

this result with Highways, local police, and Cllr Tom Thacker.

b) Signpost The Crux Easton signpost still missing. It has been on order for some months. No further progress.

c) Blocked Ditches Cllr Cox has received complaints about the ditches towards Crux Easton being blocked and therefore flooding roads. Unsure if it is highways' or landowner's responsibility. This needs to be reported to Steve Goodall of Highways for action.

**Clerk/
Cllr Cox**

6. Broadband
No progress. Response unlikely until spring 2013.

7. Neighbourhood Watch
No report. Cllr O'Shaughnessy has also not heard anything. Cllr Cox has received one report of a car acting suspiciously in the early morning and then later on in the day. This was reported – the owner turned out to be a journalist for a national paper.

8. Council Plans

a) Clerk Recruitment Noted and welcomed. Contract has been signed by clerk and chairman.

b) Clerks Report The first 6 weeks have been extremely busy, primarily with the accounts and budget. There have been problems with getting email set up with BDBC, but this issue is now resolved. I have attended the HALC AGM, of which there is a brief update later in the meeting. Finally, a consultation document came in today from the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, requesting input from Parishes on how they would like to see the service operating in the future. If anyone wants to have input to this, please could they let the Clerk know.

The Council noted that there is no flood plan, being unnecessary due to our height. The Council does have an emergency plan, which could be submitted. Local farmers try to keep roads open in snow. It is worth noting the high proportion of thatched cottages – can fire hydrants be very clearly marked? The Council is happy that HCC ensures that Cross Lane is cleared in severe winter conditions. Clerk to respond accordingly.

Clerk

c) Website Cllr Cox updated the Council. The new website is now live, and has received a favourable reception. The invoice is now in for payment.

It is hoped that local directory spots on the website may be sold for £10 each; however, the Clerk noted that the Council will need to apply for a VAT dispensation, as any income from this will be well under the limit of £2000 per year. Agreed unanimously.

Clerk

There are now pictures on the website from the Remembrance Service, which was very well attended – thanks to Cllr O' Shaughnessy for laying the Council wreath. There is also information about Ash dieback disease.

Footpath map on website – Cllr Cox has been looking for a definitive map of footpaths in the parish. HCC has the whole county mapped, and has agreed to supply the Council with a map, but access would be via the Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA). Clerk to action. A3 maps are to be laminated and put on noticeboards in Ashmansworth and Crux Easton.

Clerk

d) Grass Cutting This needs to go to tender for 2013. There is not an existing formal contract. A draft specification has been put together. This is to be discussed and agreed at next meeting. Cllr Johnson noted that it might be better to only cut half the field on a regular basis as a full cut

is not necessary. This can be agreed with the contractor at time of contract finalisation. Cllr Black noted that the Council may need to specify how short the grass should be cut, as this will affect the type of machinery to be used.

e) Parish co-operation

Nothing to report, although local neighbouring parishes remain in touch.

f) Planning Guidelines

Cllr Benzing updated the Council. He has updated the draft planning document for the parish. He will now take another look with reference to recent documentation from the clerk. He has taken into account the conservation area, and threatened flora and fauna. Further discussion was deferred until the next meeting. Comments are invited by email in the interim. Cllr Cox noted that turning stables into houses needs to be discouraged, rather than discouraging the stables being built in the first place. Cllr Cox recorded the Council's thanks for Cllr Benzing's hard work on the guidelines document.

h) Village Design Statement

The Clerk gave a brief background on Village Design Statements, and noted that this is now superseded by Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. Local Plans are very similar to Village Design Statements; however a Neighbourhood Plan is a much bigger undertaking, with solid legal backing at Borough level. As a result, it is very expensive to produce. It may be worth seeing if any neighbouring parishes are planning to go down this path, and seeing if a group Neighbourhood Plan would be viable. Cllr Cox noted that a separate Village Design Statement for Crux Easton would be helpful. Cllr O'Shaughnessy noted that a very small one was done around the time of the millennium, and that this could be built upon. It was further noted that it would be good if the Statement was a community effort.

9. BDAPTC, HALC

Cllr Cox welcomed the BDAPTC support on changing the website, and the extra grant to fund this.

The Clerk updated the council on the recent HALC AGM, at which there were several interesting presentations, the most important of which was about Parish insurance. The Clerk now has several points to investigate for Ashmansworth's insurance.

