Communications Group Minutes 14th October 2023 – 7:30PM

AGENDA ITEMS

Present: Cllrs Arger, Castro, Martin, Sharp

1. **Apologies:** Cllrs Riordan, Alesi
2. **Matters arising from last meeting.**
   a. Budget request

> 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

Questions arising:

- What is the current budget?
- Increase of annual costs?
- What is the budget for the Village Update and Annual Report?
- Are we on time for other requests?

JC brought to attention that even though the Finance and Strategy group decided not to increase the current budget for a possible change of IT resources, still need to be considered an increase of the costs for the new year in line with inflation (printing costs, etc.).

Can the office, please, clarify:

- **What falls within the Communications budget: Annual Report, Village Updates, Website…?**
- **how much is the annual budget for Communications for the present year?**
- **and what would be the expected increase for the following year, and communicate this to Finance and Strategy for consideration?**

   b. Communications with residents

From previous minutes:

> ## 5. Recommendations for proposals to improve Council communication with residents
>
> It was felt by the group, that community engagement has diminished significantly and a concerted attempt to improve it, would be a positive move for the parish council and residents.
>
> The group requested that posts regarding Council work to encourage community engagement, be published on the parish council Facebook page and website at weekends, including key times would be recommended.
> In order to address any concerns, posts could be done by agreement of three councillors for a trial period of three months.
>
> The group requested the return of the Chairman's report. This could be sent to the office during the week and timed for posting on a Saturday morning.
>
> The group considered that the parish council had lost the very positive engagement with the residents, that had been so successful over previous years.

3. **Village Update** – Spring. Main articles and action plan.
   -Upon discussion, the group decided for front article to be about the survey and to include an article about the Merit Awards to the previous list emailed by JC.
   -Proofreading will be trialled first with AI and then by members of the group.
   -Collation would be on a Saturday in the Youth Club when available by Communications and councillors that wish to collaborate.

- Articles from Parish Council and Community Groups for the Village Update:

  - Opening Article: Survey   JC
  - Christmas time   PR/JC
  - Planning Committee   AS
  - Greener Staplehurst Group   DG
  - The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Review Group   MA
  - Communications   JC
  - Employment, Finance and Strategy   PR
  - Road Safety   AS
  - SCENIC   AS
  - Survey   PC Office
  - 3G Working Group   LB
  - Merit Awards   JC

Requirements: articles of not more than 200 words absolute maximum (please, count them). And at least a good quality photo. More photos would be welcome so we can choose the ones that suit better. Photos with people (smiling) are especially treasured 😊 It is not a requirement to reach 200 words. Please, no waffling. Make it interesting!

We are sticking this time to Council Groups exclusively, as we don't have as much space due to the survey. Please, see your initials next to the group. If you don't need to submit anything, could you please warn me to avoid chasing and to look for possible replacements.

- Schedule

January	SPRING UPDATE –	Copy: 25 January
		To typesetter: 02 February
		To printer: 09 February
		Collation: 17 February
		Distribution: 19 February

-Communications Group members to collaborate with other volunteers for distribution.

4. **Village Update / Annual Report** – Schedule, for Council.
   It was decided to delay the original schedule for the Annual Report by one week in order to include an article about the results of the elections to Parish Council.
   The Communications Group wishes to submit the following schedule for approval. Before submission, the group wants to request the office to check dates with Paxman first:

FORWARD PLAN FOR VILLAGE UPDATES 2024 and ANNUAL REPORT

Communications Group Meetings	Suggested Content	Copy & Distribution Deadlines
January	**SPRING UPDATE –**	Copy: 25 January To typesetter: 02 February To printer: 09 February Collation: 17 February Distribution: 19 February
March	**ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024** – Chairman's report. Write-ups from Councillors and Clerk. Summary of news and projects from previous year (April 2020-March 2021). Financial Statements to year end 31/03/21. Parish Council contacts.	Copy: 3 May To typesetter: 10 May To printer: 24 May Collation: 8 June Distribution: 10 June
July	**AUTUMN UPDATE –**	Copy: 02 August To typesetter: 09 August To printer: 16 August Collation: 24 August Distribution: 27 August
Early October	**WINTER UPDATE–**	Copy: 18 October To typesetter: 25 October To printer: 01 November Collation: 09 November Distribution: 11 November

Notes

Copy co-ordination by Communications Group. Typesetting and Printing www.paxmanprinting.co.uk.
Collation by volunteers of the Communications Group.
Distribution packs made up in Youth Club building.
Annual Report distribution also includes Play Scheme leaflet and fete programme.

