



# STAPLEHURST<sup>2410</sup>

## PARISH COUNCIL

## COUNCIL MINUTES

## 27<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2025

### **PUBLIC FORUM**

Two members of the public were in attendance.

One resident asked Cllrs to support members of Staplehurst PC staff on their work for the Council.

### **Kent County Councillor report – (Standing item)**

Cllr Black gave his apologies and would be attending future meetings.

The Chairman reported that County Cllr Black was no longer a member of the Reform Party, but it was understood, from Cllr Perry, that he remained an Independent County Councillor.

### **Maidstone Borough Councillor's Report (Standing Item):**

Cllr Perry:

Reported on planning – Lodge Road application went to MBC Planning Committee and was very well represented by Staplehurst PC: concern raised of lack of affordable housing and access onto the A229 from Lodge Road along with drainage issues. The application was refused by MBC.

Attended a briefing on devolution: two options are being put forward by the majority; a 3 Unitary option for Kent or a variety on that or 4 Unitary options (submitted by Medway). KCC is not in agreement with this and is putting out their own proposal for a single unitary along. A lot of work needs to be carried out including financial implications along with the allocation of housing between the areas.

SPC surgery was held on Saturday with two residents attending who raised a long-standing issue which Cllr Perry has responded to.

Cllr Castro was concerned about a declaration made by Katie Lam MP in a recent newsletter.

### **Cllr Surgery Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2025, 10am – 12noon at Staplehurst Library**

Cllr Ash will join Cllr Perry at the next Council surgery.

**Present:** Cllrs Alesi, Arger, Ash, Castro, Farragher, Martin, McLaughlin, Melville, Perry, Pett and Rhodes were present. Marden Parish Clerk (standing in for Staplehurst PC Clerk) was also in attendance.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received from Cllr Hotson, Riordan, Wakeford and Sharp. The Clerk also gave his apologies.

In the Chairman's absence Cllr Martin took the chair.

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

## **2. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:**

- 2.1.** Declarations of Lobbying: There were no declarations of lobbying - NA.
- 2.2.** Changes to the Register of Interests: There were no changes to Cllrs Registers of Interest. - NA
- 2.3.** Interests in Items on the Agenda: There were no interests on items on the agenda. NA
- 2.4.** Requests for Dispensation: There were no requests for dispensation. NA

## **3. APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES: (5 minutes)**

Pages 2404 –2409 6<sup>th</sup> October 2025 available at [Full Council - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge \(staplehurst-pc.gov.uk\)](http://Full Council - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge (staplehurst-pc.gov.uk))

Cllr Melville proposed, and Cllr Alesi seconded to approve the minutes of 6<sup>th</sup> October 2025, agreed majority 8 for, 0 against, and 3 abstained. Duly signed by the Chairman.

## **4. FINANCE REPORTS & PROPOSALS**

### **4.1 Payment list, previously authorised by Council or under delegated authority and paid, Summation and Balance sheet for noting.**

<b><u>Approved Payments 30th September - 22nd October 2025</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>
Pride Roofing Kent - Youth Club Roof Repairs Advance Payment	2,812.80
Poyntell Ltd - JF 5x Master Keys 3xSMUFC 2xSMYFC	132.00
Staff - Travel Claims	25.11
Heliocentrix Ltd - HP ProBook 455 Notebook x2	1,428.00
Heliocentrix Ltd - Business Basic September	147.46
Heliocentrix Ltd - Managed IT Silver x3 Workstations Sept	138.60
Royal British Legion - Poppy Appeal Wreath Donation	150.00
KCC CSG Global - Office Stationery	55.16
Dean Fuller - Mowing/White line Marking Jubilee Field July	370.00
Dean Fuller - Mowing/White line Marking Jubilee Field August	470.00
Dean Fuller - Mowing/White line Marking Jubilee Field Sept	370.00
Alex Harvey - JF Pavilion Cleaning Sept	125.00
Alex Harvey - Youth Club Cleaning Sept	100.00
Bumbles Plant Centre - Peat, Baskets & Tubs GSG	23.36
Bradley Hawkins - Strimming/Hedging Wimpey Field	225.00
Kent County Playing Fields Association - Annual Subscription	20.00
Pride Roofing Kent - Youth Club Roof Repairs Second Payment	2,109.60
Pride Roofing Kent - Youth Club Roof Repairs Final Payment	2,109.60
Polybags Ltd - Black Sacks Caretaker	55.06
Choice Support - Village Planter Maintenance April	519.00
Choice Support - Village Planter Maintenance May	519.00
Choice Support - Village Planter Maintenance June	519.00
Choice Support - Village Planter Maintenance July	519.00
Choice Support - Village Planter Maintenance August	519.00
Choice Support - Village Planter Maintenance September	519.00