Cllr Cox has attended a meeting on the Parish Lengthsman scheme, Big Lottery fund and the General Power of Competence.

The Lengthsman scheme is being co-ordinated by Tom Thacker for all his parishes. It will cover things like ditch clearance, hedge trimming and other very minor highways matters. It has been successfully piloted, and may go live some time in 2013/14. A lead council would be appointed to manage the scheme for participants. A contractor would be engaged to cover the area of participating councils. It was agreed that our council would be willing to participate.

The Big Lottery Fund is for small grants for local projects – they have more money now because the Olympics are now over. It might be used to replace of chairs in the Village Hall.

The General Power of Competence is aimed at larger councils, and gives councils the power to do things that there is no other power given, eg, taking over village shop as a co-operative. Qualification criteria are a two thirds elected Council (rather than co-opted) and a qualified clerk.

10. Finance Matters

a) Annual Audit

The Clerk updated the council on the actions from the last Audit. There were several actions from the internal audit:

Minutes are now being initialled and signed correctly.

Cheques are now being signed by two members of the Council, and not by the Clerk. This is in line with the Local Government Act 1972.

The outgoing Clerk's expenses have now been paid, and the new Clerk has a formal contract of employment. The Council has now been set up with PAYE, and the Clerk is awaiting further details from HMRC to complete this process.

The VAT reclaim for 2011/12 and for the first half of this year is now ready for submission. The next claim is due to be submitted in January 2013.

The Register of Member Interests is now complete, and has been submitted to BDBC.

Annual Return – procedures are being put into place to ensure that the correct figures will be entered for next year's annual return.

Standing Orders are under review. There does not appear to be a formal risk assessment or formal financial regulations – this is also under review. The risk assessment is particularly important.

Budget – the budget for this year and next has been reviewed, and will be discussed later in this meeting

The accounts for the Memorial clean have been formalised. The Memorial will need to be included on the asset register, and will need to be included in the insurance.

Record keeping – invoices and remittances are now being filed appropriately, and the Clerk is maintaining a simple income & expenditure spreadsheet.

Training – the Clerk is receiving necessary training on an ongoing basis from Silchester PC. It may be worth councillors considering a tailored training session from HALC, to be delivered here in Ashmansworth.

b) Budget

The Clerk presented the budget for next year. She strongly recommended registration with the Information Commissioners Office. The figures for charges from Silchester Parish Council are unclear at the moment – Clerk to clarify how much Silchester is likely to charge. The budget was unanimously approved.

Clerk

c) Precept

The Clerk recommended doubling the Precept for 2013-14. The reasons for this are that the new clerk is now on a recommended NALC salary and contract, which significantly increases the Council's costs. As a result of this, the council also needs to increase its reserves – the recommended figure is enough to cover at least three months of running expenses. It should be noted that the Council's only income at present is that of the Precept, but the Precept is in fact one of the smallest in the county. There is very little room for any savings. Our current precept results in a band D rate of £14.20 per year and, if doubled, would still only be costing a total of around £2.30 per month. The actual increase represents an overall rise of just 1%. The increase is a consequence of even small parishes having to pay for a clerk at commercial salaries and Ashmansworth is contracting their new clerk for the minimum number of hours per month that would appear to be sustainable. Unanimously agreed – precept request will

Clerk

be for £3000.

d) Payments Approval Please see appendix A for the financial statement. Unanimously approved.

12. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 8th January at 7.30pm, Ashmansworth Village Hall

The meeting closed at 9.30. Cllr Cox thanked the councillors for a productive, busy meeting.

Appendix A

Financial statement : Ashmansworth Parish Council

Meeting date : 13/11/2012

Total all balances :

Balances at date : 28/10/2012

Current
1766.62

Payments since last meeting date

:

Cheque No	Payee	Details	TOTAL COST
100495	E M Christian	Grass Cutting	678.00
100501	Mrs M J Thomas	Clerk Salary	92.09

Items for payment

Cheque No	Payee	Details	TOTAL COST
100496	Staples	Stationery	34.97
100497	AuditCommission	External Audit	90.00
100498	VisionICT	Website Fees	510.00
100499	Crux Easton Church	Hire for Meetings	35.00
100500	Ruth Kent	Clerk Salary	300.00
100502	Mrs M J Thomas	Clerk Salary	92.09
100503	Mrs M J Thomas	Clerk Salary	92.09

Receipts since last meeting date :

Payee	Details	TOTAL AMOUNT
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