

# STEEP ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 2016

**CHAIRMAN:** Jim MacDonald

**CLERK:** Jenny Hollington

## **DRAFT**

### **MINUTES OF THE STEEP ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY – MONDAY, 24<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016** **AT 7.00 P.M. AT STEEP VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT:** Jim MacDonald (in the Chair) Terry Cook Peter Thackrey  
Luke Spurdle Jenny Martin Simon Bridger

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Flt Lt Matt Holloway  
Flt Lt Rachel Potts  
Vaughan Clarke – County Councillor  
Nick Drew – District Councillor  
Jenny Hollington - Clerk

There were approximately 25 members of the public present throughout the meeting

**APOLOGIES:** Cllrs. Peter Cruttenden, Graeme Fairley and Nick Hurst

APM16/01 **Minutes of the last Meeting** – The Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2015 were approved as an accurate record and signed accordingly.

APM16/02 **Guest Speakers from RAF Odiham** – The Chairman introduced Flt Lts Matt Holloway and Rachel Potts who gave a presentation on the work carried out at RAF Odiham with particular reference to the training exercises in the skies above Steep.

Flt. Lt. Holloway explained that the RAF have been based at Odiham now for over 33 years and it is home to several helicopter squadrons flying the Chinook and Lynx helicopters. Personnel from RAF Odiham are engaged on operations and exercises worldwide and are held at readiness to deploy anywhere in the world. Here in the UK, they support counter terrorism, the police, aircraft rescue, and floods. There is of course, a continuous need for aircrew to undertake rigorous and continuous practice in a realistic environment and to train regularly at low level. Night time training is essential to ensure aircrew are proficient in the necessary skills. Careful consideration goes into timings, but it is not possible to avoid disturbance.

The Chinooks are very stable and are not subject to the same restrictions as civilian aircraft - consequently, they can sometimes be flying very low to the ground. Wherever possible they will manoeuvre away from habitation if they are able to spot it. There are some certain criteria which have to be avoided including Stud Farms and Riding for the Disabled Centres. There are some local pieces of land to Steep where landowners have given permission for them to be used for landing and skills training. Horse riders are asked to ensure they always wear high visibility jackets to help them to be seen – this will enable the Chinook to gently climb to avoid them. Personnel from RAF Odiham are keen to engage with the horse riding community and are holding local events with this in mind – details are available via the RAF Odiham website.

Following the presentation there was an opportunity for questions from members of the public after which the Chairman thanked both Flt. Lts. Holloway and Potts for such a fascinating and interesting talk.

APM15/03 **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman gave thanks to all Steep Parish Councillors for their continued support and work over the last year. In particular, he thanked Peter Cruttenden, Vice Chair, for his support in all areas, Graeme Fairley for his work on two Parish Council sub-committees, Jenny Martin for her tireless work on the footpaths, Simon Bridger, Chair of the Village Hall Trustees, and Terry Cook for all his general help and advice. He also thanked Jenny Hollington, the Clerk for keeping on top of all things Parish Council related, Ray and Johnny Street for their help with the website, Drake Hocking the parish Tree Warden who provides invaluable advice on a regular basis and Rosemary Lilley, who keeps the War Memorial looking lovely.

In reviewing events over the past year, the Chairman reminded everyone that at last year's Annual Parish Assembly, Dan Oakley had shared his vision for Dark Night Skies status to be bestowed upon the SDNP. Steep Parish Council were therefore pleased to hear that his efforts have been successful and the Park has become only the second area in the country to be awarded such status.

The Parish Council's year began with an approach to build affordable houses on Forge Field in Ridge Common Lane. The Parish Council responded by engaging with the community but ultimately the site was found to be

## STEEP ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 2016

unsuitable. Since then the Parish Council has been working hard to identify sites that may have potential - this work is on-going.

The inaugural Steep Film Challenge was held in September 2015, organised by Phyllida Barnes and her team. The resulting films were very entertaining and all featured well known Steep landmarks – well done to all involved.

Over the summer a meeting was held with Network Rail representatives to share concerns over their proposal to close Sheet level crossing and replace it with a footbridge. This was followed up by a letter to SDNPA and Steep P.C. were pleased to hear that the SDNPA shared many of these concerns. In addition, the parish referendum organised by Sheet Parish Council showed that their residents also rejected the proposal. Following discussions with SDNPA and pre planning advice, Network Rail decided not to proceed with their plans, but will install full gates in due course instead.

Hampshire Highways finally got round to carrying out some much needed work on the roads and ditches of Steep Marsh – however, there are still outstanding issues and the Parish Council will continue to push for further improvements.

The Parish Council was saddened to hear that the Jubilee Day Nursery was to close at the Village Hall at Christmas, after more than 30 years. The Nursery was started by Rachel Goodchild's mother and had become a village fixture – the Chairman wished Rachel and her team well.

Steep Parish Council are delighted to welcome a new Pre School setting to the Village Hall, "The Avenue at Steep" run by Fiona Palfrey, the owner of The Avenue Nursery in Petersfield and wish her every success with her venture.

