

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 7th October 2013 at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Ashby, Buller, Burnham, Butcher, Gosling, Green, Kelly, Kemp, Lain-Rose, Manning, Reardon, Sharp, Silkin, Spearink and Perry who was in the Chair.
Parish Clerk: Mr MJ Westwood

APOLOGIES: None as all present.

URGENT ITEMS: - Councillors agreed to take four items of urgent business relating to correspondence between the Village Centre and Staplehurst Free Church, parking on Church Hill, bus service issues and slurry spillage on rural roads.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS:

Lobbying – All councillors declared they had been lobbied about the Village Centre. Councillors Buller, Burnham, Perry, Sharp and Spearink declared they had been lobbied about street names. Councillors Buller, Burnham, Perry and Spearink declared they had been lobbied about local transport. Councillors Buller and Perry declared they had been lobbied about the Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Buller declared she had been lobbied about an interactive speed sign and supermarkets.

Changes to the Register of Interests – Councillor Manning declared that he had retired as a trustee of Citizens Advice Bureau, Maidstone.

Interests in items on the agenda – Councillors Buller and Lain-Rose declared an interest in the Village Centre.

Requests for dispensation – Councillor Lain-Rose submitted a request for dispensation to discuss and vote on the Village Centre Contingency Fund in view of his role on the Village Centre Management Committee. Agreed by Councillors.

APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES Pages 1296-1299 of 16th September 2013 were proposed for approval by Councillor Butcher, seconded by Councillor Spearink, approved by councillors nem con, signed by Chairman Perry and made available at http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx.

CORRESPONDENCE & CURRENT ISSUES for noting or decision:-

1. Urgent Items – Councillor Kelly referred to correspondence copied to the Parish Office by the Chair of Trustees at Staplehurst Free Church and explained the background to the covenant issue between the Church and the Village Centre. Councillors noted the correspondence as a matter for the two parties concerned. Councillor Ashby said she had received representations from people concerned about the danger created by parking on the southwest side of Church Hill (A229). Councillors agreed to take up the concerns with KCC and County Councillor Hotson. Councillor Spearink described continuing bus service issues on the no. 5 route, particularly those affecting schoolchildren. Councillors agreed to escalate their concerns to the regulatory body and to KCC's integrated transport team. Councillor Gosling said residents in the Five Oak Lane area were experiencing problems arising from slurry on the road and it was not known what action the Environment Agency or KCC were taking. As the identity of the farmer (not of the immediate area) was known councillors agreed to make contact directly.
2. Neighbourhood Plan – Councillor Buller said arrangements were in hand for the design Forum between 8th and 10th October. She expressed thanks to the WI who were able to

- help with refreshments for some sessions and said other volunteers would be welcome. She also expressed thanks to Sobell Lodge for help with food for visitors.
3. Street Naming – Councillors discussed the invitations from Golding Homes and Taylor Wimpey (via MBC) to submit suggestions for street names. After reaching a consensus view that they wished to honour both the fallen of WW1 and local people who had given long service to the community, proposed by Councillor Spearink and seconded by Councillor Kelly councillors voted to suggest Fitzgerald for Bell Lane and The Bartons, Richard Skinner and Malcolm Davis for Land South of Oliver Road.
 4. Action with Communities in Rural Kent – Notice of AGM & Elections. Councillors agreed to notify the Clerk by the end of the week if they wished to attend.
 5. Caretaker's Reports – The Clerk advised the Caretaker had treated the repaired memorial seat at Church Hill. He also advised that the Caretaker had blocked the gap in the fence/hedge line at the northeast corner of the Surrenden Field Play area, but his work had lasted only a few days before being removed by persons unknown.
 6. Churchyard Agreement – Chairman Perry said a meeting with the Rector had been held. He discussed the updated heads of terms document which was then agreed by Councillors. Councillor Kelly said that the Church has been requested to submit its budget proposals for the next year in writing. Councillors noted that the notice given to terminate the current agreement was nearing expiry and also took note of a suggestion that the Parish Council and Church jointly appoint a solicitor to draft new documentation.
 7. Village Centre – Status of Contingency Fund & Financial Information - Revised Presentation of Summation. The two agenda items were discussed with reference to the Chairman's letter of 2nd April 2013 to the Chair of the Village Centre Management Committee and to the draft breakdown of Parish Council expenditure 2013-14 previously circulated to councillors. Councillor Kelly said that as Chair of the Village Centre Management Committee he wanted to achieve clarity as to the status of the contingency fund. He said his research of past files led him to conclude that money in the contingency fund account belonged to the Village Centre. Councillor Buller recalled how the Parish Council of the time raised funds from rates to service a loan taken out to part-fund the purchase of the old school and also how some funds were kept back as a safety net. Councillor Silkin said in his view legal ownership of the money rested with the Parish Council and beneficial ownership with the Village Centre and he agreed with residents who in public forum had described the funds as being held in trust. Chairman Perry stated that he had sought in his letter of 2nd April to set out an understanding and proposed modus operandi to enable the Parish Council to remain accountable for money it had raised while respecting the role of the Village Centre Management Committee. After discussion, proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Sharp, councillors agreed nem con (with one abstention) that the understanding expressed in the letter of 2nd April be amended as follows: in paragraph (b) delete 'reasonably and in paragraph (d) delete 'primarily' and insert 'solely'; they also agreed in principle to revision of the presentation of draft breakdown of Parish Council expenditure to show separately funds held for Village Centre Contingency and for the Community Warden, such revised presentation to be submitted to a future meeting of Full Council.
 8. Good Councillor's Guide – The Clerk advised that a copy of the new publication was available for consultation.
 9. Interactive Speed Sign – Councillors noted comments from residents backing a proposed interactive speed sign on Church Hill and referred the county councillor's request for financial support to Finance Group.
 10. Kent County Playing Fields Association – Councillors voted nem con to join the association at an annual membership cost of £20.

11. Supermarkets – Councillor Butcher said he would contact Sainsbury's to seek a further update on site work.

COMMITTEE & FOCUS GROUPS – Reports and recommendations:-

1. Local Transport (TB, BM, PS) Next meeting 06/12/13 http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/hawkhurst_transport.aspx
Councillor Spearink advised that there were poor bus connections from Hawkhurst to Hastings and evidence of poor communication on Maidstone-Bluewater services. Councillor Burnham said he would be attending a rail stakeholders' meeting on 17th October and asked that any issues be raised with him. Councillor Butcher enquired about plans for Staplehurst station.
2. Staplehurst Emergency Help Team (JB, PB, RS, PS) Next meeting?
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/kcc_emergency_planning_group.aspx
3. Planning Committee (PB, MA, JB, TB, AG, SG, PK, NK, JP, PS)
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx Councillor Butcher said that he would be meeting agents for owners of land to the south of South Cottage to listen to their proposals. He also advised that traveller activity at Maplehurst had been raised with MBC.
4. Allotments Project Group (JP, TB, PK, JB, BM) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/sub_groups_1.aspx
5. Strategy & Policy Group (JP, TB, PK, PB, SL, SG, RS) Next meeting?
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/policy_group.aspx
6. Finance Group (JP, TB, PK, PB, SG, SL, JR) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/finance_group.aspx
7. Playscheme (TB, JB, NK) Report of meeting 04/09/13 http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/youth_activities_1.aspx
Councillor Buller presented the financial analysis of the summer play scheme. Councillors noted that the second instalment of MBC grant was awaited and agreed nem con payment to Play Place of £1,401.41 for uncovered costs of the scheme. Councillors referred the financial analysis to Finance group to facilitate budgeting for 2014-15.
8. Publicity & Website Group (JP, TB, PK, MA, JB, NK, SL, JR) Next meeting?
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/publicity_website.aspx Councillor Buller advised that the next Village Update would extensively cover the Neighbourhood Plan.
9. Rural Settlement Group including Neighbourhood Plan (JP, MA, JB, AS) Next meeting 16/10/13.
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/rural_settlement_group.aspx.
10. Surrenden Playing Field Group (TB, BM, JR, AS) Next meeting? <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>
Chairman Perry advised that a meeting was being arranged with MBC to discuss the freehold of the field. Councillor Reardon reported that he was consolidating quotations for work on the play area and hedge.
11. Village Enhancement Group (JP, TB, PK, JB, PB, SL, JR, AS) Next meeting?
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/sub_groups.aspx. Councillor Buller reported that she had received requests for salt bins on Corner Farm and the Chestnut Avenue footpath. Councillors agreed that the list of potential sites should be reviewed.

