

Note for Staplehurst Parish Council 3rd February 2020 – Greener Staplehurst Group

Introduction

In September 2019, SPC agreed to a proposal by Councillors George and Thomas to set up a group to take forward green initiatives and work with like-minded residents who had brought similar ideas to the council (Min1787).

Since then, councillors and residents have met as the Greener Staplehurst Group (GSG) and have commenced work on developing a number of initiatives.

Terms of Reference

Having picked up on some uncertainty about whether GSG was a working group of the Parish Council or a community group supported by the PC, I have drafted some terms of reference based on the second premise (i.e. GSG being a community group supported by the PC). The scope of activities reflects the scope in the proposal agreed in September 2019.

The terms of reference focus their guidance towards parish councillor members of GSG rather than towards the group as a whole – see particularly the shaded phrases in the document. They have been shared with some councillor members of GSG.

If members consider GSG to be a PC working group subject to full PC control, the draft can easily be amended. It would entail tightening up some of the provisions and applying them to all members (as happens in the cases of Road Safety Group and NPRG).

Note (1): the status of GSG will affect the treatment of any funding agreed (see ‘Funding’ below).

Note (2): for the Parish Council’s insurance policy to cover volunteer activity, such activity must be both under the control of the Parish Council and appropriately risk-assessed.

Funding

Cllr Riordan: “The Greener Staplehurst group has started to carry out work in various parts of the village including starting to create wildflower areas. Trees have been acquired for planting and the group have utilised the payback team to strip back areas for planting. As the group has no source of funds at the present time it would like to request that the Parish Council set aside a sum of £250 to be used for signage and initial set up for the projects.”

The signs are to mark out areas where the group are working in order to advise the general public that these areas are a work in progress, the signs have been offered at a discounted rate by Iden Signs. The group expects to fund future projects by donations and they are looking to apply to various funding sources in order to raise funds for the projects going forward.”

Note (3): if GSG were to operate as a separate community group, funding could be awarded as a donation. Although funds could be held temporarily by SPC, the proper way forward would be for GSG to open its own bank account. SPC may only reclaim VAT on purchases that it makes itself and which are for its own use.

For Approval

1. Funding of £250 to be allocated to the Group from donations budget
2. Terms of reference to be approved as drafted.

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