

Staplehurst Parish Council

MEETING NOTES OF THE COUNCIL'S:

COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT GROUP

held at **Parish Office, Village Centre, Staplehurst** on

20 May 2019 between **19:30** and **21:40**

Members Present: Parish Councillors Bowden, Buller (*until the point indicated*), Forward, Lain-Rose (Chair), Langmaid, Miller, Perry, Rawlinson, Sharp (*from the point indicated*) and Symes and Non-Councillor Member Louise Brice (*from the point indicated*).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Parish Councillors Chapman, Riordan and Thomas. In addition, Louise Brice had expressed that she may be late.

2. NOTES OF THE GROUP MEETING

The Group's meeting notes of 18 March 2019 were **AGREED** as an accurate record by Members.

3. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS

Parish Councillor Miller enquired as to the necessity of the declaring interests at Group meetings. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that as part of Section 3.21 of the Council's Standing Orders, a Councillor and a non-councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in the Council's code of conduct in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under the code on their right to participate and vote on the matter. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose went on to explain that, in his view, it was particularly important for Group meetings as these are not open to public or press.

Parish Councillor Perry declared interests in Items 8 (Jubilee Field), Item 9 (Surrenden Field), Item 11 (Parish Public Toilet Review), Item 12 (Youth Club). Parish Councillor Lain-Rose declared interests in Item 12 (Youth Club). Parish Councillor Symes declared an interest in Item 6 (Street Lighting). Non-Councillor Member Louise Brice (*when arrived*) declared an interest in Item 9 (Surrenden Field) and Item 11 (Parish Public Toilet Review).

Members **AGREED** to grant dispensation to all members for all interests declared.

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4. CHAIR OF THE GROUP (2019/20)

Following the appointment of Membership on 13 May 2019, the Membership of the Group must agree who will be the Chair of the Group, as set out in the Group's Terms of Reference Section 5. Parish Councillor Buller proposed Parish Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Parish Councillor John Perry. Those present unanimously **AGREED**. Therefore, Parish Councillor Lain-Rose will continue to be the Chair of the Group until the first Group meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council in May 2020.

5. SUMMER PLAYScheme 2019

Parish Councillor Buller explained that the Summer Playscheme has its programme of activities published on the website and this was tweaked as they had displayed the BioBlitz event on the wrong date and this is now corrected.

Parish Councillor Buller explained that the playscheme will run from the Staplehurst Primary School (hopefully the infant area) for three-weeks in the Summer, the first week will be mornings only and the second and third weeks will be mornings and afternoons. Therefore, users can decide to attend for three hours in the morning or three hours in the afternoon or decide to attend all day.

The first day of the playscheme which will be on 29 July 2019. It will be an open morning. The parents/guardians take their child/ren to visit the playscheme and activities will happen but will be an open morning to allow for the child/ren to familiarise themselves and for parents/guardians to discuss with the staff running the scheme.

Parish Councillor Buller explained that once the scheme is completed, the costs are presented to the Council and the deficit it covered by the Council, as the fees paid by the users do not cover the entire running costs. This is budgeted as £2,000 and usually comes under this.

Parish Councillor Buller explained that councillors can visit the playscheme whilst it is running. However, explained that councillors should wear their identification badge. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose asked if they had been provided with badges, it was confirmed that these had not been provided yet. Probably due to the office not receiving all photographs from new councillors.

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained historically that Maidstone Borough Council used to contribute to the costs associated to the playscheme. However, in recent years, this has been withdrawn and now it is the responsibility of the Council to fund this.

Parish Councillor Forward asked that Parish Councillor Buller requests that the playscheme provider splits the attendance to the BioBlitz into two groups.

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6. STREET LIGHTING (CHAPEL LANE)

Following the Council meeting on 13 May 2019, Parish Councillor Lain-Rose provided a verbal update that Parish Councillor Riordan was working with a colleague in UK Power Network to look at both street lights in Chapel Lane and once more information is available would be tabled at the earliest Community Enhancement Group Meeting.

This was **AGREED** by Members and was noted that consultation with affected residents was necessary and by holding a discussion at the Group meeting prior to Council consideration would provide additional time for the consultation.

Parish Councillor Perry requested whether a discussion with County Councillor Hotson should take place to ascertain whether he would support this project from his KCC Members' Grant. This was **AGREED** by Members and Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that usually County Councillor Hotson generally likes to support by part-funding this with the Council and clarification should be sought to ensure that County Councillor Hotson would be happy to contribute along with Borough Councillors Perry and Brice's grant (potentially without Council injecting money).

