

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 15th March 2010 at 8 p.m.

Prior to the start of the meeting, all those present stood in respectful silence in memory of Dr. Richard Skinner, former Parish Councillor, Chairman and local Doctor.

PRESENT:

Councillors Best, Buller, Burnham, Butcher, Fairfax, Franks, Kelly, Knowlden, Munn, Perry, Reardon, Spearink and Chairman Arger.

Parish Clerk: Mrs. J S Bassett

APOLOGIES:

Councillors Sankey and Smith whose reasons for apology were accepted.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:

1. Lobbying – Councillor Buller declared she had been lobbied in respect of the public toilets.
2. Personal Interest – Councillor Kelly declared a personal interest in respect of the public toilets.
3. Prejudicial Interest – Councillor Kelly declared a prejudicial interest in respect of the public toilets and left the room whilst this item was under discussion.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The Minutes of the Full Council meeting PAGES 959-962 of 15th February 2010, having been circulated, were approved and signed by Chairman Arger.

CORRESPONDENCE & CURRENT ISSUES:

1. Fight for Freedom train passes – update from Mr Farrow was noted.
2. KALC Area Committee – Councillor Butcher offered to be the Parish Representative on the Neighbourhood Forum.
3. MBC/Parish Liaison Meeting 18/03/10 – Councillor Spearink agreed to attend.
4. Public Footpath Diversion Order – KM290 (Part) was noted.
5. Resident's letter re: sewage problems was noted. Councillors agreed to write to Southern Water to support the resident's request for action, with a copy to MBC Environmental Health.
6. Staplehurst Airfield Memorial Project – Letter and details of the opening day from Mr Sergison were noted. Councillors Munn, Perry and Spearink confirmed they would attend. Councillors agreed that the donation of £50 should be sent soon.
7. Tri Angle Awards 2010 were noted. Councillors agreed to donate £52.50 towards this scheme.

8. Urban Rescue Centre – Details of the visit to be organised by Councillor Spearink had been circulated and volunteers to attend were requested.
9. Wootton Bassett letter of acknowledgement was noted.

COMMITTEE MINUTES & GROUP REPORTS:

1. Planning Committee – Councillor Arger reported on the committee recommendations made earlier this evening. She also reported that MBC Planning Officers would provide training on planning soon.
2. Amenities Committee – Councillors approved Minute Pages 559A-560A of 1st March 2010. Councillor Burnham highlighted the proposed improvement works to three footpaths in the parish, one of which was proving to be controversial.
3. Policy Group – Meeting notes of 24/02/2010 had been circulated and were noted without comment and were posted on the website at:- http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/staplehurst_carnival_fete_committee1.aspx
4. Publicity & Website Group – Meeting notes of 11/02/2010 & Feb Usage Report were noted. Councillor Best clarified that a small number of people who used pseudonyms on the Forum were disruptive. He emphasised that if posters wanted the Council to take action they should approach it directly rather than hiding behind anonymity. The documents were posted on the website at:- http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/publicity_website.aspx
5. Staple Drive Project Group – Councillor Fairfax reported that the public consultation had taken place and thanked Councillor Reardon for liaising with the Primary School Council. MBC Officers had inspected the proposals and made suggestions which would require quotes to be obtained. MBC Officers had confirmed that funding could carry over to the next financial year. It was proposed now to retain and refurbish the existing swings. It was hoped to return with revised details in April for approval to ensure the project would be completed before the summer holidays.

COUNCILLOR & CLERK'S REPORTS

1. MBC Air Quality Workshop – Report by Councillors Buller and Fairfax had been circulated and was noted by Councillors. Website copy available at <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx> Councillor Buller highlighted that the main cause of air pollution was queuing traffic, particularly buses and lorries which caused ten times more pollution than other vehicles.
2. KALC Chairmanship Training Day – Councillor Fairfax's report had been circulated and was noted by Councillors. Website copy available at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/kent_association_of_local_councils.aspx
3. Audit Review – Councillor Perry reported that the review of the effectiveness of the internal audit control had been carried out. Notes of the meeting held with the Internal Auditor and Clerk were circulated, noted and available at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/finance_group.aspx Key issues had been considered and reviewed. All the points raised had been met and another review would be carried out in November. The division of work between Clerk and Assistant was currently being explored.

