

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Committee, Group or Sub Group	
FINANCE GROUP	
Meeting Date & Venue	
4 p.m. Tuesday 4 th November 2014, Parish Office, Staplehurst Village Centre	
Report Author	
Sue Bassett – RFO	
Report	
<p>Present: Councillors Rory Silkin (RS) – Chairman, John Perry (JP), Paul Kelly (PK) and Sue Bassett (RFO)</p> <p>Apologies: Councillors Tom Burnham (TB), Paul Butcher (PB), Simon Green (SG), Sam Lain-Rose (SLR) and John Reardon (JR).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minutes of last meeting (03/10/2014) had been circulated and were agreed as a true record. 2. Review of Council Suppliers <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Parish Office Lease from Village Centre – RS confirmed that this had expired some years ago and the matter should be regularised with a new detailed document to reflect the current agreement and practice. Finance Group to progress in 2015. 2.2. Bell Lane Toilets Lease renewal – MBC had acknowledged that this was due May 2015 but draft documentation was awaited. JP agreed to check and chase MBC. 3. Chapel Lane Street Lights – RS outlined the proposed plan of action following recent discussions with residents (report at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx and agreed by Full Council). Further information was awaited from KHS contractors but no further action by the Finance Group at this stage was considered necessary. 4. Pensions Policy – Councillors noted the document amended by SG and agreed that this be <u>recommended for adoption by Full Council</u>. In addition the RFO was requested to research employer obligations relating to new pension legislation for all employees and report back. 5. Churchyard Budget 2015 – The revised budget negotiated by PK was noted and agreed the sum be rounded to £6,200 in the Council’s budget. Agreed that the annual reconciliation process undertaken by the RFO should continue in the same manner as previous years. 6. Street Lighting costs – The Assistant Clerk’s report on the current status was noted. The RFO reported that it would be difficult to supply an accurate indication of savings that would be achieved in this project, as a new maintenance contract would need to be negotiated after the installations and removals had been completed. 7. Youth Leader Project – It was acknowledged that the Youth Club paperwork and trustees needed updating to reflect the current situation. PK reported that he was trying to help PB with this work. RS requested that this be completed by the end of January 2015 when a review would be conducted. Should the Youth Club then not be running correctly, RS suggested that it be put out to tender. 8. Village Centre re-building strategy – PK commented (as Chairman of VCMC) that the trustees were trying to achieve sustainability with the running of the current building and were not yet ready to consider a re-building project. Councillors agreed to defer further discussion to the next meeting of the Finance Group. 9. Skate Park Repair & Repainting quotes – Councillors noted the revised quotes and after a short discussion agreed to recommend the acceptance of the Evolution Quote No: 2352 in the sum of £4,253.75 to prepare and repaint the riding surfaces and sides of the Skatepark plus repair the damaged areas with concrete. <u>Recommendation to be considered by Full Council.</u> 10. Tree works at Surrenden Playing Field – The RFO’s report was noted and after some discussion Councillors recommended to obtain two competitive quotes based on the report by Forestry First. 11. Donations 2015 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11.1 Councillors requested a full list of donations made in the current financial year before finalising the list for 2015. Meanwhile a total of £2,500 had been put in the budget. 11.2 Councillors agreed not to recommend a donation to the Heart of Kent Hospice. 	

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- 11.3 Councillors agreed to recommend a donation of £500 towards the Staplehurst Primary School Early Years Garden. Recommendation to be considered by Full Council.
- 11.4 Councillors agreed not to recommend a donation to Victim Support.
12. **Internal Audit** –RS requested that the opinion of the Internal Auditor be sought regarding how prudent or safe in terms of internal audit would the use be of internet signatures. See Post Meeting Note at foot of this page, of the meeting held on 6th November 2015 to review internal controls.
13. **Parish Services Grant expenditure** – The RFO’s report detailing the current position of expenditure from this grant was noted. Maintenance of the Churchyard had not been included as it was understood that MBC did not assist with the funding of maintenance in open churchyards within the Parish Services Agreement. JP agreed to pursue with MBC why the following areas of maintenance expenditure were not included within the Parish Services Scheme; Street lights, footpaths, Play Areas and open churchyards.
14. **Draft Budget 2015/2016** – Councillors appreciated the more detailed layout of the budget Version 2. Various amendments were recommended; Neighbourhood Plan increased to £7,000 and to re-name the proposed Village Centre Rebuild fund to the Village Centre Feasibility Fund. With these amendments Councillors recommended that Version 3 be considered by Full Council with an adoption deadline of 20th January 2015.
15. **KCC Budget Consultation** – Councillors recommended that individual Councillors as members of the public could respond to the online consultation by the deadline of 28/11/14 see <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/have-your-say/budget-consultation> but recommended that the Parish Council itself should not respond to the consultation.
16. **KCC Youth Club Lease** – The quarterly lease/purchase payments were currently paid by cheque. Councillors recommended to Full Council that in future, these payments be made by Direct Debit.
17. **VEGroup future plans** – PK suggested that a project of (saddle-shaped) oblong planters be explored to decorate the metal fencing along the bank on the east side of the A229 opposite the High Street junction with Offens Drive. The RFO to explore the views of Kent Highways.
18. **Date of Next Meeting** – January 2015. RFO to liaise with members of the Finance Group on future dates to ensure the best possible attendance.

POST MEETING NOTE – JP and RFO met with Tim Kendrick (TK) Internal Auditor on Thursday, 6th November 2014 at the Parish Office. TK had undertaken quarterly internal audits of the Parish Council’s Accounts, accounting practices and internal controls. He confirmed that he was satisfied that safe and proper practices were being employed. The only recommendation made to improve safety in case of burglary would be to ensure the cheque books and petty cash tin were locked in the fire safe when the office was left unoccupied (overnight and at weekends). It was noted that the Audit Commission Return had confirmed that the return was in accordance with proper practices and that no matters gave cause for concern. Discussion covered RS’s question about electronic signatures. Whilst there were no safety concerns, TK asked what the processes would be to evidence that Councillors had indeed checked the payments as legitimate before authorising them. It was recommended to keep this issue under review but whilst cheques still existed, to retain the status quo and review again if/when it became necessary. It was recommended to add RS as a cheque signatory to the Council’s accounts. TK confirmed that he had no intention to raise his audit fee (which had remained at the same level for many years).

Date & Venue of next meeting	
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January 2015 exact date to be agreed.
