

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES 16TH JANUARY 2023

Reports from County and Borough Councillors

KCC Cllr Parfitt-Reid raised a number of points;

- 1) KCC Budget is under pressure and there is a need to save significant funding @ £86m
Therefore, looking at savings such as sale of some of the KCC estates and reduce some services.
Draft budget for 2023/24 on KCC website – summary on page 32
Final group meeting 30th January 2023 then onto Council for approval
Looking at a 4.9% increase for KCC portion of Council Tax
- 2) Members Grant – note cut from £10,000 to £3,500
- 3) Highways – two key points
Grit bins need refilling and KCC currently grits A / B roads and has agreements with local farmers for some rural roads. Note during recent bad weather “diversions from A / B roads onto to rural roads” were just left – chase up to avoid in future
Pot holes - 5,451 reported across Kent – 937 in MBC area with a backlog of 937, 39 in Staplehurst
Important to report pot holes – target of 2 hours if dangerous, 7 days if safety concerns and 28 days routine.
- 4) No 5 Bus – decisions made about subsidy – which I was against – to stop the No5 bus in the evenings from February 2023 and Arriva have decided as it is un-economical to operate the Sunday bus service, also stopping in February 2023.
- 5) Cranbrook Road – signalised pedestrian crossing just past Petrol station – good news that the s106 funding is in place and subject to feasibility and costing this should be actioned – but will take some time
- 6) Cost of living support – KCC working with partner agencies and authorities to do a road show – aiming to use Sainsburys in Staplehurst – Date to be confirmed
- 7) Primary Health care – lobbying local MP’S to improve - as this would be good for all – but also has knock on impact on KCC Adult and Social care budget
- 8) Yellow lines in Gybbon Rise – still chasing up
- 9) Community Resilience fund – round 3 will soon be available for community groups

Some questions followed;

Cllr McPhee – how often are pothole targets met – Cllr Parfitt-Reid will feed back information

Cllr Hotson – Budget position very challenging – heard rumours about Libraries and Community Wardens. Cllr Parfitt-Reid responded with Libraries currently ringfenced Community Wardens some reductions proposed

Cllr Hotson asked about extra salt bins requested from residents – Clerk to liaise with Cllr Parfitt-Reid

Cllr Hotson then expressed disappointment at NO5 Bus Service being reduced – we are a rural service centre, without services? Cllr Buller raised the point about affordable housing but no bus service – taxi fares can be £50

Cllr Riordan Yellow lines in Gybbon Rise – still chasing up

Cllr Riordan thanked Cllr Parfit-Reid for her attendance

MBC Cllr Perry – updated everyone that the MBC are looking at a mix of savings and increased income, the budget for 2023/24 was looking at a 2.9% increase for MBC portion of Council Tax

Signed Chairman.....Date.....

Local Plan inspection is progressing to next stage – which some other Councils have struggled to get to.

There are a number of issues with Bin collections which are being worked on

Surgeries still very popular welcome to join Cllr Parry.

Cllr Buller – asked about reports in “Kent Online” about concerns about “garden villages and delay will increase housing numbers. – Cllr Perry not heard but will double check

Cllr Castro asked about MP’s Constituencies – any update

Cllr Parry yes the Maidstone area split into 3

Weald of Kent – includes Staplehurst also parts of Tunbridge Wells area

Maidstone and Malling

Faversham

A resident paid tribute to former Cllr Peter Spearink – who sadly passed away.

In addition, they informed the Council that Robin Kenworthy a well know advocate for the village had also sadly passed away -agreed that the Clerk would write and offer formal condolences to the family

A resident raised concerns that the potholes in Offen’s Drive, they are hazardous and in desperate need of repair

Cllr Riordan paid tribute to former Cllr Councillor Spearink, a long-standing Cllr who always attended Council meetings in a suit and tie and cared passionately about the village. He sometimes had a sharp tongue, but was practical and wanted to get on and do things for the village. He was very thoughtful of those suffering – support for the Sobell Centre, footpaths in Wimpey Field to improve access , Community Payback – not only for the work carried out in the village but also support to members of Community Payback and support for those suffering for the war in Ukraine. He led the way on many Council issues; offering his time as a Parish Councillor and led the street naming policy as he was keen to remember those who had fallen in the wars, village worthies and historically names in the area.

