

# MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF SHEPTON MONTAGUE PARISH HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL, SHEPTON MONTAGUE ON TUESDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2020 VIA ZOOM AT 7.30pm

**Present:** Andrew Wiley (chair), Julia Hunter, Paul Williams, Jay Bunyan (clerk), Robin Bastable (local councillor) and 5 members of the parish.

**Apologies** for absence were received from Oliver Dowding, Richard Reed and Anna Groskop (County councillor)

1. **Minutes** of the last Annual Parish Meeting were approved as a correct record, proposed by Paul Williams and seconded by Andrew Wiley.

2. **Matters Arising:** None

## 3. **Parish Council Chairman's Report for the year 2019-2020**

### **Introduction**

1. This has been an interesting year for the Parish. We have seen the impact of a National Health Crisis along with the normal activities concerning Highways, Planning, the Environment and various local projects, including the potential establishment of High-Speed Broadband across the whole Parish.

### **COVID-19**

2. The Parish has had two confirmed cases of COVID-19 over the last few months, fortunately both with good outcomes. With a relatively high average age and a number of persons who have been shielding, we are glad to have escaped so lightly and feel very privileged to have been living where we are during the lockdown period. The local support to vulnerable people in the Parish has been outstanding, through neighbours and friends, and the volunteer groups that have stood up to provide additional support have been very lightly used. The Parish has adapted well to new ways of working and virtual Parish Council meetings have been some of the best attended for some time.

### **Highways**

3. **A359.** There have been a number of accidents on the junction where the A359 crosses the river Pitt near Pitcombe, with drivers, coming from the Castle Cary direction, overshooting the corner and ending up in the hedge above the river. These accidents appear to be single vehicles with no other parties involved and do not appear to have been reported. Aside from damage to the hedgerows these accidents have destroyed all the road signs, including the historic fingerpost. The Parish Council is very concerned regarding the safety aspect of these accidents and has reported the matter to SSDC Highways to ask for more safety measures such as warning signs for the corners and also the re-instatement of both the modern and historic signs. Highways have been unable, to date, to carry out a site visit, due to COVID-19 restrictions.

### 4. **B3081.**

a. After some lobbying from the Parish Council, SSDC Highways installed a number of additional warning signs for the B3081 through Stoney Stoke, which has been an accident black spot for many years. Though, perhaps, early days there have been no incidents since the introduction of the new warning signs, and we hope that this work has gone some way to mitigate the risk of future accidents.

b. The Parish Council also successfully intervened to seek re-consideration of a Planning Proposal to open a driveway entrance onto the B3081, where the applicants, new to the Parish, hadn't appreciated the nature of that stretch of road

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and the risk involved.

5. **Footpaths.** There have been incidents of Public rights of way in the Parish being obstructed and footpath furniture, stiles and signposts, falling into disrepair. In the former case the matter has been referred to SSDC Highways who have responsibility for rights of way and in the latter the Parish Council has appointed a Councillor to carry out a survey of Parish footpaths to identify items requiring attention, so that action can be followed up.

### **Planning & Licensing**

6. **Emily Estate/ The Newt.** Through the year the Parish has had a number of planning applications from the Newt. These have principally consisted of conversion of old buildings into staff accommodation or holiday cottages and some minor amendment existing, approved applications. None of these has proved controversial.

7. **Local.** The Parish has also had a number of domestic planning applications, one light industrial building and a number of Premises Licence applications

8. **Enforcement.** There have been a number of issues raised to the Parish Council concerning breaches of Planning Consent. These have been referred, by the Parish Council to SSDC Planning for determination. Response to these reports has been slow and the outcome of the investigations has yet to be notified to the Parish Council.

