

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH AT 5PM, STAPLEGROVE VILLAGE HALL**

## **PRESENT:**

Parish Councillors: Joan Bird, Michael Clark (in the chair), Alan Debenham, Bryn Evans, Tom Harris, David Ware

District Councillors: Nick Townsend and Caroline Tucker

County Councillor: Danny Wedderkopp

PCSO: Claire Escott

Nine members of the public were also in attendance.

## **1. Apologies**

No apologies had been received.

## **2. Code of Conduct - Declaration of interests**

All the Parish Councillors have a personal interest with respect to the North Taunton Development. Cllr Tucker declared a pecuniary interest.

## **3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> January 21016**

Having been circulated, it was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016 were taken as read and signed as a correct record of proceedings.

## **4. Police Matters**

PCSO Claire Escott was reported that she was moving on to a different area and that PCSO Tony Wearmouth would be taking over from her. She reported that there had been a number of thefts of bicycles and lawnmowers, and owners should ensure that these are left securely locked. In more rural areas, there have been a number of thefts of 4x4 vehicles. Again, it was noted that these should be left securely locked.

The PC extended their thanks to Claire for her support over the years, and wished her well in her new role.

## **5. Questions from Members of the public re items not on the agenda**

### **Blocked road drains**

A parishioner raised concerns about blocked road drains in the Parish. He reported having seen the drain unblocking lorry working in Langford Lane which as a more rural area, he considered might have a lower priority. The Chairman noted that the lorry worked on a rota, with Staplegrove's drains being maintained once a year. It was also noted that blocked drains can be reported directly to TDBC online or by phone. In this instance, the PC would raise this with TDBC.

## **6. Matters Arising**

### **6.1 Manor Road Play Area**

The Chairman reported that the new sign had been received and will be fitted to the wall of the playground facing towards Lawn Road. He continued that the Charity Commission had agreed that the provision of a path through the playground was acceptable, and that quotations would be sought to complete this work. Additional sources of funding would be investigated.

### **6.2 Hudson Way Play Area**

It was noted that the new fencing had been installed, but that the gates were on order and would be fitted when they arrived. The additional bin had not yet been installed due to staff illness, but Debbie Arscott, at TDBC hopes that this will be done early in April.

### **6.3 Manor Road - faded road markings**

The Chairman reported that he had received various responses from a variety of people at SCC, including that no further road markings will be undertaken until next financial year; that the road was to be 'top dressed' in the summer and that the markings would then be done; and, that they had already been done. The PC will continue to follow this up.

### **6.4 Reduction of grants from TDBC**

It was noted that Council Tax Support (CTS) is being reduced by 33% each year until it reaches zero. However, Burial Ground, Footpath and Playing Field maintenance grants are currently unaffected.

### **6.5 Repairs to Manor Road wall**

The Chairman reported that the wall in Manor Road had been damaged by a car crashing into it in November 2015. The PC have now appointed a contractor to undertake repairs to the wall, the cost of which will be covered by insurance. Subject to a licence being received for a temporary traffic control on Manor Road, the work will be carried out during April.

## **7. Taunton Deane Site Allocations & Development Management Plan (SADMP) Examination - 30 March, 31 March, 1 April and 5 April 2016**

The Chairman reported that he and Cllr Evans would be attending on Wednesday 30 March as this is when the Staplegrove policies will be discussed. It was noted that Cllr Clark will make representations on behalf of the PC. ROSAG and WARG will also be asked to contribute by the planning inspector. Cllr Clark stated that the PC will raise infrastructure matters with regard to the new development.

The Chairman noted that there had been a large volume of comments submitted in response to Ptarmigan's planning application, including queries from Highways, Health and Environment consultees. Cllr Debenham noted that the County and District councils' responses were not clearly against the new development. It was noted that the costs of redeveloping the plans to link the spine road to the roundabout at Cross Keys might be offset by the reduction in groundworks, as the developer's current plan took the spine road through land with potentially difficult topography.

During a meeting with John Williams, Rod Williams (WARG) was informed that a Transport Management Strategy group had been set up to look forward at transport issues in the coming 20 years. The terms of reference for the group are not yet available, nor is there a date for when their findings would be made available.

