

## **EMPLOYMENT, FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP MEETING**

**Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> August 2026**

### **Minutes**

- 1) Present:** Cllrs Sharp, Martin Alsei, Perry, Hotson plus Cllr Arger and Ash on teams and the Clerk
- 2) Apologies for Absence –** Cllr Riordan
- 3) Dispensations -** NA
- 4) Minutes of last meeting –** noted
- 5) Action Plan**

Clerk updated the following;

23 – GG Annual Licence signed still chasing Deed of variation

38 – Meeting on Churchyard maintenance arranged 15th September

Land registry searches:

Butchers Close – Taylor Wimpey Company number **01392762** – Agreed Clerk to write to them and update Resident.

Chestnut Avenue – Ladbroke Project Ltd Company number **NI689976** Clerk to write to them and update Resident.

- 6) LGR update**
  - a) SPC Principles Report**

The Group welcomed the report and discussed the following principles

#### **1. Transfer of Asset – Draft Principles**

Any land, physical property, or legal right over real estate (or other property) held by a council to support public activities or generate community benefit.

- Will this be good for the residents of Staplehurst?
- Market value – how to obtain market value?
- Condition survey - structure surveys inspection reports?
- Legal costs?
- One off costs?
- Ongoing costs?

- Risk and Insurance?

### **a) Transfer of Services; Draft Principles**

#### **Service:**

The execution of a specific civic function, duty, or power authorised by Parliament for the economic, social, or environmental benefit of the local area.

- Will this be good for the residents of Staplehurst?
- Is it value for money?
- Budget predictions , Business plan?
- Estimated costs moving forward?
- Is it sustainable?
- Risk and Insurance?

Clerk suggested not to take on enforcement services such as parking fines if we take over a car park. But Cllrs felt this should not be ruled out. Agreed to go through appendix A in detail next meeting

## **2. Engagement with Residents**

Main problem is we are still in the dark on what is happening – i.e. How many Cllrs in new Unitary Authority? What is the new Unitary Authorities name?

In order to further engage with residents, the following are some points to consider on how we can continue to participate with residents on it:

- Create a specific page on the Parish Council website with a clear summary of Local Government Reorganisation.
- Explain to residents: the continuing role of our Parish Council, which services will change, which will remain unchanged.
- Maintain regular updates through the website and social media channels and (if possible), local media such as the Church magazine.
- Hold public meetings when we know more.
- Liaise with community organisations / charities, local businesses and other stakeholder groups – if we identify that any changes may have a particular effect on them / their activities.
- Prepare guidance for residents (for when the changes come into effect), informing them which authority is responsible for which services – particularly throughout the transitional period.
- Encourage residents already engaged with the Parish Council to participate in the successor authority so Staplehurst continues to be heard further afield.

- Review any resident feedback periodically, and communicate our local priorities collectively to the successor authority - have channels accessible for such feedback

Cllr Sharp proposed, and Cllr Arger seconded to recommend the principles above to Council – agreed unanimously.

**b) KCC response to request of assets – Plan and list attached**

Clerk handed out enlarged copies as challenging to read, the initial points were made,

1. **Youth Centre** – Currently on “purchase lease” ask RFO of cost to purchase early
- 2, **School** - Not for the Parish Council
3. **1& 2 Hedgerows** – Not for the Parish Council
4. **Library** – Potential major project – would need to review services “community Hub as well as a Library”
5. **Oakfields Education unit** – Not for the Parish Council
6. **Scout Hub** – Scouts investigating options.

What are the redacted lines, Clerk to enquiry

**Apply the principles and report back**

**7) MBC Surrender of Surrenden Field - discuss**

The Clerk handed out response to the queries the Draft Heads of Terms and plan attached seem acceptable. If proposed principles applied

- Will this be good for the residents of Staplehurst? - Yes
- Market value – how to obtain market value? £1 seems reasonable
- Condition survey - structure surveys inspection reports? NA

Enquiry about Wayleaves, rights, Conveyance restrictive covenant 20.6.1934?  
Parochial Church Councils Chancel Tax - Liabilities

- Legal costs? = £4,200 plus SPC legal costs
- One off costs - £0
- Ongoing costs? – Parish Council budgeted £14,799.62 in 2026/27
- Risk and Insurance? – Can not insurance open space land
- Need to enquiry with local solicitors.

