

SHERSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Parish Meeting of Sherston Parish Minutes of the meeting held

Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 7.30pm
Held at Sherston Village Hall

21 members of the Public Present.

Welcome and housekeeping from the Chairman, Councillor Tanya Burgess (TB)

1. Apologies received from Councillors Owen Evans and Matthew Wofinden-England
2. Minutes of Sherston Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th April 2022
 - ◆ Distributed for consideration.
 - ◆ **Resolved** to adopt and sign as a true record.
3. Council Report for 2022/23 presented to the Parish – Appendix A
4. Representations from organisations
 - ◆ Wiltshire Councillor Martin Smith – Report - Appendix B
 - ◆ Blooming Sherston – Looking to beautify Sherston and the area. Focus will be made on working with the Parish Council on the new gateways that will be installed within the Parish. Encouraging residents to take pride in their own areas and engage with Blooming Sherston.
 - ◆ Drama Group – Performances run from Tuesday through to Saturday, a community service and entertainment for the village. Looking for more people to help with the group, either on stage or behind the scenes. Funding is becoming an issue and help is needed.
 - ◆ Probus – Meets in the Rattlebone on the first Monday of the month, membership is restricted to 36 due to the location and formed of retired men in the village. The session consists of refreshments followed by a lecture on various topics and followed by a group lunch. A summer outing is usually arranged, and group activities are held.
 - ◆ Football Club – Reinstated in 2021, the club is doing really well and now 1 league below senior level with 2 teams playing. Funding is obtained through funding and memberships. More space is required as the club is looking at growing and expanding with a youth team. A grant request will be made to the Parish Council for some bins and additional resources required.
 - ◆ Tennis Club – Letter received – Thanks given to the Parish Council for the support over recent years e.g. tree felling. The tennis club is currently taking a break owing to low membership. The tennis club are happy to continue to help maintain the tennis courts for as long as possible.
 - ◆ Drawing Class – Runs every Wednesday both in the morning and afternoon in the British school rooms, currently with 10 attendees.

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5. Questions / Representation from parishioners

Members of the public raised questions and raised points, which included.

- ◆ Problems with vandalism in the area, and the possibility of using the preschool building on the rec for a youth club.
- ◆ Possibility of youth football teams and ladies/girls teams to join the football club.
- ◆ Concerns over the cycling races that go though the village, AT advised that the roads belong to highways and the Parish Council has no control over the races. The Parish Council has consulted with the event organisers and appealed to reroute due to concerns raised. Residents are encouraged to contact the organisers direct to raise concerns.
- ◆ Locations for speed cable devices, collecting the data.
- ◆ Parking opposite grays becoming an issue and residents also parking on pavements.

6. Close of Meeting – 20.55pm

Signed as a True Record.....

Date.....

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Appendix A

Report to Sherston Annual Parish Meeting on 17th May 2023

by Martin Smith - Wiltshire Councillor for the Sherston Division.

Since my report to last years Annual Parish Meeting, I have again spent much of my time on case work, which is where residents seek help with accessing various services from Wiltshire Council or seek advice and/or lobby their local councillor on planning matters.

Planning:

Although I'm told the planning team are now up to full strength, various residents have been subjected to lengthy delays in getting decisions on planning applications. I spoke to the Wiltshire Council Cabinet member for Planning only yesterday about this. He said that they are still working through backlogs and there was still a problem if ecology reports were needed, as it was very hard to recruit people with these skills. I am endeavouring to escalate delays with planning up the management chain when necessary.

GP Surgery plans:

As the Chair of the Parish Council has reported, a great deal of time has been spent on ensuring the various stakeholders in this project keep talking in a bid to make progress. We have met with the GPs and I met with James Gray MP to try to apply pressure on the Integrated Care Board (which is the relevant part of the NHS) to inject more urgency into this project.

I have also tried to improve the communication channel between the developers, Acorn, and the planners. Again my discussions yesterday may have achieved that.

We now need the GPs to submit their amended business case and then for the NHS to approve it by committing to a lease on a new building. We can then move forward with getting the building built.

School support:

In my role as a School Governor, I have also been involved in supporting Sherston Primary School with the appointment of a new headteacher who starts in September. I continue to be the Chair of Members on the Athelstan Trust, which runs Malmesbury Secondary School.

I have also been involved with tree planting at Sherston school along with colleagues from Sustainable Sherston. We will be meeting with the School Business Manager in the coming weeks to see how we can help the school improve the insulation in the building and lower their energy costs.

