

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Staploe Parish Council Held Online at 7.35pm on Thursday 21st May 2020 by Skype After the Annual Parish Meeting Which Started at 7pm

Present:

J. Ibbett (Chairman)
V. Zwetsloot (Vice Chairman)
J. Thomson
G. Meola
R. Squire

D. Smith
E. Meola
L. Crawford (Clerk)
Borough Cllr. T. Wootton
One member of the public

Apologies for absence: none

2020/029. Election of Chairman

Having consented to her nomination Cllr. J. Ibbett was proposed for the post by Cllr. V. Zwetsloot and seconded by Cllr. R. Squire. There being no other nominations she was duly elected as Chairman.

2020/030. Election of Vice Chairman

Having consented to her nomination Cllr. V. Zwetsloot was proposed for the post by Cllr. J. Ibbett and seconded by Cllr. J. Thomson. There being no other nominations she was duly elected as Vice Chairman.

2020/031. Declarations of Acceptance of Office

These will be signed on Friday 22nd May by Cllr. J. Ibbett and Cllr. V. Zwetsloot in the presence of the Clerk.

2020/032. Declarations of Interest and Updates to Registers of Members Interests

- Declarations of interest: Cllr. J. Ibbett declared an interest in the highways verge cutting as her husband is the contractor and she and Cllr. J. Thomson declared an interest in the planning application at School Farm.
- Updates to Registers of Interests: the Clerk circulated a link in advance of the meeting to the published Registers of Interest for each of the Councillors reminding them to check that they are still correct and reminding them that changes should be registered within 28 days. Cllr. R. Squire and Cllr. V. Zwetsloot confirmed that there have been no changes. Cllr. D. Smith updated his. Cllr. J. Ibbett is in the process of changing her employment status and will update before the 28 day period expires and Cllr. J. Thomson, Cllr. E. Meola and Cllr. G. Meola will check theirs and update them after the meeting.

2020/033. Approve the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 19th March 2020 and ratify the decisions made.

- Having been previously circulated the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
- At the time of the meeting in March the coronavirus lockdown was about to be imposed and the Clerk and a number of Councillors were already self-isolating. Therefore, we decided to hold the meeting via Skype. However, the Coronavirus Act had not been passed at that stage so in theory online meetings were not permitted. The legislation permitting these meetings has

now been passed so **it was resolved to ratify the decisions made at the last online meeting in March.** Proposed by Cllr. J. Ibbett and seconded by Cllr. D. Smith.

2020/034. Public Open Forum

Councillors and the Clerk have received queries about the safety of the grass verges along Bushmead Road near Duke's Spinney and near Lower Honeydon Farm as they have not been cut. The Clerk explained that these areas are protected due to the presence of the rare wildflower Bath Asparagus but **it was resolved that the Clerk should take some videos / photos and ask Bedford Borough Council whether a half metre safety cut is appropriate in some places.**

It was resolved that the Parish Council should publicise the roadside nature reserves and get a quote for posts marking the reserves.

2020/035. Appointments and Responsibilities

- Speedwatch. Trained: Richard Squire, Veronica Zwetsloot, Mark Potts and Robert Browning. Tom Tagg, Sara Coote and Graham Fry have also expressed an interest but are not trained yet. Tom Tagg is on the waiting list for training but it was cancelled due to Coronavirus.
- Staffing committee. Cllr. G. Meola, Cllr. J. Ibbett and Cllr. R. Squire will continue in post.
- Finance committee: Cllr. R. Squire, Cllr. V. Zwetsloot and Cllr. D. Smith will continue in post.
- A1 Working Group. Cllr. R. Squire, Cllr. D. Smith, Cllr. J. Ibbett and Tom Tagg will continue in post.
- Village Hall Working Group – there has been no formal conclusion about disbanding this group. The Village Hall Committee will discuss it at their next meeting.

2020/036. Standing Orders and Terms of Reference

- These were reviewed without amendment for each of the following:
 - Parish Council
 - Committees (covered by the Parish Council's Standing Orders)
 - Working Groups - separate terms of reference.

