

**STEEP PARISH COUNCIL**

**CHAIRMAN:** Cllr. Jim MacDonald

**CLERK:** Mrs. Jenny Hollington

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015 at Steep School following the Annual Parish Assembly**

**Present:**

Cllr. Jim MacDonald (in the Chair)	Terry Cook
Jenny Martin	Simon Bridger
Peter Cruttenden	Peter Thackrey
Graeme Fairley	Luke Spurdle

**In Attendance:**

County Councillor, Vaughan Clarke  
District Councillor, Nick Drew  
Clerk, Jenny Hollington

There were 15 members of the public in attendance throughout the meeting.

- 15/65 **TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN** – Cllr. Jim MacDonald was nominated as Chairman by Cllr. Jenny Martin, this was seconded by Cllr. Peter Cruttenden and unanimously agreed. The declaration to accept the Office was duly signed and witnessed.
- 15/66 **DECLARATIONS TO ACCEPT OFFICE** – Declarations to accept Office by Councillors were duly signed and witnessed.
- 15/67 **APOLOGIES** - Apologies had been received from Cllr. Nick Hurst who has been called away on business (the Clerk will contact him separately to witness the declaration to accept Office).
- 15/68 **MINUTES** – The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed accordingly.
- 15/69 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - The Chairman reminded Councillors of their responsibility to declare any interest in any matter on the Agenda.
- 15/70 **TO ELECT A VICE-CHAIR** – Cllr. Jenny Martin nominated Cllr. Peter Cruttenden as Vice-Chair, this was seconded by Cllr. Peter Thackrey and unanimously agreed.
- 15/71 **MEMBERSHIP OF PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**Planning Committee** - Steep Parish Council has a duty to respond to parish planning applications within statutory deadlines. To meet this demand, a Planning Committee has been formed, consisting of 5 Parish Councillors. Following the elections, there is currently a vacancy on the Planning Committee. Cllr. Terry Cook proposed new Councillor, Graeme Fairley, this was seconded by Cllr. Simon Bridger and unanimously agreed.

Members of the Planning Committee are therefore confirmed as Cllr. Jim MacDonald, Cllr. Peter Cruttenden, Cllr. Terry Cook, Cllr. Simon Bridger and Cllr. Graeme Fairley.

- 15/72 **TO IDENTIFY AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY** – The Chairman proposed that decisions on areas of responsibility (including the Finance Committee) and the structure of the Parish Council be deferred until the July meeting in order to give Councillors time to consider where their interests lie - this was agreed. The Clerk was asked to circulate the current list so that Councillors had something to work to.

15/73`PUBLIC COMMENT – The Chairman confirmed that Standing Orders would be suspended to enable comments to be received under the relevant agenda items. There were no comments from the public on any matters not covered on the Agenda.

15/74 FINANCE

- (a) The Annual Return 2014/15 has been checked and signed off by the Internal Auditor and no issues raised. The end of year accounts 2014/15 were therefore approved and signed.
- (b) The Governance Statement, which confirms a sound system of internal control, was considered and signed.
- (c) Bank Signatories – Cllr. Jim MacDonald and Cllr. Terry Cook are signatories for the HSBC current account, for which a third signatory is required. Following discussion, it was agreed that Cllr. Jenny Martin should be the third signatory.
- (d) The letter and invoice received from The Hampshire Association of Local Councils concerning the provision of an H.R. service at a cost of an extra £100 per year was considered. Following discussion, it was agreed that this was a valuable service and that the cost should be approved.
- (e) The letter from the Pensions Regulator regarding the new automatic enrolment legal duties was discussed. It was agreed that Cllr. Cruttenden would act as the nominated contact for Steep P.C.
- (f) The following cheques were approved:

Chq No 100036	HMRC (Tax)	£33.80
Chq No 100037	J. Hollington (Salary – March)	£486.20
Chq No. 100038	Steep PCC (Grant - Newsletter as agreed at March meeting)	£300.00
Chq No. 100039	Steep V. Hall (refund of Dev Contrib (landscaping play area)	£4631.00
Chq No. 100040	HALC (Affiliation + H.R. Service)	£417.00
Chq No. 100041	J. Hollington (Salary - April + AGM expenses)	£548.43
Chq No. 100042	Broker Network Ltd (Insurance)	£348.90

15/75 INSURANCE – Quotes for insurance provision had been received from Zurich, Hiscox, Ecclesiastical and Aviva. The Parish Council’s current insurer is Hiscox, and this was also the most competitive quote received - it was agreed to renew insurance provision with Hiscox at a cost of £348.90 for the year.

15/76 FOOTPATHS

**Footpath 18** – E-mail correspondence raising concerns about clearance and the rather liberal use of weed killer on the Hangers Way footpath was discussed. It was noted that the Parish Council has written to the landowner in the past asking about his plans for that area, but not received a response. Various options of involving the HCC Ranger, County Councillor, and/or Nick Heaseman of the SDNPA, were discussed. It was agreed that Cllr. Martin would speak to Elliott Rowe, HCC Ranger, in the first instance.

**Footpath 13** – Quotes are being sought for re-surfacing the footpath. The landowner may be willing to provide materials – HCC Small Grant Scheme funding will be applied for. Cllr. Martin and the Clerk will liaise.

**Footpath 22a** - Now that the ground has dried out, Cllr. Cook confirmed that the Kissing Gates will be installed within the next month.

