

WATER METERS IN STAPLEHURST

The way you pay for your water is changing. South East Water, the company which supplies your drinking water, is carrying out a programme to install water meters for all its customers. This means you only pay for the water you use.

The South East of England has been classed by the Environment Agency as an area under serious water stress. It is therefore important we help to protect water supplies. Research has shown households with a water meter use 10 per cent less water than those unmetered households.

The Customer Metering Programme started in summer 2011 and is due to reach Staplehurst in late spring 2015. By 2019 at least 90 per cent of households in South East Water's supply area will have a meter installed. In total 375,000 meters are being installed across the South East.

In the majority of cases, South East Water will install the meter on the external stop tap which is normally found in the footpath at the boundary of the property. Customers will not need to be at home for this and any disruption caused will be minimal. In a very small number of cases, such as a shared water supply, the meter may need to be installed inside the property, often under the kitchen sink.

All customers will receive information in advance of the installation with full details. At this stage you do not need to do anything and South East Water will contact you if a survey of your water pipe work is needed before the work can take place.

Many customers are already keen to be more water and energy efficient, so South East Water has put some handy tips on the website to help. These include how to make the most of rainfall to water your garden, how to use less water for everyday tasks including washing and cooking, and looking at how small changes can make a big difference to how much water is used. Plenty of information about water metering, including financial support schemes available, can be found at southeastwater.co.uk or call the metering helpline on 0333 000 0003.



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):

December 1st 15th (in the North Hall)

Meetings (usually Mondays) in 2015 are:

January 5th 19th
February 2nd 16th
March 2nd 16th
April 7th (Tuesday) 20th
May 5th (Tuesday) 18th

The Annual Parish Meeting will be Monday 11th May.

Parish Council Information

COUNCILLORS

Rory Silkin (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 Perry
John Reardon
Adele Sharp
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 except December, together with a Parish Councillor from 10am until noon. Borough Councillor Watson's surgery will be from 9:30 until 11:30am on December 13th. PCSO Pete Gardner will hold a Police Surgery from 10am to 11am on Saturday December 13th.

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

Village Update

WINTER 2014

www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Parish Council, ably assisted by the Rural Settlement Group, continue to progress the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the benefit of all those people who reside and work in Staplehurst. You can find a copy of the current draft of the Neighbourhood Plan at: <http://www.feria-urbanism.eu/staplehurst-downloads/4584816379>

On the 11th June 2014 a Neighbourhood Plan public consultation event was conducted in Staplehurst which was to facilitate the six week consultation period. Nearly 200 people attended throughout the event and feedback to the draft plan on the day was overwhelmingly positive. This consultation gave all residents, business owners, developers, land owners and other stakeholders an opportunity to comment on this draft plan. The formal six week consultation ran from Wednesday 4th June 2014 until Thursday 17th July 2014.

As a result of that consultation, residents submitted their feedback via online survey (83), email (26) and letter (14). In all this amounted to 160 pages of comments on all of the policies and supporting text. To read what people said please go to: <http://www.feria-urbanism.eu/staplehurst-downloads/4584816379> The analysis work has already started on these comments and in time a full Consultation Statement will be published showing all the comments and the subsequent responses from the Parish Council. In general there is broad support for the Neighbourhood Plan with one unsupported policy.

On Wednesday 12th November a further community engagement event took place at the United Reformed Church. 177 people attended across five presentation sessions from 5pm until 10pm. Members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group, Rural Settlement Group and Parish Councillors were also in attendance to answer any questions. Richard Eastham, Feria Urbanism, gave an



update on progress with the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan whilst sharing the results of the recent public consultation. Questions were posed across all sessions and these were answered based on the information to hand. For those of you who were unable to attend you can still make comments via the StaplehurstNHP@live.co.uk email address. When the Parish Council has considered all the comments it will agree the changes that need to be made to the current draft of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Further liaison will take place with MBC to revise the draft and prepare the next document for the Regulation 15 Consultation which is due to take place in 2015. It is at this point that you get another chance formally to have your say on the Neighbourhood Plan. Eventually the Neighbourhood Plan will go to Referendum when we all have the opportunity to vote on it. Remember that more housing development is bound to come to Staplehurst whether we like it or not. The Neighbourhood Plan is our only legal opportunity to control and influence that housing, as well as the impact on the rest of the Community.

In the meantime, if you have any queries please contact clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk.

Please remember to 'Support your Neighbourhood Plan'.

Staplehurst

Parish Council

HELP RUN STAPLEHURST

Staplehurst Parish Council is the only elected, official body with overall responsibility for the wellbeing of everyone in the area. Every four years we have an election and the next is due in May 2015. We hope there will be more candidates than seats so that an election will be needed. Have you something to offer our community?

There are several large development proposals in hand for the area as well as the new Maidstone Local Plan and the vital Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan. You may be one of many people who have strong opinions about the future of Staplehurst. This is your chance to have real influence. You can find more information on what councillors do by visiting www.cpalc.org.uk/becoming-a-parish-councillor and attend some Council Meetings which start at 7pm on the first and third Mondays.

COUNCILLOR JOHN PERRY

We thank Councillor Perry for his sterling work in guiding the Staplehurst Parish Council as its Chairman since May 2010. John has worked exceptionally hard for the Council and has most successfully maintained the balance between allowing Councillors to express their views and getting the Council to make a decision and move on to the next business. We have benefited greatly from John's background in accountancy, from his experience in the European Union which has provided an unrivalled insight into the official mind, and from his more recent work in Albania which has helped him to keep Staplehurst's local problems in perspective. We say to John, "Gratias multas tibi ago!"

SEWAGE SYSTEM MARDEN ROAD

The long standing issues with the sewage and surface water drainage systems in Marden Road go on, seemingly without conclusion. The issue is the overloading of the already stretched system as ground water is seeping into the pipes. Local residents have to endure raw sewage overflowing onto their properties. This has been an issue for many years, but is steadily getting worse.

After exploration and some attempts at rectification by agencies working for Southern Water, it seems the only solution is to re-line a "large section" of pipe work in the Marden Road area. However, having identified the issues Southern Water, using a priority formula assessing impact and cost among

OLIVER ROAD OPEN SPACE

As part of the planning application for the Taylor Wimpey development south of Oliver Road, now being built, part of the woodland to the west of the housing and the field to the south is to become a nature conservation area with public access. One of the ways in which the future management of this area could be secured would be for Taylor Wimpey to transfer ownership of it to Staplehurst

BUSES

There have been three significant meetings since the last Update. Six members from the Parish and Local Transport group had a further meeting with three executives from Arriva and Helen Grant, MP on 18th September. All parties considered this to have been a very fruitful meeting, with all of our concerns taken on board by Arriva and some suggestions for addressing some of them. One is already in place to help the 4.00pm rush by our schoolchildren. A small alteration to the times of the buses has all but solved a very distressing problem. We also learnt of some of the operating problems that Arriva have to face, showing that there are two sides to every story. The next day we reported on the meeting to the AGM of the Local Transport Group at Hawkhurst. Mrs Brice made a very good presentation and is planning to meet with the representatives from Arriva, Stagecoach and KCC to discuss how different areas operate to find out if we could benefit from any of their operating procedures. Finally on 30th September we addressed the MBC Transport Scrutiny Committee and presented a short paper briefly highlighting our concerns and suggesting ways to get people out of cars and on to buses. Our arguments were based almost entirely on the question of reliability. The minutes of this meeting are on the MBC website.

One very significant area of progress is the introduction of the Arriva App for smart phones. This can be simply downloaded from the Arriva website and will show you in real time exactly where the bus is on the route and if it is late running, by how much. With this technology now in place we are pushing for the introduction of real time information screens at rural bus stops.

the factors, state "we have no plans to progress with this particular scheme at this time". Surely in the 21st century this is unacceptable!

SPC along with Borough Councillor Perry have sought help from MBC Environmental Services and have fully briefed MBC Cabinet and Head of Planning Department. SPC Draft Neighbourhood Plan clearly identifies the inadequate sewage and drainage systems for not only Marden Road, but the whole village and identifies the need for suitable infrastructure update and upgrading ahead of any future development.

Marden has similar issues. Our MP Helen Grant is chairing a meeting in November to seek a resolution to the problems.

