

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF STAPELEY & DISTRICT PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2021 IN STAPELEY COMMUNITY HALL,
PEAR TREE FIELD, STAPELEY**

PRESENT:	Councillor M Theobald	Chairman
	Councillor S Ford	
	Councillor J Gibbs	
	Councillor J Hillman	
IN ATTENDANCE:	Dr M Page	
APOLOGIES:	Councillors M Docker, G Gwinn, A Jacobs and P Groves	
ABSENT:	Councillor K Nord	

54 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members were invited to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest or non-pecuniary interest which they had in any item of business on the agenda, the nature of that interest, and in respect of disclosable interests, to leave the meeting prior to the discussion of that item.

No declarations were made.

55 MINUTES – 19 JULY 2021

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2021 be approved as a correct record.

56 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the Parish Council's Standing Orders, members of the public were able to ask a question of the Parish Council or make a statement.

In view of Covid restrictions which limited the number of persons permitted in the Community Hall, members of the public had been asked to submit these in writing.

Two residents had submitted statements/questions, both of which related to disruption in the vicinity of Clonnersfield owing to work being carried out by LILA. The essence of the complaint was that none of the residents had been informed in advance that the work was to be undertaken.

The residents were asking the Parish Council to support their view that they should receive compensation for the disruption and for the Council to decide on a suggested form of compensation.

Whilst Members were sympathetic to the frustrations expressed, this was not a matter for the Parish Council itself as this was a civil matter for the residents themselves to deal with through the contractor and/or Cheshire East Council.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk respond to the residents to the effect that whilst the Parish Council empathised with the frustrations they expressed, the Parish Council had no power to intervene in this matter.

57 MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREA, TALBOT WAY

Following contact by the Clerk, Dr Martin Page, a director of Cheshire Ecology was in attendance. Cheshire Ecology was one of the companies contacted for a quotation for the work to be undertaken on the conservation area on Talbot Way.

Cheshire Ecology was a consultancy which would not be able to undertake the work itself but could oversee the work and manage any contractor appointed.

Dr Page had provided the Ecology report which had been commissioned by Muller Homes in 2012. Page 34 of the Ecology report showed the distribution of ponds in the immediate area and demonstrated that several of the ponds near Talbot Way were Great Crested Newt ponds (position in 2012).

Members were reminded that each company invited to quote for the restoration work was given the following brief:

Given that Great Crested Newts are known to be associated with the conservation area, it is important that the successful contractor and its operators will be working specifically in accordance with the terms and conditions of a Natural England class licence for Great Crested Newts.

The work required is as follows:

- *Trim grassed areas and control hedge at front edge.*
- *Trim hedge three times a year and remove waste.*
- *Trim back trees and rear shrubs once a year.*

The current state of the site is as follows

- *The pond is in poor condition and will soon become unsuitable for Great Crested Newts and other amphibians to breed within, as the sediment will build and the water will become more shallow and stagnant.*
- *The pond should be the priority for future habitat management, in terms of wildlife conservation (general amenity management should also continue).*
- *The pond requires restoration and the successful contractor is asked to advise on the best course of action.*

Although this was the position when the invitation to quote was issued, Dr Page had recently inspected the site and he provided a copy of a late 19th Century OS map of the area which indicated that they all used to be connected to the surface field drains. When the site was developed, the drains were filled in and as a result, the ponds were no longer topped up with rainwater.

The original ponds were CF1, CF2, CF3, CF4, CF8 and CF9 (as shown on the report referenced above). The water table was now too low for them to hold water and unfortunately, the only solution would be to install pond liners.

The Clerk was asked to try to obtain a copy of the mitigation measures referenced on page 3 of the document.

Dr Page was thanked for this attendance.

58 CASUAL VACANCY

It was reported that John Davenport had resigned as a parish councillor on 13 September 2021.

Cheshire East Council had been notified of the vacancy; the notice had been displayed on the website and would also be displayed in the Parish notice-board..