2020/037. Community Events

- It was resolved to wait until the government have issued guidelines on public gatherings before making any arrangements.
- It was resolved to cancel the Father's Day picnic on the 21st June
- It was resolved to discuss VJ Day celebrations at the July meeting
- Cllr. J. Thomson will arrange a visit from a fish and chip van on Saturday 6th June and see if she can organise a repeat of the pizza delivery van approximately 2 weeks later.

2020/038. Borough Councillor Tom Wootton's report

Borough Cllr. T. Wootton had delivered his report in the Annual Parish Meeting but did add that he is keen for Staploe to continue to encourage Bedford Borough Council to fulfil their commitments agreed in February to maintain the Bushmead Road and install dataloggers once traffic has returned to normal.

2020/039. Planning Report

- **Application:** 20/00809/LDE **Type:** Cert of Lawful Use and Dev (existing) Application
Description: Erection of American style barn, low-lying timber stables landscaping, materials, lighting, parking area and use of site as equestrian training centre.
Location: Stables At School Farm Honeydon Bedford Bedfordshire MK44 2LP.
Deadline: 25/05/2020 **Link:** [20/00809/LDE](#)
It was resolved to respond with no objections. Proposed by Cllr. R. Squire, seconded by Cllr. V. Zwetsloot
- **Application** 20/00523/LBC **Type** Listed building application
Description Repairs to part of the roof (already carried out).
Location: Old Farm Cottage 64 Staploe Lane Staploe St Neots Bedfordshire PE19 5JA
Deadline: 14/04/2020 **Link:** [20/00523/LBC](#) **Date of letter to planning:** 14/04/2020
Object, Comment or Support: Support **SPC Comment:** Three members of Staploe Parish Council considered this application in April and were in support of the repairs to the roof.

2020/040. Insurance

- Having been previously circulated the land and buildings asset register was reviewed without amendment.
- The Parish Council are in a 3 year fixed deal for insurance with Norris and Fisher which ends at the end of May 2021. Although it is a fixed deal we have purchased some new items and some of these needed to be added to the special items list (second Morelock speed sign and defibrillator) and this increased the insurance premium from £356.05 in 2019/20 to £433.60 for 2020/21. The penalty to break our three year contract would be £50.59 and competitors did not think it would be worth quoting under these circumstances. **It was resolved to pay the insurance premium of £433.60.** Proposed by Cllr. E. Meola and seconded by Cllr. R. Squire.

2020/041. Street Lights

- Consider inspection regime for the Parish Council's 21 street lights. In March the clerk received a letter from Bedford Borough Council advising that we should be getting formal electrical and structural inspections of our street lights and asbestos checks. We have 20 LED lights on brackets on telegraph poles and one steel column near Number 2, Duloe. At the last meeting the Clerk presented a quote for these tests from Electrical Testing Ltd. who inspect the lights for Bedford Borough Council. They quoted £1297 + VAT to perform the standard tests. In March it was resolved to save towards these tests but it was assumed that the testing was not necessary yet since the new lights had recently been installed. However, since the last meeting it has become apparent that no structural tests were carried out when the new lights were installed and our street light inspector Andy Muskett (who did not install the new lights) believes some of the brackets need changing and that some asbestos seals may still be in place. He is not certified to do formal electrical and structural testing but he is preparing a quote to identify any cracked brackets and missing screws, label any lights which still have asbestos seals and to replace the steel column in Duloe as the current one is an older model which is difficult to test for structural integrity. **It was resolved that the Parish Council should ask Andy Muskett to inspect as a matter of urgency and the Clerk will present options for any works required at the next meeting.** Proposed by Cllr. R. Squire and seconded by Cllr. D. Smith.

2020/042. Highways

- The speed limit review in Staploe and Duloe has not progressed because although the works package for the proposed speed limit has been prepared, Bedford Borough Council have said

that the speed limit could not be advertised at the time promised due to lack of staff resource and the subsequent closure of the local newspaper due to Covid restrictions. They have apologised for the delay and they will be using their own website and any local website / social media pages / newspapers that are still publishing in St Neots and Eaton Socon. I have offered to publish in our newsletter, on our website and Facebook page and directed them towards the Hunts Post which is apparently still being published. Once they have advertised the proposed restrictions they hope to install the new signs within 4 months subject to them receiving no objections.