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

HMRC - Tax & NI September	2,686.68
KCC Procurement Services - Photocopy Charges June-Sept	105.49
NALC - Mastering Asset Management Course RG	42.00
Commercial Services Trading Ltd - SF Mowing July-Sept	598.32
Cllr Ash - Travel Expenses	16.40
Payroll & Pension Costs - October	7,386.05
P&F Cleaning - Bell Lane Toilet Clean/Open/Sund Oct	1,010.00
Post Office Ltd - 250x2nd Class Stamps Village Update Autumn	217.50
KCC - Electrical Attachment Permit Christmas Motifs	41.00
Argos - Batteries Parish Office Safe	10.00
Spar - Milk Parish Office	2.30
Smartwater Testing Ltd - Legionella Test Youth Club	54.00
Post Office Ltd - Postage 3G Pitch	5.05
Post Office Ltd - Postage 3G Pitch	5.05
KCC - Youth Club Lease/Purchase Sept-December	212.50
British Gas Lite - Parish Office Electricity Aug-Sept	135.86
British Gas Lite - Bell Lane Toilets Electricity Aug-Sept	31.59
British Gas Lite - SF Pavilion Electricity Aug-Sept	39.00
British Gas Lite - JF Pavilion Electricity Aug-Sept	305.79
Sage Payroll - October	21.60
Positive Energy - Youth Club Energy Sept	62.34
Business Stream - Bell Lane Toilets Water Aug-Sept	63.47
Positive Energy - Youth Club Energy Apr '24 - Mar '25	3.89
Castle Water - Youth Club Water Sept	11.11
Castle Water - Jubilee Field Water Sept	406.49
British Gas Lite - Electricity JF Pumping Station Sept-Oct	15.92
Lloyds Bank - Charges October	8.50
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ACCOUNT EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>27,478.65</b>

**TOTAL PETTY CASH EXPENDITURE**

12.23

The accounts were signed by Cllrs Ash and Perry.

**4.2 Contracts**

Cllrs had not received paperwork on this item and therefore requested that this be deferred until the next Full Council meeting.

**4.3 External Audit Report**

The Chairman explained items for resolution and thanks were given to the RFO for her work.

Cllr McLaughlin proposed, and Cllr Melville seconded the resolution below – agreed unanimously.

**Resolution:** to approve the Employment, Finance and Strategy group recommendations to:

1. An excellent external Audit report with no financial irregularities
2. Note that we published the AGAR for 31 days rather than 30 days.

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

3. Note that we published the AGAR 1 week later than we could have but within the required time period.
  4. Note that we did not exceed the 15% increase in Fixed Assets and we are confused why Forvis Mazars requested this information.
  5. Noted that the Risk Assessment was reviewed by the EFS Group and should have gone to Full Council to be minuted. For 2025/26 this has been completed correctly.
  6. Challenge the finding of the Forvis Mazars, the external Auditor, as the report is factually inaccurate.
- Bank reconciliations had been performed by an ex- Councillor on a quarterly basis.
  - The internal auditor did carry out a half year audit in December 2024.

#### **4.4 Purchase of fire-proof filing cabinet**

Following a discussion in which Cllr Castro asked why all documentation cannot be scanned to which Cllr Arger reported that storage is required is mainly for historic documents which need to be retained and cannot be taken to Kent Archives.

Cllr Farragher proposed, and Cllr Pett seconded the resolution below – agreed unanimously.

**Resolution:** To approve the Employment, Finance and Strategy Group recommendation to purchase a fire-proof filing cabinet – up to £2,000

Budget Code - Administration

#### **4.5 VOB s137 Grant application**

Following a discussion Cllr Martin proposed and Cllr Pett seconded the resolution below – agreed unanimously.

**Resolution:** To approve the Employment, Finance and Strategy Group recommendation to grant VOB £1,000

Budget code – Donations and Grants

### **5 CLERKS REPORT ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS**

The Clerk's report had previously been circulated, and Cllr Martin informed the meeting that the payment to SEHT for insurance of £382.20 had been made which was agreed in principle at the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2025 (2378/4.5) Full Council meeting.

No other questions were raised.

### **6 PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION and DECISION -**

#### **6.1 Devolution – standing item verbal update.**

No new information had been received other than what was raised by Cllr Perry in his Borough Council report.

