



## Minutes of Queen Camel Parish Annual Village Meeting held on Friday 20th May 2022 at 7pm

Doors opened at 6pm to allow people to meet and to view information provided by village organisations and clubs. Approximately 75 electors, residents and friends of Queen Camel came to the meeting.

**Present:** Parish Councillors: Vice Chairman John Brendon, Michael Baker, Brian Hewlett, Phil Jones, and Bryan Norman.

**Also present:** District and County Councillor Mike Lewis, Speakers as listed in the headings below and parish clerk Elaine Owen.

### 1. Welcome

Cllr John Brendon, vice Chairman of Queen Camel Parish Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 2. Minutes of the last meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Copies were available and the minutes were approved (with the addition of a comma).

### 3. Chairpersons Report – Councillor Brendon

*Note: At the meeting the following updates were given between the other speakers. For convenience they summarised together under this heading.*

Cllrs. Rachael Malton and Bryan Norman and the Memorial Hall Committee were thanked for organising the event. Thanks were also given to Parish Clerk Elaine Owen. Cllr Brendon gave apologies on behalf of Chairperson Sue Gettings who is on holiday and Dan Hewlett who was unable to attend due to work. The other councillors were individually introduced.

Two councillors did not stand for re-election and Cllr Brendon thanked Kathy Grainger for her service over many years for the parish council. Kathy has had several roles and was particularly known for her work on the environment and footpaths. Cllr Malton was thanked for developing the environment group responsibility last year and for her enthusiastic involvement in council matters.

The opportunity to join the parish council as a co-opted councillor was drawn to the attention of everyone. There are two vacancies and any councillor present, or the clerk, would be pleased to give more details.

With regard to the rise in precept it was explained that the precept had not been raised for 3 years and that the parish council needed to balance the books. Also, the tax base gone down which means that the money is collected from a slightly smaller number of people. (The Budget papers for 2022-2023 are available at <https://queencamelpc.org.uk/finance/>).

The Experimental Traffic order continues to make a significant positive impact at weekends and the parish remains very grateful to the volunteers who manage the road closure each week. The parish council remains in regular contact with Galliford Try and highways over continuing A303 works.

Parishioners will probably be aware of the phosphate problem which means that no new houses or developments are being granted planning permission at the present time. It seems that it will be some time before this problem will be solved.

The parish council is aware that the village hall was disappointed that its grant request for solar panels was not immediately agreed, but deferred. The parish council is required to be diligent and strategic in its allocation of these funds as well as needing to see a cost benefit analysis to ensure that any project is value for money. It was also for a high amount and there is a need to be careful that the solar farm money is not all spent at once.

Cllr Brendon thanked everyone who had put so much effort into the playing field, including renovation of the pavilion and also gave thanks to those on the previous Playing Field Committee, who were the previous managers of the field until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

Touching on the Neighbourhood Plan, a plan to review the Projects List is needed and some surveys will need to be made over the summer, for example of the conservation area. Volunteers will be welcomed and more details will be provided in due course.

The parish council introduced a Facebook group this year and sponsored the cost of the Welcome Pack.

#### **4. Mike Lewis County and District Councillor**

Mike Lewis began with thanks including parish councillors are re-standing and those who have left, as well as all of the volunteers who do works around the parish.

He then went on to talk about the new unitary authority which means that everything will be dealt with by one organisation, which will be simpler. The parish council will need to participate in the Local Community Networks which are now starting up.

Cllr Lewis recommended signing up to the school newsletter, saying how inspiring it is to read about all the activities that are now going on at the school.

#### **5. Dr Simon Huins, Queen Camel Medical Centre**

Dr Huins gave an update on Covid in relation to infection rates and vaccination availability. Flu jabs will be provided separately in October separately for those aged over 65 or with a medical condition.

The surgery has opted to use *Ask My GP* to manage communications. They receive about 100 new requests a day with a 2-3 hours call back time. Anyone who asks for face to face appointment will get one. The system seems to be well-liked by patients. Dispensing has been a challenge this year and was impacted by staff Covid absence. However, turnaround times are improving.

