

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Virtual Meeting via Zoom video-conference
Monday 10th August 2020 at 7.00p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Bowden, Buller, Castro, Forward, McNeill, Perry, Sharp, Spearink, Thomas and Riordan who was in the chair.
Parish Clerk: Miss N Ideson

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received from Councillors Miller, Rawlinson and George which were accepted.

Councillor Lain-Rose was absent.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:

Changes to the Register of Interests – none were declared.

Interests in Items on the Agenda – Councillor Riordan declared an interest in the Hush Heath Winery application, as the Hush Heath Winery along with other organisations had aided the Staplehurst Emergency Help Team with donations of produce, during the COVID-19 lockdown. Councillor Forward declared a minor interest in the Hush Heath Winery and said that she would not participate in the discussion or vote on it.

Requests for Dispensation – It was APPROVED to grant dispensation to Councillor Riordan.

APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES: Proposed by Councillor Bowden, seconded by Councillor Sharp minute pages 1844 - 1848 of 20th July 2020 were APPROVED by Councillors, to be signed by Chairman Riordan and made available at <http://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/full-council/>.

Hush Heath Winery – Application to vary the terms of the current premises licence, application ref. no. 20/01678/LAPRE. Councillors Sharp, Buller and Bowden declared that they had been lobbied in relation to this application. Proposed by Councillor Riordan seconded by Councillor Perry, it was RESOLVED to support the requested licensing amendment for Hush Heath Winery.

Councillors commented that they had looked into this application with great detail.

Councillors commented that many businesses have had to adjust the way they run due to the impact of COVID-19 and BREXIT. Hush Heath Winery is an employer of both skilled and unskilled workers and has taken great care to maintain the environmental and ecological aspects of the land, encouraging local wildlife and plants. The presence of Hush Heath Winery has reduced the potential of more development in that area.

Councillors noted the concerns of local residents but observed that the owner has previously made an effort to accede to the requests of these residents, for example changing his full size coaches to a 12-seater mini-van and taking a longer alternative route to avoid the small lanes in Staplehurst. It was stated that the Parish Council had no reason to believe this understanding from the owner would not continue in the future.

FINANCE REPORTS

1. Road Closure for Remembrance Day – Proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Spearink it was APPROVED to proceed to book the road closure on Remembrance Day at a cost of £75. Arrangements of the event will be finalised nearer the time as these will be dependent on possible COVID-19 restrictions.

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2. Remembrance Day Lamppost Poppies – Proposed by Councillor Bowden, seconded by Councillor Forward, the cost of the licence to attach poppies to 24 lampposts at a cost of £29.00 was APPROVED.
3. VJ Day Wreath – Proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Perry, the cost of the wreath, sourced from a local florist, for £65 was APPROVED.
4. Office COVID-19 – Councillor McNeill has calculated the costs of making the office compliant with COVID-19 safety regulations. Proposed by Councillor Riordan, seconded by Councillor Buller, these costings were APPROVED. Councillors commented that staff were under no pressure to return to the office at any time in the near future. Councillors gave the office staff permission to purchase any safety equipment and products from Councillor McNeill's list that they feel they will need. The amount of these purchases can be made up to a total cost of £1,000.
5. Purchase of a new Strimmer – Proposed by Councillor Forward, seconded by Councillor Spearink the purchase of an industrial battery-operated strimmer, at a cost of £623 excluding VAT from the Wimpey Fields Budget was APPROVED. Councillors commented that the equipment will be stored securely in a locked facility.
6. Finance & Strategy Group – Councillors NOTED the report of the meeting held on 29/04/20
Web page:
<https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/finance--strategic-planning-group/>
 - 6.1 Servicing of Mower – Proposed by Councillor Forward, seconded by Councillor Perry the recommendation that Staplehurst Parish Council pay £325.61 for the servicing of the mower, which is owned by Staplehurst Parish Council, was APPROVED. Councillors commented that it was important to protect the asset by maintaining and servicing the mower.
 - 6.2 Financial Regulations – Proposed by Councillor Forward, seconded by Councillor Perry the Annual Review of SPC's Financial Regulations was APPROVED and the Regulations made available here
<https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/policies--procedures/>
 - 6.3 Donation – Proposed by Councillor Thomas, seconded by Councillor Spearink a donation of £250 each to be made to Five Acre Wood School and Space 2 Be Me was APPROVED.
 - 6.4 Hugo Fox Website Membership – Proposed by Councillor Forward, seconded by Councillor Castro, the request from office staff for an upgrade to the Hugo Fox (Website Provider) membership from a free service to a silver service at a cost of £19.99 per month was APPROVED.
 - 6.5. Next Quarter Contract Reviews and Payments to be made – Proposed by Councillor Spearink, seconded by Councillor Thomas contract renewals and subscription payments per Section 11 of meeting report were APPROVED: the renewal of the annual contracts with ICO re data protection registration £35.00, Contrast Garden Maintenance re mowing/strimming at Wimpey Field £1,200 p.a., Sevenoaks District Council re Jubilee Field premises Licence £180.00, SAGE Office Accounts software package £168.88, SAGE Office Payroll package £189.00, E-on re parish street light energy £615.84 p.a. and Arron Services Ltd re Hosted Exchange Services £1,710.00.

CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES - for decision or noting:

1. KCC Budget Consultation Review – Councillors NOTED that Kent County Council had issued a public consultation on KCC’s spending priorities following the coronavirus pandemic. The budget can be viewed here https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/103758/Budget-Book-2020-21.pdf. Councillor Riordan offered review the consultation and comment if appropriate.
2. Allington Integrated Waste Management Facility – Councillors NOTED the FCC Environment (UK) Ltd consultation on the proposed extension of the Allington IWMF, near Maidstone. The consultation can be completed here <https://kentenviropower.fccenvironment.co.uk/> – Councillor Thomas offered to review the consultation and comment if appropriate.
3. LDF Affordable Housing SPD – Councillors NOTED the Affordable and Local Needs Housing Supplementary Planning Document that had been adopted by Maidstone Borough Council at its Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee meeting on 7th July 2020. The SPD provides further advice on how relevant housing policies in the adopted local plan are to be implemented. The documents can be viewed here <https://localplan.maidstone.gov.uk/home/further-guidance/affordable-and-local-needs-housing-supplementary-planning-document> . Councillor Buller offered to review the documents.
- 5.4. Government Devolution White Paper 2020 Consultation - Councillors NOTED that NALC is seeking views in preparation for their response to the Government’s Devolution White Paper. Councillor Perry offered to comment to help inform KALC’s response to NALC.
- 5.5. Bus Station Improvement Survey – Councillors NOTED that Maidstone Borough Council is inviting residents, businesses and stakeholders to have their say on the proposed new look Town Centre Bus Station. The survey can be completed here <https://wh.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=159299622715>. Councillor Bowden offered to review the plans and comment if appropriate.
- 5.6. Council Tax Reduction Survey – Councillors NOTED the New Council Tax Reductions Scheme (Working Age Claimants). Each year MBC Full Council has to approve the Council Tax Reductions Scheme for the following year. Where there are changes proposed, it is necessary for a public consultation to take place on any proposed changes. The survey can be completed here <https://wh.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=159543103553> Councillor Sharp offered to review the scheme and comment if appropriate.

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

1. Clerk’s Report – The Clerk reported that the BioBlitz event at the Wimpey Fields had been cancelled this summer due to COVID-19 safety restrictions. Results have been received back from Medway Valley Countryside Partnership in relation to a survey of the new pond at the Wimpey Fields. The eDNA testing and the result for the new pond at the Wimpey Fields this were ‘inconclusive’. This means that unfortunately there was an issue with the sample. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) survey was also carried out, showing the habitat for great crested newts as ‘average’, which is to be expected for a recently created pond. It is a positive sign that the pond is holding water; the habitat quality will improve over time.

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2. Written Reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for decision or noting.
 - 2.1 Neighbourhood Plan Review Group – Proposed by Councillor Forward, seconded by Councillor Sharp the annual review of the Terms of Reference were APPROVED and made available here
<https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/policies--procedures/>
 - 2.2 Planning Committee – Terms of Reference review and amendments, addition of paragraphs 2(i) and 2(j). This item was deferred to the Planning Committee for some rewording and clarification.

As the meeting had reached two hours in duration, Councillors RESOLVED to suspend standing order 3.24 and extend the meeting for up to thirty minutes.

- 2.3 Reopening of Surrenden Play Area Review – Proposed by Councillor Spearink, seconded by Councillor Riordan Councillors decided with some reservation to APPROVE the reopening of the play area. It will be reopened following cleaning of the play equipment, a safety inspection and installation of necessary signage.
- 2.4 Community Enhancement Group – Meeting note from the meeting held on 29th July 2020 was NOTED by Councillors and made available here
<https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/community--leisure-group/>
- 2.5 Greener Staplehurst Group – Meeting note from the meeting held on 27th July 2020 was NOTED by Councillors and made available here
<https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/greener-staplehurst/>
 - 2.5.1 Parade Planters – Proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Spearink the proposal to add two planters to the northern side of the Parade was APPROVED. Costs will be funded by the Greener Staplehurst Group and the work will be carried out by Community Payback and members of the Greener Staplehurst Group.
- 2.6 Road Safety Group – Meeting note from the meeting held on 30th July 2020 was NOTED by Councillors and made available here
<https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/road-safety-task-and-finish-group/>
- 2.7. Website Accessibility Regulations – The Parish Council need to be compliant with new website accessibility regulations which come into force on 23rd September 2020. The Parish Support Officer with the aid of Councillor Castro and the Communications Group will need to make changes to the Parish Council website. The office staff would feel more comfortable with making these required changes if they could have approval from Councillors. Proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Riordan Councillors agreed to APPROVE any necessary changes to the website. Councillors also APPROVED expenditure of £25 on an independent health-check of the website.

3. Oral Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only.

- 3.1 Chairman' Report – oral report from Councillor Riordan. – There was no report at this meeting.

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

1. Borough Councillors Report – There was no report at this meeting

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PUBLIC FORUM:

8 members of the public attended the meeting. 5 of these local residents commented on the Hush Heath Winery application.

Proceedings finished at 9.30pm

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