



# **Staplehurst Parish Council ANNUAL REPORT 2018 - 2019**

**Lest we forget...**

# Chairman's Annual Report 2018-2019

During the past year, Staplehurst Parish Council has continued to provide services to and represent the people of Staplehurst, as it has done since the 1890s. Some of this activity is plainly visible, but much else goes on behind the scenes.



As one of the larger parishes to the south of Maidstone, Staplehurst has taken a lead in bringing parishes together over concerns with planning and planning enforcement. This has resulted in a response from Maidstone Borough Council and improved communication over issues including the revision of the Maidstone Local Plan. We also hosted a training course run by the Kent Association of Local Councils, which enabled several Staplehurst councillors to receive training at a reduced cost.

During the year we negotiated the acquisition of the freehold of footpath KM312 (between Butcher Close and Bell Lane) from the administrators of Carillion. We also spent much effort on Surrenden Field, the freehold of which is owned by Maidstone Borough Council. We were not able to agree terms for buying the freehold, but we are close to taking a new 125-year lease of the Field at a peppercorn rent, which will ensure that this important asset in the centre of our built-up area is available to local residents for the foreseeable future. I should like to thank Councillor Perry for his important contribution to reaching this conclusion.

The Parish Council organised an independent traffic count at four points on the A229 north and south of the village, in response to concerns about the volume and speed of traffic, and the likely effect of planned housing developments at several places served by the A229. An analysis of the data by the volunteer Speedwatch team confirmed residents' impressions and Speedwatch observations that a significant minority of drivers greatly exceed the 30mph and 40mph speed limits. This resulted in a great deal of media coverage, some of it accurate.

On Remembrance Sunday, 11 November, some 400 people assembled on Surrenden Field for a moving ceremony where a beacon was lit to mark the centenary of the Armistice in 1918 and to remember the men from Staplehurst who died in the First World War. Thanks are due to Councillors Reardon and Manning for taking the lead on this event – particularly as Councillor Reardon and his team had been responsible for stewarding and managing the road closures for the Remembrance Sunday

# Chairman's Annual Report 2018-2019

parade that morning.

The Keep Safe Staplehurst event in February gave residents an opportunity to meet the emergency services, and to see displays by local businesses and organisations promoting health and home security. Councillor Symes came up with the idea for this event, and was very active in organising it.

Councillors Claridge and Spearink resigned from the Parish Council in April 2018 and Councillor Riordan in March 2019. I thank them for their various contributions to the work of the Parish Council. We co-opted Councillors Forward and Kelly in May 2018 and Councillor Pontet in October 2018.

The Parish Council changed from holding meetings twice a month to a frequency of every three weeks from September 2018, together with an attempt to improve the quality of our decision making by providing Councillors with more background information and more specific recommendations.

I should like to pay tribute to our parish clerk Mick Westwood and his staff, Deborah Jenkins (responsible financial officer, RFO) and Jean Terry. The Parish Council is a public authority, and the Clerk and RFO have the duty of ensuring that we meet our legal responsibilities and obligations. In the past year this has included compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation. Paul Nyahwa, our village caretaker, is proving a tower of strength and makes great use of his skills as a handyman to improve our local environment.

Finally, I should like to thank all the members of the outgoing Parish Council for their support during the past year. I wish the new Councillors who will be elected on 2 May well, and trust that they will continue to work together for the benefit of the people of Staplehurst.

*Tom Burnham*

# Income & Expenditure Account

## For the year ended 31st March 2019

### INCOME

|                                                                                               |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Parish Precept                                                                                | 145,000.00 |
| MBC Parish Services Grant                                                                     | 9,370.00   |
| Other Income ( <i>VCT bin, electricity, Jubilee Field rent, cartridges, Insurance claim</i> ) | 382.90     |
| KCC Grants ( <i>Traffic Survey</i> )                                                          | 400.00     |
| Other Grants & Donations ( <i>Wimpey Field Trees</i> )                                        | 50.00      |
| SPC Bank Interest                                                                             | 92.92      |

