

HAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A QUARTERLY PARISH MEETING

A Quarterly meeting of Ham Parish Council took place at 7.00 pm on Monday 22nd February at 7pm over Zoom video conference.

Present: Mr C Dean (Chairman), Lady Walker (Vice-chairman), Mr J Marriage, Mr M Humphreys, and Mr D Bicknell, and 11 members of public.

1. **Apologies:** none.

2. **Minutes:**

The Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting held on 12th November 2020 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

3. **Matters Arising:** none.

4. **Police Report**

The Chairman explained that due to budgetary cuts we are no longer sent Police reports and it was agreed to remove from the agenda as a fixed item.

5. **Roads, Signs and Speed Limits**

David Bicknell reported back on research into Speed Watch devices which had initially looked very promising. However, a range of issues means the units are not suitable. Notably: solar powered so they only operate in bright sunlight in the Summer, accurate positioning, requirement for warning signs, and reports from other villages on a lack of effectiveness. As a result, it was agreed they were not suitable.

Mr. Bicknell continued, covering other traffic calming measures and a wide-ranging discussion then took place with all contributing.

Speed bumps and speed cushions were discounted due to their very localised effect, requirement for street lighting and noise/pollution issues. Speed feedback signs, e.g. happy / unhappy faces were also discussed and it was noted by several people that these can have a very positive effect. Ham's speed watch project from a few years ago was raised and it was noted that this had very little impact on the speeders that were caught.

It was agreed to investigate the cost of three smiley face units for discussion at the next meeting, alongside chicanes at the three entrances to the village. In addition, it was agreed that letters would be written to any company whose vehicles were seen speeding after a very positive response from Wiltshire Concrete.

It was suggested that Stuart Wheeler may be able to provide some assistance.

The Chairman brought up the issue of road conditions, notably the potholes forming near the county boundary heading east out of the village. Mr. Bicknell mentioned that if a pothole requires evasive action, it can be reported directly to the police. The original advice of using the My Wiltshire app to report issues was also highlighted alongside Wiltshire's pothole hotline 0300 456010.

6. Flooding

Mr. Humphreys reported back on the ditch outside the cottages left of the pub which urgently needs clearing. In addition, the continued flooding outside Saddlestons just north of the Green. Further discussions were had about recent successes and it was agreed to keep pushing Wiltshire on the various trouble spots.

7. Footpaths

Mr. Marriage reported back on the planned repairs to Field Lane and explained that we were still waiting for a delivery of planings but that there were positive signs this would be in the near future.

Mr. Marriage also raised the question of replacement of certain stiles with kissing gates and explained some of the funding options available and what would be required. A wooden kissing gate is around £350, and a further £150 for installation. It was agreed that the two stiles at the entrances to the Old Rectory would be the first target. Mr. Taylor suggested that a faster route might be to ask local companies for sponsorship. It was agreed that the Chairman and Mr. Marriage would talk further over the next few months to progress a solution.

Mr. Taylor, representing The Ham Estate, asked everyone to always keep their dogs on leads and under close control on the public footpaths. He also explained that large areas had been seeded with sunflowers which was warmly welcomed by all present.

8. Finances

The council agreed to pay the Village Hall £200 as it's usual payment as a location for meetings. The Village Hall Committee is extremely grateful to the Parish Council for their thoughtful generosity.

9. Best Kept Village Competition

The Chairman and Mr. Humphreys raised the proposal to enter the Best Kept Village Competition. This is a competition between villages in Wiltshire with less than 3,500 residents. The Chairman explained that Ham had won the competition many years ago, but that our last entry 5 years did not do so well.

Mr. Humphreys explained that it would help pull the village together and get everyone involved and ideally cover as many different facets of the village as possible.

The Chairman raised various ideas for discussion including the notice board, the church sign and a new flag. There followed a long discussion covering various ideas including the sign on the Green, new gravel on the church path.

The council and all present agreed that Ham should enter the competition.

10. Local Elections

The Chairman covered the dates of the upcoming local elections, explaining that nominations needed to be in by the 8th of April and delivered in person. Ham Parish Council has 6 positions and therefore if 6 or less apply there would be no need for an election. Mr. Marriage asked what would happen if no one applied and the Chairman responded that you had to have 3 people on the council to be quorate, and therefore if there were too few applications there was a danger village decisions would be made further afield.

11. Correspondence

The Chairman read out a request from Jenni Blake, Chair of the Governors of Shalbourne, with regards to vacancy on the Governing board.

The Chairman explained that on Tuesday last week the Parish Council received a letter from Dickens Hopgood Chidley, solicitors in Hungerford on behalf of Iain and Fiona Lindsay at Manor Farm, In connection with the deed of covenant between them and the Parish Council.

The Chairman confirmed that he had acknowledged receipt of the letter and that we have been requested to respond substantively within 21 days.

The letter explained that legal action that will be taken against Ham Parish Council if they did not reverse the decision with regards to amending the covenant that was made at the planning meeting on the 10th August last year. The Chairman continued to explain that shortly after receiving this letter he learnt that Wiltshire Council have granted planning permission for the application to build an annex to the south of the main house.

The Chairman proposed that the Parish Council sought legal advice and engage with its own solicitors in order to respond to this letter correctly and then organise a public meeting to discuss the Covenant. The council all agreed that this was the best way to proceed.

A long discussion followed with regards to the Manor Farm covenant. The Chairman explained that a public meeting would be arranged to discuss this formally and that the quarterly meeting was not the place. Further heated discussions ensued, and the Chairman explained that as the Covenant was not an agenda item it could not be discussed officially.

Mr. David Bicknell explained that he was extremely troubled by the situation and that as a parish council, we are volunteers doing our best, and did not feel comfortable being threatened with legal action. He continued to explain that he was very worried a precedent was being set that if villagers did not receive the answers they wanted from the Parish council they would simply engage legally. Mr. Bicknell said that it was impossible to make sensible decisions while under threat and said that he had no choice but to resign with immediate effect.

The Chairman explained that he was very sorry about this decision and thanked Mr. Bicknell for his 8 years of service. This was echoed by many present.

12. Any Other Business

The village party was discussed, and the Chairman echoed feelings that a party should be organised and proposed that it was discussed nearer the time when the rules on Covid were clearer.

The meeting closed at 8:20pm