

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF EGM
TUESDAY 31ST OCTOBER 2023

These minutes are not verbatim, at the meeting some points were raised outside the order of the agenda – i.e. queries about the business plan when discussing consultation. Therefore in these minutes the questions and answers have been put into the structure of the meeting agenda.

Attached in **Appendix A** is the Jubilee Field 3G pitch survey overview report. Also the “Staplehurst only responses” Jubilee Field 3G pitch survey overview report as requested in the meeting, attached in **Appendix B**. The some of these figures are also included in the minutes in red as a comparison.

Public Forum

A resident raised some points on the survey.

- Out of the 312 responses only 283 are from Staplehurst – can this be assessed on the 283?
- Can we clarify the percentage of household / residents that replied from Staplehurst
- Should residents outside the Parish influence how funding is spent?
- 0 responses from children under 16 key users group need what effort were made?
- If under 16’s cannot access the survey how can they answer the survey
- Consultation is just a snap shot of a moment in time.
- If the council decides to proceed can they insure;
 - A safe design
 - Low cost rent for local groups
 - Low cost usage for local residents.

Present: Cllrs Riordan, Ash, Pett, Perry, Farragher, Ahmed, Eerdekenes, Martin, Arger, Alesi Castro, Hotson and Sharp plus the Clerk.

1. APOLOGIES: Cllrs Mclaughlin and Mclean

2. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:

2.1. Declarations of Lobbying - all

2.2. Changes to the Register of Interests - NA

2.3. Interests in Items on the Agenda – Cllr Perry Trustee of the JFMC and Cllr Alesi Girl Guide representative on the JFMC

2.4. Requests for Dispensation – Both Cllr Perry and Cllr Alesi requested dispensation to speak and vote on items 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 – Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Eerdekenes seconded to agree to the dispensation – agreed majority – 12 for, 0 against and 2 abstained

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3 PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION and DECISION

3.1 3G Consultation Report

Clerk introduced the item as they had worked with the Bid Consultant on the survey. We have followed the Council's Community Engagement Policy – including the Gunning Principles.

Picking up the points the raised by the resident. (Note figures mentioned in the meeting were 283 from Staplehurst and 18 from outside the Parish. The actual figures are 280 from Staplehurst and 21 from outside Staplehurst – these figures will be used throughout the rest of these minutes.)

- Out of the 312 responses 280 are from Staplehurst – can this be assessed on the 280? – **Will enquiry if this can be done – see appendix A and add to website.**
- Can we clarify the percentage of household / residents that replied from Staplehurst **The survey closed online on the 16th October 2023, due to the local postal service 3G multisport group agreed to accept hard copy responses until 23rd October 2023.**
If Staplehurst is TN12 0'... we received 280 responses
We received 7 responses with only TN12 (Likely to be Staplehurst)
We received 4 hard copy response with no post codes (likely to be Staplehurst)
We received 21 responses from outside Staplehurst
We received 2 damaged hardcopy response – which we did not enter – 1 appeared support supportive 1 appeared to object to the project

Latest Census indicates Staplehurst population 6,693 therefore using the 280 response figure @4.2% responses were from Staplehurst population
Using 280 response figure @ 3,200 households equates to 8.8% responses from Staplehurst households.

- Should residents outside the Parish influence how funding is spent, such as from Tonbridge? **A valid point, it was noted that only 2 voted from Tonbridge so statistically limited impact.**
- 0 responses from children under 16 key users group need what effort were made? **Engaged with Youth Service but little response – agree if the project proceed more engagement with under 16's.**
- If under 16's cannot access the survey how can they answer the survey – **see above**
- Consultation is just a snap shot of a moment in time. – **Correct. Consultation is done to help shape a project – it is not a referendum and not a "binding referendum". It helps inform the project.**
- If the council decides to proceed can they insure;
 - A safe design
 - Low cost rent for local groups
 - Low cost usage for local residents.

If project proceeds by all means can consider in the design process and the business planning

The Clerk started by thanking those who have taken part and noted that the consultation was done at an early stage to help shape the project. Some found it frustrating that a final design or business plan was not available. If the project proceeds it will be developed with input from the consultation.

