

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Committee, Group or Sub Group	
FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP	
Meeting Date & Venue	
10 a.m. Thursday 19 th July 2018, Parish Office, Staplehurst Village Centre	
Report Author	
Mick Westwood – Parish Clerk	
Report	
<p>Present: Councillors Tom Burnham (TB), Paul Kelly (PK), Sam Lain-Rose (SL-R), John Perry (JP), Paddy Riordan (PR) and Mick Westwood (MW), Parish Clerk; Deborah Jenkins (DJ), Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Appointment of Chairman: AGREED - Cllr Tom Burnham.Apologies: Cllr Rory Silkin (RS).Minutes of last meeting (26/04/2018): it was NOTED that they had previously been issued to Full Council and published on the PC website. <u>ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS b/fwd:</u>Youth Leader Project – SL-R update re: formal agreement to clarify Management and Maintenance issues of the building and land and a Service Level Agreement to establish the standards, principles and scope of the Youth Worker provision. PK advised that the Youth Leader formerly engaged to run the sessions had left. PK was now assisting the remaining worker and had undertaken training. Youth Club policies are being updated. SPC is still funding the club at the rate of £1k per quarter. PK said this funding was helping the club to cover costs including those of the two workers. Other income is being sourced from hirers. The Men's Shed workshop project could make a real difference to the site.Jubilee Playing Field – SL-R update re: JFMC 3-year Business Plan (including a strategy for mower breakdowns/servicing). Update/progress report on the completion of the Maintenance Agreement. PR commented that the AGM would be held that evening (19/07/18): <u>papers including financial information would be made available to SPC</u>. PR explained that JFMC's income came from football pitch letting at rates that were comparable to other local venues. SPC's support in funding maintenance expenditure during 2018 was acknowledged, e.g. lighting work, door and glass repairs, shutter servicing, sewage pump repairs. PR said he would need help to produce a business plan and he was grateful for the increased engagement by parish councillors, notably Cllr Forward who had offered to assist. <u>OTHER BUSINESS</u>Internal Auditor – DJ advised that new controls had been agreed with the Internal Auditor to assist the processing of BACS payments. <u>His written report of the overall SPC risk and controls position was awaited. JP said he would follow this up.</u>Bank Account – It was NOTED that SPC had agreed the new Investment Strategy. <u>The Parish Office is to look into other institutions offering suitable accounts for deposit of funds not required for immediate expenditure.</u> This is with a view to spreading the risk beyond a single banking group.	

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8. **Footpath KM312** – DJ reported that she contacted Carillion about SPC taking ownership of the footpath notwithstanding the company's failure to complete the works on the path (per Full Council decision Min1696). Carillion had not responded. It was AGREED that a direct approach to the company's solicitor would be appropriate. POST-MEETING NOTE: this was followed up; Carillion's solicitors confirmed that they had no instructions to pursue the transfer, nor did they expect to receive any. Carillion then responded that it would complete the transfer of the footpath to SPC provided that SPC met Carillion's legal costs (estimated £1,000).
9. **Next Quarter Contract Reviews and Payments to be made** – A schedule of forthcoming contracts and subscriptions for renewal had been circulated to all Councillors. **It was agreed to recommend to Full Council the renewal of the contracts as set out in Appendix A.** PR said he would liaise with local painting companies to identify those who may be interested in quoting for the repainting of the skate park rides. It was noted that the annual inspection report was due imminently and would indicate any maintenance issues that needed attention. SL-R said he would liaise with the Wimpey Field grass contractor about insurance arrangements.
10. **Donation Request** – TN LIVE Music Festival: request £500. It was NOTED: an identical amount had been given to the Fireworks Group last year; the largest 2018-19 donation to date was £250; £500 would take the spent or committed donations expenditure in 2018-19 to £2,000 (budget £2,150). **It was AGREED to recommend a donation of £500 subject to receipt of satisfactory event documentation (risk assessment and evidence of insurance that had already been requested – subsequently received).**
11. **Surrenden Playing Field & Nicholson Walk Freehold** – Update (JP). No further progress had been achieved since MBC's rejection of SPC's final offer. The Group reviewed MW's draft letter to MBC drawing attention to the expiry of the lease in March 2019, confirming SPC intention not to renew the lease (Min1664 & 1673) and seeking engagement on the handover of maintenance and service arrangements. It was AGREED to send the letter to MBC's Director of Finance and Business Improvement.
12. **Tree Work following Inspection Report** – Chestnut Avenue. DJ reported that SPC's tree inspector had identified a dead tree and a diseased tree at Chestnut Avenue. The dead one (T14) required felling and the MBC tree officer had consented subject to replanting in the next planting season. DJ said she was following up quotes for felling to ensure the work would facilitate replanting. It was AGREED that the Parish Office should follow up the quotes and execution of the work on the dead tree. POST-MEETING NOTE: the dead tree T14 was felled on 24th July; work was carried out by Kirby McKay tree surgeons (cost £400).
13. **Publication of Financial Information** – DJ recapped that, having gone over the £200,000 threshold for gross income and/or expenditure, SPC would be required to supply additional information to the external auditor and to publish on its website particular financial information to comply with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. The Group NOTED the contents of MW's report (Appendix B) about the type of information covered.
14. **Meeting Information** – It was NOTED that group meeting reports were published on the PC website. The Group AGREED it would be helpful if the set of papers associated with Full Council agendas (made available to members of the public at meetings) could be published on the website before meetings too.