Pre-school/nursery:

Unfortunately we have seen no progress by Wiltshire Council officers in the search for a new supplier of a pre-school facility. This is a nationwide problem at the moment. Until the funding issues are sorted out by Government, we are unlikely to make much progress.

However, the school have been interested in setting up a pre-school in the past and once the new headteacher is in post, this will be an option I will be exploring again with them.

Highways and Speeding:

The state of the highways over the winter have been pretty shocking to be honest. Wiltshire Council are saying that the weather conditions were to blame but I sense there's been a lack of investment in roads for many years so the resilience of the road network to bad weather is now very low.

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Since 2010, local authority support from central Government has been cut. The Local Government Association, in a study, says that this support has been reduced by 16% even over the last 4 years, whilst having their council tax increases capped at 2% for much of the time. This accounts for the pressure on budgets and the reason for the number of potholes. The Government has recently allocated more monies to Councils to help with potholes so we may see some improvement. The Parish Steward is still focussed on fixing potholes and I continue to press for potholes to be fixed, where I am aware of them. Please continue to use the MyWilts app to report issues and alert me if there are related safety issues.

With the support of the Parish Council, I have purchased 'village gates' for the entrances to the village; these will be installed by Wiltshire Highways over the coming weeks. These have a calming affect on traffic speeds.

You will notice the speed assessment devices across some of our roads at the moment; these are there to collect speed data from vehicles. Depending on the data we collect, we can then assess what the appropriate response is for action, whether it's 20 mph speed limits, speed indicating devices, community speed watch groups or some combination.

I was hoping to set up a Lorry Watch group in Sherston that monitors the movements of HGVs trying to use the lanes in Sherston, with existing weight limits, but unfortunately Wiltshire Police do not want to cooperate with this at the moment, due to resourcing issues.

I have been working with the local community policing teams about speeding and anti-social behaviour, which has resulted in recent speeding enforcement in the village and evening patrols by officers.

Electric Vehicle Public Charging Points:

As the lead councillor on the Malmesbury Area Board for Climate Change, I have been working with officers at Wiltshire Council on the need for public EV charging points in the locality, particularly aimed at those residents who have no off-street parking. Initially we had interest from a commercial provider in putting charge points in the village hall car-park; however the company pulled out, when it became clear they would have to invest more than £100,000 to make the project work.

So using the Wiltshire Council scheme, I applied and have had approved an OZEV grant from the Department for Transport for £11,683 and another grant from Wiltshire Council for £2,500. With the Parish Council topping up with a contribution of £5,288, we can install 4 22KW chargers in the High St. This proposal was consulted on using an online survey and a face to face session in the village hall. It was publicised via Facebook and a leaflet drop to most houses in the centre of the village. There was strong support and the Parish Council unanimously approved this project at their meeting on 11th May.

Sherston Village Hall:

In order to help the village hall renovation project, I was very happy to support a further grant of £5,000 this year from the Malmesbury Area Board, bringing the Area Boards contribution to £10,000 towards this exciting project, which of course was opened back in February.

Climate Change and Biodiversity:

My work on the steering committee of Sustainable Sherston, the School and the Parish Council, all overlap in this area. I have been involved in coppicing at Grove Wood, planting trees at the school, continuing with the recycling of pill blister packs and printer cartridges.

We also achieved better signage to encourage more cycling on the Foxley Road as an alternative and sustainable route to Malmesbury. I hope to organise an official opening once the potholes on the Foxley Road are fixed.

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We are also looking to open up more footpaths and cycle routes in the wider Malmesbury Area to join up the town with the surrounding villages.

I'm sure I've missed a number of items in this report as it's been a busy year. Feedback from residents is always welcome.

Cllr Martin Smith
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Appendix B

Report to Sherston Annual Parish Meeting on 14th April 2022 by Martin Smith - Wiltshire Councillor for the Sherston Division. Since May 2021, when I was elected to represent the wider Sherston area at Wiltshire Council, I have spent much of my time on case work, which is where residents seek help with accessing various services from Wiltshire Council or seek advice and/or lobby their local councillor on planning matters. Planning: Unfortunately, the planning team, particularly in the north of the county, have been struggling with turning around planning applications within the timescales they should be meeting. The initial problems started with a surge in applications during and after the Covid pandemic, the implementation of a new IT system early in 2021, lots of vacancies in the planning team, the changes in planning regulations by Government in undermining Neighbourhood Plans over two years old and the lack of a 5 year development land supply at Wiltshire Council. The latter two issues have meant an increase in speculative applications on green-field sites from large developers,

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which have further added to the planning workload, as developers go straight to appeal due to non-determination of their application by Wiltshire Council in the regulated timescales. I have asked numerous questions of the Cabinet at Wiltshire Council about the above issues (as reported in the local press) but have only received assurances that all is well, when plainly it is not. There are still major delays in getting applications determined (42% of applications are not determined within the 13 week service level). We are still losing planning staff to the private sector and other authorities. I will keep reminding the cabinet that all is not well.

