

## PARISH COUNCILLOR PADDY RIORDAN

TRANSCRIPT OF CHAIRMAN'S VIDEO REPORT 28/11/19

Hello everyone and welcome to Staplehurst Parish Council Chairman's video report for 28th November 2019

I will start by updating you on The Parade. We are in the process of installing wooden planters in the big brick planted areas on both sides of The Parade; these are in the process as we speak. One particular councillor is treating the wood and preparing them for the installation. Once they are positioned, we will be filling them with topsoil and they will be planted with suitable flowers and plants. This has been funded by local residents and businesses and I'm sure we will be putting a small sign in to acknowledge their fabulous contribution to brighten up our village.

Residents might be aware that there are plans to brighten up The Parade for the Christmas period. Shops and businesses are sponsoring Christmas trees to be sited all around The Parade this weekend and the Fireworks Group have sponsored some lighting to be put on one of the trees.

The Christmas tree lighting that is mounted on the lampposts all down the High Street and Station Road will be installed as usual. Unfortunately, some of the lampposts are due to be replaced by KCC so some lights may be missing but generally these lights are very well received and brighten up the village.

We are heavily involved in engaging with MBC in relation to the review of the local plan. Obviously there has been a call for sites to meet the government criteria for new housing. I believe there is in the region of 34 sites of various sizes applied for in the Staplehurst area; many of these will be discarded by the Borough Council at an early stage, but some will be considered. The Parish Council stance on these sites is that we will be rejecting all of them, as we have had our fair share of housing, these are not in our current neighbourhood plan and we feel it is not suitable for Staplehurst to take any more housing at the present time. Our Neighbourhood Plan Review Group are working hard on this item and we are having a meeting with the Borough Council in the very near future to discuss the matter.

Residents will remember in the summer that we lobbied Sainsbury's with the support of our borough councillors and the local press to try and get some updated information on their proposals for their supermarket in Staplehurst. We have been working very hard on this matter behind the scenes and I'm very pleased to say that we have a meeting with Sainsbury's in the near future and the latest information we have received from them is as follows:

"Staplehurst is one of four stores in a package for approval by Sainsbury's board probably in December or January; the approval would be for delivery of the Staplehurst store during the financial year 2020 to 2021 the aspiration was to deliver it by Christmas 2020; the petrol station would be constructed concurrently. Sainsbury's representatives would like to meet parish councillors in the first half of December to update them in more detail"

We have a meeting planned with them; I have to say it sounds very promising but I don't want to speak to soon.

I feel it's important to let everyone know that we are reviewing our budget for the next financial year and at present, after we receive our precept, we have a shortfall in the region of £30,000. We are working very hard with our office staff to try to cover the shortfall because if this happens annually our reserves would dwindle very quickly. We are trying to do this without cutting important services that we currently offer to residents but you will appreciate this is a difficult task.

Residents will be aware of recent local events including the 125-year celebration of the Parish Council, the fireworks event and the Remembrance Day parade, all of which were very well attended and very well received; they are a credit to everyone involved.

# Staplehurst Parish Council

Finally, our Village Update magazine will be issued in the near future which includes a lot of information about current affairs in our village. We have decided to continue with this magazine, because it is felt it is a very important source of information to many of our residents.

Thank you very much for your time and I look forward to catching up again soon.