SEDGEHILL and SEMLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **131st Annual Parish Meeting** held on Monday 13th May 2024 at Semley Village Hall commencing 7.00pm.

1. **Apologies:** Received from Liz Oatts, Geoff Wilde and Sadie Hellon.

2. **Present:** Cllr D Curless (Chair of meeting), Parish Clerk, W Cllr Bridget Wayman and 5 members of public.

3. **Chair's welcome and announcements:**
The chairman welcomed and thanked those residents present for attending this evening.

4. **Adopt Minutes:**
The minutes of the 130th Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th May 2023 were adopted and signed as a true record. **Proposed by** Andrew Ebbens and seconded by Alan Bowerman (all present in favour).

5. **Open Floor question time:**
It was reported ditching work carried out a success.
T consider guest speaker on Dark Skys at next Annual Parish meeting with refreshments.
Q. What is happening about potential closure of bridleway across railway line?
A. PC has sent response letter to Network Rail objecting to the proposed closure.
No further questions raised.

6. **Wiltshire Council's Report:**
To reduce phosphates into the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (and this includes the Nadder, Wylye, & Ebble tributaries) Wiltshire Council has received funding from Government for residents to 'Revamp Their Tank'. This is a 100% funded grant to replace your old septic tank if you are close to a watercourse. Please see this link Biodiversity and development - Wiltshire Council. Council officers will screen all applications to determine eligibility.
At full Council on 22nd February, Wiltshire Council approved the budget for 2024/25 with an increase in Council Tax of 4.99%. The total budget is £486m, three quarters of the funding coming from Council Tax. For every £100, £38 is spent on vulnerable adults and £21 on vulnerable children, £9 on waste collection and disposal.
From the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), Southwest Wiltshire has a population of 22,611, of which 30.4% are 65+ year olds – it is 22% across the whole of Wiltshire. The prevalence of dementia is 1.1% (0.9% Wiltshire) and 24% of people 50+ are disabled (25% Wiltshire). Wiltshire's population of 65+ is projected to increase by 43% by 2040 from 1/5th to nearly 1/3rd. Currently, 18% of 65+ are living on their own (14% Wiltshire).
We have 15.4% of homes in fuel poverty (10.4% Wiltshire) [Not sure how this is calculated, but probably has something to do with the lack of mains gas.]
14.6% of children under 16 lived in a low-income family – about 500 children (12.7% Wiltshire).
19% of 4-18 year olds have special educational needs – these are costly services and demand is also likely to rise.
Not only is Wiltshire as a whole going to have to deal with the increase in demand for services for older people, but SWW is likely to experience greater demand. We need to continue to

support existing services and provide new ones to help maintain a healthy and thriving population.

It is extremely fortunate that through prudent management the Council is well placed financially, but there are always risks and a tight grip needs to be kept on spending. However, an additional £10m has been allocated to spend on Highways over two years as the Council is aware of the effects of the weather on our roads over the past couple of years and exacerbated more recently with the near constant and heavy rain. It will probably take much longer than two years for our roads to return to a decent state. An extra £1m has been allocated over three years for an additional gully tanker to add to the existing three. With over 80,000 gullies, it takes time to empty them all, but the additional tanker will help keep our roads clearer of standing water and prevent property flooding.

Wiltshire and Swindon are producing a joint Nature Recovery Strategy. This is in the early stages of development and the Council carried out a survey in March to help discover your priorities for nature recovery. Please follow the link to the page on the Council's website where you can sign up to receive the Newsletter for future events and surveys. Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy - Wiltshire Council.

From May to July there will be a series of surveys and workshops to establish priorities.

7. Various Reports:

Community Police Report: PCSO Stewart Hunt

There has been a total of 7 crimes recorded in the Semley area which is a decrease from last year where 14 were recorded. 2 crimes recorded in the Sedgehill area which is a decrease from last year where 5 were recorded. One report of RTCs in your area and 0 road related offences. Two burglaries reported in your area this year, one report was a business property, and one was a residential property. Two reports of Burglary in the Sedgehill area both residential properties. You have a very low level of antisocial behaviour occurring within both areas which is good news, there has been 0 reports for the year. Zero Reports of Criminal damage for both areas over the past year. Two reports of Theft for the Semley area they include one report of a stolen vehicle and one report of a stolen trailer.

Crime data released by the Office for National Statistics shows a decrease in overall recorded crime across Wiltshire, with significant reduction being seen in areas identified as priorities for the force by Chief Constable Catherine Roper - burglary, violence, and safer public spaces.

The local neighbourhood team will be increasing their presence in the rural community which will involve a higher level of patrols in the area. This gives local communities the opportunity to engage with officers and express any concerns they may have and to ask for any advice they may require.

The Bobby Van Trust, a registered charity who work alongside Wiltshire Police and offer a completely free service to anyone over 60 (or over 18 and registered disabled). They offer a free Home Security service which includes checks for door and window locks, lighting, dummy CCTV cameras and more. They also offer a Stay Safe Online service which will help prevent any fraud related offences occurring. Their contact number is 01225 256867 and their website is BobbyVanOnlineSafety@wbvt.org

Please sign up to the Community Messaging service, where you can get up to date information on what is going on in your area (QR code available).

