

# Askerswell Parish Meeting – Reports from the chair and local coordinators October 2020

This report is in writing because the Covid-19 emergency prevents us meeting in person. It summarises the happenings of the last six months and reviews the six months ahead. This is the time of year when we have to make decisions about money. The Finance section below explains them and how you can give your input.

## Chair's report

### Finance

The financial position for 2020/21 is on track with the plan that we agreed at the meeting in October 2019. An outline financial statement is below. The Parish Meeting in August approved the Finance and Governance reports for 2019/20 and they have been submitted to the relevant authority. Since the last financial report, we have paid our chosen contractor for maintenance at Washingpool Millennium Green. Regular expenditure on other routine matters remains small and within the expected budget. We began the year with a reserve of £451 (after allowing for expenditure already committed) and expect to end this year with a reserve of about £860. As agreed at the October 2019 meeting, we are continuing to build towards an agreed reserve of £1,000, giving us the ability to respond to unexpected issues.

### *Decisions required now*

1. What precept should we request for next year from Dorset Council?

The Council divides the precept equally between each household in the parish, adds the cost to the council tax bill and pays it in two instalments to the Parish Meeting. The precept has been £1,800 for several years. It's one of the lowest in Dorset. I propose that we keep it the same for 2021/22.

*Decision 1: Do we keep the precept at £1,800? If not, what should it be and why?*

2. What contribution should we give to the village hall and the churchyard?

The Parish Meeting usually supports the hall and the churchyard. Last year we gave £400 to each - £800 in total - reduced from the usual total of £1,000 to help us build the agreed Parish reserve. This year we can afford a total of £1,000. Because of the special circumstances, we may wish to consider giving more to one than the other.

I've discussed the position with Jessamy Wilsdon (Village Hall chair) and Godfrey Lancashire (PCC chair). The hall has received several quite substantial grants from external organisations. Although the hall has lost income from hiring and events, and the committee has undertaken several projects and plans more, it is financially in a satisfactory situation. The churchyard is maintained by the church, whose income has been reduced by interruptions to services and by cancellation of its regular fund-raising events. Also, the churchyard had to pay for the reconstruction of the retaining wall at the Naller's Lane end of Parson's Path.

So here are three possible options: A - £500 each to the hall and the churchyard; B - £300 to the hall and £700 to the churchyard; C - £100 to the hall and £900 to the churchyard. Frank Hemmings and I (PM chair and deputy chair) suggest option B.

*Decision 2: which option should we choose? If not one of those, what should we do?*

If you wish to express your view about these decisions, please email

[askerswellchair@gmail.com](mailto:askerswellchair@gmail.com) or call 01308 485169 before 31 October.

Washingpool Millennium Green Our aim is to manage the area in ways that balance safety, amenity and biodiversity. Work to clear fallen timber, to safeguard remaining trees and to provide a written maintenance plan was completed in late spring by the contractor chosen by competitive tender. The contractor's report and maintenance plan are on the village website. The local report on Green Spaces below outlines how the plan will be taken forward.

Washingpool Fund The October 2019 meeting suggested that we formalise the holding of money to support Washingpool that has built up from various sources, such as the annual calendar, over several years. That's now been done by opening a new bank account, with an initial deposit of £251.67. This fund is helpful because it allows us to pay for things that the Parish Meeting's very limited spending remit cannot cover.

The Washingpool Fund is not part of the Parish Meeting money, although it's our intention to regularly present at future Parish Meetings an explanation of how the money is used. The bank account requires two signatories for any withdrawal, in the same way that the accounts for the Parish Meeting and Parish Lands do. There are three signatories at present – John Mahoney, Frank Hemmings and Maggie Barrett – the three Parish officers when the account was opened. We expect to transfer signatory authority as the officer-holders change.

We have recently received a very welcome addition to the fund from Peter and Helen Gilmour of Threshers Cottage. They have donated £500 to each of Washingpool Fund and the Parish Lands charity, to contribute to the village and its recovery from problems caused by the Covid pandemic. We thank them very warmly for their kind generosity.

Maintenance of open spaces Many people have helped maintain our open spaces by cutting the grass and maintaining the surroundings at Washingpool and the village hall and by planting the tubs in the Square. Thank you to them all. Howard Atkinson deserves special thanks for his attention to village's biodiversity health and development. See his report below.

