

Queen Camel Annual Parish Meeting - 16 May 2025

The annual village meeting (AVM) was held in the Memorial Hall at 6.45pm on Friday 16 May 2025

The Annual Village Meeting was preceded by the opportunity of attendees to have a chat with a presentation on screen displaying all things that have been going on in the village for the past 12 months.

Displays from the Community Land Trust, Cleaveside Lounge and Queen Camel Bowls Club were on view in the Marples Room.

John Brendon as Chairman of the parish council welcomed about [70] parishioners to the meeting. The minutes of the AVM on 17 May 2024 were confirmed as correct and signed by the chairman.

Apologies were received from Sarah Dyke MP, Cllr Kevin Messenger, David Lilley, Rachael ScullyDavid and Carlo Biggart, David and Kathy Lowe, Marina Barger, Mike and Morwenna Ford, Steve Lollard and Andy Vosey.

Guest speakers

Ed Benbow reported on the successful activities at Hazlegrove School, which is still very much there even after the building of the new A303 making access harder. The focus of the school is to provide the pupils with a caring background to stimulate their curiosity and build their confidence for the future. They are seeing more pupils going on to the Gryphon School and Sexey's, reflecting the impact of VAT on school fees, as well as its more traditional secondary schools such as King's Bruton and Sherborne.

Inspector Roseanna Green is the newly appointed police inspector covering a large area from Wincanton to Chard. She gave hope under the new government policy that we would see more police presence in the community but admitted that the issue with HGVs and the weight limit through the village on the A359 needed more investigation. Except for emergencies the best way to contact the police was either by calling 101 or the Avon & Somerset website when a 72 hour response time is guaranteed.

David Gordon gave an enthusiastic summary of the achievements at Countess Gytha School which were much more than academic with good sporting and creative achievements. The school is doing well which he hopes will allow the sixth class can be reinstated so that there is one for every year group.

Dr Daniel Edmonds reported on the medical centre which has gone through a period of change with the retirement of both the doctors Huins. However new recruits have allowed the practice to remain in a good place to care for the area's clinical needs. Nevertheless, he has concerns about its ability to meet the needs of the community if all the apparent housing developments occur. Car parking and flood around the surgery are also a problem.

Cllr Henry Hobhouse (HH) started by giving a demonstration on the new flood alert system and said he would willingly help any residents near the Cam to get it set up on their mobile phones. He reported on the slightly improved finances of Somerset Council but warned that it would need a waiver in 2026 by central government on a substantial accumulated debt for past expenditure on

education and care for children with disabilities. He also explained how he had overcome the phosphates problem and house building was now possible again. There was also much discussion on what could be done on HGVs and Hopkins lorries in particular coming through the village.

Rosemary Heath-Colemen reported on how the Old School is recovering from the disastrous flood in May 2023 with much improved flood defences in the main buildings which are now operating with nearly full tenancies. There remains a question on what to do with the old hall building, but overall, the site is in reasonable shape with attractive gardens. Rosemary also made a heartfelt statement about her own medical crisis of a year ago and the remarkable recovery she had made.

Phil Jones read out a report from **Rachael Scully**, chair of the Memorial Hall Committee. The hall is looking for volunteers to help in its running, particularly as it is now showing signs of ageing. Nevertheless, it provides good well-maintained facilities at competitive rates.

In the open forum the following points were raised:

- what could be done to prevent Wessex Water dumping sewage in the Cam? This happens most days. HH said this was difficult to stop as the household numbers using both the Sparkford and North Cadbury works were not sufficient to force the water company to upgrade
- Could a 20mph limit be imposed through the village. This required evidence to justify whether it was necessary and would also cost in excess of £12000
- How can the 7.5-tonne weight limit on HGVs be enforced? There is a current dialogue going on with the police and a traffic monitoring box has been installed to see what the evidence is on HGVs and traffic speeds
- Following the improvements to the playing field carpark adjacent to the new play area it was questioned whether the access road could be improved. This falls into two parts, Green Lane with is a Somerset Highways responsibility and the steep track to the bowls club and carpark with is a parish council one. The latter will be looked at in the next year to see if a new tarmac surface can be provided.
- How much comes in from the solar farm grant each year? Approximately £7000 comes in which goes into the Community Benefit Fund which is available for village organisations to apply for grants to assist on worthwhile capital projects which would benefit the community. The chairman also gave a summary of all the £128000 of income the parish council had received in the year to 31 March 2025, which was as follows:

Precept £24000

Interest £2000

National Highways £10000

The National Lottery £85000

Solar Farm £7000

and £128000 had been spent on the new play area.

The chairman noted a common theme that ran through a number of the presentations and comments, being the need for more volunteers to help support the many village organisations. We have a vibrant community and need to sustain it.

In conclusion the chairman thanked all the speakers, the meeting organisers and the bar staff from the shop as well as everyone for attending.