

Staplehurst Parish Council ANNUAL REPORT 2017 - 2018



Chairman's Annual Report 2017-2018

Some of the work of the Parish Council during the past year has generated improvements which are plain to see – for example the great improvements at the Wimpey Field since we took it over, aimed at ensuring that all our residents can appreciate the wildlife there, the all-weather path across the school end of the Surrenden Field, meeting a long-felt need, and the car park extension at Jubilee Field which avoids the need to park in front of the gates when they are closed.



However, there have been many less obvious areas of activity. For example, since the Staplehurst Sub-Branch of the British Legion had to disband, we have taken on organising the road closures and marshalling for the annual Remembrance Sunday parade from the Village Centre to the Parish Church.

Parish councillors often represent the council and local residents at meetings of the MBC planning committee or at planning appeal hearings. This can feel frustrating when we feel that our comments are being ignored, but on occasion the points we have raised have made a crucial difference, and even when we have not managed to carry the day residents have thanked us for putting their views forward.

We have developed our relationship with the Community Payback service, who has worked particularly at the Wimpey Field, the Jubilee Field and the Churchyard, and we thank Councillors Spearink and Riordan who have been the main points of contact. You might expect that people working under compulsion would do the minimum, but in our experience they have mostly worked well and are pleased to be achieving a visible improvement. The Community Payback manager for the area has commented “how beneficial it is for ourselves to work with a proactive Parish Council such as yourselves, and I hope we will be able to continue our partnership as long as you need us.”

We trialled weekly Parish Council surgeries at the Library for a year but found a marked decrease in numbers attending. We have now returned to holding monthly surgeries jointly with Borough Councillor Perry, and where possible with PCSO Gardner as well.

I should like to thank all those who have served as parish councillors during the past year. All are unpaid volunteers, and many have far exceeded their obligations. In this respect the Parish Council is no

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different from many other local organisations, which rely on volunteers giving their time to create the range of activities which we enjoy. As new housing developments are built over the next few years, the challenge for Staplehurst will be to welcome our new residents and to involve them in the life of our community.

We thanked Laurence Whittle and Anne Gosling for their contributions on their resignation, and welcomed Elaine Symes as a new parish councillor. We thank Borough Councillors John Perry and Louise Brice, who worked hard to ensure that Staplehurst is not overlooked in Maidstone, County Councillor Eric Hotson, PCSO Peter Gardner and Community Warden Mira Martin. Our thanks are also due to our parish clerk Mick Westwood and his staff, Deborah Jenkins and Jean Terry. Les Reeve, our village caretaker, retired in December after some years of very valuable service, and Paul Nyahwa is proving a worthy successor.

Tom Burnham

Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31st March 2018

INCOME

Parish Precept	139,400.00
MBC Parish Services Grant	9,335.00
MBC S106/CIL Grant (<i>Jubilee Field car park, Surrenden Field drainage & footpath, Youth Club benches, path & bridge</i>)	25,711.50
Other Income (<i>VCT bin, HMRC, Legal fees, electricity, JFMC insurance refunds & rent</i>)	620.75
KCC Grants (<i>Wimpey Field path</i>)	500.00
Other Grants & Donations (<i>Wimpey Field Trees & Benches & Bioblitz event</i>)	3,235.00
SPC Bank Interest	39.53
VCMC Bonus Saver Interest	0.52
Christmas Light Donations	246.40
Third Party Funds - Warden Men's Shed Project	200.00
TOTAL INCOME	<u>179,288.70</u>

