



# STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

## 16<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024

### **Public Forum**

A resident thanked the Council for arranging the registration of Nicholson Walk.

### **Borough Councillor's Report (Standing Item):**

Cllr Perry updated Council on his work as Mayor of Maidstone: including attending Maidstone Grammar School speech day, Hosting charity events at Hush Heath and a Garden Party plus representing Maidstone at formal events in Rochester and Canterbury. Cllr Perry is looking forward to opening of the "panto season at the Hazlitt Theatre" and chairing the MBC Council meeting next week.

Cllr Riordan raised a number of points;

- Planning Notice – asking MBC planning if full name and address to be removed from planning notices due to identity fraud – this will require a change in law. Request Staplehurst Planning Committee consider at next meeting.
- Proposal at MBC to reduce Planning Committee membership from 13 to 9 members – refused. Voted against as only reduce local knowledge and expertise
- Waste management - issues seem to be resolved in Staplehurst but requesting more care with bins being put back
- Ask RSG to hand out letters to residents regarding over grown hedges such as Bell Lane, Church Green etc
- Can office use social media to ask dog owners to "pick up after their dog"
- Biggest issue for many residents is the state of the roads – as a Parish Council we can only ask KCC Highways – arranged a meeting with KCC Highways Offices to tour Staplehurst, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024 pencilled in– when confirmed will invite Parish Councillors.
- Will circulate Ward cluster meeting notes – happy to answer any questions
- Parking at school – this is challenging and very frustrating for local residents – Chasing up Police and MBC parking enforcement – it is on the priority list

### **Kent County Council's Report**

Cllr Parfitt-Reid raised a number of points;

- Had hoped to bring report on "Pilot Rural Youth Club scheme" today but will chase up report and bring to next Parish Council meeting 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

- SEND and Adult Social Care, still major financial pressure – hitting other service areas.
- Those seeking asylum / migration also putting a disproportionate cost onto KCC, even though we feed into the National Asylum Dispersal Scheme.
- Community Wardens – still no update
- Potential “devolution agenda” Kent to have a Mayor? But this would be just an additional layer of bureaucracy / cost.
- LGA national survey of Local Authorities on long term financial sustainability – in 2022 – 25% felt they were financial stable in the long term. In 2024 only 4% of Local Authorities felt they were financial stable in the long term – very worrying national trend.
- Government funding only annually, so cannot plan ahead.
- Fully aware roads are a major issue – but no more funding.
- Note 30% of road closures are by “utilities for emergency works” – it is not just the roads but the electric, water infrastructure as well

Cllr Castro urged for the “Pilot Rural Youth Club Scheme” as really important in Staplehurst.

Cllr Castro asked about the state of Offen’s Drive – major route in staplehurst (Parade, Medical Centre primary’s school etc)

Cllr Parfitt-Reid agreed and mentioned site visit with KCC highways officer being arranged.

**Present:** Cllrs Riordan, Hotson, Castro, Sharp, Alesi, Martin, Pett, Perry and the Clerk.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllrs Ash, Arger, Mclaughlin and Wakeford
2. **COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:**
  - 2.1. Declarations of Lobbying - NA
  - 2.2. Changes to the Register of Interests - NA
  - 2.3. Interests in Items on the Agenda – Cllr Sharp co-option item
  - 2.4. Requests for Dispensation – NA

Chairman closed meeting to consider:

### **Co-option of Parish Councillors**

Cllr Sharp had declared an interest and left the meeting for this item.

Prior to the start of the meeting Mr Eastwood sent an email withdrawing his candidacy for co-option, therefore three candidates for three vacancies.

Clerk summarised process. Each Candidate, in turn, had three minutes to put forward their case and Cllrs had the opportunity to ask questions.

Cllr Riordan asked for clarity on the eligibility of each candidate. The Clerk explained that:

- Ms Farragher is on the electoral roll.
- Mr Rhodes is on the electoral roll
- Ms Metcalfe met the criteria under ownership and occupancy – noted that a layman’s understanding of the term occupancy was living in a property but Electoral Commission, MBC (our principle electoral authority) and Kent Association of Local Councils view was more nuanced regarding eligibility criteria. That being “a part owner and maintaining a property but not living in the property” met the eligibility criteria to be co-opted onto a Parish Council.

Each candidate in turn spoke and answered questions. Then the voting on co-option took place by ballot.

Farragher: For 7 against 0 and abstained 0

Metcalfe: For 3 against 3 and abstained 1, Chairman casting vote - against

Rhodes: For 6 against 1 and abstained 0

Cllrs Farragher and Rhodes were duly co-opted onto Staplehurst Parish Council and joined the meeting. (They did not have all the information available to them that the other Councillors had to be able to make an informed decision, therefore they abstained from each vote at this meeting).

