

**THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**HELD AT HIGH HAM VILLAGE HALL**  
**TUESDAY 9th MAY 2017 AT 7.30pm**

Present: David Vigar (Chairman), approx. 28 Parishioners, Gerard Tucker (District Councillor)

Apologies: None

1. **2016 Minutes** Had been displayed on the noticeboards no action outstanding and were signed as a true record.

2. **Chairman's Report** Having welcomed everyone to the meeting the chairman thanked all the councillors and volunteers for parish groups and it was noted that work was progressing well with a new Parish website and work was ongoing with the Millenium Wood. It was noted how well the Parish Lengthsman scheme was working and the success of the school in recent inspections was noted. Those at the school were thanked for ensuring such a good learning environment for the children.

3a **School Liaison Report** – Chris Palmer read a summary of the School Liaison report.

School Liaison Councillor's Report – 9 May 2017

As the School Liaison Councillor, and as the current Chair of Governors, I am pleased to provide the following report:

The 2016/17 school year has been a very busy and successful one for High Ham C of E Primary School. After a very long period of appraisal and deliberation of the benefits of the school becoming a Multi-Academy Trust, the decision was finally made by Governors to formally submit an application to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) in March last year for consideration. That said, we have heard nothing at this time other than to say our application has not been passed to the Headteacher's Board, the decision making authority, and that everything is currently on hold until after the General Election next month.

Personally, I believe the application may not be supported at this time for a number of reasons, not least the view that larger MAT formations are the preferred way forward by the RSC and, without a crystal ball, who can predict how much the political landscape may change and impact, once again, on our education system post election? However, we will have to wait and see what develops and I will keep the PC informed.

The school has been the subject of two statutory inspections during the early part of 2017. The first one was the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) and the second one our official Ofsted Inspection conducted by an inspector from the Office for Standards in Education.

I am pleased to confirm that our school was graded 'Outstanding' in the SIAMS inspection and 'Good' in the Ofsted inspection. These results are significant and testament to all the hard work put in by all members of staff, governors, parents and, of course, the children. These results also acknowledge the tremendous support the school receives from the wider school community and I hope this support continues unabated in the future as High Ham Primary is a fantastic parish asset and we should not lose sight of this!

Looking ahead to this current school year, budgetary pressures being faced by all schools are already beginning to hit home hard! If it was not for the very careful management of the school budget over recent years allowing a healthy carry forward year on year, we would not be in a position this year to deliver the kind of education our children deserve. Next year's position looks even tighter.

As a means to address this situation, myself, fellow governors, staff and parents have been writing to our local MP, David Warburton, to encourage him to lobby for parliamentary changes to be made to the schools funding formula. This course of action will continue in the hope that applying pressure will eventually convince those who govern from afar do what is right for all schools!

Finally, despite the challenges ahead, our school remains in a strong position, is well respected and continues to be the school of choice for parents in our parish and a great many other parishes in the surrounding areas.

I would also take this opportunity to thank my fellow governors, all members of staff and parents. Special thanks to Headteacher, Mrs Jane Rosser, for her professionalism and astute leadership, I firmly believe the school is in safe hands!

Chris Palmer  
High Ham Parish Council

b. **Village Hall Report.** – Presented by Amanda Chuter

It has been another busy year for the committee and the life of the hall with further facility improvements, and more successful committee-led community events.

The VH Team:

Amy Drewitt and Viv Hall joined the committee of Gwen Chubb (chair), Peter Magwick (sec), Hannah Rice (Treasurer), Nicky Westphal (bookings), Linda Penfold, Sue Palmer, Amanda Chuter, Charlie Blotheridge and Rebecca Croot.

Anita Langford who keeps the hall in good order.

Bonus Ball Fund raiser, Jackie Ash. Run every 10 weeks with £300 winnings issued and £290 for hall funds.

Events organised by the Village Hall Committee May '16 - May '17:

Big Breakfast

Fish and Chip Supper

Murder Mystery

Christmas Wreath workshop

Formal presentation of a framed photograph of the late Den Davis - a long-standing committee member.

Parish Open Gardens and windmill competition

All the events were very well supported and funds were raised for further village hall improvements.

Future events in the pipe-line:

Village New Year's Party

Christmas Decorations - the committee's decoration of the hall for Christmas 2016 was well received and will be repeated.

Thanks to all who gave or loaned the decorations and tree.

Work to further improve the hall and its facilities included:

Electrical wiring in kitchen upgraded and extractor fan installed

Hall and disabled loo painted

Exterior light installed

Clock repaired

Picture, photos and other artefacts that relate to the village and the history of the hall, reframed and displayed

Storage trolley for tables and new children's tables purchased.

Work to be completed soon:

New flooring and painting - Committee Room

Water boiler and heated food cabinet - SSDC grant funding to be applied for.

After many years as committee member and then Secretary, Peter Magwick is standing down - his contribution to the business of managing the hall has been valued by all who have worked with him. Thank you Peter.

c. **Somerset Association of Local Councils** Noted that SALC could be consulted on Parish Council matters on an ad-hoc basis. The services were supportive services for Parish Councils.

d. **Sir Edward Hext Almshouses** John Vigar reported that Molly Cullen was happy to continue as the Parish Council representative. Molly Cullen was thanked by the meeting for doing so. It had been a quiet year.

e. **Footpath Liaison Report** Ian Taylor – Footpath faults could be reported directly on the Somerset County Council website. Faults could be reported directly to Ian Taylor as well. Few faults reported this year. Tony Whitford working on strimming some paths and additionally there were some organised walks. Tony thanked for his input.

f. **Tree Officer's report 2017** Paul Brunson reported the following.

100 native trees and shrubs were donated by the millennium wood management committee and planted on the Playing field around the BMX track with the help of pupils from High Ham primary school.

Existing plantings on that site were maintained and the wild flower areas were planted with donated spring bulbs.

g. **Planning Liaison Officers Report**

Planning Officer's Report – 9 May 2017

I am pleased to provide the following 'general' report in respect of the Parish Council's management of Planning Applications received over the last year.

In the 10 years I have been actively involved in dealing with planning applications received, I believe this last year has probably been one of the most challenging so far. To a certain extent, the challenging element should come as no surprise because planning has always been, by far, the most 'emotive' area of involvement the parish council has responsibility for. As a result, we have had to revisit certain procedural aspects and protocols related to the way the parish council fulfils its duty as a statutory consultee of the Planning Authority.

A key part of this process has also involved questioning 'expectations', both the expectations of parishioners and what the parish council can realistically achieve on their behalf as there is no doubt we have, on many occasions in the past gone beyond our remit in an attempt to keep all parties happy. A classic example of this relates to the level of consultation that has taken place with parishioners in the past, particularly immediate neighbours to application sites, when there is no obligation on our part to do so when applications are received.

As a means to introduce a more attuned approach I have sought advice from the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) and discussions held have been very productive as to what can be done to address these issues.

Essentially, we will no longer be consulting in every case but will expect anyone with concerns relating to a proposal to either write to the parish council, as well as the planning authority, or attend a parish meeting in person to convey their views or concerns. However, should the size and scale of any future proposal demand additional scrutiny or consideration by the parish council then it is quite likely that this will result in wider consultation with parishioners. Each application will be dealt with on its merits and we will decide how best to proceed. Additionally, I intend to produce a draft parish council 'Planning Handbook' or guide, which clearly sets out the parameters in which we will operate in the planning domain. This will allow a clear understanding of what our parishioners can expect from their parish council.

Tension and conflict amongst neighbours when plans are submitted by one party and not embraced by another party is, unfortunately, something we have experienced in the past and is, therefore, not unknown in our community. Many attempts have been made in the past to reconcile such tensions but the sad thing is these still continue to fester away and create a climate of unpleasantness in a most wonderful part of South Somerset I believe we are all blessed to call our home.

Can I, once again, encourage those who are intending to apply for planning permission in the future to share their proposals with their neighbours and take appropriate steps to lessen any issues that might arise at some point in the future? If concerns can be talked through at the start of the process and adjustments made to the submitted plans that are very often subtle in nature, then all parties have the best chance of getting what they want.

Due to the fact that 'new build' dwellings in our community are generally executive style detached houses a decision was made

to explore what could be done to address the shortfall in affordable or low cost housing. As a means to address this a 'Housing Needs Survey' is being undertaken in conjunction with South Somerset District Council Officers. A meeting was held last March with Sara Kelly, the Area Development Lead for Area North, to consider the steps that would need to be taken to inform the parish council of what level of need exists for such housing so that we have a realistic chance of securing the future provision of housing for young people/families by working with all parties in the process. It is hoped that the survey will commence in September.

To conclude, I will revisit the 'expectations' element I mentioned earlier. Your parish council takes it's responsibilities very seriously and will endeavour to represent you and this parish in the best way it possibly can. To do this everyone needs to share expectations that are realistic in terms of what can be achieved and what the best route of approach is. For this to happen, we must all work together in partnership and fully understand what our respective roles are if our aspirations to secure a better and prosperous future for our community are to be realised so, let's make it happen!

Chris Palmer  
High Ham Parish Council

h. **Twinning Report High Ham Twinning** - Presented by Mary Madgwick  
High Ham Twinning Association  
Report for Annual Parish Meeting 2017

The Association has been in touch by email with our partner village in France, particularly after various attacks in France and before elections in the spring.

The Association's Annual General Meeting is to take place on Monday 22 May 2017 at 7.00p.m. in the school community room. All those interested are most welcome.

Mary Madgwick 02/05/2017

i. **Speed Watch Report** - Presented by Peter Dent

This is the annual report of the High Ham Community Speedwatch Team.

This is the fifth year we have been operating.

The team currently has 9 members and we operate at 4 locations in the village, two on the northern approach in Field Road and two on the southern approach on Ham Hill.

In the last 12 months we have carried out 40 one hour sessions. Police have supported us by joining us on 10 occasions.

During these 40 sessions we monitored the speed of 4,057 vehicles. Of these, we reported 258 motorists for exceeding the speed limit and travelling in excess of 35mph. The average speed of the offending motorists was 38mph. The highest speed recorded was 53mph. Police sent warning letters to 126 of these drivers pointing out the dangers of speeding and advising them of the consequences of failing to adhere to the speed limit. A further 3 motorists were personally interviewed by Police at their homes and given words of advice.

The aim of the Police through the Community Speedwatch teams is to make motorists aware of and comply with the speed limit and reduce the risk of accidents associated with speed.

During our speed monitoring sessions 6% of all vehicles passing through the village were exceeding the speed limit. The target set by police is 10%, so we are well within this figure.

There are approximately 250 volunteers in South Somerset operating in 32 Community Speedwatch teams. We need more volunteers to join us here in High Ham so that we can increase the number of sessions of roadside checks. Training is given by the Police and takes just a couple of hours. On average our members give up just 2 - 3 hours a month and operate on dates and at times that suits them. If anyone is interested in joining us they can either approach me or any members of the Speedwatch team for further information.

This concludes the High Ham Community Speedwatch annual report.

j. **Lengthsman Report** - Presented by Amanda Chuter  
2017 Parish AGM Lengthsman Report  
Routine work:

- Grass cutting the rides and glades in millennium wood, the cemetery (with much appreciated help from Tony Whitford), priority verges and visibility splays

- Litter picking at play area, and throughout the parish (thankfully not a massive problem)
- Weed killing along kerbs and pavement edges, control of invasive and noxious weeds in millennium wood, weeds in the cemetery and recreation ground
- Drainage, opening blocked grips and grids, rodding blocked pipes. Future work includes working with the drain sucker from SSDC to clear some blocked sumps
- Hedge trimming, clearing road signs where vegetation has encroached

Play area:

- Construction of new goals with Paul Green
- Prep work for installation of basket ball hoop
- Repair work to the fence in the car park
- Hedge trimming in car park

Cemetery:

- Thinning and crown lifting in hedge row, clearing the branches that had grown into the phone cables.

Village centre:

- Clearing debris from pavements
- Future work includes replacing broken posts on green

Millennium Wood:

- Tree planting and other tasks with Roger Hall, Amy Drewitt, Amanda Chuter and Dave Vigar and other volunteers throughout the year
- Some work done under the community Warden scheme, some work carried out separate to the scheme, funded by various grants

Management of vegetation:

- Control of noxious and invasive plants: ragwort, hemlock water droplet, bramble, nettle, old mans beard
- Mowing and strimming

Woodland management:

- Hedge trimming, clearance of encroaching vegetation around gates
- Brushing, thinning, deadwooding, coppicing
- Clearance of new paths to add to the tree ID trail
- Field maples that have out-grown their location felled and replaced with new trees
- Crown thinning of some mature hedgerow ash trees with deadwood in crown to avoid risk
- Wood chip production and spreading the mulch

Pond

Pond clearance

- Control of invasive plants

Installation:

- Prep work for the information board
- Benches, picnic tables
- Bird feeding station, bug hotels, tree labels for tree ID trail
- Construction of rustic seats for outdoor classroom

Craig Howe

k. **Playing Field Report** - presented by Paul Brunsdon  
AGM HHPFMC  
Chairman's Report Year Ending 20.04.2017

This year has seen continued enjoyment of the parishes playing field facility. The following events stand out as important milestones through the year.

- Important maintenance work was carried out on the zipslide by a company that Kompan employs for inhouse maintenance.

- Resurfacing of worn areas of grass was toppedressed with imported landscape bark to comply with recommended safety regulations.
- 7 a side football goals were bought and kindly assembled by our lengthsman and volunteer Paul Green to whom we are very grateful given the large number of parts that arrived early one morning. I can report that the goals are in almost daily use. The plan is to allow the top 11 a side goal to rest and be reseeded now an alternative exists.
- Aller park under 11 s now train on a regular basis with the new goals as an important draw.
- High Ham team beat the visitors from Pitney in the Xmas charity match and £275. Was raised and donated to Clic Sergeant.
- Regular safety checks were made by Charlotte and reports made to the committee and we thank her for her vigilance.
- A disco was arranged for December which had to be rescheduled for owing to an unforeseen clash with a school fundraising event in the village hall. This was regrettable as the rescheduled valentines event in failed to draw a crowd. I would favour returning to the quiz or live music formula this year.
- There is a pile of bark that has been deposited in the car park by topline and it is available for a modest donation. £15.00 has been raised todate.
- Craig has repaired the posts again
- 100 trees and shrubs and snowdrops were planted by the schoolchildren around the BMX track.

My thanks to everyone who has worked hard to keep the playing field running this year.

1. **Millenium Wood** – Report presented by Amanda Chuter

Millennium Wood 2016-17

It has another busy year for Lengthsman Craig Howe and the MW Management Group (Dave Vigar, Roger Hall, Amanda Chuter Amy Drewitt).

The last 12 months schedule of Lengthsman-tasks:

hedge cutting  
mowing of rides and paths and cutting back adjacent growth  
brashing, coppicing and wood chip production  
Control of noxious and invasive plants

In addition, trees were identified for felling and replaced with whips donated by Trust for Nature Conservation Volunteers Work funded by the Tesco grant/SSDC ‘Health and WellBeing Scheme’ has continued with the installation of:

New paths and tree identification trail

Construction of seats in outdoor classroom

pond-side shelter (designed and constructed by Castles Cary Ltd, Henstridge)

3 insect towers

bird feeding station (due to repeated human interference, feeding has stopped. Suggestions for solving problem are welcome)

tree identification labels

2 picnic tables and 3 benches

And

pond renovation

planting 500 native bluebells

improvements to car park

Future work:

Continue to lightly thin tree for the health and well being of the wood and its appearance.

The final Tesco-funded purchase, an interpretation board, will be installed sometime in May.

Additional and replacement signage will be installed in May: new signs will include warning of deep water and for children to be ‘actively supervised’, and ‘High Ham Parish Council’ to be on main gate sign. There are plans to install signs at strategic sites to direct visitors to the wood.