EXPENDITURE

General Administration (<i>Parish Office staff, utilities, equipment, insurance, subscriptions, training, meetings & travel, publicity & website</i>)	91,045.82
Office Equipment	5,416.60
Donations	2,235.00
Street Lighting, furniture, repairs, planters & caretaker	6,697.68
Playscheme	1,575.18
Jubilee Sports Field & Skatepark Maintenance	17,828.98
Youth Club (<i>Site maintenance, KCC Lease/Purchase & Youth Worker</i>)	9,046.50
Surrenden Playing Field & Trees	19,001.08
Churchyard Maintenance	5,166.99
Christmas Lights	1,704.26
Professional Consultant Fees	3,478.00
Public Convenience maintenance	8,474.89
Street Sweeping	9,711.00
Wimpey Field Maintenance (<i>Footpath, trees & bulbs, mowing, Bioblitz event, benches, Legal tfr costs</i>)	12,336.27
Local Government Pension Scheme	6,900.00
SEHT	46.99
Third Party Reserve Fund - Youth Club	169.39
Third Party Reserve Fund - Men's Shed	400.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>201,234.63</u>

Balance of Income/Expenditure	-21,945.93
Balance brought forward from previous year	<u>152,427.86</u>
	<u>130,481.93</u>

The above Income & Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet with Supporting Statement are (at the time of printing) subject to Council approval, internal and external audit. Staplehurst Parish Council accounts are audited quarterly by Iden Business Services and the Annual Audit Return is made to Littlejohn LLP, Chartered Accountants. In accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the dates set for the period of exercise of public rights commence on Monday 4th June 2018 and end on Friday 13th July 2018.

Balance Sheet

as at 31st March 2018

LONG TERM ASSETS

None (see supporting statement below) 0.00

CURRENT ASSETS

VAT Recoverable	2,366.98	
Cash in hand	130,220.92	
		132,587.90

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accruals	(0.00)	
Creditors (unpresented cheques)	(2,105.97)	
		130,481.93

REPRESENTED BY:-

GENERAL FUND 58,085.23

Ongoing Project Budgets:

Allotment land purchase fund	10,000.00	
Fund for Outside Works	10,000.00	
Surrenden Playing Field Project	16,500.00	
Wimpey Field	12,572.57	
Balance c/fwd for future budget	22,003.86	
		71,076.43

RESERVES (held on behalf of others)

Rural Warden Alcohol Project	900.00	
Rural Warden Winter Project	53.83	
Rural Warden Youth Club Project	366.44	
		1,320.27
		130,481.93

Supporting Statement to the Accounts

LONG TERM ASSETS

Assets have been treated as an expense item at the time of purchase for accounting purposes.
As at 31.03.2018 the following assets were held:

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Jubilee Field (Freehold)	0.00
Land between west side of High Street & Chestnut Avenue (Freehold)	0.00
Land north east of Bell Lane (Freehold)	0.00
Land south side of Marden Road, opposite North Down (Freehold)	1.00
Lease/purchase of Youth Club land from KCC	10,800.00
Wimpey Field (Freehold)	0.00

BUILDINGS (insured replacement values)

Sectional Building (Surrenden Pavilion)	9,067.02
Jubilee Pavilion	633,879.35
Public Convenience - Bell Lane	86,578.64

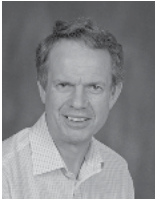
OTHER ASSETS (insured replacement value)

As listed on the Asset Register 31.03.2018 held at the Parish Office 296,827.37

LEASES - As at 31st March 2018 the following Leases were in operation:-

Lessor	Purpose	Rent	Expiry
Maidstone Borough Council	Bell Lane Toilets	Peppercorn	2028
Maidstone Borough Council	Surrenden Playing Field	80.00	2019
Kent County Council	Youth Club Land Lease & Purchase	850.00	2050
Staplehurst Parish Council	Jubilee Field Management	5.00	2035
Trustees of Jubilee	Field Lease of land for Guide Centre	5.00	2088

Parish Councillors



Tom Burnham – *Chairman*

I took over as Chairman of the Parish Council from Councillor Silkin in July, and would like to thank him for his contribution in that role. I should also like to thank Councillor Sharp for succeeding me as Chairman of the Planning Committee. I have tried to keep in touch with the full range of Parish Council activities, but I have been particularly involved with the Neighbourhood Plan Review Group, the Communications Group, the Station Redevelopment Group, the Library Users' Group and the Churchyard Liaison Group, as well as helping Councillor Buller organise our volunteer litter picks in September and March.