Cllr Riordan thanked those who visited Peter in his last few months – Cllrs Castro and David George amongst others.

Cllr Riordan also paid tribute to Robin Kenworthy who cared passionately about the Parish.

Present: Cllrs Riordan, Buller, McPhee, Castro, Davidson-Houston, Alesi, Perry, Hotson and Eerdeken, McLaughlin, Cllr Farragher, Sharp, and McClean

1. **APOLOGIES** Cllr Clifton

2. **COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS** regarding items on the Agenda:

2.1. Declaration of lobbying - NA

2.2. Declarations of changes to the Register of Interests - NA

2.3. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda - NA

2.4. Requests for Dispensation - NA

3. **APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES** Pages 2051 – 2055 of 19th December 2022 available at [Full Council - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge \(staplehurst-pc.uk\)](https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk) were proposed by Cllr Eerdeken and seconded by Cllr Castro and agreed by majority 11 for 0 against and 2 abstained. They were then signed by Councillor Riordan.

Signed Chairman.....Date.....

4. FINANCE REPORTS

4.1. Accounts for Payment – (for decision). The payments list was proposed by Cllr Perry and seconded by Cllr Mclean and agreed unanimously.

Approved Payments 14th December 2022 - 10th January 2023	Amount
Homeleigh Timber - Rock Salt x15 Bags	125.82
Cllr Reimbursement - Merit Awards Frames x5 & Vase x1	46.95
HMRC - Tax & NI November	2,936.75
B Hawkins - Strimming Wimpey Field November	150.00
WKPS - Annual Subscription	25.00
Payroll & Pension Costs - December	6,674.88
Paxman Services - Bell Lane Toilet Clean/Open December	803.26
Paxman Services - Bell Lane Toilet Sundries December	112.48
The National Allotment Society - Annual Subscription	66.00
Hugo Fox - Silver Subscription January	23.99
Bulb - Youth Club Energy December	68.59
Messenger Mobile Services - Blocked Drain Youth Club	276.00
All Saints Staplehurst - Churchyard Maintenance Oct 2021-Oct 2023	8,852.44
Transport Survey Systems - Road Traffic Survey 2021-2022	456.00
Choice Support - Planter Maintenance December	410.80
Arron Services Ltd - Annual Service Contract	780.00
Iden Business Services Ltd - Budget Preparation	500.00
Amazon UK - Football Table Youth Club	479.00
Amazon UK - Electric Kettle Youth Club	21.00
Kieron Lehane - Bell Lane Toilet Repair Men's Door	85.00
TV Licensing - Youth Club Annual TV Licence	159.00
Adobe Systems - Monthly Subscription Dec-Jan	15.17
Opus Energy - Surrenden Pavilion October	28.35
Opus Energy - Bell Lane Toilets Electricity October	29.14
Opus Energy - Bell Lane Toilets Electricity November	29.34
Opus Energy - Surrenden Pavilion Electricity November	27.78
Opus Energy - Parish Office Electricity November	2.18
Telecoms World - Winter Warm Rooms Mobile Phone Line	1.19
Kent County Council - Youth Club Lease Purchase 3/4	212.50
Countrystyle Recycling - Waste Collection November	69.84
npower - Street Light Energy November	23.90
MBC - Council Tax Rooms 2-3 January	72.00
MBC - Council Tax Room 1 January	62.00
Sage Payroll - January	8.40
Business Stream - Bell Lane Toilet Water December	44.32
Npower - Street Light Energy December	61.93
Countrystyle Recycling - Waste Collection December	87.30
Lloyds Bank Charges - December	7.85
Arron Services Ltd - Hosted Exchange January	214.32
TOTAL CURRENT ACCOUNT EXPENDITURE	24,050.47
TOTAL PETTY CASH EXPENDITURE	6.40

Signed Chairman.....Date.....