Then highlighted some points in the consultation report;

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- 312 survey responses is @ 4.3% of population return rate or @ 8.8% returns from households. (The Staplehurst only responses was @4.2% and @ 8.8% of households)
- Important to acknowledge that if the project proceeds the “feel” of the Jubilee Field will change from “general open space” to “a sports ground.”
- **Question 8** - That 61% of responses were not concerned of the use of free open space for improved sporting infrastructure and 39% of responses were concerned of the use of free open space for improved sporting infrastructure (Staplehurst only assessment 60% of responses were not concerned of the use of free open space for improved sporting infrastructure and 40% of responses were concerned of the use of free open space for improved sporting infrastructure)
- **Question 9** - That 63% of responses were supportive of using the S106 funding for the project and that 38% of responses were unsupportive of using the S106 funding for the project (note anomaly due to rounding up percentages) (Staplehurst only assessment 62% of responses were supportive of using the S106 funding for the project and that 38% of responses were unsupportive of using the S106 funding for the project)
- **Question 10** - That 66% of responses were supportive (strongly agree / agree) of the project and 26% of responses were unsupportive (strongly disagree / disagree) of the project (Staplehurst only assessment that 64% of responses were supportive (strongly agree / agree) of the project and 27% of responses were unsupportive (strongly disagree / disagree) of the project)
- Those that do not use the facilities / their main reasons were summarised on page 10 of the Consultation Overview
- Walking / Dog walking was equal first with watching football in the reasons for using the Jubilee Field
- A range of excellent comments were made which should feed into the design and planning of the project, if the project proceeds.
- A range of excellent comments were made which should feed into the business plan of the project, if the project proceeds.
- Some questions were raised about S106

A range of funding questions were raised, to clarify;

S106 funding is a legal agreement between the Developer / land owner and the Planning Authority (MBC not SPC) – it is allocated with certain conditions such as open space or highways. It cannot be used for anything else, other than the specified conditions.

The Parish has requested and MBC agreed to use the following on the 3G pitch project at the Jubilee Field.

Hen and Duckhurst (14/502010) - £129,719.33 towards improvement , refurbishment and maintenance of the existing area of open space, play area and outdoor sports facilities at Surrenden Playing Field and Jubilee Field

£104,719.33 requested to Jubilee Field 3G multi-sports pitch – confirmed by MBC

Land North of Headcorn Rd – (14/505432) - £105,897.65 towards improvement and refurbishment of Jubilee Playing Fields and play area

Funding dedicated to Jubilee Field, requested all funding to 3G multi-sports pitch project when planning permission / quotes – confirmed from MBC

If we decide not to proceed or the project does not obtain planning permission the Parish Council could consider alternative uses for the S106 funding - within the specific conditions.

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If the funding is not used at all, the developer can claw the funding back (in these agreements not before 2030)

Community Infrastructure Levy funding (CIL) is now used, it is an accumulation of contribution paid to MBC who then pay directly to the Parish Council twice per year. It is more flexible and the Parish can decide which projects to spend it on throughout the Parish – no CIL funding is allocated to the 3G pitch project at the Jubilee Field.

The point about a sports ground is noted, but it is the purpose of the Jubilee Field Dog walking is equal first activity – need to consider in design process
Staplehurst is lucky to have such an active Junior Football team, the grass pitches do not meet their needs and they have to travel all over west Kent for “home matches and training” – the 3G pitch would elevate that problem.

The meeting closed to allow Mrs Brice – a resident who is Chairman of the 3G multi-sport pitch working group – to speak

This project has been about eight years for hard work, lobbying and arguing the case for a 3G pitch at Staplehurst. We have managed to get it in the National Football Development plan, Maidstone Football Development plan and improvements to the sporting infrastructure at Jubilee Field into the Staplehurst NDP. These are major achievements, and brings significant external funding. Yes, there will be issues, but it is a once in a life time opportunity to improve the community sporting infrastructure in Staplehurst.