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that historically that the Council had previously upgraded all their streetlights and handed back to Kent County Council and where they could not upgrade decommissioning had taken place. However, residents requested that we kept the Chapel Lane lights in place and would be prepared (when the need arose) to maintain the lights themselves. It was **NOTED** by Members that should the Council secure the funding and arrangements to maintain the lights on this occasion that the condition that should the need arise in the future to maintain them that this is not automatically granted and a review should take place (with consultation to residents) and Chapel Lane residents be given the opportunity to financially contribute, prior to decommissioning.

Parish Councillor Bowden enquired whether they were expecting to retain the same style lighting as currently or will the lights go to LED which is more efficient to run. Members **NOTED** this and depending on the results of the investigations coordinated by Parish Councillor Riordan, this would be fed back to the Group and consultation should be made with the residents.

7. 2019/20: COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT BUDGET

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose introduced the report detailing the Group's budgets. The report provides drilled-down detail to what is covered under each budget heading to provide Members more of an understanding of the Group's area of responsibility.

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Parish Councillor Bowden explained that he had looked at this in some detail and when he became a councillor he had spoken with the Parish Office team, who explained the Council was operating a deficit budget. Parish Councillor Bowden felt that savings should be identified.

Parish Councillor Bowden enquired:

- J as to why the Skatepark needed repainting annually and why it is so expensive. Parish Councillor Perry explained that the repainting is expensive because of the specialist nature of the paint and the limited number of contractors able to undertake this work. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that this was painted annually for health and safety reasons due to the usage of the equipment and is almost certain that it is covered by a risk assessment that satisfies the Council's insurers. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose also noted that the Council is liaising with a local contractor who could undertake the work at a considerably lower cost, which may provide some savings.
- J as to why the Council injects money into the Churchyard. Parish Councillor Perry explained it is for generally maintenance of the All Saints Churchyard. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that the Churchyard Agreement is published online under Policies & Procedures and this agreement was entered into because the maintenance of the churchyard was too onerous on the All Saints Church. It is believed, that if the churchyard was not continued to be maintained by the church, the churchyard would be closed or the church could ask the Council to be responsible for maintaining. Therefore, the Council believed that the most cost-effective and best value for money option would be to financially support the church to continue its responsibilities.
- J as to why the Council spends so much money on public toilets. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that was is not reflected within the report is the £2,500 granted to the Council by Maidstone Borough Council for maintaining the toilets in the parish on their behalf. In addition, the Council is in the middle of a review on Public Toilets within the parish and explained that this will be updated later on in the agenda.
- J as to why the contingency budget under Jubilee Fields is nearly 50% of the entire budget. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that the contingency included legal costs for reviewing the management structure of the Jubilee Field Management Committee. Members will be aware that the budget of the Jubilee Fields was overspent considerably last financial year, primarily due to the purchase of the Mower.

Non-Councillor Brice arrived at this point.

Parish Councillor Bowden explained the need to save money. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that although the Council is running deficit budget, Members should not make its priority reduce spending, it should make it obtaining value for money. There are ways that revenue increases, such as an increase to the tax base and finding alternative funding streams (i.e. grants, donations from funders).

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Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that as individual Councillors and as a Council generally any expenditure should be considered with the following in mind: (a) is the expenditure necessary; (b) does it represent value for money and (c) can it be funded utilising alternative revenue streams (i.e. grants).

The Council historically hasn't consistently looked for alternative funding streams and an example of undertaking this is apply to the Maidstone Leisure Centre Trust for funding to support the drainage work at the Jubilee Fields, Blakemore Retail for the BioBlitz event and some primarily work at The Parade.

Non-Councillor Member Louise Brice explained that Golding Homes have a pot of money and that Tracey Crouch has a list of funders on her website which may be useful. Louise also commented that traditionally every time she is made aware of any funding, she forwards on to Parish Councillor Lain-Rose, he is already aware and has applied for the funding.

Parish Councillor Perry requested that the 2019/20 skatepark repainting allocated expenditure is moved into reserves. This was **AGREED** by the Members to request that the Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer includes this to the Finance & Strategy Group to make a recommendation to the Council.

Non-Councillor Louise Brice requested that the £2,000 set aside for the legal costs that is covered in Jubilee Field contingencies is removed and added into its own line under the budget heading. This was **AGREED** by the Members.

Non-Councillor Louise Brice suggested that the BioBlitz events could be charged for (i.e. £1 per attendee). This was discussed by Members and agreed the time and energy coordinating and managing this fee would outweigh the benefit and didn't fit the spirit of the event. However, it was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to Council that a donation bucket/box is available at the BioBlitz on the Wimpey Field for voluntary contributions to assist with the cost.

Parish Councillor Forward explained to the Members what the BioBlitz event is to the new Members of the Group and Council.

Non-Councillor Louise Brice enquired about the unallocated donation budget and whether this should be removed or allocated. Parish Councillor Perry explained the importance of having flexibility to requests that occur during the financial year, outside the budget-setting cycle. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained this is similar to what happened with the TN Live Festival and the Family Fireworks Group.

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8. JUBILEE FIELD

Parish Councillor Sharp arrived at this point.

8.1 EMERGENCY LIGHTING

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose introduced the Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer's report. This was discussed at length by the Members, in particular whether to refer this to the Jubilee Field Management Committee. Members felt that on this occasion, despite the particulars of the lease, it would be more effective for the Council to agree this expenditure, due to the lack of funding available to Jubilee Field Management Committee currently and the length of time until the next planned meeting in July 2019. Therefore, it was **AGREED** by Members to make a recommendation on the supplier to the Council for approval on the expenditure.

Members discussed the two quotes received and **NOTED** that one of the quotations was provided by a Parish Councillor. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose clarified that when this was sent for a quote, it was whilst that individual was not a Councillor. After much discussion it was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to Council that the quotation provided by County Fire Protection to supply and install 6 no. LED batten emergency lights at a cost of £680.00 (exc. VAT) should be authorised and assigned to the Council's Jubilee Field budget heading. The rationale to accept this quotation was due to the contractor conducting the inspection.

Parish Councillor Buller left the meeting at this point.

8.2 MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose provided a verbal update on the management and maintenance agreement. It was explained to members there is now a fairly new drafted agreement that this Group will need to revisit and if any changes are made recommended to Council. The draft agreement formally transfers the Council's responsibility to the Jubilee Field Management Committee, which includes the grass mowing and hedge cutting. This transfer formally represents the current situation of how the field is maintained.

The agreement is required under the lease between the Council and the Jubilee Field Management Committee. This requirement has not changed and although at different times by different people this has been attempted to be progressed. It has now got to a stage further than previously. However, Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that it is not fully completed yet and further work was required.

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that the agreement needed to be clearer and more prescriptive of the how the Council expects the Jubilee Field to be managed by the Management Committee. For example, how it should raise funds on improving the car park.

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The agreement will need to be extremely clear on which party is responsible for certain types of maintenance and management of the field.

Non-Councillor Member Louise Brice queried the impact of the development of the site to any agreement reached now. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that the agreement, where as far as possible will incorporate the planned developments of the site into the agreement now and will include a clear mechanism for further development as part of the agreement, to make it clear how the Jubilee Field Management Committee will work with the Council to develop the site, in line with the Council's Neighbourhood Plan. However, if the need arises in the future, this agreement would need to be reviewed to ensure it is still relevant and where necessary variations to the management and maintenance agreement would need to be negotiated between the parties and agreed in writing and added as an appendix to the agreement.

Non-Councillor Member Louise Brice raised that Maidstone Borough Council has potentially financial investment from the Community Infrastructure Levy and Business Rates Retention Pilot Project which needs to be investigated on how the rural parishes can access. Louise explained that it was her view to see Staplehurst designated as Southern Sports Hub for Maidstone. It was proposed by Louise that John Perry and Louise Brice (as Borough Councillors) and Sam Lain-Rose (as Chair of the Community Enhancement Group) to meet with Maidstone Borough Council's Officers – namely William Cornall (Director of Regeneration & Place) and Mark Green (Director of Finance & Business Improvement). This was **AGREED** by the Members to meet with Maidstone Borough Council officers to investigate, scope the opportunities and report back to the Group at a future meeting. Any meeting will include an Officer of the Council (if available).

Parish Councillor Forward enquired as to when the management and maintenance agreement would be in place. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that he would look to redraft an updated agreement and share with the Group. However, felt it appropriate to allow Paddy Riordan (as Chairman of the Jubilee Field Management Committee) to hold his Annual General Meeting in July 2019 and move on from there.

8.3 FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENTS

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that there had not been any updates from the Footballers on progress and that the last time he had been involved in discussions was regarding the Planning Application and working with Parish Councillor Perry to expedite the release of the decision to satisfy the funders on their visit to the football site.

