

Village Update

AUTUMN 2014

www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

We will need new parish councillors!

Parish Council elections are due to be held next May. All 15 seats will be up for election for the following 4 year term. You can help make important decisions on the future of Staplehurst including our open spaces and sports facilities, major and minor planning applications, support for young people, running our website and many other issues. Parish councillors have a variety of skills, some practical as well as financial, management and legal. However, common sense and good humour are essential together with a willingness to listen as well as share your views. There are two main parish council meetings a month and two planning committee meetings as well as a variety of special groups. Our councillors have a wide range of views so you can expect interesting debates where your voice will count. Apart from helping your village, you will also have the opportunity to improve your speaking and committee skills. Training is provided.

Why not attend a few meetings as a member of the public over the next few months to see if this would

This could be your chance to be a Parish councillor.....



interest you? You could pop in and chat with the clerk who can also give you a leaflet with more information. Or, you could go online for information. If you would like an informal chat with a councillor, please contact the clerk.

STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Thank you to everyone who attended the consultation events and sent in their comments about the Regulation 14 draft version of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan. The six-week consultation period closed on July 17th. Every comment is now being carefully considered and accepted points will be incorporated into the next draft. If there are major changes the Council will consult residents again for

a further six weeks. The next stage of the process is to consult Borough wide for a further six weeks. Thanks go to Staplehurst Health Centre, the Library, the Post Office, The King's Head, The Mocking Bird and Coachman's Cottage Studio for hosting copies of the draft plan. Look out for further updates in the Latest News section of the Council website and on village notice boards.

Staplehurst

Parish Council

SOLAR ENERGY INFORMATION MEETING

The Planning Committee has spent a lot of time considering the Great Pagehurst solar energy project. So that we would be better informed about similar applications in future, three Parish Councillors and a number of other Staplehurst residents were able to attend a meeting kindly arranged by Ulcombe Parish Council at which various aspects of solar energy were presented. A range of experts presented points of view on energy supply, landscape impact and effect on food production. There was a detailed presentation from MBC planners, and we were pleased to find that MBC has established definite criteria for assessing this type of application, which should enable them to take a consistent approach to the increasing number of solar energy proposals in the rural areas of the Borough.

UPDATES

The Parish Council keeps everyone informed by producing these Village Updates throughout the year. You can help us by receiving it by e-mail, reading it online at the Parish Council website or becoming a volunteer deliverer who are particularly needed in the rural areas. If you could help us save your money by any of the above methods please contact our clerk on 01580 891761. Thank you.

PLANNING NOTES

Cllr Paul Butcher, chairman of the Planning Committee, has unfortunately been unable to attend a number of meetings recently because of illness. We send best wishes for his recovery.

The proposal for a large-scale solar energy installation at Great Pagehurst Farm (application 13/1456) has occupied a good deal of the Committee's time in recent months. Apart from the obvious impact on the agricultural landscape (which led the Committee to recommend refusal), a number of the issues are technical ones which the Parish Council is not well equipped to assess. At the time of writing, the Great Pagehurst application was still to be decided on by MBC. Another recent application was for outline permission for a further nine houses at Fishers Oast (14/500363). Councillors voted to recommend approval to MBC and commented that there should be adequate provision for surface water drainage, flood risk assessment and appropriate tree protection measures. Maidstone has set up a combined system with Swale and Tunbridge Wells Boroughs to handle the administration of planning applications. The web page to search for planning applications is now at <http://pa.midkent.gov.uk/online-applications/> and it is also linked from the MBC home page (www.maidstone.gov.uk) – "Find a Planning Application". Some older information has not yet been transferred from the old site.

FIRE SAFETY

It was unfortunate that Staplehurst saw a serious house fire this summer. Whilst no one was hurt in the incident a large amount of damage was done, resulting in a loss of personal items and the family being unable to remain at the property. While the Fire Service were in attendance they took the opportunity to leaflet drop the surrounding houses to remind people of the fire risks caused by electrical items. All of the leaflets can be seen at http://www.kent.fire-uk.org/your_safety/download_resources.aspx Please remember that if you know a vulnerable person in the village you, or they, can contact the Fire Service directly. They are happy to provide advice, may make a visit to advise further or even fit smoke alarms.

