

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL  
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on  
Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at 8.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Ashby, Buller, Gosling, Lain-Rose, Manning (from the point indicated in the minutes), Perry, Riordan, Sharp, Smith, Spearink and Burnham who was in the Chair.

Parish Clerk: Mr M J Westwood

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Silkin (on parish council business); Councillors Claridge and Reardon.

**COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS** regarding items on the Agenda:-

Changes to the Register of Interests – Councillor Lain-Rose declared a change of employment information and gave the Clerk a new signed declaration.

Interests in Items on the Agenda – none declared.

Requests for Dispensation – none requested.

**APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES** Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Sharp, minute pages 1671-1673 of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018 were APPROVED by Councillors, signed by Chairman Burnham and made available at [http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes\\_of\\_the\\_last\\_meetings.aspx](http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx). Councillors Riordan and Smith abstained.

**FINANCE REPORTS:-**

1. Grounds Maintenance

a) Further Investigative Work by GRS Arboricultural Consultants – Quotation for work at Surrenden Field & Youth Club Site (for approval). Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Riordan, Councillors RESOLVED nem con: (i) APPROVE expenditure of £240 on further investigative work on an oak tree at Surrenden Field (designated T7 in the report undertaken by GRS Arboricultural Consultant); (ii) APPROVE expenditure of £215 on a survey of and report on trees on Staplehurst Youth Club site.

b) Hedge Cutting at Jubilee Field and Surrenden Field – Quotation for approval. Councillors reviewed the Clerk's report dated 29/01/18. Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Buller, Councillors RESOLVED nem con: (i) not to accept the quotation for hedge cutting at Jubilee Field; Councillor Riordan will engage the Community Payback team; (ii) to ACCEPT the quotation of £1,460 from Forestry First to cut hedges at Surrenden Field, noting that the Parish Council could at this stage commit only to one year.

c) Hedge and Grass Cutting at Youth Club Site – Quotation for approval. Councillors reviewed the Clerk's report dated 29/01/18. Councillors requested clarification of the comparative cost of hedge trimming in 2017 to enable them to consider the proposal at their meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> February.

2. Parish Services Scheme (PSS) – Correspondence from MBC advising the PSS payment for 2018-19 (for noting) and request to sign PSS Funding Agreement (for decision). Councillors NOTED the letter from the MBC Director of Finance and Business Improvement dated 22/01/18 and that MBC had allocated to the Parish Council a payment of £9,370 under the Parish Services Scheme. RESOLVED: the Chairman and Clerk should sign Parish Services Scheme Funding Agreement for 2018-19.

*Councillor Manning joined the meeting.*

3. Surrenden Playing Field & Nicholson Walk Freehold – Estimate for Valuation pursuant to Min 1673 (for approval). Councillor Perry said that he had sought and obtained an estimate for the cost of a professional valuation of Surrenden Playing Field (Min 1673, 15/01/18). The quoted cost was £825. Councillor Perry stated that he supported accepting the quotation as he felt it would give the Parish Council the opportunity to set out the key issues involved in maintaining Surrenden Field as well as other factors affecting its value, which could ultimately strengthen the Parish Council's case for securing the freehold at the price of £5,000 that it had offered. He commented that MBC had delegated negotiation of the cost of transfer to officers, but officers had made a decision to refuse the Parish Council's offer. Councillors discussed the proposed quotation at some length: some members felt an independent valuation was essential to support the Parish Council's case and offer; others noted the comments of the proposed valuer that he could not commit to providing a value as low as the Parish Council would wish and felt the valuation could work against the Parish Council. After some discussion Councillors voted as follows: Accept the quotation – 4; Not to accept the quotation – 4; Abstained – 3. The votes being tied, Chairman Burnham exercised his casting vote not to accept the quotation and the proposal was defeated.
4. Wimpey Field – Quotation for footpath extension (for approval). Proposed by Councillor Spearink, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, Councillors RESOLVED nem con to ACCEPT the quotation of £2,100 from Southeast Groundworks to extend the footpath at Wimpey Field by 70m.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting:**

