

# Village Update

WINTER 2010

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

## STAPLEHURST YOUTH CLUB

SYC, a new Activities Club and Lounge for ages 11-14, sponsored by the Parish Council, is now open 6:30 - 8:30pm on Tuesdays in the Club building (next to the Village Centre). Entrance is free. There's lots on offer - Wii and PS games; pool; table tennis; art and crafts; games; music; movie clips... and more, plus hot chocolate, tea or coffee and biccies. In fine weather, outdoor games will be offered. Youth-interest sessions and trips out will be planned, as decided by Youth Club members and with parental approval. Projects to develop youth skills and service in the community will be considered. SYC is run by Youth Development Worker Mike and a volunteer team (in partnership with

other Youth-friendly agencies). All the Club Team are CRB checked. Mike has 20 years' experience in Youth work and is Home Office

approved. Membership is free, but after initial visits a parent or carer of the young person has to fill in a Permission/Health/Contacts sheet (to be kept by the Club leaders). This is for the safety and wellbeing of members during meetings.

Parish Councillor Paul Butcher has sought and received a £1,000 donation from Golding Homes for the new Youth Club. If you would like to contribute financial help to this commitment for the wellbeing of youth in our village and the ongoing costs of running and developing the building, or for more information about SYC, please contact Paul Butcher tel: **07860 818992**.

## STAPLEHURST SKATE PARK

The Skateboard and BMX equipment in Jubilee Field is used by a large variety of people of all ages and abilities. As with all play equipment, it requires safety checks and maintenance. The Skaters' group recently highlighted that the paintwork was worn and becoming slippery, especially when wet. It was decided that the whole riding surface of the equipment be repainted with special paint called Skatex designed for this type of equipment. Skate Park Solutions, owned by expert in

this field Tony Pill, swiftly carried out the work. Users have confirmed the new surface is much better.

George Heron, Ashlee Carslaw, Tom Sandys, Mike Seal and Stephen Downton, all from Staplehurst, took part in a 10 mile sponsored bike ride from Tonbridge to Penshurst and back to Tonbridge. They raised £275 towards the re-surfacing of the skate park, which they donated to the Parish Council. On behalf of all the Parish Council, Chairman John Perry thanks the Group for their continued impressive fundraising efforts.



# Staplehurst

*Parish Council*

## EMERGENCY PLAN PROGRESS

More volunteers are welcome to join the current group of about 20. In October, 12 members attended a Training Day at Tonbridge. Lauren Rodwell is now the leader and administrator. We are very grateful to her for taking on this important task. The group is working on a plan which has to be accepted and accredited by KCC Emergency Planning Team. All communities, from cities to hamlets, will follow the same government guidelines set following the floods of 2007. Volunteers from one village can thus be called on to help out in

another because everyone has had the same training. Plans are also underway to contribute to Operation Watermark next spring. This is a national exercise in which all communities large and small are invited to join. Volunteers will be needed, both those with special skills and those who can offer what is every bit as important, such as welcoming at rest centres, making tea and giving reassurance. We hope to have more details in the next Update. Meanwhile, if you would like to know more, please contact the Clerk.

## COMMUNITY HUB PROJECT

This good neighbour scheme was designed by Age Concern Maidstone, an independent charity, to reach older citizens who live in rural areas. The aim is to provide a support framework linking all parts of our community to ensure that older people are not overlooked. Staplehurst has been chosen for a pilot scheme; we can decide what would be best for a Staplehurst hub. For example, it has been suggested that this initiative could be linked with the Emergency Planning Group. A recruitment meeting for volunteers will be held on 7th December at 2 p.m. in the Youth Club building next to the Village Centre. Please come with your ideas for making older citizens' lives more enjoyable, safe and entertaining.

## DOG MESS

Dog mess is a health risk, especially to children. Please clean up your dog's mess. Once bagged it is classed as litter and can be put in litter bins. You can report to the Civic Wardens on **01622 602117** any dog owner who doesn't clean up after their dog. The dog owner can face a £50 fixed penalty fine on the spot or, if prosecuted, a hefty fine of up to £1000.

