

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 18th January 2010 at 8 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Best, Buller, Burnham, Butcher, Fairfax, Kelly, Munn, Perry, Smith, Spearink and Chairman Arger. Parish Clerk: Mrs. J S Bassett

APOLOGIES: Councillors Franks, Knowlden, Reardon and Sankey whose reasons for apology were accepted.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:

1. Lobbying – Councillor Buller had been lobbied in respect of Public Toilets.
2. Personal Interest – None.
3. Prejudicial Interest – None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The Minutes of the previous Full Council meeting PAGES 953-955, having been circulated, were amended on Page 955 at the end of Paragraph 2 with the addition of "in Maidstone." The Minutes as amended were then approved and signed by Chairman Arger.

COMMITTEE & SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Planning Committee – Chairman Arger reported that MA/09/1928 would be considered by MBC Development Control on 21st January and she would attend to reinforce this Council's recommendation to refuse.
2. Amenities Committee – Councillor Fairfax proposed, seconded by Councillor Best and agreed that the Minutes 553A-555A of 4th January 2010 be adopted. Councillor Spearink expressed discontent at the committee's views expressed on Page 554A Paragraph 3. He considered the reason to change public references from accidents (no-one to blame) to crashes (where someone is to blame) was to encourage greater care amongst drivers. Councillors noted this view. Councillor Buller referred to the annual Clean Up and requested that the main (footpathed) areas of the village be done, even if nothing else.
3. Finance Group Report – Councillors had received a copy of the Finance Group meeting notes of 14/12/09 and 13/01/10. Councillor Perry spoke to the proposed Terms of Reference for the Finance Group and answered Councillors' questions. Councillors then agreed to adopt these terms. With reference to the Finance Group Meeting Report of 13/01/10, the following proposals for expenditure were proposed, seconded and agreed; To purchase an extra Sage software Licence at £50, To purchase

HP Photosmart printer at £84, to accept quote of £359.94 from Changing Seasons for tree maintenance works at Surrenden Playing Field (Councillor Kelly abstained).

4. Publicity and Website Group – Councillor Best reported that the report from the meeting held on 14/01/10 would be circulated shortly. Copy for the Village Update due for distribution on 22nd February was to be drafted and checked by this group and the Chairman before printing. Various current issues would be addressed. It had been noted that website usage had declined slightly but would be monitored. Parish Office IT hardware issues would be addressed by Councillor Reardon soon.

COUNCILLOR REPORTS:

1. Internal Audit – Councillor Perry reported that he and the Clerk had met with the Internal Auditor to review the effectiveness of the internal financial controls. One issue, regarding the division of staff labour is to be looked at the further meetings are envisaged throughout the year.
2. Emergency Plan – It was recommended that the offer of a talk by the Kent Emergency Planning Team be taken up to assess what responsibilities might be, to include neighbouring parishes. Councillor Spearink considered it would be a great deal of work and doubted whether parishes had the resources.
3. Churchyard Liaison – Councillor Munn reported that the January meeting had been cancelled due to the snow and there being no issues to discuss. It was confirmed that responsibility for the new extended area for burials had been handed over to the church.
4. Kent Free Trees Scheme – Councillor Munn reported that he had today planted the 40 free tree saplings next to the school boundary in Surrenden Playing Field.
5. Public Toilets- Councillor Kelly reported that feedback from Maidstone Borough Council was still awaited regarding the terms of a Lease for the Bell Lane Toilets. Councillors discussed and emphasised that an interest in The Parade toilets should also be expressed but to proceed with negotiations for taking on the Bell Lane Toilets first then include The Parade Toilets at a later date if financially possible.

ACCOUNTS AND FINANCES:

1. Parish Precept 2010-2011 – The Fifth Draft Budget and precept calculation had been circulated to Councillors who raised a number of points for clarification. Additional funding had been included for the Staple Drive

Play Area Project, future maintenance of the public toilets at Bell Lane and additional expenditure incurred on the Jubilee Playing Field Car Park. The Finance Group had recommended a precept of £73,500 for 2010-2011. This equated approximately to £31.15 per band D property for the year, which was a 4% or £1.20 increase on the previous year. All Councillors then indicated their agreement to this proposal.

2. Cheque Signatories – The updating of Parish Council cheque signatories was required. It was proposed and agreed nem con that any two of the following Councillors would be cheque signatories; Councillors Arger, Perry, Buller, Kelly, Spearink and Fairfax.
3. Summation of Accounts - The summation to date had been circulated to Councillors and was noted without comment.
4. List of Accounts for Payment - The list had been circulated to Councillors and was read out by the Clerk and totalled £5,835.71. It was proposed by Councillor Spearink, seconded by Councillor Fairfax and agreed that the accounts as listed be paid.

Chairman.....

Meeting closed at 21:10

PUBLIC FORUM - The member of the public attending (Mr Hegarty) raised the following three issues; that over 30 snow photographs had been submitted for the website "Year in the Life" page; that the WI had a brief to act in an emergency and reminded Councillors that the Parish Council had put £8,000 into building the Parade Toilets in the past, because the public had wanted them there.

POLICE REPORT – PCSO Pete Gardner reported that 7 crimes had been reported since December 2009. Three burglaries, one theft of a tractor, two thefts of motor vehicles (one since recovered) and one theft (detected). It was reported that two lads had been taken to court for seven other offences in this area.