

# Threapwood Parish Council

Meeting of the Parish Council

Wednesday 26 January 2022. 7.30pm in Chorlton WI Hall.

## MINUTES

Prior to the start of the meeting, it was noted that the proceedings were going to be recorded for administration purposes.

### PRESENT

Cllr. Miles Lewis – Chairman.

Cllr Steve Chewins      Cllr Helen Groves      Cllr Brian Holmes      Cllr Louise Rees

Cllr Chris Whitehurst

Richard Salmon (Clerk)

Tommy Wright (Minutes assistant)

Members of the public - 4

### APOLOGIES.

None

### DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

Cllrs. Lewis and Chewins confirmed that they had attended a Sarn Steering Group meeting as guests.

Cllr Rees' dispensation was noted to participate in any discussion relating to the Queens Head Steering Group

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A question was made regarding the ownership of the Queens Head.

### QUEENS HEAD - SARN

A report give by Stephen Croasdale on the Queens Head which is an Asset of Community Value (ACV) from members of the Sarn Steering Group (SSG) on the "Save our Sarn Campaign". See appendix A.

### MINUTES

86. **Resolved** that circulated Minutes of the meetings of November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021, are accepted as a true record.

### PLANNING.

No new applications or changes since the last meeting on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

### ACCOUNTS.

87. **Resolved** accepted following cash book to date and approved payments

HM Revenue	VAT Refund	-	-	-	74.94
R. Salmon	Accounting	Error	-	-	0.02
R. Salmon	Printer base	Toner	55.00	(VAT) 11.00	66.00
R. Salmon	Staple office	Paper	16.55	3.31	19.86
Shires	Shires	Pay Roll	45.00	9.00	54.00

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## CHORLTON & CUDDINGTON WI

88. **Resolved** Council agreed to donation of £400. It was agreed to ask the cost of the repairs and to consider a further donation at their next meeting in light of these costs.

## BUDGET

89. **Resolved** Council Budget the following for the year 2022 – 2023

	2022/23
<b>PRECEPT</b>	<b>3580</b>
<b>BALANCE b/f</b>	<b>3800</b>
<b>BUDGET</b>	
Clerks Salary	2568
Administration	208
Int. Audit	30
Pay Roll	60
ICO	40
Pension	25
Post	5
Stationery	30
Insurance	300
Web	145
Room hire	120
	<b>3531</b>
Defibrillator	0
Training	0
Subs	0
History	30
Poppy	50
Election Costs	0
Girls Football	0
VAT	0
Contingency	0
Total	<b>3611</b>
<b>CONTINGENCY</b>	<b>3769</b>

## PRECEPT

90. **Resolved** Council Precept £3580 for the year 2022 – 2023.

## THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

Threapwood Community Group had no plans for the Jubilee.

The council will investigate further the planting of an Oak Tree in the Church Yard.

It was noted the public bench on Castle Lane is in need of repair.

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The meeting closed at 8:19 pm

Signed

email:clerk@threapwoodparishcouncil.co.uk

<http://www.threapwoodparishcouncil.co.uk>

Tommy Wright

## Appendix A

SSG Presentation to Threapwood Parish Council (“the PC”) – 26.01.2022 As you are aware back in the early part of 2021 a group of friends and neighbours formed the Sarn Steering Group (“the SSG”) with a view to seeing what we could do to save the Queens Head (“QH”) pub (which we all know as the Sarn) as a much loved and needed asset and continued focus for the local communities it serves. Our number comprised folk from all walks of life and backgrounds. If we were lacking in knowledge in a particular area we sought out individuals who came and gave us the benefit of their experience. In particular, we have received invaluable help and guidance in this area from The Plunkett Foundation, a charitable organisation who help communities save local assets, assisting communities like ours. There has been a pub here for over two hundred years and for much of that time it has been the focal point primarily for the residents of Tallarn Green Threapwood but also from villages further afield. We couldn’t see the demise of such an asset of community value pass us by without a concerted effort to save it for our and future generations. Through the PC we successfully applied to have the QH designated as an Asset of Community Value by Cheshire West & Chester Council. This should, as intended, act as a substantial deterrent for any purchaser seeking a Change of Use for development other than as a pub. In the March ’21 budget the Government helpfully introduced a Community Ownership Funding Scheme (“the COFS”) aimed at helping communities to save assets valued by the community such as local pubs, village greens, shops, libraries, etc., and the SSG intends, if necessary, to take advantage of this scheme. A successful application means the Government will match every pound raised by the community up to a maximum of £250,000. We therefore opened a dialogue with Admiral Taverns (“Admiral”) with a view to the local community purchasing the QH, but also making it clear to Admiral that we would be more than happy to see them sell the pub to any party intending to run it as a pub on their own account. In the event of a community purchase we set ourselves a target to raise £160,000 from the community which we considered would be enough to purchase the QH. We would then apply to the COFS for match funding to cover what we had conservatively estimated would be the cost of an extensive refurbishment of the pub