As this vacancy was in Batherton parish, it would be for ten electors from that parish to call a by-election and if not called, the Parish Council would be able to co-opt to the vacancy.

59 REPORT OF BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

There were no matters to report as both Borough Councillors had given apologies for non-attendance.

60 COMMUNITY HALL – RE-OPENING

60.1 Re-opening

The Parish Council reviewed the situation in respect of the re-opening of the Community Hall.

The only regular client to re-commence activities, was the Scouts (Cubs and Beavers). A new client, Bizzytots, would commence activities on 20 September 2021, subject to acceptance of its risk assessment. A copy of the confirmed regular bookings was submitted for information.

The hire agreement had been revised to include a Covid addendum. The Working Group had not yet addressed the issue of setting the limit on the number of persons permitted in the hall; the Clerk had, therefore, set the limit at 40, pending a decision on this.

The Clerk asked the Parish Council to make a decision about the use of bouncy castles as they were usually placed close to the fire door and occupied a significant space in the hall.

RESOLVED: (a) That it be noted that the Community Hall had re-opened on 9 September 2021;

(b) That the limit on persons permitted in the hall be set at 40;

(c) That the number of persons permitted in the hall be reviewed at each meeting; and

(d) That bouncy castles continue to be permitted in the Community Hall.

60.2 Risk Assessments for Casual Clients and Regular Clients

The Parish Council was asked to consider waiving the requirement for risk assessments to be prepared for both one-off events and all regular clients. In these circumstances, each client, having received a copy of the Risk Assessment (R/A), and the hire agreement which included the Covid addendum, would be asked to confirm that they would comply with the Council's R/A.

Although the Clerk had received enquiries about one-off bookings, two potential clients had cancelled owing to the requirement for them to prepare an R/A.

RESOLVED: That the Parish Council waive the requirement for risk assessments to be prepared by clients, both casual and regular.

61 PLANNING

61.1 Planning Application

The Parish Council was asked to comment on the following planning application by 24 September 2021.

21/4331N 2 Foxtail Road, Stapeley, CW5 7TA
Proposed single-storey extension.

RESOLVED: That no observations be made in respect of planning application 21/4331N.

61.2 Consultation Document: Draft Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Supplementary Planning Document (SuDS SPD)

The draft SuDS SPD had been published for consultation purposes and provided further guidance on how applicants could integrate sustainable urban drainage systems in their proposals.

This was the first stage of consultation on the SPD which, once adopted, would be a material consideration in decision-taking.

RESOLVED: That no comments be made on the Consultation Document: Draft Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Supplementary Planning Document.

62 FINANCIAL MATTERS

62.1 Ratification of Payments

RESOLVED: That the following payments be ratified, all of which had been made in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.

£432.00	Johnsons of Nantwich – design and printing of the newsletter.
£213.00	The Leaflet Team – delivery of the Parish Newsletter.
£150.60	C M Jones – reimbursement for payment to Holdfast Security Systems For supply of 12 new keys for the Community Hall (£125.50 net and £25.10 VAT)
£75.00	C M Jones – reimbursement for payment to Cheshire Association of Local Councils. Planning training for Councillors A Jacobs, J Gibbs and M Theobald
£25.00	C M Jones – reimbursement for payment to Cheshire Association of Local Councils: Induction training for Councillor J Gibbs.
£12.00	C M Jones – reimbursement for new keys for notice-board.
£41.40	Shires Accountants – payroll service (£34.50 net and £6.90 VAT)

62.2 Authorisation of Payment

RESOLVED: That the following payment be approved:

£567.98	HM Revenue & Customs – tax on Clerk's salary. For the months of August and September 2021
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62.3 Switch to Digital Banking

The Clerk had been in contact with the Royal Bank of Scotland to enquire into digital banking to enable payments to suppliers and contractors to be made by BACS.

The Parish Council was asked to decide (a) if it wished to switch to digital banking with the Royal Bank of Scotland; and (b) if so, to decide on the number and the names of Members who could be authorised to access the accounts on-line.

