

STEEP PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Caroline Robinson

CLERK: Mrs. Jenny Hollington

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 30th March 2015 at Steep Village Hall

Present:

Cllrs. Caroline Robinson (in the Chair)	Terry Cook
Jenny Martin	Nick Hurst
Charles Gibson	Peter Cruttenden

In Attendance: Ray and Jonathon Street (Steep P.C. and village websites)
Clerk, Jenny Hollington

There were 3 members of the public in attendance throughout the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

15/44 **APOLOGIES:** Apologies had been received from Cllrs. Jim MacDonald, Peter Thackrey, Simon Bridger, County Councillor Vaughan Clarke, and District Councillor Nick Drew.

15/45 **MINUTES** – The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 2nd March 2015 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed.

15/46 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - The Chairman reminded Councillors of their responsibility to declare any interest in any matter on the Agenda.

15/47 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Sleepers in Steep Marsh – There has still been no response from HCC. This will now be followed up by phone by the Chairman/Cllr. Gibson.
- Litter – the previous Minutes stated that there isn't a litter problem in Steep – however, it was pointed out that there is a definite litter problem in Pratts Lane, in Steep Marsh which is not covered by the volunteer litter pickers from CPRE. It was agreed to keep this topic as a focus for the new Council.

15/48 **COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT** – The County Councillor was unable to attend the meeting, having been unwell - Vaughan was wished a speedy recovery.

15/49 **DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT** – Councillor Drew was also unable to attend and had sent the following up-date which was read to the meeting:

- There has been a break in litter collection because of new Health and Safety rules but EHDC now has a plan in place to work with the new regulations without shutting every road in the district.
- A new grant for rural businesses is available from Leader – if this is of interest to the Parish, an EHDC representative can come to the next Parish Council Meeting to explain more.
- Elections – The Parish Council and Clerk were thanked for their support over the previous term;
- Compliance – if there are any issues, please inform Cllr. Drew as soon as possible;
- Sheet Crossing – Cllr. Drew had requested that the EHDC Cabinet add their support to keeping Sheet crossing open, but they have pointed out that this is a ward issue – both Cllr. Guy Stacpoole and Cllr. Nick Drew have stated their support to keeping Sheet Crossing open in the interests of safety and local business.

15/50 **STEEP PARISH COUNCIL AND VILLAGE WEBSITES** – Comparison figures from 2012 and 2015 were circulated and are attached to the Minutes. These show that the Village website usage has increased and now has an average of 464 hits per month. The Parish Council website is less widely used but the

usage is consistent, with 53 hits per month on average (of these 50% come via the Village website, 47% come through google and only 5% come directly).

Initiatives from the Parish Plan survey showed that residents wanted better communication, a forum, more news, a footpath map and more photos. Ray reported that he had tried using Twitter to advertise forthcoming events, but there had only been 23 followers at the time. It was agreed that another attempt should be made and that Ray should write an article for the next edition of the newsletter to promote the Twitter handle and engage followers and then tweet regularly on Parish activities.

The website is currently being re-designed and will include a photo gallery. The HCC interactive rights of way map does not seem to be supported – this will be checked and up-dated if necessary. Cllr. Martin will liaise with Ray to include the local walks and maps produced by the Recreation Group Working Party.

Ray and Johnny Street were both thanked for their excellent work on the website.

15/51 FINANCE

(a) Internal Audit Report – the Internal Auditor hi-lighted the fact that PAYE is not being paid consistent with contractual obligations affecting N.I. For reasons of convenience, the Clerk has been paid rather irregularly, particularly since the Council moved to holding its meetings every 2-months and this has resulted in salary being paid in arrears. Only 11 payments have so far been made in the current financial year. Cllr. Cruttenden met with the Clerk to discuss this and produced a note for the file to recommend the following actions:

- (i) The salary payment for February would be executed before the end of March 2015.
- (ii) A routine of regular monthly salary payments will be established from April 2015 around the second Tuesday of each month – the cheque signatories will make themselves available to support this process.
- (iii) The Clerk will perform a reconciliation of HMRC payroll adjustments 2014/15 and seek to reconcile these with HMRC by the end of May.
- (iv) If appropriate, a standing order will be set up to ensure regular payment.

(b) Grant Request – Steep & Stroud Newsletter - A grant request received from the Editor of the Steep & Stroud Newsletter in the sum of £300 for the 2015 financial year was considered. A statement of accounts had been included and a covering letter explained that the request is for a smaller amount than usual because grants for this year have also been received from the District and County Councillor and, in addition, an increase in advertising revenue is anticipated. The sum of £300 was unanimously agreed, to be paid once the precept is received.

(c) The following cheques were approved:

Chq No. 100025	McVeigh Parker (Kissing Gates) (omitted from previous minutes)	£638.40
Chq No. 100033	J. Hollington (February salary)	£520.00
Chq No. 100034	HALC (Good Councillor Guides)	£ 6.00

15/52 SHEET CROSSING – There has been no up-date from Network Rail except to say that the Public Exhibition will now be held after the May elections.

15/53 SHLAA SITES – Dates and times for the proposed meeting with Chris Patterson were discussed. It was agreed that the evening of 9th April was preferable but, if this was no longer available, an afternoon meeting would be appropriate.

