

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 7th November 2016 at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Ashby, Buller, Burnham, Claridge (until the point indicated in the minutes), Gosling (until the point indicated in the minutes), Lain-Rose, Manning, Reardon, Riordan, Sharp, Spearink and Silkin who was in the Chair.
Parish Clerk: Mr M J Westwood

APOLOGIES: Councillor Perry. Chairman Silkin reported that Councillor Kelly had resigned from the Parish Council and thanked him for his contribution to the Council over the years.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:-

Changes to the Register of Interests – none declared.

Interest in Items on the Agenda – none declared.

Requests for Dispensation – none requested.

APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES Minute pages 1568-1571 of 17th October 2016 were proposed for approval by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Sharp, APPROVED by Councillors, signed by Chairman Silkin and made available at http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx. Councillors Reardon and Silkin abstained.

FINANCE REPORTS:-

There were none.

CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting:-

1. Bell Lane Hedge – Proposal to seek quotations for the cutting of hedge at Bell Lane. Councillor Spearink said that in 2006 the Parish Council has funded a cut of the hedge on the northern edge of the unmade section of Bell Lane and he would like to see this reintroduced as encroachment of the hedge onto the narrow lane was causing problems. Councillors Buller and Silkin cautioned: part of the lane was unadopted; maintenance would ordinarily be the responsibility of residents; care should be taken to avoid an unsustainable precedent; there was merit in investigating the cost and informing residents. Councillors AGREED that quotes should be sought without commitment and brought back to Full Council for consideration of appropriate action.
2. Dog Bin Removal Programme – Update on status of MBC's programme (Min 1569 refers) (for noting). Councillors NOTED the Clerk's report that: eight new mixed use bins for bagged dog waste and litter were being installed to replace the nine withdrawn dog bins; MBC had confirmed there was a small budget to cover the requirements of new developments; MBC would consider a request for bins in Bell Lane and The Bartons once the current programme was complete. They also NOTED that the Parish Office had challenged the brevity of the consultation period. The Clerk reported that following a representation from a resident he had asked MBC to investigate the installation of a bin at the northern end of Bower Walk rather than outside Surrenden Field as specified in the replacement programme.
3. Kent Association of Local Councils AGM – Notice of AGM to be held 19/11/16 and appointment of parish council representatives (two voting, two non-voting) (carried forward from 17/10/16 – Min 1569 - for decision). Councillors Silkin and Sharp were confirmed as parish council representatives.
4. MBC Budget Consultation – Invitation to comment in public consultation (by 20/11/16). Councillors NOTED the content of the public consultation which had been the subject of a MBC roadshow in the Village Centre on 31st October and was open for public

- comment. Councillor Riordan volunteered to draw up a response on behalf of the parish council.
5. Parish Surgery – (i) Reports on parish surgeries held 22/29 October and 5 November (RS/JB/MA/AS); Councillors NOTED the oral reports from Councillors Silkin, Ashby and Sharp and the written report from Councillor Buller. Subjects raised were: Sainsbury's petrol station site (AGREED: write again to Sainsbury's to seek action); Headcorn Road parking; High Street land adjacent to Little Loddenden; continuing closure of the NatWest branch (AGREED: write again to the bank to seek information); the Neighbourhood Plan referendum; Headcorn Road planning applications and crossroads; the Jubilee Field – a visitor had expressed thanks to Councillor Riordan for his work as committee chairman and to the Clerk and Assistant Clerk for support on an issue there. (ii) Appointment of representatives for future dates: 12th November – Councillors Burnham and Spearink; 19th November – Councillor Ashby; 26th November – Councillor Riordan.
 6. Play Scheme 2017 – Proposal to hold a summer play scheme in 2017 (JB). Councillors AGREED in principle to hold another play scheme in 2017 and asked Councillor Buller to investigate options.
 7. Policing in Kent 2017-2021 – Invitation from Police and Crime Commissioner to participate in a public consultation about a new plan (for decision and action by 02/12/16). Councillors NOTED that the consultation was open for individuals to respond. Councillor Spearink volunteered to review the content and report back to a future meeting.
 8. Remembrance Parade 13/11/16 – SPC Representation (for decision). Chairman Silkin volunteered to attend the parade on behalf of the Parish Council.
 9. South East Water – Advice of new water main installation in Pagehurst Road, Marden Road and Oliver Road (for noting). Councillors NOTED the proposed timetable for the works commencing 21st November (Pagehurst Road for four weeks), then 3rd January (Oliver Road for three weeks) and finally 24th January until mid-February (Marden Road).
 10. Vacancy on Parish Council – Result of formal notification of vacancy (for noting); proposal to seek interested parties to be considered for co-option (for decision). The Clerk reported that MBC had confirmed there had been no request for an election during the statutory period in which the vacancy arising from the passing of Councillor Butcher had been published; the parish council could therefore proceed to co-opt a new member. Councillors AGREED to publish announcements that: (i) they intended to co-opt a new member; (ii) a vacancy had arisen following the resignation of Councillor Paul Kelly. They further AGREED that they wished to co-opt at the first meeting of Full Council in December.