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15. **Future Budgeting – Five Year Plan** – MW discussed drawing up a longer-term plan beyond the current one-year budget to help inform delivery of longer-term projects and the management of the PC's income and reserves (further discussed in the report to the meeting – Appendix C). There were mixed views about the value of longer term planning given the uncertainties that can arise but acknowledgement of the value of effective co-ordination of major projects to ensure there is no conflict, e.g. when looking to limited S106 funding. TB, SL-R and MW will consider the subject further.
16. **Updated Standing Orders** – MW advised that revision of SPC's Standing Orders was work in progress. A rewrite based on the new model, rather than an update of the old version, was necessary. POST-MEETING NOTE: SL-R has produced a first draft of new standing orders.
17. **Date of Next Meeting** – 25th October 2018.

Appendix A

Staplehurst Parish Council – Forthcoming Contract Reviews/Renewals

Activity	Company	Value	Review Date	Notes	Actions
Insurance	Came & Company	£4,330.79	Contract ends 30/09/2018	3 yr contract. Came obtains three quotes.	Renew
Skatepark - Painting	Evolution Skateparks	£3,756.00	July 2018	Annual Rollover. Specialist paintwork.	Seek local quotes.
Wimpey Field Mowing & Strimming	Contrast Garden Maintenance	£20 per hr	Contract ends 20/08/2018	Annual Review	Continue but check insurance cover.
Accounts Software	Sage	£168.00	August 2018	Annual Review	Renew
Payroll Software	Sage	£150.00	September 2018	Annual Review	Renew
Data Protection Registration	ICO	£35	01/08/2018	Annual Subscription	Auto renew – obligatory
Street Lights - Electricity Supply	E-on	£446.04 p.a.	Ongoing	Ongoing. Unmetered supply – few providers.	Renew

Appendix B - Requirements of Local Government Transparency Code (LGTC) 2015

SPC's 2017-18 expenditure exceeded £200,000. This means it falls within the definition of a local authority under LGTC.

Review of the LGTC indicates the key areas affecting SPC relate to the need for:

- quarterly publication of certain expenditure and procurement/contract information
- annual publication of information relating to land holdings and grants made
- once-only publication of waste collection contract information.

LGTC covers both what must be published and what is recommended to be published. This note focuses on what must be published.

Quarterly Publication

For Expenditure Items over £500 (net) (LGTC paras 28-29):

- Date of expenditure
- Beneficiary
- Purpose
- Amount (net, wherever possible; otherwise, gross with a suitable note)
- VAT (if not recovered)
- Category

LGTC states: 'Salary payments to staff normally employed by the local authority should not be included'.

