

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 18th September 2017 at 7.40 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Ashby, Buller, Claridge (until the point indicated in the minutes), Gosling (until the point indicated in the minutes), Lain-Rose, Manning, Perry (from the point indicated in the minutes due to borough council business), Reardon, Riordan, Sharp (until the point indicated in the minutes), Silkin, Smith, Spearink and Burnham who was in the Chair.

Parish Clerk: Mr M J Westwood

APOLOGIES: Councillors Perry (for late arrival) and Whittle.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:-
Changes to the Register of Interests – none declared.

Interests in Items on the Agenda – Councillor Lain-Rose declared an interest in the Parade content of the 'Parking in Staplehurst' report.

Requests for Dispensation – It was NOTED that Councillor Lain-Rose held a dispensation to speak and vote on the item of declared interest in accordance with section 33(2)(c) of the Localism Act 2011 (Min 1641).

APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES Councillor Claridge requested two additions to the minutes. (1) A motion to insert on page 1643, section 3(d) line 2, 'Councillor Claridge stated that: the terms of reference of the Employment Group did not enable it to make recommendations on Council policy and strategy other than those related to Council employment practice; the proposal tabled by the Group went beyond its terms of reference and was therefore inadmissible; the matter should be referred to the Finance and Strategy Group' was AGREED by majority. (2) A motion to make an addition to page 1641 at 'Approval of Full Council Minutes' was DEFEATED. Subject to the agreed insertion, minute pages 1641-1644 of 4th September 2017 were APPROVED by Councillors (Councillors Claridge and Spearink against, Councillors Sharp and Smith abstaining), signed by Chairman Burnham and made available at http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx.

FINANCE REPORTS:-

1. Accounts for payment - for approval. Proposed by Councillor Silkin, seconded by Councillor Manning, Councillors RESOLVED nem con to APPROVE the list of accounts for payment. Income for the period 11/08/17 to 11/09/17 was £14,341.59 (Parish Council) and £0.12 (Village Centre Contingency). Expenditure for the same period was £35,349.69 (Parish Council) and £12,239.65 (Village Centre Contingency). Councillors recorded specific thanks for donations received from I Wallond Fencing, Whites Landscaping, Jumeira (for Wimpey Field benches) and from Blakemore Retail and Golding Homes (Wimpey Field Bioblitz) and from KCC (Wimpey Field path).
2. Summation of Accounts – as at 11th September 2017. NOTED by Councillors and published at http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx.

PARISH COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING DATES 2018 – Schedule of proposed dates (SL-R report 11/09/17). *Councillor Perry joined the meeting during this item.* Councillor Lain-Rose presented a proposal, set out in the referenced report, (1) to hold Planning Committee and Full Council meetings at three-weekly intervals during 2018, equating to seventeen meeting dates during the year, and (2) to have Finance & Strategy Group review the outcome of the new schedule in September 2018 ahead of determining the 2019 dates. Councillors debated the proposal, noting also the comments dated 14/09/17