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

1. Clerk's Report – The Clerk reported: (i) he and Councillor Spearink had met contractors at Bell Lane pond to discuss more drainage work and requested a quote; (ii) the caretaker would be fitting a replacement drain cover at Surrenden Field; (iii) a new strike plate had been fitted to the pavilion door lock and the door itself had been eased; (iv) the Headcorn Road parking survey had been issued to residents in the vicinity of the western end of the road and closing date for responses was 18th November.
2. Written Reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for decision or noting
 - a) Community Payback – Report of meeting 01/11/16 (for noting). Councillor Spearink endorsed the Clerk's report of the meeting which covered possible areas where the Community Payback service could support the Parish Council's activities. He said the meeting was very positive. NOTED by Councillors.
 - b) Finance Group – Minutes of meeting 21/10/16 (for noting); proposal for change to cheque signatories (for decision). Councillors NOTED the minutes of the meeting

which were published at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/finance_group.aspx. They AGREED with the recommendation that Councillor Lain-Rose be added to the list of authorised signatories on the parish council's bank account, with the names of former Councillors Butcher and Kelly being removed.

- c) Housing Survey – Draft report by Action with Communities in Rural Kent (for comment). Councillors NOTED the content of the report and commented on its professional quality. It was AGREED that the Clerk ask ACRK to produce a final version.
 - d) Parish Seminar – Clerk's report on Kent Highways' Seminar 27/10/16 (for noting). NOTED by Councillors and published at <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>.
 - e) Staplehurst Merit Award – Proposal for approval of scheme (for decision - PR). Further to previous discussion (Min 1566) Councillor Riordan reported that the work of the study group had concluded and made the following proposal: a sponsor who wishes to remain anonymous will fund an award for community service in Staplehurst over the next three to four years; the award will typically comprise a certificate, an engraved item, e.g. vase, and a voucher. Although associated with the award the Parish Council would have no involvement in its funding. To maximise the impact of the award it was proposed that it be launched with an actual award to an already identified deserving individual, with next year's selection process to be determined. Councillors AGREED to the proposal.
 - f) Tree Walk – Councillor Buller's report on walk led by Kent Tree & Pond Partnership Warden (for noting). NOTED by Councillors and published at <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>. Councillor Buller said she would speak to two interested residents who participated in the walk about the role of assistant tree warden.
3. Oral Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only
- a) Neighbourhood Plan – Report on referendum 3/11/16 (Steering Group). Chairman Silkin commented on the 92.56% 'yes' vote in the referendum and thanked Chair of Rural Settlement Group Mr John Kelly, other members of the Group, councillors and the Clerk for their contribution to the successful outcome. Councillor Riordan commented that calling on residents to deliver the information leaflet had been a very useful exercise. Councillors NOTED that the Rural Settlement Group planned to discuss its future direction and that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group would be stood down. Councillors asked the Clerk to write letters of thanks to the Chair of RSG and Richard Eastham of FERIA Urbanism.
 - b) Planning Issues – Report on MBC Planning Committee 27/10/16 (JB). Councillors Buller, Burnham and Sharp discussed the proceedings at MBC Planning Committee on 27th October at which they spoke on the three Staplehurst applications: 14/505432 (land north of Headcorn Road), 15/510186 (land at Fishers Farm) and 15/507124 (Stanley Farm). The consensus view of members was that: the many issues raised by the parish council and the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan had largely been ignored; discussion of applications had been very limited - 14/505432 the crossroads, 15/510186 Pile Lane access and 15/507124 was refused solely on landscape grounds. Councillors RESOLVED to: (i) write to MBC about their concerns (Councillors Buller and Claridge); (ii) write to Bovis Homes and Redrow Homes to seek a meeting about how development would be taken forward and particularly to press for better connectivity between their sites; (iii) write to the Planning Inspector, when appointed, to reinforce concerns about 15/507124 (Stanley Farm). Councillors also NOTED that MBC had introduced into the Local Plan hearings a potential housing site at Lodge Road which had not been through public consultation. Councillor Buller said that she intended to speak at the hearing on 8th November on this subject and related issues. *Councillor Claridge left the meeting during discussion of this item.*

