

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL  
held at Staplehurst Village Centre on  
Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018 at 7.30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Ashby, Buller, Forward, Lain-Rose, Manning, Perry, Riordan, Sharp, Silkin, Smith, Symes and Burnham who was in the Chair.  
Parish Clerk: Mr MJ Westwood

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Kelly and Reardon.

**COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS** regarding items on the Agenda:-

Changes to the Register of Interests – none declared.

Interests in Items on the Agenda – none declared.

Requests for Dispensation – none requested.

**APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES** Minute pages 1713-1717 of 13<sup>th</sup> August 2018 were APPROVED by Councillors, signed by Chairman Burnham and made available at <http://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/full-council/>.

**FINANCE REPORTS**

1. Parish Council Bank Account Signatories – Proposal to add a new signatory to the account (for decision). Proposed by Councillor Buller, seconded by Councillor Lain-Rose, it was RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Forward as a signatory on the Parish Council's bank accounts.

**CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting:**

1. Drones in the Countryside – Correspondence from Weald of Kent Protection Society about HM Government Consultation 'Taking Flight: The Future of Drones in the UK' <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/drone-legislation-use-restrictions-and-enforcement> (closes 17/09/18). The correspondence and consultation were NOTED by councillors. Individuals with specific views were encouraged to respond directly to the consultation.
2. Footpath KM312 – Update and recommendation relating to the cost of transfer (for decision). Councillors NOTED the Deputy Clerk's report dated 22/08/18 containing an update on the anticipated legal fees relating to the transfer of land to the Parish Council. Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Buller, it was RESOLVED to increase the sum allowed for the Parish Council's own legal fees from £600 to £1,000 to cover fees and disbursements.
3. Land between Chestnut Avenue & High Street – Update on grass-cutting arrangements (for noting). Councillors NOTED the Clerk's report dated 22/08/18, which advised that Forestry First had agreed to take over the grass-cutting on the Parish Council's land between Chestnut Avenue and High Street at the price charged by the previous contractor who was no longer in a position to carry out the work.
4. Maidstone Citizens Advice Bureau – Invitation to Annual General Meeting 10/09/18, 7.00pm, Town Hall (for decision). Councillors NOTED the invitation and were asked to inform the Parish Office if they wished to attend.
5. Parish Council Surgeries – (i) Report of surgery 25/08/18 (MA/JB): Councillors NOTED the report by Councillors Ashby and Buller. During a busy surgery the following issues were raised: construction vehicle damage to verges in the vicinity of Slaney Road and sales banners south of Headcorn Road (both taken up with Redrow); inconsiderate parking outside Homeleigh and the school (taken up with the company and the PCSO respectively); hedges on Headcorn Road that need cutting (taken up with residents and KCC); speeding in the village and possibility of a 20mph limit in the residential area (notified to Speedwatch,

plus meeting to be held with Kent Highways); litter in general and the possibility of bin provision at Wimpy Field ('take litter home' signs to be considered); disappearance of the bin from Thatcher Road-Bathurst Road junction (reported to MBC); praise for the new paving at the Parade; information sought and provided about the Parish Council's Facebook page and the Horticultural Society. (ii) Appointment of representatives for future dates: 29<sup>th</sup> September – Councillor Silkin.

**PARISH COUNCIL REPORTS** (from Committee/Groups/Office on specific issues or as regular update)

1. Clerk's Report – The Clerk reported: a meeting about speeding issues with Kent Highways, borough and county councillors would take place on 14<sup>th</sup> September and Councillors were reminded to notify their attendance; the training session to be delivered by the Kent Association of Local Councils was going ahead in the North Hall on 5<sup>th</sup> September; the Clerk and the Caretaker had initiated some repairs and repainting at the Surrenden Field play areas; a meeting had been held with representatives of Civils to discuss land between Lodge Road and Hen & Duckhurst Farm (Councillors Buller, Burnham, Forward, Perry and the Clerk attended); a meeting had been held with Growing Concern (Councillor Manning and the Clerk attended) to review the good work on the planter maintenance; the latest monthly site meeting with Redrow Homes had taken place (Councillors Buller, Burnham, Forward and the Clerk attended); Redrow has sold seven units and first occupation is expected in October; Redrow is to check the proposed alignment of the connection between its site and the Bovis one; Councillor Forward and the Clerk had met a representative of HML to discuss Wimpey Field access and had put to both HML and Taylor Wimpey proposals for short-term and medium-term action, which will be followed up on the return from vacation of the relevant parties; a very successful Bio-blitz event had been held at Wimpey Field.
2. Written Reports on Committee, Group and Project activities - for decision or noting
  - a) Community Enhancement Group – Discussion of deferred recommendation of meeting 23/07/18 (for decision) <http://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/community--leisure-group/>: (i) Terminate street sweeping contract on 31/03/19. Chairman Burnham introduced the item by stating that the Parish Council's street-cleaning service (introduced in 2011) was being delivered efficiently by the appointed contractor, but the question was whether it was appropriate for the Parish Council to continue to provide such a service. Comments were made about benefits of the service: it extended and enhanced the service provided by statutory provider MBC, giving better coverage of smaller roads and a quick response to problems; it collected a considerable amount of dirt and leaf-fall, preventing it entering the drainage system; it was important for the Parish Council to be proactive about service delivery at a time when local authorities were reprioritising services and the village was expanding. It was NOTED that County Councillor Hotson had commented on the benefits of the service. Councillor Perry advocated deferring a decision to allow further investigation and counselled that if the Parish Council were to discontinue the service, the decision would prove to be permanent. Concerns were expressed about the Parish Council providing a street-cleaning service: parishioners were paying twice for street-cleaning through council tax and precept; the main result of the Parish Council's service was to make the borough council's job easier; latterly, coordination with MBC had been more difficult, which increased the incidence of duplication; it was difficult to perceive differences in cleaned streets; there were other priorities competing for Parish Council resources. Councillor Lain-Rose commented that, since initiation of the service and up to and including the current financial year, the Parish Council will have spent approx. £71,000 on street-cleaning. Proposed by Councillor Lain-Rose, seconded by Councillor Forward, it was RESOLVED by a majority vote to terminate the Parish Council's contract for provision of its street-cleaning service on 31/03/19.

- b) Neighbourhood Plan Review Group – Report and recommendation of meeting 15/08/18 <http://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/neighbourhood-plan-review-group/> (i) Recommendation to apply for listing of community assets. It was NOTED that the items nominated for consideration as assets of community value were Bell Lane public conveniences and the defibrillator at the library. The Clerk explained that the Parish Council held a lease of the toilet premises until 2028 and that the defibrillator did not meet the criteria for listing as an asset of community value. The recommendation was therefore not formally moved. Councillor Buller advised that the Group would present to the next Full Council meeting proposals for revisions to the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Perry commented that the review of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan would be likely to involve a 40% increase in housing need and it would be important to consider updates of the Neighbourhood Plan in this context.
  - c) Station Regeneration – Report of meeting 31/07/18 (for noting). Chairman Burnham commented that productive discussions had been held with MBC’s Director of Regeneration and Place and that MBC was looking to commission studies to generate proposals to support regeneration of the station area. Councillors NOTED this information. Chairman Burnham further commented that he had met Southeastern Railways who had advised that some more immediate works were proposed, including additional seating on platform one, new litter bins, new ‘replacement bus service’ signs in Station Approach and installation of the ‘heritage gates’ at the eastern car park.
3. Oral Reports from Committee/Groups/Councillors – for information only.
- 1. Inconsiderate Parking Boards – Councillor Symes reported that Headcorn Parish Council had installed A-boards in selected locations to discourage inconsiderate parking, which had been positively received. The subject had been submitted to Community Enhancement Group for discussion. The Clerk advised that he had made enquiries of Headcorn Parish Council and Kent Highways about the use of the boards.

**REPORTS FROM OTHER COUNCILS, AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS** for noting: -

- 1. Borough Councillor’s Report – Councillor Perry reported that MBC was starting to review its Local Plan. In response to a question from Councillor Lain-Rose, Councillor Perry confirmed that Borough Councillor Brice was planning to meet representatives of Aldi. In response to a question from Councillor Riordan, Councillor Perry said he would be meeting MBC’s Director of Finance and Business Improvement and would be discussing the ownership of Surrenden Field.

**REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS** (written reports for noting): -

No items.

**URGENT MATTERS** (at Chairman’s discretion, information only items for noting or for decision at a future meeting)

Parish Council Mower: Councillor Riordan said that the mower belonging to Staplehurst Cricket & Tennis Club had been stolen. Councillors NOTED the information and commented that if a request were made to borrow the Parish Council, it would be considered sympathetically subject to satisfaction with insurance arrangements.

Chairman.....

**PUBLIC FORUM**: Before the meeting, speakers discussed failings in the number 5 bus service and delivery of the Parish Council’s street cleaning service.

Meeting closed at 9.50pm.