Meeting re-opened

This is the main sporting open space in the village, other recreational open space such as Surrenden Field and Wimpey Field are available as well.

Is the main pitch open to the public open space? Yes when matches are not on. It was part of the agreement for the installation of the fencing. However the perception is that the main pitch is closed off.

We have to understand that there is give and take – Staplehurst residents use facilities outside the parish and others use our facilities – the Skatepark already attracts people from far and wide.

Only @5% response, is that reflective of the community?

Forms were sent to every household – we cannot force people to respond.

Note @5% return is a respectable return in line with other types of survey done nationally or by MBC / KCC.

Yes it would have been great to get more responses but this is a reasonable response to a consultation.

Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Martin seconded that Council had considered the consultation report on the 3G multi-sport pitch project – agreed unanimously

3.2 3G Procurement report

Following a debate the main points were;

- All fees are exclusive of VAT
- A robust procurement process has taken place
- FieldTurf were the lowest quote **£910,983.99**
- The fee does not include contingency as it is a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP)
- All tendering suppliers had included for disposing excavated material off site, we have indicated that we could use the spoil to create bunds etc on the site. FieldTurf

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indicate this would be a saving of **£48,717.18**, making the contract sum **£862,266.81**

- All tendering supplier's final commercial costs includes for a £65,000 net Client Provisional Sum for a possible new power supply for the AGP LED Floodlights.
- All tendering suppliers confirmed they would hold their price for 90 days plus a year post 18th October 2024 to allow for a July 2024 submission to the Football Foundation and a October 2024 grant award decision.
- The cost of Ecological Surveys, Arboricultural Surveys, Transports Assessments etc required for planning permission are budgeted for at £10,000. (If we wish to proceed we would need to pay the survey costs plus overheads and profit as the planning permission is submitted, spring 2024. This would come to **£11,287.50**)
- If the project is delayed further cost would be incurred in the region of £50,000 - £75,000.
- The fee does **not** include planning application fee
- The fee does **not** include pre-planning application advice meeting with MBC, if the Parish Council wish to have a pre-planning application advice meeting with MBC the Parish Council would have to fund it.
- If the planning application process leads to conditions such as safe pedestrian access or increased car parking a revised GMP will come forward and that will be the GMP 2 contract sum.
- If items raised such as safe pedestrian access or increased car parking are **not planning conditions** then the Football Foundation would **not part-fund these items**.
- If the Parish Council wished to deliver these elements of the project the **Parish Council would have to find alternative funding**.

Why do we not just improve the grass pitch drainage? The Clerk referred to the FAQ question 5.

The Jubilee Field is mostly Wealden Clay, which is very challenging to effectively drain. The "Ball Park" cost is approximately £250,000 to install sand based drainage into the pitches plus approximately £50,000 every 5 years to renew the sand slit drains¹. The usage would typically be only 4 to 5 hours (2 adult matches / 3 junior matches per week per pitch) with no training and in mid-winter reduced usage due to weather.

In simple terms the usage would not generate enough income to fund the general maintenance / ongoing drainage costs. So pitches would get over used and fall into problems.

A 3G pitch costs approximately £1,000,000 to install and can be used up to 80 hours per week. It generates income to cover general maintenance, long term maintenance costs and any surplus will be ring fenced to improve the facilities at the Jubilee Field.

Is too much funding being focused on the sports community, what about the non-sports community?

Is this just a vanity / legacy project?

Can we purchase parcel of open space on the fringe of the village – likely to be expensive but could put forward to the NDP group / Local Plan Review

We need to ensure that the design process highlights any elements that the Football Foundation will **not part fund** and that the Council will have to find alternative funding for.