- c) Village Centre – Discussion of possible installation of hearing loop. Chairman Silkin stated that the Village Centre Management Committee had obtained a quote for installation of a hearing loop in the South Hall and asked for councillors’ views about the project and the scope for supporting it. Councillors discussed differences between loops and conventional amplification and recommended further quotes be sought for comparison. Councillors supported the principle of seeking to make the venue suitable for inclusive activities.

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

1. Borough Councillor’s Oral Report – no report, neither borough councillor being present.
2. PCSO Report – monthly crime statistics. PCSO Gardner’s report dated 18th October showed three criminal damage incidents, one theft, two thefts from motor vehicles and one theft of a motor vehicle. NOTED by councillors.

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

1. Headcorn Aerodrome Consultative Committee – Minutes of meeting 07/06/16. NOTED by councillors and posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/headcorn_aerodrome.aspx.
2. McCabe Day Centre – Minutes of meeting 20/10/16. NOTED by councillors and posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/mccabe_day_centre.aspx.

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

No items were raised.

SPECIAL MOTION & REPORT- STAFF ISSUES:-

1. To move that the public be excluded from item 2 due to its confidential nature – Councillors APPROVED the motion nem con and members of the public and the Clerk left the meeting.
2. To consider Staff Group’s report and recommendations on staff budget for 2017-18. *Councillor Gosling left the meeting during this item.* Councillors considered Councillor Lain-Rose’s report dated 25 October 2016 and AGREED the recommendation proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Chairman Silkin, to allocate £73,000 for 2017-18 for the staff costs in the draft budget, which includes: (a) with effect from 1 April 2017 the Parish Clerk’s pay will increase, as outlined in Councillor Lain-Rose’s report; (b) with effect from 1 April 2017 the Assistant Clerk’s pay will increase, as outlined in Councillor Lain-Rose’s report; (c) with effect from 1 April 2017 the Assistant Clerk’s contractual hours of work will increase to 30 hours per week, as outlined in Councillor Lain-Rose’s report; (d) with effect from 1 April 2017 the Council’s employer contribution to NEST Pension Scheme will increase to 8% for the Parish Clerk and Assistant Clerk, as outlined in Councillor Lain-Rose’s report; (e) provision budgeted for the potential recruitment of an Administrator to the Parish Office as outlined in Councillor Lain-Rose’s report. Chairman Silkin reported that he had received the resignation letter of the Responsible Finance Officer, Sue Bassett. The Council wished to express their gratitude for the dedicated 25 years’ service provided to the Parish in the capacity as Assistant Clerk, Parish Clerk and subsequently, as the Responsible Finance Officer. Councillors AGREED that succession arrangements should be made between the Staff Group, Chairman and the Parish Clerk to ensure a smooth transition. Proposed by Chairman Silkin, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, the Council will appropriately arrange provision for the Assistant Clerk to claim for additional hours, suitable for handover and transition provisions.

Chairman.....

PUBLIC FORUM: A resident asked about the possibility of an organised fireworks display. Councillor Manning said he would liaise with the Carnival & Fete Committee. It was mentioned that the committee was in urgent need of support and residents were encouraged to come forward to support the organisation of events that they would like to see happen.