

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
FINANCE GROUP

held at The Parish Office on 13th January 2010 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Best, Kelly, Knowlden, Perry, Reardon and Arger who was in the Chair. Clerk: Mrs J S Bassett

APOLOGIES: None as all present.

ISSUES ONGOING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

1. Computer glitches & Sage programme – Councillors discussed issues and recommended that the Website & Publicity Group should deal with hardware issues. Councillor Reardon to assist with software problems. Recommended that an extra Sage Licence be purchased at £50.
2. Donation requests
 - 2.1 CILK – Further details had been circulated which Councillors discussed. Recommended £100 be donated to this charity.
 - 2.2 CCDAS – Community Centre for Debt Advice Staplehurst. Councillors recommended £150 be donated to CCDAS.
 - 2.3 Staplehurst Airfield Memorial Project - Previously discussed by Full Council on 17th August 2009 at Page 938 paragraph 11. Councillors recommended £50 be donated towards this project.
3. Jubilee Grass Cutting Tender – Negotiations had not taken place between the Footballers and KCC Landscapes. KCC had been asked again to provide a quote for Surrenden Playing Field alone. Councillors agreed that the current budget should be adhered to. If KCC required more, the footballers would be offered less.
4. Renewal of office colour printer – The Clerk provided a number of quotes. After discussion it was agreed to recommend the purchase of the HP Photosmart Premium (CD055B) at £84.

CURRENT ISSUES:

1. Surrenden Playing Field Tree Works – The quotes and specification provided by MBC were noted. Councillor Kelly recommended a local contractor and a quote would be obtained for consideration by Full Council.
2. Toilet Team – The interim report was noted by Councillors but further information and draft lease was awaited from MBC. Councillor Kelly

expressed concern that expenditure may be needed in future to upgrade the disabled access to the Bell Lane toilets. Consideration was also needed about cleaning arrangements (if in-house issues such as management, training and insurance arose). Councillors emphasised that interest in The Parade toilets should also be maintained, even if they were "mothballed" until funding was found to re-open them. It was suggested that a campaign be launched to fund refurbishment amongst the Parade businesses as they would be chief beneficiaries.

BUDGET PLANNING FOR 2010-2011 – The Fourth Draft budget had been circulated in advance and a fifth revision was prepared after these discussions for consideration by next Full Council. The Clerk reported that EDF had now imposed a Standing Charge for the two unmetered accounts which would add nearly £500 per annum to the Street Lighting costs. Councillor Best commented that electricity supply should be tendered. Councillor Arger raised the concern that MBC may withdraw Concurrent Functions Grant in 2011/2012 and the adverse effect this could have on the Parish Precept. General discussion ensued regarding rationale behind the use of General Fund to cushion increased expenditure. Councillors considered that any increase required could be explained by the new projects; Jubilee Car Park, Toilets, Staple Drive Play Area & Surrenden Playing Field pathway. Councillor Best considered that in a current climate of downward pressure, the Parish Council should try to reduce expenditure also. Councillor Arger countered this with reference to the Toilets where downward pressure from higher authorities devolving down their responsibilities meant that Parish Councils had to take on more. Councillor Best's recommendation for no increase in parish precept was not seconded. Councillor Perry's recommendation for a Parish Precept of £73,500 (approximately £31.15 per Bank D and a 4% increase over previous year) was seconded by Councillor Kelly and agreed with one abstention.

INTERNAL AUDIT – Councillor Perry reported that he would be meeting with the Internal Auditor and the Clerk on Friday to review the effectiveness of the internal audit procedures.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 17th March 2010 at 7.30 p.m.

Chairman.....