Chairman reopens meeting

**Cllr Sharp rejoined to the meeting.**

Cllr Hotson raised his concerns about the Co-option process at the last meeting and asked for the Co-option process to be raised at the next Employment, Finance and Strategy Group meeting.

### **3. APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES: (5 minutes)**

Pages 2268 – 2273 27<sup>th</sup> August 2024 available at [Full Council - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge \(staplehurst-pc.uk\)](#) to be signed by the Chairman.

Cllr Alesi proposed and Cllr Pett seconded to approve, with the amendment 6.4.iv “draft forms” the minutes of the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

Agreed majority; For 7 , against 0 abstained 3. Duly signed by the Chairman.

## 4. **FINANCE REPORTS & PROPOSALS**

### 4.1 **Payment list**

Cllr Alesi proposed and Cllr Castro seconded to approve the payment list below. Agreed majority; For 8 , against 0 abstained 2.

<b><u>Approved Payments 21st August - 11th September 2024</u></b>	<b>Amount</b>
P&F Cleaning Services - Bell Lane Toilets Clean/Open/Sun Aug	1010.00
CSG Global Education Ltd - White Line Marking Powder JF	62.35
Amazon UK - Portable PA Speaker Cover	14.48
CSG Global Education Ltd – Stationery	34.17
Payroll & Pension Costs August	7145.47
Artistree Fencing & Landscapes - JF White Line Marking	156.00
KCC - MVCP Wimpey Field Bioblitz August	420.00
Hi Kent - Hearing Aid Support Grant	440.00
Choice Support - Village Planter Maintenance August	519.00
Hugofox Ltd - Silver Subscription September	23.99
Playsafety Limited - Jubilee Skatepark Annual Inspection	93.60
Playsafety Limited - Surrenden Play & Gym Annual Inspection	230.40
Paxman Printing Service - Village Update Autumn	793.00
Artistree Fencing & Landscapes - JF White Line Marking	156.00
Joshua Melville - JF White Line Marking	140.00
Miss C Lucas - Jubilee Pavilion Cleaning August	40.00
Miss C Lucas - Youth Club Cleaning August	20.00
Bumbles Plant Centre - Plants GSG	8.67
Staplehurst Community Centre - Office Rental Sept – December	1400.00
Bradley Hawkins - Mowing & Strimming WF August	100.00
Amazon UK - Mop & Bucket Youth Club	24.95
Amazon UK - Toilet Rolls	50.37
Staplehurst Community Centre - Hall Hire April-June	341.00
Staplehurst Community Centre - Hall Hire July	120.00
County Fire Protection - Fire Equipment Service JF Pavilion	232.98
County Fire Protection - Fire Equipment Service Youth Club	60.48
Post Office - Stamps 20x 2nd Parish Office	17.00
Spar - Milk & Tissues Parish Office	4.94
Adobe Systems - Monthly Subscription Aug-Sept	19.97
Npower - Street Light Energy July	30.03
BT - Broadband & Phone Charges Aug-Oct	235.93
Telecoms World - Virtual Phone No. SEHT July	14.39
Countrystyle Recycling - Waste Collection July	96.06
Business Stream - Waste Water Jubilee Pavilion May-Aug	169.33

British Gas Lite - Electricity Bell Lane Toilets	33.48
MBC - Council Tax Parish Office Room 1 September	62.00
MBC - Council Tax Parish Office Room 2-3 September	72.00
MBC - Council Tax Youth Club September	121.00
MBC - Council Tax Bell Lane Toilets September	100.00
British Gas Lite - Electricity JF Pavilion Jly-Aug	268.72
Sage Payroll – September	12.00
Sage UK Ltd - Account Annual Subscription	351.60
Arron Services - Hosted Exchange September	271.32
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ACCOUNT EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>15,516.68</b>

**TOTAL PETTY CASH EXPENDITURE** 0.00

#### **4.2 Summation and balance sheet - Noted**

#### **4.3 Greener Group report**

Following a debate, where it was noted that Jon Grimwood was a valued member of the community who did a lot of work with the Greener Group and started the Christmas Tree shredding charity event.

Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Castro seconded to approve the resolution below. Agreed majority; For 8 , against 0 abstained 2.

**Resolution:** To approve the recommendation of the Greener Staplehurst Group work programme

- a) Replacement bed Station Rd/Chestnut avenue south end. £400
- b) New memorial bed in memory of Jon Grimwood. The Parade Shopping Centre South of Offens drive. £400
- c) New bed under the SPC notice board at entrance to Village Centre. £100
- d) Replacement and enlarged gateway beds on A229. £400
- e) Maintenance and planting of all current and planned beds £1,000
- f) Advertising for helpers and members - £150
- g) Contingency £150

**Total £2,700**

**Budget code** Greens, Trees and Tubs

#### **4.4 Replacement Emergency Lights – Jubilee Field Pavilion**

Following a debate Cllr Alesi proposed and Cllr Castro seconded to approve the resolution below. Agreed majority; For 8 , against 0 abstained 2.

