

## **STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL NOTES (for January 2017)**

**Neighbourhood Plan** – Following November's positive referendum result Maidstone Borough Council formally made the plan at its full council meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December. 'Making the plan' is a formal term that means that the Neighbourhood Plan has become part of the statutory development plan for the area and therefore Maidstone Borough Council will have to use the Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in Staplehurst. This will give Staplehurst a greater influence over the shape of future development and related issues such as infrastructure, traffic movement, community facilities, service provision, open spaces and enhancing the heart of the village.

Copies of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan are available to read in Staplehurst Parish Office and in Staplehurst Library. The plan can also be read on-line at [www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk) and at <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/local-plan/neighbourhood-plans2>.

**Christmas Lights** – We hope the new lights brought some seasonal cheer to the High Street. We were unable to make use of every column in the High Street as four of them did not meet KCC's load-bearing requirements. It is hoped that at least some of these columns will be upgraded in time for next Christmas. The Parish Council is fortunate to receive financial support from local businesses; production deadlines mean these kind donations will be acknowledged in the next set of Parish Council Notes.

**Closure of NatWest Staplehurst Branch** – At the start of December NatWest announced that its branch at The Parade would not be reopening. The bank initiated a communication programme to let customers know directly and information has been published via a number of other channels including the village website, so by now this will be old news to most readers. The Parish Council is very disappointed with the bank's decision which the bank is adamant will be final. Nevertheless, at the time of writing (second week of December), the Parish Council is seeking a meeting with representatives of NatWest and is investigating options for alternative services including the provision of a mobile branch stop by NatWest. In the meantime customers can continue to use the Post Office to withdraw cash and to make deposits.

**Neighbours** – Following the season of goodwill to all men it's now time for New Year's resolutions. The Parish Council and Parish Office are contacted about many kinds of issues. Sometimes these issues relate to problems between neighbours, which could often be resolved with a little consideration and communication. It is a sad reflection on modern life that the proliferation of technology and communications media has apparently coincided with more people engaging far less frequently with their neighbours. So for 2017, why not make a resolution to 'think neighbours'? This could take many forms: simply speaking to your neighbours, thinking about what you do and what it means for others, e.g. where you park, where and when you put out your

rubbish, how tall and wide your hedge is. As the song says, 'Everyone needs good neighbours!'

**Surgeries at the Library** – The Parish Council holds a surgery every Saturday in the library between 10.00am and 11.00am. Do come along to meet a parish councillor and ask questions about local issues. Councillor Perry's borough council surgery is normally on the last Saturday of the month. The next PCSO surgery will be on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> January between 10.00am and 11.00am.

**Vegetation** – Plants, hedges and trees can reduce the width of footpaths and visibility on the highway. Property-owners are responsible for maintaining their hedges; failure to do so may generate anything from a polite neighbourly request to a report to Kent County Council (03000 41 81 81 - option 2 - or <http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>). KCC will give owners a deadline to remedy a situation or as a last resort carry out the work itself and send owners the bill.

**Parish Council on-line** – Visit [www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk) to see Parish Council minutes, reports, a calendar of events, plus local information and comment on the 'Latest News' and Forum pages. Consult the Local Directory and Village Groups pages for information about local businesses and organisations; contact the Parish Office to submit a listing. The Parish Council is also on Facebook.

**Parish Information and E-groups** – Copy minutes of Parish Council meetings are available at Full Council meetings and on the Parish Council website at [http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes\\_of\\_the\\_last\\_meetings.aspx](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx). Sign up to an e-group to receive direct e-mails of useful information about local issues e.g. weekly MBC plans list, Parish Council minutes & agendas, press releases. Contact the Parish Office (details at the end of these notes) for any questions.

**Bell Lane Toilets** – Maintained on behalf of the Parish Council, they are open during the day and locked for the night. For non-urgent issues, call during office hours or leave a message on 01580 891761. For emergencies outside office hours, telephone 07539 692588.

