

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on
Monday 21st December 2009 at 8 p.m.

Due to the snow and ice, the Mayor of Maidstone had sent his apologies for not being able to attend this meeting. The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Eric Hotson was invited to attend in the Mayor's place. Councillor Hotson thanked the Council and gave a short address of encouragement and appreciation of the Parish Council and staff for their work. He commented that he had been disappointed that Staplehurst had been unable to reaccredit to Quality Status but had been let down by the rules. It remained an excellent Parish Council nonetheless. Councillor Hotson would be Mayor during the next year but the ceremonial and civic duties would not lessen his input on behalf of the Parish.

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

APOLOGIES: Councillor Franks and Knowlden whose reasons for apology were accepted.

COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:

1. Lobbying – Councillor Buller declared she had been lobbied about public toilets in the village.
2. Personal Interest – none.
3. Prejudicial Interest – none.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The Minutes of the previous Full Council meeting on 7th December 2009 PAGES 949-952 had been circulated. Two minor amendments were requested by Councillor Spearink, agreed and made to Page 950 Paragraph 4; to substitute "week-day" for "Sunday" and Planning Committee to substitute "December" for "November". After amendment these were then signed by Chairman Arger.

CORRESPONDENCE:

1. Approval of Lease to Jubilee Sports Field – Councillor Perry spoke to the documents that had been prepared for the new Lease to Jubilee Sports Field, the new Management Agreement for the Jubilee Sports Pavilion and appointment of Trustees. Chairman Arger proposed their approval, seconded by Councillor Perry and agreed with one abstention.

2. KCC Consultation – Community Infrastructure Provision Service Strategies; Deadline for consultation responses was 20th January 2010. Councillors agreed to defer to Planning & Amenities Committees on 4th January 2010.
3. Kenward Trust – The letter of thanks for the Council's donation was noted and that a speaker with attend the Annual Parish Meeting on 10th May 2010.

COMMITTEE & SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Planning Committee – No specific report but Councillor Fairfax was thanked for representing this Council's views at Development Control.
2. Finance Group – Councillor Perry reported that the group was drafting the budget for 2010/2011 and was considering applying a large part of the General Fund to reduce the precept. Full information would be available in advance of the January Full Council when the precept would be set. The Clerk, Councillor Perry and the Internal Auditor would be meeting in February to review the effectiveness of the Internal Financial Controls.
3. Jubilee Field Project Update – The Clerk confirmed that the landscaping project had been completed and the Management Group would be meeting in February.
4. Publicity & Website Group – Councillor Best spoke to the paperwork that had been circulated and confirmed that the two proposals would not incur expenditure or liabilities for this Council. New pages for the website had been drafted which would enable local businesses to upload their own advertisements and up to date information (access to specific pages as presently enjoyed by local village groups). Councillors raised a number of queries but Councillor Best confirmed that this Council would not endorse specific businesses and a disclaimer would make this clear. It was anticipated that donations would be requested but work was in progress regarding whether charges could be levied. Councillors agreed in principle to this proposal and more detail would be given once the technical work had been carried out voluntarily by Councillors. The second proposal related to additional pages for the uploading of Councillor's reports, sub group reports and other information that had been submitted to and approved by this Council. The list would be developed and evolve over time. Some concern over copyright was raised by Councillor Kelly but the ethos would be that these were public documents and available to as wide an audience as possible. Councillors agreed to this second proposal.

COUNCILLOR REPORTS:

1. KALC AGM – Report to be submitted shortly.

2. KCC Community Engagement – Councillor Fairfax had circulated her report of the meeting attended on 11th December. Councillor Spearink had also attended and commented that he would like to explore the setting up of a coffee-shop drop-in for minority groups such as students and care-home workers in Maidstone.
3. Staplehurst Primary School – Councillor Fairfax’s report had been circulated on her recent visit. It was a QPS requirement to promote democracy with young people. There were currently no formal links with the primary school and the Head teacher was keen to invite Councillors to attend their School Council. Councillor Reardon agreed to be the point of contact for this.
4. Public Toilets – Councillor Kelly had circulated details of his investigations regarding the possibility of this Council taking over the public toilets at Bell Lane from April 2010, otherwise MBC would close them. Much detail was still needed from MBC regarding the terms of the Lease and other issues but this Council was looking positively towards keeping the toilets open at this stage.
5. Old Person’s Forum Committee – Councillor Spearink reported that the proposed committee had been so well-supported that it had turned into a Focus Group. There would be no monthly report but the group would invite speakers to their meetings.

ACCOUNTS AND FINANCES:

1. Summation of Accounts - The summation to date had been circulated to Councillors and was noted. Despite no decorations at the Parade, the additional motifs along Station Road were much appreciated.
2. List of Accounts for Payment - The list had been circulated to Councillors, was read out by the Clerk and totalled £16,949.49. It was proposed by Councillor Spearink seconded by Councillor Best and agreed that the accounts as listed be paid.

Chairman.....

PUBLIC FORUM: Mr Ron Hegarty commented that the Kent Messenger was also about to carry advertisements on its own Website as well as Village Correspondent’s reports.

POLICE REPORT – Since 16th November 2009 four crimes had been reported; one criminal damage, 1 burglary in a non-dwelling and 2 thefts.