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necessary to bring it up to an operational standard. The options available once the purchase and refurbishment were completed would be as follows: 1. Letting to a tenant licensee to run as a free house (the preferred option); or 2. A community run pub. The legal entity required to purchase the QH can be established/incorporated once the SSG decides to proceed with an application to the COFS but we would not wish to incur the costs involved until we were absolutely sure we needed to proceed with the purchase. Community engagement was vital in order to drive the campaign on and to be successful in an application to COFS. We first reached out to the community in August 2021 by sending out questionnaires to as many members of the communities of Threapwood, Tallarn Green, Sarn and Willington & Worthenbury as we could seeking their input as to how the community would like to see the pub run in the future. We received invaluable information and ideas in the 247 responses returned by residents and families of all ages and from all walks of life giving their full support to our aims. Next, we held an open public meeting at Tallarn Green village hall in September in order to engage face to face with the community and confirm their genuine interest in rescuing the QH and to answer any questions. In addition, 139 of the questionnaires confirmed the respondents' willingness to pledge money to assist with the fundraising towards our target. At the same time the SSG organised a pop-up pub event in mid-October which was a great success and helped to raise the community's awareness of what we were undertaking and also raised the sum of £528 net of costs towards our fighting fund. With this overwhelming level of support from the community we determined to make more detailed preparations to apply to the COFS intending to do so upon the issue of the 2nd round of funding by the Government which was expected in early December. The written submissions and business plan required to support such an application have been largely completed. The SSG then had to find out how much we could raise and whether we could achieve our target of raising £160,000. Therefore, we approached the community in November 2021 to ask if they were willing to pledge funds towards this target and, on a confidential basis, how much. The total sum pledged to date is £101,350. Unfortunately, the sum pledged falls short of our target of £160,000. However, with matchfunding the sum pledged would enable a purchase of the QH to proceed but would leave limited funds for the necessary refurbishment needed to get the pub open again as a viable operation. Whilst this was disappointing, it was a valiant effort and demonstrates the overwhelming community support for our much-loved pub, and that it surely is an Asset of Community Value. The SSG wish to extend a huge thank you to the communities of Threapwood, Tallarn Green, Sarn and Willington & Worthenbury for all their support in our campaign. Current progress towards a community purchase has been delayed in any event because the next round of applications to the COFS, to which we were gearing up to apply, has now been put back to spring 2022 (no confirmed date) and the COFS has been re-opened to the 1st round funding applicants whose bids failed in August 2021. Whilst all the above has been progressing, in the background Admiral have been negotiating consecutive sales of the QH with 2 potential buyers and the SSG has been liaising with both Admiral and the potential buyers with a view to encouraging such buyers to proceed by giving them the benefit of our local knowledge and emphasising the great interest in the community to see the QH continue to flourish as a pub. The interested purchasers have both expressed a firm intention to buy, refurbish and reopen the QH and in the light of this the SSG has agreed to delay pursuing further funding towards the target sum whilst these interested parties go through the legal and financial requirements to buy the pub. However, a serious legal issue affecting Admiral's title to the QH has arisen, serious enough to prevent potential purchasers from proceeding (and therefore ensuring the QH remains closed) until the issue is settled. The SSG's contact with the first potential buyer indicated that they were hoping to complete their purchase of the QH before Christmas 2021 but they have decided to delay proceeding with their purchase whilst this issue remains pending. The legal issue referred to above, as far as the SSG has been able to find out, is that whilst Admiral has a clear Title to the property an adjoining owner, the owner of Butler's Yard, has submitted a claim to the Land Registry which we understand relates to rights of

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access across part of the QH title from Butler's Yard to the public highway. The claimant has indicated to members of the SSG that the legal issue includes not only rights of access but also a claim of ownership over part of Admiral's Title, affecting in particular the car park. It is understandable that prospective purchasers may be put off proceeding with a purchase whilst this dispute remains outstanding. We must also report that, regrettably, if the SSG were still to pursue a purchase the QH as a community asset, its solicitors, and no doubt the COFS would not agree to the purchase proceeding complete while such dispute remains pending. In the event that Admiral disputes such a claim (on which we are not in a position to elaborate) it could take many months (possibly more than a year) to resolve this issue and, self-evidently, this is not a matter which we, the SSG, can directly influence. Accordingly, SSG has agreed to continue to support the proposed purchasers as much as we are able and, whilst awaiting a settlement of the claim, to use that time as an opportunity to investigate what further options, if any, might be available to us in order to reach the target of £160,000, and to progress with the application to the COFS. It is fervently hoped that a sale with either of the potential purchasers can proceed so we can only hope that the parties involved act reasonably and quickly to resolve this issue and that they take into consideration the wishes of the community for the QH to begin operating as a pub sooner rather than later. In the event that the legal issue is not settled then there is the risk that the effect of the claim lodged with the Land Registry will be to prevent, not only a sale of the QH but also will directly deprive the community of a much needed and wanted asset of immense value to the community.