### **Environment**

9. **Tyres.** We have had a rather mixed year on the environment. Thanks to the efforts of members of the Parish and Landowners the pile of tyres near the river Pitt were removed. Unfortunately, they have been moved to other land in the Parish. This is unwelcome and has proved highly controversial. The matter has been referred, by the Parish Council and members of the Parish to the Environment Agency for determination. The Environment Agency Legal Triage Department have the matter in hand but have warned that the normal 30 day response times are elongated due to COVID-19 backlog. The Parish Council have been in very recent contact with the EA and the soonest we are hoping for an update from the Case Officer, who is currently on leave, on 6 Aug 20.

### **Fingerposts**

10. The Fingerpost project has continued and is nearing completion, though latterly progress has been slow, due to COVID-19 Thanks are due to many people and businesses in the Parish that have offered sponsorship. One fingerpost, at the Pitcombe junction mentioned earlier, has been shattered by a car. The Parish Council is not allowed to deal with the installation of the cast iron posts and we will require SSDC assistance if the post is to be re-erected and restoration completed. Two other posts are complete with replacement parts but need final painting and assembly. The final post, at the Montague Inn, has suffered recent additional damage, with an arm being knocked off and removed. Sponsorship of this sign has been offered by two parties and the post will be dismantled, a new arm will be cast, repairs made and the post reassembled in due course

### **Broadband**

11. Over the year high speed fibre-optic based broadband has been established to some properties in Stoney Stoke by Wessex Internet. Due to failures in the Government Sponsored Broadband scheme it has recently become possible for the rest of the Parish to use grants for Private Broadband providers. The Parish Council have provided some assistance to Wessex Internet to establish landowners who's permission would be

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required for cabling runs. Should enough people in the remainder of the Parish sign up for the Wessex Internet provision, high speed broadband could be established by the end of the year or early 2021.

**Rail to Trail**

12. The Parish has also been involved in the proposed establishment of a cycle path along the disused Bruton to Wincanton railway line. The project is in its very early discovery phases currently and has a number of challenges to overcome if it is to proceed. Recent activity has included a survey of Parish residents to establish the level of support and estimate likely utilisation.

**Conclusion**

13. It has been an interesting year with some significant progress offset with some real challenges and frustrations. We believe that these latter areas are being addressed but the pace of resolution has been slowed by COVID-19 and slow response from the authorities concerned. We will continue seek resolution of these issues in the near future.



A G C Wiley  
Chair - Shepton Montague Parish Council

**4. Presentation of Parish Council accounts (unaudited)**

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2020

INCOME	2019/20	EXPENDITURE	2019/20
Bal B/F	£3645.67	Zurich Municipal Insurance	£257.60
Precept	£2090.00	SALC	£51.01
Fingerpost grant	£1000.00	SSDC (elections)	£190.97
		Churchyard grass cutting	£800.00
		SALC Clerk's training	£25.00
		CAB donation	£20.00
		Village Hall donation	£100.00
		Somerset Forge	£2,100.00
		Somerset Forge	£72.00
		Clerk's salary	£495.00
Total	<u>£6,735.67</u>	Total	<u>£ 4,111.58</u>
		Income minus Expenditure equals	<u>£ 2624.09</u>
		Balance as per bank statement@ 31st March 2019	£ 3,111.09
		Less unrepresented cheque - clerk's pay	£ 495.00
		Balance as per cash book@ 31st March 2019	<u>£2624.09</u>

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Copies of the accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 were displayed. £2624.09 was carried over into the financial year 2020/21. The accounts were signed off as a correct record, matching the balance in the bank account.

**5. Open discussion**

Sue Hester raised a query about the cycle path – this will be dealt with at the Parish Council meeting planned for 18<sup>th</sup> August

Sarah Maude asked about repairs to the destroyed fingerpost. AW confirmed that SSDC are responsible as the post itself was broken in 2. It is not known who was responsible for the damage.

John Sykes has kindly offered to replace the fingerpost by the Montague Inn

Sue Hester asked about progress on the survey of footpaths – Oliver Dowding to report to the meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> August

It was noted that 3 cases of COVID-19 had been reported in the village – at least one of these imported from Italy

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_