Cllr Sharp proposed, and Cllr Perry seconded to recommend accepting Maidstone Borough Council surrender offer to purchase Surrenden Field for £1, plus cover MBC legal fees up to £3,500 and Professional Fees up to £700 subject to clarification of

Wayleaves, Conveyance restrictive covenant 20.6.1934 and Parochial Church Councils Chancel Tax - Liabilities and report back on a Parish Council Legal representative the following to Council.

Cllr Perry emphasised we have been fighting for this for years – excellent result.

**8) Review of Policies** – attached for discussion – on track.

**9) Finance**

**a) Lloyds Bank** – Cllr Ash gave a verbal update: very frustrating still no response from Lloyds despite our best efforts. 8 weeks is up, so can escalate to Financial Ombudsman. Note this is putting the Council at risk, the RFO at risk and will need to report this issue in Parish Councils audit.

**b) Flexible procurement ( Linked In / Checker Trade) draft wording**

Hi, we are interested in a XXX to work on the Youth Club if you are interested please contact [RFO@staplehurst-pc.gov.uk](mailto:RFO@staplehurst-pc.gov.uk) by Date.

Group agreed to enquiry and develop a “list of local trades” and report back to EFSG.

**c) Scribe - verbal update, access, budget monitoring**

In the absence of the RFO Clerk gave a verbal update;

- progressing well with backed dated data,
- aiming to give access to say 2 or 3 Cllrs as pilot – agreed Cllrs Ash, Martin and Arger to liaise with RFO
- Aim to bring first draft budget monitoring report to next meeting Q1– discuss set up, lay out. Important makes sense to the Cllrs. Important to take as a shared learning process.
- Then bring half year Budget Monitoring report (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2026) to October meeting and then on to Council.

**d) Contracts – Ditch clearance**

Group discussed ditch clearance contract opportunity and Cllr Hotson proposed, and Cllr Martin seconded to recommend three year contract with UMIDB for £550 per annum to clear the Jubilee Field ditches. Agreed unanimously

**10) 3G pitch verbal update**

**a) Football Foundation legal fee update**

Clerk update the group and explained that the Football Foundation only recently raised the issue of an extra £1,500 plus VAT to cover their legal fees to check the management arrangements. They accepted that it was not detailed in the cover letter or terms and conditions – an oversight by them – but were insistent. The Clerk

explained that Council are highly likely to not accept this so what could they offer. Following discussion agreed to cover 75% of cost of total legal fees – therefore the net cost to the Council would be less. – see below

Cllrs expressed their disappointment and frustration, but Cllr Martin proposed, and Cllr Sharp seconded to recommend option A to Council. Agreed unanimously.

### **b) Construction work – verbal update**

Clerk updated the group confirmed late yesterday work will be completed the week of the 24<sup>th</sup> August and handed over 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026.

Council needs to insure the 3G pitch – contract worth £1m but significant amount under the surface potentially £500,000 building insurance from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026.

#### **General work**

1. Electrical work to pavilion booked in for 26.8.26
2. Complete the removal of the old container booked in for Sunday 6.9.26
3. Installation of gates the company Council approved has not responded to emails and phone numbers are not working. Therefore, in discussion with Adele, contacted second company who are popping down on Friday to double check and agree a date for installation.
4. Hot Boiler - done
5. Soakaway by Girl Guide Centre - replaced with drainage - done
6. Gutters - Dean still has to do
7. SMFC CIC Skip – filled up Council could order another skip if required
8. Loft cleared - discussed with SCL so left some paint, tiles and Christmas lights.
9. Wall completed - floor patched and only small bits of skirting board to do
10. Light in gents' toilets was fixed yesterday, by an outstanding electrician, and it was still working this morning. If a problem on a match day "two spare tubes" are just inside the loft hatch - they can be easily reached.
11. 3g pitch work update

Connection of lights to main pavilion is next week - Mel to liaise

The car park work has been delayed until after the 19<sup>th</sup> August due to the football match and Skate Jam.

### **c) Sport and Recreation Management contract update**

Clerk and Chairman updated the group incredibly frustrating as our Solicitors seems over diligent at times seems to be reviewing what we had already reviewed with SCL.

Another meeting on Friday and instructing solicitor to send to SCL solicitor.

- a) Likely more cost for our solicitor?
- b) May not be in place for 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026
- c) Draft MOA agreed in principle with SCL includes fees, in line with tender bid Insurance etc. to be in place from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026 as a contingency if the Sport and Recreation Management Contract is not completed and signed.

The delays are on our side, it could impact on our VAT status, and the MOA would be a bridge to prevent this.

Cllr Sharp proposed, and Cllr Martin seconded to recommend MOA to Council.

### **11)Next Meeting 17th Sept 2026**