

---

**GREAT SOMERFORD  
(INCORPORATING STARTLEY) PARISH COUNCIL**

---

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting - DRAFT  
17 May 2023  
Community Room @ 7.30 pm**

**Present**

Cllr M Griffiths	Cllr F Miles
Cllr J Harper	Cllr T Sturgis
Cllr A Lennox	Cllr D Todd
Cllr H Lennox	

**In attendance**

Cllr E Threlfall, Wiltshire 5 members of the public  
Clerk, H Wallace

**Intro**

Cllr Griffiths welcomed those present and introduced councillors who would be speaking on different topics during the meeting, which are all documented in the Chair's Report.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies received from Cllr Barker and Cllr Vout

**Declaration(s) of Interest**

None declared

**Minutes**

**Minutes and Matters Arising from the 2022 APM**

To **approve** the Minutes of the 4 May 2022 Annual Parish meeting & consider Matters Arising.

*Note: These minutes will not be read out – copies have been on the PC website for 12 months or can be obtained from the Clerk.*

The Minutes were signed as a true and accurate record. **Proposed** Cllr A Lennox, **Seconded** Cllr Todd.

**Chair's Report**

**The Chair's report # – Cllr Meriel Griffiths**

This report includes resumes by each of the Councillors on the responsibilities they have undertaken during the year.

The Chair commenced with reading of her written report a copy of which is an Appendix to these Minutes.

It was highlighted to parishioners that booking the community room could be done by contacting Cllr Todd and that further details are on the website

Cllr Miles read a report regarding the Best Kept Village and the comments that had been made at the 2022 visit. **Action:** Requests for weed picking will be put on the village Facebook – Cllr Miles

The Parish Information Email (PIE) system was mentioned, with gratitude to former Chair, Stephen Mansfield for continuing to do these emails as well as update the Parish Council website.

Improvements have been made in terms of accessibility to the defibrillators and there are plans to run a First Aid and defibrillator course next year. The church defibrillator is going up on the outside of the church imminently. The Emergency Plan is being updated and will go on the website, once completed. Cllr Threlfall commented that representatives of the police and fire services would be at the Malmesbury Area Board meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June. **Action:** Cllr Todd to read the emergency plan and see if it is possible to speak with emergency services at the meeting in order to assist Cllr H Lennox with completing the plan.

Finance – an overview was given in accordance with the report within the Chair's report. A modest surplus was made last year. CIL funds still need to be invested but within restricted terms of use. The monies need to be spent within 5 years.

Cllr Griffiths then gave a summary of CIL spending and future plans. Good feedback was given about the new slide.

It was reported that Councillors have considered and rejected a large number of ideas. CIL only covers the capital elements. The public are asked to put forward any ideas for projects that fall within the guidelines (see Appendix below).

An update regarding footpaths was given. Signage is not always adequate, so once all the footpaths have been walked a list of improvements will be put forward and some CIL money may be used for minor upgrades. A report with photographs is being prepared currently.

Cllr Griffiths read out the highways information update on behalf of Cllr Vout, which covered the key issues being experienced on the roads. Public are urged to report items via the MyWilts app.

Cllr A Lennox presented information regarding the Neighbourhood Plan, sharing disappointment at the lack of weight given to the document in the planning granted for Broadfield Farm development. Additionally, more than 150 comments from local parishioners did not change the outcome. The current Neighbourhood Plan doesn't specifically say not to build outside the village boundaries, which will be addressed in a revision. Councillors are in touch with Wiltshire council about aspects to consider for the next Plan what would be needed to introduce a 20 mph zone. The aim is for the Neighbourhood Plan to be re-written in the next 12 months.

Speed indicator devices (SIDs) have been purchased. It has taken a long time for Highways to approve the use of the devices and their placement. They have run two speed reviews in different areas. In Startley's 30 mph zone the average speed was 38 mph and up to 62 mph has been clocked. Speed bumps were suggested but lighting in the village isn't sufficient to allow for that. More sites have been approved for SIDs.

