

# Annual Parish Meeting.

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## Introduction

You may be aware that monthly Parish Council Meetings have been cancelled as per Government guidelines to avoid the spreading of the Corona Virus. Powers have been delegated to the Chairman, Vice Chairman & Planning Chairman to make decisions, mainly to ensure that bills are paid to suppliers etc. However, we have also used technology to enable the Parish Councillors to meet 'virtually' using video meeting software on the same night as the monthly meeting would normally be held. Whilst it isn't yet fully recognised legally, it has enabled us to discuss the issues on the monthly agenda and to guide those delegated to make decisions. A copy of the April virtual meeting will appear on the website after the May meeting.

Every Year at this time we hold an open meeting, known as the Annual Parish Meeting. This allows residents to air topics and issues that they think the Parish Council should be aware of. It also gives the Parish Council the opportunity to tell residents what they have been doing during the past year. The monthly Parish Council meeting is focussed on immediate issues and doesn't lend itself to this.

We can't use the virtual meeting software to hold the annual Parish Meeting, but the reports below from myself as Chairman of the Parish Council, Mike Hardwick the Clerk and Russell Adams the Planning Chairman, should go some way to keeping you up to date with what we have been doing and what we are planning to do, as soon as we come out of the current situation. As ever, you have the facility on this site to send an email to Mike the clerk if there is an issue concerning you, or one that you feel should be brought to our attention.

## Chairman's Report April 2020

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2019 has been another busy year for Kewstoke Parish Council. Looking at the report I made last year, there were some items that were ongoing, so I'll cover them first:

### **Bus Terminus Car Park.**

The Pay and Display Car Park has caused parking issues around the village, particularly in Sand Road & Beach Road. We did predict this when the original scheme was rowed back from what we originally requested. A supplementary Traffic Restriction Order covering Sand Road & Beach Road (including the stretch between Crookes Lane & The Commodore Hotel) and also Crookes Lane, outside the entrance to Ardnave Park, has been drawn up and was due to be implemented just after Easter. We will keep pressure on NSC to ensure that it does happen before the summer arrives.

We have been landscaping the grounds around the Car Park by planting trees, bushes and shrubs. This is being partially funded by money we are receiving from NSC from their car park revenue. This work is being overseen and managed by John Sayer and his team of volunteers. Many thanks to John & all of you, it's looking really nice.

### **The Kiosk.**

Now under the stewardship of Dave & Matt from the Sand Bay Tearooms, continues to thrive. It is now open all year round when weather permits. This in turn allows the toilets to be opened as well. The money from the Kiosk concession and the 20p charge from the toilets, allow this to become cash neutral to the Parish. Dave & Matt have made great improvements to the interior of the kiosk and it is proving to be a really good partnership with the Parish Council. Ron our orderly ensures that the toilets are kept clean for visitors, all under the watchful eye of Ken Harper whose contribution should not be forgotten.

### **Traffic Calming.**

The Flashing speed signs are now in place. One is on Kewstoke Road and the other in Crookes Lane. We are still using the temporary 'loan' sign from NSC and it is currently in use on Beach Road. Unfortunately we still have the Yellow signs on Kewstoke Road directing coaches away from the bottleneck between Crookes Lane & Anson Road. A traffic Order has been raised by NSC. We are chasing them again after their assurances for it to be in place before the holiday season. On the flip side, no one is going on coach holidays to Weston at the moment. As soon as the traffic order is in place, the yellow signs will come down.

### **Erosion of the Sand dunes.**

The Parish Council have continued to express concerns about the rapid erosion of the sand dunes to the Environment Agency. There have been meetings with their officers. Some work putting additional chestnut fences has been carried out and more has been promised. However, first the flooding earlier in the year in Worcestershire, saw them concentrate their energies there and the current lockdown have no doubt hampered their efforts now. We will continue to work in partnership with them in improving and maintaining the sea defences which are a concern to all of us.

Thanks must also be given to Russell Adams for his efforts with his tractor. He has filled in some of the holes in the dunes with large amounts of driftwood that could not be moved by hand.

### **Dog Bins.**

As NSC stops emptying the dog bins on the beach and around the village, we have had to put a plan in place to ensure that work continues to be done. The number of bins and their locations have been reduced and changed to take advantage of the fact that dog mess can be put in the normal waste bins. Ken Harper has been instrumental in organising a new contract through Weston Town Council. This means going forward the bins will still be emptied and at a lower cost to the Parish as well.