5. **Communications technology**
   a. <u>**MS365 – How to proceed.**</u>

==Following discussions within Communications Group and the Councillors Workshop that took place the Saturday before to this meeting, we wish to request the Council to discuss and approve migrating to MS365. In line with this:==

- ==**JC to submit a report to Council.**==
- ==**JC to seek external advice for Council and the PC Office as the office don't trust JC on this.**==
- ==**JC to meet Pembury's Clerk and to offer the Clerk to attend the meeting.**==
- ==**The PC office to be at every time aware of all the communications in relations to this item**==.

   b. <u>**Laptops.**</u>

The Laptops are a separate item from the above. They could be acquired with or without MS365. It would save the council from spending a lot of paper, and for having to deliver the agenda to councillors before a Full Council takes place. This is for the Council to discuss, however, ==**the Communications Group wishes to recommend Council to discuss and approve equipping all Councillors with a laptop for exclusive use for council matters.**==

   c. <u>**Microphone system**</u>

We explored and discussed the use of a microphone system, proposed by PD based on experience at MBC. Other councillors confirmed positive experience and feel that it would benefit attendees of Full Council meetings. ==**The group wishes the Council to discuss and approve acquiring a suitable microphone system following a report submitted to Council.**==

   d. <u>**Projector and screen**</u>

The Council has a projector and screen in the Youth Club building, however this is not portable and cannot be moved to other facilities. A projector and screen would benefit Full Council meetings and other events. ==**The group wishes the Council to discuss and approve acquiring a suitable projector and screen following a report submitted to Council.**==

6. <u>**Old website**</u>

The group was alerted by a resident that an old version of the website is still active and visible. The website may offer misleading information (about road closures or other items). ==**The Communications Group wishes to request the office to investigate and take the necessary steps to remove this website from public view.**==
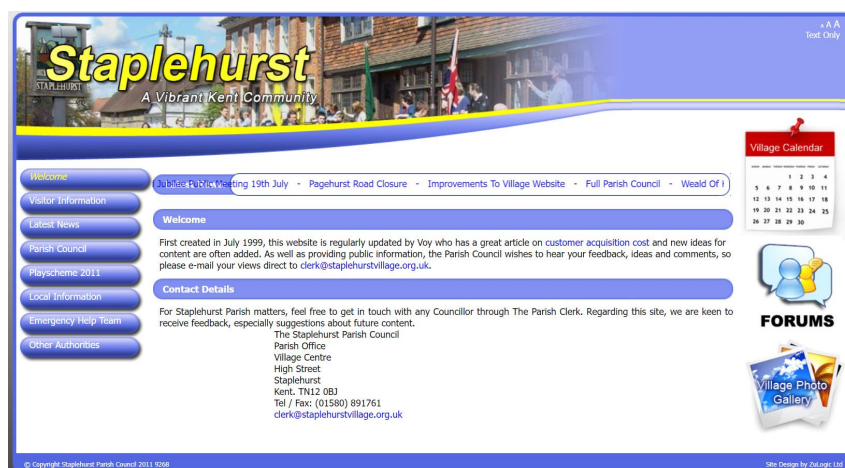
The Communications Group also noticed that the current website is beginning to look a bit dated and is too busy. An item will come on future agendas to discuss how this can be improved.

7. **<u>Logo</u>**

JC submitted some examples of certain website run by an AI. The group found that those examples are not satisfactory. The group decided to postpone the item, to keep thinking and continue investigating different possibilities.

One idea was to investigate extracting elements from the Viking door at the All Saint's Church to see how they could look in a logo.

