**Staple Parish Council**

Minutes of a virtual, on-line meeting held on Wednesday 10thMarch 2021, at 7.30pm via Zoom

**Councillors present**

Cllr T Bartlett (Chair)

Cllr S Coulson

Cllr N McCollum

Cllr G McCollum

Cllr D Kirk

Cllr J Kirk

Cllr R Loukes

Cllr M Conolly

Cllr S Chandler

Parish Clerk: J Mount

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| **1** | **Apologies for absence**  None received |
| **2** | **Declaration of interest**  There were no declarations of interest |
| **3**  3.1  3.2  3.3 | **Minutes of previous meeting**  Approval of Minutes Proposed:Cllr. J Kirk  Seconded: Cllr. S Coulson  Passed unanimously  Matters Arising  There were none  Mrs R Clevedon has been contacted ref. salt bin. They do not really use it, and don’t feel it is necessary to be there. It will be disposed of. All other salt bins have been filled  Highway Improvement Plan  There will be a further meeting later in the month. Cllr. J Kirk said that the most obvious problem is speed reduction by whatever means possible. Cllr. G McCollum asked if the whole of the village is a 30mph zone. Some of it is, but not all. Anywhere where there are streetlights is a 30 mph zone. Cllr. R Loukes mentioned that along the Shatterling Road there has been a serious accident in the last few days. Should be 40mph and double white lines. No fatalities as yet, but a large number of incidents. There have been many accidents, not necessarily fatalities. Cllr.N McCollum said that looking at emails etc. there are 4 issues: the A257, speeding through the village, junction of Buckland Lane and School Lane, and the road past the village Hall. School Lane and past The Street should be better signposted with double white lines and a speed reduction. Reduce the speed going down School lane and into Durlock Road/Lower Road. Speed bumps do cause a noise. Cllr.J Kirk asked about chicanes. A cheaper element would be to have an SID at Piglet Place. Toby Butler has given the view that he is unlikely to budge on this particular point. Cllr.G McCollum said we need to find a solution on this one. Near Cllr.RLoukes’ corner, one of the issues is parking on the corner. Cllr. R Loukes said that a solution would be to extend double white lines to include double yellow lines. Cllr.S Chandler said that all items discussed so far are appropriate to go on the Highways Improvement Plan and should be prioritised. The timeline is that once submitted, there would then be a meeting with Highways Officers, they will comment on feasibility and practicality of the items. There is a relatively small budget for this particular item in the Council’s annual budget, so parishes may have to use their own funding. White lines that have been worn out can be reported to highways through the portal. Toby Butler has indicated that he is willing to have a discussion. Recording of accidents; only certain accidents are being recorded. Cllr.R. Loukes said that worn out lines on the road are an improvement, not necessarily a repair. Cllr. J Kirk remarked that although Toby Butler's wish to ‘find another way’ sounds good; there would be no point in coming up with an alternative plan; as a SID needs to be placed exactly where the Parish Council have recommended it should be placed. Cllr.N McCollum said he was happy to put the details into a template on behalf of the Council. Clerk mentioned he had been given a template by another Council and that he would forward the template to Cllr. N McCollum. Cllr.D Kirk asked if Toby Butler could be asked to come along to our next council meeting? Would it be better to meet in person on site if that would be possible? Cllr N McCollum and Cllr J Kirk could also be at the meeting. Clerk to arrange a meeting with Toby Butler. Meeting to include Cllr. S Chandler. |
| **4** | **Public Session**  Caroline Mason spoke about the barn development behind Durlock farm. She said that Mr Hulme does not own the driveway, only partial access. She was aware of several objections. Could the Council intervene in some way? Cllr. J Kirk explained that approval had already been obtained for this development some time ago, and that this latest application was simply an amendment to the number of dwellings: i.e. a change from three to four dwellings (with associated parking).  