SPEED WATCH

Staplehurst has welcomed 14 newly trained volunteers to swell our ranks this summer. Speeding motorists should also be aware of an increased presence of volunteers at the roadside who are recording their details throughout Kent. This is because there are many more schemes and this has already led to an increase in motorists receiving letters of advice from Kent Police. For those who do not heed these reminders further action may well lead to police enforcement.

RUNNING CLUB



After seeing various Government and Borough initiatives regarding health and wellbeing, the Parish Council was pleased to see the launch of Staplehurst Running Club based at the Cricket Club. The Parish Council has donated £250 towards hi vis vests for the runners to wear. The club attracts around 50 runners, many of whom had never run before, at the Monday and Thursday sessions. Most have completed the "Couch to 5km" in 10 weeks, so well done everyone! SRC are on Facebook and there are various posters around the village.

BUSES

Good news! Common sense has prevailed at last and the bus timetable is being revised so the Pinnock Lane bus to Maidstone will now be at 9.30am so that residents can use their bus pass to match the rest of the Parish. This has been the result of much lobbying by representatives of the Parish Council.

BELGIAN VISIT

Last month a group of four Belgian aircraft historians, men who recover lost WW2 aircraft and ensure that any remains are properly buried, came to visit the Memorial to P/O Doutrepoint and booking clerk in the Station booking hall. Councillors Perry and Spearink were there to welcome them and an exchange of gifts was made. They were taken to see the Advanced Landing Ground memorial on Chickenden Farm. They were delighted to see that our parish was so involved in remembering the fallen of different nations who fought for our common freedom. Their parting words were that when they get home they will spread the word that this parish takes this sort of thing very seriously. They intend to visit Headcorn next year to see the airfield and the museum.

One person who was sadly missing from this visit was the late Ted Sergison who had been rushed to hospital the day before. We told our friends about him and that both of the memorials that they visited were his inspiration and work. Sadly Ted died on the Sunday, but at least he did know that the visit was to take place. Their website is www.planehunters.be/



HEDGES

It is the responsibility of residents and landowners to keep their hedges trimmed back to their boundary. There are a number of properties around the village where vegetation is reducing the width of the pavements making it difficult for people to pass safely with prams/buggies/wheelchairs or with young children in hand. Indeed if you drive a car you may well know a junction that you cannot see out of because of vegetation. One incident recently occurred as a lady was too close to the road because of an overgrown hedge. A wing mirror of a car pulling a caravan clipped her arm with such force that she was knocked to the ground. The driver was very upset and the lady was very shocked and suffered a badly bruised arm. If you do not maintain your boundary vegetation you may be reported to Kent County Council via the KCC Highways Fault Reporting Portal at <http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>. As a last resort KCC can trim your vegetation and then send you the bill.

MAIDSTONE LOCAL PLAN

Maidstone Borough Council's Local Plan will provide a framework for all development until 2031. It will cover provision for shops, businesses, homes, jobs, the environment and infrastructure. Over the last few years the council has been gathering information on the population, economic data, landscape surveys and infrastructure. They know they need an integrated transport plan to alleviate traffic congestion, along with the resulting air pollution and lost working time. Agreeing on required housing numbers and finding suitable sites has been a major part of Maidstone's plan. A new call for sites was sent out this year and the large number submitted means another long process of inspection and assessment has been started; they hope to have completed this process by early 2015. MBC are holding a meeting in September with councillors of the parished areas to discuss their plan and answer any queries we may have.

STAPLEHURST EMERGENCY HELP TEAM - SEHT

The SEHT held its annual meeting on 24 March. The chairman described what had been achieved in the past year, including contacting local organisations for help in future emergencies. We were lucky enough to have Chris Else, Kent Fire and Rescue, attend to talk on the reorganisation of Emergency Planning taking place nationwide. This will require ever greater reliance on local help provided by organisations like us. One of our SEHT volunteers attended the recent fire although we were not called out officially. The Fire and Rescue Service and local residents were very impressed, although no assistance was needed on this occasion. We have also had our usual meetings during the year and plan our annual exercise for September. All volunteers for that are welcome!