**Resolution:** to appoint a County Fire protection, £373.60 plus VAT to replace three failed emergency lights in changing rooms 2, 3 and 4.

**Budget code** Jubilee Field pavilion

#### **4.5 External Audit**

Following a debate, Cllr Hotson noted that due to the growth of the Council we have exceeded the "small authority" threshold and therefore must pay the increased fee

to the external auditor. Cllr Hotson proposed and Cllr Martin seconded to approve the resolution below. Agreed majority; For 8 , against 0 abstained 2.

**Resolution:** To approve the increase in cost for the external auditor (Mazars) to £840 plus VAT

**Budget code** Audit

#### 4.6 Scenic report

Following a debate which included;

##### Christmas lights motif

The Christmas lights motifs are valued by so many villages and they are important to the village, so we must aim to improve for December 2024

If we appoint Streetlights for the existing 11 Christmas light motifs we can then finalise the order for the new Christmas lights motifs and report back to next Council meeting

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Castro seconded to approve the resolution below. Agreed majority; For 8, against 0 abstained 2.

**Resolution:** Christmas lights motifs to appoint Streetlights £775.00 +VAT and report back on more Christmas light motifs to the next Council meeting.

**Budget code** Christmas Lights

##### Parade Disabled Toilet –

Following a debate it was confirmed

- The building is not owned by the Parish Council
- Council would need a to double check that the legal approvals are still in place
- Council would need a building survey to take on the management and clarify costs
- Change of use permission maybe required – if used for storage
- Would need up to date costs for cleaning disabled toilet
- Would need to add to Council insurance

Note there is no budget in 2024/25 for this work

Cllr Riordan noted this was turned down in 2023 due to ongoing costs and suggested deferring the item until a fully worked up project could come back to Council, Cllr Pett suggested that we aim to report back to next meeting even if we do not have all the information..

Cllr Pett proposed and Cllr Riordan seconded to approve the resolution below. Agreed majority; For 8, against 0 abstained 2.

**Resolution** – Parade disabled toilets for Scenic to liaise with the office and to report back to the next Council meeting on;

- Clarify ownership of building, and obtain permission
- Double check that the legal approvals are in still in place
- Quote for a building survey and identify works required
- Clarify if a change of use permission is required – if used for storage
- Obtain quote for cleaning disabled toilet

- Clarify if any additional premium would be added to Council insurance
- Develop a budget for the project
- Report back to Council

Cllr Martin raised an item concerning Christmas tree. The Clerk noted that a large Christmas tree would be approximately £250, we do not own the land the tree would be sited upon so would need permission and a large "container" plus tethers to hold the tree safely in place. Also a risk assessment would be required, especially as it is next to the A229. Scenic to bring forward a report to the next Council meeting.

## **5 CLERKS REPORT ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS – attached (5 minutes)**

Clerk noted the following

Option of additional Loudhailer, Cllrs decided not to take up the offer of another loudhailer for a £50 donation

2067/pf – Redrow - Cllr Ash report at next meeting he attends

2081/7.1 – Railway Station - We received an email to say Network Rail aim to bring forward updated designs in the near future. Clerk will circulate further information when received.

2267/10 – Cutting and marking at Jubilee Field – Parish Council is cutting and marking pitches weekly. However, SMFC put forward an offer to the JFWG to take on the maintenance of the main pitch themselves, at no reduction in the ground hire fee or cost to the Council. This means the Council could stop the Council contractors from maintaining the main pitch / surrounds within the fenced area, resulting in a financial saving to the Council. This would require an amendment to the existing SMFC ground hire agreement. It was noted that SMFC stopped hiring a groundsman in the summer 2024 so this is reinstatement of their groundsman.

Following a debate, which included the option of a JFWG report back to Council it was felt that Council should consider the SMFC offer to maintain the main pitch;

- Cut grass - as required
- White lines – as required
- Repair divots / goalmouths – as required
- Put goals up and down – as required
- Raking the dead grass off pitch – as required
- Litter picking and dog mess clearing – as required
- Cut surrounds of pitch (within fence line) - as required
- Clearing blocked pitch drains – as required
- Communication with Council to help with upkeep – as required
- This would be an amendment to the existing SMFC ground hire agreement up to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025 with no change in fee

Cllr Hotson requested that it is reviewed at the end of July 2025

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Castro seconded to approve the resolution below Agreed majority; For 6, against 0 abstained 4.