The council are in the process of contacting the agent for the applicant. Cllr.T Bartlett will try and find out any necessary information and contact Mrs Mason. You cannot transfer a right of way to another party, which is what has been suggested. Cllr.S Chandler clarified that the decision of a planning committee is not dependant on ownership, it is outside of the planning process. It is a civil decision between who owns the land and the applicant. Legal ownership of something is a different issue. Mr and Mrs Snow said that they were worried about the speed that cars travelled past their house, it is very dangerous. Cllr. R Loukes said that the location of their house is actually outside Staple Parish Council boundary. As the boundaries are at the moment, there is nothing that Staple Parish Council could help with, it is in the parish of Woodnesborough. Cllr. R Loukes showed a plan which highlighted the local boundaries to clarify the position. Lynn spoke about the fact that there had been another recent accident on the corner of Durlock Road and School Lane. It is a very dangerous corner where several accidents have taken place. He also made the point that dropping the speed limit might be a “quick fix” solution, but it is unlikely to have any effect, since cars are constantly speeding through the village anyway, ignoring the present speed limits, as the SIDs have shown. Alternative physical measures need to be considered before someone is killed. Cllr. S Chandler said that she understood the problem but the only people who can enforce the speed limit are the Police. There are physical speed limiters that can be introduced, and it would be worth mentioning them on the Highways Improvement Plan.  Helen Harlow spoke about the wildlife friendly village and said that some progress had been made with planting, but they have been advised by KCC that they would need public liability insurance. Cllr. T Bartlett said they should continue with the planting. Cllr. S Coulson said she had never heard of this before and that the people involved in the planting were sensible enough not to put themselves at danger when carrying out the work; it should carry on. Cllr. S Chandler suggested that Helen should email her, and she could contact the officer concerned to clarify the situation.  Cllr. J Kirk spoke on behalf of a member of the public who had contacted him regarding 2 caravans on a piece of land. The rest of the land had been sold, but not the piece where the caravans are. They have decking around them, mains electricity and are being plumbed into the existing sewer system. The member of the public considered this to be an indication that they are being used as a dwelling and that they should therefore be subject to planning laws. Cllr. T Bartlett said that the owners have sold the land and are applying for change of lawfulness to allow them to be used as dwellings. Cllr. G McCollum asked why the application had not come before the Parish Council. Cllr. T Bartlett said it will come to the council in time. Sarah Gadd spoke about the same subject and said that in order to have electricity supplied to a dwelling you have to have an address and that was why the address had been granted. It will be put before the Parish Council, but there is an order in which things have to happen. |
| **5**  5.1  5.2  5.3 | **Reports**  **District Councillor** (it has been circulated to Councillors)  1. Highways Litter: The amount of litter and other undesirable detritus on the side of major roads and in lay-bys in the district has caused growing concern. The issue has become acute since the pre-Christmas deadlock in Dover and the continuing use of Manston as a clearing station for Covid compliance. DDC has a statutory duty in this regard, but litter clearance is a complicated business because of the need to obtain permission for road closures, and it is also very expensive. The cost of a full clean of the A2, A 20 and A256 within Dover district is in the order of £250,000. We are working with KCC and Veolia to tackle the problem and have asked the DFT to declare that these roads should be given Special Road status in order to obtain more funding and will continue to press this case.  2. Decarbonising DDC buildings: DDC has received a grant of £830K from the Public Sector Decarbonising Scheme to effect changes in the heating and lighting systems at the Council Offices and at Dover Museum. These changes will remove 119 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent on a yearly basis and are part of DDC’s commitment, made in council in January 2020, to make all DDC activities carbon neutral by 2030.  