Parish Council. To give a better understanding of the issues involved several Parish Councillors were recently given a tour of the land involved and were accompanied by Mark Pritchard of Medway Valley Countryside Partnership to give expert advice. The Parish Council is seriously pursuing the idea although several points need to be resolved before a decision is taken.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to the latest Village Update, the first since I became council Chairman. It has been a hectic few weeks learning the job, but most interesting. Many thanks go to John Perry for his excellent work as chairman these past few years. I hope I can do as well. This is an interesting time for Staplehurst. We are just coming up to the last full scrutiny of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. It is nearly in its final form and I hope many of you will have a look and give us your views. It's important we get this right so please make time for a look. There will be information available all over the village as to where to find it.

On top of that we have a giant election date in May 2015. A General Election, Borough election and the Parish Council is up for election too, all on the same day! It will be one of the most significant elections in modern times with the outcome likely to dictate the UK's future for our lifetime. The Parish Council is only up for re-election every 4 years so this too is important for the Village. Have you ever thought of becoming a Parish Councillor? If you want a voice in the Village and wish to influence what goes on here why not give it a try? You can get a flavour of how it works by dropping in on a Council meeting. They happen twice a month and dates are advertised on our website and in the Updates. We certainly need new Councillors as inevitably some of the previous group retire from the council at each election. If you would like to talk to me or another Councillor about what is involved, contact our office during the week or leave a phone message for us to contact you.

Rory Silkin

PLANNING REPORT

MBC has finally given permission to demolish the former Wild Duck pub and restaurant in Pagehurst Road and replace it with two detached houses. The pub has been derelict for several years. An application to build sixteen houses and six flats on a site on the north side of George Street was refused by MBC. Staplehurst Parish Council had previously recommended refusal. An outline planning application for 250 houses on the Hen & Duckhurst Farm site, north of Marden Road, was considered by the full Parish Council. It was decided to recommend MBC to refuse the application because "the premature nature of the application meant it failed to deal satisfactorily with key issues of infrastructure and with Neighbourhood/Local Plan context". Finally, a detailed planning application for twelve houses on the Homeleigh Timber site in Station Road was recommended for refusal. MBC had previously granted outline planning permission, but Councillors felt that concerns expressed by the Parish Council about the outline application remained valid and they further highlighted over-intensive development, excessive building height and consequent overshadowing of neighbouring properties, unsympathetic design and layout not in keeping with neighbouring properties on Station Road, insufficient parking provision, increased likelihood of surface water flooding, the loss of substantial and mature trees and

STAPLEHURST EMERGENCY HELP TEAM

SEHT held its annual Practice Scenario on Wednesday 15th October, just in time for winter. Winter is when many emergencies occur and SEHT is ready to provide a safe place for anyone affected, with a cup of tea, a meal or even a bed for the night if needed. Summoned by a 999 call the Kent Emergency Planners get us involved. But you can help yourselves too by preparing your own Emergency Plan. If the power or water failed where might you go for a meal or a night? What would you need? Prepare now and don't be caught out!

TWINKLE, TWINKLE

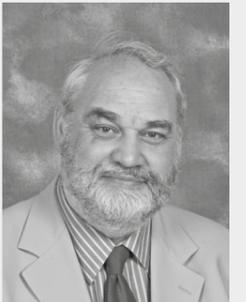
It is almost time for the Parish Council's Christmas lights to make their seasonal appearance! Following the introduction of the LED lights last year we have listened to your comments and added some more bulbs to the larger motifs. As the lights use low energy bulbs the extra power used will be minimal. We hope you enjoy them.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW CHAIRMAN, RORY SILKIN, BY JOHN PERRY

On election to Maidstone Borough Council last May, I decided that in order to avoid any possible conflicts of interest, I should stand down as Chairman of Staplehurst Parish Council. I have thoroughly enjoyed being Chairman and I have been in position to represent the interests of our community at Maidstone Borough Council and at the Kent Association of Local Councils. So, in September this year after being Chairman for the past four and a half years, I handed over the position to Councillor Rory Silkin.

We currently have a very diverse Council with a wide range of experience. Staplehurst Parish Council is very pro-active and has one of the highest profiles of any Parish Council in the Borough of Maidstone; and I am sure that Rory with his legal background and experience is ideally suited to take on this role. However, the one thing I can assure him is that he is likely to be very busy.

I should like to take this opportunity to wish Councillor Rory Silkin all the very best for the future. I know that with his long association with Staplehurst the Parish Council will be in good hands.



general negative impact on biodiversity. Full details of the recommendations for all the planning applications considered by SPC's Planning Committee can be found in the committee minutes at www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/minutes_of_the_last_meetings.aspx