

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 21st June 2010 at 8 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Best, Buller, Burnham, Butcher, Paul Kelly, Knowlden, Munn, Reardon, Sankey, Spearink and Chairman Perry. Parish Clerk: Mrs. J S Bassett

APOLOGIES: Councillors Arger & John Kelly whose reasons for apology were accepted.

CO-OPTION TO FILL COUNCILLOR VACANCIES & ANOTHER RESIGNATION:

No-one present offered themselves for co-option. The Chairman commented that in addition to the current two vacancies, Councillor Knowlden had written to tender her resignation at the end of this meeting, as she would be moving out of the parish. Chairman Perry expressed his sadness and said Councillor Knowlden would be much missed, had been an asset to the Council and wished her the best of luck.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:

1. Lobbying – All Councillors declared they had been lobbied in respect of the Forum. In addition, Councillor Buller declared she had been lobbied in respect of the Toilets.
2. Personal Interest – Councillor Sankey declared a personal interest in the Carnival & Fete and Councillor Butcher declared a personal interest in the Youth Club.
3. Prejudicial Interest – None declared.

TO APPROVE FULL COUNCIL MINUTES: PAGES 973-978 of 17th May 2010 had been circulated, were agreed then signed by Chairman Perry.

CORRESPONDENCE & CURRENT ISSUES for review:

1. Airfield Memorial – The Chairman led discussion on feedback (including a letter from a former resident with a donation to the Memorial fund) which had been received following the unveiling ceremony. A letter of thanks had been sent to Mr Sergison for his magnificent effort in this community project. Councillor Buller had been overwhelmed by the day and the way in which the community had worked together on this project. The Chairman gave a vote of thanks to Ted Sergison, together with the Munn family for providing the land and the Women's Institute for the buffet after the ceremony. The Clerk was asked to make enquiries as to whether any shortfall of funding had occurred as the Finance Group had suggested the Parish Council pay for the hall hire on this occasion. It was understood that another project was being considered by Ted Sergison in consultation with The Rector, to create a better war memorial in the form of a stained glass window for St. George's Chapel.
2. Alcohol Control Order – Councillor Perry's written recommendations had been circulated, were noted and available at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/police_liaison.aspx. Councillors Perry, Butcher, Buller and Paul Kelly agreed to begin research and progress this project.
3. Ann Widdecombe – letter of thanks was noted.
4. KALC Area Committee – The list of potential devolution of powers from MBC to SPC was noted. Chairman Perry proposed that the Policy Group should research and follow this up as well as look at existing MBC assets in this parish which might get sold off in future.

5. Kent Highway Services – The reply from KHS declining the commuter's request for two exit lanes from Station Approach was noted.
6. Parish Council Insurance – Noted that the full Policy documents were available for inspection. Councillors noted additional insurance was also available at additional cost. Clerk to make further enquiries and report back to Finance Group.
7. Public Toilets – The Clerk had circulated details provided by MBC of the potential costs for the Parade Toilets. Councillors agreed to defer any decision until after the first 3 months operation of the Bell Lane toilets had been assessed and budget checked. Updating, redecoration and hand driers were needed at Bell Lane Toilets. The doors had now been reinforced and locking systems worked. The Parade toilet was currently deadlocked but required cleaning. Councillor Buller expressed a wish to see The Parade toilet reopened.
8. The Parade – The letter from Wisprole Investments Limited stated that they were in discussions with their maintenance contractor for the repair and maintenance of the areas to the front and rear of The Parade. Councillors commented that lighting at the back of the shops was still needed and rubbish skips were a fire hazard. It was understood that the litter bins were to be emptied by the shops but those nearest the High Street, Library and Chemist would not be emptied. Councillors also commented that the brickwork to the planters was appalling and the image of the village was important. The Clerk reported that the issues of ownership and maintenance of street lights, CCTV, bins, bollards and benches remained unclear. The Chairman agreed to seek clarification with Wisprole.
9. Village Green Registration – The draft letter (see 564a para 3) was agreed.
10. Website Forum – The Chairman opened discussions on the subject of issues arising from the open forum. Written submissions had previously been circulated to Councillors and public. Chairman Perry commented that the case for retaining the Forum had been well made, although the advice from NALC had been disappointing. Strong views had been expressed, Case Law quoted, issues set out and a compromise way forward with four options had been suggested by the Chairman. Reports available at <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx>. After much constructive and lengthy discussion Councillors agreed to retain the Forum but refer issues back to the Publicity & Website Group for detailed consideration of; tightening the monitoring arrangements, a night curfew and the practicalities of doing away with the use of pseudonyms.
11. Youth Club Service Level Agreement (see 977&978 para 9) – Following the presentation by Natalie Penfold, Councillors discussed the proposed project, proposed youth worker and queried why a formal agreement to include the Parish Council was necessary when the Youth Club was a registered charity. Councillor Butcher as Chairman of the Youth Club confirmed he had volunteers to run the Youth Club but that the Club had not been open at all recently. The SLA would set out clearly the responsibilities of the KY&C, Youth Club & Parish Council in this project. However, Councillors remained unclear as to exactly how much would be required to fund the Youth Work and activities for young people in Staplehurst. Councillors agreed in principle to the proposals and to send a letter of intent to Kent Youth & Community to offer financial support, but requested a more detailed breakdown of costs for Staplehurst.

COMMITTEE & FOCUS GROUP REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Planning Committee (MA, JB, PB, JK, PK, PS, JP, TB) No report was made.

2. Amenities Committee (WB, PB, PK, AK, RM, JR, MS, JP, TB) Minutes 565A-567A of 7th June 2010 were approved and signed by Councillor Best. The Amenities Committee recommendation to accept the annual cost of Website support at £150 was ratified. The Summer Village Update and Annual Report 2009/2010 had been completed and distributed.
3. Allotments Project Group (JB, PB, JK) Councillor Butcher reported that a meeting would be held as soon as possible. Three areas of land would be looked into and it was agreed that a personal approach was needed.
4. Council Policy Group (MA, TB, PK, JP, PS, WB) would meet shortly.
5. Finance Group (MA, WB, TB, PK, JR, JP) & Minutes 106F of 9th June 2010 were circulated and noted. Chairman Perry reported that details of the proposals for Jubilee Playing Field were still awaited. Staff Appraisals would be conducted soon.
6. Publicity & Website Group (WB, JB, TB, JK, JR) next meeting due 15/07/10.
7. Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group (MA, JB, JK, PK, JP, PS) next meeting due 23/06/10. Councillor Spearink expressed a wish to withdraw from this group in favour of local resident Simon Green.
8. Staplehurst Toilet Team (MA, PK, MS) No further report was given.
9. Emergency Planning Group (JB, PB, PS) Councillor Spearink commented that MBC would probably cover any action this parish could take locally but Councillor Butcher had put forward ideas which would be investigated for report back.

COUNCILLOR REPORTS FROM LOCAL GROUPS

1. Carnival & Fete (MS) Councillor Sankey reported that additional help was needed to collect money on the gates. Vice Chairman Burnham agreed to assist Chairman Perry and Councillor Spearink on the Parish Council stall.
2. Churchyard Liaison (PB, RM) Next meeting on 28/06/10
3. Dawkins Trust & Diagrit Sports & Social Club (PB) Councillor Butcher was still trying to make contact.
4. Headcorn Aerodrome Consultative Committee (RM, JP) Councillor Munn gave a verbal report from meeting held on 15/06/10; a complaint about overhead flying was being investigated to verify height and noise, planning permission had been obtained for solar panels and new toilet block, on 14 & 15 August a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight including the Red Arrows, Spitfire and Hurricane would take place and visit several air fields. The Tiger Club had appreciated the letter of thanks for their display at the Memorial unveiling.
5. KALC Area Committee (PB, MS) A meeting was due soon.
6. Kent Fire & Rescue Service (PS) No report made.
7. Jubilee Field Management & Users Group (MA, JP) – Meeting held on 03/06/10. Full details of the drainage scheme were awaited and the dug-out proposals had been shelved for time being. The operation of the Maintenance Agreement would be considered by Councillor Best.
8. Local Transport forum (PB, PS) Meeting due 01/07/10
9. Maidstone Disability Focus Group (PS) Meeting due soon.
10. McCabe Day Centre (MS) Next meeting due 19/07/10
11. Neighbourhood Watch (JB) Councillor Buller reported that two-monthly meetings were being held and encouraged support for the Police stand at the Carnival.
12. Police/Parish Liaison (PB, MS, PS) Meeting had been deferred pending the arrival of a new Inspector.
13. Sobell Cheshire Home (JP, PS) No report made.

14. Staplehurst Village Centre Trust (PK) A Fire Risk Assessment and Asbestos Survey were being undertaken.
15. Speedwatch (JB) Councillor Buller reported that from 0700-1300 one day in July every Parish with Speedwatch equipment would be out simultaneously in the Mid Kent Area, to educate drivers to respect speed limits.
16. TRAMP; South Maidstone Traffic Management Partnership (PB) Next meeting 30/06/10.
17. Youth Club (PK, MS) The Club was currently not operating.
18. Staplehurst Primary School Liaison (TB, JR, MS) No report was made.