- Verge grass cutting. Mark Ibbett has quoted £1,200 to cut the whole parish three times. Ideally the urban areas (within the speed limits) should be cut 6 times per year. Mark has quoted an additional £100 per extra urban cut. The Borough give us £1390 so three extra cuts would cost an additional £110. I have asked for the extra £110 from the Borough and they are considering it. Meanwhile we only have £1,200 in the budget for grass cutting. **It was resolved that all of the grass cutting grant could be used to do an extra two grass cuts (rounding up to £1,400) and the third urban cut would be dependent on receiving the additional money from the Borough Council. This will exceed our budget by £200 but contingency funds will be used.** Proposed by Cllr. V. Zwetsloot and seconded by Cllr. J. Thomson.
- Works required. Cllr. D. Smith asked the Clerk to chase the Borough re 35, Duloe's drive. Cllr. J. Ibbett reported subsidence on Staploe Road.

2020/043. Tree inspections and works

The Clerk reported that Andrew Brightman (tree surgeon) has revisited Duloe Common following the survey done in 2019 to look at the ash trees in the boundary and he does not think they have been affected by ash dieback. He does not think any works are required at the moment. It does appear that the large ash belonging to BPHA which was pollarded last year to remove a number of dead branches is dead or dying. The Clerk has reported this to BPHA.

It was resolved to accept the quote for crown lifting work on the horse chestnuts at the Playing Field for £350 + VAT and for a tree safety survey at the Playing Field for £200 + VAT. Proposed by Cllr. E. Meola and seconded by Cllr. V. Zwetsloot.

2020/044. Finances

- Receipts and payments and schedule of regular payments. These were checked against invoices in advance of the meeting and proposed for payment by Cllr. V. Zwetsloot and Cllr. R. Squire. They are listed on pp6-7
- It was resolved that the Clerk's pension could be paid by BACS rather than cheque as Bedfordshire Pension Fund are not accepting cheques at the moment.
- The bank reconciliation was checked against the bank statement by Cllr. R. Squire and is listed on pp8-9 and the earmarked reserves are listed on p10. Earmarked reserves will be transferred to the savings account.
- 2019-20 Accounts. These were circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting and will be published on the parish website shortly after the meeting.
 - The internal audit report was presented to the Council. It was conducted by Kim Webb on 1st May.
 - The Annual Governance Statement was completed and will be signed by the Chairman on 22nd May
 - The Accounting Statements were unanimously approved and will be signed by the Chairman on 22nd May.
- The 2019-20 performance against budget was reviewed in the Annual Parish Meeting.

- VAT reclaim. This will be done after the meeting.
- Direct debits for electricity (approx. £30 per month), and the Information Commissioner (approx. £35 per year) were approved. The direct debit for e-mail hosting with 1&1 has ended and Cloudnext's e-mail hosting will be paid annually by BACS.

2020/045. Policies

- The Code of Conduct was reviewed and Councillors answered a series of questions relating to it as a short training exercise. No changes were made to the code approved in 2019.

2020/046. Clerk's Contract, Salary and Pension

Contract

The Clerk's contract was reviewed with no amendments.

Pension

The employer's contribution to her pension has increased from 23.8% to 24.8%. The increase was reluctantly approved by Councillors in December 2019. It was not optional. The Clerk met with the actuary and the Council evaluated the cost of leaving the scheme before approving the increase by e-mail in December as the deadline to approve the increases fell between meetings.

The Parish Council joined the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in 2012 when the employer contributions were 17.3% due to increase to 19.3% in 2013/14 which they accepted. However, the Council did not anticipate that percentage contributions would continue to increase annually.

