

# HOLNE PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting on 4 April 2017 in Holne Village Hall at 7.30pm

### Present

Cllr B Owen (Chairman), Cllr T Crook, Cllr D Higman, Cllr E Ross, Cllr Simpson, Cllr D Troake, District Cllr Smerdon, 22 members of the public and the clerk (Suzanna Hughes)

The meeting was opened by the Chairman at 7.30pm.

APM040417.01	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> Apologies were received from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cllr J Bellamy</li></ul>
APM040417.02	<b>The Church House Inn – update and discussion</b> The Chairman informed the meeting that the purpose of this item was to update the parish about The Church House Inn and give the parishioners an opportunity to ask questions. She advised that the Parish Council had been concerned for some time and had been trying to obtain information from the Trustees. Details had not always been forthcoming but she wished to assure the Trustees that they had the support of the community and Parish Council in trying to secure its future. She also hoped that the Trustees would be able to allay any concerns this evening. She then proceeded to read a letter received from the Chair of the Trustees and a letter from Bettsworths Estate Agents which provided more information about the current position, a copy of which is attached.  The meeting was informed that the Charity owns the pub and the decision makers are the four Trustees. Concerns were raised about the deterioration of the pub whilst it is on the market and the fact that the village now had no pub and no vicar. With regard to ongoing maintenance, Trustee Keith Evans advised that they have done what they need to do but this is largely governed by the estate agent. He pointed out that bringing in commercial cleaners and companies to maintain the exterior costs money. Following the successful ‘Scrubfest’, it was suggested that villagers may be willing to offer such support again. It was agreed that Bo Hanson would put out an appeal for further help.  Cllr Ross wished to point out that she had the utmost respect and admiration for Marion Kaye, Acting Chair of the Trustees, for the work she is doing.  A potential buyer with long-standing connections to the village and pub was present at the meeting and addressed those present. He advised that raising the money to fund the purchase of the Inn was a problem because of a covenant. However, he informed those present that he was in the process of putting together a proposal for the Trustees’ consideration.  Mike Cunniam stated that whoever buys the pub, the parish must spread the word to encourage business.
APM040417.03	<b>Chairman’s Report</b> The Chairman began her report by quoting the start of her 2016 report...  <i>‘I’d like to start with highlighting 2 goals to achieve for this coming year: The first is to implement a pro-active and informative Holne Hub. The PC have a website – there is huge potential to utilise this for community benefit, to develop into a community noticeboard, to link to all the other Holne based community project, such as Playpark and the shop. Currently Suzanna, our clerk uploads PC minutes to the website, but it needs a manager, to be able to liase with all the groups, to keep the website up to date with photos and details. So we are looking for a website manager – it could be a really interesting role and help to develop</i>

*IT skills?*

*The second is to fill the PC vacancy. This is not a scary role, nor are any previous skills or experience necessary. It's a brilliant way to take an active part in village life and to get an insight into village workings and sometimes politics. It gives a chance to take part in village development, to maintain a sense of community and help influence positive changes. It does take several months to get into the role with the only request to attend the monthly PC meetings.*

The Chairman informed the meeting that she was extremely pleased that these goals have both been reached....

'Bo Hanson and Tim Crook have set up a new Holne Village web page – Holne, Scoriton and Hamlets website, "your one stop community shop, home to all things Holne and Scoriton". Please check out their page [www.holnevillage.co.uk](http://www.holnevillage.co.uk). You will see this is a brilliant and truly community based site. And if you want further information or wish to contribute contact [info@holnevillage.co.uk](mailto:info@holnevillage.co.uk)

And Tim Crook has been co-opted on to the Parish Council this evening which means we are a full council.

I'd like to welcome Tim and also John Bellamy who joined us in October. And of course to thank Cllrs Lis Ross, Gilly Simpson, David Troake and David Higman for their continued help and support I'd also like to thank Ross Gray as tree warden, Paul as snow warden (not that he's done much recently!) and our councillors, for South Hams, Pete Smerdon, and for Devon County Rose Rowe.

The thorny issue of broadband has dominated discussion this year. BT is still completing works though several people have gone live. There has been much discussion on which provider. There still seems different services and different opinions.

Achievements for this year:

The TAP fund have come up trumps for us this year. This is a pot of money, funded from both DCC and SHDC. Parish Councils are invited to bid for a portion on the basis of the population. And we have been awarded £600 towards a defibrillator

Cllr Troake has been researching defibrillators and after a presentation by Teign Heartbeat, it was agreed to purchase, the rest of the funding from Councillors Smerdon and Rowe from their allocation budget. We are currently waiting for estimates for installation. It is to be located at the shop David will be organising resuscitation training for the community in due course. It will be advertised on the website.

The Parish Council continues to support Playpark Charity. Fund raising goes on for further improvements, particularly for the entrance gate. Several fun events have been organised, Easter Egg hunt, celebration for 1year anniversary. Christmas craft activity and maintenance with leat clearing. Thank you to Hannah and David Best for organising to lay the road side hedge which looks amazing. They have also now planted saplings in the gaps.

The Parish Council contract Simon Birbeck for its grass cutting. John has kindly agreed to liaise with contractor to keep an eye and advise when cuts are due.

The leats are a regular item on the agenda. While we haven't had severe rains, there have been no reported problems.

I'd like to thank Cllr Ross for ensuring the sink in Playpark is emptied every week (not personally though).

As usual the village came up trumps when the Parish Council was unable to access electric supply for the Christmas tree lights, it was with regret the Parish Council took the decision not to have a tree. But on the green, as if by magic, appeared a selection of trees, the Christmas fairy at work! This giving us ideas for this coming 2017 Christmas.

Another example of community working together was 'Scrubfest'. Concerned by the lack of maintenance and apparent deterioration of the Church House Inn, and as an eyesore to visitors

and villagers alike, a cleaning day was organised. The exterior was attacked, windows, frames and the surrounding flower beds. What a difference and thank you to Bo and all who helped on the day.

Lastly and absolutely not least, I would like to thank Suzanna our clerk very much for her efficient management and organising of the Council as always'.

APM040417.04

### Clerk's Finance Report

#### Balances held March 2017

Current Account	£ 1,434
Savings Account	<u>£ 4,447</u>
Total	<u>£ 5,881</u>

#### Grants Donated 2016/17

Parish Link	£ 60
RBL	<u>£ 22</u>
	<u>£ 82</u>

#### Major Sources of Income 2015/16

Precept & C. Tax support grant	£ 6,921
VAT reclaimed	<u>£ 134</u>
	<u>£7,055</u>

#### Grants received 2016/17

None

The Parish Council has always tried to keep the precept as low as possible and for many years there has been either only a very minimal increase or none at all. With the precept being the Parish Council's only source of income, for 2016/17, however, the Parish Council had no option but to make a more significant increase. The increase was to cover a general rise in costs and to cover the increased cost of insurance of Playpark and its equipment and the maintenance and grass cutting in Playpark which is now the responsibility of the Parish Council rather than the District Council. Having made this more significant increase last year, however, there will be no increase in 2017/18.

There have been no surprises in the Parish Council's spending this year and it has been able to stick within its budget. The annual day to day running costs of the Parish Council are around £4,000 per year. This figure includes the clerk's salary, insurance, hall hire, audit, subscriptions and other administrative costs. Other costs this year include the grass cutting and maintenance of Playpark which have totalled £1,100.

The other significant cost borne by the Parish Council for the last 25 years has been the annual repayment of a loan which was taken out by the Parish Council to assist with the village hall. The annual repayments were £1,149 which accounted for around 17% of the total precept received by the Parish Council. The good news is that the Parish Council has just made its final repayment and the loan is now paid off.

As Belinda mentioned, the Parish Council is about to purchase a defibrillator which including installation will cost around £1,400. Whilst the Parish Council made a budget provision at the start of the year towards the cost of this, grants have been received from the County and District Councillors to the sum of £800 and a grant of £600 from the TAP fund has made up the shortfall which means the Parish Council will only have to make a minimal contribution, if any.

I think I mentioned last year that Parish Councils with an annual turnover of less than £25,000 are now required to comply with 'The Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities'. This means that the Parish Council is required to publish certain information on its website as part of the new audit

	<p>framework. This includes the end of year accounts, annual governance statement, internal audit report, list of Councillors and their responsibilities, location of public land and building assets and minutes and agendas of meetings. This information can be found on the website and is freely available to inspect as part of the Government's desire to place more power into citizens' hands to increase democratic accountability.</p>
<p><b>APM040417.05</b></p>	<p><b>Community Reports and Questions</b></p> <p>Ross Gray introduced himself to the meeting as the Tree Warden and was also pleased to introduce his new assistant Alex Ducas. He informed the meeting that anyone seeking advice about trees or hedges in the parish should contact either Ross or Alex who are very happy to help. He reminded Parish Councillors not to forget the after care for the newly laid hedge at Playpark. He also commented that everyone will be affected to a degree by the ash die-back disease and to be advised everyone to be vigilant with their own trees.</p> <p>It was proposed that Mike and Gill Cunniam be formally thanked for the work they do to raise funds for the village through the sale of books.</p> <p>Peter Bellamy, Chairman of the Village Hall Committee, informed the meeting that the AGM of the Village Hall Committee will be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May at 7.00pm in the Village Hall and that everyone is welcome to attend. He advised that the Committee continues to work hard to improve the hall. As well as ongoing maintenance, the hall has recently been painted (interior and exterior). He urged the village to continue to support the hall.</p> <p>Cllr Ross informed the meeting that Judy Henderson had recently stepped down from running the Gardening Club. She wished to formally thank Judy for her involvement and organisation of the Club over many years.</p> <p>The meeting was informed that the Holne Revel will take place on 29<sup>th</sup> July.</p>
<p><b>APM040417.06</b></p>	<p><b>Close</b></p> <p>The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting before closing the meeting at 8.35pm.</p>

.....

Cllr Belinda Owen

## **On behalf of the Trustees of the Holne Church Charity**

Attached is a letter from Matt Bettesworth, received following a meeting with the Trustees of the Holne Church Charity about 10 days ago which lays out the current situation in regard to the sale of The Church House Inn.

However, there are a few points that I would add:

- The Trustees of the Holne Church Charity are responsible for the Church House Inn and Playpark and because of their charity status must follow guidelines and rules of the Charity Commission.
- The Diocese of Exeter has no involvement with the Trust.
- The Trustees are made up of the Vicar of Holne, 2 representatives from the PCC of the Church and 2 representatives of the Village community.  
(Due to the on-going ill-health of Revd David Sherwood (Rector of Ashburton), Marion Kaye (Deputy chair of the Trustees) has taken on the role of acting Chairman.)
- The sole beneficiary of the income from the Trust is the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Holne.

We are grateful to those who had a 'clean up' of the outside of the Church House Inn. However we would point out that the trustees have worked or paid for work on the exterior of the Inn and its garden 3 times over the past 8 months, as well as having spent several thousands of pounds on internal commercial cleaning work.

Also we would like to point out that to comply with our Insurance policy we have drained down the heating system, turned off water, gas and electricity and at least once each week the premises in checked over.

Many thanks

Marion Kaye

(Acting Chair of the Trustees of the Holne Church Charity)

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

Holne Church Charity  
C/o Mrs M Kaye  
4 Buckfast Close  
Buckfast  
Devon  
TQ11 0EW

Our ref: MB/ke/2544  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2017

Via email only: [marion@marionkaye.com](mailto:marion@marionkaye.com)

Dear Marion

**Re: The Church House Inn, Holne**

Further to our recent meeting and in anticipation of the Parish Council meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> April, I set out below a summary of events to date and commentary regarding the sale of the Church House Inn at Holne.