1. General Data Protection Regulations – Report of Workshop organised by Kent Association of Local Councils 11/01/18. The Clerk commented on his report of the workshop. The key messages were that local councils would need to invest time, money and resource in ensuring they were compliant with the new regulations; KALC would be distributing guidance material and sample documents on conclusion of the workshops; the Parish Office had commenced auditing the personal information it held.
2. Fence north of railway bridge, Maidstone Road – Correspondence re MBC planning consent for application 17/504729. Councillors NOTED a resident's objection to the temporary planning consent granted by MBC to Tesco Stores for fencing on the north side of the A229 railway bridge. Councillors observed that: the Parish Council had objected to the application; there was no route through which to challenge the decision itself; a judicial review would address only a failure of process and one could not be identified; a judicial review would in any case be very expensive. Councillors Buller and Perry said they had discussed the position with the resident at a Saturday surgery. Councillors agreed to take no further action and asked the Clerk to respond to the correspondence.
3. Parish Council Surgery 27/01/18 – (i) Report on key issues raised. Councillor Buller reported that topics raised at the surgery were: fencing on the north side of the A229 railway bridge; Staplehurst in Bloom; Kent Highways' closure of Headcorn Road for resurfacing works; a refused planning application at Marian Square. (ii) Appointment of representatives for future dates. Chairman Burnham – 24<sup>th</sup> February.
4. Staplehurst in Bloom Project – Correspondence from Staplehurst Horticultural Society. Councillors RESOLVED nem con to endorse the project and to invite a representative of the society to address a future meeting.

#### **PARISH COUNCIL REPORTS** (from Committee/Groups/Office on specific issues or as regular update)

1. Clerk's Report – The Clerk reported: BT telephone box at Church Green – he had sent photos to BT who would be inspecting it to assess the need for repainting and repair (update expected by 19/02/18); a request to undertake metal detecting had been

received; the Parish Office was gathering information about retail premises in the village; he was arranging a meeting with Redrow Homes; Sainsbury's had advised the company planned to open its store by 2020 and intended to develop the petrol station site (it would be checking the condition of the latter); a missing Crowther Close street sign had been reported to MBC at the end of October but it had still not been replaced – MBC had now advised it had been dealing with a backlog and would process the replacement when it had enough requests to justify a bulk order; on 03/02/18 the caretaker had cleaned up some graffiti on Surrenden play area – CCTV footage would be checked; documentation was being completed for the new Parish Council bank account.