In terms of planning, it was discussed that due to living in a conservation area, most applications are about trimming trees which are almost all approved. Developments can be approved due to Wiltshire not having a five year land supply, which is actually caused by building faster than needed. The Recreation Area Working Group are liaising with the Diocese of Bristol, who are the owners of the Glebe Field for a small area to kick a ball. Latest news from the Diocese is that progress is being made, but Cllr Sturgis will keep chasing.

Cllr H. Lennox read out a summary from the Chair's report regarding the

cemetery, particularly about the ground conditions. A new noticeboard is on order and will be installed soon.

Village reports **Village Matters**

- i School Report # –  
Cath Rambridge from SHASA (the parent, teacher association of the school) presented that the committee is very active and part of the life of the school. They have recently focused on furniture for key stage one and an interactive whiteboard. They were grateful to the Parish Council for their donation towards that. They are now looking to fund new play zones in the playground. Funding largely comes from events like bingo and wreath-making and so on, which keeps the committee busy. The Parish Council invited SHASA to put in another grant for the current financial year.
- ii Report from the Trustees of the Free Gardens # – Trustee M Griffiths  
The Free Gardens report was given in accordance with the written report. Parishioners were asked to contact Cllr Barker if they would like a plot.
- iii Report from the Trustees of the Great Somerford Community Fund – Trustee C Blount  
A quick reminder to parishioners that private donations could be gift-aided. There is currently a £5,000 donation which is ring-fenced. The written report as attached was read out to those present.

Wiltshire report

**Wiltshire Council Report** – Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall

The financial situation at Wiltshire Council is much healthier than some other councils due to strict control. Potholes are a constant issue at the moment, but they are starting to catch up. Again, the public were urged to report on the MyWilts App. The council are looking to secure the road at Lyneham Banks and make it safe - it will take some time. Cllr Threlfall will chase getting gullies cleared, and the large tree on Hollow Street has been reported for assessment. An application for a 20 mph zone past Somerfords' Walter Powell School needs to come from the school. The Parish Council can complete the form but it needs to be signed off by the Headteacher of the school. SHASA offered to follow up on the speed issue.

Public Questions and AOB

A chance for the public to raise any questions or queries on issues relating to the parish. There were no other questions that had not been covered during the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Approved  Chair

Date 8/5/2024

Appendix 1: The Chair's Report (including Village Reports)

## **Chair's Report to the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting**

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

### **Part I**

#### **Great Somerford Parish Council Report**

##### **1. Introduction – Cllr Griffiths**

The Parish Council has met every month this year, apart from August and December. We were pleased to be able to return to holding meetings in the Community Room once the COVID social distancing requirements had been relaxed.

Parish Council Meetings continue to be held at 7.30 pm on the first Wednesday of each month with the exception of the January meeting, which remains as the second Wednesday. There will be no meetings in August or December unless otherwise notified. All members of the public and press are welcome, and the first 10 minutes of each meeting is scheduled for any questions or issues to be raised by members of the public.

We are once again fortunate to have a "full house" of nine parish councillors, having welcomed Cllr Miles and Cllr Todd, as well as our new parish clerk, Helen Wallace. We were very saddened to report the death of Cllr Dave Butcher, who was a dedicated parish councillor for many years. We are also grateful to Mrs Butcher, who has until recently continued to manage the bookings for the Community Room. We are pleased to have found a new caretaker, Mrs Claire Brown, who is looking after the Community Room beautifully, while Cllr Todd has kindly taken on responsibility for the bookings, details for which are available on the Great Somerford Parish Council website.

<https://www.greatsomerfordparishcouncil.co.uk/community-room/>

##### **2. Best Kept Village Competition – Cllr Miles**

Great Somerford entered the Best Kept Village Competition in 2022 and was delighted to come fourth in the Medium Village category for the whole of Wiltshire, having come first in

the local North Wiltshire category. I thought I would read the report out in full, because it's a rather good celebration of our parish and its inhabitants:

*The judges said: "We started our visit by parking in the church car park and walking up to the church with the extremely impressive planting scheme to our left, which is beautifully tended.*

*The church feels very welcoming and was immaculate in every way. The churchyard is also very well looked after.*

