

Village Update

SPRING 2010

www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

BELL LANE PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

It has previously been reported that Maidstone Borough Council will no longer fully fund the cost of both its toilet facilities in Staplehurst. The Parish



Council has decided in principle to keep open the Bell Lane toilets. It will then be responsible for their maintenance. A small increase will be added to the Parish Precept for 2010 - 2011 specifically to help with the costs. Negotiations over legalities and grant funding continue with Maidstone Borough Council. Not least due to continuing vandalism of the toilets near the library, it is not currently viable for the Parish to take them over from the owners, MBC, despite the large sum the Parish has contributed to this site in the past. These will be closed for use as toilets; other uses of the site are being looked into, as well as the possibility of the Parish being able at a later stage to re-open these toilets. The new accessible toilets at the station are available for use by those with a RADAR key at any time as an alternative for disabled users.

STAPLE DRIVE PLAY AREA

Maidstone Borough Council, which owns and maintains the land, stipulates it can only be used as a play space. It will make funds available for new play equipment to a maximum of £9,000, provided Staplehurst Parish Council matches the amount MBC contributes. Three suppliers have been asked for ideas and quotations to prepare the site and install play equipment. The age range to be provided for is toddlers to eight years old. There will be a display of suggestions in the Library at the end of February, with an opportunity to comment.



Staplehurst

Parish Council

ALCOHOL ABUSE REPORT

Many Staplehurst residents have concerns regarding 'youths hanging around' and in particular the anti-social results of street drinking, mainly at The Parade and Surrenden Field area of Staplehurst. Chris Lomax, KCC Community Warden for Staplehurst, PC Marc Pennicott, Kent Police Neighbourhood Officer for Staplehurst and Marden, and PCSO Peter Gardener, Police Community Support Officer for Staplehurst and Marden, have been working in partnership with Jason Reilly, Operational Supervisor at Trading Standards and his team, in order to tackle this issue. What they have done and/or plan to do is:

- Attend the Parade area during evening shifts; use the mobile police station both as a deterrent and for residents to engage with them about any issues. They have found it is mainly young adults over the age of 18 who are involved in street drinking.
- Trading Standards have made site visits to local

retail premises that are licensed to sell alcohol. This was initially to introduce themselves and to confirm their policies of asking to see identification from anyone who looks under the age of 25.

- Trading Standards set up an operation to check that retail premises use the under-25 I.D. policy.
- Trading Standards issued follow-up advice regarding the results of this operation.
- Training will be offered to retail staff surrounding sales of alcohol.
- Local Police have and will continue to provide a presence in the area during the evening.
- An alcohol-issues youth interaction project is to be set up.

Although this is a long-term project, officers have noticed a large reduction in the presence of street drinking in both the problem areas of Staplehurst as a result of this project.

EAST KENT SCHOOLBOY SCRAMBLE CLUB MEETINGS 2010

EKSSC has said it will run a maximum of three one-day events at Duckhurst Farm, Clapper Lane, Staplehurst each year. This year they will be on Sundays, May 23rd, June 20th and July 18th. On race days, starting from 10am, there will be 6 practice sessions of 2 laps each, followed by 3 blocks of 6

racers. Practice sessions are approximately 5 minutes each. Races last from 12 – 20 minutes; they are not run at set times. There are gaps between races to clear the track before the next race. Provided there are no delays or injuries, racing should be finished by 5.30pm at the latest.

PLANS FOR MORE HOUSES IN STAPLEHURST

Following central government directives for new accommodation to be built in the South East, Maidstone Borough Council is preparing a 20-year plan so that 11,000 more housing units could be built in the locality. Currently, the majority of units are proposed for the outskirts of Maidstone. Staplehurst is considered to be a potential Rural Service Centre by MBC and suitable for more housing. Various sites identified in Staplehurst could provide: Option A, 790 homes or Option B, 265 homes. On 25th November 2009, a Workshop was held in the Village Centre. It was facilitated by Borough Councillor Richard Lusty with two members of MBC's