3. Budgets: Despite all the additional costs and reduced revenues because of Covid the financial outturn for 20/21 is expected to be on Budget or slightly better, largely because of a variety of Government support grants. There is a lot of uncertainty about 21/22 but the current forecast is that we will need to take circa £500K from the General Fund Reserve, currently standing at £2.6 million, to balance the books next year, without affecting front line services. The DDC element in Council Tax will rise by 2.6%, but it should be remembered that KCC, which forms by far the highest proportion of the Council Tax bill, will be increasing their charge by 5% to support adult social care.  4. The Open: The R&A have confirmed that the Open at Sandwich will definitely go ahead in July. They and their partners, including DDC, are preparing for three scenarios: a ‘normal’ tournament with full spectator participation (originally some 250,000 were expected;) a tournament with limited spectator numbers; and a closed tournament, as at the Masters in the autumn last year.  5. Freeport: We were very disappointed to learn that the Port of Dover has withdrawn from the group of organisations, including DDC, working up an application for East Kent to become one of the Government’s planned freeports. We understand they took this view because they were not convinced that there were enough tangible and measurable benefits, that the proposed partners were too disparate to meet Government criteria and because they wanted to concentrate on improving their own facilities to speed the flow of goods. Without the port the concept falls.  6 Local Plan: Given the difficulties of consultation during the pandemic we have been delighted with the volume of response, which far outweighs the level seen during ‘normal’ consultation for the last local plan in 2011. The planners now have to digest these responses over the summer prior to producing the next draft. On the subject of regeneration, we are in the final stages of preparing a visual schematic which will show residents and potential investors how Dover Town would look if the wide range of regeneration projects currently envisaged come to fruition over the next few years. As part of this we will shortly be receiving a parking strategy document prepared by specialist consultants.  7. Manston: Although not strictly DDC business, but of interest to our area, a judicial review has decided that the government did not provide sufficient evidence for why they rejected the recommendation from the Planning Inspectorate and gave permission for aviation to return to Manston. It is understood that the Government will now revise their submission. Manston is due to close as a vehicle holding area in the summer but there is much scepticism that this timing is realistic.  Cllr. Sue Chandler (KCC) gave a report (it has been circulated).  **Kent Together, Kent County Council’s 24-hour helpline** is still available and ready to support Kent’s vulnerable people who need urgent help, supplies or medication. The Kent Together helpline provides a single, convenient point of contact for anyone in the county who is in urgent need of help during the Coronavirus outbreak. It is a collaboration between KCC, central Government, District, Borough and local councils, the voluntary and community sector, the NHS, emergency services and other partners to ensure help is at hand for vulnerable people and those who are shielding. It is also the place to report your concerns about the welfare of someone else.  The Government announced that, using a new model which considers health and personal factors, clinicians have identified a further 1.7m adults across the UK population as at higher risk from Covid-19. For those residents in Kent who receive notice from the Government regarding this, whilst they will be prioritised for the vaccine, help and support is still available to them through the Kent Together helpline to ease them through any challenges posed by new additional shielding requirements.  **Symptom free testing** continues throughout Kent, the positivity rate is dropping from just under 1% to 0.6% as the rates of infection are thankfully falling.  At the County Council meeting in February Members approved the **budget for 2021/22** which focuses on maintaining vital services and supporting communities and residents to recover from the pandemic. As part of the budget, it was announced that a further £6million of emergency COVID funding will be used to help Kent’s struggling households pay their Council Tax. This means all existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) working-age households will automatically have their 2021-22 Council Tax reduced by £50 – or by the total Council Tax due if this is less than £50. There are over 65,000 families eligible for the CTRS scheme, compared to 56,000 a year ago. New claimants eligible for CTRS throughout the year will also receive the additional reduction to their Council Tax bills.  On top of this extra help, one-off funding will also be given to every Kent district council to boost their Council Tax Hardship Fund. This will enable the districts to provide Council Tax relief to those who have been seriously impacted by the pandemic – suffering a loss in income, or a change in their financial circumstances, such as furlough or redundancy.  