

TRUSTEE MEETING FOR THE LAND HELD IN TRUST BY STEEP PARISH COUNCIL ON THURSDAY, 2ND
SEPTEMBER 2010 AT STEEP VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT: Caroline Robinson (Chair) Jenny Martin Nick Hurst
Richard Coles David Llewellyn Charles Gibson
Terry Cook Fran Box

APOLOGIES: Jo Bell

IN ATTENDANCE: Robert Venables (Ex Head of Legal Department at the Charity Commission)
Jenny Hollington (Clerk)

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON** –In view of the fact that Caroline Robinson, as well as being current Chairman of the Parish Council, has been in correspondence with Jonathan Crutchlow of the Charity Commission and had done the groundwork for the meeting, Charles Gibson proposed Caroline Robinson be elected as Chairman of the Trustees. This was seconded by Richard Coles and all agreed.

Caroline therefore took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the first meeting of Trustees of the land held in Trust by Steep Parish Council. She stressed that all three plots of land (Ridge Common Lane, Church Road and Sandy Lane) were covered by the original Trust document and would be covered by the Charity

2. **REGISTRATION OF THE CHARITY** – The benefit of registering the Charity immediately to keep business separate from the Parish Council and make it plain that the land held in Trust is charitable was discussed. The Charity Commission has offered to waive the £5000 minimum threshold for small Charities and it was suggested that this “should be grabbed with both hands!”

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the Charity be registered as soon as possible – the Clerk to action.

3. **NAME OF THE CHARITY** - The original wording that the land is held in Trust “for the benefit of the Labouring Poor of the said Parish of Steep” was discussed. It was pointed out that the words “labouring poor” were very archaic and it was queried whether this could be changed. The Trustees were advised that this would almost certainly be possible by resolution. Following discussion, it was agreed that “in need” sounded better than “poor”, “deserving poor” or “needy”.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the Charity be registered as “**The Steep Relief In Need Charity**”.

4. **OBJECTS OF THE CHARITY** – The Chairman stressed that, as per the letter dated 14th July from Jonathan Crutchlow of the Charity Commission, Trustees must bear in mind how the land was given and who the beneficiaries of the Charity should be. It was suggested that before agreement is reached with regard to the Objects of the Charity, enquiries should be made to ascertain whether there are any people “in need” in Steep – possible lines of enquiry to include John Owen, St. Mary’s Church, Steep School, The Welcome Club, and the Catholic Church.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk and Chairman make discreet enquiries for potential beneficiaries and means of publicising the existence of the charity so that applications for support can be encouraged.

A question arose as to whether the land should be kept for allotments? Robert Venables explained that the word “allotment” in this context was used as in “an allotment of shares” or “that which is allotted”. He added that many of the other plots of land distributed by the Enclosure award were listed as “allotments”.

It was pointed out that precedent has been set for a Charity, originally set up to benefit the Labouring Poor, being changed to benefit the local community – an example of such being the allotments at Lavant – and it was queried whether the wishes of the local community should be taken into account in this instance? Robert Venables stressed that the duties of the Trustees were to act at all times in furtherance of their trusts, which were for the relief of the poor and not the advancement of the interests of the residents.

5. **TRUSTEES** - Concern was expressed that the public would not make a distinction between the Council acting as a local authority and, separately, as Trustees of the Charity. It was clear that their duties in the two capacities were different and that their first duty as Trustees was to the Objects of the Charity and not to the general community interest. It was concluded that, in view of the inherent possible conflict between the two duties, further thought should be given to arranging in due course, for a different trusteeship of the Charity. This might well lead to a Trustee body to which the Council and other local bodies might be invited to nominate trustees. It was agreed that this could be an aim for future consideration.
6. **BEST USE OF LAND** – It was agreed that, In order to assess the best use of the land, professional input should be obtained. The names of two local Surveyors were put forward and it was **RESOLVED** that the Chairman/Clerk should discuss the situation with both Surveyors and ask for independent, professional advice.
7. **BANK ACCOUNT** - The Clerk confirmed that money raised from grazing on the Allotment Land is held by the Parish Council and is accounted for each year in a separate column of the accounts. Records which the Clerk had been able to access in a short time before the meeting and which are not complete, show that this amounts to approximately £3,750 (breakdown attached).

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should start proceedings to open a new account in the name of the Charity, to enable the money to be transferred. It was agreed that further enquiries should be made to settle the correct amount to be transferred and that the result would, of course, be subject to audit.
8. **ALLOTMENT SOCIETY** –The Chairman proposed that a report of the Trustee Meeting should be given at the Parish Council Meeting on 6th September in order that members of the Allotment Society, and Parishioners, are kept up to date. The Allotment Society’s Constitution will be required before further consideration can be given to their proposals.
9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – To be arranged.

The Meeting closed at 9.45 p.m.