### **Website & Social Media.**

You will have noticed that we have a new more interactive village website with even a new Parish Council Logo and Mission statement. [www.kewstokevillage.com](http://www.kewstokevillage.com)

A lot of work has been done, particularly by Marcus our volunteer webmaster and our Media committee to get this up and running. Unlike the old site, it will be continually updated with news and information. We know that the site is getting a lot of hits and interestingly, a lot of these come from links to the Facebook page, where we often flag up information. We aim to have the website fully compliant with Accessibility legislation by September this year. The Facebook page proves to be ever popular under the excellent moderation of Karen Jenkins, who has been instrumental in organising our Volunteer Support Scheme to assist with those needing help during the current crisis.

### **Housekeeping within the Parish Council.**

Policy standing orders & procedures that the Parish Council work to, have been looked at in detail. They have been renewed and where required, replaced to make them more relevant for today's world. These are all available to view, under the 'Governance' flag on the Parish Council web pages.

Attention was drawn as to how we as Parish Councillors receive agendas and minutes for meetings. Mike would print them out, distribute them himself to councillors before the meetings, often having to reprint as a change of agenda item came up. It was decided to buy inexpensive electronic tablets which have now been distributed to councillors. Richard Buckley was tasked with sourcing the new tablets and reorganising the Parish Council's email procedures. The minutes of meetings can now be sent electronically to each councillor and can be altered as required. This along with the plan to have the majority of residents receive the Parish Council Newsletter electronically (Hard copies will still be available on request) does away for the need to have such an expensive photocopier. When it's rental contract comes to an end, it will be replaced with a simpler & cheaper copier.

### **Village Orderlies & Clerk.**

Our Village Orderlies Beverley, Janet & Ron continued to do a sterling job throughout the year, keeping the verges & top of the beach free of litter. Janet has been instrumental in organising volunteers to help with beach cleaning, particularly after a big storm has left a lot of rubbish. The orderlies are very easy to see in their Hi Vis Jackets & Kewstoke Parish Council tabards. Their vehicles now carry magnetic signs when they are on duty. They are managed in the first instance by Mike Hardwick, the Parish Clerk as one of his many duties. Mike has proved to be a great asset to this Parish and has been responsible for carrying out many of the innovations we have seen.

So, in concluding this report I mustn't forget to thank the Parish Councillors not mentioned above, whose contributions to the council and this village are so important.

Nancy & Christine for Organising the Children's Christmas Party

Glen for managing the Allotments

Rose for heading up the staffing committee,

The two Tony's. Tony Horry for his knowledge of the village and local government procedures and Tony Morris as an excellent Parish Council Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Finance Committee. Our district Councillors Roz Willis & Lisa Pilgrim have been very helpful in maintaining a bridge between NSC & the Parish Council. As has Natalie Richards our NSC liaison officer, who has been exceptionally helpful to the Parish Council.

As I said at the start of this report, there will be new issues that we have not yet addressed. There are ongoing issues that we haven't quite got sorted, but quite a few 'wins' here. I hope that you understand that your Parish Council are committed in the work that they do voluntarily for our community.

**Jim MacDonald, Chairman. Kewstoke Parish Council**

# Clerks Report April 2020

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I would first like to refer to the last audited account presented for 2018/19. These are in the form of an Annual Governance and Accountability return AGAR, which comprises of 3 parts 1. Annual internal audit report, Annual Governance Statement and an Accounting Statement.

These have been published on the Parish Web site [www.Kewstokevillage.com](http://www.Kewstokevillage.com).

## **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS**

The unaudited accounts for 2019/20 shows that the council broke even in providing its services. The original budget for 2019/20 was set showing a £8K deficit whilst keeping the precept at the 2018/19 level. It was anticipated that some cost savings and additional income could be achieved during the year to offset this deficit figure and allow the accounts to balance. This was achieved; see cost/Income review below. In effect the Council made a surplus for 2019/20 of around £8K. The accounts are still to be audited externally and Internally before being finalised and published both on the Village notice boards ( covid-19 restrictions permitted) and on our new Web Site [www.Kewstokevillage.com](http://www.Kewstokevillage.com).

The precept of £46K was set by the Council in January and for the 3rd year running was not increased. There is a proposal this year to refurbish the Toilet and Kiosk Block and continue with the upgrade of the memorial seats all to be met from revenue.

The overall current assets ( cash Balances) of the Council have increased to over £100K with £17K ring fenced for the Traffic Management Scheme and an amount ring fenced for the renewal of the agreement to provide the footpath from the village Hall to the Bay Bar. I believe that the ability to deliver existing services and proposed Capital Maintenance as outlined above, without again increasing the precept shows a high level of control of the Council's finances.

## **COST REVIEW**

Throughout the year there has been an ongoing review of the Council's expenditure to ensure parishioners are receiving value for money. This ranges from reviewing works schedules, challenging costs and benchmarking salaries.

