

Village Update

AUTUMN 2011

www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

VEG GROUP

The Toilet Team on the Parish Council has been upgraded to the Village Enhancement Group; VEG for short. This group of councillors will take on projects to improve services and our local environment, seeing them to fruition. We hope you have seen that we are not only managing the Bell Lane Toilets successfully, but have made many improvements. The disabled toilet at the Parade could be next. The planters in Bell Lane are delighting us all and we are now looking to select other suitable sites in the parish. Litter is a continual problem. We are now employing the services of a local mini-Scarab Sweeper which can be seen out and about. Have you spotted it yet? As well as roads and paths, bus shelters are being given a regular clean. You can do your part by keeping the boundary of your property tidy and maybe the footpath outside. We know that you didn't drop the litter, but let's try to make Staplehurst litter free! When an area is looked after it usually stays clean; when areas are neglected then people add to it! Our band of volunteer litter pickers and caretaker need your support. Watch out for the VEG group in action!



PLAYSCHEME

PlayPlace together with the Parish Council have run a very successful playscheme. The play manager, Gail, and her team have provided a safe and happy environment with plenty of fun! Councillors have visited the scheme on several occasions. Thank you to all the Team and to the school for the use of their excellent facilities.

TREE WARDEN

Ron Ribbens has been the tree warden for Staplehurst for many years, but due to health issues has recently had to retire. We would like to thank him for all his efforts and expertise during his time in this position. The Parish Council is now looking for a replacement for this interesting voluntary work. If you are interested in filling this role please contact the Clerk.

QUEEN'S JUBILEE 2012

At the public meeting on July 19th a steering group was formed to organise the major events for Staplehurst's celebrations. There is now a section on our website in the Local Information area for anyone to submit news of their plans and see what other groups are doing. Please read this page and email to jubilee@btinternet.com Let's get celebrating!

Staplehurst

Parish Council

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR COMPETITION 2011

Excellent photographs are being placed on Facebook etc., but it would be really great if photographs were also submitted to the Village Website. Here's a fantastic opportunity for you!

The 'Staplehurst Seasons' competition will highlight the Photo Gallery on the Village Website. Photographs submitted will hopefully form part of the Staplehurst Website Calendar in 2012. The competition is open to all ages. Photographs must have been taken within the Parish of Staplehurst in 2011. Entrants may submit up to 5 digital images and must be willing to have their image displayed on the Website. The deadline is 1st December 2011.

The Judges' Panel of 3 notable photographers living in Staplehurst will select photographs which capture seasonal life. The top 10 photographs will be displayed in the Village Hall on Monday 19th December 2011, where final judging will take place. The winner will be presented with a new Cannon 1100D digital SLR camera or price equivalent model or cash vouchers up to £300, together with a Certificate.

See www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/image_gallery for competition details and rules or with enquiries please email councillor.johnkelly@gmail.com or phone on 07771 545095.

DRAFT CORE STRATEGY FOR MAIDSTONE BOROUGH

The draft Core Strategy document finally went before Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Cabinet on 10th August 2011 and it was agreed that public consultation could now take place. The next stage in the process will be Public Participation, which involves a six weeks' consultation period beginning on 2nd September 2011. MBC have agreed to hold a consultation meeting in Staplehurst on 14th September 2011 (time and venue to be confirmed).

The Development Delivery will deal with land allocations for residential and non-residential development,

development management policies, environmental designations and village boundaries, among other topics. Work on this will follow promptly after the adoption of the Core Strategy, expected in late 2012/early 2013.

Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group plans to facilitate public consultation within the Village, using various methods of communication. In the meantime, the Group continues to work on the draft Staplehurst Plan, whilst awaiting feedback from MBC on the draft Development Contributions Document. So watch this space!

PLANNING A NEW BUILDING?

Some questions to ask:-

- Have I researched what I really need?
- Will it blend into the surrounding area?
- Will my neighbours be affected?
- Am I altering a listed building?
- Can I talk to a Planning Officer at Maidstone Borough Council?
- Would a specialist advise on my proposals and draw up plans?
- Am I happy to apply for planning permission?

