



PARISH COUNCIL

**MEETING
26TH AUGUST 2025**

MINUTES

PUBLIC FORUM

No residents spoke.

Cllr Riordan requested to record the meeting and Cllr McLaughlin withdraw his consent to be recorded.

Cllr Riordan agreed to pause the recording when Cllr McLaughlin spoke.

Kent County Councillor report –(Standing item)

Cllr Black raised a number of points

- KCC have found savings of £60m and are putting the extra funding towards pothole repairs – this will help but not solve the county wide problem
- KCC seeking more savings and will update you in the future
- Hedge cutting is way behind, Cllr Black is doing his best to chase up KCC Highways. However, if the Parish Council want to cut hedges around signs to help Cllr Black offered to cover cost from KCC Cllr Allowance.
- Cllr Black will chase up Cllr Wakeford's issue – Clerk to forward contact details
- Hopefully successful with water spillage in Bathurst Rd that has been causing problems / damage to the road
- Will chase up other issues that have been raised

Maidstone Borough Councillor's Report (Standing Item):

Cllr Perry raised a number of points;

- Devolution is an ongoing issue - now 3 options being discussed One unitary authority (whole of Kent), 4 unitary authorities or 3 unitary authorities
- Planning Committee – suggest the Parish Council Planning Committee is aware that MBC does not have a 5-year housing land supply so the "tilted balance" is in favour of approving Housing applications. Therefore "call ins" where an officer recommends approval should be given serious thought
- Noted, an MBC Byelection in Lenham is being arranged – this is due to the "Heathlands Garden Village" issues.

Cllr Riordan raised a number of points:

- his discussion with Cllr Black included; Cranbrook Rd improvements, Youth Service provision, Water leak in Bathurst Rd, Damage to grass / kerb off Marden Rd, Bell Lane Hedge cutting, ongoing issue of Hawkenbury Bridge, arranging meeting with School regarding traffic / parking late September / October – once date known will inform everyone.
- the issue of debt in devolution process was discussed, Cllr Perry queried the MBC debt figure mentioned, but it was generally agreed that there is no funding for the Devolution / Reorganisation process and that there is already significant debt across the local authorities in Kent.

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

Cllr Surgery Saturday 27th Sept 2025, 10am – 12noon at Staplehurst Library –
Cllr Martin to attend on behalf of the Parish Council

Present: Cllrs Sharp, Martin, Arger, Alesi, Mclaughlin, Melville, Rhodes, Farragher, Perry, Pett, Riordan, Ash and Hotson

1. APOLOGIES: Cllrs Castro and Wakeford

2. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:

2.1. Declarations of Lobbying - NA

2.2. Changes to the Register of Interests – Cllr Rhodes is no longer on the Girl Guide Management Committee – item 6.3

2.3. Interests in Items on the Agenda - NA

2.4. Requests for Dispensation - NA

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

Pages 2375 – 2382 4th August 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))

Cllr Riordan asked for a change –“included 3G Multi-Sport pitch cost” to “were wrong” Cllr Melville proposed and Cllr Ash seconded to approve the minutes, with the above amendment, of the meeting held 4th August 2025: agreed by majority 6 for, 0 against and 7 abstained. Duly signed by the Chairman.

4. FINANCE REPORTS & PROPOSALS

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

<u>Approved and paid payments 31st July - 19th August 2025</u>	<u>Amount</u>
HMRC - Tax re Cllrs Basic Parish Allowance Payment Oct 2024	490.57
Staff - Travel Claims May/June/July	35.37
Bumbles Plant Centre - Plants, Bedding & Canes GSG	59.41
Hugofox Limited - Silver Subscription August	23.99
NALC - Planning Framework Training Cllr MA	42.00
KALC - Planning Framework Training Clerk	18.00
KALC - Procurement Training x2	72.00
Commercial Services Trading Ltd - SF Mowing Apr-June	1,196.63
Alex Harvey - Youth Club Cleaning July	125.00
Alex Harvey - JF Pavilion Cleaning July	100.00
Heliocentrix Ltd - Business Basic July	158.93
Heliocentrix Ltd - Managed IT Silver x3 Workstations July	138.60
Business Stream - Youth Club Waste Water May-July	45.50
CSG Global Education Ltd - Stationery	34.78
Bradley Hawkins - Wimpey Field mowing/strimming/hedging July	200.00
Homeleigh Timber - Link Chain Surrenden Field Gate	4.31
Homeleigh Timber - Padlock Keys x2 Surrenden Field Gate	9.58
Homeleigh Timber - Cable Ties	9.63

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

Amazon UK - Manhole Cover Chestnut Ave/A229	101.99
Homeleigh Timber - Drain Pipe Parts Youth Club	60.98
Forestry First Ltd - Removal of Tree Branch Footpath KM312	180.00
HMRC - Tax & NI July	2,508.52
Payroll & Pension Costs - August	8,267.73
Post Office Ltd - NDP Survey Postage	1.55
MBC - Parish Office Council Tax Room 1 August	62.00
MBC - Parish Office Council Tax Room 2-3 August	72.00
MBC - Bell Lane Toilets Council Tax August	100.00
MBC - Youth Club Council Tax August	121.00
British Gas Lite - Bell Lane Toilet Electricity Jun-Jly	29.08
ICO - Data Protection Annual Fee	47.00
Sage Payroll - August	20.88
Positive Energy - Electricity Youth Club July	58.09
Business Stream - Waste Water Bell Lane Toilets Jun-July	62.93
British Gas Lite - Electricity JF Pumping Station July-Aug	13.80
Castle Water - Potable Water JF Pavilion July	52.98
TOTAL CURRENT ACCOUNT EXPENDITURE	14,524.83

TOTAL PETTY CASH EXPENDITURE

0.00

Cllr Riordan raised concerns regarding the water and electricity bills at the Jubilee Field, why are the Council supporting a commercial business.

Cllr Sharp raised the point that Cllr Riordan was asked for a report on the matter, Cllr Riordan made it very clear he had declined the invitation to do a report on the matter.

Cllr Melville proposed and Cllr Ash seconded to approve the payment list above: agreed by majority 7 for, 3 against and 2 abstained.

The summation was noted.

4.2 Christmas Lights update report

Following a debate which highlighted that Christmas Lights were always a challenge process, Cllr Melville proposed and Cllr Arger seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed unanimously

Resolution: To agree a fee up to £1,500 for the installation and dismantling of this year's Christmas lights.

Budget Code - Christmas lights

4.3 Budget Monitoring report Jubilee Field year end 2024/25

Following a debate which highlighted the actual expenditure was lower than the budgeted expenditure for instance

Electric £3,500 budget, actual £3,126.75 – under budget by £373.25

Water £2,900 budget, actual £834.03 – under budget by £2,065.97

That overall expenditure was £17,497.74 under the budgeted expenditure

That overall income was £1,243.64 above the budgeted income

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

Cllr Riordan raised concerns about the water and electricity bills in the Pavilion and that the Council is subsidising SMFC CIC, a professional football club.

It was explained that the Council sets the budget and had to pick up considerable legacy expenditure costs from the JFMC in 2024/25, such as Hot Water tank. The Council set the hire fees. The precept supports the services at the Jubilee Field as a whole, as well as other services such as Youth Club or the Allotments etc.

The Council does not charge Fivestar Football course for extra water / electricity costs every time a child uses the toilet in the pavilion, nor the SMFC CIC for their use of the pavilion nor, separate use of water between users of the pavilion and the Council watering grass pitches.

Cllr Pett asked about the 3G pitch fees – Clerk mentioned VAT Consultant, Bid Consultant Dun and Bradstreet company searches and will circulate breakdown.

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Hotson seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed by majority 10 for, 0 against and 3 abstained

Resolution – To note Jubilee Field end of year 2024/25 budget monitoring report, as per **appendix A**

4.4 Jubilee Field budget monitoring report – 1st April – 30th June 2025

Following a debate Cllr Riordan asked about the drainage cost, Clerk noted the initial inspection work was included and the actual drainage work would be in next quarters figures.

Cllr Ash asked about the sinking fund, was it for anything specific? Clerk responded not allocated as such, it would be transferred at the end of the financial year to Ring Fenced Reserves to help build up a fund for any significant costs in the future.

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Rhodes seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed by majority 10 for, 0 against and 3 abstained

Resolution: To note the budget monitoring report the Jubilee Field, 1st April – 30th June 2025, as per **appendix A**

5 CLERKS REPORT ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS

Clerk enquired about

- 2067 / PF – EV charging points – Cllr Riordan still chasing after two years
- 2331/6.1 – Chilmington Water treatment – Cllr Perry will chase up
- 2332/61 Footpath KM293A – Cllr Riordan and Perry have not chased, Cler to follow up

Clerk gave verbal feedback on

- the Blue Light event, 16th August 2025 which went well with about 100 attendees but was not widely advertised by the Police so not as many as expected turned up.
- Note EFS Group meeting changed to 10am start from 1:30pm start
- The Theatre in the Park went successfully last week
- Cllr Riordan enquired about a report on the Surrenden Field pavilion project, a report should come to a Council meeting soon

6 PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION and DECISION -

6.1 Devolution – standing item verbal update

Previously discussed.

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

6.2 **3G Multi-Sport pitch update report**

Following debate which highlighted;

- the frustrations of the Parish Council with the delays
- Cllr Sharp talked through the latest amendments to the BNG monitoring form, appendix B, which was circulated to Cllrs on 20th August 2025.
- Cllr Riordan felt this should come back with the final document.
- Cllr Hotson and others felt this is a standard document and should progress with the amendments as discussed
- Cllr Ash suggested progressing unless “material changes in the document”

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Melville seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed by majority 8 for, 5 against and 0 abstained

to approve appendix B (the Unilateral Undertaking Pursuant to Section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and other powers - BNG Monitoring form- with amendments as discussed unless material changes to the document

(Clerk / Chairman will circulate any changes to all Cllrs)

The Clerk then talked through the design and build element, noted that the contractors’ costs include a provisional sum of £20,000 for BNG monitoring. If the Council pay the agreed £10,000 BNG monitoring fee directly to MBC, then the provisional sum of £20,000 BNG monitoring fee will be removed from contractors’ costs. The only amendment proposed by the 3G MSWG was the potential work to the soakaways adjacent to the Girl Guides Centre.

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Sharp seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed by majority 8 for, 2 against and 2 abstained

Confirm no further design amendments but note potentially onsite additional work to soakaways – as a variation / onsite additional work

Cllr Melville proposed and Cllr Martin seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed by majority 12 for, 0 against and 1 abstained

Once planning permission obtained liaise with the Design and Build Contractor to finalise costs

Clerk noted that we can also apply to Kent FA, however it is likely we shall still have a shortfall Cllr Mclaughlin proposed and Cllr Melville seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed by majority 12 for, 0 against and 1 abstained

Once planning permission obtained submit grant applications to Kent Playing Field Association, Active Sports and Kent FA

Cllr Melville proposed and Cllr Mclaughlin seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed by majority 11 for, 1 against and 1 abstained

Once planning permission obtained notify 3 short listed contractors and agree date for tender submission – aim for October 2025 with an opportunity for any queries, questions and interviews November 2025 and decision in December 2025

The Clerk talked through an indicative project plan – subject to planning permission.

- Planning permission
- Confirmed provisional cost and Cllr workshop to discuss
- Sport and Recreation management tender returns
- Assessment and interviews, suggested all Councillors, Cllr Hotson Full Council meeting for interviews
- Council EGM for a decision

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

6.3 **Girl Guides lease / annual licence report**

Cllr Farragher apologised as she had not declared an interest at the start of the meeting and did not seek dispensations and abstained from voting.

Following a debate which included

A) Girl Guides variation to underlease – appendix C.

It was suggested the variation to the underlease remain the same but add:

1.3 To allow selling of alcohol with appropriate licences

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Melville seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed by majority 10 for, 0 against and 3 abstained

To approve appendix C with the amendment 1.3 To allow selling of alcohol with appropriate licences

B) Annual Licence

It was suggested to amend the times (on Monday – Thursday 4pm – 10pm) to “when the Kathie Lamb Centre is being used by the Girl Guides”

Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Melville seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed by majority 10 for, 0 against and 3 abstained

To approve appendix D with the amendment “when the Kathie Lamb Centre is being used by the Girl Guides”

Cllr Mclaughlin proposed and Cllr Pett seconded to approve the resolution below: agreed by majority 10 for, 0 against and 3 abstained

To approve the following fees

Variation to underlease

- Existing annual ground rent £5 for building and £50 contribution water supply remain the same
- 5% of external income

Annual Licence

- Annual Rent of £5

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Arger seconded to suspend Standing Orders and extend the meeting by 30minutes – agreed 10 for, 0 against and 3 abstained.

Cllr Pett commented that these meetings are often extend and should not be, Clerk agreed and noted.

6.4 **Planning application 23/502352/Hybrid land West of Lodge Road.**

(Note as Cllrs Perry and Riordan are also MBC Cllrs they did not take part in the discussion and were recorded as Non-Voting)

Following a debate which included:

- The Staplehurst Housing Survey emphasised the importance of affordable housing
- Note KCC will object if the s106 contributions are not delivered
- Still concern about the through road to Dickens Gate to alleviate the pressure on the Crossroads
- Understand the “tilted balance” is more likely to favour housing applications
- That developers always attempt the viability argument, if they cannot deliver the development another developer could

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

Cllr Pett proposed and Cllr Arger seconded agreed for 11, against 0 abstain 0 that the Parish Council submit the comments below

" Staplehurst Parish Council stand by their comments 26.04.24 regarding this site. However, we strongly reiterate that this development should deliver the appropriate affordable housing and S106/CIL contributions in line with adopted NPPF and MBC Local Plan policies."

(Cllrs Perry and Riordan recorded as Non-Voting)

6.5 Updated IT policy

Following a debate which noted the update on the existing IT policy focused on including a disclaimer form for Cllrs that use their own equipment and a disclaimer form for Councillors that use Parish Council provided equipment.

Cllr Ash asked if a Councillor used the equipment inappropriately what would be the sanction – Cllr Sharp responded that she was sure this would not happen but the ultimate sanction would be to remove access to the Councils IT. Note the footnotes were included to explain concerns previously raised.

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

Resolution: To agree the updated IT Policy including IT equipment disclaimer forms

6.6 Consider a Boot Fair at Surrenden Field

Following a debate which include general support for a good cause (SEHT) an invoice of £10 should be raised. Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Ash seconded to approve the resolution below, agreed unanimously

Resolution: To consider another Boot Fair 13th September 2025, at Surrenden Field and an invoiced donation of £10

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

8. Chairman's Report – already raised issues in meeting

8.1 Committee and working group minutes - deferred

- 8.1.1 Planning Committee minutes 11th August 2025
- 8.1.2 Road Safety Group minutes 7th August 2025
- 8.1.3 Jubilee Field Working Group 18th August 2025, minutes to follow
- 8.1.4 SCEnic meeting 21st August 2025, minutes to follow
- 8.1.5 3G Multi-Sports pitch working group meeting minutes 13th August 2025
- 8.1.6 Employment, Finance and Strategy Group meeting 21st August 2025, to follow
- 8.1.7 NDP Review Group next meeting 28th August 2025
- 8.1.8 Communications Group meeting minutes of 20th August 2025, minutes to follow
- 8.1.9 Greener Staplehurst Group meeting - to be arranged

9 REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS None

Public Forum - A resident noted that the chairs were very hard.

10 Confidential items deferred

HR reports

- 10.1** HR Report Bower Walk was deferred
- 10.2** HR Report Youth Club Insurance was deferred

These minutes are not verbatim, the decisions are accurate

Meeting closed.....10.00pm.....

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....