Patrick Riordan – *Vice Chairman*

This will be the second year that I have represented the Parish Council as Vice Chairman. I am also Chairman of The Jubilee Field Management Committee, and member of Communications Group, Community Engagement Group and Planning Committee. I also assist with The Wimpey Field and Community Payback Services. We have managed to develop the Jubilee Field somewhat, making several small improvements and maintenance projects are ongoing. We have installed a 24-hour car parking area for users of the facility whilst the main carpark is closed. A working group has been put together to further develop the sports facilities and social facilities at the field and a first meeting is due shortly. I represented the Parish Council and the Jubilee Field management committee on the Staplehurst family fireworks group this year. The event was considered to be a huge success and we hope to improve again this year. Many things are in the pipeline for our village, several are hard to achieve however we will continue to work towards our goals.



Margaret Ashby

I have been a councillor and member of the planning committee now for seven years and the issues have been unrelenting, the last year being no exception. I am regular at the council's surgery in the library and it has always been an interesting time listening to members of the public's comments. Work as a trustee of the village centre continues and we hope you will all enjoy the decorative works and improvements. As a member of the Communications group I look forward to the new web site going live and hope the village finds all the new information and links helpful.

Joan Buller BEM

I have had another busy year serving on the Parish Council Planning Committee and representing their views at MBC meetings. I have continued to organise, with my excellent band of volunteers, the distribution of the Village Update and Annual Report. With Councillor Burnham I have organised our twice a year Clean-Ups and I continue litter-picking throughout the year, as do many other residents. Thank you! I am also active in the Speed Watch, Play Scheme, Neighbourhood Plan Review, Staff and Community Enhancement Groups. I am also working with colleagues to try to achieve improvements to our Station area, as promoted in our Neighbourhood Plan. I have now served for 35 years on the council; Staplehurst is very special to me.



Parish Councillors

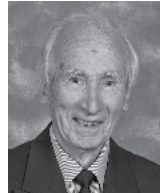


Sam Lain-Rose

It has been an interesting year this year. I am proud to be the Lead Councillor for the Employment Group and the Chair of the newly created Community Enhancement Group. Since April 2017 there have been exciting projects that I have been involved in, including the Parade improvements, which are still ongoing, the introduction of the new website and the improvements to the Council's operation. A key example was that over the past 12 months, I have assisted my colleagues in streamlining the amount of Council groups to a more manageable and effective size and we now have 5 key Groups – Communications Group, Community Enhancement Group, Employment Group, Finance & Strategy Group and Neighbourhood Plan Review Group.

Barrett Manning

In the past 12 months I have been involved with the Parish/Police Liaison Group where there has been a fresh appraisal of the role and duties of the PCSO. Five new volunteers have been trained and a further three are under training. The old Carnival & Fete Committee has changed its title to Staplehurst Community Events Group (SCEG) as the carnival is no longer part of the event. It granted over £5000 to deserving causes and has the support of the parish council. The Staplehurst Library Users Group (SLUG) continues to be active and is among the top four in Kent for service. As the Staplehurst branch of the British Legion has folded, the Staplehurst Remembrance Day Group intends to mark the occasion annually. They are arranging a special parade and service this year to commemorate the 100th anniversary of WW1. Wimpey Field Nature Park has seen many improvements during the year and remains a popular nature reserve. Tarmac paths have been laid to allow the disabled and parents with push chairs to enjoy all-round access. A thousand bulbs and many trees have been planted by volunteers. I represent the parish on the Hawkhurst Transport Accessibility Group who meet bi-monthly with representatives from 14 parishes with representatives from Arriva, Stagecoach and KCC in attendance. Arriva are preparing a new timetable for the No 5 bus route which will include an additional early morning service to Maidstone. Arriva and Stagecoach have joined forces to create a Sunday No 5 service to Hastings via a link at Hawkhurst.



