

STOCKING PELHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting held on Monday 18th Sept 2017 at Roedowns at 7pm

Present: D Nicholls (Chairman) P Lucas M Hutchins A Brown
 R Whitefield R Banks J Lucas (Clerk)

Action

29:17	<p>The meeting was called in response to recent developments at the site of the Cock Public House.</p> <p>Following the appearance of three empty caravans (two caravans in front of the pub, with a third van at the side), on 31st August 2017, the following occurred:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photographic evidence and information was sent to Liz Aston and Kevin Steptoe of East Herts Planning who agreed to contact the owner of the property Mr Savage, in order to ascertain whether the appearance of caravans had been authorised and therefore may represent lawful entry, but potentially in breach of planning. • Sarah Robson, who rents the house adjacent to the pub site (from Mr Savage) has been trying to contact Mr Savage via the rental company but without success. • Kim Shenton, a Planning & Enforcement Compliance Officer confirmed that it is the owner's responsibility to have the vans removed. <p>On the evening of Sunday 17th September, local residents became aware that a fourth van had appeared, at the front of the pub and that the caravan at the side of the pub was now occupied by a man and a woman (who is heavily pregnant). In addition, there is a truck and a car (bearing a 2015 plate) parked in front of the occupied van.</p> <p>It was reported that the man had requested help from neighbouring properties. He asked for water, for use of a toilet and for access to electricity. These requests were generally met with polite refusal. In one case, water was supplied and the man said that he would be on the site for about a week. One resident made a call to the police via 101 and was told that unless the man had been threatening, no action would be taken at that time. However, a police officer did visit the site on Monday 18th September.</p> <p>A member of SPPC made a call to the office of Councillor Graham McAndrew and followed this up with an email, copied to SPPC. This brought the matter to the attention of Claire Carter, who is a service manager for Community Wellbeing and Partnerships at Herts Council.</p> <p>Further telephone calls and emails on behalf of SPPC to the East Herts Planning Office resulted in the receipt of a phone call and email from Jonathan Geall, who is the Head of Housing and Health at East Herts Council. Dealing with traveller encampments is part of his remit and Claire Carter leads on this issue for him.</p> <p>Kevin Steptoe's office has informed SPPC that Paul Dean is the Lead Enforcement Officer for this case. Femi Ramsey is the Planning Officer who has replaced Martin Plummer and will be dealing with planning issues relating to the pub site.</p> <p>Mr Geall has spoken to Inspector Chris Hunt at the police and to Councillor McAndrew. He intends to speak to Kevin Steptoe as soon as possible. Chris Hunt will visit the site on 19th September. This may be followed by a welfare visit. While dealing with encampments is essentially a matter for the land owner, Chris Hunt, Claire Carter, Kevin Steptoe and Jonathan Geall will review whether there are any actions that the council can take in this instance. SPPC will be kept informed of the progress made. SPPC will also seek guidance from the appropriate Enforcement Officers.</p>	
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	<p>A discussion followed concerning the reactions and response of SPPC to the situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is some concern that the pub site is being 'scouted' as a potential site for additional travellers.• Local residents are advised to keep a record/log of any interactions with the occupants of the pub site as these might be relevant in a court judgement concerning nuisance laws. Mike Hutchins will circulate this advice via email.• If the property developer, Mr Savage has allowed the site to be occupied, then he is in potential breach of planning. If he did not allow it, then it ought to be in his best interests to ensure that the site is vacated as soon as possible. <p>It should be noted that a number of village residents, including some SPPC councillors that are directly affected, have responded to the situation independently. A coordinated response, backed by an accurate audit trail is considered to be the best way forward.</p>	MH
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