

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL  
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on  
Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at 7.45 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Ashby, Buller, Burnham, Claridge (until the point indicated in the minutes), Gosling (until the point indicated in the minutes), Lain-Rose, Manning, Perry (from the point indicated in the minutes), Reardon (until the point indicated in the minutes), Riordan, Smith, Spearink, Whittle and Silkin who was in the Chair.  
Parish Clerk: Mr M J Westwood

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Sharp.

**COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS** regarding items on the Agenda:-

Changes to the Register of Interests – none declared.

Interest in Items on the Agenda – Councillor Burnham declared an interest in the Planning Committee report (Parish Council Reports item 2b) and said he had not participated in the Planning Committee discussion and voting and would not participate this time.

Requests for Dispensation – none requested.

**APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES** Minute pages 1583-1585 of 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016 were proposed for approval by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Riordan, APPROVED by Councillors, signed by Chairman Silkin and made available at [http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes\\_of\\_the\\_last\\_meetings.aspx](http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx).

**FINANCE REPORTS:-**

1. Accounts for payment for approval. Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Claridge, the list of accounts for payment was APPROVED. Payments for the period 10<sup>th</sup> December to 6<sup>th</sup> January totalled £16,430.44; receipts for the period were £162.67 (Parish Council) and £0.19 (Village Centre Contingency).
2. Summation of Accounts to 06 January 2017 - NOTED by Councillors and published at [http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes\\_of\\_the\\_last\\_meetings.aspx](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx).
3. Finance Group Report including Budget 2017-18 and Parish Precept – written report of meeting 06/01/17, oral report of meeting 13/01/17 and proposed budget for 2017-18 including Parish Precept (for decision). Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Riordan, Councillors RESOLVED to APPROVE the recommendations of Finance Group arising from its meeting on 06/01/17 as follows: (1) Jubilee Playing Field (item 6 of meeting report) - the anticipated cost of servicing the existing Jubilee Field Management Committee mower should be covered by Council reserves if necessary; (2) Volunteer Warden Support Scheme (item 8 of meeting report) – no financial support to be given at the present time; (3) (a) Christmas Lights (item 9 of meeting report) – Kent Highways to be chased to repair the four High Street lamp columns that failed load-testing to ensure all 24 motifs could be used in the street in 2017; (b) to delegate to the Clerk the disposal/scrapping/sale of the 30 old motifs – a suggestion by Councillor Buller to use old motifs elsewhere in the village was not agreed by councillors; (c) Councillor Lain-Rose to investigate storage locations for the new lights – Councillor Riordan said he would discuss possibilities with the Jubilee Field Management Committee; (d) to remain with e-on as unmetered electricity supplier. Proposed by Chairman Silkin, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, councillors RESOLVED to AGREE the recommendation of Finance Group arising from its meeting on 13/01/17 (item 3 of meeting report) to APPROVE the previously circulated version 4 of the 2017-2018 budget and a precept of £139,400. Councillors NOTED that the precept level equated to £59.11 per annum or £1.14 per week per Band D property, representing an increase of £4.11 per annum or 8 pence per

- week per Band D property. They also NOTED that the parish council would not receive central government local council tax support grant which had been withdrawn.
4. Bell Lane Hedge – Report on quotations obtained for works pursuant to Min 1572 of 7/11/16 (for decision). *Councillor Perry joined the meeting during discussion of this item.* Councillors discussed the RFO's report on quotations received for work to cut the hedge along the unadopted part of Bell Lane and the issues arising from the proposal to do the work: the lane was regularly used by local people and a one-off cut would put the hedge in a more manageable condition; however, in unadopted roads the responsibility for maintenance rests with frontagers (those with homes fronting the road) and public funding of work could be seen as setting a precedent. Councillors NOTED that Finance Group did not consider such work as appropriate for Parish Council funding. A motion proposed by Councillor Spearink, seconded by Councillor Riordan, to accept a quotation of £300 for cutting the south side of the hedge on the unadopted part of Bell Lane was NOT AGREED by councillors (For 5, Against 6, Abstained 3). Councillors did AGREE that information about the cost of cutting the hedge should be shared with residents in the relevant part of Bell Lane in case they wished to make a private arrangement with a contractor.
  5. National Allotment Society – Annual Membership Subscription of £55 (budgeted item - for approval). Proposed by Councillor Burnham, seconded by Councillor Spearink, councillors RESOLVED to renew the membership subscription for 2017.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting:-**

1. Civic Service 14/03/17 – Invitation from Lord Lieutenant of Kent. Councillors were asked to advise the Clerk by the deadline of 03/02/17 if they wished to attend the service.
2. Kent Minerals & Waste Sites Plans: Call for Sites – Consultation by KCC – oral report of review by Cllr Spearink (Min1583). Councillor Spearink said he had reviewed the plans and they did not impact on Staplehurst.
3. Maidstone Borough Council Planning Committee Meeting 27/10/16 – Letter from MBC Chief Executive. Councillors NOTED the MBC Chief Executive's undated response (received 20/12/16) to Chairman Silkin's letter of 16/11/16 about issues arising from MBC Planning Committee's discussion of three Headcorn Road planning applications on 27/10/16. Councillor Perry stated for the record that he had been advised just 30 minutes before the meeting that he should not attend during discussion of the Staplehurst applications. He said he had told the MBC Chief Executive that he believed further member training on participation and pre-determination issues was needed. Whilst recognising the pressures on MBC officers, many councillors retained concerns about the management of the applications and the lack of a joined-up approach to the two Fishers Farm sites. They AGREED that the Chairman should write to the MBC Chief Executive to reiterate their concerns and to seek a meeting. *Councillor Reardon left the meeting.*
4. Objectives for 2017-18 – Discussion of how setting key objectives would benefit the Parish Council. Councillor Claridge said he felt that the Parish Council's effectiveness could be improved by focusing on agreed key objectives. Councillor Whittle said objectives should satisfy SMART criteria. Chairman Silkin asked councillors to think about possible objectives and submit them to the Clerk for circulation with papers for the meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> February when an agenda item will be to establish ten key objectives.
5. Parish Surgery – (i) Review of surgery programme to date and decision on future programme: councillors agreed that the weekly surgeries were proving worthwhile and should continue; (ii) Report on parish surgery held 7 & 14 January: Councillor Burnham said residents had raised a planning application by Fridays, asked about the closure of NatWest, praised the new Christmas lights and complained about car parking restrictions near the school which created difficulty for Bower Walk residents who had no off-street

- parking. Councillor Riordan said he would liaise with Borough Councillor Brice about the parking issue. Councillors Buller and Smith said they had received enquiries about fly-tipping, the Village Centre consultation, Sainsbury's, NatWest and the Christmas lights; (iii) Appointment of representatives for future surgeries: 4<sup>th</sup> February – Councillor Riordan, 11<sup>th</sup> February Councillor Ashby.
6. Policy Consultation on Draft Public Service Ombudsman Bill – Correspondence from National Association of Local Councils (for response by 24/01/17). NOTED without further comment by Councillors.
  7. Salt Bins – Correspondence with request for additional provision. Councillors Spearink, Lain-Rose and Buller volunteered to investigate potential new sites and to report to Full Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February.
  8. Surrenden Playing Field – Request from Carnival & Fete Committee to use the playing field for (i) 10k run 11/06/17; (ii) Carnival & Fete 24/06/17 (provisional). Councillors AGREED nem con to the requested dates.
  9. Vice-Chairman Vacancy - To receive nominations for the vacant second Vice-Chairman role and vote for a replacement to take up the role. Chairman Silkin stated that a benefit of having a second vice-chairman was to share duties more evenly, noting that Councillor Burnham was not only sole Vice-Chairman but also Chairman of Planning Committee. He invited nominations for the position: Councillors Spearink and Perry proposed Councillor Riordan; Chairman Silkin and Councillor Ashby proposed Councillor Lain-Rose. After a vote by show of hands, Councillor Riordan was elected by majority as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council.

*Councillor Claridge left the meeting.*

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

1. Clerk's Report – The Clerk reported: a meeting with NatWest would be held at Helen Grant MP's office on 27<sup>th</sup> January; the village caretaker was checking salt levels in the parish bins following the recent bad weather; the Clerk had been working with Councillor Lain-Rose on job descriptions and documentation for Jubilee Field and the Youth Club; the Parish Office staff would be working on transition arrangements over the coming weeks leading up to the RFO's retirement.
2. Written Reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for decision or noting
  - a) Bell Lane Pond – Proposal for post-clearance work to enhance the pond area. Councillor Spearink discussed his report on work undertaken by the Community Payback team at Bell Lane pond, which he said had been very productive. He said that following the imminent completion of clearance he wished to recommend planting a birch grove which over time could grow into an attractive feature. Councillors RESOLVED to purchase 50 saplings at a cost of £39.50 and to spend a further sum up to £100 for related planting requirements.
  - b) Planning Committee – Motion to reverse the Committee's approval of a comment in respect of planning application 16/507661 Land to the South of Marden Road 'If consideration were ever given to approval of the application they would wish to see a transfer of adjoining land for community purposes' (Min1290P-1291P) and withdraw the same comment submitted to MBC. Motion submitted in accordance with standing orders 7(a) and 9(i) (SL-R/MA/JP/BM/JR/PR/AS/GS). Councillor Lain-Rose explained that the motion had been submitted by eight members for the reason set out in the written notice: 'This motion primarily undermines Staplehurst Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan which received 93% support from voters in the local referendum and has recently been adopted by Maidstone Borough Council pursuant to the Localism Act 2011 Schedule 38A (9) and Regulations 19 and 20 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.' Councillor Perry said he