ENFORCEMENT

If any local residents become aware of development that does not have planning permission (planning applications and decisions can now be checked on MBC's website <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/swifltg/apas/run/wphappcriteria.display>) then please notify the details to the Principal Planning Officer, Peter Hockney Tel: 01622 602547 or peterhockney@maidstone.gov.uk. Your query will be investigated, but enforcement action will only be taken if considered expedient to do so.

UPROCKIN AT JUBILEE FIELD

The Uprockin event at the Jubilee Field skatepark on Saturday 16th July was sadly a victim of steady rain. Despite valiant efforts with mops, the skateboarding, BMX bike and random wheel competition had to be called off, disappointing the young people from near and far who had braved the wet weather. Supported by Maidstone Borough Council and with a range of sponsors, the event followed a similar one held in Maidstone. Many

Staplehurst residents helped on the site, the footballers' changing rooms were open for toilets and the Guides provided refreshment from the Kathy Lamb Centre. Among the stalls was a joint one by British Cycling and the San Fairy Ann Cycling Club, who are using the Field for cycle training and grass track bike racing. Although frustrated, the organisers recognise the excellent potential of Jubilee Field for community-based events.



STAPLEHURST EMERGENCY HELP TEAM

Since the major fire in the High Street well over a year ago, members of the SEHT have been working to create a Local Emergency Plan. When in place, this will strengthen contacts with the Emergency Services and provide a framework to enable local people to help one another in a crisis. Some members of the SEHT are undertaking Rest Centre Training to provide a place of safety should another crisis occur in Staplehurst. A telephone tree of volunteers has also been set up and tested. In the first trial-run eleven people were contacted who could have turned up to help in a crisis. Further tests are planned. SEHT's work is also to encourage local residents to come forward to volunteer their time, equipment or expertise in whatever way they wish. A confidential spreadsheet of information is being added to and will only be used in the case of an emergency or annual updating. If you have yet to

volunteer, please go to the Emergency Help Team page on the Parish Council Website at http://staplehurstvillage.org.uk/emergency_planning_team.aspx where a form can be downloaded for sending into the Parish Office. Full details of all meetings are also available there.

In the coming months the SEHT hopes to have a "live" practice run of its ability to respond to a crisis. Working with Kent County Council Emergency Team, the SEHT will be given a crisis scenario to deal with to see how it copes. For this we will need willing volunteers to act the part of residents who have been displaced from their homes, requiring shelter or other personal needs. A cross-section of residents will be welcome and the greater variety of people the better. So if you would like to spend an interesting time being looked after in a Community Shelter, please let the Parish Clerk know.

CHURCH GREEN

The Parish Council recognise that Church Green is an important green space in the village and it is highly valued by local people. We are committed to its preservation as a public open space and would strenuously resist any attempt to develop it. We have decided not to pursue the option of applying for its registration as a Village Green, nor to lease it from its owners Golding Homes. Village Green registration is a very time consuming task and although we feel

confident that the Green would meet the criteria, we no longer feel it needs protection in this way. This is partly because of the willingness of Golding Homes to lease it to us for 25 years which they would have been very unlikely to do if they considered it had any development potential. In addition a lease would make the Parish Council responsible not only for day to day maintenance, but also for any unforeseen major costs arising from, for example, squatters or major rubbish dumping. We have advised Golding Homes that we would be open to working with them on the management or enhancement of the Green although we have no specific proposals in mind.

KENT HIGHWAYS SUMMER MEETING

In June a meeting was held between Staplehurst Parish Council and Kent Highways; hopefully to be repeated every six months to allow Highways to gain an understanding as to what the Parish feels should be a priority. As we are all aware of parking issues and the Council is aware of an impending survey by MBC; that was left off of the agenda. Points discussed were:-

- * **Overhanging vegetation.** Where paths are impassable to parents and buggies, Highways can complete any work and charge the owners retrospectively if local requests to remove growth go ignored.
- * **Illegal parking.** If the Parish identifies an ongoing issue they can request MBC Enforcement pay regular visits.
- * **Crossing on High Street outside Vine House.** Highways have completed a survey of this area and confirmed that they will not entertain a crossing at this point. The road narrows to such an extent that it would be dangerous to road users, especially when buses are stopped. The most southerly crossing point in the village is outside the chemist in the Parade; not ideal, but no other option is currently feasible.
- * **Road markings.** The Parish Council has been

highlighting the worn-out state of the lane markings on the High Street, Marden Road junction. The good news is that these lines have now been renewed.

