

DRAFT

STEEP PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Caroline Robinson

CLERK: Mrs. Jenny Hollington

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 3rd November 2014 at Steep Village Hall

Present:

Cllrs. Jim MacDonald (in the Chair)	Terry Cook
Simon Bridger	Jenny Martin
Charles Gibson	Peter Cruttenden
Peter Thackrey	

In Attendance:

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

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

14/107 **APOLOGIES:** Cllrs. Caroline Robinson and Nick Hurst

14/108 **MINUTES** – The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 8th September 2014 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed.

14/109 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - The Chairman reminded Councillors of their responsibility to declare any interest in any matter on the Agenda.

14/110 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Steep Marsh ditches - concern was expressed with regard to the blocked ditches in Steep Marsh. The Chairman confirmed that Hampshire Highways are aware of the issue and an order has been placed for the clearing of the existing ditches between the village and Sandy Lane. In addition the potholes in Rockpits Lane are to be made safe and the passing bay near the junction with Sandy Lane is to be made up within the next month or so.
- Steep Marsh hedges – the hedges at Downgate Farm have now been cut back, but hedges further along are still an issue – the Clerk was asked to look into this and write to landowners.

14/111 **COUNTY COUNCILLOR’S REPORT** - The County Councillor’s Report for November is appended to these Minutes. In addition it was confirmed that work on the new street lights in Steep will be starting soon.

14/112 **DISTRICT COUNCILLOR’S REPORT** – The District Councillor reported on the following items:

- Sheet Crossing – Cllr. Drew confirmed that as Ward Councillor he is liaising with Stroud and Froxfield Parish Councils as well as fellow Councillors at EHDC.
- Grant application – the funding for the new bench on Steep Common is in place. District Councillor funding is due to be increased in the next financial year.
- Remembrance Day – wreaths for both Steep Church and War Memorial have been issued by EHDC.
- SDNPA Meeting, 12th November – Cllr. Drew stressed the importance of attendance at this meeting at which SHLAA sites in each parish will be made known – Cllrs. MacDonald, Cruttenden and Robinson are to attend for Steep P.C.
- Developer’s Contributions – Cllr. Drew confirmed he would investigate the use of £1000 from the E.I. pot held for Steep and report back at the next meeting.

14/113 **SHEET CROSSING** –

- (a) **Results of traffic survey** – there has been no official feedback on the survey as Network Rail are reluctant for information to be released into the public domain before the Public Exhibition to be held in January 2015. At a meeting between Steep P.C. representatives and Camilla Bushill of Network Rail it was reported that there had been no discernible difference in the traffic between the gates being shut during the trial and the normal traffic with the half barrier crossing open. It had been pointed out to Ms. Bushill that during the trial many Steep residents had avoided the crossing and those that had travelled along Mill Lane and Rockpits Lane to access the A3 and A272, rather than to approach the crossing, would not have been picked up by the survey cameras.

Residents of Steep Marsh present said that, although they did not use the crossing on a regular basis, parking in Sheet Village had caused problems during the trial, with parents parking both sides of the road at school drop off and pick up times. The County Councillor said that parking would be addressed within Network Rail proposals.

- (b) **Community feedback** – E-mail correspondence querying the P.C. stance and community in-put was discussed. The Chairman confirmed that a survey of those who attended the Network Rail “Drop-In” Session held in Steep Village Hall in March showed that of the 46 responses, 1 person was in favour of closing the crossing, 1 person was unsure and the remainder were in favour of keeping the crossing open with a full gate barrier crossing. This information coupled with concerns about the impact road closure would have on businesses and Steep Marsh-Steep community linking, had informed the P.C. stance.

On the issue of further community feedback, it was agreed that parishioners should be encouraged to attend the Public Exhibition at Sheet Village Hall in January (via posters, website and newsletter) and to make their views known to Network Rail. It was also agreed that, once the Public Exhibition has taken place and the full picture is known, a further “drop-in” session should be held at Steep Village Hall to seek resident feedback.

In the meantime, a statement clarifying the current P.C. position and explaining how parishioners can get involved, will be issued and published in the Village Newsletter as well as being sent to EHDC, HCC, the District and County Councillors, the Petersfield Society and neighbouring parishes, for information.

14/114 FINANCE

- (a) **Budget and Precept 2015/16** – The Clerk had met with Cllrs. Robinson and Cruttenden to discuss and draw up a proposed budget for 2015/16 and this had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that last year the precept had been substantially increased to cover costs of forthcoming elections - even after this increase, Steep’s precept remains one of the lowest in the area. Income for the current year is expected to be higher than budget as a result of grants covering the full costs of the substantial footpath works. Together with modest savings achieved across normal expenditure a surplus of around £2000 versus the budget of £245 is expected for 2014/15.

Looking ahead to 2015/16, it is anticipated that, with a smaller addition to the on-going election reserve, standard expenditure will be slightly lower. Keeping the precept at the same level in 2015/16 will result in a break-even position at year end, and this is appropriate given the satisfactory level of general reserves.

Following discussion the proposed budget for 2015/16 was approved and the recommendation that the precept should remain at £14,000 for 2015/16 was also agreed.

- (b) To approve cheques –

100017	£547.40	J. Hollington (Clerk’s salary –September)
100018	£700.00	D. Hammerton (Bench, Steep Common)
100019	£483.30	EHDC (Repairs to play equipment, Steep Common)

100020	Cancelled	
100021	£600.00	Steep PCC (Newsletter donation)
100022	£57.50	Steep in Need Charity

It was agreed that the following two cheques should be approved for payment later in the month, once amounts were confirmed.