### TOTAL INCOME

55,295.82

### EXPENDITURE

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| General Administration ( <i>Parish Office staff, utilities, equipment, insurance, subscriptions, training, meetings &amp; travel, publicity &amp; website, Village Updates, stationery, postage, council tax, rent, hall hire</i> ) | 86,418.23 |
| Donations                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 2,084.04  |
| Street Lighting, furniture, repairs, planters & caretaker                                                                                                                                                                           | 17,657.03 |
| Playscheme                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 1,910.00  |
| Jubilee Sports Field & Skatepark Maintenance                                                                                                                                                                                        | 17,348.44 |
| Youth Club ( <i>Site maintenance, KCC Lease/Purchase &amp; Youth Worker</i> )                                                                                                                                                       | 5,470.00  |
| Surrenden Playing Field & Trees                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 3,465.16  |
| Churchyard Maintenance                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 7,483.07  |
| Christmas Lights                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 1,678.04  |
| Professional Consultant Fees                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 3,654.80  |
| Public Convenience maintenance                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 8,489.08  |
| Street Sweeping                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 8,964.00  |
| Wimpey Field Maintenance ( <i>Footpath, trees, water butt, mowing, Bio-blitz event</i> )                                                                                                                                            | 4,038.40  |
| Local Government Pension Scheme                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 6,900.00  |
| Staplehurst Emergency Help Team                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 127.85    |

### TOTAL EXPENDITURE

175,688.14

|                                            |                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Balance of Income/Expenditure              | -20,392.32        |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 130,481.93        |
|                                            | <u>110,089.61</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 2019

### LONG TERM ASSETS

None (see supporting statement below) 0.00

### CURRENT ASSETS

|                 |            |            |
|-----------------|------------|------------|
| VAT Recoverable | 2,381.15   |            |
| Cash in hand    | 107,708.46 |            |
|                 |            | 110,089.61 |

### CURRENT LIABILITIES

|                                 |        |            |
|---------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Accruals                        | (0.00) |            |
| Creditors (unpresented cheques) | (0.00) |            |
|                                 |        | 110,089.61 |

### REPRESENTED BY:-

GENERAL FUND 60,296.77

#### 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                    | 6,572.57  |           |
| Balance c/fwd for future budget | 5,400.00  |           |
|                                 |           | 48,472.57 |

### 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   |
|                                 |        | 110,089.61 |

## 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 31.03.2019 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                         | 11,400.00 |
| 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 31.03.2019 held at the Parish Office 306,901.41

### LEASES - As at 31st March 2019 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*

As Chairman during the past year, 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 Churchyard Liaison, as well as helping Councillor Buller organise our volunteer litter picks in September and March. I have represented the Parish Council at several MBC Planning Committee meetings and I have attended two presentations about the revision of the Maidstone Local Plan. After twelve years on the Council, I leave with a wider perspective on local activities.

## Margaret Ashby

This year as so many others has been full on with planning issues. As a member of the planning committee a lot of my time is spent visiting sites and inspecting plans. This year has been particularly busy because of the two large developments in progress.

Our Communications Group has also kept me busy with the new Parish Council web site coming on line and regular updates on Facebook. I have also spent a small amount of time as the Council rep to All Saints Church churchyard committee, inspecting the grounds and dealing with general maintenance. There have been lively debates in the council in the last year resulting in some interesting events like the traffic survey. The council has had to take on many of the jobs and responsibilities previously dealt with by MBC so the next few years are likely to be even busier.



## Joan Buller BEM

I have had another very busy year serving on the Parish Council Planning Committee and representing Staplehurst's views at MBC meetings and planning appeals. With other Councillors and staff, I meet regularly with our current major housing developers. 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, Employment, Communications and Community Enhancement Groups. I have been Treasurer of the Neighbourhood Watch

Scheme since it started in 1987. I have now served on the council for 36 years and I love being an active part of the Staplehurst community.

## Susan Forward

I was co-opted as a Parish Councillor last May, hoping to spend my first year finding out about the role, but it was not to be. Due to councillor resignations and the collapse of a working group, I found myself as the default Lead Councillor for all things Wimpey Field. I hope you approve of my gentle hand there. As part of this role I have also spent much time and energy, with local residents, trying to alter and construct appropriate pedestrian and contractor vehicular access to our Nature Reserve. We are not quite there yet, but with the support of our MP Helen Grant and the goodwill of all, including the original developers of the new estate, we hope the Nature Reserve will soon be accessible to all with minimal inconvenience.

I have also taken advantage of available training for new councillors, including basic planning knowledge. Due to my vocational past I came to the Parish Council with useful experience which I have put to good use. I've enjoyed meeting with our developers and asking those hard, naive questions! I have also represented you at Maidstone Borough Council Planning Committees and Planning Appeals, alongside our Borough Councillor John Perry.

More recently, I have been working with a local resident to get pavement improvements, including dropped paving, to make Staplehurst more pedestrian friendly and accessible for all.



