

Marking 30 years of Saltford Parish Council – May 2021

Saltford Parish Council in the modern era was formed following inaugural elections in May 1991. Saltford Parish Council and Keynsham Town Council started life at the same time following orders in the Privy Council.

The first Saltford Parish Council elected comprised Cllrs Sheila Bateman (Lab), Lynne Davies (Lib Dem), Mark Davies (Lib Dem), John Dunford, Francine Haeberling (Con), Eric Linfield, Pat Vine, Frank Vine (Chair of the planning committee), John Scott (Chair), Duncan Hounsell (Lib Dem) (Vice-chair) and Maurice Short (Chair of the environmental committee). The Council appointed Roger Kinsman as the first permanent Parish clerk.

At the end of the inaugural year, the Keynsham Chronicle wrote “The caring, efficient council has done much for the community it serves. No issue is too much trouble to look into and solve quickly.”

The seeds of the Parish Council go back to the plan by the Ministry of Transport in the 1970s to by-pass Saltford. Villagers recall three or four options being offered for consideration.

One option was to the south of the village but cutting through the Golf Course - this produced many letters from other Golf Clubs supporting Saltford Golf Club opposition to the idea. Another option was widening the A4 Bath Road into two carriageways in each direction. This second option had clearly been a consideration for a long time, as the planning permission for houses along the A4 had to include much longer front gardens, particularly on the south side to accommodate widening the road. There was wide support for opposing this option as it still meant heavy traffic through the village.

As such, the chosen route for the by-pass was from Broadmead roundabout, Keynsham, to Twerton involved a three and half mile dual carriageway beginning at the end of the Keynsham bypass, a flyover of the Bristol-Paddington main-line railway to join the route of the Midland railway path before sweeping back across to rejoin the existing A4. This route was the most favoured by Saltford residents. Was this because the route was the furthest away from most residents? The well-advanced plan caused planning blight for years on houses adjacent to the A4 between the Broadmead roundabout and the Pixash Lane junction.

Although this chosen route was generally accepted, many of those in Saltford’s ‘old village’ opposed this by-pass option, particularly Frank Vine, a powerful personality who lived on the High Street. A Saltford group based in the old village was formed to fight this proposal.

The idea for a bypass was eventually dropped after a few years by the ministry because of cost and possibly disagreement about routes. However, the group that formed to oppose this bypass option became the Saltford Residents Association.

The Saltford Resident's Association, led by Frank Vine, focussed on local issues affecting Saltford involving planning, planning applications, and highways. Frank Vine had retired from military service and remained a commanding figure. Many still remember his booming voice "Vine here!" when he answered the telephone.

It is to his lasting credit that Frank Vine recognised the limitations of a residents' association and the advantages of a Parish Council. He saw that a residents' association is not very democratic because officers are largely self-selecting. He saw that a resident's association was difficult to sustain in the long-term as enthusiastic volunteers would not necessarily be replaced. A Parish Council can raise money from all property owners in the village through a precept (part of Council Tax) and employ a clerk. A Parish Council is recognised in law as a public body, has legal powers, and a greater clout.

Frank Vine campaigned for the establishment of Saltford Parish Council and that came to fruition in 1991. Frank and his wife Pat were elected to the inaugural Parish Council. Saltford Parish Council held its first meeting on 15th May 1991, following the outcome of the local election on 2nd May 1991.

Minutes and papers of the Parish Council meetings in the 1990s are held at the Somerset Heritage Centre at Taunton somersetarchives@swheritage.org.uk



Photograph shows the first elected Saltford Parish Council, taken by Roger M. Clark.

Backrow L-R: Frank Vine, Maurice Short, John Dunford, Francine Haeberling, Pat Vine, Mark Davies, and Sheila Bateman.

Front row L-R: Duncan Hounsell, John Scott (Chair), and Rodger Kinsman (Parish Clerk).

Salford Parish Council expresses its thanks to Duncan Hounsell and Reg Williams (both former Chairmen of SPC, plus Reg Williams was Secretary of the Salford Resident's Association in the late 1970s) for their contributions to this article. If you have any recollections to add about the Salford Resident's Association or the first Salford Parish Council please email clerk@salfordparishcouncil.gov.uk