

STAPELEY & DISTRICT PARISH COUNCIL

CLERK'S REPORT – JUNE 2014

1 Introduction

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman have recently attended a Chairman's training workshop arranged by the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC).

As part of the training, Jackie Weaver, Chief Officer of ChALC, emphasised that the role of Parish Councils was to make decisions and that it was not a good use of parish council time to discuss items listed under "Correspondence" and "Shared Items" as it encouraged debate on matters which were not listed as substantive items on the agenda and on which decisions could not be taken.

Mrs Weaver favoured the use of a "Clerk's Report" which would provide an update in respect of any relevant correspondence received, provide information about the activities at the Community Hall; reports on, for example Police Cluster meetings, Nantwich LAP Highways Group and other partner organisations, including the Parish Plan Implementation Group (SPAG).

Similarly with "Matters Arising". This should not appear on agendas as it can encourage rehearsing of the previous meeting. Any matters which need bringing forward from the previous meeting should appear on the agenda as specific items. The Clerk's report can provide an update where a matter was raised, but has not yet been concluded.

On occasions in the past, Members have used "shared items" as a means of requesting the inclusion of an item on the following agenda. This is unnecessary as the Standing Orders provide for any Member to request an agenda item under Standing Order No. 4(a) at least 5 clear days before the meeting. This is the legal requirement, but as the Clerk routinely issues the agenda 7 days before each meeting, it is helpful to have Notices of Motion earlier (though not a requirement).

Mrs Weaver also emphasised that all councillors should become familiar with the provisions of their Council's Standing Orders.

This is, therefore, the first "Clerk's Report" and is intended for information only. There should be no discussion on the report; however, Members may seek clarification on any items.

2 Annual Parish Meeting

It was disappointing that only two members of the public attended the Parish Meeting. This was a similar situation to that in May 2013 when there was only one resident in attendance. The Minutes of that meeting will be submitted for confirmation to the July Parish Council meeting.

3 Planning Matters

Muller Homes Planning Appeal

The Inspector's report in respect of the Muller Homes Public Inquiry is due to be published in July. As soon as the outcome is known, the Clerk will notify Members.

13/1223N – Outline application for up to 40 dwellings – land to rear of 144 Audlem Road, Nantwich (development in neighbouring parish)

This was the subject of a Public Inquiry which was held on 10 June over a 4-day period. The appeal decision will be published on the Cheshire East Council planning portal website (www.planningportal.gov.uk/pccs). Borough Councillors Peter Groves and Andrew Martin will attend to speak against the application.

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4 Community Hall

(a) Lease

At the time of writing, the new lease is currently with Cheshire East Council (CEC) Legal Services. The Parish Council is currently occupying the hall "at will". When the new lease is available, Members will need to decide its duration. It was originally envisaged that the new lease would run from November 2013 to November 2015, with a break clause enabling the Parish Council to withdraw in November 2014. As the lease is not yet available for approval it is possible that the majority of the first year of the intended lease will have expired before it is signed. In these circumstances, the Parish Council might wish to sign a one-year lease only which would terminate, possibly, August 2016 which is only three months short of the original lease termination.

(b) Committee

The first meeting of the Community Hall Committee was due to be held on 27 May 2014 but was inquorate. The meeting had been arranged with the expectation that four Members would be present; two gave apologies on the day of the meeting, leaving only two. The quorum for any Committee is three Members or one-third of the membership.

(c) Grassed Area

The grassed area around the hall, which is the responsibility of CEC, is very overgrown with weeds of at least 4 ft high. This matter has been raised with CEC Assets on previous occasions, but no action has been taken. CEC has been asked to ensure that the area is cut and maintained as this could act as a disincentive to anyone wishing to use the hall.

(d) Vandalism/Fencing Around the Hall

Although new guttering was recently installed at the hall, vandals have removed this and have also hacked at the brickwork underneath an air vent at the front of the hall. CEC has been advised of this.

The Clerk is seeking quotations for the provision of robust fencing (similar to that around the MUGA). The fencing would be fixed at the edge of the footway all around the hall, would be closed in at roof height, and should prevent vandals from damaging the fabric of the building.

Councillor Groves has undertaken to pursue this with Cheshire East Council with a view to identifying funding.

(e) Regular User

One of the regular users of the hall was three months in arrears on fees despite numerous reminders. The key has now been returned to the Clerk and the Caretaker will open and close the hall for any future bookings, provided that payment is received in advance. In due course, if payments are made in a timely manner, the key can be returned to them.

(f) Wall-Hanging

The tapestry was hung on a pole in the hall on 6 June 2014. The tapestry was prepared by pupils at Stapeley Broad Lane School in 2012, following a grant of £1,000 from the Parish Council.

The Clerk has contacted the Head Teacher at Pear Tree School to make arrangements for the ceramics artwork prepared by her pupils to be displayed in the community hall.

