

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 15th January 2018 at 8.25 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Ashby, Buller, Gosling, Lain-Rose, Manning, Perry (from the point indicated in the minutes), Reardon, Sharp, Silkin, Spearink and Burnham who was in the Chair.

Parish Clerk: Mr M J Westwood

APOLOGIES: Councillors Claridge, Riordan, Smith; Councillor Perry for late arrival due to MBC business.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:-

Changes to the Register of Interests – none declared.

Interests in Items on the Agenda – none declared.

Requests for Dispensation – none requested.

APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES Minute pages 1668-1670 of 18th December 2017 were APPROVED by Councillors, 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 Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Silkin, Councillors RESOLVED nem con to APPROVE the list of accounts for payment. Expenditure for the period 12/12/17 to 08/01/18 was £18,025.95 and income for the same period was £1,472.35.
2. Summation of Accounts – as at 9th January 2018 (for noting). NOTED by Councillors and posted at http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx.
3. Parish Council Budget and Precept for 2018-19 – (i) Proposed expenditure budget – proposed by Councillor Silkin, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, Councillors RESOLVED nem con to APPROVE the budget for 2018-19 which was posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/statement_of_accounts.aspx; (ii) precept of £145,000 - proposed by Councillor Silkin, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, Councillors RESOLVED nem con to APPROVE the proposal to request a precept of £145,000, noting that for a Band D property it equated to £60.30 per year (an increase of 2% or £1.19 per year on 2017-18).
4. Finance & Strategy Group Meeting Reports and Recommendations – The meeting reports dated 14/12/17 & 08/01/18 were NOTED by Councillors and published at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/finance_group.aspx. Councillors discussed the Group's recommendations regarding: (i) contract reviews and subscription renewals Q1 2018 – the actions set out in Appendix A to the report dated 14/12/17 were APPROVED; Councillor Lain-Rose commented that Community Enhancement Group would discuss renewal of the cleaning contract for Bell Lane toilets and dates for the summer play scheme; (ii) Allotment Society subscription – renewal at a cost of £55 was APPROVED; (iii) Kent Tree and Pond Partnership donation – a donation of £50 was APPROVED, to be divided equally between tree warden and pond warden support; Councillors NOTED that the Partnership would provide training and support for any residents interested in becoming a tree or pond warden in the parish; (iv) professional valuation of Surrenden Field & Nicholson Walk – this item was deferred for discussion with the Surrenden Playing Field & Nicholson Walk update report as the meeting's last item of business.

CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting:

1. Annual Parish Meeting – Discussion and decision on date for 2018 meeting. After some discussion Councillors concluded that although it had been worth trying the Saturday

evening for the annual parish meeting in 2017, there was no evidence that it had made a significant difference. They NOTED that the timings of Easter and scheduled council meetings gave a three-week gap in the second half of April and early May. The asked the Clerk to ascertain venue availability for the week commencing 23rd April. Councillor Perry arrived during this item.

2. Lord Lieutenant of Kent Civic Service – Invitation to attend service at Canterbury Cathedral on 20/03/18. Councillors were asked to notify the Clerk if they wished to attend.
3. Parish Council Surgeries – (i) Reports on key issues raised: Councillor Sharp said three visitors on 6th January had raised the condition of the Parade and flooding outside the pharmacy, the empty NatWest premises, the Railway Tavern and parking in Bathurst Road; Chairman Burnham said that at his surgery on 13th January there had been no visitors but on 30th December a visitor had asked about the prospects of a supermarket. ii) Discussion of frequency and appointment of representatives for future dates – Councillors commented that visitor numbers to the surgeries had been falling and in some cases there were no visitors at all. RESOLVED: with immediate effect surgeries will be held jointly with Borough Councillor Perry on the last Saturday of the month between 10.00am and 12.00pm. Councillor Buller volunteered to attend the surgery on 27th January. Councillors commented additionally that they would still be available at other times through personal contact in the village, via social media or via the Parish Office.