¹ Based on similar projects in the area – would need detailed site surveys and costed designs
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Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Farragher seconded that Council had considered MGAC procurement report for the Jubilee Field 3G multi-sport pitch project – agreed unanimously

3.4 3G Options report

Following a debate the main points were

- It is vital that a draft business plan comes forward as soon as possible, we do not want to be left with a project that does not cover its costs.
- The Submission to the Football Foundation has a standard business plan template. Expenditure includes – maintenance costs, staff, sinking fund for long term replacements etc
- Income from pitch hires. If it is not sustainable income covers expenditure it will not get approval from the Football Foundation.
- The business plan needs to show not just local football but also other activities using the facility. A range of activities were mentioned.
- An indicative business plan can come forward but the information is not confirmed until after planning permission. Secondly we have not yet marketed the facility. This would normally happen after confirmation of the Football Foundation application funding
- We have had opportunities like this before – Indoor Sports Centre - and not being able to deliver them – important we move forward with this project
- The issue of Council funding was raised – see table below of costs

Element	Cost	Comment
Bid Consultant	£10,309.00	Agreed 5 th June 2023
FieldTurf	£11,287.50	Next stage
Preplanning application advice	£1,505.00	Next stage
Planning application fee	0	To be determined
Legal Charge	£2,000.00	Fee to Football Foundation
Council legal costs	0	To be determined
Miscellaneous	£4,898.50	Cover planning application and Council legal fees
Total	£30,000.00	

- If the project proceeds, £30,000 of Parish Council funding is required. This will be the Parish Council contribution to the total project cost.
- Clerk was asked to clarify the following;
 - If we move forward but decide not to submit a planning application, what would be the Cost to the Council?
@ £25,000 due to upfront nature of our funding plus abortive fees from Football Foundation @£10,000 – A total of @ £35,000.
 - If we move forward and planning permission is not forthcoming what would be the cost to the Council?
@25,000 – due to upfront nature of our funding but **no** abortive fees from Football Foundation. A total of @ £25,000

The Clerk summarised the project plan – see **appendix C** attached

Cllr Pett proposed to “pause the project to allow time for a business plan to come forward”. This was not seconded.

Cllr Hotson, appreciated Cllr Pett’s sentiments around the business plan, however as we have heard, people have been working on this for years, £30,000 from the Parish is not an unreasonable sum for a £1,000,000 project, that we are following a staged process and as

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long as the indicative business plan comes forward before we commit to a further stage he would support it.

Cllr Riordan requested a recorded vote.

Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Hotson seconded that Council should approve the resolution below;

Resolution; To proceed with the 3g multi-sport pitch project to the next stage and;

- I. approve £15,000 from General Reserves – of which £10,309 has already been approved for the appointment of Continuum Leisure - – for the Jubilee Field 3G multi-sport pitch project (Jubilee Field Budget)
- II. approve £15,000 from Earmarked Reserves for the Jubilee Field – for the Jubilee Field 3G multi-sport pitch project
(The Parish Council’s funding is a total of £30,000)
- III. approve the MGAC recommendation to appoint FieldTurf at a cost to the Parish Council of £11,287.50 (GMP) (Jubilee Field Budget)
- IV. seek a pre-application meeting with MBC – senior planner and Head of Service - fee £1,505. (Jubilee Field Budget)
- V. ensure the design and planning comments in the Consultation Report are fed into the design and planning process i.e. car parking, etc
- VI. bring back to Council the design, prior to submission of a planning application December 2023 / January 2024
- VII. ensure the business plan comments in the Consultation Report are fed into the business plan process i.e. low cost use, etc
- VIII. agree a part payment of £425 to Continuum Leisure for a draft business plan in December 2023 / January 2024 (part funding of the already agreed £850 in I. above)

Agreed majority; 11 for, 1 against and 1 abstained

Cllrs Riordan, Ash, Perry, Farragher, Ahmed, Eerdeken, Martin, Arger, Castro, Hotson and Sharp - for

Cllr Pett - against

Cllr Alesi - abstained

3. Public Forum

A resident asked for confirmation that the indicative business plan would come before the council agreed to submit a planning application – confirmed.

A resident raised the concerns that the junior Football club would use a significant amount of time on the 3G pitch – not much time for other uses / users.

***These minutes are not verbatim but a summary of the discussion at the meeting.
The decisions are accurate.***

Meeting closed – 9:30pm

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