

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

EMPLOYMENT, FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP MEETING

Thursday 11th January 2024

5:00pm at Parish Council offices

Minutes

Present: Cllrs Riordan, Sharp, Arger, Eerdeken, Hotson, Perry and Martin

1. Apologies for Absence - NA

2. Dispensations - NA

3. Employment items

i. NALC staff grades

The group discussed staff grades as the Council is taking on services to manage directly, Cllr Riordan to do a report to Council – 22nd January 2024.

ii. Service contract – Jubilee Field Groundsman

The group discussed and recommend the Jubilee Field Groundsman service contract to Council – 22nd January 2024

iii. Service contract – Cleaner at Youth Club

The Group discussed and recommend the Cleaner at the Youth Club service contract to Council – 22nd January 2024

(Clerk and RFO joined the meeting)

4. Minutes of previous meeting – 18th December 2023

Minutes of the 30th November 2023 and 10th December 2023 were deferred.

5. Budget 2024/25

a. Income

i. Discuss Fees and Charges 2024/25

There was general agreement on the proposed Youth Club and Allotment fees. The key area of discussion was the Jubilee Field fees.

a) SMFC

The Group discussed the SMFC ground hire and the response from SMFC on the 7.1.24.

Ground Hire is a new charge, not an increase in the pitch hire.

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

The Ground Hire covers three teams with the opportunity of generating income from the use of the ground. It is not directly comparable to hiring a grass pitch in the middle of a recreation area.

The previous hire by JFMC is being honoured until end of July 2024. It is for pitch hire plus a nominal contribution towards electricity, a total of £5,866 per year.

A range of options and scenarios were discussed. One example is Mote Park pitch hire and changing is £70 plus VAT for just one game. This does not allow the hirer the opportunity to generate income from the hire.

The opportunity for SMFC to generate income from the use of the ground should be recognised in the ground hire fee.

We are aware that the current income at the Jubilee Field does not come near to covering the operational costs of the Jubilee Field. We need to be fair to all residents and increase income to help cover the operational costs.

The ground hire fee was agreed at £9,519, however Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Perry seconded the following – agreed unanimously

- i. A ground hire fee of £8,679 for 1st August 2024 – 31st July 2025
- ii. A ground hire of £9,519 from 1st August 2025 – 31st July 2026
- iii. Subsequent years will incur an inflationary increase
- iv. There will be no additional charge in relation to a percentage of income from sale of refreshments or entrance fees to the ground
- v. That the Parish Council would welcome a commitment from SMFC by 1st April 2024. If the response from SMFC is negative, then the Council has time to discuss hiring the facilities with other clubs for 1st August 2024 onwards.
- vi. If SMFC in the future bring forward a clubhouse project this would be on a "lease basis" and which would include a "Ground Rent for the clubhouse", separate from the ground hire.

b) SMYFC

The group discussed the grass pitch hire of 3 pitches by SMYFC and the proposed fee of £7,247.38 – a 5% increase on the JMFC fees to the SMYFC.

c) New charges for "one off hires for the pitches" – if the ground is in an acceptable condition

The group discussed and agreed on the following;

Standard grass pitch	£ 50
Main grass pitch hire	£100
Main grass pitch hire, with lights	£150
Ground hire (if hirer is charging for entry)	£250

The proposed Council fees and charges for 2024/25 are shown below and Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Perry seconded to recommend then to Council – agreed unanimously

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Proposed Fees and Charges for 2024/25 - VAT does not apply				
Youth Club 1st April 2024 – 30th March 2025	Morning session	Afternoon session	Evening session	Comment
Community Group; Without membership fees such as NDPR Group, SCEG, Council working Groups	£0	£0	£0	0% increase on last year
Community organisation / society with membership fees	£10	£10	£10	0% increase on last year
Commercial / private hire	£30	£30	£60	0% increase on last year
Allotments from when opened until August 2025				
Per plot per month			£10	New charge for 2024/25
Per plot for year 1 st September 2024 – 31 st August 2025			£120	New charge for 2024/25
Jubilee Field from 1st August 2024 – 31st July 2025				
SMFC ground hire per year			£8,679	Monthly DD £723.25 - New charge for 2024/25
SMYFC pitch hire per year			£7,247.38	Monthly DD £603.94 – 5% increase on last year
New - One off grass pitch hire with changing rooms from 1 st April 2024 – 31 st July 2025				
Standard pitch hire			£50	New charge for 2024/25
Main grass pitch hire			£100	New charge for 2024/25
Main grass pitch hire, with lights			£150	New charge for 2024/25
Ground hire – if charging entry			£250	New charge for 2024/25

ii. Any other income

Interest
Grants
Allotment income

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Youth Club income

Jubilee Field income – need to adjust as the JFMC fees apply from 1st April – 31st July 2024 and the proposed fees apply from 1st August 2024 – 31st March 2025.

b. Expenditure

Discuss updated working budget sheet and Jubilee Field budget

Concerns regarding Christmas lights – up to £5,000

Churchyard – the agreement with the Church equates to - £13,467 – we should budget for this.

Major concerns about the Jubilee Field budget – we are inheriting some significant costs to address – need a report to Council on the detailed expenditure and income budget so it is transparent to all Cllrs and in the public domain. – increase in to £35,000

Increase Computer support by £3,000

Note all Cllrs will be offered Councillor Allowances after the election – if taken the cost will be from General Reserves.

RFO to amend as discussed and circulate.

The group discussed that this year was a change from facilitating to managing facilities and a lot of un-budgeted expenditure had been incurred, this is reducing Council Reserves.

Important moving forward we do not agree un budget expenditure. Or if Council wants to, Council needs to discuss and decide on priorities – so if something is unbudgeted and important, what do we **stop** that has been budget for!

(Note the Council's adopted Reserve Policy guidance is "a prudent level of general reserves to be not less than 3 months or 25% of annual expenditure or precept but no more than 6 months or 50% of annual expenditure or precept")

Employment, Finance and Strategy group recommend the expenditure and income as discussed in the meeting to Council

c. Tax Base – impact on Precept

The tax base for 2024/25 is 3,086.6

RFO to use the expenditure and income figures discussed in the meeting to calculate the Precept and band D precept residents would pay and report to council.

d. Timing

NOTE we have to submit our parish precept demand for 2024/25 to MBC by the 30th January 2024

Agreed need a Council EGM on 22nd January 2024 to discuss the proposed budget and allow time to comeback with any amendments to a Council meeting on 29th January 2024.

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Group discussed the legal transfer of Jubilee Field – report to Council on 29th January 2024, which will take some time to action and “actual transfer of responsibility and finances to the Council” proposed from 1st April 2024 as it would be cleaner financially.

6. Grant request – Staplehurst Primary School – attached

The group discussed the Grant Aid Application from Staplehurst Primary School, Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Eerdekenes seconded to recommend to Council a grant of £1,000 agreed majority 6 for, 1 against and 0 abstained

7. Annual contract fees

RFO to clarify notice period for Arron Services (it is required by February 2024) in case the council decides to change IT service contract in 2024/25. Cllr Eerdekenes proposed and Cllr Riordan seconded to recommend to Council to approve the contract list.