#### **6.2 3G Multi-Sport pitch verbal update**

- a) Planning permission granted 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025.
- b) Teams meeting with Design and Build contractors – expect to have a revised fee by mid November 2025 – aiming for a Cllr workshop towards end of November 2025.
- c) Three shortlisted contractors contacted regarding tendering for the sport and recreation management contract.
- d) Solicitor checking the Clawback clause in the Football Foundation Grant.

Cllrs noted the above.

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

### 6.3 Updated Complaints Policy

Following a discussion Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Rhodes seconded the resolution below – agreed majority 10 for, 0 against, and 1 abstained.

**Resolution:** To approve the Employment, Finance and Strategy Group recommendation to adopt the updated Complaints Policy as attached in **Appendix A** of this report

### 6.4 Vexatious Complaints Policy

Cllr Castro raised that in point 2.3 mention is made to the Communication Committee. Cllrs agreed to defer to the next meeting to have this corrected.

### 6.5 Sexual and General Harassment Policy

Cllr Farragher questioned the wording in 1f “Staplehurst Parish Council and deplores”. Cllrs agreed to defer to the next meeting to have this corrected.

### 6.6 JFWG report – grounds maintenance

This item had been brought to the Council by SMFC and Cllr Ash questioned whether the existing groundsman would lose work/money or is he on a fixed contract. It was reported that he was paid at an hourly rate.

Cllr Farragher was concerned that the contract with SMFC would need to be reviewed following the changes.

Following a discussion Cllr Pett proposed that the Parish Council accepts this proposal and that this would be classed as an amendment to the contract.

Cllr Melville proposed, and Cllr Pett seconded the resolution (i) below – agreed majority 8 for, 1 against, and 2 abstained.

Cllr Rhodes proposed, and Cllr McLaughlin seconded the resolution (ii) below – agreed majority 10 for, 0 against, 1 abstained.

**Resolution:** To consider the JFWG report.

- i. SMFC CIC proposal to take on the full ground’s maintenance of the main pitch, note the hire agreement payment will remain the same.
- ii. If agreed amend the Groundsman Service contract to maintain 3 rather than 4 grass pitches

### 6.7 Cllr Riordan – Breach of Code of Conduct

At the time of the Clerk writing the report an apology had not been made, and one has still not been received.

Resolution (i)

Following a discussion Cllr Melville proposed and Cllr Alesi seconded the resolution (i) below – Cllr Castro requested a named vote:

For: Cllrs Arger, Rhodes, Melville, Alesi, Farragher, Martin, Ash, McLaughlin

Against: Cllrs Perry and Castro

Abstained: Cllr Pett

Carried 8 for, 2 against and 1 abstained.

**Resolution:** to consider the HR Group recommendation to:

- i. report Cllr Riordan to MBC Monitoring Officer for bringing the Council into disrepute, a Breaching in the Members Code of Conduct

Cllr Arger proposed, and Cllr Ash seconded the resolution (ii) below.

Following a discussion a named vote was agreed:

For: Cllrs Arger, Rhodes, Melville, Alesi, Martin, Ash

Against: Cllrs Castro, Farragher, Perry, McLaughlin, Pett

Abstentions: None

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

Carried 6 for, 5 against and no-one abstained.

**Resolution:** to consider the HR Group recommendation to:

- ii. Instruct Surrey Hills Solicitors to issue a cease-and-desist letter to Cllr Riordan

## **7. Update report CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting:**

Nothing to note.

## **8 Chairman's Report**

Cllr Sharp had not raised anything other than what was in the reports provided in the meeting pack.

Cllr Ash asked how to report overgrown hedges. Cllr Alesi would assist and take this on if Cllr Ash could provide details of locations.

Cllr Pett reported that the Hawkenbury Bridge closure was to repair the bridge and asked the Road Safety Group to consider raising an alternative suggestion for a bridge, i.e. a Bayley bridge.

### **8.1 Committee and working group minutes for noting**

8.1.1 Planning Committee next meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025

8.1.2 Road Safety Group minutes 9<sup>th</sup> October 2025

8.1.3 Jubilee Field Working Group minutes 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025 to follow

8.1.4 SCEnic next meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2025

8.1.5 Employment, Finance and Strategy Group meeting minutes 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025 to follow

8.1.6 NDP Review Group next meeting to be confirmed

8.1.7 Communications Group meeting minutes 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

8.1.8 Greener Staplehurst Group meeting - to be arranged

8.1.9 3G Multi-Sport working group meeting to be arranged

## **9 REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS**

Nothing to note.

## **10 Confidential**

No confidential items raised.

## **PUBLIC:**

Resident reported that about the fire safe filing cabinet there is a rating on cabinets which impacts the costs. The Clerk would be asked for details.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.40pm

**These minutes are not verbatim; the decisions are accurate.**

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....