4.2. Summation – Balance sheet – Noted

4.3. Councillor Parish Allowance 2023/24

Following a debate, which highlighted the point that Staplehurst Parish Councillors do not currently, and have not taken in the past taken the allowance. Also, the public assume that being a Parish Councillor is a voluntary role. Some felt that we should budget for this rather than use General Reserves, others were unsure as we do not know what sort of funding will be required. It was raised that some people may be put off not seeking to become a Councillor and the allowance may support issues such as Child Care It was agreed that a report would come back with the pro's and con's of promoting the Basic Parish Allowance before the May Election

Cllr Buller proposed, Cllr Eerdeken's seconded and the resolution below was agreed unanimously

Resolution: note the new Parish Council in May 2023 will need to consider using the General Reserve to cover the Basic Parish Allowance of £8,874.

4.4. Council Budget for 2023/24 and precept

Following a debate, which highlighted several points

- RFO double check amended figures and circulate to Councillors
- CIL funding should be General Reserves in future years
- 0% increase may lead to a sharp increase in future years

Cllr McPhee proposed, Cllr Perry seconded an amendment " include CIL funding in revenue budget for 2023/24 and review in future years plus confirm amended figures via email" – agreed majority 12 for and 1 abstained

Cllr Castro proposed and Cllr McLaughlin seconded the resolution below, it was agreed by a majority of 11 for, 0 against and 2 abstained.

Resolution: to approve

- 1) the budget of £269,276.86 for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix A of this report with the following amendments;
 - Remove the £5,000 contingency
 - Remove the £8,874 Basic Parish Allowance – suggested from General Reserves if required
 - Add £500 to Chairmans discretionary budget
 - Add £553.69 to the projects budget
- 2) include CIL funding in revenue budget for 2023/24 and review in future years
- 3) confirm amended figures via email
- 4) that the precept request is £224,317 so the impact on the Council Tax would be neutral and a Band D property precept remains unchanged at £75.02 per year

4.5. Council donations in 2022/23

Following a debate, Cllr Buller proposed, Cllr McPhee seconded and the resolution below was agreed unanimously

Resolution: To approve the Finance and Strategy recommendations;

- Kent, Surry and Sussex Air Ambulance = £250
- Heart of Kent Hospice = £250
- Community Centre for Debt Advice Staplehurst = £200
- Citizen Advice Bureau Maidstone - £200
- Maidstone and the Weald Samaritans = £100
- Parish Magazine (Staplehurst Church) = £75
- Kenward Trust = £100
- Involve Kent - £75
- Staplehurst WI (help with clean up refreshments) £50

(Note these had previously been agreed but never come to Council and is not inline with current policy)

4.6. Youth Club footpath improvements

Following a debate where it was felt the variety of proposals required further clarification, Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Buller seconded the following resolution "to delegate authority to the Clerk in consultation with Cllrs Riordan, Castro and McPhee to finalise a specification and seek new quotes up to £5,500 plus VAT" – agreed unanimously

Cllr Mclean proposed and Cllr McPhee seconded the resolution below and it was agreed unanimously

Resolution:

- a) to delegate authority to the Clerk in consultation with Cllrs Riordan, Castro and McPhee to finalise a specification and seek new quotes up to £5,500 plus VAT

4.7. Surrenden Field vehicle entrance – grasscrete installation

Following a debate, where it was felt that the costs were prohibitive. Cllr Sharp proposed, Cllr Mclean seconded and the resolution below was agreed unanimously

Resolution: a) not to install grasscrete at the vehicle gate entrance off Surrenden Road

5. **CLERKS REPORT ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS** - attached

Noted that Cllrs Alesi, Mclaughlin and Sharp are joining the Communications group, that Cllr Alesi is joining the 3g all sports pitch group and SCEnic group.

To chase up Sainsbury bus service

To add target dates to status column of Clerks report

Signed Chairman.....Date.....

6. PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION and DECISION

6.1 Jubilee Field 3g all sports pitch update

Following a debate, where the issue of impact of the drainage of the 3g all sports pitch on the rest of the Jubilee Field area was asked to be clarified Cllr Sharp proposed, Cllr Eerdekins seconded and the resolution below was agreed unanimously

Resolution: to approve

1. Agree to move to the Site Feasibility Stage and accept that if the Parish Council aborts the project we will be liable for the £5,140 plus VAT
1. 3g working group to proceed with the tender for the Bid Consultant and report back for the Council to make a decision

6.2 Hazlitt Theatre outdoor production

Following a debate, where we need to ensure the dates do not clash with KCC Youth Service event or SCEG events Cllr Buller proposed, Cllr Castro seconded and the resolution below was agreed unanimously

Resolution: to approve an Outdoor Theatre production by the Hazlitt Theatre at Surrenden Field in August 2023 subject to the appropriate permissions and risk assessment

6.3 Date for Community Litter Pick

Following a debate, Cllr Mclean proposed, Cllr Castro seconded and the resolution below was agreed unanimously

Resolution: to agree the 1st April 2023 as the spring Community Litter Pick

6.4 Date for Volunteer Social event

Following a debate, Cllr McLaughlin proposed, Cllr Davidson-Houston seconded and the resolution below was agreed unanimously

Resolution: to agree the 20th February 2023 for the Volunteer Social Event

6.5 KALC Community Awards

Following a debate, Cllr Sharp proposed, Cllr Castro seconded and the resolution below was agreed unanimously

Resolution: to promote the KALC Community Awards

6.6 Telephone Box

Following a debate, that once the final works where complete Cllr Sharp proposed, Cllr Castro seconded and the resolution below was agreed unanimously

Resolution: : to agree to use the telephone box at Church Green for community groups to promote their activities /events

Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Buller seconded to suspend Standing Orders and extend the meeting to complete the business of the Council. – Agreed unanimously

7. CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for noting: -

- 7.1 Salt bins – Clerk to liaise with Cllr Parfit – Reid
- 7.2 Buses - not stopping - noted
- 7.3 Temporary traffic lights – the Clerk had phone the contact number on various temporary road works, but no one had answered – need to clarify how we / public can contact contractors regarding temporary road works
7. 4 Electric charging points – potential funding identified – Road Safety Group consider

Signed Chairman.....Date.....

8. PARISH COUNCIL REPORTS (from Committee/Groups/Office on specific issues or as regular update)**8.1. Chairmans Report – Oral report by Cllr Riordan**

- Noted the sad passing of former Cllr Spearink and also the sad news this evening regarding Robin Kenworthy
- Helen Grants office is arranging meeting with water authorities, MBC, KCC and parish Council representatives, early February 2023- will report back to Council
- New date for Volunteers celebration agreed
- Let's promote the KALC awards – website social media etc.
- Number 5 bus – to bring forward report to Council – very dissatisfied how this has worked but potential options with neighbouring parishes.
- Thanked Cllr Castro for helping with the removal of the Christmas tree / lights and also local tree surgeon who shredded Christmas trees for a donation to Heart of Weald Hospice - £230 raised

8.2. Written reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for noting.

Planning Committee – minutes of the meeting on 9th January 2023

SCEnic – Cllr Sharp – next meeting 2nd February 2023

Finance and Strategy Group – next meeting 16th February 2023

3g all sports pitch group – next meeting 17th January 2023

Road Safety Group – Cllr Sharp – meeting notes 1st November 2022, next meeting 30th January 2023

Communications Group – Minutes of the meeting on 23rd November 2022

Youth Club – meeting to be arranged

Greener Group – meeting notes 4th December 2022 to follow

Neighbourhood Plan Review Group – meeting held on 11th January 2023 to follow

9. REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS NA

10. URGENT MATTERS- at the discretion of the Chairman, information only items for noting or for decision at a future meeting NA

11. Special Motion - NA

11.1. To move that the public be excluded from item 11.2 due to its confidential nature.

A resident raised concerns about Fly Tipping, removal of signs / bollards, digging up a grass verge, and Waste Bins being left out – it was explained that none of these were Parish Councils responsibility but the Road Safety Group would investigate and report back.

Meeting closed.....9.45pm.....

Note these minutes are not verbatim

Signed Chairman.....Date.....