

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF STAPLEHURST  
held in the South Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre at  
8.00pm on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014

**PRESENT** – Twenty-three residents signed the attendance list. Also attending were eleven Parish Councillors, County & Borough Councillor Eric Hotson, Borough Councillor Richard Lusty, Community Warden Mira Martin, Peter Waring (Environment Agency), Assistant Clerk Deborah Jenkins and Parish Clerk Mick Westwood.

**APOLOGIES** – Parish Councillors Margaret Ashby, Paul Butcher, Neal Kemp and John Reardon; PCSO Pete Gardner.

**ENVIRONMENT AGENCY** – Councillor John Perry took the Chair and welcomed Mr Peter Waring from the Environment Agency. Mr Waring discussed the role of the agency in providing flood warnings, preventing inappropriate development, promoting new flood defence schemes and carrying out essential maintenance of water courses. He advised that the agency was seeking to fine-tune its flood warning service to make it more focused. He said that new flood protection schemes were being considered but not to protect some at the expense of making others' situation worse. He discussed the importance of sustainable drainage schemes and said they should imitate greenfield rates; he preferred open storage systems to closed ones. Mr Waring invited residents to complete questionnaires, available at the meeting and from the Parish Office, and left his own contact details for further information. The Chairman thanked Mr Waring who then left the meeting.

**MINUTES OF THE 2013 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** – These had been circulated beforehand. There being no comments, the Minutes were signed as a true record by the Chairman of the Parish Council, John Perry. There were no matters arising.

**STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT** – Copies of the Statement of Accounts (subject to audit) had been circulated and the Statement was noted. Net current assets totalled £106,776.28 represented by funds and reserves in the following sums: General Fund £29,032.85; Allotments £10,000; Surrenden Playing Field project £17,000; balance of underspent sums carried forward £36,683.39; plus reserves held on behalf of others totalling £14,060.04. There were no questions raised.

**GYBBONS CHARITY ACCOUNT** – The balance at 31.12.2013 stood at £1,955.10. Income received during the previous year from War Stock and Interest totalled £19.23. Donations totalling £1,250 were made.

### **ANNUAL REPORTS**

**Staplehurst Parish Council Chairman** – Chairman John Perry spoke about a busy twelve months in his report which was subsequently filed herewith and published on the Parish Council website. He discussed the wide range of services provided by the Council and commented on issues faced during the year: the condition of the Parade; the poor bus service; supermarket applications; the question of housing numbers which had featured prominently in the Borough Council's draft local plan and in the Parish Council's work on a Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan. He thanked a number of people for their contributions to parish life over the year: Staplehurst's PCSO and Community Warden; the Rector of All Saints; the Member of Parliament; councillors (parish and borough); the Chair of Rural Settlement Group; and the Parish Office team.

Borough Councillor Lusty – Councillor Lusty discussed the value of his monthly library surgery which over the years has seen many visitors with a wide range of concerns. He cited as an example of the issues raised this year parking in Greenhill, Little Field and Poyntell Road, for which measures would shortly come into force. He said he had visited Thanet to look at solar farms to inform his view on the Great Pagehurst application which was due to come before MBC Planning Committee in the coming weeks. On housing numbers he said he remained concerned about the challenge of dealing with a growing population and on supermarkets he was persuaded by the benefits of facilities in the station area offered by the second supermarket proposal.

County & Borough Councillor Hotson – Councillor Hotson observed that his 22 years as borough councillor had seen five parish council chairmen and 55 different councillors. He declared he had been proud to serve as chairman of Kent County Council for the past year. He remarked that the question of housing numbers was very much out for consultation and praised the work of the Rural Settlement Group and Neighbourhood Plan team. He discussed his unease about solar farms (not 'farms' in his view) and the challenge of resolving issues with the bus service and bus passes. He warned that there were financial pressures which would affect services and said that new ways of working were being examined. He said his KCC Member's Grant had last year paid for a speed sign on Church Hill, bollards at the school and an extended 30mph limit on Marden Road; however, this year, his grant pot was reduced from £35,000 to £25,000, which had to cover all parishes in his division. He gave special thanks to Staplehurst's PCSO and Community Warden.

Police – PCSO Gardner's report had been circulated previously and published on the village website. Staplehurst crime figures for the year to March 2014 showed a fall of 17 against the previous year.

Mr Robin Kenworthy – Modernising the Ambulance Service: Mr Robin Kenworthy gave a short slide presentation to illustrate local initiatives, including improvements to response capability. He discussed the different types of responders and vehicles and illustrated how a greater area could now be reached within eight minutes.

### **ELECTORS' QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

Several questions were raised. Station Car Parking – pressure should be put on Network Rail to address the shortage of parking. Chairman John Perry explained that the station area featured in the Neighbourhood Plan and that the Parish Council intended to pursue action at an appropriate time. Street Lights – plans for changes in Staplehurst. Councillors Hotson and Lusty spoke of the part-night lighting conversion plan under the KCC Safe and Sensible street light project that is aiming to save £1m p.a. and cut carbon emissions by 5,000 tonnes. Chairman John Perry explained that the Parish Council was making changes to the lights for which it is responsible. Grass at Bell Lane - MBC is responsible for the areas adjacent to the car park. Investment in Staplehurst – any interest from ADL/Scarab? Councillor Kelly said he had made an informal enquiry. Litter – vanishing bins do not seem to be replaced; some event posters remain in place long after their date. Councillor Lusty commended a community campaign in Bearsted. Noticeboards – they are for community and not commercial use.

The meeting closed at 10.15 p.m.

Chairman.....