunteers to form a Community Speedwatch Team that would need to take the necessary Police Training.
- g) **Speed Identification Devices (SIDS)** – The Council had decided to install a movable SID. Two locations had now been suggested and approval would be sought from Wiltshire Highways.
- h) **Covid-19 Impact on the Parish** – It was felt that some positives had arisen with volunteer help for vulnerable people and a Facebook Community Page introduced.

- i) **Gigaclear Super Broadband Installation and Reinstatement** – Notwithstanding the problems throughout the Parish during the installation and rectification process the benefits and opportunities for high speed broadband were now evident.
- j) **Rights of Way/Footpath Maintenance/Community Warden** – The Council would be considering how a Warden could be found and any volunteer/s would be welcomed.
- k) **Affordable Housing/Self Build Housing Provision** – The Council had been asked to consider the matter. The Housing Needs Survey had not identified any need but the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group would need to consider any approaches to include an exception site to accommodate affordable housing alongside any development land within their recommendations to the Council.
- l) **Planting of Parish Roadside Verges** – The Council had included two issues to be considered by attendees before making any formal decisions. The Council had been asked to consider if there were any areas within the Parish that could be considered as part of the Wiltshire “Re-Wilding” Project. Alongside this a question had arisen in regards to the Council taking over any planted verge areas together future maintenance liability via a Licence under the Highways Act. In regards to the former following investigation and consideration the Council had felt that there were no suitable areas to be suggested to Wiltshire Highways. Those in attendance shared this view.

In regards to the latter, this had been highlighted by recent verge planting in Grove Lane. Claire Marlow raised objections to this planting suggesting that it was not required and had been carried out without any authority. Peter Macdonald explained the circumstances relating to the specific planting. There were no further views expressed and the Council would need to determine any course of action at their next Council Meeting.

- m) **Stanton Lane Highway Fingerpost** – Linda Durno raised the issue of the dilapidated condition of the historic design fingerpost at the road junction. The sign was in a prominent position within the Conservation Area and some action should be taken. The Clerk would consider options and report to the Council for decision.

CLOSURE OF MEETING:

The Meeting Chairman thanked all those who had provided Reports and who had attended the Annual Parish Meeting 2022.

Signed:

Councillor:

Date: