

Village Update

AUTUMN 2009

www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

PARISH CARETAKER LES REEVE

How many of you know that we have a parish caretaker? We have and I'm Les Reeve. My duties are varied, but my main task is keeping litter under control at Surrenden & Jubilee Fields and Nicholson Walk. There are litter bins provided in all areas, but you'd think nobody wants to use them. Broken beer and spirits bottles are especially dangerous; most days I can fill several refuse sacks with rubbish. The CCTV equipment at Surrenden and the skate park in the Jubilee Field are regularly inspected. There is often graffiti to remove. I check the play equipment which is frequently vandalised. Play equipment, seats and gates have to be repaired and painted. The grass and nettles have to be kept under control.

I check the play areas 3 times a week in summer and once a week in winter. Maidstone Borough Council checks them every month. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents checks all play equipment annually.



Join Neighbourhood Watch and Kent Police for afternoon tea to make Staplehurst a cold calling control zone

Maidstone and District Neighbourhood Watch Association, in partnership with Mid Kent Police and Kent Trading Standards, are setting up a "Cold Calling Control Zone" in Staplehurst. Residents will be supported on how to deal with Bogus Callers and Rogue Builders, with education packs and road signs. Cold Calling Control Zones have proved to be a big success in other areas of Maidstone; there are current schemes set up in Shepway, Marden, Coxheath and Yalding. Residents are more aware of how to tackle any unknown callers at the door and companies who sell legitimately are asked to be more sensitive in the need for good practice when operating in the area. You are invited to the Launch of this scheme and

for afternoon tea at the McCabe Close Day Centre on Wednesday **14th October from 3pm**. There will be presentations on Cold Calling and an opportunity for you to pick up an information pack.

If you have enquires or concerns about this scheme please contact Lorraine Hemphrey, Watch Liaison Officer, Maidstone Police Station, on **01622 604395**



**Kent
Police**



Staplehurst

Parish Council



ACCESS FOR ALL SCHEME AT STAPLEHURST STATION

Completion of the bridge will be in October 2009. The new bridge has been built in keeping with the main station building. Great trouble was taken to match the colour of bricks. The old bridge may possibly be used for emergencies only. To improve accessibility from various areas of the village to the Station, kerbs need to be lowered. This will be on the Agenda for the next Parish Council meeting on Highways.

SPEED WATCH

Changes made to Kent Police's Speed Watch policy have meant that the details of more offenders are being recorded. More parishes have joined in by purchasing equipment and more volunteers have been trained so wherever you travel in Kent there could be a Speed Watch team checking that you are observing the speed limits. In Staplehurst our volunteers have been concentrating their efforts on a few of our ten police-approved sites which we have identified as potentially the most hazardous to the general public from inconsiderate motorists.

PARADE PARKING

Can you park at the Parade for an hour and go shopping elsewhere? Whilst the landlords consider their "hospitality is abused" if people do so and would prefer you to support their tenants' businesses, they would not expect vehicles parked at the front of the parade for up to one hour to be clamped even if you shop/conduct your business elsewhere. Should this occur, please give the facts to the Parish Office. The Parish Council continues to research the issues and press the Landlords for greater clarity. Parking 6pm – 9am is unrestricted as the signs now show. Sundays should also be free of restrictions, but the signs need to be amended to show this. Disabled bays have yet to be clearly marked out. It is possible that these parking restrictions could precede a planning application to build more shops and maisonettes on the planted areas which may include the felling of all trees at the front roadside of the Parade area. Residents are advised to keep a check on new Planning Applications registered with MBC. Details will be posted on the Parish Council website Forum & meeting Agendas so that any planning responses can be submitted to MBC within the deadlines.