The Chairman welcomed this news, but added that the outcomes of the previous 20 year plan had not all been completed to date. The creation of the NIDR had taken priority over the Outer Distributor Road.

## **8. Pedestrian crossing work on Greenway Road**

The Chairman noted that the crossing on Greenway Road was frequently used by Taunton School pupils and, as such its relocation puts it in a much more sensible position. It was noted that resurfacing work will also be taking place.

## **9. Speeding in Showell Park**

A parishioner had contacted the PC with concerns about the speed of traffic using Showell Park, particularly around shift changeover times. This was referred to the PCSO and Nuffield Hospital. Another parishioner asked whether the PC were aware of any request by the Nuffield Hospital to extend their car park. The PC have no information on this. It was noted that staff of the hospital

are seen parking in Showell Park from 8am, when it is felt that there are likely to be spaces in the car park. Cllr Ware also noted that hospital staff are parking on Hudson Way, adding to the congestion there particularly at school drop off times. The PC will contact the Nuffield Hospital with regard to staff parking.

#### **10. Reduction of speed limit around Cross Keys roundabout**

The Chairman reported that the PC had been informed, through Norton Fitzwarren PC that SCC have agreed to reduce the speed limit to 30 mph on A358 (Cross Keys to Staplegrove) and B3227 (Cross Keys to Burnshill Cottages) in the 2016/17 financial year. It is hoped that the reduction may be extended along the A358 to past the junction of Langford Lane.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Wedderkopp for the installation of the 30mph roundel outside Staplegrove House. He then asked about the possibility of another roundel being installed nearer to the Village Hall as the speed of traffic along this section of road made leaving the Village Hall car park quite hazardous at times. Cllr Clark also requested that Staplegrove be included in the visiting schedule for the mobile, flashing 30mph sign. Cllr Wedderkopp will liaise with Gary Warren at County Hall with regard to these requests.

Cllr Wedderkopp was also asked to consider whether a Small Improvement Grant could be allocated to the reconstruction/widening of the pedestrian footpath near Westerkirk on Staplegrove Road. It was noted that the bank had slumped here, covering much of the tarmac with soil, making the footpath dangerously narrow. Cllr Wedderkopp said that this would be considered in the new financial year.

#### **11. Local broadband provision**

In response to a parishioner's enquiry, Cllr Harris had investigated local broadband provision. He reported that download speeds varied massively across the Parish: from 80MB/s in areas with fibre, to 3.5MB/s in more rural areas. There are a number of households within the north of the Parish which are connected to the exchange in Kingston St Mary. Fibre broadband does go to KSM, but not all households are connected, or suitable for connection, depending on their distance from the exchange. It was suggested that as this issue affects a small number of households, it might be more effective to lobby Open Reach together.

Cllr Wedderkopp had reported to KSM PC that provision of fibre has slowed down as there is a new tender out for 'Connecting Somerset'.

Cllr Townsend reported that he had spoken to Ian Timms who expects more fibre cabinets to be installed next year. It was noted that not all the cabinets are connected yet. Cllr Townsend suggested that any drop in broadband speed can be reported to an individual's provider, who may send an engineer to investigate. This often results in a further improvement. It was also noted that turning a router off regularly, for example at night, can result in slower speeds.

#### **12. Electoral review of TDBC**

The Chairman reported on a briefing that he attended at the end of February about the Electoral review of TDBC. Electoral reviews look at whether the boundaries of wards, or wards, or number of councillors within a local authority need to be altered. It is unlikely that any changes will occur within Staplegrove although with the projected increase in households, there is potential for running 24% over the average of 1,400 residents/councillor.

Cllr Townsend noted that some councillors are more active than others, and some cuts are likely. Cllr Wedderkopp added that not all District councils have Parish Council, which therefore adds another layer of required activity.

### **13. Somerset Day celebrations**

The PC had been contacted with regard to celebrating Somerset Day. Further investigation revealed that 2016 will be the second year that this event has been marked. As the PC plan to work alongside the Village Hall committee to commemorate the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with a 'Clean for the Queen' event, it was felt that Staplegrove PC would not participate in Somerset Day this year.

### **14. Staplegrove sports club (SSC) revised proposals**

Nick Stilton from SSC addressed the PC to explain the revised proposals for expansion to the sports club. Cllr Debenham thanked SSC for raising the profile of Staplegrove through its successes, particularly in football. Mr Stilton said that the club needed to expand to continue this work, and to respond to the potential increased demand created by the proposed new housing development.