*From here we made our way to the Free Gardens allotments, clearly the biggest the judges have ever seen! We spent a lot of time wandering around this area, admiring the produce being grown and the composting skills of the gardeners and enjoying the well mown paths that make each allotment accessible. A really special feature of this village, with a very useful board explaining the history of this area.*

*We were very impressed with the re-wilding of verges in some areas and the complete absence of any litter or rubbish. The edges of the roads throughout the built-up areas of the village also appeared weed free.*

*The War Memorial is well tended, and the play area has been very well designed with the useful addition of a gazebo.*

*Great Somerford appears to be an extremely friendly and active village, where new residents appear to have integrated well.*

*There is a lot of very useful information on the village website and clearly the village came together to look after vulnerable residents during the COVID pandemic. The Parish Council is also taking serious action to combat speeding in the village and protect residents.*

*There is a real effort to promote looking after the environment and to live as sustainably as possible. We were impressed with the very useful links on the website which offer help and advice in many areas and encourage green and sustainable gardens.*

*We could not find any areas of the village that warranted negative comments. The only negative comment would be that the map submitted could have more clearly marked the areas that the judges should have visited, which is a minor point.*

*We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to Great Somerford, a beautiful village with much to commend it."*

Francis Miles is coordinating our entry for 2023, and we would be grateful for any help that you can all give her to ensure our continued success. Cllr Miles would like to point out that the map has been redesigned for this year's submission, and the judges' attention has been drawn to some community events in the past year. Perhaps they will attend on the day of the village's Coronation celebration in the showground on 28<sup>th</sup> May! The village seems permanently clear from litter so residents must be kind enough to pick up what they can see, and a special thanks to the villager who regularly clears the road between Great Somerford and Startley of all litter. It is true that the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), who sponsor the competitions, are increasingly concerned with the qualities of community life, rather than pristine and manicured settings.

### **3. Communications – The Parish Information Email (PIE) System – Cllr Griffiths**

The Parish Information email system was initiated in 2019 and is used to convey any generally useful information to those that have signed up – this includes local road closures and community events. It is very easy to sign up – just click on the "Sign Up to the Parish Information Email" link on the Parish Council website.

<https://www.greatsomerfordparishcouncil.co.uk/parish-information-e-mail/>

No personal details that you enter will be shared with any third party.

We are grateful to former Cllr Stephen Mansfield who has continued to maintain the PIE system for us, as well as the Parish Council website.

### **4. Defibrillators – Cllr Todd**

We now have two Defibrillators: The first is located in the former public phone box outside the Volunteer Inn in Great Somerford, and the second at The Grove house by the T-Junction in Startley, with the kind permission of the owners. Should you need to use a defibrillator during an emergency, the instructions are spoken automatically, as soon as you open up the defibrillator case. Note: Both Defibrillator storage box 'Access Codes' are now on display at each location, and/or available when you call 999.

A well-attended First Aid and defibrillator course was held in the Church in September 2022 with another First Aid course to be organised in 2024.



## **5. Emergency Plan – Cllr H Lennox**

The Emergency Plan is still being updated, but this is proving difficult to finalise, given the reticence of the Police and Fire Services to engage in conversation concerning the risks and responses. As the climate is changing, so are the possible scenarios we, as a parish, may have to face in the future, and it is therefore necessary to have an Emergency Plan that reflects these issues and allows us to respond to the needs of the inhabitants, whilst not impeding the work of the emergency services. The existing Emergency Plan, though out of date, still provides a framework for the basic outlines of parish response and following consultation with the relevant bodies, the updated version will be promulgated and volunteers sought to assist in a more formal capacity, with clearly defined roles and training where necessary, in order to respond to any given situation in a timely fashion when required.

## **6. Financial Update for 2022/23 – Cllr Harper**

Great Somerford Parish Council finances continue to be robust. Total income during the financial year was £54,829, of which £14,400 was the annual precept from Wiltshire Council and the remainder from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Parish Council's main operating expenses include paying the Parish Clerk, running the Community Room, cutting the grass in the parish's public spaces and Startley cemetery, maintaining the Winkins Lane Play Area and emptying the dog waste bins. The Parish Council also makes grants to various community causes, such as the "Signpost" newsletter, the Church, the Free Gardens and Somerfords Walter Powell School. A substantial donation was also made during 2022 to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebration, which supported a highly successful and very well-attended street party. For the full year the Parish Council made a small operating surplus, in line with expectations.