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

1. Clerk's Report –The Parish Office staff had attended a KALC workshop on General Data Protection Regulations: new regulations would come into force from May 2018 and necessitate additional work for businesses and authorities; councils would need to appoint a Data Protection Officer (DPO); NALC had advised that council staff should not be designated as a DPO due to conflict of interest and other factors; KALC would be distributing further information. The Clerk requested Parish Council bank account signatories to ensure they had provided the office with the full details required for the new bank account. The budget preparation had taken up considerable time but was now complete. The office had submitted a number of pothole reports to Kent Highways; the Clerk reminded Councillors that KHS had arranged to visit the office on 20/02/18. Salt was available to top up parish council salt bins. The Clerk had contacted BT to request repair and repainting of the call box at Church Green. The storage container for Jubilee Field was due to be delivered on 23/01/18.
2. Written Reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for decision or noting
 - a) Community Enhancement Group – Report of meeting 05/10/17 for noting, except for decision report item 4: ratification of Group membership in accordance with Community Enhancement Group Terms of Reference 4(c). The report of the meeting was NOTED and posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/community_enhancement_group.aspx. RESOLVED: Borough Councillor Brice's membership of the Group was CONFIRMED.
3. Oral Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only
 - a) Village Clean-Up – Proposed date 10/03/18. Councillor Buller reported that the next village clean-up was scheduled for 10/03/18, which was AGREED by Councillors.

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

1. Borough Councillor's Oral Report – Councillor Perry reported that MBC was discussing its 2018-19 budget; government has raised the permitted increase in council tax demand without a referendum from 2% to 3%; the proposed 2018-19 Parish Services scheme payment for Staplehurst was almost identical to that for 2017-18; some improvement in

the management of enforcement cases has been seen; MBC is dealing with a larger number of fly-tipping cases.

- 2. Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) – Draft Minutes of AGM held 18/11/17. NOTED by Councillors and posted at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/kent_association_of_local_councils.aspx.
- 3. Beult Catchment Improvement Group – Report of meeting 21/12/17. Councillor Burnham’s report of the meeting he had attended with Councillors Ashby and Spearink was NOTED by Councillors and posted at <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>.

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

No reports

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

No items

SPECIAL MOTION & REPORT – SURRENDEN PLAYING FIELD & NICHOLSON

WALK:-

- 1. To move that the public be excluded from item 2 due to its commercial sensitivity. The motion was NOT AGREED as the content of the report and related correspondence was not deemed to be commercially sensitive. Councillors therefore discussed item 2 in public session.
- 2. To consider the report’s update regarding correspondence received relating to the freehold of Surrenden Playing Field and Nicholson Walk. Councillors NOTED that MBC maintained that its price for disposal of the freehold interest in Surrenden Field and Nicholson Walk was £32,375 and that it had rejected the Parish Council’s offer of £5,000. Councillors then discussed the deferred recommendation of Finance & Strategy Group (item 4, meeting report 08/01/18) that, notwithstanding the Parish Council’s intention not to renew a leasehold interest in Surrenden Field on expiry of the current lease in March 2019 (Min1664), a quotation for the cost of an independent professional valuation should be sought. Councillors NOTED the Group’s comments that previous valuations had not adopted a sound basis for assessment of the site’s value and did not acknowledge the ongoing site maintenance costs. RESOLVED: Councillor Perry to obtain a quotation for an independent professional valuation of the site.

Chairman.....

PUBLIC FORUM: Before the meeting residents commented on (i) the poor condition of The Parade and the flooding outside the pharmacy; (ii) the desirability of spending money on improving Surrenden Field rather than acquiring it; (iii) the Youth Club was banning energy drinks on site. Councillors Lain-Rose and Reardon commented on the Parade: contractors would soon be undertaking work on the plant beds, which had been postponed just before Christmas; Kent Highways have plans for a rubber composite surface to replace the damaged block paving; Councillor Reardon is seeking a site meeting. After the meeting a resident commented that it would be prudent to seek a quotation for an independent valuation of Surrenden Field before proceeding further.

Meeting ended at 10.10 p.m.