

## Staplehurst Parish Council Website Forum Participation Guidelines

In this Forum, Staplehurst Parish Council, (this Council), gives local residents, businesses and others with an interest in Staplehurst, the opportunity to share information, discuss topics and respond to postings by others.

The aim of this Council is to ensure that this community forum is inclusive and safe, whilst being a platform for vibrant discussion and sharing of information. Please note that anyone wishing to raise an issue for the attention of the Council should do so via e-mail. Postings on this forum will not be acted upon by the Council.

This Council has no wish to restrict the freedom of speech but it does request that forum posters abide by the following guidelines.

### Guidelines for all forum posters

1. **Identity** – All forum posters must register before being allowed to post notices or respond to topics. People are encouraged to use their own name and display their email address. This Council reserves the right to remove any unidentifiable postings. Do not create multiple registrations with different e-mail addresses.
2. **Respect** – Other people's views and beliefs should be respected but please consider the impact on others when writing your posting. This Council understands that people often feel strongly about subjects but will consider removing any content that other users might find offensive or threatening. Personal attacks about an individual have no place within an intelligent discussion. This Council will actively discourage any obscenity, mindless abuse or gratuitous innuendo.
3. **Criticism and complaints** – This Council recognises that forum posters may wish to discuss the general conduct of local businesses and services with one another. However, to ensure such local business or services have the opportunity to take appropriate steps to remedy any such criticism, please direct such complaints to the source – not this forum. Specific criticism of an individual employee, business or service provider has no place on this forum and will be removed forthwith.
4. **Language** - This Council appreciates that we have a world-wide audience; however, as Staplehurst is a parish in England, the language used on this forum should also be in English. Any words that in conversation would be considered swearing, blasphemous, or of a sexual, racist or homophobic nature have no place on this forum. Any postings containing inappropriate language or that cannot be understood by a majority of English speakers will be removed or amended.
5. **Content** – Any potentially libellous or defamatory remarks, or postings that could breach a copyright, have no place on this forum. This Council reserves the right to remove any forum posting that may put this Council or the forum poster in legal jeopardy.

6. **Think and check** – This forum is the place for intelligent discussion but remember that intonation of sarcasm, humour and innuendo do not necessarily transfer easily to written text. Before a posting is submitted, please read it very carefully and use the spell checker. Remember that this is a public forum - your words will be open to all. Be aware that you could be misunderstood or give unwitting offence to others.
7. **Keep it relevant** - Most conversations on the forum will relate to an existing string or subject. Although some conversations can be wide ranging, please add to an existing string only if your posting is related to that existing subject. New or unrelated topic strings should begin with their own subject headings. This forum is intended for local topics, news and discussion points. We can't solve the world's problems in this forum.
8. Apart from removing posts and articles which breach the house rules, the Council reserves the right to close entire threads when they stray off topic or become too long. As a guideline, you should look to start a new article when the total number of posts is around 50, because your article may be closed to comments at any time due to the length of the string.
9. When contributing to this Forum you agree to grant to the Council, free of charge, permission to use the material in any way it wants (including modifying and adapting it for operational and editorial reasons).

#### **Staplehurst Parish Council Policy regarding forum postings.**

- If, in the opinion of this Council or its employees (e.g., any elected Staplehurst Parish Councillor, Parish Clerk or Assistant Parish Clerk), any posting is considered to over-step the ethos of the above guidelines, this Council reserves the right to remove or amend such posting.
- When editing or removing part of an inappropriate forum posting or comment, this Council will endeavour not to change the overall meaning of the original posting.
- After removal or amendment of any posting, an email of explanation will usually be sent to the forum poster to assist with understanding of these guidelines. However, long or protracted arguments will not be entered into.
- It is this Council's intention to maintain a pleasant and welcoming public forum for use by everyone living, working, visiting or thinking of moving to Staplehurst.
- The Council reserves the right to remove the registration of any frequent abuser of these guidelines.

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