GP Surgery plans: As I'm sure the Chair of the Parish Council will report, a great deal of time has been spent on ensuring the various stakeholders in this project keep talking in a bid to make progress. At the start of the year, it felt like we were getting close to a Heads of Agreement, although it then transpired that the Parish Council needed to get independent advice from valuers and solicitors, before this could proceed. The GPs also need to get their business model signed off by the NHS. Although outline planning permission for a GP Surgery was approved a few months ago, the detailed planning permission was withdrawn by Acorn as the planning officers were recommending it be refused on a number of grounds. I've been informed that Acorn plan to revise their application and resubmit in the near future.

School support: In my role as Vice-Chair of School Governors, I have also been involved in supporting Sherston Primary School through the problems caused by the Omicron wave of Covid and in getting a 'Good' report from the latest Ofsted inspection.

Pre-school/nursery: As soon as we knew that the Pumpkins Pre-school was closing down, Tanya Burgess and I convened a number of meetings with Pumpkins, parents, Wiltshire Council and another possible supplier, YMCA. Whilst the Parish Council focus on the building and lease arrangements, I am focussing on getting Wiltshire Council officers to sound out other potential suppliers of a preschool facility, with the aim of getting something in place for September 2022.

Highways and Speeding: The issue that I have had most complaints about after planning, are highways and speeding through the village. The state of the highways are in general not good. Since 2010, local authority support from central Government has been cut. The Local Government Association, in a study, says that this support has been reduced by 16% even over the last 4 years, whilst having their council tax increases capped at 2%. This accounts for the pressure on budgets and the reason for the number of potholes. However I continue to press for potholes to be fixed where I am aware of them. Please continue to use the MyWilts app to report issues and alert me if there are related safety issues. With the support of the Parish Council, I have submitted a plan to Wiltshire for 20 mph zones in some of the central streets in Sherston and asked for the views of Wiltshire Highways as to traffic calming measures on the approaches to the village and along Easton Town and through Pinkney. I hope to be able to progress this with Wiltshire Highways in the next year. I am also trying to reinstate a Community Speed Watch group in Sherston as this scheme is being relaunched across Wiltshire on 1st June, by the new Police and Crime Commissioner, following pressure from myself and other councillors (see the May Cliffhanger for details). I am also hoping to set up a Lorry Watch group in Sherston that monitors the movements of HGVs trying to use the lanes in Sherston, with existing weight limits (see the May Cliffhanger for details).

Electric Vehicle Public Charging Points: As the lead councillor on the Malmesbury Area Board for Climate Change, I set up a survey for the Town and Parish Councils in the Malmesbury Area to assess the need for public EV charging points, aimed at those residents who have no off-street parking. Following that I am working with officers at Wiltshire Council and as soon as they have set up a

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framework and process, I will be applying to get charging points installed around the wider community area. Sherston Village Hall: In order to help the village hall renovation project, I was very happy to support a grant of £5,000 in total from the Malmesbury Area Board, towards this exciting venture. Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in Sherston: I was very happy to support the Jubilee committee's request of £928 from the Malmesbury Area Board as starter funding for the Jubilee celebrations. This was on the condition that any surplus made by the committee will be donated to the Village Hall project. Climate Change and Biodiversity: My work on the steering committee of Sustainable Sherston, the School and the Parish Council, all overlap in this area. I have been involved in repairing the steps at Grove Wood, planting wildflowers in the Village Hall field, working on a plan for planting more trees at the school, better treatment of food waste at the school, continuing with the recycling of soft plastics, pill blister packs, crisp packets and printer cartridges. I am also progressing better signage to encourage more cycling on the Foxley Road as an alternative and sustainable route to Malmesbury. Also looking to open up more footpaths and cycle routes in the wider Malmesbury Area to join up the town with the surrounding villages. I also supported the grant from the Area Board for a thermal imaging camera to enable residents to check on the insulation in their homes. This has been very popular given the increase in the cost of energy. Please contact Sustainable Sherston if you wish to hire it out. I'm sure I've missed a number of items in this report as it's been a busy year. Feedback from residents is always welcome.

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