

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF STAPELEY & DISTRICT PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2021 IN STAPELEY COMMUNITY HALL,
PEAR TREE FIELD, STAPELEY**

PRESENT:	Councillor M Theobald	Chairman
	Councillor M Docker	
	Councillor S Ford	
	Councillor J Gibbs	
	Councillor P Groves	
	Councillor J Hillman	
	Councillor A Jacobs	
	Councillor K Nord	
IN ATTENDANCE:	Borough Councillor A Martin	
APOLOGIES:	Councillor G Gwinn	

89 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.

Councillor J Gibbs declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 105 on the basis that he was a friend of one of the contractors who had submitted a quotation for the website re-design.

No other declarations were made.

90 MINUTES – 25 OCTOBER 2021

90.1 Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2021 be approved as a correct record.

90.2 Clarification under Minute No. 79 – Code of Conduct

Members had asked for clarification of the definition of a co-optee as set out in Minute No. 79.

Although S.27(4) of the Localism Act 2011 referred to the definition of a co-optee, it was use of the term 'co-optee' which caused confusion.

It did not relate to the appointment of new councillors, in an electoral context; for example, where a casual vacancy occurred. The term 'co-option' in the context of the Code of Conduct related to individuals who were not elected or co-opted in the electoral sense (i.e. they were not officially Members of the Council) but they could be appointed to a Committee or Joint committee for a specific purpose and/or term. The logic of including this group in the Code of Conduct process was to ensure that even as non-Members, they were held to the same standards as their elected counterparts.

91 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.

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

92 REPORT OF BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

Borough Councillors Peter Groves and Andrew Martin reported in respect of Cheshire East Council matters of interest.

There were no specific items at this point in the proceedings as Councillor Groves would be commenting on other items on the agenda.

93 COMMUNITY HALL

93.1 Capacity

The Parish Council was asked to review the maximum number of persons allowed in the hall at any one time. This was currently set at 40, but Members had agreed to review this at each meeting, taking into account the prevailing Covid-19 situation.

RESOLVED: That the capacity at the Community Hall remain at 40.

93.2 Water Plus

Arising out of discussion under the budget item at the previous meeting, the Clerk had contacted Water Plus to ask for a site review and had provided them with the following documents.

- Application form for site area concessionary scheme. (October 2021)
This had been submitted to Water Plus to reflect the fact that in 2010 a concessionary scheme was introduced which meant that community halls were to be charged at a fixed rate.
- Site banding application submitted to Water Plus in August 2019. No response had been received from Water Plus.
- Copy invoice from 2018.

There had been an issue with access to the Parish Council's account. Although the Clerk had registered in the name of the Parish Council, with the account number, Water Plus had set it up in the name of another Parish Council, using that Parish Council's account number and providing access to the Clerk.

The Clerk had been in contact with Water Plus to resolve this and she was now able to access all the bills online.

RESOLVED: That in due course, a claim be submitted to Water Plus to reclaim overpaid costs as the company had failed to place the Community Hall in the concessionary scheme.

93.3 Schedule of Regular Activities

The Parish Council received for information an up-to-date schedule of the regular activities at the Community Hall.

93.4 Review of Energy Usage

Utility Aid had made contact and stated that it was now in partnership with The National Association of Local Councils to support 10,000 councils in the UK with all energy-related matters, and it suggested that the Council view the website for further information about the partnership. <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/about/our-partners#utility-aid>

The company specialised in energy for street lighting, public conveniences, council offices, sports pavilions, cemeteries, town halls and other council-run buildings as one of the sponsors for the Society of Local Council Clerks and managed the energy for hundreds of town and parish councils in the UK. It also offered the option of collective purchasing for town and parish

councils to reduce costs by bulk buying and could also support the Council on its journey to 'net zero' with qualified assessors and access to a large variety of green energy suppliers.

In response to a Member's question, the Clerk confirmed that the company would not make a charge for this work; its income would be derived as a benefit from the successful contractor, if the Parish Council decided to make a change.

RESOLVED: That, in the first instance, Cheshire East Council be asked if it could partner with the Parish Council to take advantage of CEC's electricity costs.

