

STEEP PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Caroline Robinson

CLERK: Mrs. Jenny Hollington

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday, 8th May 2014 (following the Annual Parish Assembly)

Present: Cllrs. Caroline Robinson (in the Chair) Terry Cook
Jim MacDonald Simon Bridger
Charles Gibson Nick Hurst
Jenny Martin

In Attendance: Jenny Hollington (Clerk)

There were 2 members of the public in attendance throughout the meeting.

- 14/50 **APOLOGIES:** Cllrs. Peter Cruttenden, Peter Thackrey, County Councillor, Vaughan Clarke, and District Councillor, Nick Drew
- 14/51 **ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN** – Cllr. Caroline Robinson was proposed by Cllr. Terry Cook, seconded by Cllr. Jim MacDonald and this was unanimously agreed - the Declaration to Accept Office was duly signed and witnessed.
- 14/52 **ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIR** - Cllr. Jim MacDonald was proposed as Vice-Chairman by Cllr. Caroline Robinson, seconded by Cllr. Nick Hurst and this was unanimously agreed
- 14/53 **CONFIRMATION OF PLANNING COMMITTEE AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES** – It was agreed that the members of the Planning Committee should remain as before:

Chairman	Cllr. Jim MacDonald
Members	Cllrs. Caroline Robinson, Terry Cook, Nick Hurst, Simon Bridger and Peter Cruttenden

Cllr. Cook questioned the need for the Planning Committee to meet within each 3-week consultation period as it appears that EHDC don't make decisions within the stated guidelines. Cllr. Jim MacDonald said he would query this with EHDC and provide an explanation at the next planning meeting.

Other Councillor Responsibilities were agreed as follows:

Steep Common	Cllrs. Charles Gibson and Jim MacDonald
Steep Hangers	Cllr. Terry Cook
Footpaths	Cllr. Jenny Martin
War Memorial/V. Hall	Cllrs. Caroline Robinson and Simon Bridger
Roads & Traffic	Cllr. Charles Gibson
I.T.	Cllr. Nick Hurst
Finance	Cllrs. Caroline Robinson, Jim MacDonald, Terry Cook and Peter Cruttenden

Working Parties - It was agreed that Parish Councillors should lead the Working Parties set up to look at the issues raised in the Parish Plan. As the Parish Councillor who now has responsibility for roads and traffic within the parish, Cllr. Gibson agreed to take over the Roads and Traffic Working Party from Mrs. Openshaw (ex-Parish Councillor). The Chairman undertook to write to Mrs. Openshaw to thank her for all her hard work.

Cllrs. MacDonald and Cruttenden will lead the newly established Planning and Development Working Party as previously and Cllr. Martin will continue with the Recreation Working Party which is now reaching its conclusions.

14/54 MINUTES – The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 3rd March and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 28th April were approved and signed accordingly.

14/55 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - The Chairman reminded Councillors of their responsibility to declare any interest in any matter on the Agenda.

14/56 PUBLIC COMMENT – None

14/57 FINANCE

- (a) The Internal Auditor’s Interim Report was discussed. The changes to Appendix 11 of the Governance and Accountability for Local Councils had been circulated and noted as requested by the Internal Auditor – however, it was agreed that Steep Parish Council need do nothing at this time, as they are content to leave things as they are with regard to payments (i.e. cheques signed in meetings).
- (b) The draft Investment Strategy (circulated prior to the meeting) was discussed. The twice yearly review of the Investment Plan was queried and it was proposed that this should be delegated to the Finance sub-committee for action. With this proviso the Investment Strategy was approved.
- (c) The end of year accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Annual Return for 2013/14 was approved (subject to audit) and the Annual Governance Statement considered, agreed and signed.
- (d) Following the recent news reports concerning the Co-operative Bank, it was agreed that the account should now be closed. Options for alternative banks and the pros and cons of a high street bank (HSBC) versus a specialist bank (Unity Trust) discussed. Following the discussion, it was agreed to open an HSBC Community Account - the Village Hall already bank with them and the service is very good.
- (e) Insurance quotes received from Aon, Zurich, Aviva and Hiscox were compared. It was agreed that the Hiscox quote (via Came & Co.) should be accepted, being both the cheapest and most comprehensive.
- (f) The following cheques were approved:

100287	£276.00	Hampshire Assoc. of Local Councils (Affiliation fee + training)
100288	£148.86	DNE Services (re-painting the memorial bench in Mill Lane)
100289	£1319.51	Clerk (Salary + expenses including new laptop)
100290	£322.61	Broker Network Ltd. (Insurance)

14/58 WORKING PARTY REPORTS

Roads & Traffic Working Party – no report had been made available – The Chairman commented that this was a shame as excellent work had been going on behind the scenes. It was agreed that, as previously discussed, Cllr. Gibson should liaise with the Group to move things forward.

Cllr. Cook reported that 5 drains are blocked between Bushy Hill and the Mill and agreed to meet Cllr. Gibson on site to follow this up.

The appalling condition of passing places and verges throughout the parish, particularly Steep Marsh, and possible solutions were discussed – the Clerk was asked to find out more about the Parish Lengthsman scheme being trialled by HCC.

Cllr. Martin confirmed that HCC has now written to request that the new hedging which obscures sight lines at the junction of Mill Lane/Church Road, is removed.

Recreation – Cllr. Martin reported that discussion is on-going with regard to improvements to access of Footpath 12.

Planning and Development – Cllr. MacDonald reported that he and Cllr. Cruttenden had met with the Chairman of the Trustees of the charity land in order to understand their current position. He confirmed that the Trustees are close to obtaining approval of new objects from the Charity Commission and anticipate being able to take things forward in the autumn. This may influence plans for development as obviously it is important to look at the broader picture within the parish. In the meantime, improvements are being considered for the play area at the Village Hall and three companies have been asked to look at enhancing the facilities – it is hoped that funding for these improvements will be found from grants available.

TREE WORK AT STEEP COMMON – Cllr. MacDonald confirmed that 3 quotes had been received for the tree work recommended by the Tree Warden at Steep Common. Chris Booker had been asked to carry out the work (quote of £350) which is due to take place before the end of May.

NETWORK RAIL - The second “Drop-In” Session at Sheet Village Hall had been well attended and MP Damien Hinds had come along to talk to Network Rail representatives about their proposals. It was unfortunate that HCC’s representative who was due to attend in order to explain options for the roads if the crossing is closed, cancelled and a replacement was unable to be found.

The Clerk confirmed that the crossing is to be temporarily closed for a week when the children go back to school after half term and HCC will carry out a survey to see what effect this has on traffic.

REVIEW OF BI-MONTHLY MEETINGS – The effectiveness of bi-monthly meetings was discussed - in general it was felt that with the Working Parties meeting alongside the Parish Council and reporting back regularly the system works – however, communication is essential and there are difficulties when information is not made available – some improvements need to be made in this area.

Following discussion it was agreed by 5 votes to 1 to continue with the bi-monthly meetings.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR STEEP MARSH MEETING – The annual P.C. Meeting in Steep Marsh is to be held on Monday, 16th June at 7.00 p.m., in a marquee on the green at the entrance to the Brickyards Industrial Estate. Volunteers will be required to help erect the marquee on the day. It was agreed that, as previously, the agenda should be geared towards Steep Marsh issues, and that the Clerk should ask Richard Peach to attend the meeting to address the issue of the poor conditions of the lanes and verges.

It was queried whether the issue of the Steep School catchment area should also be on the Agenda, but agreed that this would not be appropriate as, in view of the far reaching implications, this item would require a full consultation with all concerned.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING – Monday, 16th June in Steep Marsh at 7.00 p.m.

The meeting closed at 10.15 p.m.