**Contact Kent County Council** – Some useful Kent County Council numbers are as follows:

Highway Helpline (1)	03000 41 81 81 (office hours - see options below)
Highways Helpline (2)	03000 41 91 91 (out-of-hours emergency)
Speed Awareness	03000 41 82 82
Concessionary Fares	03000 41 83 83
Kent Freedom Pass	03000 41 84 84
KCC Main Number	03000 41 41 41

- Option 1 - Driver Education and Speed Awareness
- Option 2 - Vegetation Enquiries
- Option 3 - Potholes
- Option 4 - Street lights enquiries and problems (most village lights are KCC-owned)
- Option 5 - Drainage problems
- Option 6 - Any other items not covered above

You can report a highways problem on-line at <http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>. You do not need to contact the Parish Office to report such defects and actual eye-witness reports are more valuable to Kent Highways. The on-line reporting site allows you to attach photographs to your report. Responsibility for motorways and trunk roads lies with the Highways Agency on 0300 123 5000 or e-mail [ha\\_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk).

**Kent Public Rights of Way** – To report any issues with public rights of way call 03000 41 71 71 (lines open 8am - 8pm Monday - Friday). In an emergency outside these hours telephone 0300 333 55 38. Faults may also be reported via email [prow@kent.gov.uk](mailto:prow@kent.gov.uk) or by visiting the KCC website [http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment\\_and\\_planning/countryside\\_access.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/countryside_access.aspx) or by writing to Public Rights of Way and Access Service, 8 Abbeywood Road, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4YT.

**Maidstone Borough highway-related services** - MBC is responsible for some highway services such as street sweeping, street nameplates, street naming and numbering, park and ride facilities. Telephone MBC Contact Centre on 01622 602162 to report issues requiring attention or go on-line to <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/parking-and-streets/street-problems>. For other highways and public transport issues contact Kent County Council Highways.

**Maidstone Borough Council Planning Services** – MBC offers a pre-application advice service for householders or anyone contemplating residential/commercial development. For further information visit <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-for-residents/pre-application-advice> or telephone 01622 602736. To report a planning breach or enforcement issue go to MBC's website at <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-enforcement> and then click on the appropriate icon.

**Dog Issues** – Please bag dog waste and use any ordinary litter bin or domestic waste bins. If you witness owners failing to clean up or wish to report persistent incidents of mess, telephone MBC Environmental Services on 01622 602202 to give details, including information in confidence about perpetrators if known. Visits by officers to problem areas can be timed to be most effective and a fine imposed when the offender is caught. To report a stray or problem dog, telephone MBC's Dog Warden on 01622 602117.

**MBC Cleansing and Collection Services** – Call MBC Contact Centre on 01622 602162 or go to [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk) for information about refuse services provided by Maidstone Borough Council. Use the phone number or go on-line to <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/parking-and-streets/street-problems> to report undesirable activities such as fly-tipping, dumped cars, littering etc. A “pull-out” (or rear of property) collection service is available to those who are unable to wheel or carry their refuse to the front boundary of their homes.

- **Rubbish & Recycling Collections** – Use green recycling bins to dispose of paper, cardboard, glass bottles and jars, food and drink cartons, plastic bottles and food trays and containers. Textiles and small electrical items may be left out separately for collection. For further information visit the dedicated website at <http://www.recyclingtogether.co.uk/>.
- **Garden Waste** – Two sizes of wheelie bin can be hired from Maidstone Borough Council (240L and 140L available for an annual hire charge of £35 and £31.50 respectively). Neighbours may wish to consider sharing a bin. Further information is available at <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/binsandrecycling/my-bins> or by telephoning 01622 602600. If your property is assessed as not having room for a bin you may be eligible to obtain white sacks on a subscription basis from MBC; telephone 01622 602600 for details.
- **Food Waste** – Compostable bags for the kitchen caddies are available from the Henhurst Farm Shop, Pinnock Lane, TN12 0HD and Paxman Services (UK) Ltd at Unit 3 Larkstore Park, Lodge Road, TN12 0QY.
- **MBC Bulky Collection Service** – Phone MBC on 01622 602600 or go online to <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/binsandrecycling> to arrange a collection. For further information go to <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/binsandrecycling/other-types-of-collections>. Householders may also use the KCC Household Waste Tip at Burial Ground Lane in Tovil; opening times are Monday to Saturday 8.00am to 4.30pm and on Sundays and most bank holidays from 9.00am to 4.00pm. The site is closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year’s Day. For further information go to [http://kent.gov.uk/environment\\_and\\_planning/recycling\\_and\\_rubbish/waste\\_and\\_recycling\\_centres/maidstone.aspx](http://kent.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/recycling_and_rubbish/waste_and_recycling_centres/maidstone.aspx).