planning department. Plans for local development in the Borough were reviewed. Two Staplehurst Parish Councillors and six representative residents of the village attended. Parish Councillors, though not other representatives of those villages, came from Harrietsham, Headcorn and Marden. Positive aspects of living in Staplehurst were thought to include village life, community spirit, the primary school, library, medical centre, and mainline railway station. Employment, education, shopping and the needs of different age groups were considered. Staplehurst's representatives emphasised that it lacks the infrastructure and roads to support even the existing population. Delegates were told that while some funding for facilities could be raised through the new Community Infrastructure Levy, no guarantees can be given. Option B, (265 homes,) was preferred by the Staplehurst delegates over Option A.

MBC intends to provide a draft working plan by March 2010 for Parish comment. Public consultation is planned for July and August 2010. Thanks to those members of our community who attended this daytime workshop on behalf of our parishioners.



PARISH PRECEPT 2010-2011

Council Tax demands for the next financial year will be sent to all householders very soon. Although the Council Tax is collected by Maidstone Borough Council, the amount you pay is shared amongst organisations such as Kent County Council, Kent Police, Maidstone Borough Council and Staplehurst Parish Council. The very smallest part of your Council Tax is attributed to Staplehurst Parish Council and amounts to £31.15 per Band D for the whole of the next financial year.

Staplehurst Parish Council has prepared its budget for 2010-2011 to include funding for a number of new local projects. This Council is working to renew the Staple Drive Play Equipment, to take over the maintenance of the Bell Lane Toilets (otherwise MBC was going to shut them), and is considering upgrading the CCTV and improving the pathways at Surrenden

Playing Field. In addition this Council will continue to maintain parish street lights, the Parish Office and website, Churchyard, Christmas Lights, Surrenden and Jubilee Playing Fields, play equipment, street furniture, Playscheme and the administrative expenses of running the Council itself.

Whilst some of the Council's general reserves have been applied to keep down the precept demand of this Council, it has still been necessary to increase the Parish Precept by £3,500 to £73,500 for 2010-2011 which is 4% more than the previous year, or £1.20 extra per Band D property for the year. Despite the increased responsibilities and areas of expenditure that Staplehurst Parish Council now has, it continues to maintain tight control of expenditure.

Parish Clerk

REMAINING STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS IN 2010

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 invites 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.

Planning Committee – 19.00 (7pm)
Amenities Committee – 20.00 (8pm)
Monday 01 March
Tuesday 06 April
Tuesday 04 May

You are requested to state your name and address prior to speaking. The Parish Council as a planning consultee makes recommendations to Maidstone Borough Council which makes the decision based on planning policy. All meetings are held in the South Hall, Village Centre.

Planning Committee – 19.00 (7pm)
Full Council – 20.00 (8pm)
Monday 15 March
Monday 19 April
Monday 17 May – Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

Monday 10 May – 20.00 (8pm) Annual Parish Meeting

Monday 07 June
Monday 05 July
Monday 02 August
Monday 06 September
Monday 04 October
Monday 01 November
Monday 06 December

Monday 21 June
Monday 19 July
Monday 16 August
Monday 20 September
Monday 18 October
Monday 15 November
Monday 20 December

ROADS AND FOOTPATHS

Kent Highway Services is responsible for the maintenance of the roads around Staplehurst. Especially after the recent heavy snow, repairs will be needed. If you wish to report a pothole or other fault, it can be done online at www.kent.gov.uk/eFault/Application/ReportCategory.aspx

The emergency telephone number is 08458 247800.