The result this year was a reduction in the Council's Insurance premium of approx. £400 and a backdated refund of water rates for both the allotments and toilets in the region of £2K as well as a back dated VAT reclaim of £400.

The contract for Dog Bin emptying this year has been negotiated with Weston Town Council with a savings of £2K.

## **INCOME REVIEW**

### **Kiosk Contract**

The Contract for the sub lease of the Kiosk was reviewed this year and new tenants are now in place. The renewal of the lease allowed for a contribution from the tenants towards the energy costs to be included.

Other Revenue streams were explored, notably contributions towards the upkeep and maintenance of the memorial seats mainly along Beach Road Sea front of some £300.

It is also worth noting that other Grants were received this year which had not been budgeted for, notably £2,400 from NSDC in respect of maintenance of the new car parks which the Parish Council has undertaken to provide, £1.2k from the Environment Agency for Sea Defense work and £1.2K in respect of CIL . (Council Infrastructure levy).

Taking into account the reduction in water rates and contribution towards energy costs through the renewed lease of the Kiosk, the Toilets are not only open all year (subject to Covid-19) but are now pretty much self-financing.

### **INTERNET BANKING**

During the year the Parish Council set up a new bank account to allow for on- line internet banking which accommodated the controls as set out in the Councils Standing Orders and Financial controls. The Bank chosen was Unity Trust Bank and now almost all our payments to staff and Contractors are paid through Internet Banking.

The benefits of this method of payment have really come to the forefront in the current covid-19 crisis. Invoices and Timesheets are received, scanned and electronically sent to Councillors to approve and then subsequently authorise the associated on-line transactions allowing for payment. There is no need for anyone to leave home to sign and post cheques as was previously the case.

### **EXTENSION OF WORKING COMMITTEES**

A number of new Committees were set up during the Year, including a Staffing Committee, Media Committee and an expansion of the Finance Committee to include Council Policies. These are chaired by members of the Council and allow a small working group of interested parties to discuss issues in detail before reporting back to the full council with recommendations for approval. These have proved successful and allow for a lot of the groundwork discussion to be covered outside of the main Council meeting.

**Mike Hardwick, Clerk to Kewstoke Parish Council.**

# Planning Chairman's Report 2020

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My recent time as Planning Chairman has seen one or two large planning applications that have been of great interest to this Parish.

The largest, I would say, has been the proposal for a large 300 or so lodge/caravan holiday park, at the approach to the village, on a 40 acre site off Sand Road & Lower Norton Lane. This application was received in May 2018 almost two years ago, but no decision has yet been made by North Somerset Council.

Kewstoke Parish Council objected strongly to the application, as something of this size would, we believe have changed the character of the village and also caused issues in the roads approaching the site. A large development like this needs to be fully thought through before any decision is made.

An application was received for the building of 20 dwellings on land along Crookes Lane. This application was refused by North Somerset Council after which an appeal was lodged by the applicant. The Appeal Hearing was held at the Town Hall where a Government inspector listened to all of the relevant information from the appellant, members of the public and the Parish council. After several weeks, the Inspector made his decision and upheld the decision of North Somerset Council to refuse the application. This was for a number of reasons, which included that the land was outside the settlement boundary of the village, was on a flood plain and that the land had been allocated for a school site, should one be required in the future.

At this point I would like to remind people that the Parish Council have no decision making powers with regard to planning applications. We only make comments and recommendations to North Somerset Council.

I should also like to make clear that back in October 2017 the Parish Council produced a policy document stating that it would not support any development outside the village settlement boundary on the grounds of flood plain and traffic issues etc. This can be viewed on the Parish Council website in full.

Beach Road has seen a number of refurbishments and also the replacement of older properties. To maintain the 'Street Scene' along Beach Road, the Parish Council have commented on the ridge line being maintained to its current level, which has in the main been kept. This is in the hope that properties do not become overbearing upon the area.

More recently an application was made for the change of use of land to the rear of the Commodore Hotel for 8 holiday lodges. The Parish Council recommended refusal to North Somerset Council on a number of issues of which were: vehicular and pedestrian access to the highway and it being on part flood plain. No decision has been made at this time by North Somerset Council.

Lastly, one of the holiday parks has recently changed ownership, the new owners wishing to revert to holiday use only. This would have made a number of residents living there and paying Council tax homeless. At this moment in time I am told that there are discussions taking place with the new site owners in an attempt to avert a crisis in the future. There have been other issues with holiday parks in the area. Tenants have misunderstood by believing that they were residential, when in fact they were holiday accommodation and they could only live in them for short periods and not as their main residence.

That's all from me. I will just say that I hope you all keep well throughout these difficult times.

**Russell Adams, Planning Chairman. Kewstoke Parish Council.**