

# STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Employment, Finance & Strategy group meeting Thursday 30th November 2023 2:00pm at Parish Council offices

**Present:** Cllrs Riordan, Hotson, Arger, Martin and Sharp plus Clerk and Deputy Clerk / RFO

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Cllrs Eerdekenes and Perry
2. **Dispensations - NA**
3. **Minutes of previous meeting** – 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023 minutes agreed unanimously
4. **Budget 2024/25**
  - i. **Working budget 2024/25 – RFO to lead discussion (bring to the meeting)**

The group discussed the draft budget, focusing on expenditure

1. Allotments – agreed need to sort out installation – report to Council. Allocation of £1,000 in budget with further costs to be taken from allocated reserves agreed
2. CCTV report about new CCTV cameras going to Council – finalise ongoing costs before recommending figure for budget at December meeting
3. Christmas lights – to remain at £1,796.90. Need report in new year to review current Christmas lighting display – down from 24 motifs to 16 this year
4. Churchyard – further request for funding received – awaiting figure for discussion at December meeting
5. Greener Group costs to be fed into draft budget on receipt
6. Jubilee Field – currently £4,000 in budget. Figure to be amended as required following JFMC meeting
7. Wimpey field – £4,080 to include quote from MVCP for two bio-blitz, volunteer and TAG days
8. SEHT - £500
9. Office support total budget £16,818, request for RFO to breakdown costs relating to sundry items budget of £4k. Since the meeting RFO has clarified as follows:

Countrystyle Recycling - Waste Collection paid monthly	832.52
Land Registry Search Fees - ad hoc	25.00
MBC - Road Closure Licence Remembrance Parade	75.00
GDPR-info Ltd - DPO Support Services	350.00
Green Box Recycling - Skip re Community Payback - one off	175.00
ICO - Data Protection Fee	35.00
Safe Batteries	9.00
Water Filters	12.00
Parish Office - Tea, Coffee, Milk, cleaning items	175.00
Paxman Printing - Winter Warm Rooms Flyer x1000	39.00
Village Clean up refreshments	18.00
Sage Payroll paid monthly	96.00
SAGE Accounts paid annually	266.00
Contingency for sundry items not in a specific budget heading	1800.00
Total est. 2024-25	£3,907.52

Computer Support - Council IT – a discussion took place following a suggestion from Cllr Castro to upgrade the office software to Microsoft 365. It was agreed that this would need to be investigated further and a report sent to Council. It was agreed not to increase the budget in 2024-25 for the proposed project

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10. Staff Costs - an Employment Group meeting is scheduled for next week – proposals will be fed into budget at the December meeting.
11. Councillors agreed that a sinking fund of £1k should be included in the budget for buildings maintenance at each of the following sites: Bell Lane Toilets, Youth Club, Jubilee Pavilion and Surrenden Field - £4k in total.

**ii. Draft Jubilee Field budget 2024/25 – note we are meeting Lee Seal (JFMC) on Tuesday so will bring to the meeting**

RFO presented initial draft budget following meeting with JFMC treasurer. Concerns were raised relating to electricity water costs and the lack of income relating to these. It was suggested to add a “sinking fund – see above i.11 - £1,000. Business rates?

It was Agreed Clerk draft “ground rent agreement” incorporate pitch ground entrance, use of pavilion and significant electricity contribution for next season – to next F and S ,meeting then onto meeting with SMFC

SMYFC – 5% increase for next season in pitch hire fees

Season runs from 1<sup>st</sup> August – 31<sup>st</sup> July each year.

**5. JFMC Committee or Working Group – covering discussion paper and examples attached**

The Group discussed the option of a Committee and Working Group, concerns about misappropriation of funding in the past – transparency is an issue.

Conclusion preferred option working group but tighter terms of reference.

Clerk to redraft and circulate for comment, report onto Council.

**6. List of potential donations**

The group discussed and recommend to Full Council the following donations for 2024-25:

All Saints PCC Parish Magazine	75.00
Community Centre for Debt Advice	200.00
Heart of Kent Hospice	200.00
Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust	200.00
Kenward Trust	100.00
Royal British Legion - Poppy Wreath	100.00
Staplehurst WI – Village Clean-up Refreshments	50.00
Staplehurst Men's Shed - Village Clean-up Refreshments	50.00
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	£975.00

It was proposed to recommend to Full Council a £200 donation to Staplehurst Scouts from 2023/24 donations budget in appreciation of the support of the Youth Club and Men’s Shed.

**7. Quarterly Contracts for Renewal**

The following contracts are due for renewal: Castle Water approximately £120 p.a. - Youth Club water; Contrast Garden Maintenance £1,200 p.a - mowing and strimming at Wimpey Field and Countrystyle Group £832.52 p.a. – waste collection. EF&SG members recommend agreement to Full Council for approval.

**8. Dates of next meeting**

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023, 2pm with the aim to present draft Budget to Council for approval on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024.