As you are fully aware the marketing of the property was delayed for over 7 months initially whilst a Court Order was sought to evict the previous tenant which you as Trustees could do absolutely nothing about. We have had continued interest in the Church House Inn since last August when we went to the market although to date we have not secured a buyer for the property. We had a strong offer last Autumn which was accepted by the Trustees, subject to contract, although sadly the offer did not reach fruition. In the meantime, we have had a steady flow of interest over the Winter months and following our meeting last week we have reduced the guide price to £300,000 - £350,000 with the intention of generating some 'Spring Interest' which has been evident almost immediately.

This week we have also received an offer from a potential purchaser who will be confirming their ability to fund and complete the sale in the next week or so. We also have another viewing arranged for next week and a further viewing with someone who is coming from overseas the week after Easter.

I am confident that this recent activity should lead to us being able to agree a sale in the not too distant future.

I am aware that you are under increasing pressure from the village to find a solution for the Church House Inn which I know that you and your fellow Trustees are working hard to achieve. There is obviously a misconception with some of the village regarding the structure and ownership of the pub. It is evident that not everyone understands that the pub belongs to the Holne Church Charity and other than the Charity's surplus income going towards the upkeep of Holne Church, the Charity is completely separate from and absolutely nothing to do with any staff or administrators of the Church of England. I think in some circles there is a belief that the Trustees have been previously charging a high rent in order to somehow finance the Church which is of course an absolutely ridiculous viewpoint.



Matt Bettesworth BSc(Hons) MRICS  
Paul Bettesworth BSc(Hons) MRICS  
Barney Bettesworth FRICS ACI Arb  
Paddy Bettesworth MA(Cantab) FRICS

Chartered Surveyors, Property Agents  
29/30 Fleet Street, Torquay TQ1 1BB  
Tel 01803 21 20 21 Fax 01803 298245  
[www.bettesworths.co.uk](http://www.bettesworths.co.uk)

In the meantime, we have also heard that the villagers have discussed the possibility of listing the Church House Inn as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) with the local authority. I sincerely hope that this does not come about as is likely to seriously hinder the progress of any potential sale. Having been involved in many ACVs over the past decade or so I find that the good intentions of the villagers (usually simply to save a pub from 'change of use') hardly ever reaches its conclusion as the reality of a pub run by the locals is wildly different from the idea or intention.

The issue is that once a moratorium has been served on the asset, the villagers have 6 months during which to formulate an offer. This will ultimately stall the marketing of the pub for six months as the trustees will not be able to accept an offer from any other willing purchaser during this time. In my opinion, this will simply stall the marketing until next Autumn, which will be of no benefit to anyone.

I have only ever experienced one instance where a pub listed as an ACV has concluded in the villagers actually buying the asset. In so many other cases, it has simply been a waste of time and in the end actually been counter productive.

Ultimately, the biggest possible threat of a closed pub is the fact that a new owner may decide to submit planning for change of use. Given that the trustees have already pledged the future of the Church House Inn as a pub by creating a covenant to keep the property as a licensed premises, this has effectively closed this avenue off. In my opinion, this negates any need to list the property as an ACV.

I am happy for you to submit this letter to The Parish Council for circulation at their forthcoming meeting and hope that it helps alleviate fears over the future of the Church House Inn. The pub market is facing many challenges at present which makes it probably the most testing sector of all property types. However, given the recent price reduction and the present positive interest, I am sure I will be able to feedback with some good news soon.

Yours sincerely



**MATT BETTESWORTH BSc(Hons) MRICS**

Matt Bettesworth BSc(Hons) MRICS  
Paul Bettesworth BSc(Hons) MRICS  
Barney Bettesworth FRICS ACI Arb  
Paddy Bettesworth MA(Cantab) FRICS



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