Most of the required information is already recorded in the monthly unpublished list of all accounts for payment. However, the list does not state a category (budget heading) and it always states the gross amounts. Further work will be needed to produce a suitable quarterly list for publication.

For Procurement Activity (LGTC paras 31-32):

- Details of every invitation to tender for goods/services with a value that exceeds £5,000 (net)
- Details of any contract, commissioned activity, purchase order, framework agreement or other legal agreement with a value that exceeds £5,000 (net). This excludes directly employed staff. LGTC para 32 lists ten items of information required.

It is assumed that the publication requirement covers only transactions initiated during the previous quarter (i.e. not including contracts previously agreed and currently in operation), but this should be checked. Examples of SPC agreements that would be covered: street sweeping; planter maintenance (not exhaustive list).

Annual Publication

For land and building assets (LGTC paras 35-37):

- LGTC para 37 lists specific information to be published for both freehold and leasehold assets

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- All information must be published in one place

For all grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (LGTC para 42):

- Date grant awarded
- Time period for which grant awarded
- Department responsible for the award (more applicable to large authorities)
- Beneficiary and its registration number (e.g. company or charity number)
- Purpose of grant
- Amount

Note: LGTC refers to all grants, with no minimum amount mentioned.

Once-only Publication

For waste collection contracts (LGTC para 54):

- Details of existing waste collection contracts
- Information to be published at the same time that the first quarterly publication is made
- Details required are identical to those for contracts (LGTC para 32); this implies that the publication threshold is £5,000 plus (check).

SPC has contracts for collection of waste from its bin at the Village Centre and from Bell Lane toilets.

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Appendix C - Future Budgeting – Five-Year Plan

Introduction

- This note introduces for discussion the suggestion that SPC considers forming a longer-term plan to reflect its ambitions for the village and to provide a vision that informs the management of its reserves and annual budget.

Background

- In Q4 2018 SPC will start the process to set the budget for 2019-20
- Traditionally, SPC has budgeted on a year by year basis and reacted to known demands on the PC finances
- In Q4 2017 Finance & Strategy Group assessed some potential expenditure items and allocated them into categories: budget year, following year, longer term
- To date, little more has been done in terms of longer term planning.

Current Position

- July Summation shows SPC reserves totalling £123k (General Reserve of £80k; Parish Project Reserves £43k) (figures rounded)
- July Summation shows anticipated expenditure of £165k against budget of £180k (figures rounded)
- MBC holds £20k of Section 106 money (to be spent by 2025).

The Case for Forward Planning

- Recently some 'unexpected items' have brought additional expenditure (e.g. for Jubilee Field, tree works, Men's Shed project)
- Groups could be encouraged to think ahead to what they want to achieve beyond the present or next year; such forward thinking could help reduce 'surprises' (although it is recognised that the unexpected will not be eliminated) and develop ideas for projects that will bring significant improvements to the village.
- Ideas could be brought together into a plan covering, say, the next five years; this plan would help to inform the setting of the budget and precept and the management of SPC's reserves.

Format of a Five-Year Plan

- Could be called a 'strategic plan' or 'ambition plan' or 'aspiration plan'
- High-level, not detailed, including: an overall vision statement; aims – what SPC will do to achieve the vision; objectives – specific deliverables
- The Plan will not go into detail as this will come into individual project proposals and budget-setting; rather, the Plan will provide a context for the setting of each year's budget and associated financial decisions throughout the year
- Example: Dover Town Council has a concise (four pages) 'Ambition Plan' that sets out what it wants to achieve over a five-year period. It is available at <https://dovertowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/publication-scheme/#ps-policies>. Specific objectives are listed under seven themes (or aims) and categorised according to the type of action the town council will take (in this case, influence, participate or deliver).

For Discussion

- Does Finance & Strategy Group consider that a plan as described above should be pursued?