

**MINUTE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
TUESDAY 19 MAY 2009 AT 6.20 PM AT STAPLEGROVE VILLAGE HALL**

PRESENT: Dr G Hayes (in the Chair), Mr M Clark, Mr J Morris, Mr D Ware, Mrs J Brockwell, Taunton Deane Borough Councillor (TDBC), PC Andy Davies and one member of the public.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Tom Harris and Alan Debenham.

The Parish Council conveyed its best wishes to Alan Debenham who was to undergo a hip replacement operation the following day.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN 2009/10

Geoff Hayes and Michael Clark were elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2009, having been circulated, were taken as read and signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Notice board at Staplegrove Post Office

Noted that the new notice board at the Post office was now in place.

Staplegrove Children's Playground

The Chairman reported that the installation of the new play equipment in the Staplegrove Children's Playground had been completed on 12 March 2009. The report of the post safety installation inspection was discussed and it was noted that the minor detail concerning the ties on the matting had been subsequently dealt with.

Traffic matters – Corkscrew Lane/ Manor Road

Somerset County Council's Traffic Engineering Technician had placed an order for the additional signage and markings for this stretch of road as agreed at the last meeting, and which it was hoped would be in place by the end of June 2009.

It was noted that SCC's Local Transport Plan Implementation (LTP) Officer had investigated, with the County Cycling Officer, the feasibility of a footpath combined with a cycle path through the woods opposite Village World. Unfortunately, they had concluded that although the inclusion of cycling facilities in this project did increase the contribution made towards LTP targets beyond that made by the original footway request, this was offset by the estimated financial cost to deliver this scheme. Consequently, this request did not achieve a sufficient value for money rating for it to be considered as a candidate for LTP funding at this time. Although this was disappointing news the Parish Council would keep this proposal on the table and raise it again with SCC, from time to time, in the hope that LTP targets may change or new funding might become available. The Clerk would update Trevor Cavill and David Warr.

6. ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISH ELECTORS – MATTERS ARISING

The Parish Council agreed to re-appoint Tom Harris as its representative on the Staplegrove Trust for the four-year term of office 2009-2013. The Chairman expressed his appreciation for the work Tom had done in relation to the Trust.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

8. PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT)

Noted that as the PACT priority concerning improvements to the Manor Road/Corkscrew Lane junction was in hand, inconsiderate parking on Hudson Way at school dropping off and pick up times would be the next PACT priority. Andy Davies agreed to speak to those drivers who were causing problems, particularly at the junctions.

Andy added that there were very few problems in the parish, although there had recently been some arrests following theft from farms and outbuildings.

9. FINANCIAL MATTERS

Bank reconciliations

The Clerk circulated details of the bank reconciliations for February, March and April 2009, which had been checked and certified by a parishioner.

2008/9 accounts and asset register

Noted and approved the 2008/9 accounts and asset register which had been circulated with the agenda. It was noted that the balances were very healthy and it was agreed to consider purchasing a new information board for The Grove. The Clerk would seek a quotation for a new board. It was also agreed, when next in The Grove, to look at the drainage at the western corner, opposite the Post Office, to see if any improvements were required.

Internal audit of 2008/9 accounts

Noted that Mr B J Howe, our internal auditor, had audited the accounts for 2008/9. Mr Howe had been pleased to report that he had no matters to raise with the Council and had thanked the Clerk for providing excellent accounts and documents. It was noted that the Internal Auditor had carried out a limited internal audit and that the Parish Council must ensure that effective controls were in place and were in operation to prevent and minimise any possible financial losses through fraud and corruption.

Review of the effectiveness of our internal audit arrangements

Copies of Mr Howe's internal audit testing documents, together with other working papers had been circulated with the agenda, in order to allow councillors to review the effectiveness of our internal arrangements. It was agreed that Mr Howe was an independent and most able and competent auditor. The audit undertaken by Mr Howe was very comprehensive and detailed. Internal controls also included having three signatures on each cheque, monthly bank reconciliations checked by an independent parishioner and receipts and payments reported to each meeting. It was agreed that the Parish Council had a very secure system of internal audit and control.

External audit of 2008/9 accounts

The Clerk presented the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2009 and The Statement of Accounts and Annual Statement of Governance were duly signed. Noted that the internal auditor had completed his section of the Return and the Clerk had displayed a notice inviting electors to inspect the accounts and supporting documents on request to her.

Clerk's salary

Noted that as agreed at a previous meeting a 2.4% increase to the Clerk's salary had been agreed in the interim pending the National Joint Council for Local Government Services going to arbitration. Arbitration had agreed that the pay award should be 2.75% and as had been previously agreed the Clerk's salary was increased and backdated from 1 April 2009 (£9.84 per hour for 2008/9). From 1 April 2009 the Clerk would progress to the next and final increment on the salary scale (£10.09 per hour). The 2009/10 pay award was currently in negotiation but once agreed would be reported to the Parish Council.