The speed limit on the A229 Maidstone Road has been reduced from 50 mph to 40 mph just to the north of Couchman Green Lane to the 30mph gateway located immediately north of the railway bridge at Staplehurst. Signage to show the reduction has been provided. Staplehurst Footpath Group has an organised walk on the

second Sunday in each month. As well as providing an enjoyable outing, in this way all parish footpaths can over time be inspected. Contact Richard James on (01580) 891644. Anyone organising volunteers to collect litter from the roadside is responsible for the health and safety of those taking part and must ensure that appropriate instructions are given prior to their collecting any litter. Such volunteers must indicate that they have understood and will follow them. "Hi Viz" jackets, gloves, pickers and black sacks were formerly supplied to volunteers from The Staplehurst Society by Clean Kent, which is part of Kent County Council. Clean Kent's insurers now stipulate a safe working distance of 1.2 metres from the roadside as well as other conditions. Unless these can be observed, Clean Kent is not able to support an organised litter-pick.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

At the first Amenities meeting of the New Year the chairman – Councillor Knowlden – announced she was standing down, although she will continue as a member of the Amenities Committee. We are very grateful to Cllr. Knowlden for her hard work, commitment and leadership. Tom Burnham is the new chairman elected on February 1st at the Amenities meeting.

When a councillor resigns during the four year term of each Council, notice of the resignation is made to the Parish. If 10 or more parishioners request one, a by-election can be called. The cost of a by-election, which is paid for by the Parish, is nearly three thousand pounds of your money! If a by-election is not called for, a parish council can co-opt members to fill any vacancies, but this still requires someone expressing an interest and willingness to become a councillor. Maidstone Borough Council currently funds full parish elections. Staplehurst needs to hold an election for its

Parish Council in 2011. This will give the new Parish Council a clear electoral mandate for the decisions it will be making on your behalf. At least 16 people need to put their names forward as candidates to ensure an election. You can be a candidate if you are over 18, on the electoral register, or have lived, worked or owned property in the area for at least the past 12 months. It is an opportunity for those who feel they can contribute to and represent our community. As I am sure all councillors will agree there is a large learning curve once in post and a continual education in policy, management and procedures. Staplehurst Parish Councillors are unpaid, although certain expenses can be claimed. We welcome ideas and suggestions as to how to engage your interest. This leads my thoughts to the Annual Parish Meeting on May 10th 2010. Please come to this as well as to our twice monthly meetings.

Margaret Arger

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 10TH MAY 2010 IN SOUTH HALL, STAPLEHURST VILLAGE CENTRE AT 8 P.M.

The Annual Parish Meeting is hosted by the Parish Council. The Parish Clerk will be requesting leaders of Village Groups to provide a short report of their activities during the past year. These reports will be published with the Agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting and filed with the Minutes for historical interest. A representative of the Kenward Trust, (a Christian charity dealing with issues relating to alcohol/drug misuse and homelessness,) will speak about the Trust's work. The Parish Council Chairman will give a verbal summary of

the activities of the Council during the past year and the Annual Statement of Accounts will be available. County and Borough Councillors, together with representatives from the policing team, will speak of their work on behalf of the Parish during 2009. The Annual Parish Meeting provides an opportunity for local residents to be informed about, and to report on, a great number of issues that affect this parish, as well as to discuss with or put questions directly to those who serve this community.

Parish Council Information

COUNCILLORS

Margaret Arger (Chairman and Chairman of Planning)
John Perry (Vice Chairman)
Bill Best
Joan Buller
Tom Burnham (Chairman of Amenities)
Paul Butcher
Jenny Fairfax
Barry Franks
Paul Kelly
Angela Knowlden
Roger Munn
John Reardon
Matt Sankey
Steve Smith
Peter Spearink

CLERK

Mrs Sue Bassett

ASSISTANT to CLERK

Mrs Helen Warmington

Address:

The Parish Office
Village Centre
High Street

Staplehurst TN12 0BJ

Email: staplehurst1@btconnect.com

Tel/fax: 01580 891761

Opening hours: 9am to 1pm Mondays to Fridays, except on Thursdays when it is by appointment.

Borough Councillor Lusty holds a Council Surgery at the Library on the last Saturday of each month from 10am to 12pm. This is supported by a Parish Councillor and one of the community policing team; Community Warden Chris Lomax, PC Marc Pennicott or PCSO Pete Gardner.

You are welcome to talk through any local problems or ask questions about local issues with any or all of these Councillors and officers.

