

# Somerford Keynes Parish Council

NEWSLETTER

February 2012

Clerk: Muriel Watkins 861614

[www.somerfordkeynes.org.uk](http://www.somerfordkeynes.org.uk)

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Councillors Tessa de Bertodano, John Brailey, Mike McKeown, Karen Mogridge (Chair), Ron Munroe, Sarah Powell, Roger Sleeman

## Your Parish Council

The full list of Parish Councillors appears at the head of this newsletter and all are happy to listen to any comments or problems you may have – you can obtain their telephone numbers from the Clerk if you don't know them.

## Parish Council's Annual Precept

This is the time of year when your Parish Council must decide on the precept (the total amount it receives from Council Tax) to be charged for 2012-13. In determining the amount we have to take account of a number of factors that will come into play next year.

First, our contingency reserves have reduced in both real and actual terms in the past few years, as we have drawn upon them to avoid increasing the precept, and our small investments don't earn the interest they did three or so years ago.

There are also likely to be added expenses beginning this year. A major one is the Clerk's salary: Parish Clerks are employees, and as our Clerk had not had a pay rise for several years she was in danger of falling off the bottom of the mandatory national scale, so we need to budget for this. We also want to have reserves available for any spending on Lake 99 (see below), as well as a one-off expense on the Queen's Jubilee later this year.

Taking account of all of these matters the Parish Council has decided that it must raise the precept for the first time in three years. However, because a number of new houses have been built in the parish (at Lower Mill Estate) in recent times, this means only a marginal increase for each household, amounting to around £1 for the year. This allows the total precept for the year to increase from £1600 to £2200, which will enable the Parish Council to meet all of its expected obligations through the year.

We will present an unaudited financial report to the Annual Parish Meeting in May; in the meantime, if you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask a Parish Councillor, or email [skpc@somerfordkeynes.org.uk](mailto:skpc@somerfordkeynes.org.uk)

## CDC Councillor Esmond Jenkins

You cannot fail to have noticed that Cllr Jenkins, one of our Water Park Ward District Councillors, has been the subject of complaints that he breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct. His case was heard recently by the CDC Standards Board and was widely reported in the local Press. The panel found Cllr Jenkins guilty of five breaches of the Code, but cleared him of eleven

further ones. He was censured for his 'robust and intemperate behaviour' but not suspended.

Speakers in mitigation on Cllr Jenkins' behalf included our own Cllr Sarah Powell. Sarah spoke of recent events at Keynes Park, and of how the local Parishes feel that Cllr Jenkins has supported them in the face of increasing frustration at CDC and GCC. There was applause from members of the public when the speakers in mitigation had finished.

It has long been the opinion of the Parish Council that both CDC and GCC seem unaware of the depth of public feeling in the Water Park in relation to Keynes Country Park and other Planning issues. We were especially saddened, at a recent Planning Committee meeting, to see how opinions on the issue of infill at Lake 31 appeared to be split by Party allegiances. We hope that the expensive hearing into Cllr Jenkins' alleged misconduct will have shown the two Authorities how much they are misjudging public opinion; only time will tell.

## Lake 31 Infill

A report by an independent planning consultancy has found that Watermark has breached its planning permissions with regard to the infill at Lake 31 (the more northerly of the two lakes at Keynes Park). This came as no surprise to the PC, which had been complaining to CDC about the excessive infill for over eighteen months. We have found it difficult to understand why CDC planners have been unable to put a stop to these activities. It has been explained to us that there has to be some overfilling to allow for settlement, with the overfill then being dragged back to the permitted boundaries; until this is done the amount of fill required is unknown. We find this explanation somewhat disingenuous. Contractors responsible for building works which require earth movements can get a very clear idea, using standard calculations, of the volume required to do the job, even when the movement is complicated by the presence of water as in this case. Professionals do not use a 'suck it and see' approach which is the one which seems to have been adopted by both Watermark and the Planning department.

