



SEAVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Parish **Sue Doble**

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of the Parish of Seavington St Mary and St Michael
held at Seavington Millennium Hall on Tuesday 18th March 2025 at 6.00pm.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Present: Cllr A Doble, Cllr A Broad, Cllr C Reyland, Cllr N England, Cllr M Langley, Cllr C Taylor, Mrs S Doble (Clerk)

Apologies: Ian Pamplin.

Also Present: There were 16 members of the public present.

2. Question Time

The Parish Council were asked why it seems that minutes are no longer on the website, the Council checked the website during the meeting and it is evident that the minutes were live on the website. It has been asked if they could be numbered so they appear on the website in the right order. It was felt by residents that the Parish Council are not wanting villagers to know what is going on.

A resident asked how the Parish Council communicated the rise in the precept to the villager, and stated that it is the Parish Council statutory duty to tell the residents, it was therefore suggested by the residents that the precept rise should have been explained and published in the Seavington News.

It was reported to the Parish Council that a resident was out sweeping the road in School Lane, the Parish Council confirmed that Somerset Highways are sending a sweeper to clear the debris which was washed from the top corner during the recent floods.

It was questioned why the precept has gone up. The Councillors advised that we have to keep putting it up due to Somerset Council putting more and more onto the Parishes. The Ranger itself went from £23.00 per hour to £46.00 per hour this year.

The Parish Council have agreed that communication needs to be improved and find another way of informing the villagers of decisions being made. Facebook is one option that could be looked at.

A resident did however advise that as individuals it is their responsibility of keeping in touch and to attend Parish Council meetings to obtain information; if you want to know what is going on you must make your own effort to find out.

It has been suggested that Council set a Resolution to Resolve at the next Parish Council meeting.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting Held on 19th March 2024

Members **RESOLVED** the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19th March 2024 as a correct record.

Proposed Cllr Taylor **Seconded** Cllr Langley

4. Chairman's Remarks (Summary of the Year)

Cllr Doble presented the Chairmans Report

The Parish Council has had a productive year with several important initiatives undertaken to benefit our community. This report highlights the key activities and achievements over the past year.

Two new bins have been installed to replace the old, tired, and dilapidated ones. These new bins come with covers over the top to prevent rainwater from filling them and to stop birds from emptying their contents.

With the assistance of the Community Land Trust (CLT), a new picnic bench that is both disabled and pushchair friendly has been installed, providing an inclusive space for all members of our community to enjoy.

We are currently in the process of changing our Ranger. Unfortunately, the candidate we had initially lined up let us down. We are actively arranging for a new Ranger to ensure continued support and maintenance of our parish.

We have allocated a grant to the Seavington Playing Field Association (SPFA) for a water softener, which will help protect the new appliances in the facility. This grant is a testament to our commitment to supporting local amenities and ensuring their longevity.

One of the significant problems we faced this year was fly-tipping. It has been a persistent issue within the parish, and we are working diligently to address it through increased surveillance and proactive reporting to minimise the time the fly-tipping is on site.

Highways issues have been a focal point this year. We have reported numerous potholes and dealt with various drainage problems. These efforts are crucial in maintaining the safety and usability of our roads.

Given the recent flooding, the Parish Council is prioritizing measures to mitigate future flood risks. Our current focus includes:

- Increasing drain clearance efforts.
- Implementing pipe jetting to clear blockages and improve water flow.
- Reviewing and revitalizing previous flood alleviation schemes that have deteriorated over time.

The Parish Council remains dedicated to improving the quality of life for all residents. Through continued efforts in waste management, infrastructure maintenance, and flood prevention, we are committed to addressing the needs and challenges of our community. We look forward to another year of progress and collaboration.

5. Financial Update

The Clerk/RFO presented the following report for the year 2024-2025:

The precept for the year 2024/25 was £37,507.51 which was an increase of just over £15,000. This was mainly due to the extra liabilities and costs involved which Somerset Council threatened pass onto the Parish Councils.

The VAT reclaimed from the financial year of 2023-24 was £3,182.29.

Even though our reserves currently stand at a good figure of £19,678.80 this needs to be increased as Parish Councils are advised to have the equivalent to one year's precept in hand.

At present the Parish Council has kept within budget, even though there will be more payments due before the end of the financial year.

The Ranger this year has had a significant rise of over 75% compared to last year, this is due to the eye watering price set by Somerset Council. I am however, in the process of obtaining quotes from the private sector for this coming year.

The Parish Council has given a small grant of £1,325.00 to the SPFA to purchase a water softener which was needed to extend the life of the new appliances in the kitchen.

If anyone has any questions please ask.

6. Village Organisations Reports

Seavington Playing Fields Association and Millennium Hall

Cllr A Doble – Chairman, Seavington Playing Fields Association and Millennium Hall presented the following report:

The Seavington Playing Field Association (SPFA) has had a productive and eventful year, with several noteworthy developments and achievements. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the key events, improvements, and challenges faced by the association over the past year.

We are pleased to announce the appointment of a new cleaner who has been instrumental in maintaining the cleanliness and hygiene standards of our facilities. Their efforts have been highly appreciated by all users of the hall and associated amenities.