# Parish Councillors

## Paul Kelly

Having had a year away after 17 years' service, I needed to reflect on what and how the Council sees itself moving forward with all the trials and tribulations that entails. I now have a fresh approach to what this council needs to do to move tasks on, whilst applying historical background knowledge to a raft of projects that have been actioned and delivered. I am at present running in conjunction with Mel Hughes the Youth Club for the village, which has an open membership scheme. I am also member of the Community Enhancement Group, along with Finance and Strategy Group.



## Sam Lain-Rose

It has been such a productive and great year for the Council. I am privileged that I continue to be the Chair of both the Employment Group and Community Enhancement Group. Since April 2018 there have been exciting projects that I have been involved in, including the Jubilee Field improvements that are being coordinated by the Football Club, as a result of its recent success in its current league. I have continued to work with the Parish Office to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council and saving the office time in drafting policies and procedures (that are boring, but necessary!) to aid the Council better serve the community.

## Barrett Manning

I have served on the following groups during the past year:- Employment Group and Community Enhancement Group, the community group with particular interest in Surrenden Field. My interest on the Transport Accessibility Group has centred on the Arriva No: 5 bus service over the past three years and has recently highlighted the appalling service to the Transport Commissioners. The Fete committee have three new volunteers who have taken on important roles and thereby ensure there will be a fun-filled day on the 29th June together with other events tba.



## 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 remain an active member of the Finance and Strategy Group. Right from the beginning I have been actively involved in the development of the 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. The Local Plan is currently under review and I am monitoring the process very carefully to challenge any proposals that might adversely affect Staplehurst. In this respect I am liaising with the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) as part of the Maidstone Borough Council/KALC Parish Liaison Group. I also play a very active role at Maidstone Borough Council where I lead the opposition, sit as Vice-Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee and am a Member of the Planning Committee. Finally, I have set in train an agreement for a new long lease for Surrenden Field (125 years), which recognises the importance this open space plays in the life of our community.

# Parish Councillors



## Hannah Pontet

I joined the Council in October 2018 and am now the youngest Parish Councillor. I joined as the younger generation under 30s are not fairly represented, yet the changes to this village will affect us the longest. Since joining, I have utilised my knowledge and experience in Environmental Assessment and Management, by joining the Planning Committee. I am also a member of the Community Enhancement Group. It has been great to get to know the individuals on the Council and working with them to make Staplehurst a great place to live for future generations.

## John Reardon

I try to write these annual updates to sound different each year but when completing the same tasks for the Parish Council it does become difficult. I have continued to work with other councillors on local issues. I have also continued to edit the three Village Updates and Annual Report, this one sadly being my last. This year is the last of my 14 years on the Parish Council and I feel it was one of the best. I felt privileged to be a part of a small team who planned, managed and stewarded both the Remembrance Day Parade along the High Street and the Beacon service on Surrenden Field. To see 600 plus people along the High Street and 400 plus on Surrenden Field was such a sight. I did not stand for the election as I am relocating to Suffolk with my work. Thank you all, for your support.



## Patrick Riordan

This year I have represented the Parish Council as Vice Chairman. I stood down in March however, I am standing in the election for the new council on 2nd May. I represented the Council as Chairman of The Jubilee Field Management Committee, and was a member of Communications Group, Community Enhancement Group and Planning Committee. I also assist with Community Payback Services. We have managed to develop the Jubilee Field again, several drainage improvements have been achieved, upgrades to the Pavilion and overall maintenance projects are ongoing. A large project of improvements including planning permission for floodlights, pitch alterations, pitch side barriers, fencing and spectator stands has been approved and is under way. Plans are also in place to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Staplehurst Monarchs junior club. I helped organise the Charity concert at the Jubilee Field and I am looking to provide more community events at the facility. I represented the Parish Council and the Jubilee Field management committee on the Staplehurst family fireworks group again this year; the event was again 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. I am hopeful to be involved in improvements to the centre of the village, particularly in the Parade area, and to address general parking issues around the village.

## Adele Sharp

As Chairman of the planning committee, I and the committee have been very busy and working very hard. I very much appreciate working with such a good team of people as it is a challenge to get the balance right, supporting private individual applications and local business applications, ensuring conditions are adhered to, whilst trying to prevent unauthorised and unwelcome developments.

Staplehurst has a good community that is really coming together, obviously keen to work on various areas for improvement. I remain committed to doing my best for our residents and believe much can be achieved by us tackling issues together. For my part, I continue to attend the various committee groups I am on to try and help them drive forward and I continue to work hard as a trustee of the Village Centre.