WELCOME TO NEW COUNCILLORS

The council welcomes our two new Borough Councillors. John Perry was elected in May and Paulina Watson in the July by-election. John will be serving for the usual four-year term whilst Paulina is in post until next May when Staplehurst will be back to the ballot box! The Parish Council looks forward to working closely with them. Borough Councillor Perry is continuing the monthly surgery on the last Saturday of each month at the Library together with a member of the Parish Council and Borough Councillor Watson is holding surgeries on the dates listed on the back page.

THE FUTURE OF THIS UPDATE

We have been producing this Village Update and delivering it to every house in the Parish for some years now. This year Updates were reduced to three times a year, but now we are considering if we do need to produce hard copies. This would mean asking for the Update to be emailed to you; reading it on our website or Facebook page; or reading a hard copy at strategic locations around the village.

Your comments to clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk but please add 'Parish Update Comment' in the subject bar. Alternatively you can call the office at any time and leave a message.

PLAYSCHEME

Play Place, on behalf of Staplehurst Parish Council, has run another successful scheme. We are again very grateful to the Guides for the use of their excellent facilities. The children have been entertained in a safe and caring environment which is a credit to the staff. We are very pleased that MBC have once again supported our scheme with a grant.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A lot has happened recently. We have had two elections and this has resulted in two new Maidstone Borough Councillors. These are Councillor Paulina Watson and I. Perhaps more interestingly the representation is split between Liberal Democrat and Conservative – we live in interesting times. The Neighbourhood Plan continues to progress and we are now coming to the end of the first round of the formal consultation process – Regulation 14. We shall now review the responses and if necessary make changes before setting out on the next phase of the consultation process which will be Borough wide. At the same time we have made representation to MBC regarding the consultation to their Local Plan under Regulation 18. Our Neighbourhood Plan has to show general compliance with Maidstone's Local Plan. Unfortunately there appears to have been very little coordinated support from MBC for Neighbourhood Plans and this has given rise to a number of concerns, the most important of which is the number of houses allocated to Staplehurst. We believe the methodology used is far too simplistic and this together with the lack of planning for infrastructure will be rigorously pursued.

Staplehurst yet again produced a highly successful and enjoyable Carnival and Fete. The weather stayed fine for us and I would like to give my thanks to everyone involved in organising it. I should also like to give a special mention to Caron Holden who organised the Maidstone Riverside Run which took place at the beginning of June. This was very much a Staplehurst event and raised a considerable sum for Cancer Research. The Carnival and Fete Committee also organised a very successful 10K run.

Finally, I have some sad news to report. As many of you may know Ted Sergison passed away in July. Ted was a keen local historian and had played a major role in setting up the airfield war memorial at Chickenden Lane as well as the plaque at Staplehurst Station recording the crash of the

Belgian pilot during the Battle of Britain. Ted also played a major role in the restoration work on the war memorial in All Saints Church. Councillor Spearink and I recently welcomed a group from Belgium who had come to visit the plaque at the station, but sadly Ted was not well enough to attend. Ted will be sadly missed in the village.

This is likely to be my final report as Chairman of Staplehurst Parish Council as I am planning to stand down by the end of August. This is to avoid any possible conflicts of interest between Borough and Parish; I shall remain a Parish Councillor for the time being. I should like to thank everyone for the support they have given me over the past four and a half years. As a Borough Councillor I shall continue to try to serve Staplehurst to the best of my ability.

John Perry

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

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 MBC which makes the decision. All meetings are held in the South Hall, Village Centre. Planning Committee meetings begin at 7pm with Full Council following on at 7.30pm (if planning agenda is short). Contact the Clerk for details or check the website calendar page.

Meetings in 2014 (all Mondays):-

September	1st	15th
October	6th	20th
November	3rd	17th
December	1st	15th

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
Anne Gosling
Simon Green
Neal Kemp
Sam Lain-Rose
Barrett Manning
John Reardon
Adele Sharp
Rory Silkin
Peter Spearink

CLERK

Mr Mick Westwood

RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER

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.

SURGERIES AT THE LIBRARY

Borough Councillor Perry's surgery will be on the last Saturday of each month, together with a Parish Councillor from 10am until noon. Borough Councillor Watson's surgery will be from 9:30 until 11:30am on September 13th, October 4th, November 15th and December 13th. PCSO Pete Gardner will hold Police Surgeries on Saturdays from 10am to 11am:- September 13th, October 18th, November 8th and December 13th.

You are welcome to talk through any local problems or ask questions about local issues.