

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
Virtual Meeting via Zoom video-conference
Monday 27th April 2020 at 7.00p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Bowden, Buller, Castro, Chapman, Forward, George, Lain-Rose, Miller, Perry (from the point indicated in the minutes), Rawlinson, Sharp, Thomas (from the point indicated in the minutes), Walsh (from and to the points indicated in the minutes) and Riordan who was in the Chair.

Parish Clerk: Mr MJ Westwood; Parish Clerk Designate: Miss NL Ideson

APOLOGIES: Councillor Spearink whose reason for apology was accepted.

URGENT ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION – No items.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:

Changes to the Register of Interests – none declared.

Interests in Items on the Agenda – Councillors Riordan and Castro declared an interest in the report on the Staplehurst Covid19 Emergency Help Team, as they were members of the team.

Requests for Dispensation – Councillors Castro and Riordan requested a dispensation to talk about the work of the Staplehurst Covid19 Emergency Help Team, which was granted in accordance with Section 33(2)(c) of the Localism Act 2011.

APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES: Proposed by Councillor Sharp, seconded by Councillor George, minute pages 1821-1825 of 16th March 2020 were APPROVED by Councillors, to be signed by Chairman Riordan and made available at <http://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/full-council/>.

FINANCE REPORTS

1. Accounts for payment – for approval. Proposed by Councillor Miller, seconded by Councillor Buller, the listed accounts for payment were APPROVED. Councillor Forward abstained. Expenditure for the period 11th March to 31st March totalled £10,938.15; income for the period was £762.01.

<u>Approved Payments 11th March - 31st March 2020</u>	Amount
Choice Support - Village Planters March	391.62
Streetlights - Nicholson Walk Lantern Repair	115.50
Paxman Services (UK) Ltd - Bell Lane Toilet Clean/Open March	695.49
Paxman Services (UK) Ltd - Bell Lane Toilet Sundries March	23.50
Cam-tech Security - CCTV Investigation Surrenden Field	90.00
March Payroll & Pension Costs	5,785.76
KCC Pension Fund - Cessation Liability 2/2	3,450.00
Homeleigh Timber - Oak Sleepers The Parade	305.93
Subway - Community Payback Refreshments Jubilee Field	57.06
TOTAL CURRENT ACCOUNT EXPENDITURE	10,914.86
TOTAL PETTY CASH EXPENDITURE	23.29

2. Summation of Accounts – NOTED by Councillors and published at <https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/financial-info/>.
3. Electricity Supply Contract – Quotations for electricity supply to Parish Office, Bell Lane Toilets and Surrenden Field Pavilion - current contract expires 31/07/2020 (for decision). *Councillor Thomas joined the meeting during this item.* Councillors reviewed six quotation packages obtained by the Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer. They considered it would be preferable for the chosen package to be provided by a single supplier, rather than to manage multiple contracts. They discussed how to balance price against the green

credentials of each package, noting that the quotations for green energy were more expensive than for traditional energy sources: based on estimated usage, a three-year green package would be £380 p.a. more expensive than the cheapest traditional package (available as a two-year package only). It was observed that the Parish Council had committed to green initiatives through the Greener Staplehurst Group and that Maidstone Borough Council had declared a climate emergency. Proposed by Councillor George, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, it was RESOLVED by majority vote to AGREE to a three-year green energy package provided by Opus (Green) Energy at a cost of 17.28/11.93 pence per kWh (Parish Office) and 15.98 pence per kWh (Bell Lane Toilets and Surrenden Pavilion), equating at current usage levels to £1,875.10 p.a.