94 PLANNING

There were no planning applications for consultation.

95 AUTHORISATION OF PAYMENTS

RESOLVED: That the following payments be approved.

£432.00	Crystal Clean South Cheshire Ltd. (£360.00 net and £72.00 VAT)
£714.00	Starboard Systems (t/a Scribe) – setting up of Community Hall On-line bookings system (£348.00 annual subscription @ £29 per month; set-up fee £247.00 and £119.00 VAT)
£160.00	ASB Electrical – supply and fit two new LED bulkhead commercial External lights to car park area
£255.35	Water Plus – water and wastewater – 12 July 2021-31 October 2021

96 DRAFT BUDGET – 2022-2023

The Parish Council discussed the draft budget for 2022-23 and considered the following documents:

- Clerk's report on budget proposals.
- Second draft of the detailed proposals. Cells highlighted yellow related to changes which had been made to the schedule submitted to the meeting on 25 October 2021.

RESOLVED: That the draft budget for 2022-23 be submitted to the December 2021 meeting for confirmation, subject to any amendments which may be required at that time.

97 CHESHIRE EAST COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE – DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Parish Council was asked to make comments on the Cheshire East Community Governance draft recommendations which must be submitted by midnight on 28 November 2021.

The review, which followed central government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance, was to ensure community governance arrangements continued to reflect local identities and facilitate convenient and effective local government.

The following was a summary of the proposals for the parishes of Stapeley and Batherton as identified in the consultation document (pages 173-174).

The parishes of Batherton and Stapeley were grouped under a common parish council (i.e. Stapeley & District Parish Council). The two parishes lay to the south-east of the parish of Nantwich. Some 88 per cent (that is 1,508 out of 1,711) of Batherton and Stapeley's residential properties were within an area that was adjacent to existing residential areas in the

parish of Nantwich and could therefore be perceived, on those grounds, to be part of the same community as Nantwich.

Map 27 (Nantwich) and Map 35 (Stapeley) in Appendix 5 showed this area of housing development adjacent to Nantwich (orange shaded 'potential expansion area' within the parish of Stapeley). At first sight, as Maps 27 and 35 indicated there would seem to be a case for transferring much of this area into the parish of Nantwich.

Both Batherton and Stapeley were in the Nantwich South and Stapeley borough ward.

The current governance arrangements for the grouped parishes were as shown in the table below. This showed that the distribution of seats was inequitable, with the ratio of electors per councillor being 318.9 in Stapeley, but only 37 in Batherton.

Parish	No. of Councillors	Electors (2018)	Ratio of electors to Councillors
Batherton	1	37	37
Stapeley	9	2,870	318.9
Total	10	2,907	290.7

However, the Borough Council did not consider that the south-eastern boundary of the parish of Nantwich should be altered to take in this expansion area.

Although most of Stapeley's existing housing was adjacent to the Nantwich Town Council urban area and appeared on the map as housing overspill from Nantwich town, Stapeley identified strongly as a distinct community from Nantwich. This was found in the pre-consultation responses, and Stapeley & District Parish Council had stated that it did not wish to be subsumed by Nantwich Town Council.

The table above showed that the electors of the parish of Batherton held an unsustainable representation on the grouped Parish Council and its electorate would only rise to 44 by 2025. The Borough Council did not consider that a separate election for a parish area of 44 electors represented a viable use of public money. It was, therefore, proposed that the parishes of Batherton and Stapeley should be merged to create a new parish. The merged parish would have 2,965 electors (2025).

These styles would be adopted where the Parish Council felt that the style of 'parish council' did not fit the nature of the community that it represented. Councillors would then be described as, for example, Community Councillor. On balance, Cheshire East Council considered that, unless there were very clear preferences expressed in the locality during the present consultation process, it would not be applying alternative styles to any new parishes that were formed, but this would not prevent any new parish council from adopting one of the three permitted styles at a later date.

The Borough Council did not consider that a warding arrangement was appropriate for the merged parish, as the electorate of Batherton was too low to support a warding arrangement.