# Parish Councillors

## Rory Silkin

During the last year I worked on the Finance and Strategy Group. We strived to keep the precept low despite MBC's continued cuts. I was also a member of the Planning Committee dealing with a swelter of planning applications from both individuals and developers. We like to deal as favourably as we can with individuals. Other bodies included the Employment Group and representing the Council at Kent Association of Local Councils Maidstone Area meetings. I chair the Trustees of the Friends of the Staplehurst Health Centre and I am a Council nominated trustee of the Village Centre. As I am standing down at the Council Election on 2nd May, goodbye from me and Huxley. Good luck to the new Council.



## Gill Smith

Having completed my second 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 am a member of the Community Enhancement Group and Employment Group, to contribute to developing the amenities and resources available to Staplehurst residents. 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, liaising with the various stakeholders with the aim of improving both the facilities and appearance of the station area.

## Elaine Symes

I am a partner at Laineys Farm, a Care Farm for Adults with learning difficulties which is based in Staplehurst. I have worked in care my whole working life. I get great joy from helping others.

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. Since joining the Parish Council, I have attended the Police Liaison Meeting, I have forged strong links with our local PCSO and the rural Police Team, as well as organising the Stay Safe Staplehurst Event, which was received very positively. I am actively 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 Community Events Group, Staplehurst Neighbourhood Watch and I started the Staplehurst Fields Of Vision Group. I try to encourage people to work together in my everyday life and I hope to support Staplehurst residents to work together for the benefit of the whole community. I had an idea to hold Staplehurst 'Picnic in the Park', which has been received well by Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst Community Events Group and 'Churches Together' in Staplehurst. This event will take place on 9 June 2019. I would like to see more events held in Staplehurst to really enhance the great community spirit in our village.



# Parish Clerk's Annual Report 2018-2019

It does not seem five minutes since I was writing last year's report in which I mentioned that Staplehurst had not had a contested Parish Council election for some years. Well, this year it is happening and that has to be a good thing for democracy.

Whilst the Parish Office is not directly involved in election administration, the process has indirect consequences for us. We prepare information to inform people about what being a parish councillor involves and answer their questions; we also help those considering standing as candidates to navigate their way through the nomination process and assist MBC by publicising the nomination and polling arrangements. Once the election is over, the Office will support the new councillors with information, informal guidance and more formal training opportunities.

Once again this year, the Parish Office has been involved in the organisation of local events, often behind the scenes but nevertheless doing important work. Some of the events are well-established, like the village clean-ups and the Play Scheme, while others like the Remembrance Beacon lighting and the Stay Safe Staplehurst exhibition were new and also owed much to the initiative and determination of our parish councillors and volunteers who worked so hard on them.

Last July, the Parish Council decided to change from meeting twice a month to a three-weekly meeting cycle. The reduced number of meetings appears to have worked well and still gives us enough time to meet deadlines, e.g. for commenting on planning applications. To my knowledge, even with the new schedule, Staplehurst Parish Council still meets more frequently than other parish councils, most of which meet once a month.

It is a fact of parish council life as well as everyday experience that we are often faced with information overload. An example of this is that the Parish Council receives many invitations to participate in consultations. We try to prioritise them, but I do sense the Parish Council's collective heart sink at the prospect of reading 'War and Peace' when the word 'consultation' appears on a meeting agenda!

The most immediately obvious and frequent example of consultation is when Maidstone Borough Council consults the Parish Council on Staplehurst planning applications; this is a statutory arrangement and clearly very relevant and welcomed by the Parish Council. Other consultations seem to come in all shapes and sizes and from all directions. During the past year they have covered topics such as the National Planning Policy Framework, the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, local transport, health services, waste and recycling, dog controls and recently, library opening hours.

As I write, the formalities are being completed for the transfer of a section of footpath KM312 between Bell Lane and Butcher Close to Parish Council ownership. This adds to the Council's land portfolio which is maintained not only by selected contractors but also by the efforts of willing volunteers and village caretaker Paul. With land ownership come responsibilities and expense; for example, you may have noticed that last year the Parish Council had to fell and replace some dying horse chestnut trees at Chestnut Avenue.

Limited space means this report barely scratches the surface of the Parish Office's activities. However, I must find space to thank my fellow staff members Deborah, Jean and Paul for all their hard work during the past year, not forgetting Les who steps in to cover the caretaker duties in case of need. We look forward to supporting the new council through the coming year.