100023	£520.00	J. Hollington (Clerk's salary – October)
100024	£250.00	Steep PCC (Churchyard Maintenance)

- (c) **Internal Auditor** – It was agreed to continue the rolling contract with South & West Internal Audit for 2015/16 but recommended that alternatives should be considered for 2016/17.
- (d) **Steep In Need Charity** – A final payment to take account of up-to-date income for the charity land was discussed as per the calculations circulated prior to the meeting – The proposed payment of £57.50 was approved.

14/115 STATUTORY PROVISION OF ALLOTMENTS

The Parish Council has a statutory obligation to formally consider a written request by 6 or more electors to provide allotments under the Allotment Act 1908. However, now that the Trustees of the Steep in Need Charity and the Charity Commission have agreed new objects for the charity land which no longer includes provision of allotments, the Parish Council has no land at its discretion if this was felt necessary.

It was pointed out that there is currently spare allotment capacity at Lords Farm (on the Steep Parish boundary) and Sheet allotments also have plots available. Even if this capacity was used then the Parish Council would have an option of seeking to rent land for the purpose of the provision of allotments.

It was agreed that the alternatives outlined above provide a suitable outcome to this statutory obligation.

14/116 ROADS AND TRAFFIC

It appears that headway is being made. Mike Pillans has confirmed the following actions are in place:

- **Mill Lane Culvert** – work will be carried out during the week of 24th November to clear the culvert and for a short length downstream.
- **Mill Lane/Ashford Lane kerbing** – a meeting between Cllr. Gibson and a local Highway Engineer is to be arranged to find a suitable solution.
- **Church Lane** – To be submitted for resurfacing in the 15/16 financial year.
- **Bushy Hill/Mill Lane** – potholes are to be made safe week commencing 3.11.14 and the road will be submitted for resurfacing in the 15/16 financial year.
- **Rockpits Lane** – The potholes will be made safe week commencing 3.11.14 and, again, the road will be submitted for resurfacing in the 15/16 financial year.
- **Elmwood Lane** – An order has been placed to clear the existing ditches
- **Sandy Lane** - To be resurfaced and edges repaired within this financial year.

In addition, a meeting has been arranged with Ian Janes for Thursday, 20th November to discuss proposals resulting from the Working Party report – Cllrs Gibson, Robinson and Martin will attend.

14/117 STEEP SCHOOL – HCC SAFETY REPORT

The report into road safety at the school has been received and circulated to Councillors for information prior to the meeting. The recommendations of the report were discussed:

- (a) The entrance gate, opposite the pinch point, opens directly onto the road and Gary Hedges, Principal Engineer, is looking into how this can be set back and a safe holding area created.
- (b) The entrance to the Common is not suitable as a turning area, having no visibility. Ian Janes will look into what is required to make a safe turning space.
- (c) Zig Zag lines – there is positive feedback with regard to the zig zag lines – children can be seen on the island more clearly. However, there is a concern that because of congestion, drivers are focussed on the road and not the children.

Two recommendations contained in the report have now been removed – HCC are no longer recommending that the School encourages parents to support the Network Rail proposal to shut the Sheet Crossing as there is no proof that this would reduce traffic. In addition the suggestion of parking being provided on Steep Common, which had not been approved by the Parish Council, has also been taken out.

14/118 DEVELOPERS' CONTRIBUTIONS – No up-date received (Alisdair Tweddle has been on leave).

14/119 BONFIRE & FIREWORK DISPLAY – The Clerk confirmed that the risk assessment has been carried out and the insurance company informed.

14/120 FOOTBRIDGE OVER THE A3 – The request to name the footbridge over the A3 “The Lady Joan Bridge” by the family of the lady who campaigned for its installation was considered. It was suggested that the Clerk should seek further information from the previous P.C. Chairman, Rollo Wickstead before a decision could be made.

14/121 STEEP MARSH LIGHTING – It was agreed that the Clerk should write to Drum Housing asking them to consider reducing the very bright lighting at the flats.

14/122 WAR MEMORIAL –

- (a) Arrangements have been made for the Remembrance Service to be held at the War Memorial on Tuesday, 11th November at 11.00 a.m. The Vicar will lead the service and both Bedales and Steep Schools will be represented. EHDC have provided a wreath and Cllr. Thackrey has organised a bugler.
- (b) A Tower of London ceramic poppy has been ordered and will be fixed at the War Memorial in due course.

14/123 COMMUNITY CAROLS – This year’s event will take place on Monday, 15th December at 6.30 p.m. around the Christmas tree to be positioned in the Village Hall Car Park (and indoors if the weather is bad). The very popular hand bell ringers from Steep School will be present and it is hoped that Bedales will donate the tree as in previous years. Cllrs. Thackrey and Martin and the Clerk will liaise to co-ordinate all other details, e.g. volunteers, mulled wine and mince pies.

14/124 PLANNING DOCUMENTS – It was agreed that the filing cabinet used for the old planning documents, currently stored in the boiler cupboard, should be emptied and the contents put into storage boxes to be kept in the loft space above the chair cupboard.

14/125 FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- SDNPA – Monday, 12th November – 7.30 p.m. (Cllrs. Robinson, MacDonald and Cruttenden)
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14/126 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING – Monday, 12th January 2015 at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.