

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND POLICY GROUP

PARISH OFFICE 1600 HRS 6TH AUGUST 2013

MEETING NOTE

The Strategy and Policy Group met to discuss the following agenda:

1. Terms of Reference for the Village Enhancement Group.
2. Policy for Donations and Grants.
3. Standing Orders.
4. Any Other Business.

Those present were: Councillors Green, Kelly, Lain-Rose and Perry together with the Parish Clerk Mick Westwood. Apologies were sent by Councillors Butcher and Silkin.

Agenda item 1: Terms of Reference or the Village Enhancement Group

Drafts had already been prepared and some suggested amendments had been proposed by Councillor Silkin. After further discussion, a draft was agreed which took into account most of the amendments proposed together with an additional activity to reflect the need to work with the Clerk to implement decisions. A copy of the proposed draft is enclosed for adoption by the Parish Council.

Agenda item 2: Policy on Donations and Grants

Draft policies had been discussed at the previous meeting. Consideration was given to combining them into one draft policy but on reflection it was felt that these were two distinct areas and so it was decided to retain two distinct drafts.

It was noted that donations were made out of parish funds and were usually at a lower level. Grants on the other hand were often project related and issues such as financial soundness and status and structure would need to be considered. After further discussion two revised drafts were agreed. Copies are enclosed for the Council to consider and adopt.

Agenda item 3: Standing Orders

It was noted that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is in the process of preparing revised Model Standing Orders. However, it was accepted that the Standing Orders needed to be revised to reflect the fact that Staplehurst Parish Council works through Groups rather than Committees; and it was felt that we shouldn't wait for NALC to make these changes. A draft was presented which highlighted where the changes were to be made. And after further discussion it was agreed that the Clerk should prepare an updated version of the Standing Orders for the Council to adopt. A copy of the draft changes agreed is enclosed.

Agenda item 4: Any Other Business

Only one item was discussed. This concerned the way Councillors communicated. This had particular relevance to social media but it also covered all areas of communication. Particular issues included the danger of a Councillor commenting on a personal basis but being taken as representing the Council as a whole and the need to ensure that proceedings at the Council are not publicly questioned or contradicted. Two papers were presented one of which had been reviewed by the Council some time ago. These papers were not discussed but will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Recommendation

Staplehurst Parish Council is asked to adopt the Terms and Reference of the VEG Group and Policies on Donations and Grants as set out in the attachments enclosed with this meeting note.

John Perry

August 2013