The Council Tax Hardship Relief Support Scheme is being rolled out as part of the Helping Hands Scheme previously announced by the County Council which I mentioned in my January Report.  Kent County Council **Trading Standards Officers are now offering free specialist advice** to local firms needing help to do business with the EU. There is a dedicated helpline on 03333602300, this is funded from a Kent and Medway Growth Hub Grant.  **Most pupils returned to school** on Monday 8th March (some secondary schools phased the return) and our role as always has been to advise and support schools, there has also been an input from Public Health at Kent in the testing for children.  It was announced this week that **operations for HGV’s at Manston will be suspended** on 21st March which means that the A256 will not be a main route for port traffic and is good news for local communities. Overall traffic through the port and Eurotunnel is now back to expected levels. A programme to **clear the litter** along the route has been put in place by Dover District Council with input from KCC as this requires lane closures along some of the route, the entire route will be cleaned during the next two weeks which is very welcome news.  A trial using state of the art traffic sensors is being carried out by KCC and partners Amey to monitor traffic patterns to help make future transport decisions for the County. 32 sensors have been placed across the County including in Dover Town Centre to monitor pedestrian, cycle, car, motorcycle, HGV and bus movements in and around the town of Dover, including the impacts of Brexit on port-related traffic. The cameras will help to understand usage and potential improvements that can be made to the experience of those choosing to travel actively. It is intended that the data gathered will help us to monitor and deliver schemes that will ultimately help to reduce congestion, support economic growth and improve the accessibility and experience for residents and visitors travelling within the District.  **Libraries** will be reopening in April for browsing and study space, Deal Dover and Sandwich are included in the list of 35 libraries in the initial tranche, the archive search room will also reopen in April. Full information on the library services, registration and archives can be found on the KCC website.  ***Sue Chandler***  There were no questions.  PCSO (Eva Winter)  No report has been received. |
| **6**  6.1  6.2  6.3 | **Finance**  Approval of Bank Reconciliation for February 2021  Proposed:Cllr. S Coulson  Seconded:Cllr. J Kirk  Carried unanimously  Cheques to be approved:  Cheque No. 200369 Clerk’s Salary £190.00  Cheque No. 200370 Trevor Laker (Mowers service etc.) £209.50  Cheque No. 200371 Fitzpatrick Woolmer (notice board) £1,285.20  Cheque No. 200372 Harmer (Grounds maintenance) £1,002.00  Proposer:Cllr. J Kirk  Seconder: Cllr. D Kirk  Carried unanimously  This will leave only £1500 in the current account.  Other financial Items  Clerk raised his concern that funds in the bank account were running rather low and that if all the cheques are to be paid, we would only have £1500 in our account. He has been in contact with Britannia Coaches to try and get a copy of their invoice from last year; this would enable us to apply for a £1000 grant from DDC. The precept will be coming in around the middle of April, which will help, but we cannot afford to pay everything now. Cllr. T Bartlett said that funds are normally low at this time of year. Cllr. S Coulson asked if the Clerk knew of any upcoming bills that are normally presented at this time of year. He replied probably not, but if all the suggestion that had been talked about concerning the Highways Improvement Plan were to take place, our budget would be severely reduced. Cllr. G McCollum asked the question that when we agreed to subsidise the bus, did the contribution come out of the precept, or from existing funds. Cllr. T Bartlett replied that it had come out of existing funds, which was why our reserve funds had dropped. The Clerk said that the account balances were roughly the same as the previous year, without adding on the defibrillator and bus subsidy. Cllr. S Coulson said that she would be happy to postpone the purchase of the new notice boards. Other Councillors agreed with that suggestion. The Clerk said that VAT had been repaid for the past few months. |
| **7** | **Correspondence Received**  Nothing received. |
