

STAPLEHURST EMERGENCY HELP TEAM



Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14th September 2016 at The Free Church, Staplehurst

Present: Andrew Watson (Chair) Rob Wiles (Kent Resilience Forum- KRF)
Sue Bassett Bill Piper
Margaret Friswell Mira Martin
Diane Buch Barbara Keel
Bob Howse Peter Spearink
Jason Bardell

1. Apologies: Joan Buller, Peter Jeffery

Andrew welcomed everyone to the meeting.

He apologized for "dragging his heels" because of family events, and he thanked Sue for her support.

Peter Spearink informed the meeting of the recent death of Councillor Paul Butcher, a co-founder of SEHT. Paul always had Staplehurst at heart.

2. The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and signed.

3. Matters Arising:

Andrew has written to Eric Hotson in thanks for his financial contribution to the kit bags. Sue said that the Parish Council would make up any shortfall.

The second equipment bag was then presented by Rob Wiles. It will be stored, until further notice, in the upstairs spare kitchen at the Free Church.

SEHT's Whatsapp list is now in operation. Members contacted this way have all responded.

4. The Vulnerable Residents Policy: Initial ideas were presented by Andrew. A more detailed draft is attached.

Local groups to be contacted should include the McCabe Centre (Agreed). Andrew felt it should be done in the autumn.

Rob said that it is important to stress the privacy of individuals and recommended a light approach. He also reminded us that we would be working in parallel with public services such as the power companies.

It was agreed that our plans should be advertised and that relevant organizations (such as churches and societies) should be approached.

It was also agreed that advertising and a form should be inserted in the next Village Update. The form should be returnable to the Parish Office.

Mira suggested that, in her role, she is an appropriate person to make contact with residents, and that could be included in the advertising.

It was agreed that progress would be discussed at the post-exercise debriefing meeting.

5.1 KRF Exercise (27 September) There was brief discussion of participation.

5.2 SEHT Exercise (8th October) Andrew said that plans are in hand for the exercise. All members should have their badges to hand.

Bill reminded members without badges to provide Sue with a passport photograph.

It was agreed to hold a debriefing meeting on Wednesday 12th October. This will be upstairs in the Parish Centre.

6. Information Update:

6.1. Andrew shall attend the Flood Warden seminar on 12 November. It was noted that response to this county-wide has been relatively poor, perhaps reflecting lower rainfall.

6.2. Rob presented booklets from the KRF: "What should I Do in an Emergency?" All team members should get one from Sue.

6.3 Rob Wiles:

- There is now a telephone number to report power outages: **105**
- A research paper by Professor Duncan Shaw on spontaneous volunteering is available on-line. [See Warwick Uni.]
- In an emergency event in our area, people volunteering spontaneously will be referred by KRF to SEHT.
- SEHT will now be included on a county website listing all emergency groups and responders.

7. Other Business:

7.1 Andrew: Bill asked about the Emergency Phone and reliable access to the tree. There was a discussion on the use of call-diversions by the phone company. Rob added that KRF has a copy of SEHT's telephone Tree.

Agenda Item: To review the current system of contact.

Date of Next Meetings: Wed 12 October 7:30 at Parish Centre: Exercise Review.
Wed 14 December 7:30 at Free Church.

SEHT

Promoting the 'Register for Prolonged Inclement Conditions'

The following paragraphs are intended to be either read, or paraphrased, when a SEHT volunteer addresses a local group to increase the awareness of the register (note the somewhat cumbersome avoidance of using the 'V' word)

Recalling the problems some of us might remember in the winter of 63 – when it snowed for months, and times in the '70s when there were shortages of almost everything from bread to fuel to toilet rolls – people looked out for their friends, relatives, and neighbours to make sure that they were OK.

But that was over 40 years ago, and things have changed. In most families, housewives are a thing of the past – today both parents have to work to pay the bills – and the sad truth is that many of us have no idea who our neighbours are.

So, should the inclement weather, or prolonged periods of civil unrest return – and statisticians would argue it's not a case of 'if', but 'when' – would our neighbours be 'looked out for' as they might have been in yesteryear ?

Our Emergency Help Team was set up in the wake of the Post Office fire, when the ladies of the WI realised that the firefighters, who were dousing the building for hours, might be in need of a bit of sustenance – and they set to, producing tea and sandwiches.

Over the last year, our group of volunteers have been pondering the 'what ifs' – such as 'what if a group of refugees arrived to camp on the Surrenden Field – what would we do ?' – and one such scenario (a more inevitable one than most) is prolonged power-outs, freezing weather.

How should we prepare for this ? – Lots of villagers no longer able to get out of their houses, possibly for days.

Who is likely to be affected ? – as a group, we had no idea.

So, if anyone has any concerns about how they would get out of their house in the event of a prolonged power cut, get some food in if it snows for weeks, they can add their details to a register which we hold securely in the safe in the Parish Office.

As soon as it becomes clear that the situation requires it, you will receive either a 'phone call from a volunteer, or a knock on the door, to see if all is OK.

Can you rely on your neighbour being at home when you need them – most people go on holiday for a couple of weeks. What if the power does go off as it did over Christmas three years ago – some houses were without power for a week.

To have your name added to the register, simply contact the Parish Office, or SEHT Chairman Andrew Watson (whose contact details are always in the KM – the village's 'Local Column'), and either Andrew, a SEHT volunteer, or (if you prefer) our Community Warden Mira Martin will visit you to take your details, and hear your concerns.

To finish, as we are always looking for volunteers, may I take this opportunity to invite any and all of you to join our group. There is no need to attend meetings, although everyone is always welcome to, or be involved in the annual two-hour training exercise – what we need are people we can rely on to turn out in the event of a problem arising, and we need to house people in a 'shelter' for possibly 24 hours – and to provide them with warmth, food and drink. Thank you.