Footpath maintenance – hourly rate

Agreed to increase Graham Bennett's hourly rate by 2.75% to £8.73 per hour.

Receipts and payments since last meeting	£
Receipts: Alliance & Leicester – bank interest	6.19
Alliance & Leicester – bank interest	0.30
Victoria’s Beauty Room - fee for entry in business directory on website	5.00
Alliance & Leicester – bank interest	1.12
Alliance & Leicester – bank interest	0.06
Staplegrove Children’s Playground Trust – contribution towards new play equipment purchased by PC	482.00
HM Revenue & Customs – VAT refund 2008/9	1264.94
TDBC – precept 2009/10	9000.00
Payments: Staplegrove Village Hall – room hire	39.50
Land Registry - title documents establishing ownership of duckpond footpath	12.00
Notice-It Ltd – new notice board at Post Office	507.00
JSG Hayes – reimbursement for cost of shingle at base of new notice board	15.18
SPFA – post installation safety inspection of new play equipment	220.00
Sutcliffe Play SW – supply & installation of play equipment	8029.30
J Peake – Clerk’s ¼ year salary, back dated pay award and admin expenses	1005.88
Easyspace Ltd – internet fees relating to parish website	71.98
Mr B J Howe – internal audit of 2008/9 accounts	120.00

10. REVIEW OF INSURANCE POLICY- 1 JUNE 2009 - 1 JUNE 2010

Received and noted a paper by the Clerk outlining the current insurance cover and renewal details. Noted that the new play equipment would be included in the policy. The insurance company would not insure the commando frame for theft or damage because of its age but it was covered for third party liability. Agreed that the Parish Council was well insured and all risks adequately covered. The Clerk would re-new the insurance policy with Allianz for the above period, premium £668.06.

11. CORRESPONDENCE

- Noted a letter from the Equality and Human Rights Commission concerning the duty of the Parish Council to pay due regard to race, disability and gender equality. It was agreed that the Parish Council should have an equal opportunities policy and it was agreed that the Clerk should produce a draft policy for discussion at the next meeting.
- The Chairman read out a letter from the Staplegrove Scout Group giving thanks for the donation they had received from the parish coffee mornings.
- In response to a letter from a local resident the Chairman agreed to write to him concerning his complaints about the lack of action on trying to improve speeding traffic on Manor Road. The Clerk would email his contact details to PC Andy Davies so that he could take up his complaint about a persistent speeding motorcyclist. With regard to his complaint about the narrow footpath opposite Anjalin the Clerk confirmed that she had reported the matter to County Highways in November 2008. They had had said they would arrange to have the bank sided in the next financial year. As we were now in the new financial year she would write to County Highways and remind them of their promise to do this.
- An invitation to enter the Somerset Village of the Year Competition was declined.
- The Parish Council noted with interest details of the Taunton Town Charity, which provided sheltered accommodation in Taunton for people over 60 years of age. The Clerk would pass the details to the Staplegrove Trust and would ask the Charity if it had a poster, which could be displayed on the parish notice boards.
- Although just outside of the parish, concerns about traffic queuing to get in to Taunton School on the south side of Staplegrove Road and causing a hazard were noted.

12. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Noted a paper giving details of planning applications received/decisions made, since the last meeting.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- It was agreed that the Clerk should ask Deane DLO if it were possible for them to cut the grass outside of Staplegrove House each time they cut the playground grass, and if so how much this would cost.
- The Clerk was asked to establish with SCC when the replacement trees for those removed, as part of the pinch point scheme, would be planted.
- Jayne Brockwell referred to an increase in the incidence of fly tipping in the area and asked that any such incidence be reported to TDBC.
- The Clerk referred to Tom Harris' concerns about the lack of visibility at the Old School House, on the junction of Rectory Road/Manor Road. She reported that County Highways had visited the owners on several occasions to ask them to cut back their hedge and reposition the mirror but they had not complied. As this was off the highway and on private land County Highways was unable to cut back this hedge and did not have the jurisdiction to enforce this requirement on the owner. The Parish Council was of the opinion that the visibility splay was an informal agreement by the original owners of the house and the siting of the mirror informally agreed between the owner of the house and residents of Manor Drive. It was also felt that there was no real issue with visibility here. The Chairman agreed to discuss this matter with Tom Harris.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on Tuesday 25 August 2009 at 5.00 pm. A meeting of the Staplegrove Children's Playground Trust will follow.