The football club have been confirmation that they have been promoted and now they can officially apply for the funding. However, they need to be reminded that the need to openly communicate with the Council and Parish Councillor Lain-Rose will contact Luke Wolland to explain that as a the Chair of the Community Enhancement Group, now that he is no longer a member of the Jubilee Field Management Committee, he should be invited to any discussions surrounding this in a supportive and liaison capacity.

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9. SURRENDEN FIELD

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose providing the background for new members of the Council and the Group to understand how the Council has ended up with a 125-year lease renewal.

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose then provided the update that the lease has been sent back to Maidstone Borough Council's solicitors from our legal team and the Parish Office is hopeful to receive a revised lease with the amendments sought by the Council.

Once the lease is formally in place and registered with the land registry. The Group will look at the projects for the site that have been long overdue. Examples of projects are path extension, outdoor gym-style equipment, drainage, designated picnic area.

Parish Councillor Sharp said she felt that the land should never have been taken off of us. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that the site had never been in the ownership of the Council nor anyone within Staplehurst (after Mrs Nicolson sold the land). It was sold by Mrs Nicolson to Maidstone Rural District Council and with the changes in Local Government through an act of parliament the land became the asset of Maidstone Borough Council. Although the argument that Mrs Nicolson intended for Staplehurst to be the custodians of the land, it was not legal for parish councils to own land at this time, and therefore the Council was granted management and maintenance responsibilities for the land. There is a moral argument that the Council should own the land, legally the land is and will continue to be owned by Maidstone Borough Council.

10. WIMPEY FIELD

Parish Councillor Forward reminded Members that the BioBlitz was being hosted on the Wimpey Fields facilitated by Medway Countryside Partnership on 30 May 2019.

Parish Councillor Forward updated the pond is now in place on the site, thanks to funding from Natural England.

Parish Councillor Forward explained that a consultant that is working with Maidstone Borough Council on a project of designating sites a Nature Reserves. The consultant is looking at a number of sites within the borough, which included the Wimpey Fields. The consultant will be making recommendations to the Borough Council on their views on which sites are worthy of designation.

Non-Councillor Member Louise Brice expressed that she believed that the nightingales were back on site and this needed to be verified. Parish Councillor Forward is almost certain that the nightingales have returned boarding the Henhurst Field. A dated recording has not been secured yet.

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Parish Councillor Forward updated Members on the anti-social behaviour that had been recorded on the site.

Parish Councillor Forward updated Members on the access gate and that further communication had been sent to the Council from Helen Grant MP.

Parish Councillor Forward notified Members that £22.87 (excluding VAT) had been spent from the Wimpey Field budget on a Weed Wand Blowtorch. This had been discussed with Parish Councillor Lain-Rose (as Chair of the Community Enhancement Group) who recommended to speak with the Parish Clerk and Chairman of the Council to utilise Financial Regulation 4.1 to authorise the purchase.

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that he is in the process in formalising the arrangements with the contractor Brad Hawkins. The Service Level Agreement is being drafted and that a meeting with Brad and Parish Councillor Forward will be arranged to go through this draft. Once completed, the Group will be asked to review the SLA and recommend to Council.

11. PARISH PUBLIC TOILET REVIEW 2019

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose provided a verbal update on the review of parish public toilets and that Councillors had recently viewed The Parade toilets and noted that the Finance & Strategy Group recently looked at quotes for redecorating the Bell Lane toilets and it was passed to the Community Enhancement Group to form part of the overall review of public toilets within the parish.

The Parish Council's options are:

- J keep the Bell Lane public toilets open, with investment into the site (redecoration/replacement of equipment);
- J keep the Bell Lane public toilets open, with investment into the site (redecoration/replacement of equipment) and open up the disabled toilet at The Parade, with investment into the site (to bring the site into working order);
- J keep the Bell Lane public toilets open, with investment into the site (redecoration/replacement of equipment) and open up both disabled and unisex toilets at The Parade, with investment into the site (to bring the site into working order);
- J close the Bell Lane public toilets and open up the disabled toilet at The Parade, with investment into the site (to bring the site into working order);
- J close the Bell Lane public toilets and open up the disabled and unisex toilets at The Parade, with investment into the site (to bring the site into working order);
- J close the Bell Lane public toilets and not open The Parade public toilets, resulting in no public toilets offered in Staplehurst.

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that closing Bell Lane toilets would require us to surrender our lease with Maidstone.