Full meeting notes are on the Parish website on the Reports' page. We are always keen to hear from parishioners if they have a query on Highways issues. Please pass any information to any councillors or the Clerk.

BUS SHELTERS

Late in 2010 the Parish Council with the aid of a grant upgraded two bus shelters with side panels. These were on the A229 opposite the two petrol stations. After good feedback it has been decided to upgrade a further two shelters. These are again in the High Street; outside Vine House and near Cornforth Close. A quote for the work has been requested and it is hoped the work will be completed soon.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Since May this year we have had a new Council with 14 Councillors elected unopposed. This meant that to fill the remaining vacancy we needed to co-opt a candidate. I am delighted to welcome Sam Lain who I believe is the youngest Councillor in the County. Sadly we have already lost one Councillor, Steve Smith, who has had to resign for personal reasons. I should like to thank her for the contributions she has made and wish her all the very best for the future.

The Council takes the view that it should take a proactive approach to the provision of services. We shall continue to monitor our finances closely with the aim of meeting local needs and improving the quality of life in the Parish. With this in mind we have set up a Village Enhancement Group. This Group will see projects to completion which are aimed at specifically enhancing the village. Current projects under consideration include provision of additional salt bins, expansion of the planters and improving the signage in the Village. We have successfully taken over the running of the Bell Lane Toilets and we have now taken on the street cleaning.

We believe that the concept of "Localism" may provide further opportunities to provide essential services more cost effectively at a local level. One area to explore is working with neighbouring parishes in "clusters" to provide services. It is our intention to meet with other parishes to discuss these ideas.

Finally, there are a few areas that I would wish to highlight. First, we have now successfully completed the drainage work at Jubilee Field. This was funded by the Parish Council and managed by the Jubilee Field Management Group. Jubilee Field is a very important parish facility and this will now mean that it should be available for use throughout the winter period. Second, we had planned to hold an event at the Skatepark in July this year titled Uprockin. Sadly, we seemed to have picked the worst day in the year weather-wise and the event had to be cancelled. The Skatepark is an extremely popular facility and I want to thank all those who put a lot of time and effort into organising this event. The work put in was not wasted and Uprockin is hopefully happening next year.

The Council welcomes any feedback from residents on any issues of concern.

John Perry

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Planning Committee 7pm and Full Council 8pm (or earlier if Planning Agenda is short) on first and third Mondays monthly. Contact the Clerk for details. Please refer to www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/agendas.aspx

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.

Salt Bins

The Parish Council is planning to provide more salt bins. We are now asking residents to suggest sites where there is a real need. The Council will consider these, making the final decision. Please contact the Parish Clerk with your detailed requests.

Parish Council Information

COUNCILLORS

John Perry (Chairman)
Tom Burnham (Joint Vice Chairman)
Paul Kelly (Joint Vice Chairman)
Paul Butcher (Chairman of Planning)
Margaret Ashby
Joan Buller
Jack Davidson
Simon Green
John Kelly
Sam Lain
Barrett Manning
John Reardon
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: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Tel: 01580 891761

Opening hours: 9am to 1pm Mondays
to Fridays, except on Thursdays when
it is by appointment.

COUNCIL AND POLICE SURGERIES AT THE LIBRARY

Borough Councillor Lusty holds a
Council Surgery at the Library on
the last Saturday of each month from
10am to noon.

Police Community Support Officer
Pete Gardner will be attending
Surgeries at Staplehurst Library
on the following dates. Any Police
related issues or concerns can be
discussed with him in confidence
on these dates.

Saturday 8th October 2011

12 noon to 13:00 hrs

Saturday 19th November 2011

12 noon to 13:00 hrs

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