The first stage would be to refresh the bank mandate. At present, the only remaining bank signatories were Councillors Mike Docker, Peter Groves and Keith Nord.

The switch to digital banking could provide access to as many Members as the Parish Council considered appropriate, but it was suggested that this be no more than five. Each authorised Member must be added as a signatory on the bank mandate form. Following this, each authorised signatory would need to register by accessing the form on-line and would be required to sign it; this would be a digitally-secure signature, and was legally binding.

When the bank had approved the arrangements, each authorised councillor would be provided with their own ID, an activation code and would then be able to create their own PIN and password to access the accounts.

RESOLVED: (a) That the Parish Council switch to digital banking with the Royal Bank of Scotland on the basis of dual authorisation which would require two authorised signatories to be party to each transaction made; and

(b) That in addition to Councillors Mike Docker, Peter Groves and Keith Nord, Councillors Jo Hillman and Matthew Theobald be added as authorised signatories, making a total of five.

62.4 Accounts – 2020-21 – External Audit

Although the official report of the External Auditor (PKF Littlejohn) had not yet been provided, the Clerk had received an email that the auditor assigned to review the accounts would be raising an 'except for' matter (qualification) which was subject to review and sign-off by an engagement lead.

This was on the basis that *the smaller authority failed to approve the AGAR in time to publish it before 1 July 2021, the date required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2021 and did not disclose this by answering 'No' to Section 1, Box 1.*

The accounts had been approved on 5 July 2021.

62.5 Accounts – 2020-21 – Internal Audit

One of the issues raised by the Internal Auditor was the lack of some invoices to enable him to verify the expenditure. These invoices were now submitted and may or may not be required by the Auditor in 2021-22 as evidence that this issue had been addressed.

Invoices missing were for February and March 2021 were as follows and copies had been provided to Members.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Payment £</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u>Payment £</u>
Vodafone	27.67	Shires Payroll	41.40
Vodafone	27.67	CES Ecology	2,280.00
Jof's Mowing	625.00	West Mercia Energy	71.03
Jof's Mowing	270.00	West Mercia Energy	57.98
Greenzone	32.12	Vodafone	27.67
Dame Hygiene	635.30	C Jones – Zoom fee	143.88
Armstrong Fire	250.00	Shires Payroll	41.40

62.6 The following document was submitted for information. This had been prepared using the Scribe software.

- Receipts and payments statement for the period 1 April 2021 – 18 August 2021 (the cut-off date related to the date of the last bank statement received).

62.7 Budget – 2022-2023

The Clerk reported that she would be submitting a first draft of the budget for 2022-23 to the October 2021 meeting.

62.8 Scheme of Members' Expenses

At a recent meeting, Members raised the issue of renewing the Scheme of Members' Expenses. The last scheme was approved in November 2012 and remained in force for 4 years and then lapsed without renewal.

A copy of that scheme was now submitted, and the Parish Council was asked to consider renewing it.

RESOLVED: (a) That the Scheme of Members' Expenses be renewed, without amendment; and
(b) That the Scheme remain in force until September 2025.

63 WEBSITE – SPECIFICATION FOR ENHANCEMENT OF THE CURRENT WEBSITE

The Working Group (Councillors M Theobald, M Docker and J Hillman) had prepared a 'Request for Quotations' document for consideration and approval, to enable it to be issued to prospective providers of the service.

Also submitted were two documents, namely: (1) NALC Website Accessibility Requirements; and (2) the Parish Council's Website Accessibility Statement.

Paragraph 4 – Key Dates: Members added the dates to the various dates and it was agreed that a note be added to show that the timetable was indicative only.

Pre-submission clarifications:	25 October 2021
Deadline for quotations:	8 November 2021
In-person or virtual proposal presentations	To be confirmed – if required [This would take the form of an extra-ordinary Parish Council meeting]
Post-submission clarifications:	15 November – 29 November 2021
Respondents to be notified of outcome:	Week commencing 20 December 2021

RESOLVED: (a) That the Request for Quotations (RfQ), be approved, as amended in the meeting;

(b) That the RfQ, together with the NALC guidance, and the Parish Council's Website Accessibility Statement, be issued to all local website designers (as identified in the Procurement Policy) by 1 October 2021;

(c) That the RfQ be added to the Parish Council's website; and

(d) That the Parish Council make a decision to award the contract at its meeting on 20 December 2021.