(g) Risk Assessment of the Building (Minute No. 10 – 8 May 2014)

The Clerk has asked Cheshire East Council Assets Team if a general risk assessment of the hall was been carried out prior to the lease being signed. A response is awaited.

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5 Stapeley Parish Action Group (SPAG)

New appointments have been made: Noel Wagstaff is the Chairman and Sue Sherwood is the Secretary.

John Davenport attended a meeting on 9 June and has provided an update.

1. Litter group activity continues.
2. Dog-fouling on the estate: a campaign is to be devised. The Clerk has provided health information associated with dog-fouling to the SPAG Chairman.
3. Hastings Road (Nantwich) – S.106 funding: almost £10,000 has been spent on new equipment. Additional grass matting is required for the play area on the corner of Peter de Stapleigh Way/Pear Tree Field.
4. A Communication Strategy is being developed.
5. At its July meeting, the Parish Council will be asked to consider purchasing additional spray cans for the dog-fouling scheme.
6. Hawksey Drive: Information requested on unadopted areas. The Clerk has forwarded this to the two Ward Councillors who will respond direct to the SPAG Chairman.
7. SPAG wishes to borrow the speed gun to carry out sample speed tests on the Cronkinson Estate. Users of the speed gun are required to undertake training. The request has been forwarded to Mike Docker (who has the speed gun) and Irene Latham, who was a principal co-ordinator of the scheme and they will be able to advise the Chairman of SPAG on training of volunteers.
8. SPAG has reported that the solar panel (speed sign) on London Road appears to be faulty. Mike Docker has been asked to inspect and if it is faulty, TWM Traffic Management Control Systems will be asked to carry out a repair.
9. A suggestion was made that one of the speed signs could be located near to the HV transformer in the vicinity of the community hall. Mike Docker and Keith Nord can consider if this is feasible and if so, at the July meeting, the Parish Council can consider adding this as a location. CEC would need to approve the location.
10. Home Watch. SPAG has been trying regenerate the Home Watch scheme. An article was included in the last Parish newsletter, but there has been no interest expressed. The Police Co-ordinator has been deployed to other duties and there is no replacement. A revised initiative is now being put in place, to be handled locally by PCSOs (Nick Jarvis for Stapeley). The principal means of contact will be by e-mail, Facebook or Twitter

6 Coffee Mornings – Broad Lane Methodist Chapel

Councillor Mike Docker is the Parish Council's representative on the Committee which facilitates the coffee mornings held at Broad Lane Methodist Chapel. He was unable to attend the last meeting, but Val Ingram, a Club Member, provided an update in respect of publicity for the scheme.

- Advertise on the Parish Council notice-boards and in the Cronkinson Farm Pub.
- "Leafleting" around local care homes/sheltered housing units.
- Ask Cheshire East Social Services, local GP practices, local branches of the Women's Institute and societies associated with dementia, including Alzheimer's Society.
- Publicise through companies which provide care services.

The Club has decided to remove the word "elderly" from its publicity and replace it with "older".

7 Police Cluster Meetings

The next Police Cluster meeting is to be held in July and an update will be provided at the next available meeting.

8 Highways Matters

Road patching is being carried out on the A51 London Road, from the Peter de Stapleigh Way junction up to Howbeck Bridge. This will be for the period 11 – 17 June (although these dates may

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change), but as this under a 21 day order, it can be extended, if necessary. A post was added to the website to inform local people of this work and the diversion arrangements.

The two Borough Councillors, Peter Groves and Andrew Martin, have made strenuous efforts to ensure that this work is carried out, following their attendance at a meeting called by some residents of London Road who complained about the vibrations and noise caused by vehicles driving over an uneven road surface. Councillors Groves and Martin were able to identify a “pot” of funding to ensure that this work was carried out. It was not a planned project in the Highways annual schedule but Cheshire East Highways has agreed to include the work in its current programme to help local residents.

9 Talbot Way

James Thompson of Greenspaces is continuing his maintenance work on the conservation area. The area is being mown regularly and the hedge and Willows are due to be cut-back in the near future. The Daffodils at the front are nearly ready to be cut back and tidied. This is the “untidy” stage in the year before the general cutting-back.

A Member has previously commented about the bird table in the conservation area. Mr Thompson will remove this but will not replace it. His view is that there is no purpose in having a bird table unless someone is regularly providing bird seed, as opposed to scraps of bread which have no nutritional value and are potentially harmful to birds as they swell up inside them.

10 Tree Preservation Orders – Stapeley

To report that Cheshire East Council’s Arboricultural Officer has announced a Tree Preservation Order for London Road/Wybunbury Lane, which was served on 5 June. Copies of the order have been placed adjacent to the two entrances to the public footpath joining London Road with Wybunbury Lane.

11 Correspondence

Correspondence has been forwarded to Members as and when it arrived. There are no items of particular note.

Carol Jones
Clerk
10 June 2014