

HAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A PARISH ASSEMBLY

A Parish Assembly was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 9 May 2018 at 7.45pm

Present: Mr C Dean (Chairman), Lady Walker (Vice-Chairman), Mr R Buchanan-Dunlop, Mr J Marriage, Mrs C Garrod (Acting Clerk) and ten members of the public.

Apologies: Mr N Jones

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 May 2017 were confirmed and signed.

2. Parish Council Report

Mr Buchanan-Dunlop, outgoing Chairman, reported that three events had marked the previous year: two successes and one tragedy. The successes were the arrival of Superfast Broadband in the village after a number of stops and starts, and the approval of the planning application for the renovation of the Crown & Anchor and the building of a bed-and-breakfast annexe. The tragedy was the fire at Tudor Cottage which had destroyed most of the cottage a few weeks ago. Fortunately no one had been injured, much of the contents had been saved, and the Fire Services had prevented the fire spreading to the adjacent cottage. The village now wished the Smith family a speedy and successful return to their home.

The loss of the pub as a meeting point had been keenly felt throughout the year. Nevertheless, the pattern of events in the village had continued unabated and he thanked everyone who had been responsible for organising these events for their valuable contribution to the life of the village. He ended by thanking his fellow councillors for their support to him during the year.

Mrs Smith followed up his remarks by saying that contractors would be coming in the next few days to make the structure of Tudor Cottage safe. This would involve demolishing part of one wall and lowering the height of the chimney.

3. Police Report

Apologies had been received from Ham's Community Police Constable. A written report indicated that two security risks continued. Thefts from cars parked at beauty spots were still prevalent, and there had been an increase in non-dwelling burglaries in the Marlborough area.

In reply to a later question from the floor, it was noted that the village Neighbourhood Watch scheme had lapsed following the departure of the previous coordinator from Ham. However, it was commented that the village What's App now included some 70 subscribers and provided a swift means of disseminating any suspicious events in the village.

4. Wiltshire Council Report

Councillor Stuart Wheeler said that he regretted that it had been necessary to increase Council Tax, but Wiltshire Council had been struggling to compete with the decrease in the grant from central government. He went on to touch on two local issues. He regretted the decision to close the Oxenwood Education Centre and had asked unsuccessfully for the decision to be delayed. The apparent reason for the closure was a decline in the value of the assets involved and a forecast of high maintenance and repair expenditure. He was delighted that the application for the Crown & Anchor bed-and-breakfast annexe had been successful without the need for the application to go to committee. He also mentioned that a footpath had been approved at Great Bedwyn which allowed the railway siding to be extended, and in turn this would allow five-carriage trains to be used on the Bedwyn Line.

A discussion followed on the closure of the Oxenwood Education Centre. It was noted that Shalbourne PC wished to register the Centre as an Asset of Community Value, and it was agreed that the Parish Council should formally support this. It was also suggested that HamNet should be used to encourage individual objections to the closure.

5. Village Hall Committee Report

Lady Walker, Chairman of the Village Hall Committee, reported that the Village Hall had had a busy and successful year. A summer fun day had raised £300 for the Hall fund, and a further £600 had been raised at the Harvest Supper for which she expressed her thanks for the raffle prizes and the harvest loaf baked by Mr R Miller. Pre-Christmas drinks at Manor Farm had raised £300 for Wiltshire Air Ambulance, and another £30 for the charity had been raised at Carols on the Green.

Following a survey it was estimated that £20-25,000 would be needed over the next 3-5 years for essential maintenance and improvements to the Village Hall. It was hoped that some of this could be raised by applying for grants, but local support was also required. The Parish Council agreed to make a donation of £500 from reserve funds.

6. Ham Relief Fund

Mr Buchanan-Dunlop reported that no grants had been made from the fund during the past year. The fund now stood at £1,874. Previously consideration had been made to closing the fund because of its relatively small assets, but it now seemed sensible to continue to hold it and this was agreed.

7. Ham Website

The Chairman said that the Ham website was looking dated and asked for new material to post on it. It was remarked that it would be nice to keep old photographs on it as well, as they gave a sense of history to the website.