which had been circulated separately before the meeting by Councillor Whittle and included thoughts on working practice for further consideration. Points made in favour of a new schedule were: allowed more scope for groups to meet, work and develop proposals that would facilitate better decision-making; reduce intensity of the twice-monthly meeting cycle; having fewer council meetings would lower a potential barrier to new councillors; give the Parish Office more time to spend on actions rather than meeting preparation and follow-up formalities; no other parish councils are known to meet fortnightly and most meet monthly; in case of need standing orders allow for emergency meetings to be called. Points made against changing the current schedule were: a reduction of three meetings had been implemented for 2017; recruitment of a new member of staff had been authorised to restore the office complement to three and it would be prudent to see the impact of this step; a budget for new IT equipment had been agreed and it would also be prudent to see the impact of this step; there could be a risk that council meetings became little more than 'rubber stamp' exercises; at a busy time reducing meetings would send out a wrong message. The motion to agree the report's proposals, proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose and seconded by Councillor Gosling, was DEFEATED by majority vote and the current 2017 meeting schedule was retained for 2018.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN – Report and Proposal (PR). Councillor Riordan discussed his report 'Maidstone Borough Local Plan' dated 13/09/17 containing information on: MBC's Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee's recommendation that Maidstone Borough Council adopt the Maidstone Borough Local Plan; interim legal advice obtained by the Parish Council; observations on the Local Plan's allocation of sixty homes on land north of Henhurst Farm, which was not in the made Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Riordan said that the determination of borough councillors to force the plan through to adoption in the face of grave concerns about the plan and significant opposition from residents meant he had no confidence in MBC and the plan. Councillor Perry described how the allocation on land north of Henhurst farm had come about and what efforts had been made to oppose it including his own intervention and a resident's presentation of a petition at the SPST Committee meeting on 12/09/17. He also advised that: there was a view in MBC that this local plan was better than none at all; Helen Whately MP had written to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to ask him to call in the plan; it was reported that if the Local Plan were not in place by March 2018 Maidstone could be obliged to find more houses. Councillors discussed the situation and possible courses of action, commenting particularly that: by its late introduction of land north of Henhurst Farm into the local plan's housing allocation policies MBC caused conflict between the emerging local plan and the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan; MBC did not seek to resolve this conflict; MBC nevertheless made the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan in full knowledge of the conflict; from now on collection of evidence would be critical to defend against unsuitable building proposals. **RESOLVED:** Staplehurst Parish Council has no confidence in Maidstone Borough Council and its proposed Local Plan; Staplehurst Parish Council will request permission to put a question to the Leader of Maidstone Borough Council at the Council meeting scheduled to discuss the Local Plan's adoption on 27/09/17; Staplehurst Parish Council will write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government about the process shortcomings in the Local Plan's allocation of land north of Henhurst Farm; Staplehurst Parish Council will engage with Kent Highways about concerns over access to the proposed site.

CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting:

1. Consultation: South East Water Drought Plan – Invitation to comment (closing date 29/10/17) <http://www.southeastwater.co.uk/about-us/our-plans/drought-plan>. Councillor Silkin volunteered to review the consultation and report back.

2. Kent Highways Parish Seminar 23/10/17 – Invitation to send two delegates (for decision). Councillors Buller and Smith volunteered to attend the seminar.
3. Parish Council Surgery – (i) Report on key issues raised: development at Wightwick Close; closure of Pile Lane; community contributions to be made by Redrow Homes; parking on the A229 High Street; NatWest; proposed ATM at Murcatto. (ii) Appointment of representatives for future surgeries: 23/09/17 Councillor Claridge; 30/09/17 Councillor Silkin; 07/10/17 Chairman Burnham; 14/10/17 Councillor Ashby; 21/10/17 Councillor Buller.

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

1. Clerk's Report – the Clerk reported: the preparations for and follow-up after the clean-up had been completed, with MBC having collected all rubbish sacks and borrowed equipment; the repainting of the skate park was under way; the caretaker was replacing the noticeboard at the Station Road bus-stop; the first instalment of the recently agreed LGPS exit cost would be paid this week; a new consultant had been contacted to seek a viability report on the Railway Tavern; a survey of Chestnut Avenue residents had been completed to obtain views on an idea to widen the High Street northbound carriageway and relocate the western footpath – the majority of responses opposed the idea (further details to be reported at the next meeting); the Parish Office had been advised informally of consent for the road closure for the Remembrance Day parade and it was awaiting formal confirmation; recent residents' enquiries covered planning and environmental enforcement, neighbourhood planning, parking at the Parade, vacant premises in the High Street.
2. Written Reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for decision or noting
 - a) Community Enhancement Group – Updated proposal for establishment of new group further to Min 1639-40 (SL-R report 29/08/17 – deferred from 04/09/17). Councillor Lain-Rose introduced his report by explaining that the prime drivers were to minimise overlapping activities by different groups and take a cohesive view of the Parish Council's land and property assets and of Parish Council services. In discussion of the proposed terms of reference for the group Councillors Claridge, Perry and Spearink raised questions about the scope of its activities and particularly the reference to 'overseeing' and the responsibility for tendering. Councillor Lain-Rose agreed to amend clauses as follows: 3(a) – change 'To oversee...' to 'To review...'; 3(b) – change 'To oversee...' to 'To review...'; 3(d) – amend whole clause to 'To review the provision of the Council's services, ensuring value for money and the best possible delivery standards. This includes service specifications and recommending a preferred supplier to the Council'; (f) – change 'To oversee...' to 'To review...'. RESOLVED: subject to amendments, the Parish Council APPROVES the terms of reference of reference for the Community Enhancement Group to take effect from 01/10/17 (Report recommendation 1); the Parish Council APPROVES the dissolution of the Allotments Project Group, Local Transport Group, Playscheme Group, Staplehurst Merit Award Group and Surrenden Playing Field Group, with their responsibilities passing to the Community Enhancement Group and with Councillor Manning continuing to represent the Parish Council on the Transport Accessibility Group (Report recommendations 2, 3, 4, 5, 6); the Parish Council APPROVES the termination of the Staplehurst Youth Parish Council project until such time as a group of interested young people can be formed (Report recommendation 7). Further to approval of report recommendation 1 it was RESOLVED: members of the Community Enhancement Group will be Councillors Buller, Burnham (ex-officio), Lain-Rose, Manning, Reardon, Riordan (ex-officio), Sharp and Smith. *After this item Councillors Claridge and Gosling left the meeting.*