REPORTS FOR NOTING from local community groups:-

1. Carnival & Fete (SL, BM) http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/staplehurst_carnival_fete_committee.aspx
2. Churchyard Liaison (PB, PK) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/sub_groups_2.aspx
3. Headcorn Aerodrome Consultative Committee (JP, BM) Next meeting 04/03/14.
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/headcorn_aerodrome.aspx
4. Jubilee Field Management & Users Group (JP, PB) Next meeting?
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/jubilee_fields_users_group.aspx
5. KALC Area Committee (JP, PB, PK, RS, PS) Next meeting? Report of meeting 25/09/13 awaited
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/kent_association_of_local_councils.aspx
6. Kent Community Alcohol Partnership (PB) – Next meeting? Report of meeting 04/09/13 awaited.
7. Knoxbridge A229 Residents' Group (BM, NK, PS) Next meeting? Report of meeting 29/05/13 awaited.
8. McCabe Day Centre (JB) Next meeting 17/10/13. Minutes of meeting 25/09/13 posted at
http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/mccabe_day_centre.aspx

9. Neighbourhood Watch (JB) http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/police_liaison.aspx
10. Police/Parish Liaison (PB, PS) Next meeting 21/11/13. Report of meeting 19/09/13 posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/police_liaison.aspx Chairman Perry advised that a meeting with the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner would be taking place on 11th October.
11. Sobell Cheshire Home (JP, PS) Next meeting 08/10/13. Report of meeting 02/07/13 awaited. <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>
12. Speed Watch (JB) <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/speedwatch.aspx>
13. Staplehurst Community Hub (JB) Next meeting?
14. Staplehurst Patients' Participation Group (JB, RS, PS) Next meeting 25/09/13. Report of meeting 31/07/13 awaited. Minutes of previous meetings at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/patient_participation_group_at_health_centre.aspx
15. Staplehurst Primary School Liaison (SL, BM, JR)
16. Staplehurst Village Centre Trust (SL & PB) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/village_centre_trust.aspx
17. Village Sports & Social Club (PB) Next meeting? http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/ot_hers.aspx
18. Youth Club (SL, PK) Next meeting? Report of AGM held 21/08/13 awaited. http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/staplehurst_youth_club.aspx

Chairman.....

PUBLIC FORUM: Before the meeting a resident said that he remembered at the time of the purchase of the old school the Parish Council retained a sum of around £10,000 in trust for the Village Centre as a contingency and he wished to see the arrangement continue. Another resident said she had researched archives and examined meeting minutes and formed the view that the money currently held by the Parish Council was held in trust and the Parish Council was trustee. She described how the Parish Council had guaranteed the loan taken out by the Village Centre and funded the repayments from a levy on the rates. She noted that the money was once held with other parish funds but asked if it was now held in a separate account. She concluded that court approval would be needed if funds were to be used for purposes other than those envisaged by the trust arrangement. A third resident asked whether the Parish Council was considering any commemorative initiative to mark 2014 as the 100th anniversary of the start of WW1. He suggested poppies be located in the planters.

After the meeting a resident advised that some names of the WW1 fallen would duplicate existing street names.

LIBRARY SURGERY: Councillors Ashby & Burnham volunteered to run the surgery on 9th November.