It was proposed that the council of the merged parish should have twelve seats, a council size which would reflect the Cheshire East average for a parish of this size, giving a ratio of 247.1 electors per parish councillor.

It was expected that the new arrangements would be introduced in time for the elections in May 2023.

RESOLVED: (a) That the Parish Council support the proposals for this area which was that the two parishes of Stapeley and Batherton be merged into one new Parish Council and renamed, a consequence of which was that the current 10 seats would be increased to 12 as this was a council size which would reflect the Cheshire East average for a parish of this size, giving a ratio of 247.1 electors per parish councillor; and

(b) That a note be prepared for publishing on the Parish Council's Facebook page informing residents of the Parish Council's views and encouraging residents to submit their own views on the proposals.

98 PETER de STAPLEIGH WAY – FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A CONTROLLED CROSSING

Cheshire East Highways (CEH) had conducted a feasibility study for consideration of the introduction of a Controlled Crossing (Puffin) on Peter de Stapleigh Way near Footpath No. 1.

The David Wilson Homes development on the former Stapeley Water Gardens site had increased usage of Footpath No. 1 Stapeley, as a means to walk to shops, schools, Nantwich Town Centre, train station etc. Numerous public complaints about the safety of this crossing location had been received by the Borough Council and Ward Members. As such, funding had been allocated from the 2020/21 STEPS Programme for the installation of a crossing point on Peter de Stapleigh Way in order to reinstate the public right of way. This uncontrolled crossing was installed in July 2020.

Since the crossing was installed, several complaints had been received, including a petition which requested that the crossing be removed and replaced with a controlled crossing.

As part of the petition's request, CEH carried out a PV2 data assessment at the proposed location. The assessment recorded a high PV2 (1.46 x108), value which, if used as part of the current CEC Pedestrian Crossing Policy, would qualify for the installation of a controlled crossing in that location.

The Parish Council was now being consulted on the proposal and invited to forward comments to Cheshire East Highways.

Two reports were enclosed, viz: (1) Report dated August 2021; and (2) Location plan for the proposed crossing.

RESOLVED: That the following comments be submitted to Cheshire East Highways in respect of the proposed Controlled Crossing on Peter de Stapleigh Way:

- The Parish Council considers that as part of the Planning Approval for the Stapeley Water Gardens residential development, the existing public right of way should have been closed off permanently, and the route diverted down to the existing puffin crossing at the junction with Pear Tree Field. This work should have been undertaken and fully funded by the developers, at no cost to Cheshire East Council.
- Whilst the Parish Council was disappointed that this did not occur, Members were fully supportive of the proposal to make the crossing point safer.
- The report in respect of PV squared assessment was over double the threshold for a crossing in a high priority category and whilst Members accepted that the results supported the need for the pedestrian crossing, they considered that the figure was too high.
- The report summary recommended that the crossing be installed during the 2021/22 financial year, and it was noted that funding had already been allocated. The Parish Council urges Cheshire East Highways to implement the scheme without further delay and at the latest by 31 March 2022.
- In the meantime, Members were of the view that the crossing point could be made safer by cutting back vegetation, improving lighting, and installing additional signage to highlight the location of the crossing

Note: Borough Councillor Andrew Martin withdrew from the meeting at this point in the proceedings.

99 CONSERVATION AREA – TALBOT WAY

No progress had been made following Dr Martin Page's attendance at the September 2021 meeting.

At the meeting held on 25 October 2021, the Parish Council received a fee note from Dr Page to cover the cost of a survey for the conservation area, which would then allow the Parish Council to make a decision about the work required, before seeking quotations again for a new contractor for the site. No decision was made.

Although no maintenance work was currently being carried out at this site, Jof's Mowing had been asked to cut back the hedge which was currently over-hanging the footway and impeding pedestrian access.

Members agreed that there would be merit in undertaking a basic survey of the conservation area in line with Dr Page's fee note, to understand the scope of the work required.

RESOLVED: That Dr Page of CES Ecology, be asked to provide a detailed specification of the survey work required at the Talbot Way Conservation Area, together with a map of the area.