## CHRISTMAS STREET LIGHTS

The festive display of motifs along the High Street and Station Road will be lit 16.00-23.30 then 06.00-08.00 daily during December.

## NEW WEEKLY FOOD WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE

From Monday 31st January 2011, Maidstone Borough Council will collect the black wheelie bins with most household waste fortnightly. Food waste will be collected every week on a resident's usual collection day. Residents will be supplied with a 23 litre caddy, with a lockable lid, to be used for food waste

collections. MBC will also supply each household with a small caddy which can be stored easily on a work surface for food waste; when full, the contents can be transferred to the 23L caddy. Those with shared bins or a black sack collection are not included in the new scheme.

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND STAPLEHURST HOUSING SURVEY

Maidstone Borough Council's policies for future housing targets and development are currently in draft and not available to the public. Staplehurst Parish Council continues to monitor MBC's plans. The Staplehurst Housing Survey was posted to all households on 20th September 2010. It sought parishioners' views on current and future housing, including affordable housing. Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) have had 711 surveys returned and are currently analysing the data. In conjunction with the Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group, a report will be published at the

earliest opportunity. Although too early to highlight any findings, the level of response indicates that the residents of Staplehurst care about their environment and wish to have a say in its future. The results will influence future research and MBC'S public consultation on future housing development scheduled for early 2011. Staplehurst Parish Council thanks all who took the time to complete the Survey.

For more information:

[http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment\\_and\\_planning/planning/local\\_development\\_framework.aspx](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/local_development_framework.aspx)

# CONCURRENT FUNCTIONS

As part of Council tax, a levy known as the Parish Precept is made on residents of parishes, such as Staplehurst, though not on residents of Maidstone Town and unparished areas. Currently it is £31.15 per year on a Band D property in Staplehurst. It enables the Parish Council to carry out work which is similar (though on a much smaller scale) to that carried out by MBC in the town areas. Examples are the maintenance of public areas, playgrounds, street furniture, street lighting and litter picking. To compensate for the additional expenditure incurred at parish level against the savings MBC makes by not having to attend to such items, MBC has for many years provided a grant to parishes called Concurrent Functions. In the current financial year, Staplehurst will receive £29,000 grant from Maidstone Borough Council. As the present Government requires savings to be made by higher authorities, MBC proposes to reduce and eventually cut altogether its grants to parishes. For the next financial year, this would mean the Parish Precept has to be increased by some £14,500 unless the Parish Council also makes cuts in the services it provides. The increase for a Band D property would be about £6.14 in 2011. By 2014 the Parish Precept requirement would have risen by £29,000, adding an additional £12.29 per annum for a Band D property. Based on current figures, the loss of the Concurrent Functions grant would cause a 40% increase in the Parish Precept by 2014 (provided the current Parish Precept does not rise at all). All the rural parishes in the Maidstone Borough Area strongly oppose this. A petition

is being organised and if enough signatures are obtained the proposal will have to be revisited by Maidstone Borough Council: the petition will be on display at key local shops in Staplehurst. In addition representations are being made by the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) and a letter of protest has been sent to MBC signed by all the Staplehurst Parish Councillors. Additionally, MBC has passed the expense of running public toilets to the Parish Council and is planning to charge parishes for organising their public elections. For those on fixed incomes, increases such as this would have a greater detrimental effect. Parishioners face having to pay an increasing parish precept for living in the country, whilst paying more in transport costs to access the infrastructure and services not available locally to them. Staplehurst Parish Council is very keen to see fair play and best value in all its business. SPC will continue to oppose this proposition as vigorously as possible and campaign for a better outcome for the residents of Staplehurst.

## STOP PRESS!

As a result of representations from Parish Councils, Maidstone Borough Council held an extraordinary meeting on 10th November 2010, where it was agreed that further discussions should take place between Maidstone Borough Council and the main interested parties before any reduction in the grant is made. It was recognised that a decision would have to be made by the end of November.

# STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2011

All fifteen seats of Staplehurst Parish Council will be up for election in May 2011. If you would like to find out whether you are eligible to stand for election and, if elected, help make decisions about our community, please contact the Parish Clerk for details. Information

about Staplehurst Parish Council is displayed on its website at [www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk) Local electors or members of the public are encouraged to attend and listen to any Parish Council meeting. Opportunities to speak are routinely given before and after all meetings.

# BELL LANE PLANTERS

You may have noticed two concrete drainage pipes on the grass verges outside the Bell Lane car park and toilets. These have been purchased and installed by the Parish Council. The cost has been kept to a minimum by careful purchasing and with all the hard spade work, painting and planting-up being done by councillors, ably assisted by Max Kelly. We hope to keep a fresh and attractive display all year round. Sponsors will be welcomed!



# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

First, we welcome Deborah Jenkins to our team at Staplehurst in the part-time post of Assistant to the Parish Clerk. As Clerk to Frittenden Parish Council, she is familiar with many of the issues we deal with. We have recently met with representatives from MBC to discuss the possibility of introducing an alcohol control zone in Staplehurst. There are a number of issues that would need to be addressed and we recognise that there may be other options. MBC has undertaken to come back to us shortly with ideas on what it considers would be best for Staplehurst. Finding a suitable site for allotments is proving to be extremely difficult. All possible options are being considered. The Bell Lane public toilets have been successfully taken over by Staplehurst Parish Council

and our next aim is to make the area more attractive with two year-round floral displays in planters. Finally, you will see from the article on concurrent functions that there is a very real danger this grant will eventually go. If this happens many rural parishes in the Maidstone Borough will be seriously affected and parish precepts might have to increase significantly. Therefore along with all the other rural parishes we shall oppose this as strongly as possible. We recognise that Maidstone Borough Council is in a difficult position, but we consider that the proposal as currently drafted is unfair to rural parishes. Hopefully Maidstone Borough Council will recognise this and a more equitable solution will be found.

John Perry

## STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

### REMAINING STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS IN 2010

Planning Committee – 7pm Full Council (Amenities) – 8pm	Planning Committee – 7pm Full Council – 8pm
Monday 06 December	Monday 20 December

Local electors and the press have a right to listen to Parish Council Meetings, but not to take part. At the beginning and after the closure of the Parish Council Meeting, the Chairman will invite members of the public to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes each relating to issues on the Agenda or about issues of local concern. You are requested to state your name and address prior to speaking. The Parish Council as a planning consultee makes recommendations to Maidstone Borough Council, which makes the decision. All meetings are held in the South Hall, Village Centre.

### STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS IN 2011

Planning Committee – 7pm Full Council (Amenities) – 8pm	Planning Committee – 7pm Full Council – 8pm
Tuesday 04 January Monday 07 February Monday 07 March Monday 04 April	Monday 17 January Monday 21 February Monday 21 March Monday 18 April

### ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 11 April 2011 8pm

Tuesday 03 May	Monday 16 May – Annual Council Meeting
Monday 06 June	Monday 20 June
Monday 04 July	Monday 18 July
Monday 01 August	Monday 15 August
Monday 05 September	Monday 19 September
Monday 03 October	Monday 17 October
Monday 07 November	Monday 21 November
Monday 05 December	Monday 19 December

## Parish Council Information

### COUNCILLORS

John Perry (Chairman)  
Tom Burnham (Vice Chairman)  
Margaret Arger (Chairman of Planning)  
Bill Best  
Joan Buller  
Paul Butcher  
Jenny Fairfax  
Jim Frodsham  
John Kelly  
Paul Kelly  
Roger Munn  
John Reardon  
Matt Sankey  
Rory Silkin  
Peter Spearink

### CLERK

Mrs Sue Bassett

### ASSISTANT to CLERK

Mrs Deborah Jenkins

### Address:

The Parish Office  
Village Centre, High Street  
Staplehurst TN12 0BJ  
Email: [staplehurst1@btconnect.com](mailto:staplehurst1@btconnect.com)  
Tel: 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.