The car parking is now much better and a Jubilee tree was a welcome addition. Dr Huins ended by paying tribute to his hard working staff and thanking parishioners for their support over another difficult year.

#### **6. David Gordon, Headteacher, Countess Gytha Primary School**

David Gordon spoke about how the continuing high Covid rates has impacted the school and that as a result it had not been possible to welcome the community to the school to attend events until relatively recently. It remains a long term project to return the school to being at the heart of the village so he was delighted to now be able to invite parishioners to join in some of the celebration for the Jubilee at the school. Mr Gordon thanked the parish council for the donation towards the cost of Jubilees medallions for the children that will be given out soon.

Details of all events open to the community are on the school website and he encouraged sign up to the school newsletter.

The children are enjoying school and there is good attendance. Mr Gordon was able to report both excellent academic and sports results. Clubs too are thriving. They are outward looking and have made many connections beyond the school. Posters made by the children were displayed in the hall for everyone to view.

Mr Gordon said that there are high levels of support from parents and also that staff are interested in talking to community if they have ideas for enrichment.

Concluding that it was a year to remember for all the right reasons Mr Gordon announced that he would shortly be getting married, which drew applause and many congratulations from everyone present.

#### **7. Rosemary Heath-Coleman, Chair of Community Land Trust (Old School) and Joe Knights.**

Rosemary Heath Coleman explained that the Community Land Trust is a 'BenCom' (a Community Benefit Society). This means it is a mutual, a 'not for profit' organisation, established for the benefit of the community. Parishioners were invited to view the display about the Community Land Trust.

The Old School has been very successful and has exceeded the occupancy target in its business plan. Apart from the availability of some 3 x 3 metre 'pods' for start-up businesses it is now full. Businesses and facilities include: The Willows Day Centre, Cams Kitchen café, Homes First Plus, a health and wellbeing clinic, a hair and beauty salon, therapists, a residential artist and the benefice office for the Camvale churches.

3rd June 2022 marks both the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Victorian schoolhouse and the day of Jubilee celebration at the Old School with all businesses participating in an open day to which members of the community are warmly invited. In addition to viewing the facilities and activities there will be archaeology from Roman Way on display, a hog roast, Morris dancers and the opportunity to review and comment on plans for the next phase of garden renovation.

**Joe Knights from Able to Achieve, Yeovil** was introduced. He explained that they provide opportunities for adults with learning disabilities and are working at The Old School helping to develop the garden. Engaging with community projects like this helps their learners to live as independently as possible, whilst providing much needed resource to help communities get things done. He thanked Queen Camel residents for making them feel welcome and valued. If people know of more projects they can be involved with then he would be happy to hear from them.

#### **8. Memorial Hall Committee – Rachel Scully**

The Memorial Hall is a charitable trust run for benefit of the village. It is used by wide range of age groups and interests. The hall is constantly being improved. For example, this has recently included better exterior lighting and interior decoration. The Committee is looking to make hall more energy efficient and was disappointed that an application for funding to the parish council to install solar panels has not yet approved the application despite the support of the Community Benefit Panel.

Thanks were given to Liz Jardine for running the 200 club that brings in extra funds for the hall.

Members of the village hall committee were present and parishioner were invited to speak to them if they would like any more information.

#### **9. Playing Field Management Committee – Cllr Phil Jones**

Cllr Jones said that the defibrillator on the Pavilion was now installed, being one of two paid for from the Community Benefit Fund. (The other is on the village hall).

The field was purchased in the 1955 to be a community facility and in 2017 was made a Field in Trust so it cannot be built on. The field is now managed by the Playing Field Management Committee of the Parish Council which consists of councillors and sports club representatives. Cricket is thriving, with 2 adult and 3 youth sides. The football club is not active and if anyone is interested in resurrecting this, or in starting clubs for different sports the Committee will be interested to hear from them. The aim is to encourage far more use of the playing field to maximise its value to the community. Conservation areas are also being

developed to improve biodiversity and help wildlife. Fundraising events to raise money for a new play area have been well supported and grant applications are going in shortly.