CIL money is provided to help to fund community capital projects when new houses are built in the parish, as they have been recently at Somerbrook, Broadfield Farm and Demainbray Close. Total CIL receipts over the past two years total c£94,000 and the majority remains unspent. Total CIL money spent to date amounts to less than £20,000. The levy has funded several Speed Indication Devices (SIDs), public footpath gates and

stiles, dog waste bins, a heater, a defibrillator and its biggest outlay to date will be a new slide in the Winkins Lane Play Area. However, this will leave over £80,000 that needs to be invested over the next 3-4 years, after which time any unspent funds will be returned to Wiltshire Council. Further receipts are to be expected in a couple of years' time post-completion of the 21-house extension to Broadfield Farm.

The Parish Council is currently exploring various options and would welcome more ideas from villagers, with the caveat that any proposals have to comply with the CIL money regulations. Parish Councils must use the CIL receipts passed to it to support the development of a Parish Council's area by funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on the area. Details are available on the Government website at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy#spending-the-levy>

The precept for 2023/24 has been raised to £16,400, driven by a 7% increase per average household and a greater number of houses now on the register. This rise is necessary to continue to provide the parish with a similar level of service in an inflationary environment, and the surplus is not expected to be any greater than during the last year. One positive development is the recent rise in interest rates, which should enable the Parish Council to earn a meaningful return on its cash balances. This should increase income by several thousand pounds over the next couple of years, at least whilst CIL balances remain elevated.

## **7. Footpaths – Cllrs Barker and Miles**

The footpaths have benefitted from the new stiles and kissing gates that have been installed with the CIL money, and the Parish Council is grateful to the landowners that have installed these to improve access to public rights of way. During the year there have been several storms that have been instrumental in bringing down some trees and restricting access, but the local landowners have been quick and efficient to clear the way. The 2023-2024 inspection of all footpaths in the parish has been started and will be completed by the June meeting of the Parish Council, when some more improvements will be brought for consideration to the meeting.



## **8. Highways – Cllr Vout**

Highways have had a challenging year: from dealing with the heat of last summer and the deep freeze of the winter to the torrential downpours this spring. To future proof our parish against this more extreme weather, the Parish Council has renewed emergency plans so footpaths are made safe and accessible in challenging conditions.

The roads, as I'm sure you've noticed, have been plagued by potholes the last few months. Wiltshire Council's Parish Stewards have been off their regular rounds for the last 3 - 4 months, tirelessly working to repair the roads that have been degraded by the weather. We are told they are soon to be on top of the potholes and back on regular rounds maintaining our parish roads and footpaths.

## **9. Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr A Lennox**

Throughout the past year, the application for planning permission at Broadfield Farm (part 2) has been of great focus for the Parish Council. As part of the submission to the Planning Inspector we once again confirmed that our Neighbourhood Plan was "made" (valid) until 2026, and we provided a report detailing our review of the Neighbourhood Plan against its stated objectives and approved areas of construction. Whilst it was accepted that our Neighbourhood Plan had been adhered to, the Inspector applied less weight to it, as it had not explicitly stated that construction projects outside the village boundaries would be prohibited.

As a result, it is clear that the Neighbourhood Plan will have to be reworked and submitted ahead of the next planned review date of 2026. In the coming year, the Parish Council will seek to start that consultation process, in order to create the next Neighbourhood Plan out to 2033.

