

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL
Virtual Meeting via Zoom video-conference
Tuesday 6th April 2021 at 7.00p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillors Bowden, Buller, Castro, Gartan, George, McNeill, Perry, Sharp, Spearink, Thomas, Riordan who was in the Chair and Parish Clerk, Miss A Smith.

1. APOLOGIES:

Apologies received from Councillors Lain-Rose due to work commitments. Apologies were noted and accepted.

2. CO-OPTION TO FILL COUNCILLOR VACANCIES followed by the signing of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Councillors considered the personal statements and brief presentations provided by Dr. Richard Smith, Mr Stuart McPhee and Mr Jon Grimwood as candidates for co-option. It was RESOLVED to co-opt all three candidates to the Parish Council. Councillors Smith, McPhee and Grimwood signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took their place at the Council meeting. *Councillor Thomas joined the meeting during this item and therefore abstained for the vote.*

3. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS: regarding items on the Agenda

- 3.1. Declarations of Changes to the Register of Interests. None declared.
- 3.2. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda. Councillor Riordan declared an interest in item 6.8 (due to his role as Chair of the JFMC) and 10.3 (as he knew two of the contractors)
- 3.3. Requests for Dispensation. Councillor Riordan requested and was granted a dispensation to participate in discussion and voting on items 6.8 and 10.3 in accordance with Section 33(2)(c) of the Localism Act 2011.

4. APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES

- 4.1. Pages 1898 – 1903 of 15th March 2021 available at <http://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/full-council/>. Proposed by Councillor Castro, seconded by Councillor Bowden it was RESOLVED to APPROVE the minutes with the following amendment; 1) correction of spelling of Councillor Gartan's name in item 2. Councillors Grimwood, McPhee and Smith all abstained.

5. FINANCE REPORTS & PROPOSALS

- 5.1. Accounts for Payment – for approval.
Proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Spearink, the listed accounts for payment were APPROVED. Expenditure for the period 10th March to 25th March totalled £10,018.67; income for the period was £0.27.

<u>Approved Payments 10th March 2021 - 25th March 2021</u>	Amount
Homeleigh Timber - Organic Compost GSG	83.98
SLCC - Social Media Webinar	42.00
HMRC - TAX & NI February	1,421.11
Sevenoaks DC - Surrenden Field Premises Licence 2020-21	70.00
Sevenoaks DC - Surrenden Field Premises Licence 2021-22	70.00

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Cllr Reimbursement re Plants for Gateway Planters GSG	52.08
Bouygues - Chapel Lane 2nd Street Light Installation	1,473.04
Cllr Reimbursement re Community Payback Refreshments	22.93
KCC KCS Consumables - White De-icing salt x40 bags	183.49
Phase Electrical - Forth Bridge Lights	177.00
Cllr Reimbursement re Bench Materials for GSG	48.97
Staff Salaries March	5,773.84
Opus Energy - Parish Office Electricity February	339.74
Opus Energy - Surrenden Pavilion Energy February	1.02
E-on - Christmas Motifs Energy	38.27
Kent County Council - Youth Club Lease Purchase Mar-Jun	212.50
LLoyds Bank Charges March	8.70
TOTAL CURRENT ACCOUNT EXPENDITURE	10,018.67

TOTAL PETTY CASH EXPENDITURE 0.00

5.2. Summation and Balance of Accounts – for approval.

NOTED by Councillors and published at <https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/financial-info/>.

5.3. Update on the Summer Play Scheme and Hire Agreement for Staplehurst School Hall – (for noting and decision)

Councillor Buller briefed Councillors on the progress towards running the Summer Play Scheme in 2021. She explained that the Council usually subsidises the cost of running the programme, in the region of £2,000, which includes paying for the hire of the school hall. Councillor Riordan confirmed that he had yet to seek funding opportunities, but would do so. Proposed by Councillor Spearink, seconded by Councillor Sharp, Councillors RESOLVED to APPROVE that the Clerk sign the contract for the hire of the school hall and pay the fees to the value of £955.00.

5.4. Playground Inspection training for Caretaker – (for decision). To approve a spend of up to £200 for the Caretaker to attend a playground inspection training day. Proposed by Councillor Sharp, seconded by Councillor Spearink, it was RESOLVED to APPROVE the expenditure.

6. CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting: -

6.1. Returning to face-to-face meetings – for discussion and decision.

Councillors discussed a range of options available to them and the possibility of exploring alternative venues that might facilitate a return to face-to-face meetings. Several Councillors expressed concern that they would not wish to return to face to face meetings whilst lockdown restrictions remained. A Councillor expressed specific concerns that if a requirement was to wear masks they would not be able to participate as they require the ability to support their hearing with lip reading, which would result in them not being able to attend. Councillors generally agreed that they did not wish any fellow Councillor to be unable to attend for health or shielding reasons. After much discussion Councillors voted for two motions. The first motion, proposed by Councillor Spearink and seconded by Councillor Gartan, was to find a suitable venue with the required technology and return to face to face meetings. This motion was REFUSED by a majority vote. A second motion, proposed by Councillor Riordan and seconded by Councillor Perry, was RESOLVED to APPROVE; subject to no change in the legislation

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before the 6th May 2021 that allows the continuation of virtual meetings, a scheme of delegated powers to the Clerk be granted, covering both Council and Planning matters for a temporary period (initially until the 21st June), to be supported by working groups involving Councillors enabling them to make recommendations to the Clerk for decision. The decision to delegate planning decisions would be subject to there being no impact on the statutory rights to call in an application to MBC. It was agreed that there would be an additional Council meeting at the beginning of May to appoint the Chair and Vice Chairman roles, this would normally be considered at the mid May meeting and cannot be delegated to the Clerk. It was also agreed that further investigations take place to identify a suitable venue and the technology to facilitate face-to-face meetings, with live streaming to support public participation, pending current restrictions continuing longer than anticipated.

6.2. Annual Parish Meeting – (for decision)

Following confirmation of the Government being unable to extend the legislation for virtual meetings, Councillors discussed options for the Annual Parish Meeting. In order to meet the legislative requirements Councillors agreed to bring the meeting forward to the 5th May to allow it to be held virtually. Councillors also agreed it would be appropriate to hold a face-to-face meeting for residents later in the summer, following the lifting of lockdown restrictions.

6.3. Email from KALC regarding Government Welcome Back Fund – (for discussion & decision)

Proposed by Councillor Sharp, seconded by Councillor Bowden it was RESOLVED to APPROVE that the Clerk should write to MBC expressing their wish to engage on how this money be spent for the benefit of the village.

6.4. Consultation request on Tunbridge Wells Local Plan – (for decision) to decide who will respond on behalf of the Council.

Proposed by Councillor Riordan, seconded by Councillor Castro it was RESOLVED to APPROVE that the Neighbourhood Plan Review Group prepare and submit a response.

6.5. Email from DevComms re car park lighting pollution to neighbours from Sainsburys – (for noting).

Councillors NOTED the email.

6.6. Motion from Councillor Buller to approach Bovis Homes to provide monies (additional to s106) to install a pedestrian crossing in Headcorn Road – (for decision).

Proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Riordan it was RESOLVED to APPROVE that Councillor Riordan write to Bovis Homes.

6.7. Motion from Councillor Buller to approach MBC to request s106 funding be used towards repairing the kerbs at the Parade– (for decision).

Councillor Spearink requested that consideration for repairs to the car park and the kerbs at Bell Lane car park be included. Proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Riordan, it was RESOLVED to APPROVE that Councillor Buller should write to MBC to explore how the allocated s106 funds are to be used and request that both Bell Lane car park and the Parade be considered for inclusion in any works.

6.8. Kathie Lamb Centre – (for decision)

Proposed by Councillor Riordan, seconded by Councillor Thomas, it was RESOLVED to APPROVE that the Kathie Lamb Guide Centre be authorised to install a small cement base to facilitate the installation of an air conditioning system.

7. PARISH COUNCIL REPORTS:

(from Committee/Groups/Office on specific issues or as regular update)

7.1. Clerk's Report

The Clerk updated Councillors on the progress she was making in supporting residents with gas pressure issues. Regrettably the issues are still occurring and she advised that she continues to press SGN to resolve the situation. The Clerk also advised Councillors about a complaint from a landowner to the north of Jubilee Field, regarding footballs being kicked onto her land and her fences being broken when the balls are being retrieved. The landowner is seeking the erection of high nets behind the goals as a prevention. The Clerk advised that she and the Chairman are meeting with the landowner to try to find a mutually acceptable solution. Councillors were also advised of a complaint regarding Crows on the Bell Lane nature reserve.

Written reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for decision or noting.

7.1.1. Community Enhancement Group – (for noting & decision)

Report of meeting on 25th March. The report was noted and published at

[Community Enhancement - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge \(staplehurst-pc.uk\)](#). (for decision),

a) To approve entering into discussions with KCC to lease the disabled toilet block at the Parade from 2022

b) to seek permission from KCC to commence repainting and repair works to the disabled toilet block as soon as possible

c) to agree a schedule of works and obtain quotations for the work in item (b) above.

Proposed by Councillor Riordan, seconded by Councillor Sharp it was RESOLVED to APPROVE items a), b) & c).

7.1.2. Neighbourhood Plan Review Group – (for noting)

Report of the meeting of 24^h March was NOTED and published at [Neighbourhood Plan Review Group - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge \(staplehurst-pc.uk\)](#).

7.1.3. Greener Staplehurst Group – (for noting & decision)

Report of 29th March was NOTED published at [Greener Staplehurst - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge \(staplehurst-pc.uk\)](#)

a) to approve the Litter Strategy for SPC

b) to approve expenditure of £200 from the grant funds towards the cost of plants for the new planters

c) to approve the co-option of resident Vince Fordham to the GSG.

Proposed by Councillor McNeill, seconded by Councillor Sharp it was RESOLVED to APPROVE items a), b) & c).

7.2. Oral Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only.

Councillor Castro advised Councillors of the sad death of Nigel Sheeran, leader of Staplehurst Men's Shed. There was a brief discussion on ways in which the Council may look to commemorate him. Councillor Castro advised that any ideas should be put to the Men's Shed for their consideration.

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On behalf of the Communications Group Councillor Castro reminded Councillors to submit their text for the Annual Report; additionally, for Chairs of Groups, they need to submit their text and 2-4 photos.

Chairman's Report - Oral report by Councillor Riordan. The Chairman reported to Council a number of serious criminal offences that had recently occurred within the parish, and it was agreed that Councillor Riordan should write to the Chief Constable to seek assurances with regard to an increased police presence in the village. Councillor Riordan welcomed the three new Councillors. He thanked the Clerk for her significant efforts to co-ordinate transport for vulnerable and elderly residents to receive their second vaccinations and the many Councillors, partners and ex Councillors who were volunteering to drive. He also updated on the work some Councillors and a resident had done to clear some overgrown vegetation in Ashdown Walk; that traffic calming measures were being installed to the South entrance of the village in Cranbrook Road and that they were hoping to repaint the library soon with the assistance of the Payback team. He thanked BaseBuild for their excellent work in tarmacking the remainder of the car park at Jubilee Field. He commended the Council's Support Officer for her work in enhancing the Council's website and social media presence, and advised that recent engagement had been double that of MBC and around 60% of KCC, and he hoped that the momentum would be maintained. He also updated and thanked Councillors on recent work by the GSG, NPRG & RSG. Finally, he updated Councillors on the Sainsbury's opening, and advised that he was hoping to gain some funding from Sainsbury's Community Projects fund towards projects over the coming year.

Proposed by Councillor Castro, seconded by Councillor Spearink it was RESOLVED to APPROVE suspending standing orders for a further 35 minutes to complete business.

8. REPORTS FROM OTHER COUNCILS, AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS

for noting

8.1. Borough Councillors Reports – Report by Councillor Perry.

Councillor Perry updated Councillors on the potential Boundary Commission Review, and the impact it may have on Staplehurst. He confirmed that the Local Plan Review was on target for Regulation 19 Consultation to commence from July 2021. He advised that MBC were also struggling with the return of face-to-face meetings and were having to hire the County Showground at Detling for their meetings. He confirmed that the Borough Council is now in a period of purdah. He thanked Councillor Brice for her contribution in supporting the village efforts to get the new Sainsburys. Councillor Perry also acknowledge the contribution of Helen Grant, MP in pressing for a sensible solution for the Marden Road drainage issue.

The meeting was closed to receive the report from County Councillor Hotson

8.2. County Councillor's Report – Report by County Councillor Hotson

Councillor Hotson also noted and expressed his condolences on the passing of Nigel Sheeran. He updated Councillors with regards to recent actions he had taken to support a vulnerable resident. He confirmed that there was no change in status on the re-opening of the library. He commented, that prior to 2020 and the pandemic and Brexit, the Chief Constable had committed to creating a rural task force. Councillor Hotson suggested that in addition to writing to the Chief Constable, the Council should consider inviting him to attend a Parish Meeting. He also expressed his thanks to BaseBuild for resurfacing of the carpark areas in Jubilee Field.

The meeting was then re-opened.

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8.3. Police Report – none

9. URGENT MATTERS - at the discretion of the Chairman, information only items for noting or for decision at a future meeting.

None

The meeting was closed to allow members of the public to speak in the public forum

10. PUBLIC FORUMS

No residents spoke.

The meeting was reopened to consider item 11

11. SPECIAL MOTION & REPORT

- 11.1. To move that the public be excluded from item 10.2 due to its confidential nature. It was RESOLVED to CLOSE the meeting to the public and press to consider item
- 11.2. To consider and approve withdrawal from the contract with the existing contractor, for non-performance and appoint a new contractor to repaint Jubilee Field Skate Park. Proposed by Councillor Riordan, seconded by Councillor Thomas it was RESOLVED to APPROVE the withdrawal of the contract with Yew Tree Construction and Landscaping and to appoint Evolution Skate Park Ramps to undertake the contract to the value of £5,041.50 + VAT.
- 11.3. Motion to approve contractor to purchase and install new CCTV cameras at the Parade, Jubilee Field and Market Street. Councillors reviewed the three quotations received. Proposed by Councillor McNeill, seconded by Councillor Riordan, it was RESOLVED to APPROVE the appointment of Balanced Audio Visual for a cost of £12,763.63 + VAT. It was also RESOLVED to enter into an annual maintenance contract of £1,533.00+VAT to include a mobile provider contract. Councillors RESOLVED to APPROVE the use of £9,133.67 from CIL funds to be put towards this project. Councillors RESOLVED to APPROVE up to a further £600 for the hire of a scissor lift if required.

Due to technology, issues Councillor Thomas was unable to vote on item 11.3, and left the meeting just before the vote at 21.29pm.

Chairman.....

Proceedings finished at 9.35pm.