

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL EGM COUNCIL MEETING 22ND JANUARY 2024 MINUTES

Public Forum

A resident raised concerns over the newspaper reports of KCC seeking to close Libraries – and we must defend the Staplehurst Library.

Also that the bus stop near Pinnock Lane needs to be repaired – Cllr Sharp already looking into it.

A resident raised concerns about the proposed increase in fees for the SMFC.

SMFC understands that the fees need to be increased but the significant increase would cripple the club. That they appreciate the level of investment from the Council and general support the Council has given over time but they have also invested significantly into the ground.

They offer low cost football for local residents too watch.

This level of increase would make the Club unsustainable and could lead to the club seeking a ground share with another SCEFL club.

Present: Cllrs Riordan, Perry, Ash, Pett, Farragher, Eerdeken, Martin, Arger, Castro, Hotson, Sharp, Perry and the Clerk.

1. APOLOGIES: Cllr Alesi

Absent Cllrs McClean and Ahmed

2. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:

2.1. Declarations of Lobbying - NA

2.2. Changes to the Register of Interests - NA

2.3. Interests in Items on the Agenda - NA

2.4. Requests for Dispensation - NA

3 PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION and DECISION

3.1 Jubilee Field proposed budget 2024/25

Following a debate which highlighted

- Need to double check the Electricity and water budgets
- Rates – is based on a portion
- Do we need to increase expenditure on Pavilion maintenance
- Is the budget for a “Boiler hot water tank” realistic – yes based on a specification
- Do we need contingency, say 10%?
- When the JFMC handover the field to the Council will there be any debts or payment to the Council.? – Currently no debts, hopefully some payment to the Council but being prudent have not budgeted for one.

The following was agreed

Signed by Chairman.....date.....

To increase Pavilion Maintenance budget £250 to £3,250 – by taking £3,000 from Election costs

Ask Council RFO to double check utility costs

Close meeting

A resident raised several points;

- that if SMFC leave / forced out due to price increase it would complicate the grant with the Football Foundation
- that the entry fees for the league are in is restricted to £6 at the current league, if SMFC got promotion they could increase fees
- that SMFC they are a registered Community Charity Club regarding the rates issue.

Meeting reopened

Cllr Riordan research showed minimum of £6 and he felt we need to be accurate and transparent.

The Council reiterated that there is no intention of asking the Club to leave, as the Parish Council has invested heavily into the site and supported the Club. Equally we need to be fair to residents.

Option of expenditure budget being £38,000 or add £2,000 contingency and make it £40,000

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Riordan seconded to approve the motion of a Jubilee Field Expenditure budget of £38,000 for 2024/25– agreed 10 while 2 supported £40,000.

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Riordan seconded to approve the resolution below – agreed majority 10 For, 2 against 0 abstained.

Resolution: to approve a Jubilee Field expenditure budget of £38,000 for 2024/25

3.2 Council proposed Fees and Charges for 2024/25

Following a debate which highlighted;

- Youth Club – stay the same
- The allotments drop the £10 per month fee and just ask for funding upfront annually Jubilee Field
- Increase one off standard grass pitch hire to £60
- Discussion around SMFC fees
 - Recognise that the proposed fee it is a large increase
 - Does offer SMFC the opportunity to generate income – sale of refreshments / entry to ground
 - Recognise the fees previously charged by the JFMC were not increased enough over the years – this has contributed to the JFMC not having enough money to operate the Jubilee Field and why they are seeking to Surrender the Lease to the Jubilee Field
 - This is for 3 teams use of the ground – other sites, just one match @£70
 - Some Cllrs felt the increase should be spread over a longer period of time, more than two years.
 - Also if we are charging these fees the Council must sort out the problems.
 - If the “Boiler / hot water tank” work is completed the ongoing costs should reduce?
 - It was suggested a percentage increase or @ £700 on the current charges £5,866

Signed by Chairman.....date.....

- Suggested a fee of £6,500 for 3 teams against a fee of £7,247,38 for the Youth's 22 teams.

Cllr Castro proposed and Cllr Perry seconded to introduce the SMFC ground hire fee as of 1st August 2024 to £6,500 per year (2024/25) and then from 1st August 2025 £7,500 per year (plus RPI index linked) for 2025/26 and then review.

Agreed majority 8 for, 4 against and 0 abstained.

Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Arger seconded to approve the resolution below – agreed unanimously

Resolution: to approve the Council fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out below.				
Proposed Fees and Charges for 2024/25 - VAT does not apply				
Youth Club 1st April 2024 – 30th March 2025	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Comment
Community Group; Without membership fees such as NDPR Group, SCEG, Council working Groups	£0	£0	£0	0% increase on last year
Community organisation / society with membership fees	£10	£10	£10	0% increase on last year
Commercial / private hir	£30	£30	£60	0% increase on last year
Allotments from when opened until August 2025				
Per plot for year 1 st September 2024 – 31 st August 2025			£120	New fee
Jubilee Field from 1st August 2024 – 31st July 2025				
SMFC ground hire per year			£6,500	New fee - Monthly DD £541,67
SMYFC pitch hire per year			£7,247.38	5% increase on last year - Monthly DD £603.94
New - One off grass pitch hire with changing rooms from 1 st April 2024 – 31 st July 2025				
Standard pitch hire			£60	New fee
Main grass pitch hire			£100	New fee
Main grass pitch hire, with lights			£150	New fee
Ground hire – if charging entry			£250	New fee

3.3 Council budget for 2024/25 and the level of Parish Precept

Following a debate which highlighted

The Clerk handed out a paper that since the Council report was produced the Parish Services Grant has increased for 2024/25

Need to recognise that the income at Jubilee Field has been amended

That this is the opportunity for all Cllrs to comment / amend the budget

That Council **MUST** agree the budget for 2024/25 at the Council meeting on the 29th January 2024 as Council must submit the precept demand to MBC by the 30th January 2024.

Signed by Chairman.....date.....

Note that £3,000 transferred to Jubilee Field expenditure budget from Election costs, that the remaining £2,000 Election costs should be transferred to a new SCEnic budget to do works in the village – such as the Bus Shelter previously mentioned (Street Furniture budget)

Increase Village Update & Website by £300 and reduce Grants by £300 to £3,200

Should the £15,000 cost for the “Boiler Hot water tank” be taken from CIL rather than included in the budget? If this was done it would reduce the increase in the precept to the residents.

Others felt that the Council had not increased the precept over the last few years and we need to include these costs in the budget. CIL should be used for projects around the Village.

It was felt that the indicative increase of £10 per Band D or overall @ 13% would be acceptable. Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Sharp seconded the motion to retain the £15,000 in the expenditure budget and not use CIL- Agreed For 10, against 2, Abstained 0

Cllr Riordan raised the point about seeking support for the Churchyard budget. The clerk and Cllr Perry confirmed that we could not obtain MBC parish Services Grant unless we owned / managed the Churchyard.

Cllr Sharp emphasised we offer a donation towards the upkeep of the Churchyard rather than a budget to manage it. (Should be shown in grants and donations)

Cllr Hotson proposed and Cllr Eerdekenes seconded to approve the motion below – agreed unanimously

£2,000 election costs should be transferred to Street Furniture to cover SCEnic work

£3,000 election costs transferred to Jubilee Field – as previously discussed

Increase Village Update & Website by £300 and reduce Grants by £300 to £3,200

For the RFO to amend and report back to Council on 29th January 2024 with the final budget and impact on the precept

Cllr Hotson proposed and Cllr Eerdekenes seconded to approve the resolution below – agreed unanimously

Resolution: To approve;

- i. £2,000 election costs should be transferred to Street Furniture to cover SCEnic work
- ii. £3,000 election costs should be transferred to Jubilee Field budget as previously discussed
- iii. Increase Village Update & Website by £300 and reduce Grants by £300 to £3,200
- iv. For the RFO to amend and report back to Council on 29th January 2024 with the final budget and impact on the precept

3.4 Grant Aid application

Following a debate Cllr Eerdekenes proposed and Cllr Martin seconded to approve the resolution below – agreed majority 9 For, 3 against 0 abstained.

Resolution: to approve the recommendation of the Employment, Finance and Strategy Group to grant £1,000 to Staplehurst Primary School to plant a wildlife area.
(Budget code Donanatiostn and Grants)

Signed by Chairman.....date.....

Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Arger seconded to suspend Council Standing Orders and extend the meeting by 15 minutes – agreed 11 for, 1 against and 0 abstained

3.5 Contract fees

Following a debate Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Arger seconded to approve the resolution below – agreed unanimously

Resolution: to consider the recommendation of the Employment, Finance and Strategy Group to approve the contract fees as set out in **appendix A** of the report.
(Budget Code – various)

3.6 Residents Survey Prize draw

Following a debate Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Riordan seconded to approve the resolution below – agreed unanimously

Resolution: To include a prize draw in the Residents Survey of 3 x £100 shopping vouchers
(Budget code Office support – running costs)

4 URGENT MATTERS

5 SPECIAL MOTION & REPORT – NA

6 Confidential

6.1 Employment and Service Contract Report

Council discussed employment and Service Contract matters.

Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Hotson seconded to approve the following resolution, with the above amendment – agreed unanimously

Resolution: to approve the recommendations of the Employment, Finance and Strategy Group to;

- i. the appointment of Worknest to review staff grades for a fee up to £1,338
- ii. the service contract for the Cleaner of the Youth Club – as set out in **Appendix A**
- iii. the service contract of the groundsman at the Jubilee Field – as set out in **Appendix B** - ready for when the Council take over the management of Jubilee Field

Meeting closed.....9.45pm.....

These minutes are not verbatim, but an accurate reflection of decisions.

Signed by Chairman.....date.....