## **10. Planning and Housing Developments Report – Cllrs H Lennox and T Sturgis**

Great Somerford & Startley Parish Council acts as a statutory consultee for any application for planning permission that is made to Wiltshire Council in respect of properties located within the parish. The Parish Council is able to comment on those applications and take

into account the known views of any residents of the parish. Comments are restricted to commenting on whether the Parish Council feels the application will meet the various national and Wiltshire Council planning standards. The Parish Council does not make a decision on whether an application for planning permission should be granted or refused, this is undertaken by Wiltshire Council. Residents are encouraged to seek the advice of the Parish Council if they are considering undertaking any work that may need planning permission to be sought. For properties that are located within the Great Somerford conservation area, this includes work to trees and some hedgerows. Properties that are located within the Great Somerford conservation area also do not have the benefit of the "permissive rights" that other properties have, which allows certain types of works to be completed without planning permission e.g., the construction of small extensions, erection of temporary structures such as garages and large sheds etc

Broadfield Farm. Planning Application for 21 houses (21101950) dated 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021: On the 22<sup>nd</sup> March this year, the Planning Inspectorate allowed the appeal for 21 houses after this was refused by Wiltshire Council's Strategic Planning Committee in February 2022. The members of the Strategic Planning Committee agreed with the Parish Council's objections, and gave more weight to these and the Council's Policies than to the lack of 5 year housing supply across the whole of Wiltshire, in making their decision.

The Inspector in reaching his decision on the Appeal appeared to give little, if any, weight to the Parish Council objections, ignoring parts of the Neighbourhood Plan on requirement for greater percentage of lower cost, smaller market housing. He also dismissed Wiltshire Council Policies giving far more weight to the National Policy to grant permission, where the Local Planning Authority, Wiltshire Council, could not demonstrate a five-year supply.

### **Recreation Area Working Group – Cllr Vout**

This last year, the Recreation Area Working Group, which comprises both parish councillors and volunteers and is led by Cllr Vout, has been able to identify three main areas that could have potential for a grassy area in which children could run and play a variety of games.

Through our due diligence, we have narrowed this down to one area. We are currently liaising with the owners of the land to agree a framework in which we can secure this much sought-after and needed village amenity for years to come.

Once an agreement has been made, we envisage that work can begin to flatten and improve the patch of land in early winter.

### **Road Safety – Cllr A Lennox**

A new Speed Indicator Device (SID) was purchased in June 2022, and installed in Startley in July using CIL money. It differs from the original SID by displaying the actual speed of the vehicle against the stated limit. Feedback received from local residents has been positive.

Whilst this SID has been an improvement, the Parish Council also requested a Metro Count on the Startley Road, which unfortunately indicates that the *average* speed remains 38mph in the 30mph zone. Further traffic calming measures have been considered, such as speed bumps, and we await further feedback from Highways.

Three further sites for SIDs have been approved by Highways on Dauntsey Road, Park Lane, and further up Startley Road, and the Parish Council will be consulting with local residents in those areas to permit the installation of appropriate sign poles. An additional SID will be purchased to allow rotation between all sites.

### **11. Startley Cemetery – Cllr H Lennox**

The Startley Cemetery is in good order following on from the ground issues of last summer when the extreme heat and dry weather caused the clay soil to shrink, leaving large gaps around the edges of some of the grave plots. These were filled with a mixture of topsoil and spoil left over from an excavation, but it is anticipated that if this summer follows last year's pattern, the process will repeat itself and will need to be further addressed. Maintenance has been upheld and trees, grass and hedges are neat and tidy, the hedges having been reduced in height to allow the neighbours greater light ingress. A new noticeboard is on order to replace the current wooden one, which has rotted through the bottom of the posts, and has allowed water ingress through to the notices. Ground heave has resulted in a few of the gravestones collapsing and breaking, but they do not

pose a danger to the public and it has not been possible to trace the family members. Overall, the Startley Cemetery remains a peaceful and pleasant space for reflection.

### **12. Telephone Box Library – Cllr Todd**

As ever, the Telephone Box Library is well used as a village library/book swap, and the Parish Council would like to thank the volunteers who help look after it and update the library shelves from time to time.

### **13. Winkins Lane Play Area – Cllr Vout**

The Winkins Lane playground continues to be a much loved and well-used amenity in the village.

This year, we heard many of the villagers who use the playground mentioned the slide 'not being slidey', as well as the challenge (even as an adult) to get up the mound after wet weather, without needing a change of clothes.

So this year, with the help of the CIL money, we decided upgrade this apparatus, bringing it up to current safety standards, renewing the hill on which it sits, adding in grass-lock matting to protect it from further erosion, installing steps for easy access and improving the functionality of the slide itself.