This year, we organized two major fundraising events that were met with great enthusiasm and support from the community.

- Quiz Fundraiser: The quiz night fundraiser was a tremendous success, raising over £300. The event brought together participants of all ages, fostering a sense of community spirit and friendly competition.
- Race Night Fundraiser: The race night fundraiser surpassed our expectations, raising over £600. The event was well-attended, and the proceeds will significantly contribute to the ongoing maintenance and improvement of our facilities.

Several improvements have been made over the year, enhancing the experience for all users.

- New Kitchen: We are proud to unveil our new kitchen, which has received many positive reviews from users. The modern amenities and improved layout have made it a preferred choice for events and gatherings.
- Projector Alterations: Alterations have been made to our projector system to minimize the technical issues previously encountered by hirers. We hope these changes will enhance the user experience and reduce disruptions during events.

In our efforts to expand the scope of events we can host; we have successfully obtained an alcohol license. This will allow us to host a wider variety of fundraisers and social gatherings, ultimately benefiting the association and the community.

However, we have faced some challenges in the legal domain. We are currently involved in a small claims court case with one of the hirers who failed to settle multiple invoices. The case is ongoing, and we are committed to resolving the matter in the best interests of the association.

Despite our successes, we have encountered some setbacks, including minor damage caused by a regular hirer. This issue has been addressed, and we have implemented a review structure to prevent further occurrences. We believe that these measures will help maintain the quality and integrity of our facilities.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported the Seavington Playing Field Association both financially and physically this year. Your contributions have been invaluable, and we look forward to your continued support in the future.

The Seavington Playing Field Association has made significant strides this year, thanks to the dedication and support of our community. We remain committed to improving our facilities and services, ensuring that the hall and playing field remains valuable assets for all. Thank you for your unwavering support, and we look forward to another successful year ahead.

Community Shop and Cafe

Karen Ogden - Presented the following report on behalf of Ian Pamplin (chairman)

As I have only been in office as Chairman since August I apologise if this report is briefer than previous years, however even though the challenges of the current economic climate have had an impact on the shop and café we continue on a stable footing.

During the last year we have completed the refurbishment of the till area which has made the shop more open and welcoming, the Café has been redecorated and new furniture procured which has had the same effect. The improvements have been noticed and commented on by many customers.

There have been some capital costs expended this year, these included a replacement Dish Washer for the Café and the replacement of the original extract fan in the kitchen. We now have a proper commercial cooker hood, which helps to improve the atmosphere in the Café, literally, by reducing the noise of the original fan and extracting all the cooking smells that used to pervade the dining area and shop.

One other event that caused us disruption and additional unplanned costs was a break-in. On the 11th of October at 4:00am, two individuals smashed their way through the front door and the doors to the Storeroom and the Office. They caused considerable damage but only went away with an old laptop. Fortunately, the costs were minimal and an insurance claim not necessary. The Police were informed but no one has been apprehended.

Looking forward, the economic climate is still and will continue to make life challenging particularly with the continual rise in energy costs, staff costs, business rates and the cost of living. Even so, as a committee we believe still have a bright future and we can accommodate these increases without compromising the quality of the service and goods we provide.

One of our major targets for the ensuing year is to find more volunteers to help us, for when people leave, we are finding it more and more difficult to replace them.

There have been one or two changes in the committee structure in the past year but the core of members are working hard to secure the future of the shop and café and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all the members of the committee, past and present, for their support in my brief tenure as Chair, I would also like to thank all of the staff and volunteers who work so hard to keep us afloat.

Thanks also to the parish for their support and I hope that 2025/26 will be another successful year.

The Seavington News

Stephen Morris – Editor, The Seavington News presented the following report:

Throughout the past twelve months The Seavingtons' News team has continued to produce a monthly issue of the magazine, which is delivered free of charge to every household and business in the two villages. Additional copies are always made available in the Shop, Millennium Hall and The Volunteer for visitors from outside the village.

Every effort has been made to balance regular notices and advertisements with feature articles to make the magazine a more interesting read. Frequently the magazine runs to 40 pages, including front and back covers. Securing feature copy is not easy but particular thanks are due to Zoe Langley-Wathen, Roger Wotton and Paul Nichols, supplier of Sydney Vaux photos and explanatory text, who were all regular contributors.

The Reverend Tracey used to write a monthly 'Revs Ramblings' column but when she left the parish Amanda Jagers seamlessly filled the brief with "Warden's Witterings".

This time last year I reflected on my cancer diagnosis and the vulnerability of the magazine to the health of the Editor, who not only assembles and edits copy but writes feature articles and prints the magazine. I was pleased to report that John Hanratty had agreed to come on board to share the editorial role. Unexpectedly that support was short lived and John has been unable to continue as co-editor.

Towards the end of last year, I indicated my decision to retire from the role with effect from the end of March. The April edition would be my last. The initial appeal for a replacement editorial team was most disappointing and there was a very real possibility that the April edition would be the last. Initial plans were being considered for winding up the magazine after nearly 45 years continuous production. The lack of support from villagers is hard to understand. Have we moved away from print media in a digital world? Are those who would miss the 'News' part of a vanishing older demographic? Is there a diminished community spirit and a community magazine just isn't important?

