

Staplehurst Parish Council - Transcript of Cllr Riordan's Video Report August 2019

Hi and welcome to Staplehurst Parish Council's Chairman's video report.

Firstly, I'd like to provide some information in relation to the last full council meeting on the 15th of July. Minutes of meetings are available on the PC Website.

A Councillor provided a proposal to request allocation of section 106 (developers) funding for a project at the Village Golf and Sports Club; this is to enable them to install three new golf fairways, greens and putting holes to bring the facility up to a 12-hole golf course. I'm pleased to say the Parish Council supported this request and the application for the funding has been sent to MBC for their approval. I shall update you as and when we have their response. I might add that the Village Golf and Sports Club at Clapper Lane is a really wonderful facility; it's suitable for families & golfers of all ages. It is not widely advertised at present; however, new members are very welcome.

It was agreed to implement a tree survey on footpath KM312 which is adjacent to the Wimpy Fields at the rear of Bathurst Road. These tree surveys are regularly carried out on Parish Council land to ensure there is no danger to people and to safeguard the trees themselves.

Proposals were provided for improvements at The Parade which is obviously an item which many people are very concerned about. The proposals were to repaint the bollards and benches, install two wooden planters outside of SPAR and repair and clear the large planted areas and fill with material such as pebbles or bark chippings etc. Most of this area is privately owned land and the Parish Council is restricted on what it can do without relevant permission. We have formally written to the landlords to acquire permission, particularly in relation to large planted areas. I am of the understanding that we can carry out the other works on publicly maintainable land so hopefully we will soon be painting the bollards and benches. Many residents will be aware that one Councillor and two local volunteers have already started work on the small planters which is greatly appreciated.

It was agreed that the Community Enhancement Group which is a subgroup of the Parish Council will take on responsibility to provide proposals in relation to getting the bins replaced.

This year marks 125 years of Staplehurst Parish Council and a small group of Councillors will be leading the organisation of the commemoration activities.

In relation to tomorrow's meeting, we have a busy agenda which includes a by-election for the vacant Parish Council seat. Unfortunately, due to business responsibilities a very valuable Parish Councillor has recently had to stand down which has left the vacancy. This would normally be filled by the co-option process where residents can apply to join the Parish Council and the sitting members agree on who to fill the vacancy. However, residents on the electoral roll have the right to ask for an election process to take place if 10 individuals sign a letter requesting this.

The Parish Council has to go through this process under the rules of the Electoral Commission; however, we have the choice to decide whether polling cards are sent out to all residents on the electoral roll in order to inform them of the forthcoming election. This item is on the agenda for Monday. The two sides of discussion will be: does the Parish Council wish to use council funds to pay for polling cards to be sent to every household? These Poll cards will cost

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the sum of £2,106.31 on top of the sum of £3,504.93 which is the cost of the election. The other side of the discussion will be, if voting cards are not sent out there may be many householders who are completely unaware of the election which will not give them the opportunity to vote.

This is an important item for the Parish Council which will need to be discussed at length and, as always, any input from residents wishing to put their points of view at the public forum would be greatly appreciated.

We have reports on the Borough and Parish Council surgery which is held monthly at the village library; so, anyone raising any issues at the recent surgery will be glad to know their concerns are not being ignored. We feel this is a valuable source of contact with residents and encourage anyone to attend if they would like to discuss matters of concern.

Another item of interest to residents relates to parking problems in Staplehurst. Now, we are all very aware that we have limited public parking in our village and the Parish Council has no jurisdiction over parking; however, we can engage with the various interested parties to try and achieve positive action to avoid lawbreaking and dangerous situations. Two Parish Councillors recently had a meeting with MBC parking officers and their enforcement team, along with a member of Kent police and our local PCSO to try to discuss and formulate a combined effort to deal with some of the parking problems we are experiencing. Now, whilst I would like to make it clear that enforcement is always an option, we as a Parish Council have no wish for dozens of residents receiving parking tickets and fines. Our goal is to try and create much more public awareness of the dangerous situations that arise when cars are parked unlawfully. Residents may be unaware the MBC parking enforcement team visit Staplehurst on a regular basis; however, more often than not, their work is to request vehicles are moved from yellow lines and dangerous positions prior to them issuing a ticket; they do not literally jump out of the van and slap a ticket on car windscreens. There will be a discussion on Monday to decide whether the Parish Council wishes to pursue yellow lines on Gybbon Rise on the bend opposite the school as this is considered by all parties as a dangerous spot with potential safety issues to children attending the school.

All parties at the meeting agreed to pursue a concerted effort and enforcement attendance in Staplehurst in the near future. So, watch this space.

Other work that has been carried out by your Parish Councillors involves the access gate to the Wimpey Field. This has unfortunately become an upsetting issue for many of the local residents, several of which are new to the village and have been made to feel somewhat unwelcome. Four Councillors and many local residents attended a meeting on site to have an open discussion; the residents were extremely friendly and put their points of view across in a very informed manner. This problem, in my view, has been caused by the developer & planning authorities and has landed on the lap of the Parish Council and local residents to try to deal with. The Parish Council has no wish to cause any upset to local residents; this is a sensitive issue which will need careful consideration going forward.

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The next item in relation to the Health Centre, I should make residents aware that I have a personal interest in this, because a member of my family actually works there, although they are at present on long-term maternity leave.

Several Councillors attended a Patient Participation Group meeting. A presentation in relation to primary care network which is a combined effort for running local medical centres was given. To cover all aspects of this presentation would take quite some time; so, if you're interested at all, please google, "primary care networks" or check the meeting notes of the PPG which will be made available to the public at a future council meeting.

A new phone system has been put in; hopefully, patients will find this easier to use but everyone should be aware that they only have so many staff, so if the lines are busy please be patient.

Please be aware the Staplehurst Health Centre Facebook page is absolutely nothing to do with the Health Centre and to address any issues residents should deal with the Health Centre direct.

A very unfortunate and concerning issue is that an important member of staff has handed in their notice due to regular abuse from members of the public. This came to a head when they attended someone's premises to try to assist with a medical matter one evening and literally came away in tears. The staff regularly work extended hours which they do not get paid for; they are very conscious of people's feelings in relation to medical problems and concerns when people are worried about their family; however, they cannot offer appointments and service when they are just not available. The morale of the team is low and this should be a matter of extreme concern to everyone. Nobody should be abused in their day-to-day place of work and whilst things may not be perfect at the medical centre, constant efforts are made to improve the service.

They are experiencing problems in relation to referrals: patients are not informing them that they have a care package with Benenden Health Care, they are holding the Health Centre responsible for appointments managed at Maidstone hospital and various other issues. Eye referrals should be dealt with by your optician, not SHC. Subsequently two documents have been produced to advise on referrals if anyone requires more info.

Unfortunately, appointments are regularly not attended without cancelling the appointment; this means these appointments cannot be used for other deserving patients. In one month, 60 appointments were wasted due to non-attendance without informing the centre. The number of patients and the prescriptions that they have to deal with is astounding. I believe in one month approximately 5000 patients were seen and 1892 prescriptions were dealt with, plus requirements for local care homes.

I would encourage everyone to support the Health Centre because we would be lost without them and to treat staff there with respect at all times.

To end on a happier note, the Health Centre is pleased to announce they are out of special measures. In record time, I might add.

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Everyone is very welcome to come along to Full Council meetings. You are given an opportunity to talk before and after the meeting so please come along and help us to help you.

Thanks for your time, any feedback on our Chairman's report is greatly appreciated.

Tata for now.

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