JUBILEE SPORTS FIELD

The changing rooms at the Jubilee Sports Field are being used regularly by the Football Clubs. They will soon be handed over to the New Jubilee Field Management Committee which will be responsible for their future maintenance. This new Committee, which will be independent of the Parish Council, will also assume responsibility for some of the playing areas at the sports field. Organisations with a current or potential interest in the field are asked to send representatives to an inaugural meeting to be held at the Guide Centre at **8.00pm on Thursday 22 October**. There is no catch; the Committee has already been elected! We want to identify how we can best use the sports field and the facilities there to everyone's advantage. There is potential for aerobics, bowls, green gym, rugby, running, orienteering, kite flying & more. Please attend and tell us what you want or we won't know you are there! Requests have been made to keep the field gates open. Except when the Guiding organisations meet and footballers are playing, they are kept closed to prevent unauthorised access.

WHEELIE BINS

House holders are requested to leave their wheelie bins just inside the edge of their boundary. This keeps the pavement free for pedestrians of all ages and mobility and ensures that site-lines are maintained for road users. After emptying, the contractors are then expected to return the bins to your property. If the bins are returned elsewhere then please inform Maidstone's Environmental Services Department (**01622 602162**).

THE FORUM

The Forum has a set of user guidelines to guard against postings regarded as defamatory, racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or containing threats of violence. The terms and conditions of popular public sites like Facebook or YouTube are draconian in comparison. The Council has introduced a simple registration system for users. Regular users of other public forums and websites will know that this is standard practice. Registration simply requires each user to specify their name and e-mail address and agree to comply with the guidelines. Users can still use a nickname on the Forum if they wish. This allows the Council to remove postings that infringe the guidelines and to prevent repeat postings. In this way the forum will remain a resource we can all enjoy. So get posting!

VOTERS REMINDED TO GET SET FOR A GENERAL ELECTION

Make sure you are on the electoral register ahead of the forthcoming General Election. Registration forms are being sent to households to make sure the registers are up to date so that everyone who is entitled to vote can do so. Our next General Election must be held by 3rd June 2010. Unless you complete

the registration form when it arrives, you may not be able to vote. You're not automatically entitled to vote just because you pay council tax or have voted before. Voters – especially those voting at a General Election for the first time - can find out more about what's involved at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

STAPLEHURST ARTS FESTIVAL

This will be held in the Village Centre on 14th and 15th November. The organisers applied for a grant and the Parish Council agreed to sponsor the hall hire for this event up to the value of £450. If you or your organisation wish to apply for funding for a project for the benefit of the community, Council grant-making guidelines are posted on the Parish Council website. There is internet access available in the Staplehurst Library, or, if you call into the Parish Office, you can obtain details.

SOUTH EAST HOUSING STRATEGY TO EXPAND STAPLEHURST?

Government requirements could mean at least 485 new units being built in Staplehurst by 2018. Few details are available yet. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, May 2009, a report by planning consultants for Maidstone Borough Council, identifies possible sites. The report is a feasibility study which deals only with the provision of land and was not intended to address other consequences of development. The Parish Office has a copy of a plan showing where the possible sites are. The full report can be seen at www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk (Follow the links to Planning & Building Control and then to the Local Development Framework.) The Parish Council will watch developments closely and provide more information when available. It has set up a working group to co-ordinate its response. If you would like your views to be represented to Maidstone Borough Council, please email the Parish Council (clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk), write to them at the Parish Office, Village Centre, High Street, Staplehurst TN12 0BJ or call in to the office where there will be a book for comments.

PLAYSCHEME 2009

Staplehurst Parish Council is proud to be one of only 6 parish councils in the Borough with a summer playscheme which is part-funded by MBC. Extensive preparations began in February for the 3 weeks in August when every day the 60 places were taken by children between 4 and 11. Before any places could be offered, there were training courses to attend, forms and risk assessments to be prepared, CRB checks made on the helpers, liaison with Staplehurst Primary School, insurance to be arranged and play materials to buy. Maria Norris, the Assistant Clerk, worked very hard to meet the requirements. Teachers Jensie Shepherd and Jo Guy, her Deputy, led a team of six playleaders who made sure the children thoroughly enjoyed themselves in a safe and creative environment. We are delighted to say that the Ofsted inspection was successful. Congratulations and thanks to everyone involved. Dates have been reserved already with the school for next year when the Council hopes again to provide a playscheme for the benefit of Staplehurst children and parents.