| **8**  8.1  8.2  8.3  8.4  8.5  8.6 | **Reports**  Planning applications determined   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 20/01340 | Lower Shatterling Farm, Rusham Road, Shatterling  Change of use of land to equestrian use etc. | Granted | | 20/01570 | Land adjacent to 1, The Bungalow, Staple Rd. Wingham  Outline planning permission for 4no. detached dwellings with vehicular access etc | Refused |   Planning Applications submitted   |  |  | | --- | --- | | 21/00280 | Durlock Bridge Farm, Durlock Road, Staple CT3 1JU  Erection of an agricultural barn (retrospective). It was agreed to support this application. | | 21/00214 | Bramleys, The Street, Staple CT3 1LN Erection of single storey rear extension, first floor extension over existing garage with terrace with glass balustrade and alterations to doors and windows (existing shed to be removed). It was agreed to support this application. | | 21/00066 | Lower Rowling Farmhouse, Rowling Road, Goodnestone CT3 1PZ Existing entrance 2 no. brick piers reduced in height, timber gate and posts removed to facilitate removal of driveway access. Outside our area so not discussed. | | 21/00141 | Barn at Staple Farm, Durlock Road, Staple, Kent  Change of use and conversion into 4 no. dwellings, associated parking and landscaping. It was agreed to support this application. |   Village Hall and Recreation Ground  The VHC held a Zoom meeting which went well. The VHC welcomed their new Treasurer. The VHC's finances were in better shape than had been initially assumed. This, together with an opportunity to have the remainder of the roof repaired at a discounted rate led to the decision to go ahead and repair the entire roof. No bookings are being taken on account of the pandemic. The Clerk mentioned about the insurance for the defibrillator. Discussion took place on how to pay for the increase in insurance premium. Cllr J Kirk suggested that next year, the cost of the insurance for the defibrillator could be added to the grant requested for the village hall. Cllr J Kirk raised safe-guarding issues regarding the CCTV camera and suggested that access to the recorded footage should be limited exclusively to Paul Wells.  Cllr G McCollum asked if there was any news about the Staple Country Fayre. Cllr J Kirk replied that it was not going ahead owing to lack of time for preparation owing to the pandemic restrictions. The Clerk suggested that in place of the usual Country Fayre there could perhaps be a much smaller (village only) gathering later in the year, once we knew about restrictions etc. Cllr T Bartlett said that KCC were talking about this now and would shortly be bringing out guidance on outside events and how they could safely take place.  SID/Speedwatch  Cllr R. Loukes shared his screen and showed recent SID results.  Footpaths  Cllr S Coulson reported that at the moment they are not too bad. Some cutting back of vegetation has taken place near the church. Comments have been made about farmers ploughing footpaths, but she said that this was normal, and no action needs to be taken since the farmers are allowed to do this as long as they are reinstated with 3 weeks of ploughing.  Village Notice Boards Update  The purchase of this is to be put on hold until after the precept has been received. |
| **9**  9.1 | **Items for discussion**  Dover District Local Plan  Nothing mentioned. |
| **10**  **11** | **Confidential Items**  Discussion should not take place about planning applications before they are discussed at Parish Council meetings  **Additional correspondence as permitted by the Chair**  Cllr S Coulson mentioned that there is a very old footpath notice near the Memorial Garden. The original one has now rotted away and does not really need replacing. What should be done about it? There is another one there, so it is not really needed. Cllr R Loukes mentioned that there is another one that has also rotted away. Cllr T Bartlett asked if it would be worth contacting KCC to get them replaced. The Clerk mentioned that Wickhambreaux had just had many of their footpath signs replaced (probably by KCC). Cllr S Coulson will contact KCC through their portal and ask for them to be repaired/replaced.  Cllr S Coulson also mentioned about the metal posts near the entrance to the village; could they be filed off? Cllr D Kirk said that he could get them done, but there was no electricity to run an angle grinder. Cllr S Coulson said she would contact her brother who has a small generator and ask to borrow it.  Cllr R Loukes mentioned that there had been fly tipping in Buckland Lane. He reported this on the KCC website and within 3 days, they had been removed. |
| **12** | **Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 14th April 2021  The AGM will be held on May 12th starting at 7pm with a very short Council meeting, followed by the AGM and a guest speaker.  The meeting on June 9th will include the election of Officers etc. |