

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF STAPLEHURST
held in the South Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 10th May 2010

PRESENT – Twenty residents signed the attendance list together with nine Parish Councillors, County & Borough Councillor Eric Hotson, Borough Councillor Richard Lusty, PC Marc Pennicott, Rural Warden Chris Lomax, Assistant to Parish Clerk Helen Warmington and Parish Clerk Sue Bassett

APOLOGIES – Councillors Reardon and Knowlden, Residents Clive Jones and Pauline Roots, Natalie Penfold Detached Youth Worker.

THE KENWARD TRUST – The Chief Executive, Angela Painter had been invited to speak on the work of the Trust which had a 40-year history with a Christian message which included helping homeless people and those with drug and alcohol problems. It now covered a range of work including preventative, treatment, recovery services, supported living, vision & mission to empower change with a paid staff of 100 and 40 volunteers. The fundamental value of the Trust's work is to give people the opportunity to change their lives and the belief that they can recover through help and support. Full details at <http://www.kenwardtrust.org.uk/>

MINUTES OF THE 2009 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – These had been circulated and were taken as read. Approval of the Minutes was proposed, seconded and agreed by the meeting then signed as a true record by the Chairman of the Parish Council. There were no matters arising.

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT – Copies of the (unadopted) Statement of Accounts had been circulated. Cash assets totalled £95,309.57 which was divided into ear-marked reserves in the following sums:- General Fund £29,032.85, Allotment Fund £20,000, Surrenden PF pathway project £9,830, Youth Forum £7,250, Staplehurst Partnership grant £850.75, Jubilee Sports project £10,750, Village Centre Contingency Fund £16,456.10 and £1,139.87 underspend carried forward towards the budget for 2010/2011. There were no questions raised.

GYBBONS CHARITY ACCOUNT – The balance at 31.12.2009 stood at £2,972.09. Income received during the previous year from War Stock and Deposit interest totalled £32.57. One donation of £50.00 had been made during the previous year.

ANNUAL REPORTS

1. Staplehurst Parish Council Chairman – Councillor Arger read out her report which was subsequently filed herewith and uploaded to the Parish Council website.
2. County Councillor Eric Hotson – Eric Hotson paid tribute to Councillor Arger for her excellent Chairmanship over the past years and thanked Parish Councillors, Clerk and Assistant for all the work they did. Councillor Hotson gave particular thanks to Councillor Buller who was up early every morning picking up litter. This past year with duties at the Town and County Halls had been difficult financially

for both. A major study on rail services in Maidstone had been undertaken and was indebted to Councillor Burnham's excellent paper. Consultations on elections and neighbourhood forums were being prepared. Local residents would be involved to help decide where funding should go. Joint working with other authorities to share services and working practices were reducing costs. Councillor Hotson was chairing the MASH group to try and retain maternity services at Maidstone. Reduced devolved budgets had meant less being available to groups and individuals but assistance had been given towards Youth Club heating, Girl Guide to Africa, Arts Group and Public Toilets. The fund of £10,000 was shared amongst 6 parishes and groups need to apply to him. A new County Highway Fund of £25,000 for small projects was available. Five dropped kerbs in Station Approach and Signs leading to Health Centre had been applied for. Kent Highways expenditure over past 20 years had been under-funded and Government has made £2M available to Kent to repair the many potholes between April and August. Teams had a new brief and contract to repair to a higher standard.

3. Borough Councillor Richard Lusty – Richard Lusty explained that he had a dual role; a responsibility to local residents but a greater responsibility to the Borough itself and found it frustrating when a borough decision went against the parish. He didn't expect parishes to be aware of planning law but as Chairman of MBC Planning Committee involved with the Local Development Framework and Employment Development Panel it was difficult to balance all. There had been 50 planning meetings in the past year. Two involved pre-application meetings over The Parade when the parking restrictions were raised as a concern and a new 18-hole golf course extension. A large application to create a Winery at Hushheath had recently been approved. Gypsy issues had created a great deal of heartache and frustration. MBC had very little leeway to turn down applications due to Government and Planning Inspectorate guidance. The Local Development Framework was working to produce a planning policy for the next 10 years. Sites for development, including nominated gypsy sites will need to be identified and would give parishes greater strength to deny new applications. Consultation with local residents would take place. Councillor Lusty had been involved with staff appraisals at MBC and had interviewed the Chief Executive and three Directors. Shared partnership working had been embraced by MBC and Human Resources served several boroughs. This could extend to parishes with larger parishes taking over the work of smaller parishes. Shared working was considered successful and economic. Councillor Lusty had escorted Anne Widdecombe MP during visits to the parish. The Library Surgeries were not always well attended but quality remained good and problems sorted. A good working relationship between Borough and Parish was necessary to help communication. Councillor Lusty thanked Councillor Arger for attending MBC Planning committee meetings.
4. Police Report – PC Marc Pennicott's report had been circulated, filed with these minutes and uploaded to the Parish Council Website. He verbally highlighted the positives; reported crimes remained static and partnership working was helpful, problems at the Parade with drinking and rubbish had been tackled and arrests made. Test purchasing with Trading Standards had identified that adults were buying alcohol and passing onto under-age people. Community engagement

work (knocking on doors to find out what the problems were) had taken place. A resident asked about binge drinking at Surrenden Playing Field. PC Pennicott explained that the problems were caused by adult drinkers and an Alcohol Control Zone could stop this but had not yet been extended to Staplehurst. Evidence would be collected and work was being done towards long term solutions to such problems. This initiative would be supported by MBC.

5. Reports from local voluntary groups – In addition to the written reports from the Library, CCDAS, Free Church, Friends of all Saints church, Girlguiding, McCabe, Speedwatch, Bridge Club, Staplehurst Calendar, Horticultural Society, Interest Group, Neighbourhood Watch, PTA, WI, Weald Club for the Disabled, Community Warden, Rural Youth Project and Staplehurst Village Centre which had been circulated to all present, filed with these minutes and uploaded onto the website, the following verbal report was also received;

Staplehurst Scouts – Mr Best reported that the Club was operating for 100 young boys and three girls in scouting. A full and varied range of activities was undertaken by Beavers, Cubs and Scouts including badges, visits, fund-raising and out-door adventure pursuits. There were currently 30 adult volunteers but more were needed as there existed a long waiting list of young people. The donation of £1,000 from Borough Councillor Lusty's fund had helped with repairs to the roof of the Scout Hut which at 40 years old was fast approaching the end of its economic life. Borough Councillor Hotson had also provided personal and financial support which was much appreciated. Scouting costed £20,000 per year to run, the majority of which was raised by the Group itself through fund-raising including Christmas post. In the year when Scouting celebrated 100 years of Marching Parades, it was regretted that due to bureaucracy and a fee of £1,000, the 10 minute St. George's Day Parade to the Church could not take place.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Health Issues - Mr Robin Kenworthy reported on his work within various Health Committees and groups with public representation. He had particular interest in the SE Cost Ambulance Service which had introduced changes affecting this area. The objective was for a paramedic to arrive within 8 minutes of dialing 999. In this wealden area only 75% is achieved. Heart attack patients would be transported direct to William Harvey hospital at Ashford and treated within 2 hours. Changes in location and arrangements of ambulance stations would mean all vehicles would be checked through a centre at Paddock Wood with specialists on-site to re-equip and clean ambulances, so saving paramedic's time. 72 new vehicles would be purchased to cover three counties.
2. Frittenden Road flooding – Mrs Mitchell asked when drainage work would be undertaken in Frittenden Road. The Clerk reported that MBC would be clearing the ditches later this year.

.....(Chairman)

The meeting closed at 21:50