

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Committee, Group or Sub Group	
Joint Parish Council Meeting with MBC	
Meeting Date & Venue	
Monday 4 June 2018 at Maidstone House	
Report Author	
Tom Burnham	
Report	
<p>Following a meeting of interested parishes at Staplehurst on 15 March to discuss planning issues with particular reference to gipsy and traveller sites, the parishes requested a meeting with Maidstone Borough Council. This was agreed for 4 June.</p> <p>Present: MBC – William Cornall (Director of Regeneration and Place), Rob Jarman (Head of Planning), James Bailey (Development Manager), Matt Roberts (Community Partnerships and Resilience Manager), Sarah Lee (Principal Planning Officer (Strategic Planning)). Staplehurst Parish Council – Cllrs Margaret Ashby, Joan Buller, Tom Burnham. Also representatives from Broomfield & Kingswood, Coxheath, Headcorn and Ulcombe.</p> <p>The following agenda items had been tabled. Headcorn PC had also requested that flooding issues be discussed, but this was not covered in the event.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Backlog of applications2. Appeals3. Enforcement Action4. Specialist Legal Advice5. Delivery against Local Plan assessed need6. Update to Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment <p>Backlog of applications: James Bailey reported that MBC had had about 250 backlog applications (those past the Government targets for turn-round time) including about 35 G+T applications. Over 3 months they had brought in two external consultant planners with experience in the G+T field and the regular team had given priority to backlog applications. There was now only one G+T application which had been waiting more than 8 weeks. Applications were likely to be turned round within 8 weeks in future. In some cases in the past, applications had been delayed waiting for applicants to supply necessary information, for example on their G+T status. MBC would take a firmer line on validation in such cases in future. Noted that the number of applications processed recently had resulted in a significant number of appeals lodged by applicants.</p> <p>Appeals: Noted that the Planning Inspectorate does not have enough appropriately trained inspectors to handle the number of appeals on enforcement. William Cornall has written to Helen Whately MP about this. MBC advertised for two new senior enforcement appeals officers but received no applications. They are now appointing two new planning investigation officers, who will release existing senior enforcement officers for appeals work.</p> <p>Enforcement: The NPPG advises district authorities to produce local enforcement policies to ensure a consistent approach. MBC intends to develop such a policy.</p>	

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Specialist legal advice: MBC had obtained advice from counsel specialising in G+T planning and this was now being used in assessing application. They were investigating whether information on “nomadic lifestyle” could be collected in a standardised format. There was a discussion of the meaning of “domination”, and it was suggested that an appeal inspector would require a high level of evidence to accept this as a reason for refusing an application. Inquiries to KCC and the CCG (in relation to schools and health services) had not produced strong evidence in the past.

Delivery against Local Plan: The 2011 assessment used in the Local Plan had found that 187 pitches would be needed over the period 2011-2031, and this was evidently considered satisfactory by the inspector who examined the Local Plan. Consent had been given for 146 permanent pitches in Maidstone Borough since 2011.

Update to Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment: A new GTAA would have to be done when the Local Plan review started (probably within the next 12 months). Likely that this would be done by a different organisation from the one doing the general housing need assessment.

Community Protection Team: Matt Roberts reported on this new team which had been set up by MBC to centralise community safety and environmental enforcement. Areas of activity included statutory nuisances, anti-social behaviour and unauthorised encampments (9 of the latter in 2016, 14 in 2017, 3 or 4 so far in 2018). The team cooperated closely with the Police (contact: Sgt Jack Vale, Community Support Unit) over issues such as organised crime groups, sites of interest (multi-agency action), gangs, County Lines, sexual exploitation of children, substance misuse, domestic abuse and animal welfare and licensing. The team isn't a 24/7 service, so urgent matters should be addressed directly to the Police.

William Cornall agreed to send out a letter giving further information on some of the issues raised at the meeting.

Date & Venue of next meeting	
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TBA
