

**DRAFT**

**CHAIRMAN:** Mrs. Caroline Robinson

**CLERK:** Mrs. Jenny Hollington

**MINUTES OF THE STEEP ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – THURSDAY, 8<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2014 AT 7.00 P.M.  
AT STEEP VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT:**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner – Rob Jarman  
County Councillor – Vaughan Clarke  
District Councillor – Nick Drew  
Jenny Hollington - Clerk

There were 10 members of the public present throughout the meeting

**APOLOGIES:** Peter Cruttenden, Peter Thackrey, Richard Lushington, and John Owen

APM14/01 **Minutes of the last Meeting** – The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013 were agreed as an accurate record and signed accordingly.

APM14/02 **Guest Speaker** – Mr. Rob Jarman, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, spoke on the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner, explained progress to date, and set out Simon Hayes' plans for the next 2 years:

Mr. Jarman explained his background as a former Police Officer of 30 years' service, rising to Head of Criminal Custody, which had given him a fairly broad perspective of the Police service. Simon Hayes, when he was elected in November 2012, faced several immediate things he had to do – to appoint a new Chief Constable and to write his Police and Crime Plan – he was asked to help and has continued working with Simon since and has now been appointed as Deputy. In broad terms, the Police and Crime Commissioner represents the voice of the people and is responsible for holding the police to account, and aims to cut crime and deliver an effective and efficient police service.

Since being elected, Simon Hayes has delivered his Police and Crime Plan, and started to recruit a team, including a Head of Communications and a Head of Estates, and has also moved offices.

The Plan's 4 priority areas have been distilled to –

- Improve frontline policing to deter criminals and keep communities safe
- Place victims and witnesses at the heart of policing and the wider criminal justice system
- Work together to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in our community
- Reduce re-offending

There are, of course, huge economic challenges to be faced, and police officer posts will be lost in what will be a massive re-organisation of the force to a centralised model of policing. In addition, many of the costly old buildings will be sold over the next 2 years in an effort to make necessary savings to the service.

With regard to rural crime, a strategy has been established and was signed off in March. Currently there is a 10% difference in detection between urban and rural crime (rural crime can be problematic because there are not so many people around and there is the issue of travelling crime). Research has shown that generally the first response is good, but later communication is not quite so good.

There were several questions from the floor:

- When visiting a new town, how would you know where to find the Police now that stations are being closed down? Mr. Jarman said this point has been considered – potentially the traditional blue light could be installed outside of a community building housing the Police (e.g. as being considered at Penns Place). Obviously the information can also be found on-line or via the phone.

- Where did the focus for the Crime Plan come from? Mr. Hayes' mandate was based on what he felt people wanted, then consultations were held (people were brought in and it was also on-line).
- Why do the police push "do-gooding" – victims of crime are being offered counselling, which is not what they need - they want feedback. Mr. Jarman acknowledged that this service may not always be appropriate but is aimed at helping vulnerable people.
- The ambulance service will go to the next nearest call – this does not happen in the police service and there are often delays while the call is passed to the right area. Mr. Jarman said that they are looking at mergers – e.g. joint control rooms with blue light services.

The session had to be drawn to a close in view of the time – Mr. Jarman was warmly thanked for explaining the role and for answering questions,

#### APM14/03 **Chairman's Report –**

The Chairman thanked the many people that have supported the Parish Council throughout the year, especially the hardworking County and District Councillors, Vaughan Clarke and Nick Drew, and also Drake Hocking, the Tree Warden, Rosemary Lilley, who tends the plants at the War Memorial, the Village Bonfire and Firework Committee, the Newsletter Team, and Ray Street who maintains the Village website – all of whom contribute greatly to community life within the parish. Of course, thanks were also extended to the hardworking Parish Councillors and the Clerk.

The Chairman reported that this year the Parish Council co-opted 2 new Parish Councillors - Peter Thackrey who replaces Graham Banks as Bedales' liaison, and Peter Cruttenden who replaces Suzi Openshaw. She said that they are both very welcome to the team and have already made a big difference – Peter Cruttenden with his wealth of experience and Peter Thackrey with his help organising and leading the singing at the Community Christmas event at the Village Hall.

Jim MacDonald is Chairman of the Planning Committee which consists of 5 Parish Councillors who meet regularly to ensure that all planning applications within the parish are considered within the 3-week consultation period and responds to EHDC who act for SDNPA.

This year the Parish Council has returned to bi-monthly meetings – this is in part due to the demands of training sessions, sub-committee meetings and working parties which enable work to go on behind the scenes.

The outcomes of the Parish Plan are addressed via these working parties - Jenny Martin leads the Recreation Working Party, now reaching its conclusions, but which has considered the need for any improvements to footpaths and signage as well as visitor access and information. Suzi Openshaw has worked very hard on the Roads and Traffic Working Party to improve traffic management and the conditions of the lanes and verges, especially in Steep Marsh – this project is ever on-going, partly hampered by lack of funding at HCC. Jim MacDonald and Peter Cruttenden will now work together and establish a Planning and Development Working Party to consider the need for development throughout the parish and will cover business development, affordable housing and car parking facilities at the Village Hall. Work has also started to see if there is a requirement to increase volunteering to support our community (e.g. neighbourhood watch).