Employer contributions last year were at 23.8% and the Clerk's annual salary was £3,221 and so this cost £766.60 for the year. Every three years the Parish Council have to agree to the next three years of contribution rates and they agreed to pay 24.8% for the year ending 31st March 2021, 25.8% for the year ending March 2022 and 26.8% in year ending 2023. The actuary explained that the hope is to keep contributions at 26.8% after 3 years but that she could not guarantee this.

The Parish Council can leave the scheme if they wish. This would involve preparing a cessation valuation which would cost £750 and they would have to pay the shortfall in pension funding of £1,050 (possibly more) so there would be a total cost of £1,800 minimum. If the Parish Council had left the scheme in 2020 and provided the Clerk with a NEST pension at 23.8% they would continue to pay £766.60 (increasing with inflation). If the Parish Council continue with the LGPS they will pay £32.21 extra next year, £64.42 extra the following year and £96.63 in future years if there are no further percentage increases. Therefore, it would take approximately 20 years before they made a saving by leaving the scheme at a cost of £1,800 and switching to NEST. It was resolved to accept the increase. The decision was unanimous.

Salary

The Clerk remains on SP25. The government are negotiating with the unions on public sector pay in the National Joint Council for Local Government Services. They have yet to reach agreement on pay scales for 2020 – 2021. Therefore, the Clerk will remain on the same salary as in 2019-20 for the time being. The Parish Council have budgeted for a 2% increase in her salary and it is likely that any pay increase will be approved by the NJC in time for our next meeting in July and backdated to April.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 16th July.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

Summary of Transactions for Staploe Parish Council for Approval at Meeting on:							21/05/2020
Main Account Payments							
Ref	Date	Payee	Details	Type of transaction	Cheque / Ref Number	Amount	
2	03/04/2020	Bradgate Fencing	Grass cutting playing field & Common 1 of 8	Standing order	0	£139.66	
3	21/03/2020	1&1 Ionos	One month email hosting	Direct debit	0	£2.40	
4	09/04/2020	DSG Retail PC World	MS Office 365 personal & McAfee Total protection	BACS	70582764	£87.15	
5	14/04/2020	BATPC	Annual affiliation fees	BACS	0	£93.00	
6	02/04/2020	SSE	Electricity for street lights	Direct debit	0	£29.28	
9	04/05/2020	Bradgate Fencing	Grass cutting playing field & Common 2 of 8	Standing order	0	£139.66	
10	04/05/2020	M. Ibbett	Highways grass cutting 1&2 of 8	Standing order	0	£180.00	
11	13/05/2020	1&1 Ionos	One month email hosting	Direct debit	0	£12.07	
12	20/04/2020	SLCC	Subs	BACS	0	£92.00	
13	19/05/2020	K Webb Ltd	Internal audit of accounts	BACS	0	£60.00	
14	15/05/2020	Play Safety	ROSPA Play area inspection	BACS	0	£82.20	
15	21/05/2020	SSE	Electricity for street lights	Direct debit	0	£29.28	
16	21/05/2020	Norris & Fisher	Insurance premium	BACS	0	£433.60	
17	21/05/2020	L. Crawford	Expenses for Mch-Apr	Cheque	0	£10.96	
18	21/05/2020	Annual maintenance contribution	Annual maintenance contribution	BACS	0	£150.00	
19	24/06/2020	L. Crawford	Clerk's salary Q1	Cheque	100928	£814.97	
20	24/06/2020	Bedfordshire Pension Fund	Clerk's pension Q1	BACS	0	£243.99	
Total						£2,600.22	

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Main Account Receipts						
Ref	Date	Payee	Details	Type of transaction	Reference	Amount
7	21/04/2020	Bedford Borough Council	First half of precept	Credit	0	£5,777.00
Total						£5,777.00
Savings Account Receipts						
Ref	Date	Payee	Details	Type of transaction	Reference	Amount
1	01/04/2020	Barclays	Interest for March	Credit	0	£2.54
8	01/05/2020	Barclays	Interest for April	Credit		£2.54
Total						£5.08
Transfers						
Payee	Details	Type of transaction	Type of transaction	Reference	CommAcc	Savings Acc
None						
Posted balances after the above transactions clear						
Community Account 30833940				£18,446.81		
Base Rate Savings 43461580				£10,286.85		
Payments Account 13099075				Zero		