John Perry

I continue to take a keen interest in the financial affairs of the Parish Council and for some time I have overseen the audit and internal controls of the Council and regularly meet with the Council's Internal Auditor. I am also an active member of the Finance and Strategy Group. Right from the beginning I have been actively involved in the development of a Neighbourhood Plan and I am a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Review Group. As a Borough Councillor I have continually challenged the Borough's Local Plan, especially regarding overdevelopment in rural areas and the lack of supporting infrastructure.

John Reardon

I have been a member of the Parish Council for 13 years now. Work commitments (24/7 work pattern) mean I miss some Parish Council meetings but I continue to work with other Parish Councillors for the benefit of the Parish. I attend meetings with KCC Highways to discuss issues reported. I also assist a small group in improving Surrenden Field. Managing the Parish web site and Facebook page continues to be demanding as more and more embrace social media. I also edit both the Village Updates and Annual Report that are delivered to every household in the Parish.



Parish Councillors



Adele Sharp

I continue to be heartened over the community spirit in Staplehurst. We even made it onto the news during the snow earlier this year, as people helped each other up and down the hill. Well done Staplehurst. I know there are many areas for improvement, which can be achieved by us tackling them together. For my part I continue to attend the various committee groups I am on to try and help that drive forward. An important role at present is as chair of planning and I continue to work hard as a trustee of the Village Centre. I remain committed to doing my best for the residents of our community in Staplehurst.

Rory Silkin

I chaired Parish Council and retired in August 2017, to be succeeded by Tom Burnham. I was a member of the Finance and Strategy Groups which have now usefully been amalgamated into the Finance and Strategy Group. I have also been a member of the Planning Committee, always the most active committee, and I am also on the Employment Group. I am a representative of the Council at Maidstone Area meetings of the Kent Association of Local Councils. I chair the Trustees of the Friends of the Staplehurst Health Centre. Lastly, I am a Council nominated trustee of the Village Centre and I organised the adoption of the VC's (very) recent new constitution.



Gill Smith

Having completed my first year as a Parish Councillor, I have gained a greater understanding of the procedures and legal structures involved with the role. I continue to be a member of the Planning Committee – an interesting role where we try to balance the requirement to support both individual planning applications for private housing improvements and the expansion of local businesses, whilst trying to prevent unauthorised and unwelcome developments. I have been involved with drawing up plans for this year's Playscheme, and continue to be a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Review Group. I am also a member of the Station Regeneration Group, trying to liaise with the various stakeholders with the aim of improving both the facilities and appearance of the station area. I have recently joined the Community Enhancement Group and Employment Group, to contribute to developing the amenities and resources available to Staplehurst residents.

Elaine Symes

I joined Staplehurst Parish Council in March 2018; my reason for joining the Council is to make a positive input to improve the lives of residents of Staplehurst. My particular interests are in improving urban and rural safety and the local environment for residents. I hope to be involved with local crime analysis and initiatives to reduce the overall level of crime by prevention, education and rural intelligence initiatives. I am a member of Staplehurst Neighbourhood Watch and started the Staplehurst Fields Of Vision Group. I would like to support existing groups for the elderly and the vulnerable to ensure we look after these valuable elements of our community.



The views expressed are those of individual councillors.

Parish Councillors

During the period of this report Councillors Whittle and Gosling have resigned. We thank them both for their contributions to the Parish Council and the community. Councillor Gosling was particularly involved in the Neighbourhood Plan, the Village Centre Development Group and links with the Primary School. We are pleased that Laurence Whittle will continue as our representative on the Diagrit Sports Field Committee. We wish them both well for their futures. (In mid-April 2018, Councillors Spearink and Claridge also resigned.)