**REPORTING INCIDENTS TO THE POLICE** - All non-emergency crime-incident reports should be telephoned to **101**. This non-emergency 24/7 national police telephone number gives access to the local policing team wherever you happen to be in the UK. Full details are available at <http://www.police.uk/101> If you prefer, you may talk anonymously to Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**. Life-threatening incidents, crimes in progress or serious injury road traffic accidents that require urgent police attendance should be notified by dialling **999**. In the autumn Kent Police will

be adding reporting functionality for non-urgent crimes to its new website at [www.kent.police.uk](http://www.kent.police.uk).

Local contacts are Community Warden Mira Martin (mob: 07969 584179, e-mail: [mira.martin@kent.gov.uk](mailto:mira.martin@kent.gov.uk)) and PCSO Pete Gardner (tel: 101, email: [peter.gardner@kent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:peter.gardner@kent.pnn.police.uk)).

**Neighbourhood Watch** – For information about the activities of Neighbourhood Watch in our area contact David Ralph on 01580 891656 or Jacqui Blake, NHW liaison officer at Maidstone police station on 01622 604395 or go to <http://www.maidstonenhw.co.uk>.

**Hire of North & South Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre** - Please contact the Village Centre booking secretary on 07864 547453, e-mail [book@staplehurstvc.org](mailto:book@staplehurstvc.org) or visit <http://www.staplehurstvc.org/> for further information. The Parish Office does not deal with bookings.

**Staplehurst Library** – The library is open between 9.00am and 6.00pm from Tuesday to Friday and between 9.00am and 3.00pm on Saturday.

**Concessions to Library Users** - For people with disabilities or mental health problems KCC offers an exempt card which allows concessionary use of library facilities. For full details go to <http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/libraries/join-the-library> or ask at the library for further information.

**Power Cuts** – For information about preparing for and dealing with power cuts dial 150 to be connected to your local network operator. This number applies wherever you are in the country. Alternatively, in our region go to <http://www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/> or call 0800 31 63 105 (landline) or 0333 32 32 105 (from a mobile).

**Fire Home Safety Services** – Kent Fire and Rescue Service offer free home safety advice and services. Contact them by telephoning 0800 923 7000 or e-mailing [home@kent.fire-uk.org](mailto:home@kent.fire-uk.org).

**Fire Hydrants** – To report any defects of a fire hydrant or its location sign contact the Fire Service on 01622 692121 Ext. 2391 or e-mail [water.services@kent.fire-uk.org](mailto:water.services@kent.fire-uk.org).

**South East Water Metering Programme** – For advice on water meters visit South East Water's website [www.southeastwater.co.uk](http://www.southeastwater.co.uk) or telephone the metering helpline 0333 000 0003.

**Help Scheme to Connect to Mains Gas** – SGN (formerly operating as Southern Gas Networks) is offering discounts to groups of people who wish to connect to mains gas and a support scheme known as 'Help to Heat' to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged residents to do so. For further information go to

<https://www.sgn.co.uk/Our-Services/SGN-Financial-Help/> or telephone SGN on 0800 912 1700.

**Arriva Bus Service:** For timetable enquiries phone 0871 200 22 33, for customer services phone 0344 800 44 11 or contact the company via its website at <https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/contact-us/>.

**Age UK Maidstone:** Maidstone Age UK <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/maidstone/> provides information and advice to support older people, their relatives and carers. Visits can be arranged and telephone advice given. It also provides an advocacy service to become the voice of those unable to handle matters on their own. Telephone 01622 753618 for more information. There is a drop-in service on the first Tuesday of every month at the McCabe Centre from 10.00am until 1.00pm.

**Involve Kent - Brighter Futures:** Involve Kent's community transport and services for older people (formerly known as Brighter Futures) can be contacted by telephone number 01622 235833. Involve Kent's main office number is 01622 677337. More information is available from Involve Kent's website at [www.involvekent.org.uk](http://www.involvekent.org.uk).

**Planning Committee and Full Council Meetings in South Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre from 7.00 p.m.**

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2017 (Planning Committee only)

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017 (Planning Committee followed by Full Council)

The start time of Full Council meetings depends on the length of the Planning Committee meeting agenda. Please check with the Parish Office prior to the meeting for an estimated start time or consult the agendas displayed on the Village Centre noticeboard and the village website: <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/agendas.aspx>.

Mick Westwood, Parish Clerk

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Parish emergency only out of hours contact: 07539 692588

Website: [www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk)

E-mail: [clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk](mailto:clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk)

The Parish Office is open to the public 0900-1300 hrs Mondays to Fridays (except Thursdays by appointment).