2. Written Reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for decision or noting
  - a) Community Enhancement Group – Draft report and recommendations of meeting 29/01/18. The draft report was NOTED. RESOLVED: (i) AGREE to recommendation that the following residents be ratified as members of the Wimpey Field sub-group: David Charge, David George, Emily Wright, Janet Pink, Laura Stephens, Martin Ralph, Robert Roberts, Susan Forward; (ii) AGREE to recommendation that summer play scheme dates be as follows: Open Day 30/07/18, morning sessions 31/07/18-03/08/18, morning and afternoon sessions 06/08/18-10/08/18 and 13/08/18-17/08/18; (iii) AGREE to recommendation that Staplehurst School be approached for use as a venue and that Play Place should continue to be the chosen provider; (iv) AGREE to recommendation that the Bell Lane Toilet Cleaning Contract Specification appended to the Group's report be used to seek bids for the contract to be awarded for a period of one year until 31/03/19, the tender process to be managed by the Deputy Clerk and Finance Officer. Regarding recommendations for Wimpey Field: (v) footpath extension – discussed under Finance Reports (4) above; (vi) Status of Wimpey Field financial reserve and revenue budget - Councillor Riordan said that he would bring a discussion paper to the next meeting.
  - b) Friends of Wimpey Field – Report of meeting 09/01/18. The report was NOTED and posted at <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>. Councillor Spearink reported that works had progressed quickly thanks to good support from members of the public; for this reason, some spending originally planned for 2018-19 had been brought forward. The good progress on the field would mean that next year more focus could be given to the woodland.
  - c) Gypsy & Traveller Planning Applications – Report on consultation with neighbouring parishes about SPC's proposal to hold a joint meeting (for decision as to timing and content – Min 1663 refers). Councillors NOTED the Deputy Clerk's report and, proposed by Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, RESOLVED: (i) a joint meeting should be arranged as soon as possible in Staplehurst and at a convenient evening date and time; (ii) invitations should be extended beyond those parishes initially consulted to include other neighbours; (iii) drawing up the agenda should be delegated to the Parish Council Chairman, Vice Chairman and Chair of Planning.
  - d) Neighbourhood Plan Review Group – Draft Minutes of Meeting 10/01/18. NOTED by Councillors and published at [http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/rural\\_settlement\\_group.aspx](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/rural_settlement_group.aspx).
3. Oral Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only
  - a) Communications Group – Councillor Ashby reported that the new parish council website would be fully operational with effect from 01/04/18. Copy for the next issue of the Village Update was required by 20/02/18; delivery was scheduled for early March.
  - b) Jubilee Field – Councillor Riordan reported that the new storage container had been delivered and installed at Jubilee Field.

**REPORTS FROM OTHER COUNCILS, AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS** for noting:-

1. Borough Councillor’s Oral Report – Councillor Perry reported: MBC Planning Committee had refused the planning application for land south of The Gables – he thanked Councillor Burnham for speaking at the meeting; he was seeking to engage stakeholders to take forward ideas for regeneration of the Staplehurst station area – it was noted that the initiative should include Sainsbury’s and Tesco who own land in the vicinity; a major issue before MBC this month was the setting of the 2018-19 budget.
2. Parish-Police Liaison Committee – Councillor Manning’s report of the meeting 17/01/18 was NOTED by Councillors and posted at [http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/police\\_liaison.aspx](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/police_liaison.aspx).

**REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS** (written reports for noting):-

1. McCabe Day Centre – Report of meeting 18/01/18. NOTED by councillors and posted at [http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/mccabe\\_day\\_centre.aspx](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/mccabe_day_centre.aspx).

**URGENT MATTERS** (at Chairman’s discretion, information only items for noting or for decision at a future meeting)

No items

**SPECIAL MOTION & REPORT – STAFF’S ACCUMULATED UNPAID HOURS:-**

1. To move that the public be excluded from item 2 due to its content relating to confidential staff matters. There being no members of the public still present the motion was not discussed. The Clerk left the meeting.
2. To consider the Employment Group’s report and proposals regarding staff’s accumulated unpaid hours. Councillor Lain-Rose introduced the Employment Group’s report dated 31 January 2018. There was much discussion by Councillors regarding the additional unpaid hours. However, there was a general agreement that the accumulated unpaid hours needed to be settled. Proposed by Councillor Burnham, seconded by Councillor Gosling, the Council AGREED to settle the Parish Clerk and Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer’s accumulated unpaid hours, in full, as detailed within the Employment Group report. Members RESOLVED that the Employment Group re-evaluate Recommendation 2 of the report and provide the Council with alternative options and AGREED that until further notice that all employees shall only undertake their contracted hours on a weekly basis. Councillor Lain-Rose expressed that the Council must understand that in doing this it would reduce the level of service that the Council receives from the Parish Office, until a remedy has been agreed between the Council and employees.

Chairman.....

**PUBLIC FORUM:** Before the meeting a resident commented on the poor condition of the A229 south of Staplehurst, particularly inadequate repairs undertaken to potholes and surface dressing. During the meeting Chairman Burnham allowed temporary closures to receive comments from members of the public about Surrenden Playing Field and about street sweeping.