100 INFORMATION ITEMS

100.1 Victorian Orchard Project

The Working Group met on 10 November 2021, and Councillor J Gibbs and his colleagues now reported progress. They had been successful in recruiting a non-parish councillor to the group.

Councillor Hillman was preparing a report for submission to Cheshire East Council together with a number of documents relating to the area.

The Clerk was asked to write to Cheshire East Council in respect of any responsibility which may be borne by Bovis and/or Vistry homes.

100.2 Casual Vacancy - Batherton

A Notice had been displayed in the Notice-Board and on the website, inviting appropriately qualified persons to contact the Clerk if they were interested in becoming a councillor.

100.3 Site Visit with Resident

The Clerk reported in respect of a proposed site visit with Councillor Peter Groves and a resident who had asked for an overgrown tree to be cut back. The location of the tree was unclear, but it was likely that it was on land owned/managed by Cheshire East Council.

100.4 Speed Limit – London Road

Early in October 2021, a resident raised an issue about the process for setting speed limits and had requested that consideration be given to reducing the 40mph speed limit on the A51 (London Road) to 30 mph.

The resident had raised the issue again and Borough Councillor Peter Groves had undertaken to raise the matter with Cheshire East Highways with a view to the speed limit being reduced.

100.5 Christmas Tree for Community Hall

The Clerk reported that she had placed an order for a Christmas tree for the Community Hall. Arrangements for delivery would be similar to those in 2020. Councillor Hillman had agreed to meet the contractor on site when delivery was made.

100.6 Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) Survey Report – Impact of Covid Pandemic

The Parish Council received a copy of a report following ChALC's survey across councils in the ChALC area to assess the impact of the pandemic on local council business.

101 QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE – 2-5 JUNE 2022

The Parish Council was invited to consider if it should participate in the lighting of a beacon in June 2022, to mark the Queen's Jubilee on 2 June 2022.

RESOLVED: That no action be taken.

102 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

20 DECEMBER 2021¹

103 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Paragraph 1 (2) of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items owing to the confidential nature of the business to transacted and the public interest would not be served in disclosing that information.

104 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

(Reason for exclusion: Relates to contract arrangements)

As part of the Parish Council's commitment to review all contracts with the aim of seeking local providers, an advertisement had been placed in the Summer newsletter inviting quotations from grounds maintenance contractors who would be able to undertake regular mowing, strimming, litter-picking, weed spraying, and generally tidying the garden area on Talbot Way and the Community Hall.

There had been no responses to the article.

As requested at the October 2021 meeting, Jof's Mowing, the current contractor, had submitted his schedule of the annual work undertaken.

RESOLVED: (a) That Jof's Mowing continue as the grounds maintenance contractor for the next twelve months; and

(b) That the Parish Council review the position in December 2022.

105 UPDATE: WEBSITE – SPECIFICATION FOR ENHANCEMENT/RE-DESIGN OF THE WEBSITE

(Reason for exclusion: identification of potential bidders for the contract)

Note: Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, Councillor Gibbs withdrew from the meeting at this point in the proceedings.

At the previous meeting, the Parish Council agreed that the deadline date for receipt of quotations should be revised to allow more time for quotations to be submitted. Subsequent to

¹ Subsequently cancelled

that decision, the Clerk had received six quotations which had been emailed to Members on 2 November 2021. A further two quotations had been received and these had been enclosed with the agenda.

Members considered the eight quotations and were asked to shortlist companies with a view to interviewing all or some of the companies.

RESOLVED: (a) That the Working Group (Councillors M Theobald, J Hillman and M Docker) meet to review the quotations, with a view to shortlisting;

(b) That the Working Group make recommendations to the Parish Council in respect of shortlisting, and the possible requirement for post-submission clarification meetings;

(c) That, in the event of it being deemed necessary to seek post-submission clarification, the Parish Council arrange to hold virtual meetings with contractors; and

(d) That following completion of the process in (b) and (c) above, the Parish Council proceed to awarding the website contract at the next available meeting.

.....,Chairman

The meeting commenced at 7.30 pm and concluded at 9.40 pm