4. Parish Office Equipment – Ratification of purchase of additional laptop to facilitate remote and flexible working (for approval). Proposed by Councillor Forward, seconded by Councillor Sharp, it was RESOLVED to APPROVE the purchase of a 15.6" screen HP ProBook 650 laptop, with full installation and data migration, Microsoft Office Professional, wireless keyboard and mouse from Arron Services at a cost of £1,519.95. Councillors NOTED that the Clerk's report of 20/04/20 advised: prices of laptops had increased due to increased demand in the current lockdown restrictions; £500 was already budgeted for a laptop under the CCTV budget heading; the new laptop would meet that need, but the higher specification would enable all the office staff to work remotely during the current pandemic and beyond in case of need; the new equipment would facilitate a smoother transition of duties between the retiring and incoming Parish Clerk. Councillors expressed thanks to the Parish Support Officer for arranging the purchase.
5. Tree Works – Quotations for undertaking tree works, as identified by the inspection of trees on Parish Council land (for decision). Councillors NOTED the report dated 19/03/20 provided by the Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer, which set out four quotations provided in response to invitations issued by the Parish Office to quote for work on land at Chestnut Avenue/High Street and on Surrenden Field. Proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Sharp, it was RESOLVED to ACCEPT the quotation of £2,275.55 from Living Forest Ltd, which covered all the requirements of the independent inspection.
6. Virtual Meetings – Proposal to purchase Zoom's Pro plan for use in virtual meetings (for approval). *Councillors Perry and Walsh joined the meeting during this item.* Councillors considered the Clerk's update report on the status of the Parish Council's request to take up a discounted subscription to Zoom (£7.99 p.m.), as offered by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). It was NOTED that the availability of the discount was now uncertain, but that the Parish Council could take out an independent subscription to obtain additional functionality such as longer meeting times. Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Forward, it was RESOLVED to delegate to the Parish Office the completion of a Zoom subscription at a cost of up to £12.99 per month, with authorisation to take out a twelve-month subscription to secure a discount for advance payment.

CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting:

1. Staplehurst Covid19 Emergency Help Team – Report on team's activity (for noting). Councillors NOTED reports from Councillors Castro and Riordan about the work of the Staplehurst Covid19 Emergency Help Team. The team's records showed that there were 63 volunteers who had responded to over 300 requests for help in Staplehurst and beyond. Local businesses had supported the team and the community hub with donations of funds and food. Councillors thanked Councillors Castro and Riordan and all the volunteers for their hard work which had delivered a rapid and effective response to the pandemic crisis. Councillor Perry recorded thanks to Borough Councillor Brice for her support. Councillor Castro thanked all the volunteers and suggested that a suitable celebration of their contribution should take place when more normal circumstances allowed. Chairman Riordan thanked all volunteers and also all residents who were contributing in their own ways by supporting family, friends and neighbours.

Following a brief interruption to the Zoom connection, the meeting was resumed. Councillor Walsh was unable to rejoin the meeting.

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

1. Clerk's Report – The Clerk reported: staff were working from home, with occasional and individual visits to the office; a new laptop had been ordered and would be delivered on 28/04/20; staff had attended remote training on website accessibility requirements; year-end financial statements had been drawn up and would be put before the next Parish Council meeting; the Clerk and Deputy Clerk had engaged KALC, insurers and the Internal Auditor to advise on an appropriate treatment of funds received for the emergency help team; a meeting had been arranged with Play Place to discuss the planned Summer Play Scheme; Miss Nicola Ideson had joined the Parish Office team to take over the role of Parish Clerk. Chairman Riordan welcomed Miss Ideson to her first council meeting.
2. Written Reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - No items.
3. Oral Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only.
 - 3.1. VE Day 75 – Councillor Sharp reported that the working group acknowledged that events would not happen as planned over VE Day 75 weekend; however, the group would like to encourage people on 8th May to observe a commemorative silence at 11.00am and to participate in a celebratory toast on their driveways at 3.00pm. The group will publish further information.

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

1. Borough Councillor's Report – Councillor Perry reported: MBC had established a community hub which was working with parishes; at Headcorn Aerodrome it had set up a medical centre; the Chairman of KALC's Maidstone Area Committee had escalated to the national association the subject of parish councils' powers to fund community support measures; MBC had held practice sessions for virtual meetings, with the first live one due to take place on 29/04/20 (Policy & Resources Committee).
2. Police Report – PCSO Gardner's report for March 2020. It was NOTED that there were five crimes listed in Staplehurst. Chairman Riordan commented that concerns about anti-social behaviour in the current period of restrictions should be reported to the police or to MBC's Community Protection Unit.

REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS (written reports for noting)

No reports received.

SPECIAL MOTION & REPORT

1. To move that the public be excluded from item 2 due to its confidential nature. Proposed by Chairman Riordan, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, councillors RESOLVED to discuss item 2 as a confidential item and the member of the public left the meeting.
2. To note the confidential report of the Employment Group and to approve its recommendation relating to transition arrangements for the role of Parish Clerk. The report dated 20/04/20 was NOTED. Proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Forward, it was RESOLVED to APPROVE the arrangements designated as 'Scenario 3', covering the working hours and remuneration of the retiring Clerk until the end of September 2020.

Chairman.....

PUBLIC FORUM: One member of the public attended as an observer. No comments.

Proceedings finished at 8.20pm.