Despite the uncertainty of recent months, I am now pleased to confirm that Amanda Jagers has indicated a willingness to be the new Editor. The hand over will start with the April edition which I will complete as originally promised. I will then work with Amanda on the subsequent two editions, helping her become familiar with the Affinity Publisher software and the general tricks of page layout, formatting and so forth. Beyond that I will always be available to help with any queries Amanda might have. I am also able to confirm that Kate Marsh has agreed to print each edition, making the Editor's role simpler.

The magazine continues to enjoy a steady revenue stream from advertising, which over the past year has broadly covered the production costs. The churn in advertisers is low and the continuing support of local businesses is much appreciated.

It remains for me to thank not only Ray Thorogood and Brian Edwards, fellow members of the small management committee, but also the team of volunteers who deliver the magazine every month come rain or shine. My sincere thanks go to the regular contributors from the various village organisations and to those who write feature copy which hopefully makes The News a worthwhile read.

I wish Amanda the best of luck and hope her commitment to the role will now ensure the future of The Seavingtons' News for years to come.

The Seavington Community Land Trust

John Scofield - Seavington Community Land Trust presented the following report:

The CLT committee continues to administer the three houses in Falcon close, letting them to tenants and using the income net of expenses for village good causes.

We have just re-let one of the houses, and all are now occupied, with rents brought up to date to reflect local conditions less a discount. The houses have been maintained in very good condition, thanks to our letting's agent and his team of craftsmen.

Discussions continue with the other householders in the close to improve the Falcon Close Management Company and build up a reserve for whatever communal works might be required in the future. We are also a little closer to resolving the long-standing issue of the unfinished New Road frontage by means of meetings with the developer, County Highways, Somerset Council and other interested parties.

It's been a quiet year for grants and gifts. Those awarded include: the gardening club for floral displays, the new hall kitchen and, coming soon, a picnic table (outside the play area) for the playing field.

Our main background concern is how old we are getting; the total age of the committee is not far short of 500! New, younger volunteers eagerly sought.

It was also report that dog poo bags are taken by the handful by certain dog walkers.

The Church Wardens of Seavington St Mary and Seavington St Michael

Manda Jagers - Churchwardens presented the following report:

As most of you will know, we are in inter regnum – vacancy, following the sudden resignation of Rev Tracey in the summer. We have now completed a Parish Profile, which the PCC have to accept at their next meeting, then an advert will be placed, with interviews planned for early May. We are grateful to the retired clergy who have enabled each church to have a weekly service.

This financial year, James Satterley, a local gardener whose horses graze the field opposite St Michael's and who cares for many gardens in Seavington, has the contract for maintaining both churchyards. His quote was much less than that from SC and his work has been reliable and regular, which has eased the lives of the wardens, who had received complaints about the maintenance under the previous contract. He will continue the work next year; his charges have increased slightly. We would be grateful if the Parish Council would contribute to these costs as they have done prior to this year.

This year, St Michael's have started collecting donations of tinned and dried food for the food bank based at South Petherton Church, this follows a request by a former Seavington resident in his professional capacity as Social Prescriber with the local PCN, who has a client who relies on this in the short term. It doesn't seem appropriate to have a food share based in Seavington, but we would be grateful for donations from villagers.

Rev Simon Baker, who lives in the village, has been licensed to the Benefice, he has a wealth of experience as a former archdeacon and now as Chair of the DAC. Canon Ian Gibson conducts services in Seavington when he can, but has commitments with other benefices. We are very grateful that he continues to do home communions in Seavington. Please do encourage people to contact Anne Shaw or Manda Jagers if you are aware of anyone who needs pastoral support of any kind, whether or not they are churchgoers, we are aware that there have been some difficult situations in the village this year.

You will hopefully know that the west gable of St Michael's has been re-pointed with appropriate lime mix, in our efforts to repair the damage to the interior, caused by historical use of cement. At the same time, the wooden louvres protecting the bell tower were replaced with bespoke oak ones, which will last for many decades. The PCC paid for the louvres; St Michael's Church Trust will pay for the stonework. This is an ongoing project and the Trust will re-commence fundraising this year, after pausing when other village organisations appeared to have greater need. We are grateful that Ruth and Colin Turner at the Volunteer Inn have donated the proceeds from their monthly quiz nights during 2023 and 2024.

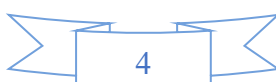
A reminder that both St Michael's and St Mary's are open all the time, there are blankets and provisions for hot drinks at St Michael's, for anyone who needs a safe and warm shelter.

7. To receive an update regarding the future of The Seavington News

The update was covered in the Seavington News report and Manda Jagers has agreed to take over as the new editor of the Seavington News. The Parish Council Chairman asked if the Seavington News constitution has been followed, it was confirmed by Stephen Morris that this was correct.

It was asked what VE Day celebrations are being planned within the village. It was advised that discussions are in place and that the hall has already been booked for the 8th May. These plans are being discussed and further information will follow.

Date of the Next Meeting: 17th March 2026



The Meeting Closed at 19.03