

Minutes of An Extraordinary Meeting of Staploe Parish Council held Online at 7.45pm on Thursday 25th February 2021 on Zoom

Present: Cllr. J. Ibbett (Chair - joined at 8.30pm), Cllr. R. Squire (Chair until 8.30pm), Cllr. D. Smith, Cllr. E. Meola, Cllr. G. Meola, Cllr. J. Thomson, Borough Cllr. T. Wootton, Lucy Crawford (Clerk) and two members of the public.

2021/015. Declarations of Interest.

Cllr. G. Meola and Cllr. E. Meola declared an interest in the playing field in that they live opposite and Cllr. R. Squire declared an interest in the playing field because he owns the adjacent land.

2021/016. Approve the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 21st January 2021

Having been previously circulated the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed by Cllr. R. Squire and seconded by Cllr. D. Smith.

2021/017. Public Open Forum

Two members of the public addressed the meeting about planning matters.

Borough Cllr. T. Wootton explained that there has been a lot of recent debate about E-W rail in response to a petition from Wilden and some other affected parishes. Borough Cllr. T. Wootton is concerned that the northern route is going to be more expensive as there are hills which will require extensive cuttings. He is also concerned that the main use of the line will be freight transport and they are likely to travel at night. This will bring little benefit and a lot of noise to local residents. He anticipates that the anti northern route campaign will be requesting funds shortly.

Lucy Crawford reported that Colmworth Parish Council are raising funds for a planning consultant to challenge the plans for Denybrook Garden Village.

2021/018. Planning

It was resolved to support the following planning application with the proviso that it should remain single storey to prevent it affecting the outlook from neighbouring properties as it is in the back garden of two other houses. It was also suggested that the change of use should not apply to the whole field and the garden should be no larger than the footprint of the house. Proposed by Cllr. R. Squire and seconded by Cllr. E. Meola.

Application number	Type	Description	Location	Deadline	Link
21/00020/FUL	Full Planning Application	Part barn conversion to create assisted living accommodation (annexe) including roof extension to form car port and change of use of land to residential use.	Stables At East Chapel Cottage 7 Chapel Close Honeydon	26/02/2021	21/00020/FUL

It was resolved to support the following planning application. Proposed by Cllr. D. Smith and seconded by Cllr. R. Squire. One Councillor suggested that it would be better if the roof line was symmetrical.

21/00096/FUL	Full Planning Application	One and two storey side extension and single storey rear extension	1 Ward Cottages Begwary Bedford Bedfordshire MK44 2NX	26/02/2021	21/00096/FUL
--------------	---------------------------	--	---	------------	------------------------------

- It has come to the attention of the Parish Council that two sites on Staughton Moor are currently attempting to establish what could become large-scale waste facilities. These sites do not appear to have any planning permission. There is some concern that the types of activities that can be undertaken by these sites have the potential to cause harmful pollution which could affect surrounding land including the water courses of our parish due to surface water run-off into the local ditches and streams, as well as the risk of a large increase in heavy traffic in the local area. In addition there is some concern about the effect on local wildlife and habitats. An Environment Agency permit has been issued under WE820AA/AA01 for a 75,000 tonne end of life vehicle de-pollution facility (car breaker), the licence covers an area on the Little America Industrial Estate and also an area of open countryside known as Robin's Hanger. The 5 Acres site is already well advanced and has put up large industrial buildings and concreted much of the site including the upgrade of other infrastructure. The operators of 5 Acres have obtained EA exemptions under WEX261839 with activities including tyre shredding and waste processing.
- It was resolved to respond to potential unlicensed activity at Little America (Robins Hangar and 5 Acre) by expressing our concerns about:
 - The new land use not being in agreement with HDC's local plan
 - Lack of planning enforcement by HDC
 - A dramatic increase in traffic on Bushmead Road and Moor Road
 - Potential pollution via runoff into Staploe parish watercourses
 - Potential harm to local wildlife
- It was agreed that the Parish Council should
 - encourage Bedford Borough Council to talk to HDC about this matter
 - request that Staploe Parish Council be made aware of all new applications / activity at Little America by HDC
 - Ask where the water goes from Little America and map the watercourses.
- Proposed by Cllr. J. Thomson and seconded by Cllr. G. Meola.

2021/019. Consider selling unwanted assets

It was resolved to sell the mower, unwanted lockers and any unwanted items such as fridges (but check with the Village Hall Committee first). It was resolved that these could be sold on private ebay accounts or equivalent and the proceeds given to the Parish Council, we could ask Matt Davis for advice re the mower and the lockers may be of value for scrap metal if not for sale. It was resolved to keep the open litter bin as it could be useful for future events at the playing field. Proposed by Cllr. G. Meola and seconded by Cllr. D. Smith.

2021/020. Consider quote for reconnecting CCTV

Peter Banks has quoted £250 plus VAT to reconnect the CCTV in the hall car park. The Clerk suggested that this cost could be met from underspends on hall hire, travel and training. It was

resolved to wait and consider this after the containers have been reconnected. Proposed by Cllr. G. Meola. Unanimous.

2021/021. Consider quote to repair bridge at the Old Chapel as a potential gift to Thomas Morris (owners of the Old Chapel, Honeydon).

Mark Compton has quoted £330 to repair the bridge. The Clerk explained that the Council had agreed to set aside £164.13 to use for this purpose. Cllr. R. Squire requested that we delay the decision until the next meeting as he wants to check a potential source of timber for the bridge. Unanimous.

2021/022. Consider costs and VAT of managing the containers / cabins

- Reconnection costs. The Clerk provided an update on the expected costs which are lower than originally expected because there is already a lateral drain under the road so there will be no need to dig up the road. The GRP kiosk was also less expensive than had previously been reported because UK Power updated their specification and the new specification was for a small cabinet. Therefore the total costs are expected to be £9622 instead of £13503.

Triple Phase connect to mains drain					
Task / item	Supplier	Quote ex VAT	VAT	Incl VAT	
UK Power Networks Triple Phase Supply to GRP Kiosk	UK Power	2674	534.8	3208.8	Quote renewed on 4th Jan 2021
GRP Cabinet	Meter Box	614.57	122.91	737.48	
Meter	Eon	157.86		157.86	
Electrical connection	Peter Banks	1670	334	2004	
Inspecting the drain to the septic tank	Lanes for Drains	125	25	150	Stills of the issue. Video is 250
Anglian Water sewage connection charges		616		616	
Anglian Water sewage infrastructure charges		570		570	Will be charged to the Village Hall. PC need to transfer the money to the hall account or transfer the billing account to the Parish Council.
Inspecting the mains drain lateral	Lanes for Drains	395	79	474	
Connection to mains drains and water	Mark Compton	2800		2800	Mark is not VAT registered
Total		9622.43	1095.71	10718.14	

Other costs	Ex VAT
Anticorrosive primer	46.50
Skip and container paint	92.00
Non slip decking treatment	10.83
Post cap	5.82
Key Safe	10.41
First Aid Kit	16.47
Sundries	20.00
Total	202.02
With MASUNT key safe	418.59

The Clerk proposed two options for a key safe. A simple one for £10.41 or a more expensive smart key safe from MASUNT which can be controlled remotely without wifi for £226.97. It was resolved to approve the above spending on other costs without the MASUNT key safe for now but to consider recommending the MASUNT safe to the Village Hall Committee for the future hall. Unanimous.

- VAT implications. The Clerk presented the following report:

VAT and Utilities on the Cabins

Charging VAT

Income from land and buildings is generally an exempt business activity so we don't need to charge VAT to people hiring our cabins.

There is one exception which is if we hire for sports for less than 24 hours and less than blocks of 10 events in which case it is not exempt. However, we would only need to start charging VAT if we were charging clubs more than £5000 per year and therefore we would exceed the £1000 VAT threshold to start charging. As this is extremely unlikely we won't need to charge VAT.

Reclaiming VAT

*As a Local Authority we can reclaim VAT on our **non-business activities** (things we don't charge for) eg. electricity for street lighting, materials for the play area, tree surgery.*

*Hire of land and buildings is a **business activity** which is **exempt** from VAT (except for sports hire of less than 24 hrs etc as above). As a local authority we can reclaim VAT on inputs of up to £35K (£7500 of VAT) per year on our exempt business activities. Therefore, reconnecting the containers will be well below this. However, if we lease to a sports club for less than 24 hours or for a booking of less than a block of 10 this is a non exempt supply so we could end up paying VAT on our input costs at the cabins.*

If we as the PC let someone use the cabins free of charge then this is non-business so we can reclaim VAT on our inputs such as painting and electricity (but the electricity bill would need to be in the name of the Parish Council).

2020/21

Our VAT costs this financial year will be around £1000 because we are doing lots of works but we won't be able to hire the containers out to any sports clubs before 31st March this year so we can reclaim the VAT.

2021-22

In future years our VAT costs are likely to be on electricity, paint, and sundries for the cabins such as cleaning materials, light bulbs etc. and so they are likely to be quite low. I would estimate VAT would be around £60 for the year (see separate spreadsheet for running costs).

The Village Hall are definitely not liable for business rates as they are a charity. It is probable that the Borough would waive these rates for us as a Parish Council as rural rate relief / small business relief etc. – the Clerk has asked for advice from the Borough Council.

Options for Managing Cabins

1. *the Village Hall charity lease the cabins from the Parish Council for a nominal rent of £1 per year and all utilities, rates and insurance are in the name of the hall. The Parish Council would still be able to make gifts to the Village Hall to support them with upkeep and buy things*

which incur substantial VAT as a gift. But it could save money on business rates if the Parish Council were to be charged and it may save money on insurance. The hall charity will have to pay VAT on all inputs they purchase directly. But we don't know how much a solicitor will charge to prepare a lease – probably at least £200 – but we could grant a fairly long lease so the cost would be low in the longer term.

- 2. The Parish Council retain the cabins and lease direct to members of the public and sports clubs etc. We would be able to reclaim VAT on our inputs if we transfer utilities into the name of the PC (currently in the name of the Village Hall). However, there is a small chance that we may incur business rates as we are not a charity. If a sports club want to hire the cabins for less than 24 hours (which seems likely) or less than a block booking of 10 then providing the income from a sports club is less than £5000 then there is no need to charge them VAT on the booking but we would not be able to claim VAT on our inputs. The Clerk will need to check what happens if some bookings are exempt and others are not – can we still reclaim VAT?*

Playing Field

The playing field is a charity. At the moment the Parish Council pay for grass cutting as a gift to the charity. The Parish Council can reclaim VAT on the grass cutting providing we get nothing in return from the Playing Field.

If we want to make the pitches available for hire then options are:

- 1. The Parish Council continue to pay £1164 for 10 grass cuts of the whole field but the Playing Field charity would receive any rental income and the Parish Council could not be repaid for any of their grass cutting. The sports club would pay for or do the additional cuts and line painting at a probable cost to them of approx.. £384 for extra grass cutting (just of the pitch) and £390 for line painting (less if they use volunteers). If the sports club could cut the grass more than 4 times it would save the Parish Council some money as we could pay for less cuts but the club would have to pay VAT on any cutting.*
- 2. The playing field charity pay for extra grass cutting up to pitch standard (and possibly some of our basic field cuts), line painting and goals and charge per game. The charity would have to pay VAT so the additional grass cutting and line painting would cost the same as above ie. £384 for extra cuts and £390 for lines. However, we would need to supply goals which cost approx. £1458. If we didn't manage to rent the pitches out as much as expected this could be a big cost to the PC. The benefit to the community would be limited – unless parishioners wanted to join the team.*
- 3. The Playing Field charity lease the playing field to the Parish Council for £1. The Parish Council can then pay for grass cutting, recover VAT and charge rent. But there would be a cost incurred in preparing a lease. Again we would need to supply goals and there are risks if we didn't manage to rent the pitches out as much as expected. The Clerk will need to check what happens if some bookings are exempt and others are not – can we still reclaim VAT?*
- 4. See if it is possible to abolish the playing field charity so we can pay for the field maintenance and receive the income directly in order to save VAT. This would save approx. £130 of VAT on the additional cuts and line painting required vs option 2 above.*

If a club wanted to use the pitches in return for doing their own extra grass cutting and line painting then they would probably expect exclusive use for the whole season and a long term arrangement. This might create issues if we want the cabins / field to be available to a range of people.

We need to consider what the benefit of pitch hire is to our community. Ability to join the club, extra use of the cabins reduces our fixed costs, but extra traffic and noise.

It was resolved to retain the management of the cabins under the control of the Parish Council. Councillors thought it was very unlikely that we would be charged rates on the cabins. Proposed by Cllr. R. Squire and seconded by Cllr. E. Meola. Councillors noted that management of the playing field was not on the agenda but that VAT would be an important consideration when determining future options. Cllr. G. Meola reminded the council of the previous decision in our January meeting 2021/07 to adopt a policy to “*provide and promote a facility which can be used in a variety of ways, which enhances the use of the playing field, the children’s play equipment on the playing field and the village hall, which is inclusive and not exclusive, which is appropriate and proportionate and is all year round.*”

- Consider whether to transfer water, sewerage and electricity account to Parish Council from Village Hall.

It was resolved to make a request to the Village Hall Committee that water, sewerage and electricity accounts be transferred to the Parish Council until the hall is rebuilt. Proposed by Cllr. J. Thomson and seconded by Cllr. D. Smith.

The meeting closed at 9.47pm