

HAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A QUARTERLY MEETING

A quarterly meeting of Ham Parish Council took place on **Friday 12 August 2016 at 6.30pm in Ham Village Hall**

Present: Mr R Buchanan-Dunlop (Chairman), Mrs S Eldridge (Vice Chair), Mr D Bicknell, Mr C Dean, Mr R Miller, Lady Walker and seven members of the public

1. APOLOGIES

None

2. MINUTES OF AGM AND PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD ON 6 MAY 2016

The Council approved the minutes and the Chairman signed them.

3. MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman reported that The Queen's 90th Birthday Celebration held as part of the Hog Roast on 12 June had been a success due largely to Mr N Hawley and Mr E Rouse and their team of helpers who had erected marquees for the occasion, and also to Lady Walker and her team of bakers who had made a pyramid of birthday cup cakes. The Parish Council recorded its thanks to those concerned.

4. POLICE REPORT

A police report was given by PC Teresa Herbert who was present for this item. The period since May had been quite quiet. Following the incident in February when an elderly resident had been bitten by dogs from a neighbouring garden, two persons had been summoned to court. The incident at Ham Spray involving the death of cattle was still being investigated, and there had been evidence of night-time poaching in the area. There had been a spate of thefts from vehicles; work vehicles had been particularly targeted. Other incidents had included online telephone scams attempting to elicit personal bank details. PC Herbert also reported that the policing of East Wiltshire would be integrated into a larger team based in Devizes from 17 October 2016, and warned that initially the team would be short-staffed. Her new role would be Community Co-ordinator, covering the area of East Wiltshire including Marlborough and Devizes.

5. BRIDLEWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

The Chairman reported that he had been informed by the Footpath Wardens for the area that the entire Wiltshire Council footpaths budget had been scrapped until at least April 2017. As a result, although Field Lane remained on their register of outstanding tasks, there was no likelihood of any repairs being made to it in the immediate future. A discussion took place on possible DIY repair work, but it was then agreed that the starting point should be to obtain professional estimates.

6. FLOODING

There was nothing new to report.

7. ROADS AND SIGNS

It was noted that the stretch of Ham Road outside Little Field Cottage had been patched and not resurfaced due to lack of funds. However, the linkage of the drains had not yet been carried out, and the Chairman undertook to chase this. The Chairman reported that a new Parish Steward scheme was due to start in October. He warned that the scope of Parish Stewards was now quite limited and the first priority would be to familiarise the allocated steward with the parish area.

8. FINANCES

The Chairman said that the parish finances remained very sound and that there had been no exceptional expenditure. Cheques were authorised to be signed for grass cutting: £364.80 and for insurance renewal: £183.04. The Chairman said he had reviewed the insurance cover and the defibrillator had been added at a replacement cost including battery of £1,700.

The Chairman said that following the retirement of Mrs J. Barnwell as Clerk it was necessary to add another signatory to the Council's bank account held with Barclays Bank, and Lady Walker had agreed to do this. This was approved.

9. CROWN AND ANCHOR

The Chairman reported that Mr D. Slade was still in negotiation with the agents, Fleurets, but no deal had yet been struck. One of the problems was that the cost of renovating the pub was now estimated to be significantly higher than initially envisaged, and inevitably this had an impact on the purchase price. There were believed to be two other interested parties, but their identities were not known. It was possible that they were interested as developers rather than running the Crown and Anchor as a pub. The ACV embargo was due to end on 22 August 2016 and it was likely that that would crystallise the bidding process. Mr Joshua Eldridge, from the floor, expressed concern that there appeared to be no fall-back plan in the event that Mr Slade's bid was unsuccessful and suggested that a consortium should be raised from the village to bid in that event. The Chairman replied that there was no bar to a consortium being raised, but warned on costs and emphasised that nothing should be done in the interim that would adversely affect Mr Slade's bid which was supported by the Parish Council and the village. In response to another question from the floor, the Chairman said that any change of use would require an application to Wiltshire Council which in principle Wiltshire Council were likely to refuse. Mr M. Fowler added that from his experience it was extremely unlikely that Wiltshire Council would accede to such a request, especially where a reasonable bid had been made to retain the Crown and Garter as a pub. Mrs S. Eldridge pointed out that an application for change of use some years ago had been rejected by Wiltshire Council. The Parish Council confirmed that it would fight any such application vigorously, and agreed that a letter should be written to the agents stating this.

10. SUPERFAST BROADBAND

The Chairman reported that following the AGM he had contacted Wiltshire Council to discover whether the Ham Spray residents could be added to the Ham Superfast Broadband coverage, particularly in view of the fact that the new fibre cables would

run through Ham Spray. Wiltshire Council's response was that this was not feasible because the Ham Spray residents' telephones were connected to a different cabinet in Inkpen to the cabinet which was connected to the centre of the village. The Ham Spray residents did not accept this as a reasonable response, but while he had sympathy with this reaction the Chairman said that there was nothing more the Parish Council could do in this respect. For the main part of the village, the fibre process had now reached the "Connect" phase, and the Chairman's best guess was that the village would have access to Superfast Broadband in October. He had been asked whether fibre connection would produce a general uplift in Broadband speeds. He said that while there was a possibility that it might generate a modest uplift, anyone wanting Superfast Broadband would have to sign up to a higher and more expensive tariff. For those wishing to do this it was now possible to register interest by accessing the Openreach website.

11. PARISH NOTICEBOARDS

The Chairman said that the paintwork of the parish noticeboards had deteriorated significantly, and the Council agreed to them being refurbished professionally.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that possible dates for a quarterly meeting in early December would be circulated.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm.