

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF STAPLEHURST  
held in the North Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre on  
Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2013

**PRESENT** – Twenty-four residents signed the attendance list. Also attending were thirteen Parish Councillors, County & Borough Councillor Eric Hotson, Sheila Potipher (Maidstone Street Pastors) and Parish Clerk Mick Westwood.

**APOLOGIES** – Borough Councillor Richard Lusty, Parish Councillors Anne Gosling and John Reardon, Mr Robin Kinrade, Mr Derek Mortimer and PCSO Pete Gardner.

**MAIDSTONE STREET PASTORS** – Councillor John Perry took the Chair and welcomed Sheila Potipher, a member of the Maidstone Street Pastors team, who spoke of the work of the Street Pastors in providing help and care on the night-time streets of Maidstone since 2008. Some 17 churches are represented in the Street Pastors' team which provides a social complement to the medical care provided by Urban Blue. Four teams of eight pastors each work one week in four often through to 4.00 am. Pastors receive training in counselling, mentoring and basic first aid. Street Pastors are men and women ranging in age from 30s to 75. They each pay £100 towards their own training and equipment but also receive donations from churches. The Chairman thanked Sheila Potipher who then left the meeting.

**MINUTES OF THE 2012 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** – These had been circulated beforehand. Approval of the Minutes was agreed by the meeting subject to amendment: on Page 93 County & Borough Councillor Hotson's Report, line 9, delete 'Councillor Kelly thanked ...' and insert 'Councillor Hotson thanked ...'; on Page 95 Electors' Questions, paragraph 4 line 4, delete '1,080' and insert '10,080'. The Minutes were then signed as a true record by the Chairman of the Parish Council, John Perry. There were no matters arising.

**STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT** – Copies of the (unadopted) Statement of Accounts had been circulated and were noted. Net current assets totalled £101,551.05 which was represented by funds and reserves in the following sums: General Fund £27,281.94; Allotments £10,000; Surrenden Playing Field pathway £17,000; Youth project £4,000; Rural Settlement Group £15,124; UpRockin 2013 grant £1,000; balance of underspent sums carried forward £9,156.14; Village Centre Contingency £16,988.97 and Rural Warden Winter Project £1,000. There were no questions raised.

**GYBBONS CHARITY ACCOUNT** – The balance at 31.12.2012 stood at £3,130.87. Income received during the previous year from War Stock and Interest totalled £19.68. No expenditure was incurred.

**ANNUAL REPORTS:-**

**Staplehurst Parish Council Chairman** – Chairman John Perry spoke about a very active year in his report which was subsequently filed herewith and published on the Parish Council website. He highlighted the Parish Council's pro-active approach to managing issues and providing services and also spoke of two major items during the year, namely the supermarket applications and the debate with Maidstone Borough Council about Concurrent Functions and the Parish Services Scheme. He praised the village's community spirit and thanked councillors (parish and borough) and the Parish Office team and for their efforts in the year.

County & Borough Councillor Hotson – Councillor Hotson thanked the Parish Council, PCSO and Community Warden for their work. He said that Staplehurst was fortunate in having a large number of village groups and he appreciated all the work of the volunteers involved. He commented on the fall in revenue streams experienced by KCC and MBC in recent years, particularly a 25% fall in government grant since 2010 and the likelihood of a further similar fall by 2015. The county and borough have had to find different ways of working with fewer staff such as collaborating with other authorities to deliver services in partnership. On highways matters Councillor Hotson said he was hopeful that a 50 mph limit would be introduced at Knoxbridge and that stronger surfacing material would be laid on the A229 from Stilebridge to Cross-at-Hand. He wanted to see more work done on estate roads. From his highways budget he said he was awaiting the extension of the 30 mph limit on Marden Road and was hopeful of having an illuminated 30 mph sign just before the church on the northbound A229 carriageway. On Core Strategy he stated that MBC was seeking to update its evidence base and was analysing sites submitted following its land call. The overall target for new homes in the borough was rising from 10,080 in 2026 to around 14,000 by 2031. On supermarkets Councillor Hotson said his postbag contained different views, some supporting one supermarket or another but some also advocating no supermarket at all. Indications were that MBC Planning Committee would consider the amended Tesco application on 16<sup>th</sup> May; meanwhile Sainsbury's were making progress with documentation.

Police – PCSO Gardner's report had been circulated previously and published on the village website. Staplehurst crime figures for the year to March 2013 showed a 16.2% fall against the previous year. Chairman John Perry said how important the PCSO and the Community Warden were to the parish and thanked them for their good work.

Voluntary Organisations – Staplehurst Calendar: Ken Collins advised that the 2014 calendar would be the 10<sup>th</sup> edition. Proceeds will go to Chapel Lane Pre-School, the Under 5s Play Group and Staplehurst Youth Club.

## **ELECTORS' QUESTIONS**

Mr John Kelly, former member of the Parish Council and current chair of the Rural Settlement Group, said he felt it was important for the Parish Council to improve communication by publishing more financial information and moving from a group to committee-based working style. He referred to the practice of some neighbouring parish councils in publishing financial schedules with minutes of meetings. Chairman John Perry explained that the Parish Council had effective internal audit arrangements and published a full annual report. He also said that each month councillors examined a summation statement of expenditure against budget and that this was currently being reviewed to establish whether it could be made more user-friendly. He cautioned that published information should be meaningful and that quality was more important than quantity. He turned to the group style of working, which he felt was more flexible and respected transparency by bringing recommendations to full council's agenda. In response to Mr Robin Oakley's question he said that a breakdown of General Administration costs could be shown. Responding to Mr Malcolm Buller's question he said that some groups had non-councillor members who made valuable contributions. Mr Robin Kenworthy stated that the impact of Localism meant that more people wanted to know where local money was being spent and asked that the Parish Council consider how it can meet this demand. The RFO advised that a notice was on the Village Centre noticeboard about the opportunity to inspect the Parish Council accounts and books.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mrs Caroline Highwood, Treasurer of All Saints PCC, asked about the Parish Council's intentions in respect of the churchyard. Chairman John Perry advised that the Parish Council felt the maintenance agreement needed attention and would discuss it with the PCC.

Parish Councillor Spearink congratulated resident Darren Schlosser on his achievement in running four marathons and raising funds for Sobell Lodge. He also commended the work of John Briffa and family in organising the Maidstone River Run.

Mr Robin Kenworthy asked that consideration be given to having amplification facilities in the village centre halls.

Chairman John Perry made a presentation to Parish Councillor Joan Buller to mark her outstanding thirty years of service on the Parish Council, remarking on the help and support she has provided to many people as well as the selfless work she has undertaken over the years.

The meeting closed at 10.00 p.m. and refreshments followed.

Chairman.....