COMMUNITY LINKS

On 17 August the Planning Committee and Full Council held public meetings at Sobell Lodge Cheshire Home by kind invitation of the residents. The Parish Council would like to encourage community engagement for all Staplehurst residents and welcomes suggestions for different venues around the parish for public Council meetings every August.

**THANK YOU
TO ALL OUR
HELPERS WHO
DELIVER THE
VILLAGE
UPDATE.**

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Planning has always been an important part of any Parish Council's remit and for the last 7 years our excellent Chairman of Planning was Wendy Green. We were all very sorry when she recently moved away. Her preparation and increased planning knowledge led to our having a raised profile with the Maidstone Borough Council planning officers and planning committee members. Her willingness to attend Development Control, speaking both for and against applications and also supporting local residents, was always greatly appreciated. She will be sorely missed and we wish her well for the future.

Cllr. Peter Spearink has taken over from Mrs Green as the new Chairman of Planning.

Assistant Clerk Maria Norris left us in August to take on new challenges. Her enthusiasm and commitment over the last three years was greatly appreciated and in particular her role with the Playscheme. Good luck Maria, good wishes for the future and thank you.

We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Mrs Rosemary ("Steve") Smith who was co-opted as Parish Councillor at the August meeting. We hope she finds being a councillor an enjoyable experience.

Margaret Arger

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL VISITS STAPLEHURST

On Monday 27th July Christopher Garland, the Leader of MBC, and four senior councillors fielded questions from a sizeable audience in the Village Centre. Here are some of the main themes.

MBC keeps only £265 of the £1801 tax on a Band E property in Staplehurst. £1254 goes to KCC, with smaller sums for the Police and Fire services. Staplehurst Parish Council receives £36. MBC also pays a "concurrent functions" grant to Staplehurst. The Government requires efficiency savings; with the recession, revenue from other sources, such as planning fees and parking charges, has also fallen. Priority is given to the Council's legal responsibilities and maintaining existing essential services. There is little scope for new spending.

Five hundred more houses could be built in Staplehurst over the next few years. MBC now believe

that if this happened, there should be corresponding investment in the necessary infrastructure, presumably at the developers' expense. MBC has no money to purchase any land for parking in Staplehurst.

Government planning guidelines require borough councils to identify an adequate number of sites for gypsies and travellers. Until this has been done it seems difficult to stop piecemeal development in locations where other forms of housing would not be permitted. Consultants have been appointed to draw up a policy for Maidstone Borough and locate sufficient sites by the end of 2010.

Staplehurst Parish Council, and the wider Staplehurst community, are left to take what benefits we can from the MBC strategy, and to think of innovative ways of filling the gap when their plans do not reach our southern fringe of the borough.

Parish Council Information

COUNCILLORS

Margaret Arger (Chairman),
John Perry (Vice Chairman),
Bill Best,
Joan Buller,
Tom Burnham,
Paul Butcher,
Jenny Fairfax,
Barry Franks,
Paul Kelly,
Angela Knowlden (Chairman of Amenities),
Roger Munn,
John Reardon,
Matt Sankey,
Peter Spearink (Chairman of Planning),
Steve Smith.

CLERK

Mrs Sue Bassett

Address:

The Parish Office
Village Centre
High Street
Staplehurst TN12 0BJ
Email: staplehurst1@btconnect.com
Tel/fax: 01580 891761

Opening hours: 9am to 1pm Mondays to Fridays, except on Thursdays, when it is by appointment. Borough Councillor Lusty holds a Council Surgery at the Library on the last Saturday of each month from 10am to 12pm. This is supported by a Parish Councillor and one of the community policing team; Community Warden Chris Lomax, PC Marc Pennicott or PCSO Pete Gardner.

You are welcome to talk through any local problems or ask questions about local issues with any or all of these Councillors and officers.