

STEEP PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRPERSON: Mrs. Caroline Robinson

CLERK: Mrs. Jenny Hollington

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 3rd December 2012 at Steep Village Hall at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Caroline Robinson (in the Chair)
Jim MacDonald

Terry Cook
Graham Banks

In Attendance: County Councillor - Vaughan Clark
Paul Garstin - Chairman of the Bonfire Committee
Drake Hocking – Tree Warden
Celia Storey (Steep & Stroud Newsletter)
Clerk - Jenny Hollington

There were 7 members of the Public present.

12/166 APOLOGIES: Clls. Jenny Martin, Charles Gibson and Simon Bridger

12.167 ABSENT: Cllrs. Suzi Openshaw and Nick Hurst

12/168 MINUTES: The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th November were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed accordingly.

12/169 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - The Chairman reminded Councillors that any interests should be recorded as necessary.

12/170 PUBLIC COMMENT –

- It was noted that the Agenda for the meeting had not been available on the website and the Minutes for the meetings held in September, October and November did not record that the Minutes had been approved - the Clerk apologised for these oversights. It was also pointed out that it was not clear from the Minutes whether the groups looking into the issues raised from the Parish Plan Questionnaire were sub-committees or working parties. The Clerk confirmed that the groups were working parties consisting of volunteers and led by a Parish Councillor. It was requested that a list of members of the various working parties are shown on the website for clarity - the Clerk was asked to action.
- The concerns of several residents with regard to the September Parish Council Meeting attended by representatives of Hyde Housing and Austin Builders to discuss a potential site for affordable housing identified in Ridge Common Lane were raised. The Chairman explained that the Parish Council had only been consulted as a courtesy – the land is privately owned and negotiations are still at a very early stage. It was made very clear to the developer that the backing was “in principle” only – any application for that site would need to be carefully considered and a traffic survey required. It was requested that the Minutes of the September Meeting be amended to reflect that the backing of the Parish Council was “in principle”. The Chairman agreed that this would be appropriate and the Clerk was asked to action this at the next meeting. Residents also queried the current need for social housing and whether other sites are also being considered. It was confirmed that the last housing needs survey was carried out in 2008 and that 21 units are required. There are currently no other sites available for consideration within the Parish and the Parish Council has an obligation to look to the future and provide affordable housing. Residents undertook to identify further appropriate sites that would meet requirements for social housing.

12/171 COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT – County Councillor, Vaughan Clarke, gave a report as follows:

The latest annual report from Ofsted which shows the proportion of primary schools in any local authority area which are judged good or outstanding has recently been published– out of 250+ local authorities, Hampshire is joint 37th (with 75% of our primary schools judged to be good or outstanding). Hampshire is the strongest of any of the S.E. Counties.

The position on Broadband is moving ahead with the recent confirmation that the EEC has allowed the government to forward funding to the Counties (£5m in the case of Hampshire). Hampshire is also contributing £5m. It is thought work will start next spring.

As part of the Diamond Jubilee, local authorities were asked to plant oak trees. As well as the individual trees planted around the county, HCC has planted some 100 acres of woodland on 3 sites in the County, some 50,000 trees. This is the largest planting by any county in the UK.

Because of high youth unemployment, money has been set aside to create 1000 apprentice jobs over the next 5 years for young people. HCC will also be granting 10 scholarships a year to fund financially disadvantaged young people through university.

In 2014 there will be commemorations to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War. It has been suggested that local councils could set aside a small area of land to plant poppies.

12/172 FEEDBACK ON STEEP BONFIRE AND EFFECT ON PROTECTED OAK ON STEEP COMMON

Drake Hocking, Steep's Tree Warden, said that he had worked with Paul Garstin (Chairman of the Bonfire Committee) and Cllr. MacDonald in relocating the bonfire further from the protected Oak and reducing the height by 1m but it is too early to tell yet whether enough has been done to protect the tree from further damage.

If it is found that damage has occurred there are still several options:

- To clear some of the woods and move the bonfire further away
- Apply to have the T.P.O. lifted
- Apply to do a light pruning to rebalance crown (unbalanced because of past damage)

Cllr. MacDonald reminded the meeting that the woods have recently been designated as a SINC and it is necessary to understand what this entails. There are also budget implications if further tree work is required.

Cllr. Cook pointed out that over a 1000 people had attended the bonfire and firework display this year and over £1,000 had been raised and donated to two local charities. Some of the money raised could potentially be used in future to pay for further work to the Common or the protected Oak.

It was AGREED to re-examine the tree in the spring and to include this item on the May Agenda for further consideration.