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Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained opening The Parade toilets, would not be quick, it would need planning as the legal documentation to do so needed negotiating with both Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council. Currently Maidstone Borough Council holds a lease with Kent County Council, and there is no provision for sub-leasing, so Kent County Council would have to authorise a sub-lease or Maidstone Borough Council would have to surrender their lease and the Council would need to negotiate a lease with Kent County Council.

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose proposed that the Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer should liaise with Maidstone Borough Council to ascertain whether if the Council closed Bell Lane public toilets and opened The Parade toilets whether we would still receive the Public Toilet Grant from Maidstone Borough Council. This was **AGREED** by Members.

Parish Councillor Symes proposed that the Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer asks the current contractor to initially quote for The Parade toilets, to assist us in ascertaining the cost. The quotes should be based on current specification of Bell Lane Toilets and the scenarios should include, the Contractor:

- J cleaning and opening/closing the Bell Lane Toilets and the disabled toilet at The Parade
- J cleaning and opening/closing the Bell Lane Toilet and the disabled and unisex toilets at The Parade
- J cleaning and opening/closing the disabled and unisex toilets at The Parade.

This was **AGREED** by Members.

12. YOUTH CLUB

12.1 MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that the Management & Maintenance Agreement is almost finalised. Following from the last meeting and the intentions of the Community Enhancement Group, the Charity has agreed to include the variation clause and the 6-month termination clause. However, has not agreed the immediate termination clause for the Council to terminate immediately with certain conditions.

Therefore, after discussion with the Parish Clerk, Parish Councillor Lain-Rose wrote back to the Charity to request that the immediate termination clause afforded to the Charity to the Council is removed. This would then remove Appendix B.

Members discussed this and it was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to Council the updated Management & Maintenance Agreement with the condition that the Charity is immediate terminate clause afforded to the Charity and Appendix B are removed from the agreement.

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12.2 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Parish Council Lain-Rose explained the historic events leading to the Council providing £4,000 per annum to a Youth Leader.

Members discussed and it was **AGREED** that Parish Councillor Lain-Rose (as the Chair of the Community Enhancement Group) and former Parish Councillor Tom Burnham would continue to lead the negotiations on the Council's behalf, due to the time constraints on getting the agreement in place by 01 September 2019.

It was **AGREED** that an initial negotiation meeting with the Charity should be sought as soon as possible to discuss this and identify the initial principles of any future service level agreement.

Members acknowledged that where possible that an agreement should foster a collaborative relationship between the youth service provided in Staplehurst and with Kent County Council, in particular with regards to safeguarding.

The drafted service level agreement would be shared with the Charity after the initial meeting (with amendments where specific points have been raised). Once this has been shared with the Charity, it will be reshared with Members of the Community Enhancement Group.

Non-Councillor Louise Brice raised that she is almost certain that in section 106 agreements there have been investment for the provision of youth services from developers to Kent County Council. Members **AGREED** to ask the Parish Clerk or Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer to investigate and if so, to ascertain the amount of funding been provided to the Council as this would be useful for the Council to request the funding from Kent County Council, as they have not invested into youth provision in Staplehurst for several years.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Parish Councillor Lain-Rose explained that Parish Councillor Riordan had asked to raise the Merit Award and it is the responsibility of the Community Enhancement Group to oversee this. Parish Councillor Lain-Rose asked whether Parish Councillor Miller would support Parish Councillor Riordan and report back to the Group on progress, as this year the Merit Award should have a more formalised and open process for nomination. This was **AGREED** by Members.

Non-Councillor Louise Brice explained that following the announcement that Sainsbury's and ASDA are not merging, she felt it was opportune to speak with Sainsbury's on their development plans for Staplehurst. Louise has spoken with a representative of Sainsburys, Mark Rush.

Mark explained to Louise that they will now go back through the review process for their sites. This will be taking place over the Summer.

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Mark Rush did not sound very positive about how quickly the Staplehurst site would be developed.

Louise Brice explained that residents are now growing tired of the two sites and the damaging impact they have on the village appearance and the perception of the village economically.

Members **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to Council that a letter be sent to the Chief Executive Officer of Sainsbury's and Helen Grant MP outlining the frustrations and that the negative impact their sites are having to the local area.

Louise Brice will be speaking with Officers at Maidstone Borough Council on the most appropriate contacts for Sainsbury's for lobbying them to build the supermarket in Staplehurst.

7. **CONFIRMATION OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The Members **CONFIRMED** the next meeting of the Group would be held at Parish Office, Village Centre on 10 June 2019 at 19:30.