

# **HAM PARISH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting of Ham Parish Council took place on **Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2016 in Ham Village Hall.**

**In Attendance:** Mr R Buchanan-Dunlop (Chairman), Mr C Dean, Mr R Miller, Lady Walker and 20 members of the public including District Councillor S Wheeler.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mrs S Eldridge (Vice Chairman) and Mr D Bicknell. The meeting wished Mrs Eldridge a speedy recovery.

### **2. Minutes**

The minutes of the Quarterly Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016 and the minutes of an Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> March were approved and signed by the Chairman.

### **3. Matters Arising**

None.

### **4. Bridleways and Footpaths**

The Chairman said that the winter wet weather had taken a heavy toll on bridle paths and footpaths but these were now recovering with the exception of Field Lane. The situation on Field Lane was that Wiltshire Council had in principle agreed to repair it but the Wardens concerned were unable to take action until a road in the vicinity was resurfaced and the scalpings could be used for the repair. Unfortunately no action had been taken over the past year. He was aware that Wiltshire Council had operated a scheme – Paths Improvement Grant Scheme – whereby Wiltshire Council would fund up to 50% of repairs to footpaths undertaken by a parish, but so far there appeared to be no funds available for this in 2016. He was also wary of using parish funds for a repair that was in principle the duty of Wiltshire Council to undertake, and was concerned that in undertaking the repair itself the Parish Council might find itself legally responsible for the future safety of the bridle path. In response to a question from the floor he said that the responsibility for the maintenance of bridle/footpaths was jointly that of Wiltshire Council and the relevant landowner, but acknowledged that the division of responsibilities was a grey area. He urged parishioners to complain individually and directly to Wiltshire Council about the state of Field Lane emphasising the safety hazard of the boggy patches to pedestrians, using the appropriate Wiltshire Council highways app if possible.

### **5. Flooding**

The Chairman commented that there was still serious flooding on Ham Road in the vicinity of Little Field and he would report further on this in the next item. Following points from the floor, he acknowledged that flooding took place outside Happy Valley on Cutting Hill but this usually subsided reasonably quickly, and that the stretch of

road outside Dove's House also flooded due to the camber of the new roadway but doubted that there was an immediate effective remedy.

## **6. Roadways and Signs**

The Chairman reported that there had been an overhaul of Highways management at Wiltshire Council. The main contractors were now Tarmac, the system of local Highways coordinators had been replaced by local appointed Engineers, and a new Parish Steward Scheme had been introduced although this was unlikely to become effective for Ham until the autumn. He had been in touch with the new appointed Engineer for Ham, Mr Malcolm Beaven, who had informed him that although there were now markings on Ham Road the repair of that stretch of the road in the vicinity of Little Field Cottage was not yet scheduled. The repair would be patching and not resurfacing, and while the roadside gullies had been cleared and the streambed scoured, the culvert was still pending investigation. This provoked a number of comments from the floor that patching would simply be a waste of money as resurfacing was the only long term durable solution, and that it would be folly to repair the roadway until the gully on the north side of the road had been linked beneath the road with the gully on the south side. Councillor S Wheeler endorsed these views and said that he would take the matter up with Wiltshire Council.

The Chairman also reported that he had informed Mr Beaven that the repair of the serious potholes on Spray Road at the county boundary had been very badly done and had now returned to their previous state.

## **7. Finances**

The Chairman reported that the finances of the Parish Council were in good order. Taking away the expenditure of £831 for the moving of the 30mph signs outside Acorn Cottages, parish expenditure was running in the order of £1,500 which was the precept for the current financial year. Reserves of £4371 were double what was arguably needed to be held in reserve, and were the result of the cost of the 30mph signs coming in significantly under budget, but he warned that events could change rapidly and he saw no urgency to reduce reserves.

Afternote: The Chairman signed a cheque for £69.38 for the Parish Council's annual subscription to the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils.

## **8. The Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations**

The Chairman reminded the meeting that the biennial Hog Roast to be held on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June would be used as the occasion to celebrate the Queen's Birthday, in concert with the national celebrations on that date. Apart from using any bunting left over from the previous celebrations, the Parish Council's initial view was to confine it very much to the normal pattern of a Hog Roast - ie there would be no central organisation of tables and chairs - unless the meeting felt that alternative arrangements were needed. It was unfortunate that the pub was closed and the only provision of food would therefore be the roast hog. Councillor C Dean offered to investigate purchasing a keg of beer for the occasion. Although the suggested formula was accepted in principle there was concern that the occasion would lack any real celebratory element. The Chairman commented that there would be an opportunity to toast the Queen's health, and Councillor Lady Walker and others suggested that there

should be a birthday cake. It was agreed that the latter would take the form of cup cakes which would be baked by members of the village.

### **9. Crown and Anchor**

The Chairman reported that following Mr D Slade's application to be a potential bidder for the Crown and Anchor under the Asset of Community Value scheme, Mr Slade had informed him that his business plan was progressing but he was still awaiting various costings before it could be finalised. The Chairman said that he was not aware of any other bids at this moment but cautioned that Mr Slade's bid was not yet a 'done deal'. The current moratorium under the ACV scheme ran until 22 August 2016. So far as support from the village for the bid was concerned, Mr Slade had confirmed that it was moral support that he was seeking.

### **10. Superfast Broadband**

It was noted that Ham was now in the Build stage of fibre optics for the village under Phase 2 of the Wiltshire Council roll-out programme, and that a new cabinet for the village was currently under construction outside The Old Rectory. However, considerable work still remained to be done and the Chairman hoped that the provision of Superfast Broadband would be activated by the autumn. He remarked that individual households could ascertain whether they would be enabled to receive it by visiting the Openreach website on the internet, and that there would be no requirement for households to link up to Superfast Broadband and pay a higher tariff for doing so. Several members of the public expressed their extreme frustration that Ham Spray households beyond Acorn Cottages would not be able to access Superfast Broadband because of their distance from the cabinet, despite the fact that the fibre optics would run through Ham Spray and that Openreach would need to lay the new cable on Wansdyke land. The Chairman said that he had every sympathy with them but the Parish Council was powerless to do anything about it, because the responsibility for providing connection to Superfast Broadband for those pockets of communities not covered by Phases 1 and 2 belonged to central government and not to local government. He was unable to suggest any sensible solution other than that they lobby their Member of Parliament. Councillor S Wheeler echoed his remarks. Comments were made from the floor that there were reports in the press that Westminster was reneging on its previous undertaking that it was working on a solution to bring Superfast Broadband to those communities without it after the completion of Phase 2, which if true did not help.

### **11. Date of Next Meeting**

Possible dates to be circulated.

The meeting ended at 8pm.