felt it was a mistake to link the comment on the land to the recommendation on the planning application. Councillor Buller said that she had originally voted against the comment and remained against it. Councillor Riordan said he had opposed the related planning application and still did, but he had reconsidered his initial support of the comment. Councillor Spearink explained that he had proposed the comment because he felt the relevant adjoining land would be a valuable extension to the Wimpey Field land which was coming into Parish Council ownership and which would be a buffer against expansion of the built-up area; he said it did not imply any support for the related planning application. He said he was very unhappy that the motion sought to reverse the vote by Planning Committee to make the comment. Councillor Gosling said she shared Councillor Spearink's view on the motion. By majority decision Councillors RESOLVED to APPROVE the submitted motion to withdraw the comment (Councillors Spearink and Gosling against; Councillors Burnham, Silkin and Whittle abstained).

- c) Rural Settlement Group – Minutes of meeting 07/12/16 (for noting). Item deferred.
  - d) Surrenden Playing Field & Nicholson Walk – Report and proposal to acquire freehold from Maidstone Borough Council (SL-R/JP). The item was discussed with confidential item 'Surrenden Playing Field & Nicholson Walk Commercial Issues'.
  - e) Village Clean-Up – Proposal to hold event on 18/03/17 (JB/TB) (for approval). Item deferred.
3. Oral Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only
- a) Village Centre Redevelopment Group – Oral report of meeting 12/01/17 (SL-R). Item deferred.
  - b) Wimpey Field Open Space – Update (PS). Item deferred.

*Councillor Gosling left the meeting.*

**REPORTS FROM OTHER COUNCILS, AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS** for noting:-

- 1. Borough Councillor's Oral Report – Item deferred.
- 2. PCSO Report – Item deferred.

**REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS** (written reports for noting):-

No items received.

**URGENT MATTERS** (at Chairman's discretion, information only items for noting or for decision at a future meeting)

No items were raised.

**SPECIAL MOTION & REPORT- SURRENDEN PLAYING FIELD AND NICHOLSON WALK COMMERCIAL ISSUES:-**

- 1. To move that the public be excluded from item 2 due to its confidential nature – Councillors RESOLVED to AGREE the motion and members of the public left the meeting.
- 2. To consider Councillor Lain-Rose's report and recommendations on the commercial aspects of the proposed freehold transfer of Surrenden Playing Field and Nicholson Walk. Councillors initially discussed Councillor Lain-Rose's report dated 28/12/16 (Parish Council Reports 2d above) and, proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose and seconded by Chairman Silkin, RESOLVED nem con to AGREE the recommendations that: (i) Staplehurst Parish Council continue to pursue the option of the freehold for Surrenden Field, along with Nicholson Walk, to be transferred to the Parish Council, subject to satisfaction with commercial, financial and legal aspects; (ii) the Clerk, in consultation with Chairman Silkin and Vice-Chairman Burnham, negotiate with Maidstone Borough Council the acquisition of the freehold of Surrenden Field and Nicholson Walk; (iii) the Clerk will seek legal advice to

support the acquisition of the freehold of Surrenden Field and Nicholson Walk. Councillors then discussed Councillor Lain-Rose's confidential report dated 04/01/17 titled 'Surrenden Fields, Staplehurst (Negotiations)' and, proposed by Chairman Silkin and seconded by Councillor Riordan, RESOLVED to AGREE the recommendations numbered 1-5 therein.

Chairman.....

**PUBLIC FORUM:** A resident said he disagreed with Planning Committee's approval (Min1290P-1291P) of a comment about transferring land adjoining the site which was the subject of planning application 16/507661; he also said the Neighbourhood Plan was very clear about Fishers Farm being treated as one site and not two.