**Resolution:** to amend the existing SMFC ground hire agreement for SMFC to maintain the main pitch,

- Cut grass - as required
- White lines – as required
- Repair divots / goalmouths – as required
- Put goals up and down – as required
- Raking the dead grass off pitch – as required
- Litter picking and dog mess clearing – as required
- Cut surrounds of pitch (within fence line) - as required
- Clearing blocked pitch drains – as required
- Communication with Council to help with upkeep – as required
- This would be an amendment to the existing SMFC ground hire agreement up to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025 with no change in hire fees
- Review at the end of July 2025

Clerk for information, noted that the proposal to revisit the Council decision “not to approve the SMFC proposed temporary outside bar at the Jubilee Field” was supported by two Councillors only, not the required five Councillors. Therefore, the item cannot be reconsidered until March 2025.

Defib for telephone box at Church Green – Cllr Riordan and Castro to fit defib and backing to phone back when photo’s for the backing of the phone box are ready.

## **6 PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION and DECISION**

### **6.1 3G Multi-Sport Working Group – standing report**

Following a debate it was noted that the Business Plan in appendix A included hire fees, usage, maintenance, site development (activities) plan, plus income and expenditure for five years. The Business Plan is on the Parish Council website Cllr Hotson felt a number of questions had not been answered.

Cllr Pett felt that it was good that un confirmed usage income was not included but felt it was still “smoke and mirrors” i.e. Charlton Athletic Community Trust Academy are keen (so booked out daytime usage ) but cannot commit!

Clerk explained they cannot commit until pitch is built; the potential income has not been included in the figures.

Cllr Hotson asked will the SLA’s be passed onto a contractor if one is appointed – this was confirmed

Cllr Hotson asked for a copy of the Hawkhurst UTD FC SLA – agreed to forward.

To note progress as outlined in report

**Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Castro seconded to suspend Standing orders and extend meeting by 30 minutes – Agreed for 7, against 0 abstained 3**



## **6.2 IT Review Report**

Following a debate Cllr Castro proposed and Cllr Riordan seconded to approve the resolution below. Agreed majority; For 8, against 0 abstained 2.

**Resolution:** To approve the IT Policy attached in **appendix A** and for Communications Group and the office staff to work on contract specification and report back to Council.

## **7 CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for noting:**

SMFC CIC proposal to lease the main pitch and surrounds at the Jubilee Field.

Note Council has a ground hire agreement at the Jubilee Field with SMFC and a pitch and pavilion hire agreement at the Jubilee Field with SMYFC.

Cllrs invited to meeting 26<sup>th</sup> Sept 2024 by SMFC CIC to listen to their proposal.

If required a report to JFWG and then to Council for a decision.

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

### **8.1 Chairman's Report**

It is important that the working groups do work effectively, liaise with the office earlier, but do the work rather than just asking the office to do all the work.

Chasing up with the MP on the availability or lack of it regarding the Community Payback team.

A new defib has been kindly donated.

### **8.2 Committee and working group minutes - noted**

8.2.1 Planning Committee minutes of 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024

8.2.2 Road Safety Group meeting minutes 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024

8.2.3 Jubilee Field Working Group meeting minutes 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024

8.2.4 SCEnic next meeting minutes 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024

8.2.5 3G Multi-Sports Pitch Working Group, in confidential section

8.2.6 Employment, Finance and Strategy Group next meeting 19<sup>th</sup> September 2024

8.2.7 NDP Review Group meeting minutes 15<sup>th</sup> August 2024

8.5.7 Communications Group next meeting to be confirmed

8.5.9 Greener Staplehurst Group minutes 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2024

## **9 REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS Noted**

Warm Room notes, Council is requested to register URC, Free Church and Library as warm spaces

### **Public Forum**

A resident was disappointed that the Sport and Recreation management contract item was in Confidential session. Clerk explained this was due to "commercially sensitive information in the report".

## **10 Confidential**

Pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960 the Parish Council will be asked to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted'.

### **10.1 Sport and Recreation management contract for Jubilee Field report**

Following a debate on the four Expression of Interest Bids, which included Dun and Bradstreet reports on each of the four bidders (commercial sensitive financial and risk reports),

Some Cllrs felt it would be risky to go forward with a brand new company without references or a track record other Cllrs felt that we should put forward all four bidders.

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Alesi seconded that all four bidders should advance to Invitation to Tender stage. Agreed For 5, Against 2 and Abstained 3.

Therefore all four bidders advance to Invitation to Tender stage.

Due to time constraints, Invitation to Tender document was deferred to next meeting.

Meeting closed.....10.00pm.....

**These minutes are Not verbatim, the decisions are accurate.**