*Mick Westwood, Parish Clerk*

# Parish Activities

## ***Planning Committee***

It has been good to see a few more faces at planning meetings over the past year and a lot of work has been going on in the office with planning applications big and small. Members of the Planning Committee often visit the sites, as well as reviewing written information from applicants and residents. Although not obliged to do so, we hand-deliver notices about planning applications to neighbours.

The Planning Committee meets before each Full Council meeting to consider planning applications affecting Staplehurst and to make our recommendations to MBC.

We always try to make sure we give good reasons for our recommendations, as although MBC is obliged to consult the Parish Council about most types of planning applications, MBC makes the final decision.

Development at the Fisher's Farm sites in Headcorn Road has commenced and some homes have now been sold on the eastern site known as Woodlands Green. Construction inevitably brings some disruption, but we seek to work with the developers to minimise its impact. The Parish Council is working hard to try and ensure the road traffic conditions are met.

There is also the development of the Hen and Duckhurst site on Marden Road, where we now have a brand new roundabout. There are a number of conditions, relating to issues such as site worker and contractor parking, drainage, road cleanliness (mud) and others which, with the help of residents, we try to keep in contact with MBC and the developers about.

As part of the development plan, both our Neighbourhood Plan and Maidstone's Local Plan are referred to when planning applications are considered, both to support approved applications and refusals. We have noted and found it quite educational to see which policies MBC refer to and how well the policies help protect Staplehurst. To that end, work is already under way to review our Neighbourhood Plan to ensure it remains current.

Finally, I encourage residents to use MBC's planning website to make their feelings known about planning applications as it helps MBC get a good feel for the strength of feeling about an application, for or against. You can even watch a live or recorded webcast of the MBC planning committee and see your SPC representative speaking for three minutes on your behalf! I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those councillors who do this, sometimes at short notice.

*Adele Sharp*

## ***Communications***

Communication is improving more and more with the use of social media. The Parish web site is now being managed day to day by the office staff and they are doing a great job. News items are uploaded at great speed and with the functionality of our web site they can be shared to our Facebook page with a simple click. Our Facebook page currently has 744 followers and the items are quickly shared to go out to further groups for an increased audience. Whilst online tools are a great help we don't forget our parishioners who don't have online access. We continue to produce three Village Updates and an Annual Report every year. These are delivered to every home in the Parish. A huge thank-you must go to the small team of volunteers who deliver a majority of these publications by hand.

## ***Community Enhancement Group***

The Community Enhancement Group has met regularly throughout the year. The Group is responsible for oversight of a broad remit, including land portfolio as well as countless services that the Council delivers. During the year, we recommended to Council ceasing the street cleaning contract; this was due to the changes in the way Maidstone Borough Council managed their street cleansing operations, which resulted in Staplehurst paying more for street

# Parish Activities

cleaning and not gaining additional cleaning. We have also started work on the introduction of a formalised agreement regarding the money we invest in the Youth Club – in which we aim to provide more accountability for and transparency of what the Council is paying for. In addition, we have worked with the football club to improve the Jubilee Field and assisted the Parish Office on the progression of a new 125-year lease for Surrenden Field, which will reduce the cost and time involved in managing the field.

## ***Community Speedwatch***

In addition to the work of the small group of volunteer residents who stand by the roadside recording the details of vehicles exceeding the police thresholds for speed, the Parish Council has been proactive by commissioning a week-long traffic survey (partly funded by County Councillor Hotson). Four sites were chosen along the A229 and measurements in both directions for the 168 hours gathered. Analysis of this data was presented to the public at the Stay Safe Staplehurst Exhibition and a press release issued which generated further publicity. Further meetings with Kent Highways, County, Borough and Parish Councillors are continuing to consider the many suggestions arising from this work. Kent Police are expected to attend the next meeting and more action is anticipated.

Residents can get involved by joining the Speedwatch team. The Kent Police/Speedwatch link: <https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/staplehurst-speed-watch/> will give you information, or contact the Parish Office.

## ***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 focussed its efforts on the essential and necessary employment policies that protect our employees' rights and provide clarity to their employment, as well as, reminding Councillors that collectively as the Council, they are employers. All our employees, Mick Westwood, Deborah Jenkins, Jean Terry and Paul Nyahwa work tirelessly for the benefit of the village and our thanks for their professionalism, dedication and efficiency 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.