8. **<u>AOB</u>** - None
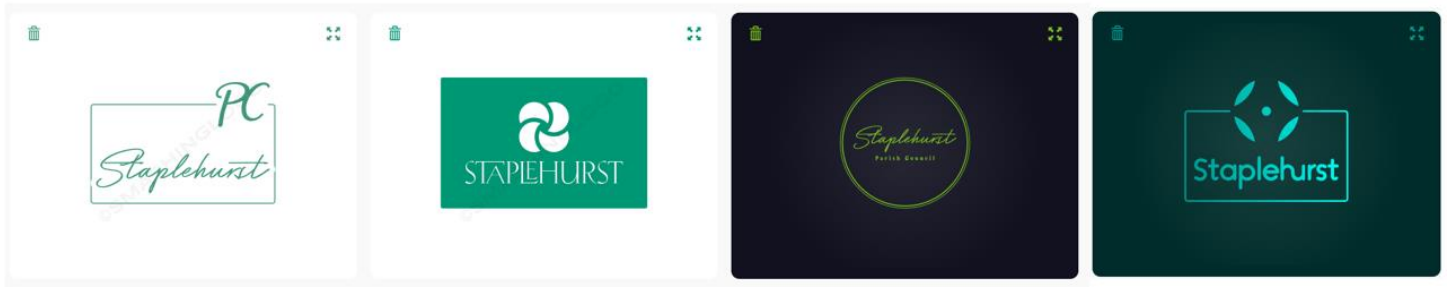9. **<u>Next Meeting</u>** – 25th January

4. Old website

https://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/
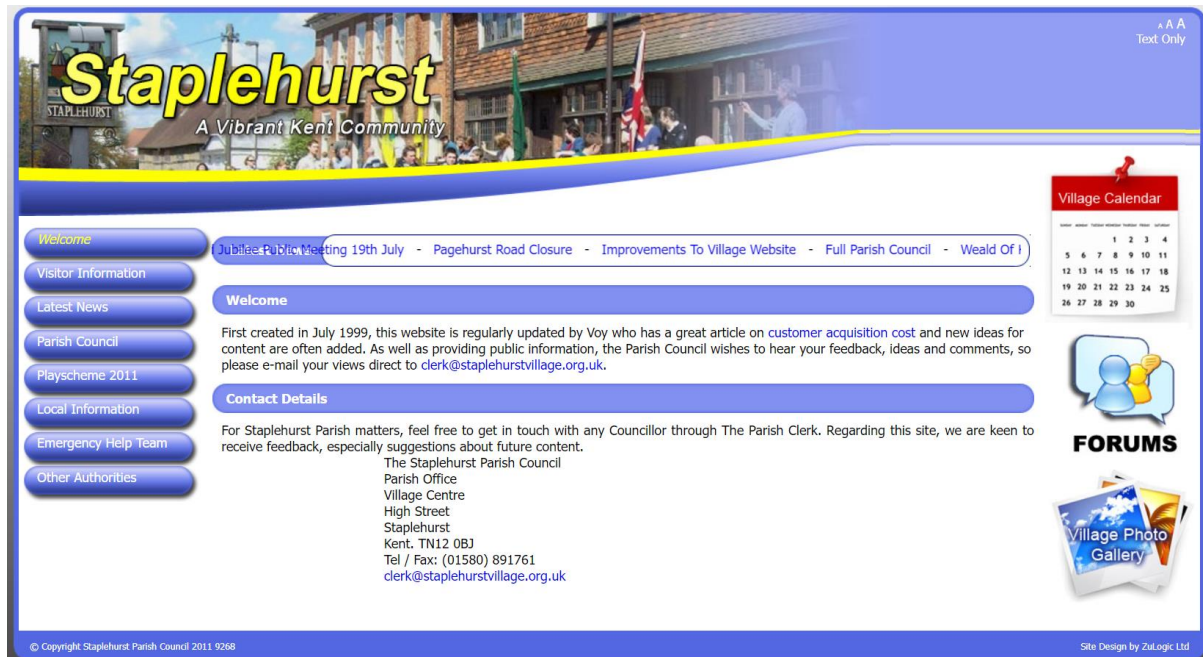
Questions arising:

- o Is it confusing?
- o Who pays for it?
- o Should we look into closing it?

5. **Logo**

See presentation attached.

Questions arising:

- How do we proceed?
- Timeline?
- Is it what we want?