Highways Report:

Road repairs - In retrospect, this has been a very frustrating year in terms of getting any progress made in the repairs to our parish road network. The key sections of road that continue to cause concern remain the same, despite some arbitrary patching work. The pace of repairs is far too slow and more frustrating than any of us would like.

- Road up Calle Hill out of Semley towards Wincombe
- Road leading up to Gutch Common off Calais Hill
- Flood damage along Station Road

Calle Hill - This section of road leading out of Semley up through the woods towards Shaftesbury (Calle Hill) has long been a cause for concern. The surface along much of its length has now disintegrated. Potholes are regularly identified, photographed and submitted to Wiltshire Council on their reporting app for the Parish Steward to tackle on his monthly visits. Unfortunately, this patching work only lasts for a very short period.

The resurfacing of this entire stretch of road from the junction leading up to Gutch Common all the way up to Wincombe Lodge at the top of the hill is now listed on the Area Board Schedule. However, despite efforts to get a date confirmed for this work, it remains vague, listed as 2024 / 5. I have been promised further detail by Nick Holder who has just taken over from Caroline Thomas as Cabinet Member for Highways. All that seems to have happened recently is a road inspection by the Major Maintenance Team with a view to assessment and inclusion in the Councils Additional Highways Investment work stream. Given the state of our roads is regularly reported to Highways, I would have thought that they had more than enough detailed information about where urgent repairs were needed.

We will continue to lobby for action to deal with this terrible state of disrepair.

Gutch Common - The lanes leading up to Gutch Common from Calle Hill have deteriorated badly in recent months, especially after the extreme conditions they were exposed to during last autumn and winter. At one-point hopes were raised when a works team arrived but they ended up just resurfacing a short section near the lower junction. Inexplicably the section further up the road which has the most severe potholes was left untouched. Applications for repair work for this section are submitted regularly.

FLOODING - Station Road. Severe flooding in October last year highlighted issues with blocked drains and gullies along Station Road. Remedial work has been undertaken and we have requested regular inspections of the drains, initially by the Parish Steward, to remedy the problem himself or request further assistance if the work is too extensive for him.

We requested a visit from the drain-jetting team and their efforts appear to have had a positive effect in controlling the run-off and keeping water levels under control. We have asked residents and business owners to report any further issues with flooding so we can take remedial action as necessary.

Alongside water damage there would appear to be an increase in traffic, particularly large lorries, along Station Road, which is leading to a deterioration of the surface, including potholes. We will monitor this stretch of road on a regular basis and report issues directly to Wiltshire Highways Dept.

TRAFFIC SURVEYS - We have put in an application for traffic surveys to be installed along the road running through Huggler's Hole to get a clearer picture of traffic volumes and speed as there appears to have been an increase in traffic over the last few months.

ROAD SAFETY - Although not actually within our parish, there is a junction with Wincombe Lane joining the A350 which is regularly used by our residents, and which has proved dangerous for some time. A number of residents have been involved in collisions there. We

are working with Donhead St Mary Parish Council to explore possible safety measures to improve this junction. Initial ideas have been provided by Highways and we are discussing their feasibility and potential effectiveness. Any works will come at some cost, and we will need to gain a clear idea of the level of support any such scheme will require.

Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group Report:
Cllr. Hellon replaced T Barton on the WG.
The working group continues to monitor WC response to Climate Change emergency.
In recent years we have seen an increased frequency of serious flash flooding.

1. Participated in Wiltshire Council Operational Flood WG meetings. Attendees include WC Highways, Environmental Agency, Wessex Water and Parish / Town Councils. The meetings provide updates on WC and PC initiatives and best practice.
2. Initiated alleviation of road surface water at corner of junction opposite Stanford Cottages, and improved drainage under road from common adjacent to Baptist Chapel.
3. Initiated discussion re alleviation of flooding along footpath adjacent to Church Green opposite St. Leonards church.
4. Monitoring Tisbury PC initiatives to alleviate flooding of the Nadder. These may include trying to reduce the flow of water upstream of Tisbury (towards Semley) during periods of heavy rain that could reduce the flow of the Sem.

Submitted SSPC response to Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 4 Survey in August 2023: with focus on improved rural connectivity and decarbonisation.
A meeting on March 25th 2024 regarding preparation and seeding of Wildflower areas in Sedgehill. Unfortunately, the very wet winter months have delayed the start of work, but we now want to move ahead as the ground is now drying out.

8. Parish Council Accounts:
Opening balance as at 1st April 2023 was £24,146.85 plus receipts of £16,799.15 less payments of £11,400.84 = book balance of £29,545.15 as at 31st March 2024. Less pre-allocated funds of £17,699.62 gives a working balance of £11,845.54

9. Bracher Trust:
Awaiting bank statement which will be very similar to May 2023 of £369.40. Due to modern day times and changes in lifestyle, consideration and enquires is being made into the possibility of closing this charity.

With no further business the meeting was closed at 8.00pm.

Minutes adopted:

Date: … 12th May 2025 ….. Name: … Cllr David Curless .. Signature: … David Curless…