Cllr Meriel Griffiths

Chair of Great Somerford inc Startley Parish Council

May 2023

## **Part II**

### **Village Matters - Great Somerford Community Groups' Reports**

#### **Free Gardens Charity – Tracy Barker**

The Great Somerford Free Gardens were established in 1809 by the Reverend Steven Demainbray and are the oldest allotments in England. The Parish Councillors of Great Somerford are Trustees of the Free Gardens unincorporated charity which is run independently and separately from the Parish Council. The Trustees of the Free Gardens are in the process of transforming the Free Gardens unincorporated charity into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), in order to bring it into line with modern legislation and regulation, and to preserve this important historic space for future generations. A Public Consultation was held on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023, and work on this transformation is currently ongoing.

In terms of operations, the Free Gardens allotments are growing from strength to strength in popularity and now have 70 allotment holders. We are most grateful to the Allotment Holders Association for their continued support and the extremely useful volunteer working parties that they have organised in order to help keep maintenance costs as low as possible.

We were regretful to lose the services of former Free Gardens Charity Trustee, Janice Botterill this year, as she knew so many of the allotment holders and is a great advocate for the benefits of allotment gardening.

Six subdivided plots have now been created: The smaller plots do mean that more people can partake in the activity. There are 5 plots that are too dry for successful vegetable cultivation and have been put aside for a community fruit tree project. We welcome input from any volunteers who would like to get involved in this project. There are also 4 previously cultivated plots that are now vacant and two that have not been cultivated yet, that are available. If anyone would like to take up a plot, please contact Tracy Barker.

The Allotment Holders recently organised a working party to 'lift the skirt' of the trees in the Jubilee Gardens and this was well attended. The Trustees and Lee Butcher, the maintenance contractor, are very grateful. The Allotment Holders have suggested two more work parties in the coming year to finish off the other half of the trees. In addition, Toby Sturgis, a Trustee of the Free Gardens, kindly cut back the hedge on the Dauntsey Road, allowing a considerable amount of money to be saved.

There is still discussion about CIL money for projects and the Trustees have suggested that at their next Steering Group meeting, the allotment holders might consider putting a bid together and completing the CIL application form, in order to make an application to the Parish Council. Projects under discussion include a second water pump, gazebo meeting point and communal accessible allotment.

### **Great Somerford Community Fund (GSCF) – Christopher Blount**

The GSCF was created in 2019 so that private donations for new equipment for the play area in could be gift aided, as requested by some potential donors, as it is not possible for the Parish Council to claim Gift Aid on such donations.

The GSCF has a donation of £5,000 from Stonewood, the developers of Somerbrook, which is ring-fenced for preliminary work towards a recreation ground, when it has been agreed where it will be located.

In the meantime the GSCF has recently agreed that all children aged 11 and under in the parish should receive an inscribed Coronation Mug to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023. The GSCF has raised £470 from local residents and the Parish Council is contributing the balance of around £200. We hope to present mugs to around 100 children in the next couple of weeks.

### **Somerfords Walter Powell School – SHASA Report – Cath Rambridge**

The Somerfords' Home and School Association (SHASA) is the fundraising organisation for Somerfords' Walter Powell Primary School and Pre School. We support our school by fundraising to enhance, enrich and improve learning experiences for the children. This includes learning resources in the classroom, school trips and events. SHASA continues to



be very well supported by families at the school and the local community.

Our fundraising efforts have recently focused on raising funds for new furniture for the Key Stage 1 classroom and the purchase of a mobile interactive whiteboard to create a breakout classroom at school to help with small-group teaching. Our main focus this academic year is to raise funds to support the creation of new play zones in the playground, including a construction area, mud kitchen and cafe, and an area for small world play.

Our funding largely comes from events which have included our Harvest Cafe, Rock n Roll Bingo and Wreath Making. We are very grateful for the support we receive via grants. The £500 generously awarded by the Parish Council in November 2022 was allocated towards the costs of the mobile interactive whiteboard. We have also received grants from the Malmesbury Carnival, the Dyson Foundation and donations from local events.