COUNCILLOR & CLERK'S REPORTS

1. Voluntary & Community Sector Conference – Councillor Perry had submitted a written report available at <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/others.aspx> and commented that the event have been disappointing with no chance to ask questions. Many groups had attended but the focus was narrow.
2. Later Life in Maidstone – Councillor Spearink's report available at http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/old_persons_forum.aspx
3. KALC Progressive Council Training Event – Councillors Butcher and Spearink had attended. Councillor Spearink commented that a Parish Council had the right to hold meetings outside the parish (such as at Highgrove Garden Centre). Councils also have the right to hold meetings in the Village School if alternative accommodation is more expensive. It was suggested that the August Full Council meeting be held at McCabe Day Centre. Clerk to liaise.

ACCOUNTS AND FINANCES:

1. Electricity Suppliers – Councillor Best had investigated and circulated details of three Tenders for consideration. There was the opportunity to make substantial savings by changing supplier and recommended moving both metered and unmetered supplies to Eon. The exact prices could not be guaranteed until the date agreement was reached but the rates shown were not expected to fluctuate. Councillor Best reported that the 2-year fixed price quote was the best deal with a cash-back incentive. Chairman Perry thanked Councillor Best for his work on this. There was unanimous support to switch electricity supply to Eon.
2. Summation of Accounts to date was noted.
3. Accounts for payment - The list had been circulated to Councillors, was read out by the Clerk and totalled £33,021.30. It was proposed by Councillor Best, seconded by Councillor Burnham and agreed that the accounts as listed be paid.

Chairman.....

Meeting closed at 11.20 p.m.

YOUTH WORK REPORT – Natalie Penfold, Kent Youth & Community Detached Youth Worker made a presentation to those present about the work she was doing in Staplehurst and neighbouring parishes. This included supporting young people, encouraging community positive interaction, school holiday activities, attending area and county youth events, dance and theatre work, supporting young people's initiatives such as "Kent's Got Talent" events, obtaining qualifications, providing information, etc. There was currently no staff at Staplehurst Youth Club so funding would be required to employ a youth worker for one evening per week to help

re-establish the Youth Club. This would cost a minimum of £1,300 per year to include 1 hour's planning for 2 hour's opening. Jenny McDonald (Youth Work Manager) explained that a person was being considered for this post who would also work at Headcorn, Coxheath and other nearby villages. The Police had considered it would be a positive way forward to enhance the work Natalie was already doing on a Monday evening. The extra session would be line managed by Natalie with regular reports to Staplehurst Parish Council.

POLICE REPORT – PC Marc Pennicott reported that 14 crimes had been reported since the previous meeting; 6 thefts, 3 burglaries non-dwelling, 2 criminal damage, 2 theft from motor vehicle, 1 burglary dwelling. The thefts had occurred mainly on the outskirts of the village and included theft of cables. The police would appreciate receiving reports of suspicious activity. Problems had occurred at The Parade with littering and two cameras had been installed at the front and back. Fines had been imposed. A Neighbourhood Task Team had made arrests for anti-social behaviour and youths had been moved away from the shop area. Again PC Marc Pennicott emphasised how crucial it was that members of the public reported anti-social or suspicious behaviour. PC Marc Pennicott advised that an alcohol control zone would be supported and managed by the Police Force and would be an impactful tool for police to use to control adults drinking within the control zone. Local test purchases had provided no evidence of underage buying of alcohol. The litter was being caused by adults.

PUBLIC FORUM: Members of the public raised the following matters:-

Mrs Fairfax commented that in principle the forum was a good idea but had personal concerns over liability for individual Councillors. The forum had been tightened by the Publicity & Website Group and hoped that further plans would be considered for the overall benefit of the village.

Mr Fulcher commented that having read the meeting papers supplied, Councillor Best's submission was excellent. Whilst he took the point of personal liability concerns, it hadn't happened elsewhere and there was very little chance of the User Generated posts going to Court. However the guidelines did need to be adhered to. The Forum was a valuable and direct means of communication and if it were lost democracy would be diminished. It was also noted that some forums were split between basic information and general comments.

Mr Oakley commented that he was not against the Forum but against the use of pseudonyms. Councillor Spearink commented that "The Forum Moderator" had now re-registered as "Not The Forum Moderator" but anyone could register several email addresses and use any number of pseudonyms.

Mr Kenworthy commented that he didn't want to have several email addresses just to speak on behalf of different groups. Posters should be allowed to have more than one name per email address and expressed support for the forum.

Mr Hegarty commented that when the Forum was first opened it ran alongside staplehurst.com which was still a registered address. If the staplehurstvillage forum was kept under control, there would be no problem with competitors.

Mr Sturdy commented that there were occasions when walkways were damaged by service vehicles (rubbish and litter collection vehicles) mounting the pavements causing unnecessary extra damage. An area in Northdown had been notified and a resident had fallen there and been hospitalised since April. Walkways were not suitable for heavy vehicles and it was important to prevent damage. Various streetlights were flashing (no detail given).