**Footpath 26** – Cllr. Martin has met with the landowner who is concerned about the use of his land by members of the public to access footpath 20 (from 26). He is unwilling to fence the area as this could spoil the openness of the countryside, but does not want children playing in the woods because of health and safety concerns. Cllr. Martin proposed that the Parish Council look into the cost of clearing trees to create a new path. It was agreed that Cllr. Martin should obtain quotes for the work and investigate funding opportunities.

Recently received e-mail correspondence concerning the condition of stiles will be included on the next Agenda.

15/77 ROADS AND TRAFFIC

**Ridge Common Lane** – Landowner issues have held up work still further - however, the lane is due to be re-opened within the next few weeks.

**Sleepers in Steep Marsh** – No information received.

15/78 POSSIBLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN RIDGE COMMON LANE (see Appendix A)

Cllr. Cruttenden briefly ran through the paper prepared in advance of the meeting (Appendix A attached) which sets out the current position with regard to the approach from HARA/Hyde Housing for a possible 9 affordable and 2 market houses on a rural exception site in Ridge Common Lane (known locally as Forge Field).

Cllr. Cruttenden hi-lighted the fact that one of the 12 agreed priorities to come out of the Parish Plan was “to seek a modest addition in the affordable housing stock, aimed principally at the elderly and young families with local connections” and that there had been substantial support from the community for this, assuming it was the right site and design etc. Since the Parish Plan was adopted in 2012 however, no potential sites have been identified, despite SDNPA calling for landowners to propose sites suitable for development via the SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment). All 3 sites identified within the parish – land behind Hayes Cottages, land at the Stroud end of Ridge Common Lane, and land at Westmark - were rejected by SDNPA as unsuitable, for various reasons.

In terms of housing need, surveys have been carried out in the past and indicated a substantial demand. Current demand level will need to be reassessed as part of any project, but it is anticipated that it would exceed the 9 units proposed by HARA/Hyde for Forge Field.

With regard to this particular site, questions of access for vehicles, pedestrians and minimisation of impact on landscape from the road and the Hangers would need to be addressed as well as the concerns of local residents. Recent, very helpful, correspondence has been received from Mr. and Mrs. Tong (who own Steep Garage but currently live in Devon) giving a history of the land and giving insight into the wishes of Mrs. Spurway, and this will be passed to HARA and Hyde for information.

In view of the established community consensus in favour of a small addition of affordable housing, the lack of any other identified alternative sites, the continued need for affordable housing and the fact that the site is immediately adjacent to the existing settlement boundary, the recommendation is for the Parish Council to consider indicating to HARA that it is willing to work with them on the many questions about the project, and in seeking a commitment to achieve the highest possible degree of community engagement. This would not, of course, commit the Council to support any final proposal, which would depend on the specifics of any planning application and feedback from the community.

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Cruttenden for his very thorough report and opened the meeting to the public for comment -

A number of concerns were raised by members of the public present - in particular relating to:

- Access to the site, the impact on traffic, poor sight lines, and the difficulties facing pedestrians (especially the elderly and young children), both in the very narrow Ridge Common Lane and in crossing the C18 to access village amenities.
- The impact on the landscape and wildlife;
- The actual size of plot – there was said to be a covenant across the land which could restrict the area available for building and a number of the trees are protected by TPOs
- Drainage
- Potential pollution – both to the brook to the rear of the plot and from light pollution

Questions arose about a previous approach by Hyde Housing on the Forge Field site in 2012 and why the scheme hadn't been progressed at the time and whether this could have been due to issues of landscape or access? The Chairman confirmed that the Parish Council had not been advised as to why the previous interest in the site had not been progressed.

Questions also arose with regard to the allotment land in Church Road, which has been previously considered for affordable housing by the Parish Council and which has the advantage of being more accessible for village amenities. The Chairman confirmed that the Parish Council transferred the "allotment" land to new Trustees, following the Parish Referendum which rejected the affordable housing project in Church Road, and no longer has a say in how this is used. The new Trustees have been negotiating with the Charity Commission in respect of their Objects, which it is understood have now been agreed, and they are exploring their options. The new trustees will be required to act in the best interests of the "Steep In Need" Charity.

The Chairman thanked members of the public for their in-put and sharing their concerns and asked Parish Councillors to consider the proposal in front of them.

Following debate it was agreed that the Parish Council will:

- engage with Hampshire Highways and SDNPA to explore whether there are significant issues which would prevent the site from being considered as a rural exception site and,
- seek clarification from the Trustees of the Steep In Need Charity as to their intentions for the land at Church Road,

before making a decision on whether to work with HARA and Hyde on plans for the Ridge Common Lane site. The results of these investigations will be discussed at the Parish Council Meeting on Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> July and a decision made once the Parish Council are in possession of the facts.

Cllr. Drew recommended that Steep Parish Council also engage with Stroud Parish Council who have been exploring options for affordable housing within their parish for some time, who may have some valuable advice – it was agreed that this would be useful.

15/79 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- Planning Training (6<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> June) – Cllr. Fairley will attend.
- Invitation to County Service (12<sup>th</sup> July) – the Chairman and Clerk will attend
- SDNPA Parish Representative Elections – Cllr. Doug Jones from Buriton Parish Council has done an excellent job and is willing to stand again.

15/80 P.C. MEETING IN STEEP MARSH – In principle, Haste are willing to offer their meeting room for a Steep Marsh P.C. Meeting, but are unable to commit this year as they are undertaking internal restructuring work. It was therefore agreed that the meeting should be held in the Barn at Burryers Common Farm courtesy of Cllr. Bridger.

15/81 DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> June at 7.30 p.m. – The Barn, Burryers Common Farm, Pratts Lane

The Meeting closed at 10.06 p.m.