64 PROJECTS

**(A) POND ADJACENT TO CLARENDON COURT
(B) VICTORIAN ORCHARD**

The report of Councillor J Gibbs, on behalf of the Working Group (Councillors J Gibbs, J Hillman and A Jacobs) was submitted. This set out progress in formulating a draft plan to enable progress to be made.

The Working Group recommended that efforts this year be concentrated on the Victorian Orchard, deferring the 'Pond Project' to the next financial year.

Arising out of discussion, it was suggested that as this was a Working Group, non-parish councillors with the necessary knowledge and expertise, could be invited to contribute.

RESOLVED: (a) That the Parish Council focus on making progress on the Victorian Orchard project during the current financial year;

(b) That the 'Pond Project' be deferred to 2022-23; and

(c) That the Parish Council be informed of any potential non-Parish Councillors who may wish to join the Working Group, so that a decision could be made.

65 STREET LIGHTING – INFORMATION ITEM

Members were aware that the 18 street-lights owned by the Parish Council had been replaced in 2018 during the CEC upgrade of street lighting throughout the parish. It was expected that Cheshire East Highways would take over full responsibility for ownership and future maintenance and replacement.

The position had yet to be clarified and the Clerk had been in discussion with the CEH Lighting Team about this matter. It had been difficult to establish this definitively, partly because of staff changes and those involved in the original enquiry no longer worked for the authority.

The Clerk submitted an information report and would update the Parish Council as and when further information became available.

66 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

DEFERRED: To the meeting to be held on 18 October 2021.

67 RESIDENTS' CORRESPONDENCE – INFORMATION ITEM

It was reported that the following issues had been raised by residents:

➤ **Blocked access from London Road onto Flowerscroft**

A resident submitted a complaint about blocked access from London Road to Flowerscroft. This blockage was by means of a gate fixed to existing brick piers, and the gate was locked. For many years, pedestrians had been able to gain access through this opening, prior to it being gated. There was a further (ungated) access to Flowerscroft a few metres away, so there had been no detriment to pedestrians.

Enquiries were made by Councillor Peter Groves through the Planning Enforcement Team (PET) at Cheshire East Council. A detailed explanation was provided for the Parish Council and the PET's view was that there was no action available to the Local Planning Authority in respect of the installation of this gate for the reasons given.

➤ **Complaint from resident on Stapeley Gardens about over-flowing litter-bins on the development**

Following a complaint from a resident about over-flowing litter-bins on Stapeley Gardens, the Clerk made enquiries, and the resident was informed that this was not the responsibility of ANSA. It was for David Wilson Homes (the developer) to manage.

This matter had now been resolved by David Wilson Homes.

➤ **Disruption by Contractor – Clonnersfield**

This had been dealt with under Public Question Time above.

➤ **Overgrown hedging adjacent to Maylands Farm**

A Member, on behalf of a resident on Broad Lane had complained about overgrown hedging outside Maylands Farm. The resident had some access difficulties and as there was no footway on her side of Broad Lane which meant that she needed to use the footway on the Maylands Farm side.

The Clerk had now contacted the person who rented the land and he had agreed to cut back the hedges at the earliest opportunity.

➤ **Social Media comments**

Councillor Hillman reported in respect of complaints on social media about the unkempt appearance of the parish.