The main revisions are to the layout of the car park, and the removal of the floodlights in response to PC concerns. He noted that the entrance to the club has been moved from its current position which is at a particularly dangerous point on Manor Road. The PC highlighted that the new access road must not be a through road, as this would link the proposed new spine road directly to Manor Road.

Mr Stilton noted that the area marked as 'Central Park' on the SSC plan was in a different location to the developer's proposed 'Central Park' area. This was because the area highlighted by the developer was unsuitable for sports usage due to its sloping nature. A parishioner noted that it is also an area prone to flooding. Cllr Debenham suggested that SSC contact the developer with regard to the unsuitability of their proposed area, and with the club's suggested alternative. Cllr Clark noted that the developer's chosen location for 'Central Park' would act as a green buffer between areas of housing, despite its unsuitability for the proposed usage. It was also thought that the site included flood alleviation proposals which were much needed in that area.

Cllr Harris queried the difference between an enclosed and non-enclosed pitch. Mr Stilton responded that an enclosed pitch was fenced to stop intrusion on to the pitch – this is a football league requirement at certain levels.

### **15. Planning applications**

The Chairman talked through a paper giving details of planning application received and decisions made since the last meeting.

### **16. Financial matters**

#### **16.1 January & February 2016 Bank reconciliations**

The Clerk circulated the details of the bank reconciliation for January 2016, which had been checked and certified by an independent person. There was a difference between the two figures of £1.18. The February bank reconciliation was not tabled as the new Clerk was still awaiting details from one of the bank account providers following the change of signatory.

## 16.2 Receipts and payments since last meeting

<b>Receipts:</b>	One website entry	£5.00
<b>Payments:</b>	L Booth – Salary and expenses for January 2016	£551.02
	PJ Signs – ‘Walk inside the wall’ sign	£24.00
	Village Hall room hire – May 2015 to March 2016	£108.00
	Easyspace – Domain Registration (staplegroveparish.co.uk)	£24.77
	H McInnes – Salary and expenses for February	£311.10
	TDBC – photocopying (May and June 2015)	£31.45

## 16.3 Budget Statement as at 13th January 2016

The Clerk circulated the Budget statement as at the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

## 16.4 PWLB Village Hall loan

The Clerk reported that the PWLB loan had been repaid in full, and that the account was now closed.

## 16.5 Village Hall hire costs

The Clerk reported that the cost of hiring rooms at the Village Hall will be increasing from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016. This may create an overspend as the budget figures were based on the current cost. Cllr Evans commented that as the PC had supported the build of the Village Hall financially, perhaps there could be a negotiated rate for use of its rooms. Cllr Clark said that he would raise this at the next Village Hall Committee meeting.

## 2016/17 Precept

The Clerk reported that Louise Henderson, TDBC had confirmed that the precept amounts were agreed at the Full Council meeting held in February. The amount agreed for Staplegrove PC was £13,000 with an additional Council Tax Support Scheme grant of £483.00.

## 17. Correspondence

No correspondence had been received.

## 18. Any other Business

### 18.1 Update from Whitmore Area Residents' Group (WARG)

Rod Williams updated the PC on behalf of WARG. Residents had been advised of the areas of concern that are considered admissible in planning decisions. He suggested focussing comments on the ‘vital three’ areas of concern, these had been circulated.

Mr Williams reported that he had asked a question at a SCC cabinet meeting with regard to road planning. In summary, he asked the cabinet if they could reassure Somerset residents that Taunton’s road network would be robust enough to meet the demand of the additional cars and journeys created by the housing developments planned in Comeytrowe, Staplegrove and West Monkton. He noted that while the improvements to the A303 and A358 are welcome, the aggregated effect of Taunton’s new housing developments might require a major upgrade to Taunton’s arterial road network, in particular a new ring road around the north of the town that links Bishops Lydeard to West Monkton and the M5, and high grade connections to new M5 junctions north and west of Junction 25 and the A358.