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Rewind to the end of 2016: "So what are you going to do with your time now that the Neighbourhood Plan has been completed?" Thinking about that question, asked of me on more than one occasion, now brings a wry smile. The workload for the Parish Office has increased and continues to do so.

The Parish Office is a principal point of contact with the Parish Council, whether by telephone, letter, e-mail or personal visit. There are opportunities to speak directly to councillors at the Saturday morning surgery at the library (last Saturday every month between 10.00am and 12.00pm) and the public forum at every parish council meeting. However, it is through the office that we receive the fullest range of contacts.

A key function of the Parish Office is to support the Parish Council and the volunteers you elect as councillors and unpaid public servants. I use the word 'elect' cautiously because Staplehurst has not seen a contested Parish Council election for some years. The next election is scheduled for May 2019 – food for thought?

The Parish Office's support covers a wide range of activities. We organise the meetings held by planning committee and full council on 24 evenings during the year, which also involves preparing reports and agendas, attending and minuting the meeting and following up the decisions. We arrange and attend many meetings with third parties such as contractors, developers, agencies and other local authorities. We monitor planning activity in the parish, manage delivery of parish council services, advise the parish council on regulatory issues and manage the parish council's finances and banking arrangements. We also arrange events, manage incoming and outgoing correspondence and handle residents' enquiries received by telephone, by mail or in person; these enquiries cover a very wide range of subjects, sometimes well beyond the Parish Council's remit but we still try to help!

Four letters on many a local government lip in 2018 are GDPR: General Data Protection Regulations. The new regulations effective from 25th May 2018 are creating a lot of work for organisations, as they review their policies and procedures; they are also providing income opportunities for consultants eager to share their knowledge - at a price! GDPR deals with how organisations manage personal data. The Parish Council

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is working to ensure it fully complies with the legislation and manages your personal data correctly.

In 2017-18 there were some changes in the Parish Office team. Our caretaker Les Reeve hung up his litter-picker and retired after nine years' service. We thank Les for all his hard work; he has not said a complete goodbye, as we retain the benefit of his services as occasional cover for our new caretaker Paul Nyahwa. You may already have seen Paul around the village in his parish council Hi-Viz jacket; please do say 'hello' to him and let him know if you see something you think may need his attention. In the Parish Office itself we welcomed Jean Terry in the new role of Parish Support Officer to handle some of the office's administrative tasks. Jean's appointment brought the office-based team back up to three after being at two for most of 2017. Jean joins me and Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer Deborah Jenkins, now the longest-serving current member of the team, who deals particularly with planning and finance matters.

My thanks go to all the office team and those who have supported us during the past year. I am sure 2018-19 will again have interesting challenges in store!

Mick Westwood, Parish Clerk

Parish Activities

Planning Committee

Planning is an important part of the Parish Council's commitment to the residents of Staplehurst and rightly takes up quite a bit of time for the clerks and councillors. The Planning Committee meets before each Full Council meeting to consider planning applications affecting Staplehurst to make our recommendations to MBC.

Many of the applications, although relatively small, are important to the applicants and their neighbours. We give them careful consideration and members of the Planning Committee often visit the sites, as well as reviewing written information from applicants and residents.

Although MBC is obliged to consult the Parish Council about most types of planning application and we may also comment on other planning matters, MBC makes the final decision. It's really important for residents to note their feelings via MBC's website on planning applications as this is the best way for MBC to gain an understanding about how locals feel about an application. The Parish Council is able to request that an application should be considered by MBC's Planning Committee, rather than be decided by a planning officer under delegated powers, although this is a power that we try to use judiciously. When a Staplehurst application comes up at the MBC Committee, a representative of the Parish Council attends to give a three-minute speech, and I'd like to thank Councillors who have undertaken this as it can sometimes be at quite short notice. It is with regret that SPC is unable to appeal if MBC approve an application we refused. If MBC refuse an application, the applicant can appeal to the Planning Inspectorate; this can involve written submissions only or a public hearing. If there is a public hearing SPC is represented by one of the councillors.

