

# HAM PARISH COUNCIL

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## MINUTES OF QUARTERLY MEETING

A quarterly meeting of Ham Parish Council took place on  
**Tuesday NOVEMBER 18<sup>th</sup> 2014 at 6.30pm in Ham Village Hall**

**Present:** Mr R Buchanan-Dunlop (Chairman), Mrs S Eldridge (Vice Chair), Mr C Dean, Mr R Miller, Lady M Walker, Mrs J Barnwell (Clerk) and one member of the public

### 1. APOLOGIES

Councillor D Bicknell

### 2. MINUTES OF THE QUARTERLY MEETING HELD 12<sup>th</sup> August 2014

The Council approved the minutes and the Chairman signed them.

### 3. MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman updated the meeting on the progress of two items discussed at the last meeting:

**a)** Recent correspondence from the Great Western Consultation suggested that rail commuters to London Paddington from Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury would be obliged to travel on a diesel shuttle unit to Newbury, when the London line is electrified (as far Newbury). A petition to retain our direct Reading and Paddington trains was circulated via Hamnet.

**b)** The proposed Equestrian Centre development at the Ballyack Estate in Buttermere had been approved by Wiltshire Council, despite local objections.

### 4. POLICING

WPC Teresa Herbert sent her apologies that she was unable to attend, but she had emailed a report, in which she said that there had been no criminal activity in the Parish in recent months.

### 5. ROADS & SIGNS

**a)** Councillor Eldridge explained that the re-siting of the 30mph speed limit signs on Spray Road to the Eastern side of Acorn Cottages was imminent. She added that the Parish Council had yet to be notified of a re-scheduled date for the overdue re-surfacing of Buttermere Road between the green to the village hall.

**b)** The Chairman told the meeting that the manager of the Ham Estate, Mr A Taylor had once again expressed concern that certain householders had not cut back their hedges and overhanging branches on Spray Road, which were likely to cause damage to farm vehicles, particularly combine harvesters. The Chairman said that Parishioners should be reminded that it is the householder's/landowner's responsibility to cut back hedges and shrubs which overhang roads and verges and that this was enforceable by Wiltshire Council. It was

Wiltshire Council's responsibility to maintain the council-owned verges. He said that the Community Highways Co-ordinator Mr S Matthews had been contacted and a map requested which would make clear which verges are the responsibilities of Wiltshire Council.

c) Councillor Miller told the meeting that a Parishioner had contacted him to complain about the erosion of the banks and verges opposite the site entrance to Shirley Lodge. It was agreed that no action would be taken until the building works were complete.

## **6. BRIDLEWAYS & FOOTPATHS**

a) Councillor Bicknell raised the issue in an email about the need for a footpath to be cleared, which, he said, was almost impossible to navigate. He referred to the right of way, which cuts diagonally at the foot of Ham Hill, from the permissive footpath through Ham Estate to the top of Ham Hill. The Chairman said that he would raise this when he next had an opportunity to talk to Estate Manager, Mr Taylor.

b) The Chairman said that he intended to contact the relevant department at Wiltshire Council to see what could be done about improving the condition of Field Lane.

## **7. FLOODING**

The Clerk told the Councillors that she had received an email from Mr Matthews (Highways Co-ordinator) informing her that a high pressure gully tanker would be visiting the village on Nov 26/27 to clear drains and ditches in flood hotspots. He had stipulated that this meant those around the village green/in front of the pub. The Clerk agreed to reply to him to emphasise that all the drains and ditches around the green needed this treatment, including the drain on the road between Ham Cross and Brook House. Also, she would emphasize the need for the drain outside Manor Cottage to be included, as well as the drain in front of Littlefield.

## **8. VILLAGE PUB AS AN ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE**

Following a lengthy discussion, the Council unanimously agreed that the Crown & Anchor should be registered as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). The Chairman agreed to action this.