As always the parish footpaths remain a focus – the Parish Council has continued to make improvements to the network, installing kissing gates and improving surfaces and drainage. Recently a Parish Lengthsman has been recruited to help maintain the hedgerows, signage and footpaths amongst other Highways related tasks. Steep P.C. is acting as the lead in a cluster of 6 local parishes.

Looking to the future, devolution is looming and it is unclear what form this will take. Steep Parish Council will do its best to engage in the discussion and ensure that they retain the ability shape the decisions that affect the Parish.

### APM16/04 **County Councillor's Report**

County Councillor, Vaughan Clarke, reported that for the first time in 6 years the County Council's share of the Council Tax will rise by 3.99% (to help pay for the extra care fees with the rise to the National Living Wage and part of the extra demand for adult social care places). Despite this, Hampshire now has the lowest Council Tax for any Shire County in the UK.

Following the installation of the new street lights, the amount of light pollution has been greatly reduced.

The Boundary Commission have redrawn the boundaries between divisions, to ensure that each division has a similar number of electors. The Hangers division is to be increased in size by about 1,200 voters and will now include East Tisted, West Tisted and Ropley, making 12 parishes in all.

Superfast Broadband continues to be a concern, especially in rural areas. More connection boxes have been erected but there are still areas of concern – experiments are continuing with different methods to reach remote areas.

Unemployment in the area is low, recording figures of between 0.2% and 1.2% - very much below the average for the UK.

### APM16/05 **District Councillor's Report**

District Councillor, Nick Drew, is an EHDC Cabinet Member in Economic Development - he highlighted funding options currently available to local business and community groups and urged anyone looking for support to get in touch with him. Current funding options available include:

## STEEP ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 2016

- Cabinet Grants (up to £25,000)
- Leader Grant Funding for rural businesses (up to £50,000)
- District Councillor funding (each District Councillor is allocated £4,500 to provide grants to parishes within the Ward)

Issues affecting Steep which have engaged Cllr. Drew during the year, included the proposed closure of Sheet Level Crossing – he worked hard with EHDC to keep the crossing open, believing it to be an important link for transport and communities.

He continues to monitor proposals from TAG Farnborough for increased airspace as this will have a direct impact on noise and pollution across our local parishes.

The change in legislation requiring roads to be closed for litter picking means that, of course, it now occurs less frequently. EHDC are trying to find a way round it and now employ litter enforcement patrols to stop litter dropping in the first place. Residents are urged to get in touch with Cllr. Drew if there are any particular problem areas.

### APM16/06 **Finance Report**

The Clerk gave a brief overview of the Parish Council accounts and reported that there had been a total income of £22,223, comprising the precept (£14,000), VAT return (x2) £1411, Developer's Contributions £4,631 (used towards improvements to the outside area at the Village Hall), District Councillor and County Councillor contributions towards surfacing footpath 18 £400 x 2, Small Grant Scheme Funding towards kissing gates £508 and Developers' Contributions towards kissing gates £416, a District Councillor Grant towards the Steep History Project of £250 and £200 from the Motorbike club to be used towards the upkeep of parish byways.

Payments through the year totalled £16,722 and included grants totalling £1,600 (Village Newsletter, Churchyard maintenance, CAB, the Shakespeare Festival and the Steep History Project), employee costs of £6240, admin costs of £1355 (insurance, training, website, audits, etc.) and there were miscellaneous costs of approx. £700 and £427 VAT to be reclaimed in 2016-17. Developer's Contributions of £4631 were transferred to the Village Hall towards the work to the outside area.

The precept will remain at £14,000 for 2016-17 and, as always, the complete accounts are available for parishioners to inspect if required.

### APM16/07 **Public Forum** – Members of the public were invited to raise any issues:

- Recycling – Concerns about the potential closure of the Petersfield Recycling Centre were raised - County Councillor Clarke reassured members that the Petersfield Centre may have to become more economically viable (i.e. shorter hours), but no closure is anticipated.
- Fly-tipping – This is becoming a much bigger problem since restrictions on recycling were introduced. Cllr. Drew said that incidents should be reported to EHDC immediately. If fly-tipping occurs on private land however, it is the responsibility of the landowner to clear.
- Roads in Steep Marsh – Concerns about the condition of the roads and passing places through Steep Marsh were raised. Flooding at Elmwood Corner continues to be a problem – at least 8 cars have broken down there in the past few months. In response, Cllr. Spurdle confirmed that Connor Morris, the new Engineer at Highways, has been out to see the problems in the Marsh - the potholes are to be filled within the next 6 weeks and the culvert at Elmwood is to be dug out and flushed through within the next 3 months. With regard to the passing places however, Highways are reluctant to commit to this – funding is an issue. The Parish Council will continue to chase Hampshire Highways regarding these issues.
- Traffic in Steep Marsh – the new signs appear to be having an impact and reducing speed through the lanes. However, the parking on both sides of the Farnham Road in Sheet is dangerous – visibility is very poor. County Cllr. Clarke offered to raise this with Highways and Sheet Parish Council.

Following the public forum, members of the public were invited to stay for refreshments before the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.