ACCOUNTS AND FINANCES:

1. Public Toilet Cleaning Quotes – Councillors considered six quotes from Cleaning Contractors alongside the potential advantages/disadvantages of in-house directly employed staff. After much discussion Councillor Arger proposed, seconded by Councillor Perry and agreed with one against, to accept the Eco-clean quote for 7 days per week on a 3-month trial. Councillors then considered the three quotes for sanitary bins and after discussion Councillor Fairfax proposed, seconded by Councillor Knowlden and agreed with one against to accept the existing MBC Contractor on a 3-month trial. Councillor Fairfax reported that negotiations on the terms of the Lease had not yet been resolved. Further detail was awaited regarding insurance. Councillors expressed concern that all details may not be complete before the hand-over on 1st April and it may be necessary to close the toilets whilst the final terms and conditions were agreed.
2. Christmas Light Motifs – The quote for repairs was noted and it was agreed to approach Hilights in the first instance. Councillors agreed to purchase 1710 clear golf ball lamps from Gala Lights.
3. Maintenance of Youth Club Site 2010-2011 – Three quotes had been requested but only one received. Councillors agreed to accept (with one abstention) the quote from Changing Seasons.
4. Summation of Accounts to date was noted.
5. Accounts for payment were read out by the Clerk. Councillor Perry proposed, seconded by Councillor Best and agreed these be paid.

Chairman.....

PUBLIC FORUM:

Mr Oakley commented that the £1M disabled-friendly bridge across the railway was only working when the station was staffed. The link between the lifts and the control centre was not working so the lifts could not be used after 8 p.m. This was contrary to the understanding with Network Rail. Councillor Burnham agreed to make enquiries. Mr Oakley enquired if alternative provision would be made if the public toilets were closed.

POLICE REPORT:

PC Marc Pennicott had given his apologies but provided the following written report which was read out by Chairman Arger:-

“Total crime – 13. Burglary in a non-dwelling – 6, Theft from motor vehicle – 3, Theft – 2, Arson – 1, Criminal Damage – 1.

The majority of the burglaries were at the end of last month and appear to be linked to other crimes reported to the previous meeting. The Police have been using a number of methods to reduce crime and this has included extra patrols in the evening and visits to the houses most affected. We have also distributed shed alarms and provided crime prevention advice to victims.

Jason Reilly from Trading Standards will be attending this evening to discuss the work we will be carrying out in The Parade. For your information the Mobile Police Station has been at The Parade twice in the last month, during the evening, to engage with the young people and to deal with any problems that arise. This is on top of our normal patrolling. A Trading Standards Test Purchasing operation has also taken place and all of the premises that were checked did not sell alcohol. This is clearly positive on the shops part and hopefully they will continue to refuse sales."

TRADING STANDARDS:

Jason Riley gave a verbal report of the work that Trading Standards he had been doing in Staplehurst in partnership with the police, Rural Warden and local businesses to deal with under-age drinking. Partnerships had been re-established, information gained, businesses consulted and problems demonstrated. Test-purchases and prosecutions had taken place as well as training of staff. All businesses had been made aware of the Challenge 25 policy and Trading Standards would continue to test businesses were implementing this and not selling alcohol to under-age youths.

In a second phase of work, anti-social behaviour was being looked at in respect of drinking in the over 18's and challenging why they are hanging around with 10-12 year olds. Purchasing by proxy is an offence to be worked on. Local businesses had expressed a preference not to have the young people hanging around with their foul language and elements of fear they create amongst shoppers. A survey had been prepared and the link was on the Parish Council website and residents and Councillors were encouraged to complete it.

In the longer term, Trading Standards would encourage the police into robust action to create alcohol exclusion zone. It was noted that the Library had suffered a great deal of intimidation, bad language and litter from the young people hanging around nearby. It was reported that a young person was going to court for littering.

Councillors agreed to write to Trading Standards in support of the work they were doing in Staplehurst.