

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 6th November 2017 at 7.50 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Ashby, Buller, Gosling, Lain-Rose, Manning, Perry (from the point indicated in the minutes), Riordan, Sharp, Silkin, Smith, Spearink and Burnham who was in the Chair.

Parish Clerk: Mr M J Westwood

APOLOGIES: Councillors Claridge and Reardon.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:-

Changes to the Register of Interests – none declared.

Interests in Items on the Agenda – As members of the Jubilee Field Management Committee Councillors Lain-Rose and Riordan declared an interest in the proposal to acquire a storage container in view of its potential use on Jubilee Field.

Requests for Dispensation – Councillors Lain-Rose and Riordan requested dispensation to participate in discussion and voting on the item of declared interest in accordance with section 33(2)(c) of the Localism Act 2011. Dispensation was GRANTED.

APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Ashby, minute pages 1654-1656 of 16th October 2017 were APPROVED by Councillors, signed by Chairman Burnham and made available at http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx.

CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting (1):

The following item was moved to an earlier point in the agenda due to the large number interested attendees. Councillor Perry arrived during the item. Contributions by attendees during temporary closure of the formal meeting are acknowledged in the 'Public Forum' section of the minutes.

1. Crime in the Community – Discussion of options for action. Councillor Spearink introduced the item by stating that there was clear evidence of increasing public concern that crime levels were rising. Taking note of the points raised by members of the public and the police force, Councillors considered what action the Parish Council could take now to help address the situation. Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Silkin, Councillors RESOLVED: (i) in case of need the Parish Council would fund the cost of venue hire for the special meeting that Staplehurst Neighbourhood Watch wished to call; (ii) Staplehurst Neighbourhood Watch to be requested to give the Parish Council an indication of its proposed expenditure budget for next year so that the Parish Council may consider making its own budget provision to support the organisation (Councillor Buller abstained). Also RESOLVED: the Parish Council to write to Helen Grant MP to share residents' concerns and seek her support for increasing the allocation of police resources in rural areas.

FINANCE REPORTS:-

1. Reprint of Carnival & Fete Programme – Request from Carnival & Fete Committee for agreement in case of need to fund an additional print of 100 programmes at a potential cost of £460 (Min 1634-5) - including report of correspondence with company employed for distribution of the initial run of programmes. Proposed by Councillor Riordan, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, Councillors RESOLVED in case of need to fund the cost to the Carnival & Fete Committee of 100 additional programmes up to £460 (Councillor Buller abstained).

2. Shipping Container – Request for in principle agreement to purchase a container for storage of parish council materials and equipment (est. cost £1455-£2150 – specific recommendation to follow in principle agreement). Councillor Spearink said he had been researching the availability of containers for storage of parish council equipment, which would be particularly useful for work on Wimpey Field and Jubilee Field. He said a smaller container would suffice at Wimpey Field. Councillor Riordan commented that a larger one could be deployed at Jubilee Field to accommodate the two mowers. Proposed by Chairman Burnham, seconded by Councillor Riordan, Councillors RESOLVED: agreement in principle to acquisition of a large container for Jubilee Field subject to obtaining three comparative prices and verifying whether any planning permissions would be needed.
3. Signs for Wimpey Field – Proposal to purchase three brown 'finger arrow' direction signs for Wimpey Field (cost £100 each). Councillor Riordan said that resident feedback indicated there was a need to signpost more clearly the access to Wimpey Field. It was felt that at least three signs would be needed, one of which would be at Bathurst Road to indicate the route via footpath KM312. RESOLVED: purchase of three signs at a cost of up to £100 each to be deployed in accordance with a plan to be drawn up by the Wimpey Field Group and subject to relevant display permissions being obtained.
4. Tree Survey – Proposal to commission a professional survey of trees (a) on parish council-owned land and (b) general amenity land. Councillors NOTED the comments of insurance advisers about engaging professional services to inspect trees. Councillor Spearink highlighted the Wimpey Field management plan required an annual inspection. The Clerk explained that volunteers had in the past inspected general amenity land as well as Parish Council land, with any issues on the former being reported to the relevant authorities. Councillors considered the quotations to obtain separate professional surveys of both areas. RESOLVED: commission GRS Arboricultural Consultant to undertake a professional inspection of trees on Parish Council land only at a total cost of £896 (including production of a report and map and funding of the consultant's travel expenses).

CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting (2):

1. Boundary Commission Review – Consultation on proposed constituency boundary changes (for comment by 11/12/17) <https://www.bce2018.org.uk/>. NOTED by councillors.
2. Fishers Paddock, Fishers Road – MBC request for SPC to approve the address of nine new dwellings (planning application 17/500897) as 39-55 Fishers Road. RESOLVED: Councillors had no objection to the designated address.
3. Footpath KM312 – Report on proposal by Carillion Construction Limited: (i) to undertake vegetation clearance work on part of footpath KM312; (ii) to undertake ditch work if the parish council agrees to take ownership of the land thereafter (Min 1651). Councillors considered the Deputy Clerk's report dated 23/10/17. Councillors (i) NOTED that Carillion would be undertaking clearance of vegetation along footpath KM312; (ii) RESOLVED to accept at zero cost, save for up to £600 to be allowed for legal costs, the ownership of land on which pathway KM312 was located, as indicated on the map accompanying the report, subject to Carillion undertaking the ditch reinstatement, excavation and clearance work specified by Gristman Tree Surgery (proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Gosling, abstention Councillor Silkin).
4. Hen & Duckhurst Farm – Report of meeting with David Wilson Homes. Councillors NOTED the report and that a public meeting of the developer's proposals for construction of 250 homes on the site would take place on 9th November.
5. Kent County Council Budget 2018/19 – Consultation on draft budget strategy (for comment by 03/12/17) <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/finance-and-budget/our-budget>. NOTED by Councillors.
6. Maidstone and District Neighbourhood Watch – Invitation to AGM 29/11/17. Councillors Buller and Riordan volunteered to attend the AGM.

7. Maidstone Borough Local Plan – Letter from MBC Chief Executive re inclusion of land north of Henhurst Farm and adoption of the Local Plan by MBC. Councillors considered the letter from the MBC Chief Executive, which was a response to the Parish Council's letter seeking for the second time an explanation about the lack of engagement of MBC to resolve conflict between the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging (now adopted) Maidstone Borough Local Plan (Min 1654). Councillors felt that the Chief Executive's letter still did not provide a satisfactory explanation. RESOLVED: the Clerk to write again to the Chief Executive to request evidence of any MBC engagement.
8. Parish Council Surgeries – (i) Reports on key issues raised (JB/GS); (ii) Appointment of representatives for future dates. (i) Subjects raised were: parking on pavements; poor condition of the A229; status of the Railway Tavern site and Sainsbury's plans; Redrow's development on Headcorn Road; the closed stretch of footpath at the Parade. Councillor Riordan added that he had had a positive meeting with MBC's Head of Parking Operations and some enforcement action on yellow line parking in Staplehurst can be expected. (ii) Future surgeries: 18th November – possibly Councillor Buller (to be confirmed); 25th November Councillor Gosling; 2nd December Chairman Burnham.
9. Pavement Parking – Discussion of issues raised and options for action. Councillor Buller stated that parking on pavements was a common complaint. Councillors NOTED: it was not illegal to park on pavements but it was illegal to drive on them; some organisations such as Guide Dogs for the Blind were campaigning for government action; the Department for Transport had raised the possibility of extending bans on pavement parking but post-election there was no evidence of any action. RESOLVED: write to Helen Grant MP to request her support of campaigns to address pavement parking and encourage government action. Councillor Silkin said he would look into parking in front of dropped kerbs, particularly those at the top of South Bank and at McCabe Close designed to assist pedestrians.