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STAPLOE PARISH COUNCIL BANK RECONCILIATION 1st APRIL 2020 TO 20/05/2020								
Date of bank statement			20/05/2020	Line of cash book:		19		
Prepared by Mrs. Lucy Crawford, Parish Clerk								
BARCLAYS								
Community Account 30833940								
DATE				Receipts		Payments	Transfers	Balance
1-Apr-20	Balance bf		£15,270.03					
20-May-20	Posted balance per accounts		£20,363.81	£5,777.00		£683.22	£0.00	<u>£20,363.81</u>
Unpresented cheques / uncleared payments:								
	None							
	Total					£0.00		
20-May-20	Balance as per bank statement		£20,363.81					
20-May-20	Posted balance - cleared balan		£-					
20-May-20	Balance cf		£20,363.81					
BARCLAYS								
Base Rate Savings 43461580								
				Receipts		Payments	Transfers	Balance
1-Apr-20	Balance bf		£10,281.77					
20-May-20	Posted balance as per accounts		£10,286.85	£5.08		£0.00	£0.00	<u>£10,286.85</u>
20-May-20	Balance as per bank statement		£10,286.85					
20-May-20	Posted balance - cleared balance		£-					
20-May-20	Balance cf		£10,286.85					

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				BARCLAYS			
				Payments Account 13099075			
				Receipts	Payments	Transfers	Balance
1-Apr-20	Balance bf		£-				
20-May-20	Posted balance as per accounts		£-	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	<u>£0.00</u>
20-May-20	Balance as per bank statement		£-				
20-May-20	Posted balance - cleared balance		£-				
20-May-20	Balance cf		£-				
Summary for all accounts				Receipts	Payments	Transfers	Balance
1-Apr-20	Balance bf		£25,551.80				
20-May-20	Balance per accounts		£30,650.66	£5,782.08	£683.22	£-	<u>£30,650.66</u>
20-May-20	Balance per bank statements		£30,650.66				
20-May-20	Balance cf		£30,650.66				

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Staploe Parish Council Reserves				20/05/2020			
Earmarked Reserve Category	Category breakdown	Funds Reserved 01/04/2020	Receipts to reserve to 20/05/2020	Payments from reserve to 20/05/2020	Balance forecast to 31/3/2020		Comment
					Breakdown	Total	
Village Hall Rebuild Reserve	General Village Hall Rebuild Fund	£7,695.50	£1,500.00		£9,195.50		Includes £425.50 from curry night in March
	CIL Money	£1,483.80			£1,483.80		From Topham End Farm. £120 used towards street lights. Remainder to be used for Village Hall rebuild.
	Heater refund (from Ward Fund 2018)	£660.00			£660.00		Refund for Village Hall heaters. (£140 used towards bus shelter, remainder to be used to purchase items for new hall).
	Solar Farm Funding	£8,700.00			£8,700.00		
	Total Village Hall Rebuild Reserves					£20,039.30	
Election fund		£510.29				£510.29	
Transparency Code Grant		£67.20		£67.20		£0.00	Bought laptop in 2018. Used remainder for software subscriptions 2019 & 2020
Literature & info fund		£48.41				£48.41	
Grass & hedge cutting field		£142.00				£142.00	
Play area assets		£150.00				£150.00	
Maintenance		£444.13				£444.13	Towards installing the defibrillator, inspection of lights, noticeboard repairs
Asset replacement (eg. laptop, noticeboards)		£0.00	£100.00			£100.00	
Total earmarked reserves		£19,901.33	£1,600.00	£67.20		£21,434.13	
Available reserves		£5,650.47				£5,767.67	
Total funds		£25,551.80				£27,201.80	
Earmarked reserves = funds set aside for a specific purpose. These can only be allocated to another purpose if the council passes a resolution to do so.							
Available reserves = total balance in the accounts less the earmarked reserves. This should be 50-100% of our precept ie. £5777 - £11554							
Therefore £5767.67 is marginally below the recommended range.							