The Chairman also pointed out there are now 2 new noticeboards within the parish – this is in direct response to the outcomes of the Parish Plan and were funded by EHDC Community Funding and Developers Contributions and are situated at the Village Hall and in Ridge Common Lane.

In conclusion, the Chairman said it has been a busy and successful year – all thanks to volunteers and supporters – and urged everyone to keep up the good work in the coming year.

#### APM14/04 **County Councillor's Report**

Vaughan Clarke said that for the 5<sup>th</sup> year running there will be no increase in the County Council's share of the council tax. The government grant to the County Council continues to be reduced, which has meant another round of job cuts, albeit at a lower level than in the past. Hampshire remains as the county with the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest council tax, but with the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest funding from central government. However, the capital spending over the next 3 years is some £620 m, the largest of any county in the UK and about 10 times that of near neighbours!

The major issue in Hampshire over the last few months has been the rainfall, with Hampshire recording the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rainfall of any county. The County's supply of 20,000 sandbags was used up quickly and 75,000 have now been issued.

Extra money has been set aside for more highway teams to work on potholes and work is due to start in April. New street lights for Steep should be arriving in September. Superfast broadband continues to be a concern especially in rural areas – 90% of Hampshire's residents should be connected by the end of 2015. A further £9.2m has been invested to bring that level up to 95% by the end of 2016.

Unemployment in the area is low (between 0.5% and 2.0%) and much below the average for the UK.

#### APM14/05 **District Councillor's Report**

The Leader of EHDC, Ferris Cowper, has stated that council tax will not increase for 5 years. With this in mind, EHDC continues to seek ways of sharing services to cut costs and are also looking at charging out services (e.g. burial services) to raise revenue.

Following on from the talk by Rob Jarman and concerns raised, up-to-date local crime figures are available from Karen Dawes at EHDC, who would also be willing to attend P.C. Meetings to discuss crime within the parish.

In 2013/14 District Councillors were allocated a pot of money to help support voluntary groups within their Ward and Nick had been pleased to contribute to the Steep & Stroud Newsletter. This funding stream is being repeated for the coming financial year and anyone organising a community project is urged to contact Nick if funding is required.

With regard to planning, the Joint Core Strategy has now been approved by the Inspector but EHDC has been forced to accept 100 new houses in the outlying villages as a minimum.

There are a couple of issues within the Ward – the first is the proposed closure of the Sheet Crossing – Nick feels strongly that this should be kept open and has made his views known to Network Rail. The second is the proposal for increased airspace by TAG Farnborough – EHDC has argued against this and Damien Hind also has great concerns.

Nick concluded by thanking Steep Parish Councillors for their support.

#### APM14/06 **Finance Report**

The Clerk gave a brief overview of the Parish Council accounts - there is £6,438.66 in the Co-operative Current Account and £8,236.60 in the HCC Deposit Account, giving an end of year total of £14,675.26. Of this total £1,750 has been ring fenced for transfer to the Trustees of the Charitable Land, and £1,432 to progress the work of the Parish Plan following the transfer of monies from the Parish Plan account to the Parish Council.

The main receipt in the year is the precept of £10,500.00 and grants received for the Church Footpath and BOAT 31 totalling £3680.63, plus developer's contributions towards the noticeboards and Footpath 18 of £3533.00. The Parish Plan Account had been closed and £1432.00 transferred to the Parish Council to continue their work. The VAT refund for the year had amounted to £1465.07

Payments in the year had included donations to the Parish Newsletter and towards Churchyard Maintenance totalling £755. The Clerk's salary amounted to £5720 and the administrative cost of running the Council, e.g. insurance, affiliation fees, training etc., came to £1408.00.

The complete accounts were available for parishioners to inspect if required.

#### APM14/07 **Public Forum** – The following issues were raised:

- Verges – with ever increasing numbers of larger vehicles using the narrow lanes, the verges are being decimated – who is responsible for the repair?

The Chairman responded by saying that this is a bit of a grey area between landowners and Hampshire Highways and is something that the Roads and Traffic Working Party will look at as part of their remit and queried via the County Councillor at the next meeting.

- Steep Marsh Lanes – the condition of lanes, passing places and verges in Steep Marsh are now worse than ever yet Hampshire Highways' priorities appear completely skewed as shown by the repair of the Mill Lane/Ashford Road junction!

The Chairman explained that the Parish Council had not been consulted with regard to Mill Lane/Ashford Lane and had made their feelings known. With regard to Steep Marsh, Richard Peach is aware of the situation and has promised to do what he can with regard to repair (starting with Sandy Lane).

- Following the flooding, several items of street furniture are littering the lanes – the Clerk was asked to request HCC to clear them.

The meeting was brought to a close and members of the public invited to stay for a glass of wine which had been donated, before the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.