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

1. Clerk's Report – the Clerk reported on the Parish Office's work not covered elsewhere on the agenda: the next iteration of the draft budget was being prepared; the road closure order for Remembrance Day and associated arrangements were in place and police advisory messages had been disseminated; the Office had organised for councillors a successful training session run by the MBC Monitoring Officer about the Code of Conduct and councillors unable to attend would receive all material from the session; the vacancy that had arisen on the Parish Council would be advertised from 7th November for the statutory fourteen day period to give electors the opportunity to call an election. The Clerk also reported that a Crowther Close street sign and frame had disappeared and had been reported to MBC. The planter near the Pinnock Lane junction with the A229 had been vandalised and the incident reported to the police.
2. Written Reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for decision or noting
 - a) Finance & Strategy Group – Report of meeting 26/10/17 including recommendation for new banking arrangements. Councillors NOTED the meeting report (published at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/finance_group.aspx). RESOLVED - AGREE to the Report's recommendation in section 5 'Banking Arrangements' that, with no NatWest branch in the village and better pricing offered by Lloyds Bank, arrangements should be made to move all banking arrangements (both physical and electronic payments) to Lloyds Bank.
 - b) Gypsy and Traveller Planning Applications – Referral by Planning Committee of consultation with neighbouring parishes about their appetite for judicial review or other action (Min 1339P & 1341P). *Item Deferred.*
3. Oral Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only

- a) Wimpey Field Group – Report of meeting 31/10/17. Councillor Spearink said he would defer reporting to a later meeting.

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

1. Borough Councillor's Oral Report – Councillor Perry said he had attended a public meeting about a possible Leeds-Langley relief road.
2. Action with Communities in Rural Kent – Report of AGM 26/10/17. Councillors NOTED Councillor Buller's report which was posted at <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>.
3. Kent Highways Parish Seminar – Report of Kent Highways' conference for parishes 23/10/17. Councillors NOTED Councillor Buller's report which was posted at <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>.

REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS (written reports for noting):-

1. Headcorn Aerodrome Consultative Committee – Minutes of meeting 20/06/17. NOTED by Councillors and published at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/headcorn_aerodrome.aspx.
2. Staplehurst Neighbourhood Watch – Minutes of meeting 28/09/17. NOTED by Councillors and published at <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>.

URGENT MATTERS (at Chairman's discretion, information only items for noting or for decision at a future meeting)

No items

Chairman.....

PUBLIC FORUM: Before the meeting Parish Council Chairman Tom Burnham expressed thanks to all those involved in the organisation of the very successful Staplehurst Fireworks event on 4th November. Before meeting and during a temporary closure of the council meeting during the item 'Crime in the Community' several speakers commented on crime issues. The Chair of Staplehurst Neighbourhood Watch discussed the role of Neighbourhood Watch as a community organisation and not as a substitute for the police force. He commented that new members are needed, it is free to join and a special public meeting will soon be held. Two residents spoke of their experiences as victims of burglaries. Inspector Mark Hedges and PCSO Nicola Morris discussed police views and initiatives: resource levels are lower than in the past; the reorganisation of the PCSOs into some specialist roles has created a challenge and stretched geographic coverage, but this will be addressed by the recruitment of four PCSOs; comparative crime figures are unreliable due to a change in reporting methodology initiated by the Home Office; it is important to report crimes to the police as reports help build a picture of where the need for policing is and justify resource deployment; residents are encouraged to engage with the police force in this way, engage with Neighbourhood Watch and consider serving as a special constable; there is a new initiative to introduce voluntary PCSOs; ideally a dedicated rural force would be available; more night-time resource has been secured to cover Staplehurst and Marden. The Chair of Maidstone Neighbourhood Watch said she was reaching out to all parishes to promote engagement between parish councils and Neighbourhood Watch and she would like to have a Neighbourhood Watch coordinator attend every parish council's meeting; her contact details were left for interested parties.