

STEEP PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN Mrs. Caroline Robinson

Minutes of the Meeting of Steep Parish Council held on Monday 14 June 2010 at Steep Village Hall

Present: Mrs C Robinson (In the Chair) Mrs J Bell Mr T Cook
Mrs F Box Mr N Hurst Mr R Coles Mr D LLewellyn
Mrs J Martin

In Attendance: Mrs L Foulcher (In the absence of Jenny Hollington)

10/91 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J Gray and Mr C Gibson

10/92 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Fran Box made the following declaration of interest - Trustee of the Steep War Memorial Village Club, Friend of Steep Allotment Society, Trustee of the land next to the Village Hall, Employee of Bedales School. Jenny Martin also declared an interest as a Trustee of the land next to the Village Hall

It was further noted that all Parish Councillors made a declaration of interest as being a Trustee of the Steep War Memorial Village Club.

10/93 PUBLIC COMMENT

Councillor Vaughan Clarke reported upon a letter he had received from Russell Cleaver of Hampshire County Council, requesting support for a lottery funding application to enhance the approach and view from Trig point, Wheatham Hill. After some discussion Jenny Martin proposed that the Parish Council support the request, and it was agreed that a letter confirming this would be sent to Russell Cleaver of Hampshire County Council.

Nick Vetch (member of the public) discussed the proposed allotment site in Church Road, as he understood that there remained some uncertainty as to the status of the land. He had discussed the matter with leading Counsel in London and he had put to him the information he had available, and Counsel had advised him “unequivocally” that the land in question was held in a Charitable Trust.

10/94 TO CONSIDER PROPOSALS FOR ALLOTMENTS IN RIDGE COMMON LANE AND CHURCH ROAD

Suzi Openshaw, the Chairman of the Steep Allotment Society was welcomed to the meeting and she circulated a document to those present entitled ‘Steep Allotment Society – Presentation to Trustees - 14 June 2010’. She proceeded to discuss the contents of the document and gave the vision of the scheme as providing “A village green space, orchard, wild meadow and play area for all, and allotments for those who want to grow. A place in which the community can get together; for the education of children; maintaining traditional skills; providing land and amenities for food production and environmental sustainability.” Suzi Openshaw explained that the design had been undertaken by Pip Morrison, a landscape architect and in addition to the raised beds there would be an orchard, tool shed, compost bins and a picnic area and benches in the area along Church Road. There would be no bonfires. They would be as organic as possible, growing in an ecologically sound way, using locally sourced wood for the tool shed, and Peter Coates from Bedales School confirmed locally sourced oak had been already found for this purpose. Jenny Martin asked about users being allowed to put up poly tunnels and netting, and Suzi Openshaw replied that she did not anticipate these being used. She stated that so far she had received 23 requests for allotments and these included Steep Welcome Club, Steep School, Jubilee Nursery church flower growers and the Wednesday Toddler Group, and it was confirmed that the allotments were

available to anyone within the Parish. Their aim was to enhance the surroundings, and the completion date was scheduled for the first week-end in October with an opening party being held for village residents. Jenny Martin asked what would happen if the plots were not adequately maintained and it was explained that each plot holder would have a tenancy agreement and a system would be implemented to ensure the plots were properly maintained and remained attractive. It would be the responsibility of the Allotment Society to ensure on-going maintenance of the site. The presentation was concluded and it was confirmed that at this time the Steep Allotment Society was not applying to the trustees for any funding for the project. The Chairman thanked Suzi Openshaw for her excellent presentation and for answering the questions put to her.

10/95 TO DISCUSS RECENT LEGAL ADVICE RECEIVED REGARDING THE LAND AT CHURCH ROAD

The Chairman then proceeded to explain the current situation pertaining to the proposed allotment land. She explained that there had been some discussion and debate as to the role of the Parish Council and whether the Councillors were Trustees or not, and whether the land is held by the Council on Trust or is in fact held under the Allotment Acts. There had been evidence to support both views and finally after some expenditure and effort by the Parish Council the Chairman reported that she had now received Counsel's confirmation that the Parish Councillors were Trustees and as a result Parish Councillors needed to be sure that as Charity Trustees they did not commit a breach of trust. Since the object of the Charity was for 'the relief of the working poor' it would seem prudent to seek the advice of the Charity Commission, including the seeking of an amendment of the objects and terms to make them more relevant to modern times. The Chairman further noted that they had been strongly advised to wait for a response to this point before any agreement to the future use of the land was given, and asked for it to be borne in mind that the land had in fact been dormant for approximately thirty years without any demand for allotments. Registering the Charity with the Charity Commission would settle the matter, and the use of the land has to comply with the purpose for which the Charity was set up. The Chairman then welcomed Robert Venables to the meeting, he had been working closely with her and Jenny Hollington and had provided advice on this matter; in addition to being Chairman of the Standards Committee for East Hampshire he was also a former Charity Commissioner and Head of the Legal Department in that office. Jo Bell discussed the proposed timescale for the project with the completion date being early October. Tony Hanlan (member of the public) suggested that from his experience if there was a consensus to the proposal for the future use of land the decision of the Charity Commission was likely to be given more quickly. After some discussion it was agreed that with advice from Robert Venables on wording and content, the Chairman would write to the Charity Commission to confirm with certainty that the status of the land was a Charitable Trust. As soon as a reply was received from the Charity Commission the Trustees would then meet as soon as possible to further discuss the allotment proposal.

10/96 TO DISCUSS FUNDING FOR FOOTPATH 20 (HANGERS WAY)

Jenny Martin discussed the urgent need for repair work to Footpath 20. A request had been submitted for £1400 from the Small Grants Scheme but there was a shortfall of £400 until the payment from the scheme could be made. The request was for the Parish Council to make a loan for this amount until the funding became available. Jo Bell proposed the loan be made and this was seconded by Richard Coles.

10/97 TO DISCUSS POSITIONING OF RUSTIC BENCH ON STEEP COMMON

After some discussion it was agreed that the bench should be sited near to the play equipment, along the line of the hedge along Church Road and facing the wood. The Parish Clerk would be asked to arrange this on her return.

10/98 TO DISCUSS PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Chairman requested that the comments on the planning applications be sent by the Parish Councillor dealing with the application via e-mail to the case officer at East Hampshire District Council. A copy of the response should be sent to the Parish Clerk.

Steep Parish Council – Minutes of Meeting – 14.6.10

The following were discussed and outcomes agreed:

- 30820/009 Maewood, Mill Lane – No objection to planning application.
- 21901/003 Weatherbury, Stoner Hill – Strongly object to planning application.
- 26530/004 Stoner Rise, Stoner Hill – Strongly object to planning application.
- 21819/002 Wyldwood, Farnham Road, - No objection to planning application.
- 30928/025 Adhurst St. Mary. – After some discussion it was agreed that the Chairman would draft a reply and send it to Parish Councillors for their comments before the final reply was sent.

10/99 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING - Monday 5 July at 7.30 pm