➤ **Business Activity at Talbot Way**

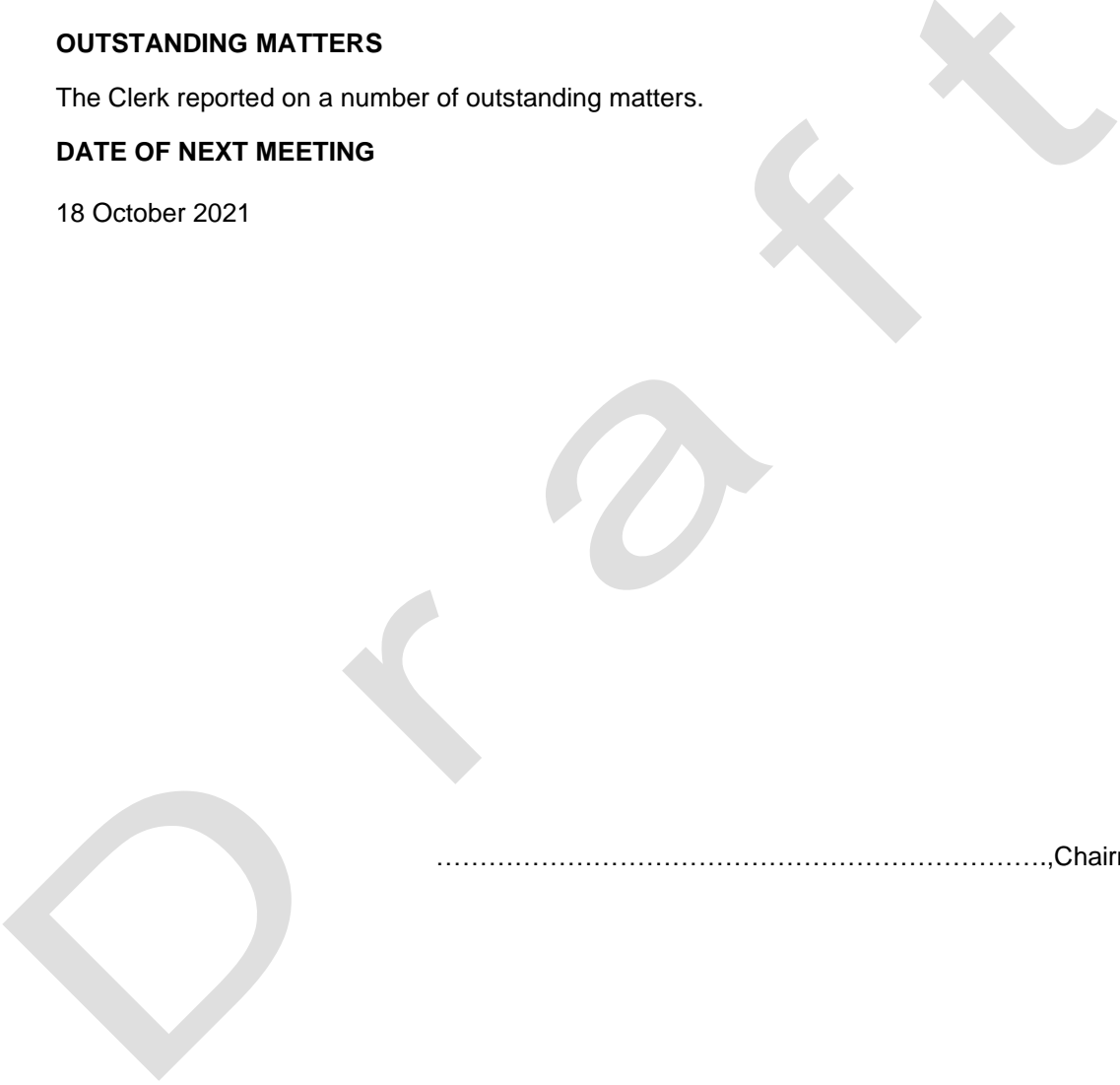
A resident had complained that there appeared to be a business being conducted from a house on Talbot Way. This was causing inconvenience to the householder as it had prevented her from entering and exiting her house. The Clerk had reported this to Planning Enforcement, which would carry out an investigation and expected to be able to report towards the end of September.

68 OUTSTANDING MATTERS

The Clerk reported on a number of outstanding matters.

69 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18 October 2021



.....Chairman

The meeting commenced at 7.30 pm and concluded at 9.50 pm