## **9. FINANCE**

### **a) Financial Forecast**

The meeting discussed the financial forecast for the forthcoming tax year, as presented by the Clerk. She explained that a cheque issued in April to the Village Hall Committee for £200 had not been presented and that having spoken to the VHC treasurer, the Clerk would cancel the original cheque. A replacement cheque for £200 was approved and signed. The Clerk also pointed out that the VHC had invoiced the Parish Council in April this year, for the hire of the hall from April 2013 through to March 2014. She suggested it would be prudent to 'catch up', ie. to

ask the VHC to invoice the Council in the current tax year. A cheque for £309.20 was approved and signed to cover the costs of the photography, printing and presentation of exhibits at the very successful World War One exhibition in the village hall, which took place in July. In addition, £50 of cash was handed to the Clerk by Mrs Eldridge for the Clerk to pay into the Parish Council bank account. (This money was donated by the pub's Vegetable Raffle fund, as a contribution towards the running costs of the exhibition). A cheque was also signed to cover the cost of buying the Council's Internal Auditor Mr N Hawley a bottle of wine, by way of a thank you for his voluntary services each year. Looking at the forecasted balance of accounts for next year, Councillors decided that a suggested contingency of £200 would not be necessary.

**b) Precept**

On the premise that, by the end of 2014, the Council would find out the precise legal costs involved for the planned works to re-site the 30mph signage, it was decided to provisionally set the 2015/16 Precept at £2,500. The Clerk confirmed that the deadline for submitting the formally approved Precept requirement to Wiltshire Council was January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015.

**c) VAT**

The Clerk estimated that upwards of £250 should be VAT recoverable. She told the meeting that she would fill out the appropriate claim-back form.

**10. VILLAGE CHRISTMAS TREE**

Councillor Dean reported that parishioner Mr W Bird had once again offered to provide the village Christmas tree. The Chairman expressed his grateful thanks on behalf of the Council for Mr Bird's continued generosity, which was very much appreciated by all concerned. On the question of tree lights, Councillor Dean said he would ask Mr Taylor if he would be kind enough to lend his set of lights, as he had done in previous years. Should they not be available, the Council approved a contingency of £250 to purchase a set.

**11. HAM HILL NATURE RESERVE**

Mr A Melsom sent apologies for not being able to attend the meeting, but instead sent an email, which the Chairman read out. He thanked Mr N Baring, who had served as warden to the Nature Reserve for many years, for all he had done and for his continued interest and support. Having newly taken over from him, Mr Melsom instigated a Moth Evening on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September, which was well attended by around 25 people and was a great success. A scrub clearing day was less well attended in October – only two parishioners turned up to help and on November 9<sup>th</sup> only one person from Buttermere volunteered, along with two visiting volunteers from Pewsey. Mr Melsom announced that there would be another session on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November between 10.30am-12.30pm and he hoped for the support of more volunteers. This date, he said, would be advertised via Hamnet. He also remarked that some parishioners had expressed concern over the game shooting that was now taking place in the Nature Reserve and the clearance of trees and

shrubs to facilitate this. However, it was evident that the shooting rights had been retained when the land had been leased for a reserve in 1986; the tree clearance was a matter for the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to resolve. He was endeavouring to obtain a copy of the deeds of the lease, so that the parish would be aware more precisely how these matters stood.

**12. ANNUAL PARISH WALK**

It was agreed that the belated Annual Parish Walk (which is usually scheduled for September) should now take place in late Spring. A date will be decided upon at the next Quarterly Meeting.

**13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Broadband**

The Chairman told the meeting that it was apparent from the Wiltshire Council website that Ham was not included in Phase 1 of the roll-out programme of Superfast Broadband by Wiltshire Council, despite a Government-funded initiative to provide 91% of rural premises with a minimum standard broadband speed of 2Mb. Although the website stated that there was a possibility of a Phase 2, which would be determined by mid-2015, the Chairman said that the wording provided little confidence that Ham would be included in it. The Chairman said he found this thoroughly unacceptable – a view that was echoed by all the Councillors. Mrs Barnwell said that as a small rural community, Ham's needs were in effect greater than other larger communities, in her opinion, as the lack of Broadband speed could threaten the Parish becoming cut off and left behind in terms of technology. She said, that in her opinion, an impossibly slow download speed (currently under 1 Mb) was not viable for those working from home and could jeopardise schoolchildren and students living in Ham, who were not able to stream lessons and lectures, which is fast becoming a requirement in higher education. The Chairman said he would write to Wiltshire Council and to MP Claire Perry to express the village's concern and discover what assistance, including financial assistance, would be available to Ham in seeking to obtain superfast broadband connection independent of the Government initiative.

**14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next Quarterly Meeting was provisionally set for Friday February 13<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**The meeting closed at 7.45pm**