Both the Neighbourhood Plan and Maidstone's Local Plan are often referred to now when planning applications are considered, both for approved applications or refusals. We shall see how this progresses, but it will be instructive to see what policies MBC refer to and how that applies to future applications.

We continue to refer tree work applications to the tree officer to ensure their expertise is employed about which trees should be 'pruned' or not.

Development at the Fisher's Farm site in Headcorn Road has moved on apace and building has begun causing the expected disruption we explained it would at the application stage.

We continue to endeavour to communicate with the developers for improvements to the detailed layout of the Fisher's Farm sites.

Adele Sharp

Communications

Some eagle eyed parishioners may have noticed that we have a new website. Staplehurst-pc.uk is now live. The old website Staplehurstvillage.org.uk might still be available when this report goes to press but it is being closed down imminently. We would like to again thank Zulogic for their support over the last 10 plus years and indeed in the last month during transition to the new site. Sadly this means the end of the Forum as the facility is not available on the new host. The Parish Facebook page continues to be heavily used as a source of information. Currently we have 632 people following the Parish Council on Facebook. This group oversees all aspects of information sent to parishioners, being written and electronic.

Community Enhancement Group

The Community Enhancement Group is a newly-created Council Group that was formed and first met in October 2017. The Group has a broad remit that makes recommendations to the Council on community, leisure and enhancement projects and other related matters. It is responsible for reviewing the land and property portfolio and provision of Council services and activities.

Community Speedwatch

Since individual parish schemes were linked via the police computer, more parts of Kent have joined in the effort to reduce the anti-social speeding of motorists through our villages. Any vehicle recorded at 35mph or over in the built-up area will have its details recorded and a second offence anywhere will result in a reminder letter from Kent Police. The vast majority of drivers are not recorded more than once, but of those receiving a letter, only a tiny percentage offend again within the twelve-month period. Our small team of volunteers would like to get out more often, but we need more parishioners to join us. An initial training on computer is followed by a roadside session with Staplehurst's Team Leader and then you will be able to offer as much or little time as you can. We do make a big difference, as witnessed by the way that cars slow when they see us. The few motorists who speed excessively can expect a severely-worded letter, as can any persistent offender. That can be hand-delivered by a uniformed officer which often intrigues neighbours and makes the point very forcefully. All evidence gained also helps us to keep the Parish Council informed where there are significant speeding problems.

Churchyard

The Parish Council funds the maintenance of the churchyard, including grass cutting, tree work and hedges. Otherwise, the churchyard would risk being closed to new burials and losing its traditional atmosphere. The work programme and budget are discussed with representatives of the Parochial Church Council and work is carried out by contractors, volunteers from All Saints Church and Community Payback teams.

Employment Group

The Employment Group is responsible for making recommendations to the Council and dealing with employment and staffing matters. This year, the Council has reorganised the Parish Office roles and responsibilities and created a new position of Parish Support Officer. It has also increased the working hours of the new Caretaker and invested in the Parish Office equipment and technology to better equip the Council employees to maximise their efficiency and effectiveness. Our employees in the office, Mick Westwood, Deborah Jenkins and Jean Terry, and the new Caretaker, Paul Nyahwa work tirelessly for the benefit of our village and our thanks for their professionalism, dedication and passion for this village should be recorded.

Finance and Strategy Group

The Group has no specific powers but makes recommendations to Full Council. Apart from its work on reviewing the Council's strategy it makes specific recommendations in respect of the Council's finances. These include: expenditure proposals; preparation of the budget and proposed precept for approval by the Council. It reviews annually the Asset Register, Risk Assessment and Financial Regulations and undertakes reviews to establish best practice and careful control of what is public money. Regular reports are received from the Internal Auditor. He is an important part of the internal control of the Parish Council's activities and a review of the internal control function and its effectiveness takes place annually, which is reported back to the Council. Over recent years we have undertaken a number of activities with the aim of improving services to our residents, but at the same time we always been careful to ensure our finances remain sound.

