

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF STAPLEHURST
held in the North Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre at
6.00pm on Saturday 20th May 2017

PRESENT – Fifty residents signed the attendance list. Also attending were eight Parish Councillors, County Councillor Eric Hotson, Borough & Parish Councillor John Perry, Borough Councillor Louise Brice, Community Warden Mira Martin.

APOLOGIES – Parish Councillors Anne Gosling, John Reardon, Laurence Whittle; John Kelly; PCSO Pete Gardner; William Cornall (MBC); Parish Clerk Mick Westwood; Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer Deborah Jenkins.

WELCOME – Councillor Rory Silkin took the Chair and welcomed all attending the Annual Parish Meeting and explained the reasons for the format of the meeting being changed, and encouraged the feedback forms to be completed on leaving.

MINUTES OF THE 2016 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – These had been circulated beforehand. There being no comments, the Minutes were signed as a true record by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

BOROUGH COUNCILLOR LOUISE BRICE PRESENTATION – Councillor Brice reflected on the year as a borough councillor. She mentioned a number of topics that featured prominently in her work, including (a) parking issues at Lodge Road, Lime Trees estate and the estates around the primary school; (b) parking restrictions; (c) speeding within the village; (d) Village Centre redevelopment group; (e) planning, particularly Fishers Farm development and Stanley Farm development, as well as, the Railway Tavern and solar farms; (f) Surrenden Field and Nicholson Walk ownership; (g) litter bins; (h) bus transportation; (i) gym facilities with Serco; (j) lobbying MBC for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for sports facilities in Staplehurst; (k) Sainsbury's supermarket development; and (l) seeking improvements to the Parade. Councillor Brice thanked members of the community and Parish Council for their support and Borough Councillor Perry and County Councillor Hotson for their work.

BOROUGH COUNCILLOR JOHN PERRY PRESENTATION – Councillor Perry spoke of his involvement as MBC Planning Committee Chairman. In addition, he explained the challenges that have affected the village and recognised the key work the Parish Council has contributed to, including following up their planning decisions to recommend refusal, especially thanking Parish Councillors Buller and Burnham for their work on preparing and speaking at MBC Planning Committee meetings. He spoke about rural issues and the challenges of representing these at borough council level. He suggested that the Hawkenbury Bridge needed investment, due to safety concerns, and recommended traffic lights there. He concluded by thanking the Parish Council, the Parish Office for their work and then thanked County Councillor Hotson and Borough Councillor Brice for their support and acknowledged the great team the village has.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR ERIC HOTSON PRESENTATION – Councillor Hotson thanked Councillor Silkin, parish councillors and the Parish office and said he valued his regular meetings with them. He also thanked Borough Councillors Brice and Perry. In addition, he wanted to thank the community for voting for him recently and explained he was delighted with the vote share, but also shared his disappointment with the turn out. Councillor Hotson explained that since being re-elected he has been promoted to Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services, with a portfolio that expands across HR services and IT,

as well as the Council’s property. He mentioned that the County Council has made £500m savings and now is working in a different way, with the major services still intact, including Libraries and Children Centres. He said that he had been pleased to support many Staplehurst initiatives with funding, including the Guide Centre roof, bell ringers, Jubilee Field drainage and Youth Club. He mentioned he had a Members Grant increase to £22,000. He mentioned the work to reduce the speed limit to 50mph at Knoxbridge, which cost £3,000 and thanked Parish Councillor Manning for his work on this. He mentioned that for 2017/18 he would look to support signage at the Hawkenbury Bridge, Headcorn Road and South Bank parking restrictions (double-yellow lines), signage on the Marden Road bends and the Wimpey Fields.

ELECTORS’ QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Mr Robin Oakley commented on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council’s Local Plan and requested the Parish Council to consider encouraging younger people’s involvement in local issues.

Mr Norman Wallis commented on the parking issues at Bell Lane Car Park, specifically resurfacing and lining the parking spaces. Borough Councillor Perry said he would look further into this with MBC.

Mr Robin Kenworthy also commented on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council’s Local Plan and the lack of comments from Maidstone Borough Council.

Ms Caroline Highwood commented on the Marden Road crossing lights and the drainage at the north side of the road. She requested that the drainage must be sorted when the crossing is permanently installed. County Councillor Hotson said he would ensure this is remedied.

Parish Councillor Joan Buller commented on assisted living housing and asked whether there were any plans to building within Staplehurst. Borough Councillor Brice explained that she was not aware of any plans and explained that developers would need a strong business case to develop these, she was not aware of any need currently.

Ms Amy Le Grande commented on the Headcorn Road parking issue and asked that the lines are done for the entirety of the road, until the grass verge. County Councillor Hotson confirmed that this was the plan and that it would be based on the Parish Council’s plan that was initially consulted on and 95% of the residents agreed to the yellow lines.

The meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.

Chairman.....