Planning There have been two applications since April: one for revised access at 2 Knapp Cottages, one for technical approvals at Hembury Mill. Neither has yet been decided. Dorset Council website has further information, and comments by individuals and statutory authorities. Also, BT applied to remove the payphone in the Square along with more than 50 other payphones in West Dorset. We objected in May and continue to monitor the situation.

Highways The surface of the eastern section of Hembury Road remains an outstanding issue. We understand that the more complaints that are received, the more likely it is that the problem will be given priority. Please help in the appropriate way.

The roads and verges are unusually clear of litter. That's no doubt one of the few positive consequences of lockdown restrictions as more people are walking locally and pick it up as they go. However it happens, thank you and please continue.

Parish Meeting officers for 2020/2021 Maggie Barrett has, as long planned, stood down as Parish Clerk. We all thank her very much for everything she has done during her time in that role. John Mahoney and Frank Hemmings were elected by the August meeting to continue as Chair and Deputy Chair for the coming year. Pressure of work forced Lauryn Mealing to step down as Clerk shortly after her election at that meeting. Nobody else has been willing to take on the role. Please let me know if you can help or if you can suggest someone who might.

Date of next meeting scheduled provisionally for 29 April 2021, restrictions permitting.

Any questions? Please feel free to contact me if you have any comments or questions.

John Mahoney, Chair of Askerswell Parish Meeting

2020/21	Chair	askerswellchair@gmail.com	John Mahoney	01308 485 169
Post	Parish Clerk	vacant		
Holder	Deputy Chair	askerswelldepchair@gmail.com	Frank Hemmings	01308 485 456

## Askerswell Parish Meeting

### Financial statements and projections for the year ending 31 March 2021

	2020-21		2019-20	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>				
April Precept	900.00		900.00	
September Precept	900.00		900.00	
CPRE grant for fingerpost			60.00	
<b>Total receipts</b>	to date	<b>1800.00</b>	full year	<b>1860.00</b>
<b>Payments</b>				
Contributions from Parish Meeting				
to Askerswell PCC for churchyard	0.00		400.00	
to Askerswell Village Hall	0.00	0.00	400.00	800.00
Insurance		152.62		160.65
Dorset Assoc. Of Parish & Town Councils		34.38		33.67
Repairs, Maintenance, Administration				
Washingpool mower servicing	191.84			
Washingpool tree work	1440.00			
plants for tubs in the Square	29.18			
Washingpool mower fuel	19.50			
administration	0.00		93.78	
hire of hall for meetings	0.00		20.00	
website hosting	41.09			
miscellaneous Parish expenses			225.30	
repairs, maintenance, admin. subtotal	1721.61	1721.61	339.08	339.08
Total payments to date		1908.61		
<b>Expected additional payments</b>				
Expected payments to churchyard & VH	1000.00			
Washingpool fence repairs	20.00			
Administration & printing	25.00			
Tubs in the Square (2 sets: winter/spring)	65.00			
expected additional payments subtotal	1110.00	1110.00		
<b>Total payments</b>	expected	<b>3018.61</b>	actual	<b>1333.40</b>
<b>Excess of receipts over payments</b>	expected	<b>-1218.61</b>	actual	<b>418.98</b>
<b>Full year projection</b>				
cash in bank carried forward on 1st April	actual	2082.88	actual	1556.28
add receipts	actual	1800.00	actual	1860.00
less payments	to date	-1908.61	actual	-1333.40
cash in bank	actual 16/10/20	1974.27		
less expected additional payments	expected	-1110.00		
cash in bank carried forward 31st March	expected 2021	<b>864.27</b>	actual 2020	<b>2082.88</b>

## Parish meeting local reports

### **Good Neighbours Scheme**

Godfrey Lancashire

The Good Neighbour Scheme (GNS) remains active as an informal group to help those in our village in need. We continue to do regular shopping for those who feel uneasy about going out during the pandemic, offer telephone support and safely distanced visits to those who live alone, and we are available for collection of prescriptions and lifts to appointments (observing current Covid guidelines). We have a team of volunteers in the village and our contacts remain Liz Guard 485463, Kathy Hince 485626 and Gill Evans 485225.

### **Green Spaces and Biodiversity**

Howard Atkinson

#### Washingpool Green

##### Grass and brush cutting

I thank the 15 volunteers who cut grass this year at Washingpool Green and the village hall. We need a couple more volunteers to populate the Rota. Surely any able person who appreciates living in this community should be willing to invest about 2½ hours spread over 2 duties to help maintain our environment. In addition, I would welcome an additional 3 volunteers to carry out Brush cutting (45min) at Washingpool Green. This has been done 5 times in 2020 but there are now only 2 volunteers with brush cutters. If necessary, a brush cutter will be provided for volunteers. Please contact John at askerswellchair@gmail.com or 01308 485169 to volunteer.