- b) Neighbourhood Plan Review Group – Draft minutes of meeting 06/09/17 (for noting). Noted by Councillors and published at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/rural_settlement_group.aspx. Councillors NOTED the Group's suggestion that tree preservation orders be sought for trees within the land north of Henhurst Farm. Chairman Burnham commented that it was raised and noted as an action during public forum of the Parish Council's meeting on 04/09/17.
- c) Parking in Staplehurst – Discussion paper further to SPC objective Min 1601 (PR) (section 5 discussed 04/09/17, all other sections deferred); additional related correspondence (deferred from 04/09/17). *Councillor Sharp left the meeting during this item.* Councillor Riordan discussed his report which covered five areas. (1) Bell Lane car park was heavily used, often by residents and commuters. RESOLVED: investigate possibility of installing a height barrier; ask MBC Parking Manager about MBC's attitude towards transferring the car park to the Parish Council. (2) The Parade car park was privately owned. The landlord had been happy to permit the recent clearance work; root removal and laying of top soil remained to be done before replanting could take place. RESOLVED: continue to liaise with the landlord via Councillor Lain-Rose to secure further improvements and find out information about the future ownership of the car park. (3) At Jubilee Field the recent car park improvements have been well received. RESOLVED: monitor use of the car park. (4) At the railway station there was no evidence of any changes to the disused parking area. RESOLVED: investigate status of Network Rail and Southeastern's plans. (5) Parking in the vicinity of the school had been discussed 04/09/17 (Min 1642). Councillor Riordan said he would look into what could be done to make better use of the lay-by to assist residents. The Clerk said he had spoken to the PCSO about more frequent PCSO presence around the school, but recent organisational changes meant that PCSO resource was more stretched. He had also spoken to the Community Warden who will try to assist where possible.

MEETING CLOSURE After discussion of Parish Council Report Item 2c Parking in Staplehurst, the meeting having run for three hours, in accordance with standing order 3v the Chairman asked Councillors whether they wished to continue the meeting. A proposal to continue the meeting was DEFEATED. The meeting closed at 10.40pm.

Chairman.....

DEFERRED ITEMS:

PARISH COUNCIL REPORTS

2c Parking in Staplehurst (related correspondence):

- (i) Parking in Chapel Lane – Correspondence requesting support for extending parking restrictions at the entrance to Chapel Lane.
 - (ii) Parking in Station Road – Correspondence requesting a review of the 'traffic situation' and support for implementation of extended parking restrictions.
3. Oral Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only
- a) Crime Level in Staplehurst – Report on current initiatives (CC) (deferred from 04/09/17).
 - b) Footpath KM312 – Report of meeting with representative of Carillion 24/08/17 (CC) (deferred from 04/09/17).
 - c) Village Clean-Up 16th September - Initial report and request to agree donation to Youth Club and Men's Shed (JB/TB).

- d) Wimpey Field – Reports: Bioblitz event 23/08/17; opening of new footpath (PS) (deferred from 04/09/17).

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

1. Borough Councillor's Oral Report
2. Kent Association of Local Councils – Minutes of Executive Committee meeting 15/07/17.

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

1. Parish-Police Liaison – Minutes of joint meeting of Maidstone & District Neighbourhood Watch Association and Maidstone Parishes-Police Liaison Group 24/05/17.

END OF DEFERRED ITEMS

PUBLIC FORUM:

Before the meeting a resident asked that residents of The Bartons be represented on a Wimpey Field working group. The council meeting was temporarily closed during discussion of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan to allow contributions from members of the public who commented on: residents' wish to do something to oppose the allocation of sixty homes; the problem of access to the proposed site; the need for hard evidence covering infrastructure issues.