# Parish Activities

## ***Jubilee Field***

The Parish Council owns the freehold of Jubilee Field; the field is leased to trustees of Jubilee Field. The Council undertakes 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. 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; 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 TN Live Festival was held on the field and was a success, as well as, a bigger and better Staplehurst Family Fireworks Event in November.

## ***Wimpey Field Nature Area***

We now have a local contractor who is as sensitive to the needs of a wildlife nature area as we are. No more zapping of teasels or disturbance of basking lizards. We held another very successful BioBlitz in August, enjoyed by many local families and children from our play scheme. This year we plan to hold Spring and Summer events, provided for us again by Medway Valley Countryside Partnership.

We also have a new natural pond courtesy of “Natural England” in conjunction with our collaboration with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership. This should ensure a habitat for our precious Great Crested Newts and other amphibian wildlife. In addition we are currently in consultation with Maidstone Borough Council to get the Wimpey Field registered as a “Local Nature Reserve”, which hopefully will get us extra support and enable us to implement helpful bylaws.

## ***Parish Services***

The Parish Council has provided 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***

Our Playscheme received an Ofsted rating of “Good”. Well done to all the staff. Play Place has again worked with the Parish Council to deliver our three-week 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 experienced a wide range of activities in a safe and friendly environment and especially enjoyed taking part in the Bioblitz event at the Wimpey Fields, which will be repeated this year. The 2019 scheme will again be held in the School with the same hourly structure.

## ***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.

# Parish Activities

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](mailto: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***

It has been a quiet year on Surrenden Field. Further improvements have been on hold due to the negotiations over a new lease. We are pleased to announce that a new 125 year lease has been agreed in principle and will be signed off shortly. Whilst improvements have been on hold, the normal maintenance has continued to provide a suitable field/play area for the Parish to enjoy. Improvements suggested have included continuation of any hard paths connecting Thatcher Road entrance to Bower Walk, replacement of the gate entrance to include a wider access with combined pedestrian entrance, so no climbing is required and a possible fenced-off dog-free area next to the Play Area. These were in very early discussions and it will be up to the new Parish Council to take forward.

## ***Staplehurst Youth Club***

Yet again the club seems very popular and although our numbers have dropped slightly due to age, we still have a healthy register of 45 members. They come from as far afield as Hawkhurst, Maidstone, Loose and Marden. 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, within the realms of acceptability! The pool table is extensively used and often a week does not pass without a 'Matchplay' game, the odd game of Pool, along with an energetic game of table tennis which often gets quite competitive! We also have the usual games consoles for the members to use. Although the club caters for the 11-18 year age group, at present the vast majority are between 13-16 years. We are hopeful that a new wave of 'younglings' will venture in to see what goes on! On average we have between 15 - 25 members attend, at some point, during club nights. Most of the time we find the young people are more than happy to just 'chill', whilst listening to music and chatting about school etc. They all identify that the club is a safe and independent base to meet and converse on a Tuesday evening. As a charity, the Trustees of Staplehurst Youth Club wish to express their thanks to Ken Collins, The Men's Shed, The Bridge Club and all those who have donated funds to the club over the past year. This is a registered charity (297372) and additionally Staplehurst Parish Council grants funding to support this village amenity.

## Parish Council Members & Contacts at 31st March 2019

Parish Council Chairman – Tom Burnham

|                |                 |               |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Margaret Ashby | Hannah Pontet   | Joan Buller   |
| John Reardon   | Susan Forward   | Adele Sharp   |
| Paul Kelly     | Rory Silkin     | Sam Lain-Rose |
| Gillian Smith  | Barrett Manning | Elaine Symes  |
|                | John Perry      |               |

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

Parish Clerk MICK WESTWOOD ..... 01580 891761  
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Deputy Clerk and Finance Officer DEBORAH JENKINS ..... 01580 891761  
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Parish Support Officer JEAN TERRY ..... 01580 891761  
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Police Community Support Officer PETE GARDNER ..... 101  
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KCC Community Warden MIRA MARTIN ..... 07969 584179  
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Maidstone Borough Councillor JOHN PERRY ..... 07770 734741  
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Maidstone Borough Councillor LOUISE BRICE ..... 07817 362860  
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Note: elections for the Parish Council and for one borough councillor take place on 2nd May 2019.

Parish Office, Staplehurst Village Centre. High Street, Staplehurst TN12 0BJ

[www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.staplehurst-pc.uk)

#### **Front cover photograph**

Front cover photograph - 'Lest We Forget'  
Many thanks to Ashley Hargreaves

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