##### Management Plan

The 5 year tree management plan (2020-2025) is available to view on the website [www.askerswellparish.org/community/index.html](http://www.askerswellparish.org/community/index.html). The year 1 tasks will be carried out this winter.

#### Spring tidy March or April 2021

It is hoped that the annual spring tidy will be possible. The commitment is about on a 1 hour on a Saturday morning. Past volunteers will be contacted at least one month ahead of the date which will of course depend partly on the weather. New volunteers would be very welcome, please contact John (contact details above).

#### Environmental

##### River Asker

Images of wildlife associated with the River Asker are being gathered using 3 trail cameras one of which is being deployed at different locations within Askerswell Parish. A summary of findings will be provided in the near future within the ECV. Covid19 restrictions and safety concerns prevented any monitoring of aquatic life in the river within this Parish in 2020.

##### Bird boxes

The annual clearing out of the bird boxes in public spaces will be carried out in October and those containing used nests compared with results from 2019.

### **Homewatch**

Veronica Sheppard

As per usual my war cry is for everyone to remain mindful of online and telephone fraud. Happy to continue to pass on appropriate information as it arises.

### **Parish Lands Charities**

Howard Atkinson

I thank Maggie Barrett for completing her four-year period of appointment. We have one volunteer, Antony Wilsdon who is willing to take up the vacant position as one of the 3 trustees. I am prepared continue as Chair but willing to stand down if the Parish Meeting wishes to appoint another in my place. John Mahoney's current period as a trustee ends in October 2023. [PM chair's note – we will formally confirm these appointments when the Parish Meeting can next meet face-to-face].

The current funds of the Parish Lands are: i) Askerswell Fuel Allotment (£548.39) and ii) Askerswell Gavel Allotment (£548.38). Much of the increase in monies from past levels

originated from Askerswell Neighbourhood Forum providing approximately £436 raised by activities in the Parish. Helen and Peter Gilmour have offered a generous donation of £500 which will soon be added to funds available. Other donations or ideas for further funding to increase funds available to the new grants scheme would be very welcome.

The trustees have responded to an increase in funds by launching a small grants scheme. They have decided that the two charities can support inhabitants by providing one off payments to: a) counter hardship, b) meet a defined educational need (e.g. text books), c) support for the elderly or infirm or d) other purposes within the object of the Charities at the Trustees' discretion. An application form is available from me (hj\_askerswell@btinternet.com; 01308 485765).

### Rights of Way

Antony Wilsdon

Nothing of note to report this time.

### Village Hall

Jessamy Wilsdon

Please see the noticeboard and the ECV for latest news.

### Village Website

Mandy Hall editor.askerswell@hotmail.co.uk

This website is designed to ensure our community remains informed about local activities and other information of interest.

Before Covid-19 Lockdown the website was gaining in popularity, getting an increasing number of hits as people accessed information about events taking place in the village via Dates for your Diary, as well as other information relevant to villagers e.g. Minutes of the Parish Meeting, Dates of Waste Collections throughout the year, latest Askerswell Parish Updates and Eggardon and Colmers View (Parish and Community News) editions for May, June and July which were not produced in print. The table below gives an idea of usage:

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2020	336	565	2,023	3,327	106.28 MB
Feb 2020	279	529	2,413	3,643	179.86 MB
Mar 2020	276	613	2,149	3,629	571.32 MB
Apr 2020	240	537	2,334	3,785	808.81 MB
May 2020	302	574	2,516	5,484	706.07 MB
Jun 2020	239	562	2,521	5,890	4.01 GB
Jul 2020	276	542	2,586	5,089	333.44 MB
Aug 2020	242	514	1,226	2,496	210.77 MB
Sep 2020	261	547	1,171	2,222	982.29 MB
Oct 2020	3	3	8	12	173.85 KB
Nov 2020	0	0	0	0	0
Dec 2020	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,454</b>	<b>4,986</b>	<b>18,947</b>	<b>35,577</b>	<b>7.81 GB</b>

As the website is accessible via Google people outside of the village can access it – people looking to move into the area can get an indication of what life in this village is like.

My thanks go to the Webmaster who deals with all the technical issues and payments that are required to run this website. Without the expertise that the Webmaster brings to this website it wouldn't exist!