12/173 FINANCE

(a) The following cheques were approved:

Cheque no. 100189	£ 105.00	A.G. Coles (hedge cutting – allotment and common)
Cheque no. 100190	£ 60.00	Jonathon Street (website management)
Cheque no. 100191	£ 40.00	Froxfield Parish Council (joint training session)
Cheque no. 100192	£1,608.49	J. Hollington (salary and expenses)

(b) The amended budget for 2013/14 had been circulated before the meeting and was discussed – there is a shortfall of £1,600 between income and predicted outgoings.

- (c) Recent communications regarding the tax base and precept were discussed – it was noted that further information on council tax and implications for households within the parish is required from EHDC. Under the circumstances however, Councillors felt they had no alternative but to consider increasing the precept for 2013/14 to £10,500 (from £9,000) to cover the deficit in the budget as discussed above. It was noted that this would equate to a rise of approximately 17% (or £3-£4 per household per year). This was agreed in principle, subject to further information from EHDC and this item will be included again on the January Agenda.
- (d) The new circular bench around the Oak Tree designed by Alison Crowther has now been installed and really enhances the Common. The weak spot in the original design has been rectified and it should now last for the next 25 years. Councillors unanimously agreed that a contribution of £500 should be made to Kay Bennett who very generously paid for the replacement.
- (e) A letter from the CAB requesting funding support was discussed – from April 2011 to March 2012 108 issues from Froxfield and Steep had been dealt with by the CAB, the majority of which were about benefits. In view of this, a donation of £500 was unanimously AGREED – the Clerk to action in January.
- (f) Invoices have been received for payment for both BOAT 31 and Footpath 15 - it was AGREED that the Clerk should transfer £8,000 from the HCC deposit fund to the current account to cover this sum, until the appropriate SGS grants have been received.

12/174 CHANGES TO NEWSLETTER LAYOUT

The recent changes to the Newsletter were discussed – the improvements had been noticed! Celia Storey reported that Ray Street has now taken over the advertising and is hoping to make the Newsletter self-funding. The Church has requested that their timetable remains on the back page. Consideration had been given to including Steep Marsh within the title – e.g. “Steep, Steep Marsh and Stroud Newsletter” but the editorial group felt that it is not appropriate as it is not a separate parish and could be considered divisive.

12/175 CHRISTMAS SOCIAL AT THE VILLAGE HALL

The Clerk reported that plans are progressing well – Pegasus will install the outdoor electrics on Tuesday, 11th December and the tree is arriving on Thursday, 13th December. Paul Garstin is providing the lights for the tree. Cllrs. agreed that items such as the cups for hot drinks, could be charged to the Parish Council Social fund (and topped back up from donations).

12/176 PARISH PLAN

It was AGREED that the Parish Plan website and the Parish Council website should be linked together and owned and maintained by the Parish Council.

It was also AGREED that the Parish Council should re-visit the points raised within the Parish Plan every other month or so.

12/177 REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

Common and Hangers

- The New Year’s Day Walk will start at 10.30 a.m. from Ashford Farm and this year will take in the newly opened Trigg Point;
- An incident of fly-tipping of garden rubbish on the Common was reported – EHDC will not be able to clear this because it is on P.C. owned land. However, the Clerk was asked to report two further incidents at Steep Hollow and BOAT 12.

Footpaths

- BOAT 31 – This work has now been finished and an invoice received (although £200 is to be retained for work that will be completed in the spring, due to adverse weather conditions)

Roads and Traffic

- The pot holes at the junction of Ashford Lane and Mill Lane as you head towards Rockpit Hollow and in Steep Marsh at Downgate and outside the Orchard, have been reported to HCC for repair;
- A proposal for white lines at the Cricketers crossroads was discussed in order to change the perception of the road – Cllr. Cook will discuss further with Cllr. Openshaw.

Village Hall and War Memorial

- The Clerk was asked to write a letter of thanks to Rosemary Lilley for all her hard work at the War Memorial.
- The Film Club have complained that the Village Hall was very cold for their film on the previous Saturday night despite the heating being switched on when they got there. There had also been a problem with the light at the disabled entrance – the Clerk was asked to look into these issues. The Film Club's request for handrails at the main entrance will need to be researched further as this could have health and safety implications. The Clerk to talk to Social Services.

12/178 CORRESPONDENCE

- SDNPA Meeting – 7.12.12 – Cllrs. Robinson and MacDonald hope to attend
- Consultation on Permitted Development – not relevant to Councils within SDNPA

12/179 DATE OF NEXT MEETING –

The Planning Committee Meeting due to be held on 10th December has been up-graded to a full Parish Council Meeting (Application SDNP/12/02832/HOUS has been called in by the SDNPA) and will take place at 7.00 p.m. at the Village Hall.

The first Parish Council Meeting of the New Year will take place on Monday, 7th January 2012 at 7.30 p.m. at Steep Village Hall.

The Meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.