Thanks must go to all those who have ben involved in all of the work in the last 12 months - the wood is in good heart and looking great.

Amanda Chuter

**m. Strimmer Project** – Tony Whitford’s report was presented by Amanda Chuter.

Somerset Strimmer Project – High Ham Parish 1/4/2016 -1/4/2017

1. The Somerset Strimmer Project
2. The Somerset Strimmer Project is run by Somerset County Council (SCC). It uses Parish Councils and volunteers to help the SCC Rights of Way Service maintain its duty for keeping public footpaths, bridleways, and restricted byways clear of vegetation. The use of volunteers is fully funded directly by the SCC.
3. High Ham Parish Volunteer

- 3.1 The High Ham Parish volunteer is Mr A Whitford.
- 3.2 Mr Whitford has received appropriate training and equipment to do the job.
4. Strimming Operations
- 4.1 Strimming operations involve checking sites for any H&S issues, access, scope of work to be done and the actual strimming
- 4.2 High Ham Parish has over 20 public footpaths. Over the period 1/4/2016 – 1/4/2017 most of the footpaths received strimming operations on one or more occasions. A total of 45 hrs 50 mins of volunteer time was used.
- 4.3 The priority for strimming has been gates/stiles and the immediate surrounds.
- 4.4 A 50 metre stretch of footpath (Footpath L12/36) west of Lower Stout Farm was recovered from hedgrow and thicket. This section had been lost for many years.
5. Organised Walks
- 5.1 Mr Whitford has organised a series of monthly walks in an attempt to get more people to use the local footpaths. Colleagues in Pitney and Somerton have contributed to organising these walks and this has enabled routes beyond the Parish to be discovered.
- 5.2 Attendance on the walks has been mixed but there is a regular core of parishioners. A reasonable level of fitness is required for many of these walks as the nature of High Ham means there there will nearly always be a steep "up".
6. Main Issues
- 6.1 The main issues affecting High Ham Parish footpaths continue to be the following:
- Lack of use – Apart from the central footpaths in High Ham and Low Ham most footpaths are barely used.
  - Stiles, Gates and Signage – Many stiles, gates and signs are in a state of poor repair or missing altogether.
  - Obstructions – Crops are grown over some footpaths, unclimbable temporary structures are placed across footpaths to contain cattle, cattle troughs are placed alongside stiles gates causing unpassable mud pools, drainage trenches dug across footpaths. A section of footpath (L12/24) is obstructed and blocked off at Netherham Farm.
- 6.2 Somerset County Council Rights of Way Section has upgraded its interactive map of all footpaths in the county. The map, as well as providing information on footpath routes etc, allows members of the public to post any problems such as broken stiles, obstructions etc. The Rights of Section pick up on these and post any remedial action. There are numerous postings affecting High Ham Footpaths.
- 6.3 The map can be accessed via the council website [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk) and enter "Rights of Way" in the search box, then click on "Report a problem". The Parish Council and parishioners are encouraged to do so.
- A J Whitford (Volunteer)27/4/2017

#### **n. High Ham Ladies Group**

Yet another very happy and successful year. Our numbers are increasing, and we have welcomed several new members and guests. Our speakers have ranged from a talk about feet – to an expedition to Kilimanjaro. I imagine the feet talk would come in very handy if any of us attempted such a trek!

Another visit to the Chocolate Factory at Cheddar, which is always a treat, and a very interesting talk by Steve Greenhalgh, SCC Road Safety Officer. We had a short quiz on the latest road signs and although most of us are drivers, it was amazing how much we had forgotten!

Much more planned for this year, and we are already in the preliminary planning stages for 2018. How time flies!

We always welcome new members and guests. We meet in the Village Hall, first Wednesday of the month, at 10.30 a.m. No meeting in August.

4. **To receive the annual account of any Village Charity.** There were none.

5. **To Consider any Matter or Motion.** There were none.

Meeting closed at 8.10pm

D Vigar

Chairman High Ham Parish Council