

## STEEP PARISH COUNCIL

**CHAIRMAN** Mr Richard Coles

**CLERK** Mrs Bridget MacMillan  
01730 261666

Minutes of the Steep Parish Annual Parish Assembly, held on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2003 at Steep Village Hall

**Present:** Richard Coles (in the Chair) Terry Cook  
Peter Cruttenden Charles Gibson  
Caro Robinson Sheila Fairley  
Bridget MacMillan (Clerk)

John West (County Councillor)

Members of the Public

APM03/01 APOLOGIES

John Venning and Jennifer Gray sent their apologies.

APM03/02 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on May 8<sup>TH</sup> 2002 were agreed as an accurate record.

APM03/04 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING

There were no matters arising.

APM03/05 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reported that the Parish Council has had another busy year with many highs and lows. The Highs included the very successful Jubilee Celebrations; the lows have included the death of Michael Stern who had Parish matters at heart and had a lot more to give.

In the autumn the loan to the Village Hall was repaid by means of the Steep Sweepstake. The Parish Council would like to thank Kate Burke, Stuart Farqueston-Roberts and their committees for all their hard work fundraising.

The Chairman reported that Caroline Greenhalgh had moved on from her job as Clerk to Steep Parish Council in December 2002 and he thanked Caroline for all the hard work that she did for the Parish during her time as Clerk. Bridget MacMillan took over the post of Clerk and the Chairman thanked her for her work and welcomed her to her post.

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Good news for the Parish is the provision of the new bus stop, due to be installed in June,

The Allotments The three allotment sites continue to be rented for pony grazing. The rents were remained the same this year.

Footpaths Rollo took over from Michael and there have been few problems this year.

The Common Terry Cook and Rollo Wicksteed were responsible for the common. The chairman reported this was all in order and the provision of play equipment was to be looked into.

Roads and Traffic Responsibility for roads and traffic has been undertaken by Caro Robinson. The Chairman thanked Tony Struthers for all the work he has done with regards to the Traffic Management Plan and Church Road. The Councillors agreed.

Planning One of the Council's main tasks throughout the year continues to be planning. In the past 12 months there have been 44 planning applications, of those the Parish Council objected to 2. Of those 2, the applicants withdrew one and one was granted permission after changes. Steep Parish Council made no objections to the remaining 42 applications, of which 29 have received planning permission, 8 were refused or withdrawn and a further 5 are awaiting a decision.

Precept The Parish Precept remained the same as the last year at £6000.00 but has risen to £7000.00 for this coming year but this is still one of the lowest precepts in the district.

The Chairman concluded his report by thanking the District Councillor, John Venning and the County Councillor John West for their expertise and support during the year. He welcomed Jennifer Gray as the new District Councillor following the retirement of John Venning. He also thanked all the Parish Councillors for their support throughout his year in office.

Finally the Chairman announced that Rollo Wicksteed had 'hung up his boots' as a Councillor in Steep having served for 32 years. He said that the village owed him a debt of gratitude and everyone hoped he enjoyed his retirement. He presented a gift from the Parish Council.

### APM03/06 FINANCE REPORT

The Clerk reported that the auditor had approved the accounts for 2001/2002 and 2002/2003.

The figures as at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2003 were as follows:

Portman Building Society      £17,541.54

#### Donations

Steep Parish Council made the following donations during the past year:

Citizens Advice Bureau	£100.00
All Saints Churchyard maintenance	£100.00
All Saints Church (Spire Fund)	£100.00
Steep and Stroud Newsletter	£200.00

Receipts

The Parish Council received a precept of £6000.00 for the year 2002/2003  
The Council had agreed the precept would rise to £7000.00 for the year  
2003/2004

The Parish Council had received income from its allotments of £240.00

The loan of £3,000.00 to Steep Village Hall was repaid .

A bequest for £500.00 was made to the Parish Council.

APM03/07 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The District Councillor, John Venning was unable to be present at the meeting but had provided the following written report:

Ex-District Councillor's Review

Many years ago, back in the sixties, I should think it was. there used to be an advertising campaign that promoted the wearing of seat-belts. It ended with the phrase "Clunk-click: you know it makes sense."

Of course, it did make sense, which was what was so intensely annoying about it.

Looking back on my time as your District Councillor, one of the features that poke out of the landscape at me is the way in which Central Government plies us all with more and more instructions, exhortations and *fiats* aimed at getting us to modify our behaviour in some way that the State thinks will improve us. Sometimes they force compliance on us by using the Law, more often by controlling our finances, denying or boosting our pocket money to get their way. Clunk-Click, they go, as they tell us how to spend OUR money.

Resistance to this process is rarely either practical or effective.... Sometimes it just has to be done, though, as we all did in the case of the Countryside march, or our freedom will gradually disappear altogether.

At the Council, we have been pragmatic. We have improved our performance, which we wanted to do anyway, and in consequence have been able to garner more than our fair share of Government Grant for Housing, planning, improvements to our IT system. We were judged to have the best-run housing dept in the South East. We have gone from the bottom of the league in planning to the top and have been given £250k for further improvements. Our refuse collection system, despite some teething troubles, is way ahead of Government targets and we have been given extra money to help us improve the service further.

Where government money has not been forthcoming, we have had to be ingenious. We have pioneered a system of funding for our sports centres that has enabled the equipment to be renewed and added to, with the result that more people can use the centres.

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We have always recognised that the community depends on the voluntary sector to make it work. Last year, we gave over £1m to voluntary organisations like the CAB and a further £250,000 to community projects, such as your village hall.

I have enjoyed my time trying to do a bit to help the parishioners of Steep and Steep Marsh. I am grateful for the kindness and understanding that you have shown me. I am sure you will support my successor, whom I think you will find a great improvement!

I am at your disposal if you think of something I may be able to help with.

No doubt we'll meet on the next countryside march, if not before!

### APM03/08 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The County Councillor, John West began his report by informing the meeting that Steep Primary School had had its application for a new school hall approved and work with the architects was underway.

The best part of the year was that the County Council was declared as excellent by the Audit Commission (one of only 21 councils)

The worst part was the Government implementing its plan to make Hampshire taxpayers contribute to other areas of the country, which in effect cancels out a Band D pensioner's pension increase entirely.

Mr. West concluded his report by stating that he would continue to support the Parish Council at County level.

### APM03/09 PUBLIC COMMENT

Rollo Wicksteed thanked the Parish Council for his gift. He worked out that he had attended 200 meetings, worked with 50-60 Councillors and 6 Clerks. He reported that the Parish Council today is busy, efficient and important to the village. He concluded by saying that he would be available for advice or information if necessary.