Jubilee Field

The Parish Council owns and maintains Jubilee Field. The Council is responsible for the annual repainting of the skate park, cutting back the hedges and when necessary the trees. Grass cutting is currently outsourced to the Jubilee Field Management Group. Jubilee Field is a publicly owned open space. Football is a major activity and there are designated football pitches and a modern sports pavilion. In addition, there is a Brownie and Guide Centre and a skate park. Staplehurst Parish Council is represented on the Jubilee Field Management Group which manages the Jubilee Field facility. In recent years we have made a number of improvements including better lighting, upgrading the CCTV and improving the drainage; although it is accepted that further work needs to be carried out regarding the latter given the recent bad winters. The Parish Council recognises the importance of this facility for the enjoyment of the community as a whole. The inaugural Staplehurst Family Fireworks Event was held on the field and was a great success.

Wimpey Field Nature Area

Much work has gone on during the past year including planting to improve its value as a home for wildlife, and also to make it more interesting and attractive for human visitors. Some of this has been sponsored by individuals or businesses, for which we are grateful. Footpaths have also been improved, and will enable wheelchair users and people with small children in pushchairs to enjoy it. The Parish Council would like to pay tribute to the dedicated band of volunteers who have worked in all weathers to achieve this result, and also to the Community Payback team.

Parish Services

The Parish Council provides a number of services to complement those provided by the borough and county councils. These include the public conveniences at Bell Lane; additional street cleaning, bus shelters, salt bins and street lights; maintenance of the Surrenden and Jubilee Fields and their facilities; and employing a village caretaker. The Parish Council also engages our friends at Growing Concern to service the village's planters.

Playscheme

Play Place has again worked with the Parish Council to deliver our summer play scheme. We are very grateful to Staplehurst School for the use of their excellent facilities. We offered all day sessions in the second and third weeks which were well supported. The children enjoyed a wide range of activities in a safe and friendly environment. The 2018 scheme will again be held in the School.

Staplehurst Emergency Help Team (SEHT)

The risk of a serious emergency increases with population, while the concentration of the available emergency services (Police, Fire brigade etc) diminishes. With this continuing diminution the emergency services' familiarity with every village is lost, and already they rely on residents to provide their local knowledge and support. SEHT was set up in 2010 to provide this.

We are a group of would-be volunteers who attend short (90 minute) meetings four times a year, plus an annual training exercise in the implementation of our village's 'Emergency Plan' – in the event of an emergency our actions have to be instinctive, there would be no time for reading. In the event of hundreds of residents having to evacuate their homes in the event of a ruptured gas main for example, a shelter would be set up immediately providing warmth and refreshment.

SEHT volunteers are never expected to undertake the professional duties of the emergency services and, while we would encourage 'good neighbourliness' in the event of house fires, vulnerable residents during a big freeze etc, we are NOT set up to provide an A&E-type service – we respond only to calls from the Kent Resilience Team. While acting as SEHT volunteers, we are covered by the Parish's insurance. We are constantly on the lookout for new would-be volunteers. If you are interested please contact the Team either via the Parish Office, or at staplehurst.report@btinternet.com.

Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Review Group

This group of parish councillors and local residents has continued to meet on a monthly basis highlighting the importance of all planning applications being judged within the context of the Neighbourhood Plan and how this relates to MBC Local Plan. The group feels strongly that the infrastructure for Staplehurst is increasingly important when any further development is considered and the Neighbourhood Plan is a living document for the future.

Surrenden Field

There is still a question over future ownership of the field when the Parish Councils lease expires in the near future. That however has not prevented a small group of councillors continuing to plan for improvements. This year we had two paths and drainage installed. One path from Nicholson Walk to the Play Area and the second path from Nicholson Walk to the Bower Walk entrance. This means everyone can walk between these points all year. The area of field nearest to the Bower Walk entrance had a drainage point installed. This seems to be working well as the area has not flooded over the winter months. Further improvements will be planned for 2018.

