



2359

# STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 23<sup>RD</sup> JUNE 2025 MINUTES

## **Public Forum**

The Staplehurst Brownies made an impressive presentation on the need for a crossing of the A229 near All Saints Church. This would help everyone young and old. They requested that Paish Council petition MBC / KCC and the Local MP to get signage, 20mph zone or road paint to help slow drivers down before anyone gets killed.

Cllr Sharp thanked them for their excellent presentation and welcomed their request. The Parish Council have been lobbying for signage for some time – a recent meeting with KCC Highways was more positive, so we will keep you updated.

A resident asked about extending the NDP consultation as there has been a poor response, which might undermine the Revised NDP. Another resident supported this request and asked about a public meeting?

Council agreed that the Clerk would investigate extending the NDP consultation and try to arrange a public meeting.

Mr Green, a special witness, introduced himself

## **Maidstone Borough Councillor's Report**

Cllr Perry raised several points

- supports the push for an extension of the NDP as it is an important planning document
- MBC have been awarded a "Trailblazer Grant of £20 million over 10 years" – one of 25 authorities in the country to help improve deprived areas in the Borough.
- MBC have a major discussion point about investing £7m into Maidstone House – their main offices
- Also, environmental planning issues with the proposed "Paddle Tennis Courts"
- The Mathurst Solar Farm application is still deferred – will update people when I know more.

Cllr Riordan raised a few points.

- supports the push for an extension of the NDP as it is an important planning document
- The discussions regarding investing £7m into Maidstone House – their main offices – is causing concern
- MBC have a grant of £16,000 from the Chewing Gum Task Force to help tidy up areas
- Has finally made progress on the EV charging points at Bell Lane and hopes to have a site meeting soon

Signd by Chairman.....Date.....

## **Kent County Councillor's Report - NA**

**Next Council Saturday 28 June 2025 – 10am surgery –** Cllr Sharp will join Cllr Perry

The Chairman read out the following.

### **Civility and Respect**

All attendees are reminded that this meeting is to be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and civility. Please ensure that all comments and contributions are made respectfully and considerately.

**Present:** Cllrs Sharp, Hotson, Martin, Perry, Farragher, Pett, McLaughlin, Rhodes, Alesi, Melville Costa and Riordan plus Clerk

Cllr Riordan requested to film the meeting. The Clerk asked not to be filmed, a sound recording was fine. The Chairman asked like wise. Therefore, Cllr Riordan recorded the meeting without facing the camera towards the Clerk or Chairman.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllrs Ash, Wakeford and Arger

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 – Item 6.7 Cllrs Sharp and McLaughlin

Clerk noted Cllrs Hotson and Farragher have stepped down as Trustees of the Staplehurst Community Centre Trust.

2.4. Requests for Dispensation -NA

2.5 Request for a Special Witness to attended item 10.1

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Rhodes seconded to agree for Mr S Green to be a Special witness and attend item 10.1 - agreed unanimously

3. **APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES: (5 minutes)**

Pages 2350– 2358 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025 available at [Full Council - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge \(staplehurst-pc.uk\)](http://Full Council - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge (staplehurst-pc.uk)) to be signed by the Chairman.

Cllr Melville proposed, and Cllr McLaughlin seconded to approve the minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025 – agreed majority; For 8, against 2, abstained 2.

Duly signed by the Chairman

Cllr Riordan felt the Audit Report should have mentioned the Youth Club Health and Safety issues of last year and requested a report to the next meeting – agreed.

4. **FINANCE REPORTS & PROPOSALS**

4.1 **Payment list, Summation and Balance sheet (5 minutes)**

<b><u>Approved Payments 28th May - 17th June 2025</u></b>	<b>Amount</b>
Rumwoods Ltd - Plants GSG	18.40
SLCC - ILCA Staff Qualification	144.00
Kent BM Ltd - Compost x 8 Bulk Bags Jubilee Field	672.00

Signd by Chairman.....Date.....

GDPR-info Ltd - Annual Subscription	350.00
Iden Business Services Ltd - Annual Internal Audit	400.00
Origin Amenity Solutions - 4x20g Rye Grass Seed Jubilee Field	334.80
P&F Cleaning - Bell Lane Toilets Clean/Open/Sun May	1,010.00
Homeleigh Timber - 10x Wooden Sleepers & Screws GSG	282.12
Homeleigh Timber - 12x Decking Wood, Pegs & Screws GSG	82.06
Hugofox Limited - Silver Subscription June	23.99
Bumbles Plant Centre - Compost GSG	14.38
TC Fencing & Field Care - Harrowing & Rolling Jubilee Field	300.00
WI - VE Day Celebration Cake	30.00
Staff Reimbursement Parish Office Coffee	13.00
Sevenoaks DC - Jubilee Field Premises Licence	180.00
Heliocentrix Ltd - Website Domain Name New	72.00
Dean Fuller - JF Mowing/White Line Marking/Petrol/Sundries	497.34
Staff Reimbursement Parish Office Sundries	3.05
Paul Waring - JF Mowing November 2024	91.20
Procurement Services - Photocopier Rental Jly-Sept	105.98
Rumwoods Ltd - Plants & Compost GSG	85.97
CSG Global Education Ltd - Office Stationery	47.34
GeoXphere Ltd - Parish Online Annual Subscription	162.00
PPL PRS Ltd - Annual Music Licence Youth Club	784.48
123 Reg Ltd - Domain Name Bi-annual Renewal	31.18
Sainsbury's - Parish Office Milk	2.10
Post Office Ltd - Stamps NDP Consultation	3.60
Countrystyle Recycling - Waste Collection April	76.85
Business Stream - Jubilee Pavilion Waste Water	122.27
British Gas Lite - Bell Lane Toilets Electricity Apr-May	29.88
British Gas Lite - Surrenden Pavilion Electricity Apr-May	35.23
MBC - Council Tax Parish Office Room 1 June	62.00
MBC - Council Tax Parish Office Room 2-3 June	72.00
MBC - Council Tax Bell Lane Toilets June	100.00
MBC - Council Tax Youth Club June	121.00
British Gas Lite - Jubilee Pavilion Electricity Apr-May	280.70
Sage Payroll - June	12.00
Pozitive Energy - Youth Club Electricity May	69.95
Business Stream - Wimpey Field Water Feb-May	81.91
Business Stream - Bell Lane Toilets Water Apr-May	62.93
Business Stream - Surrenden Pavilion Water Feb-May	23.74
Arron Services Ltd - Hosted Exchange June	271.32
	7,162.77
<b>TOTAL PETTY CASH EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>0.00</b>

Cllr Martin proposed, and Cllr Hotson seconded to agree payment list above. agreed majority; For 11, against 1, abstain 0.

Summation was noted and Cllr Martin thanked the RFO for her hard work

Signd by Chairman.....Date.....

## 4.2 Contracts

Cllr Martin proposed, and Cllr Farragher seconded to agree contract list below. agreed unanimously

### **Staplehurst Parish Council - Forthcoming Contract Reviews/Renewals June 2025**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Annual Value 2024-25</b>	<b>Cost per annum 2025-26</b>	<b>Contract End Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Bell Lane Toilet Clean/Open/Sundries	P&F Cleaning Services Ltd	£12,120.00	£12,120.00	Ongoing	One months' notice - annual price increase
Data Protection Officer Agreement	GDPR- Info Ltd	£350.00	£350.00	11/07/2025	12m F&SG for SPC Approval
Unmetered supply Xmas Lights	Npower	Est. £55.00	Est. £55.00	Ongoing annual roll-over	12m RFO/Clerk - minimal value
Music Licence - Youth Club	PPL PRS Ltd	£322.71	£322.71	13/06/2025	Annual Auto renewal
Premises Licence - Jubilee Field	Sevenoaks District Council	£180.00	£180.00	31/05/2025	Annual Auto renewal

## 4.3 Jubilee Field Ground Maintenance works

Following a debate; that the standard recreational summer maintenance work is under way (section a of the resolution) and that the drainage works are required for the use of the field with or without the 3G pitch.

We have struggled to get three quotes and seek to do the work this summer - Financial Regulations Contracts section, h) can apply -

Cllr Sharp proposed, and Cllr Rhodes seconded to approve the resolution below -. agreed majority; For 10, against 2, abstain 0.

### **Resolution:** To approve

- a) The payments of £300.00 to TC Fencing and Field Care for harrowing, £560.00 to Kent BM Ltd for purchase of fertilizer and £330.80 to Origin Amenity Solutions for purchase of grass seed (all figures are plus VAT)

### **Budget Code: Jubilee Field**

Cllr Riordan requested a recorded vote – which was granted

Cllr Sharp proposed, and Cllr Melville seconded to approve the resolution below -. agreed majority; For 8 – Cllrs Sharp, Melville, Hotson, Martin, Farragher, Rhodes, Alesi, McLaughlin, against 3 – Cllr Castro, Pett and Riordan, abstain 1 – Cllr Perry.

### **Resolution:** To approve

- b) The appointment of KD Drainage and Asbestos LTD to undertake drainage works at Jubilee Field for £3,900 plus VAT

### **Budget Code: Jubilee Field**

Signd by Chairman.....Date.....

## **5 CLERKS REPORT ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS – attached**

Clerk raised several points regarding JFWG

1. Blue lights event – unfortunately, Marden have let the Blue Lights down. This is an excellent opportunity to promote joint work with the Police, Fire Brigade and Ambulance services – subject to Satisfactory Risk Assessment, Insurance etc SMFC have yet to confirmed that Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2025 is available as the league set their matches. They have asked to be away on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 2025 but that has not yet been confirmed.

Cllr Martin proposed, and Cllr Alesi seconded to approve the Blue Light event subject to satisfactory Risk Assessment, Insurance, and that the pitch is available. Agreed majority for 11, against 0 and abstained 1

**Budget Code:** Jubilee Field

2. Container – there is an old rusting large shipping container which needed to be removed years ago. We now have an offer to remove it “Free of Charge” but will need a “clear up working party” and a skip on site to empty the general rubbish in it and on the site. – approximately £300.

Cllr Melville proposed, and Cllr Rhodes seconded to approve the removal of the old container and the hire of a skip for approximately £300 – Agreed majority For 10, against 0 and abstained 2

**Budget Code:** Jubilee Field

3. Cut edge erosion survey and report of the pavilion – We have been struggling to get three quotes since before Christmas 2024, eventually we now have two. One for £150 plus VAT and the other for £250 plus VAT (Financial Regulations Contracts section, h) can apply.

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Riordan seconded to approve the appointment of Pride of Kent Roofing to undertake a cut edge erosion survey and report back for £150 plus VAT – agreed unanimously

**Budget Code:** Jubilee Field

2330/6 Girl Guides lease progressing slowly

2108 – Cranbrook Rd -positive meeting but potential “showstoppers” - Hedge near bus stop is privately owned and will need to be removed / replanted – depends on landowner. Relocation of services in the area: if we must relocate electricity etc this would eat up the S106 funding available for the whole scheme.

2175/7 – Elderly person crossing signs – as previously mentioned the criteria for “children Crossing” is more flexible - KCC Highways report back by end of July 2025.

2262/4.5 Skatepark painted last week.

Clerk will invite all Cllrs to a “teams meeting” to KALC presentation on funding option – Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025 – 1:30pm.

## **6 PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION and DECISION -**

### **6.1 Devolution / Reorganisation – Standing Item - Verbal update (5 minutes)**

Cllr Perry noted that KCC administration are against devolution and keen to delay the process

Verbal Update from Cllr Martin who attended the KALC EGM on Devolution last week  
Excellent meeting – about 600 attendees and excellent speakers

Mayoral role – strategic and comes with powers

Signd by Chairman.....Date.....

Unitary Authorities – merging of Borough and County rolls – aiming for either 3 or 4 areas, with population of around 500,000, includes Kent and Medway

Transition costs - Kent and Medway allocated £500,000 out of a total national funding of £7.6 million, with likely cost being £20 million nationally.

Concern not enough government funding to cover transition cost

1. Consultation
2. Criteria – all equal value
3. Parish will have vital role.

A huge number of challenges such as timescale, what happens to the debt, what happens to building assets, what happens to surpluses, recruitment, etc

But also, an opportunity to improve and streamline local authority services

Various points were made

- Where is the money coming from?
- Last year reported that in 18 months KCC would be bankrupt – so what happens then.
- (Government appoints an “administrator under special measures” as has happened in other areas of the country.)
- If Adult Social Care costs are crippling KCC now. In a few years’ time Adult Social Care costs could be crippling the new unity authorities
- Concern that Parishes will be transferred services without the funding

EFS group had an initial discussion – summary below

- MBC / KCC may seek to off load liabilities / services they do not want – cannot afford
- We do not want assets / liabilities / services without funding
- Need to audit, clarify costs of any asset /service before any transfer
- Clarify Parish Council evolving “Powers”
- Clarify Parish Council Risk / Insurance
- Potentially evolving partnership roles with neighbouring Parish Councils; Youth Services / Community Warden etc
- “Bundle contracts” into one contract i.e. one grounds maintenance contract for open space maintenance in the Parish

Cllr Pett summed up best that Devolution is going to happen, there will not be enough funding to deliver services, and it is best that the Parish Council engage with the process to try and get the best for Staplehurst.

### **KALC Survey**

In the debate several points were raised notably that it is difficult to complete the survey because we do not know what is happening.

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr McLaughlin seconded for Cllrs to respond to the Clerk by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025 and to delegate to the Clerk and Cllr Martin to coordinate a Council response.  
(closing date 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025)

### **6.2 Cllr Wakeford – appointment to Committee and Group**

Cllr Sharp proposed, and Cllr Hotson seconded to approve the resolution below - agreed unanimously

**Resolution:** To approve the appointment of Cllr Wakeford to Planning Committee and Road Safety Group

Signd by Chairman.....Date.....

### 6.3 IT Service Contract

Following a debate, it was agreed to defer and to draft an IT policy

Cllr Melville proposed, and Cllr Riordan seconded to approve the resolution below - agreed unanimously

**Resolution:** To defer the Councillor IT equipment disclaimer form and to draft IT Policy

**Note Cllr Alesi had to leave the meeting**

**Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Hotson proposed to suspend Standing Orders and extended the meeting by 30minutes – agreed unanimously**

### 6.4 Annual Report

An impassioned debate took place, some of the key points were.

- KALC advice had been circulated to Cllrs last week and again today to Cllrs
- KALC is the Kent arm of NALC
- The Clerk did not overstep his powers in withholding the publication of the Annual Report
- Specific legislation includes LGA 1972, s112, Localism ACT 2011, Defamation Act 2013

Some Cllrs raised the following

- Much of the Chairman's report is historical, it should focus on 2024/25 and has inaccuracies such as the funding relating to Jubilee Field which was JFMC and SMFC - not Parish Council
- Former MBC Cllr Brice was instrumental in the funding– and has not been mentioned
- Cllr Riordan is obviously welcome to his views – but this is the wrong publication
- It is understandable that after seven years as Chairman there could be some reflection – but the focus should be on 2024/25 and accurate
- Although a supporter of Cllr Riordan for the good he has done – this is deplorable
- Several Cllrs emphasised the need to focus on the "amended version in the cover report"

However, some Cllrs felt

- That it is censorship and we live in a free country
- KALC advice is only guidance and not legally binding
- Other Annual Reports look back beyond the last year.
- Cllr Riordan defended his statements line by line and insisted it should not be changed. If changed he would withdraw it.

The Clerk emphasised that the Annual Report is a report of the Council, a Corporate Body. It is the Council's Annual Report of the year, not a personal report by the Chairman.

The factual inaccuracies put the Council at risk. Many Cllrs will recall that we have already had one challenge this year, that we were able to defend, as the issue was about Cllr Riordan as an individual, not the Parish Council.

We do not have the best relationship with some groups, and we would not have any defence this time. This is a Parish Council report.

The Chairman noted the request, earlier in the meeting, regarding extending the NDP Review Regulation 14 consultation period. This will need clarification and then edited, plus other points such as email addresses throughout the document.

Cllr Riordan asked for further amendments notably in 3G Multi-Sport and RSG reports and a report on Bower Walk letter at the next meeting - agreed

Cllr Martin suggested amendments should be in consultation with Cllr Castro as Chairman of Community Groups – however he declined as his workload does not give him the time

Signd by Chairman.....Date.....

Cllr Sharp proposed, and Cllr McLaughlin seconded to approve the resolution below - agreed majority; for 7, against 3, abstain 1.

**Resolution:** To approve

1. the amendments as set out in the report
2. Delegate to the Clerk in consultation with Cllr Martin to double check further amendments

The meeting closed at 10.00pm

The Chairman apologised to the Special Witness for having to sit through the whole meeting without the opportunity to discuss the Staplehurst Railway Station update item and explained the issue of the Standing Orders.

**6.5 To consider a Boot Fair at the Jubilee Field - Deferred**

**6.6 Community Clean Up - Deferred**

**6.7 SCCT Request for CIL funding - Deferred**

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

NA

**8. Chairman's Report - Deferred**

**8.1 Committee and working group minutes for noting**

- 8.1.1 Planning Committee minutes of 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025
- 8.1.2 Road Safety Group – next meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025
- 8.1.3 Jubilee Field Working Group minutes 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025
- 8.1.4 SCEnic next meeting 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025
- 8.1.5 3G Multi-Sports pitch working group meeting – to be arranged
- 8.1.6 Employment, Finance and Strategy Group meeting minutes 12<sup>th</sup> June 2025
- 8.1.7 NDP Review Group meeting to be arranged
- 8.1.8 Communications Group meeting minutes of 18th June 2025 to follow
- 8.1.9 Greener Staplehurst Group meeting - to be arranged

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

**10 Confidential – deferred**

**10.1 Staplehurst Railway Station update report - Deferred**

**10.2 HR verbal update – Deferred**

**These minutes are not verbatim; the decisions are accurate.**

Signd by Chairman.....Date.....