15/54 LUTCOMBE POND

Cllr. Martin reported that she had attended a meeting with Jim Hobson, the local Ranger, to discuss the problem of erosion of the dam and leakage at Lutcombe Pond. This is potentially a large and expensive project and will require community backing. The Ranger proposes to raise the necessary money by incorporating repairs into a grant application to improve access, and enhance the area for community enjoyment, by making an accessible path from the small car park and over the bridge.

There was some concern with regard to the potential of damaged habitats and the area being turned into a park, but in principle the Council's support was unanimously agreed.

15/55 ROADS AND TRAFFIC

“Humps” at Steep School – Cllr. Gibson has e-mailed the County Councillor to engage his support in getting the crossing up-graded and the bollards repaired at the same time as the re-surfacing – however, this is looking unlikely owing to time and financial considerations.

Road closures – The re-surfacing work in Church Road will take place from 7th-10th April. There is some uncertainty as to whether the railway bridge on the Farnham Road has been examined, despite the apparent road closure. The Clerk was asked to find out when Southern Water anticipate the re-opening Ridge Common Lane.

Sleepers in Steep March – Cllr. Gibson will deal with this.

Cllr. Gibson is standing down from the Parish Council at the May elections and the Chairman thanked him for all his hard work on behalf of the Roads and Traffic Working Party – he has managed to achieve a great deal on behalf of the Parish Council and village during the past 12 months.

15/56 VILLAGE HALL

- (a) The application for the use of developer's contributions in the sum of £4631 for work to enhance the play area has been approved by EHDC. The work will take place during the week of 27th April.
- (b) The proposal that the Chairman of the Village Hall Trustees and Chairman of the Parish Council need not be the same person, as currently, was discussed. It was felt that this proposal would minimise any conflict of interest and assure good governance, however, it would be a problem if no-one was willing to stand as Chair. It was agreed that it should remain a recommendation that the Chair of the Trustees need not be the same person as the Chairman of the Parish Council but that this should not be compulsory. The benefits of appointing an independent person to the Trustees of the Village Hall were also discussed and it was agreed that this should be a future item for the Village Hall AGM Agenda.
- (c) A request for fireworks at a private event at the Village Hall was considered. However, it was unanimously agreed that this would not be appropriate in view of the risks involved and noise - this will also be included as an Agenda item at the Village Hall AGM so that the decision can be incorporated into the hire agreement for future reference.

15/57 STEEP COMMON – The meeting to discuss the unofficial shortcut from Footpath 20 to Footpath 26 across private land had been cancelled, but Cllr. Martin had a long telephone conversation with the landowner to discuss the issues involved. It is hoped to organise a site meeting in about a month's time to find a resolution.

15/58 FOOTPATHS

Footpath 13 – It was agreed to ask Chris Budd to give a more detailed spec for the work involved to improve the surface of this popular footpath. An application to the HCC Small Grant Scheme may be appropriate and, if so, with input from the landowner, the cost to the Parish Council should be minimal.

Footpath 18 – Chris Budd has previously carried out work to improve this footpath and this appears to have held well. It is thought that by scraping off and putting membrane down on the second part of the

path, it could be vastly improved. This path forms part of the Hangers Way and is a flagship path, therefore the District Councillor and County Councillor may provide funding to match fund a HCC Small Grant Scheme application.

It was agreed that Cllr. Martin should liaise with the Clerk regarding applications to the Small Grant Scheme for both of the above.

Footpath 22a – The kissing gates will be installed as soon as the land has dried out.

15/59 WAR MEMORIAL – Mrs. Cook has confirmed that she would like the WW1 Ceramic Poppy to be displayed at the Village Hall. Cllr. Cruttenden will discuss ideas for display with Mrs. Cook and prepare a draft specification. This item will be added to the Village Hall AGM Agenda to be progressed.

15/60 FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS – All candidates for the May Parish Council elections will be asked to send a short statement and photo to the Clerk to be advertised within the May Newsletter. The deadline for candidate nominations is 4.00 p.m. on Thursday, 9th April.

15/61 MEETINGS ATTENDED

The Chairman had been unable to attend the EHAP&TC Meeting on 11th March and had sent apologies, but had attended the HCC Shaping the Future of Economy, Transport and Environment on 26th March – this had focussed on looking at where Parish and Town Councils felt money could be saved.

15/62 FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Bedales Annual Open Evening – Tuesday, 9th June. All Councillors were encouraged to attend.

15/63 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- Letter from Damien Hinds re pubs as community assets. It was agreed that this was not appropriate with the current legislation and would be reconsidered when the secondary legislation comes out.
- HALC Broadband Survey – the responses to the survey were discussed and agreed.

15/64 ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY AND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL– To be held on Monday, 18th May at Steep School. The Annual Parish Assembly will start at 7.00 p.m. and Dan Oakley, SDNPA, will speak on Dark Skies. This will be followed by refreshments and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

This being the last Parish Council meeting before the elections, the Chairman (who is not standing for re-election) was thanked for doing such a great job during her time in office. She, in turn, thanked everyone for their help and support.

The Meeting closed at 9.35 p.m.