Station Redevelopment

A small working group was set up in 2017 to explore possibilities for improving the surroundings of Staplehurst railway station, and has had meetings with MBC and Southeastern to this end. In the longer term, some Section 106 funding from each of the large housing developments in Staplehurst is allocated to improvements at the station, although this is unlikely to be available for some years. The group aims to ensure that these improvements will be in line with future requirements and with the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan. Short-term improvements are also being considered.

Staplehurst Youth Club

This year the Youth Club seems to have grown, with it's popularity spanning a diverse group of young individuals. Our register totals some 50 members at present. We have a cabinet full of popular board games, cards, crafting beads & accessories, together with copious amounts of oil paints & canvases to enable the group to be as creative as possible. The Pool table is 'extensively' used and I often participate with a game of Pool myself, along with the odd Table Tennis match, which often gets quiet competitive! We also have the usual games console's for the members to use. On an 'average' club evening we regularly have around 15 - 20 attendees and the odd occasion the numbers have hit 40. We had our second outing to 'Hollywood Bowl' in Maidstone, just before the Easter break. All that attended had great fun with bowling and food to end the evening.

Most of the time we find the young people are more than happy to just 'chill', whilst listening to music and chatting about school and on on their ubiquitous mobile phones! They all identify that the club is a safe and independent base to meet and converse.

The Trustees greatly thank Staplehurst Parish Council for their contribution to the club, as without such support this village amenity would likely close.

***Paul Kelly
Chairman***

Parish Council Members & Contacts at 31st March 2018

Parish Council Chairman – Tom Burnham
Parish Council Vice Chairman – Patrick Riordan

Margaret Ashby
Joan Buller
Chris Claridge
Sam Lain-Rose
Barrett Manning
John Perry

John Reardon
Adele Sharp
Rory Silkin
Gillian Smith
Peter Spearink
Elaine Symes

More information about Parish Councillors is available on the Staplehurst village website at www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/parish-councillors/

Parish Clerk MICK WESTWOOD 01580 891761
Email: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Deputy Clerk and Finance Officer DEBORAH JENKINS 01580 891761
Email: assistantclerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Parish Support Officer JEAN TERRY 01580 891761
Email: admin@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Police Community Support Officer PETE GARDNER 101
Email: peter.gardner@kent.pnn.police.uk

KCC Community Warden MIRA MARTIN 07969 584179
E-mail: mira.martin@kent.gov.uk

Member of Parliament HELEN GRANT 0207 219 7107
Email: helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk

Kent County Councillor ERIC HOTSON 01580 892312
Email: eric.hotson@kent.gov.uk

Maidstone Borough Councillor JOHN PERRY 07770 734741
Email: johnperry@maidstone.gov.uk

Maidstone Borough Councillor LOUISE BRICE 07817 362860
Email: lousebrice@maidstone.gov.uk

Parish Office, Staplehurst Village Centre, High Street, Staplehurst TN12 0BJ
www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Staplehurst Parish Office is open to the public 0900-1300
Monday to Thursday. Closed Fridays.

Staplehurst Parish Council, Parish Office
Staplehurst Village Centre
High Street, Staplehurst
TONBRIDGE, Kent TN12 0BJ

Parish Council papers may be viewed in the Parish Office on request;
most are also now available on-line at **www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk**.

Planning application papers may be viewed at the Parish Office on request or
on the Maidstone Borough Council website at **www.maidstone.gov.uk**.

Parish and Borough Councillors hold Saturday morning surgeries at
Staplehurst Library for local residents to discuss issues. Full details of dates
and times appear on the village website at **www.staplehurst-pc.uk**

Front cover photograph
Essex Skipper (*Thymelicus lineola*)
Wimpey Fields
Many thanks to Yvonne Davidson

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