We were also informed that national planning guidelines require Planning departments to try to use compromise, rather than enforcement, when Planning permissions have been exceeded. In other words, Watermark has got away with it. It will have to 'regularise' the situation by putting in a retrospective planning application for the excess infill. CDC has assured us that this will be dealt with in strict accordance to Planning criteria. We feel that Watermark and other large

developers will simply see this as a sign that they can do what they want with no worse penalty than a tap on the knuckles.

We have written, jointly with South Cerney PC and Poole Keynes Parish Meeting, to the Chief Executive Officer of CDC to express these concerns, and to insist that the Planning department publishes a plan and timetable for the proposed works to regularise the infill. There is little we can do now about Lake 31, except to monitor the planning application and the works; however, we have learned a number of lessons about Planning applications, which we will take into account in future.

### **Heartbeat**

We all depend on it, even if we don't all watch it! It is generally accepted that for every minute without a heartbeat, if it is untreated, the chance of surviving cardiac arrest decreases by 7% during each of the first three minutes and 10% per minute thereafter. After 3 – 5 minutes irreversible brain/tissue damage begins.

Those sorts of statistics have a particular resonance in a rural environment like our own, because, with the best will in the world, it will take some time for paramedics to get here if they are needed. Fortunately there has not been such an emergency in the village recently.

Long may that continue – obviously we all eat the right things and take plenty of exercise! However, there's nothing to say it might not happen in the future and should it do so, the availability of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) to administer first aid by assisting the heart to start again could save a life or minimise lasting damage.

AEDs which can be used safely by the lay person are now available, and they are appearing in a range of different locations – shopping centres, theatres, villages like ours. The Parish Council would like to hear your views on whether we should raise funds to install one in Somerford Keynes and, if so, what would be the best location, taking into account accessibility and security. Your Parish Councillors would be pleased to hear from you.

### **Cullimore Gravel Extraction Site**

You will have noticed that some stripping of the vegetation has been carried out here, but no other works are permitted to start until other requirements, such as detailed flooding assessments, are complete. Further information will be posted to the Parish website when it is available.

### **Go by Cycle Sign**

Following the representations of a number of Parishioners, the Parish Council objected to this sign, near the bollards at the Spine Road/Spratsgate Lane junction, when it was first erected. We have since also objected to a replacement sign which, although smaller, we still believed to be obtrusive.

In December the Planning Committee voted to reject the sign, which has now been removed.

However, we understand that the planning application is likely to go to appeal so we will keep you informed of its progress.

### **Lake 99**

There have been some developments regarding this lake (at the end of Mill Lane). We hope that during the course of this year we may be able to acquire the lake, but not the land fronting Mill Lane, for use by the Parish as a Nature Reserve. Again, please check the website occasionally for further details.

### **Ashton Keynes Road Closure**

We read in the Standard that Ashton Road (the B4696) is likely to be closed for over three months from March 12<sup>th</sup> to June 29<sup>th</sup>. This is likely to affect many Somerford Keynes Parishioners, but we have received no official confirmation of the closure. It might be worth reconnoitring alternative routes beforehand, if you are likely to use this road.

### **The Queen's Diamond Jubilee**

The PC and Village Hall committee are planning to organise a Parish event on the Jubilee weekend (June 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>), and would welcome ideas and suggestions.

### **Footpaths**

There is little new to report about the progress of the footpaths application for Keynes Park. However, there is a good chance that a new footway may be constructed along Minety Lane as far as Swillbrook, and there may also be moves to extend the Spine Road cycleway the extra few metres to Neigh Bridge.

### **Newspaper deliverer wanted**

Gill Abbots-Darbyshire has a vacancy for someone to work 3 or 4 mornings a week. Good rates paid. Please contact Gill on 861329 if you are interested.

### **Dates for your Diary**

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> February, 5.00pm** 'Songs of Praise' at All Saints Church, Somerford Keynes, to mark the retirement of Rev Michael Sanders.



Karen Mogridge, Chair  
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*The unadopted minutes of the Parish Council are displayed on the Parish Notice Board together with bus and mobile library timetables. The agenda for the next meeting is also displayed some days before each meeting. **Parish Council meetings are always open to the public.** The next Parish Council meeting will be on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February in the Village Hall at 7.30pm.*