Cllr Fothergill replied that TDBC and SCC have examined the traffic impact of planned areas of development by using computer-based transport models. This work has informed the development and infrastructure delivery plans published by both councils. The evidence they have gathered indicates that a wide variety of improvements are needed including highway, walking and cycling improvements; reducing the need to travel by locating homes and workplaces closer together; and, bus corridor improvement. He did not however agree that a new ring road to the north of the town would solve the town's traffic problems as much of the traffic movement is destined for the town centre and congestion is primarily caused by people making short trips across and around the town centre.

The Chairman noted that the reason that the majority of traffic is destined for the town centre is that there is no other way of getting out of Taunton without passing through it first. Which, in fact, highlights the need for a ring road rather than to the contrary.

Mr Williams went on to add that Highways had put a 'holding directive' on the development which may create a delay. Cllr Townsend added that the developer can add additional information, which if deemed satisfactory, will result in the 'holding directive' being lifted. He added that there had been a 'holding directive' at Comeytrowe, which made no overall difference.

Mr Williams continued that he had asked Cllr Fothergill what 'sustainability' meant in this context. He replied that in essence it meant that residents should be able to carry out their day-to-day lives without reliance on using a car. This was felt to be at odds with the projected number of 2.5 cars/dwelling which had been allowed for in the developer's plans. Cllr Debenham expressed concern over this as a definition of sustainability.

Cllr Evans noted that at the SADMP Examination, the Government planning inspector can comment on the Masterplan, but not on individual planning applications. However, as plans for the Eastern side of the development had not been submitted, this could be discussed.

It was noted that houses are being built at a faster rate in Taunton than in other areas of Somerset. And that this is despite employment figures going down. However, as site allocation was taken out of the Core Strategy, the core strategy information may no longer apply. It was observed that there were 'trigger points' for payments to TDBC which relate to the overall number of houses built. This might explain the speed of building.

The Chairman stated that it would be useful to know how many houses had been built in Taunton, and therefore how many are still outstanding from the identified need for 17,000 homes. Cllr Townsend said he had requested 'residence completion' figures and would pass this information on when he had received it.

Mr Williams reported that there was an upcoming meeting planned for WARG, and it would be useful to liaise with ROSAG and the concerned PCs.

The Chairman noted that the proposed improvements to Junction 25 of the M5 might create a new employment area, and therefore a potential area for housing development. The junction improvements are likely to occur in more than 4 years' time, but before 2028, so could be considered towards site allocation. It was also noted that there is a difference of opinion about the usefulness of the Core Strategy.

### **18.2 Issues regarding traffic on Hudson Way and Bindon Road**

Cllr Ware raised three concerns regarding traffic on Hudson Way and Bindon Road. Firstly it was noted that an obstruction was being caused by cars parked on Bindon Road near Chaplins. Other traffic often increased its speed to get past the parked cars which is a hazard to all road users. It was felt that the amount of traffic using Bindon Road as a cut through (from Wellington Road direction) might increase if traffic along Staplegrove Road is further affected by roadworks, site traffic, etc. created by the proposed housing development. Cllr Tucker said that she had raised this as a concern and will report back to the PC when she has more information.

Cllr Ware also reported that parking on Hudson Way is an increasing problem on weekdays. It is not clear whether this is related to Nuffield Hospital or school staff. This has a knock-on effect for parents at school drop off times. The PC will contact the Nuffield Hospital and school and ask them to remind staff to park considerately. The PC will also discuss parking restrictions on Hudson Way.

Cllr Ware commended the creation of the roundabout on Staplegrove Road near Chip Lane. However it was noted that there was a car regularly parked near the cemetery where the road narrows. This was creating a bottleneck for other traffic and a small section of double yellow lines was suggested. Cllr Wedderkopp agreed to refer this issue to Justine Clayton for consideration.

Cllr Ware offered to approach Staplegrove Pharmacy in Bindon Road with regard to the possibility of the Parish Council erecting a noticeboard on the outside of the building, and asking them to seek permission for this from the building's owner. He also offered to enquire of PJ Signs about the cost of an enclosed and lockable noticeboard.

### **19. Date of next meetings**

The next meeting of the Parish Council, to include the Annual General Meeting, will be held on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at 6pm.

The subsequent Parish Council meeting will be held on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2016 at 5pm.

A meeting of the Staplegrove Children's playground Trust will follow both these meetings. All meetings will be held at Staplegrove Village Hall.