There is a problem of dogs fouling on the playing field which is not acceptable due to the use of the field by children for sport and recreation. As a result, dogs will now be asked to be kept on lead and notices will be put up to say this is the case. Most people are very good and it is a problem that the Committee are determined to stamp out.

Volunteers are key to the success of the field and Cllr Jones extended thanks to all, including those who had recently cleaned and painted the pavilion. The field is a fantastic village asset, it just needs a few more helpers to make it a flagship for Queen Camel. There are presently vacancies for grass cutting and to provide other help around the field and the Committee would be pleased to hear from anyone with some spare time to give.

#### **10. Community Benefit Panel – Terri Plummer**

As a Member of the Community Benefit Fund Panel Terri briefly explained that the Panel reviews the applications for financial support. There is an annual payment of £6684 from the solar farm that will continue for some years [until 2030]. A further lump sum of £15,000 should be forthcoming from a second solar farm once it begins operation. The funds must be used for charitable, educational, environmental, amenity or other community benefit purposes including, wherever possible, the promotion of sustainable energy and uses.

The Panel also has oversight of the Cleaveside Community Lounge project which has a ring-fenced *Opening up and Reconnecting Communities* grant of £5,000.

Money from the Solar farm has so far been spent on a cricket roller (£3,800), church roof (£5,000) and defibrillators (£2,462). £10,000 has also been earmarked for the play area. There is £32,002 presently in the fund and village organisations are encouraged to apply using the application guidance on the website, or by contacting the clerk.

#### **11. Queen Camel Environment Group – Rachael Malton**

This is a new group, to reinvigorate and empower people in the community to be involved in improving the environment. It is meeting every 6 weeks to work out an action plan and strategy moving forward. Its work will inform the parish council and help them to target the budget for environment matters effectively.

Three focus areas have been chosen, which are education, wildlife diversity, and green alternatives (in the home and as a community) All are welcome including children and families, too. A lot is done online.

Litter picks continue and the next one is June 11<sup>th</sup> at 9am, followed by coffee and cake.

#### **12. Tennis Club / Bumps Tots and Toddlers and Camel Club – Marian Davis**

**The tennis club** remains vibrant and Marian provided the details of some notable highlights of the past year. A tennis weekend will take place in July which provides an opportunity for free play to anyone. Details will be forthcoming.

The club would like to provide an indoor court and are considering a barn type structure. However plans are still embryonic; planning permission has not even been applied for. Fundraising would be required but they are not embarking on that at the moment

**Bumps Tots and Toddlers** presently meet in the village hall with 20 families and 28 children on the register. It is hoped to move back to the church for the summer in order to enjoy the outdoor space. This is a great social group for expectant Mums and anyone with pre-school age children to enjoy.

**Camel Club** provides singing, bible stories, craft and games for primary age children. It restarted in February and presently has an average 12 children each week. This is less than before Covid as some of the children had moved on to other activities. During the summer they often have activities outside and meet each week at 4.45 on Thursdays and new members are very welcome.

Marian Davis concluded with a reminder that the Church Path Fair is in planning with details coming out shortly. Money raised will go towards the organ refurbishment fund.

**12. Motions put forward by electors**

No electors chose to put forward a motion.

**13. Question and Answers:**

**13.1 Update on old medical centre.**

Cllr Lewis was able to explain that a meeting had taken place with the enforcement officer and that an outcome was expected in the third week in July. There will be no further news until then.

**13.2 Sparkford planning applications**

A parishioner asked about the implications for the school and traffic impacts on Queen Camel of planning applications in Sparkford. It was explained that although the parish council could comment on the applications then it is the task of the planning authority, currently the district council, to ensure that local facilities are adequate for any increase in population. Anyone can object and people are encouraged to add their comments to planning applications online.

**13.3 Defunct school sign**

The 20 mile an hour sign that states 'School 'is incorrect. That is not in doubt but the parish council don't have the authority to remove it. It does no harm to encourage traffic to slow down and in due course it is hoped the 20 mile an hour limit will be extended through the village.

**The meeting closed at 20.25**

Following the meeting socialising continued.

**Minutes by Elaine Owen  
Parish Clerk**

Signed..........(Chairman) Date .....19/5/23.....