

STAPLEHURST

PARISH COUNCIL



www.staplehurst-pc-uk

Published by Staplehurst Parish Council, Community Centre, High Street, Staplehurst, Kent TN12 0BJ

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



This has been a somewhat frustrating year for the Parish Council, after years of acquiring improvements to our village, the last year has been slow and lacking the desire to make a difference.

The notable successes were the external gym and other improvements at Surrenden Field, the Summer Playscheme, the Youth Club and associated improvements, the

Bioblitz, successful engagement through community surveys, the Village Clean ups and various work with the Payback Team.

Very sadly the Youth Club has been closed for approximately 6 months! I think it is of paramount importance that the PC learns from this, because it has been a situation which only the Parish Council can take the blame for. I am pleased that, as we speak, the Youth Club is finally due to be reopened. I am very quick to acknowledge successes, when we achieve them, so I think it is important to acknowledge failures in the same way.

Again, sadly, the Payback team are not available to us for an extended period of time. We have no idea as to when they may be returning, if they will be returning at all.

I will be pursuing their return with vigour, as they have been a huge help to our whole community.

A lot of time and energy is going into getting a 3G All Weather Sports Pitch at the Jubilee Field. It is important to state that, if this goes ahead, the majority of funding will be from the Football

Foundation. The Parish Council's input will be £30,000, plus S106 funds, which is from developers' funding.

I am aware of the significant concerns of residents, who feel that the facility is being monopolised by a small number of users. Concerns over parking and management of the facility have yet to be addressed. As a football person, who has been involved in raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for the Jubilee, I would love to acquire the 3G pitch, but it must be a community facility, which is not monopolised in the way the main pitch area has been. This is your money, which is paying for it and, apart from the S106 funds, the Parish Council are paying a lot of money into the management of the Jubilee Field.

We are currently engaging with Cranbrook and other Parish Councils to try to get a secondary school back in the area. The closure of the High Weald Academy was a shock to many and, although it may be a long fight to get a school, I believe it would hugely benefit our community.

After the recent election, a non-contested election was announced for the Staplehurst Parish Council, due to lack of candidates. As there are 15 positions on the Parish Council and only 11 candidates came forward, we currently have vacancies for 4 Councillors. Perhaps some more of our residents would like to come forward to help?

Onwards and upwards!

Paddy

P.J. Riordan

SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Authority	Benefits	Building * ¹	Cemeteries * ²	Children's Play Areas * ³	Children's Play areas * ⁴	Council Housing	Council Tax	Education	Football pitches	Graffiti removal	Hedges & Shrubs roadside	Highway maintenance	Highways	Housing benefits	Library	Noise Nuisance & control	Planning * ⁵	Public Toilets – Bell Lane	Public transport	Refuse collection	Refuse disposal	Social Services	Street lighting	Street lighting * ⁶	Traffic Road Safety	Trees on the Highway
KCC								<		<	<	<	<	<	<				<			<	<		<	<
MBC	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓				✓		✓	✓			✓	✓					
SPC				✓	✓	C	C		✓			C	C	C			C	✓	C	C				✓	C	

This Council is primarily responsible for the provision of this service and should be your first point of contact.

✓

This Council is consulted on matters relating to the provision of this service and may be able to offer some assistance.

C

*1 Building regulations and enforcement

*2 In Staplehurst Church manages cemetery

*3 Housing areas

*4 Recreation Grounds

*5 Policy / Applications / Enforcement

*6 Nicholson Walk, Chapel Lane and 6 on Maidstone Road

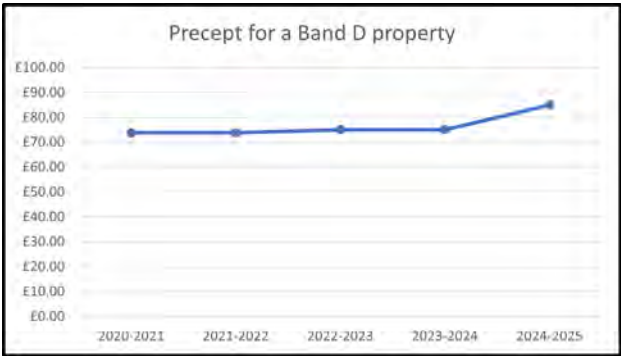
Kent County Council	03000 410 410	www.kent.gov.uk/reportaproblem
Maidstone Borough Council	01622 602 000	www.maidstone.gov.uk/reportaproblem
Staplehurst Parish Council	01580 891 761	clerk@staplehurst-pc.uk

MONEY MATTERS 2023/24

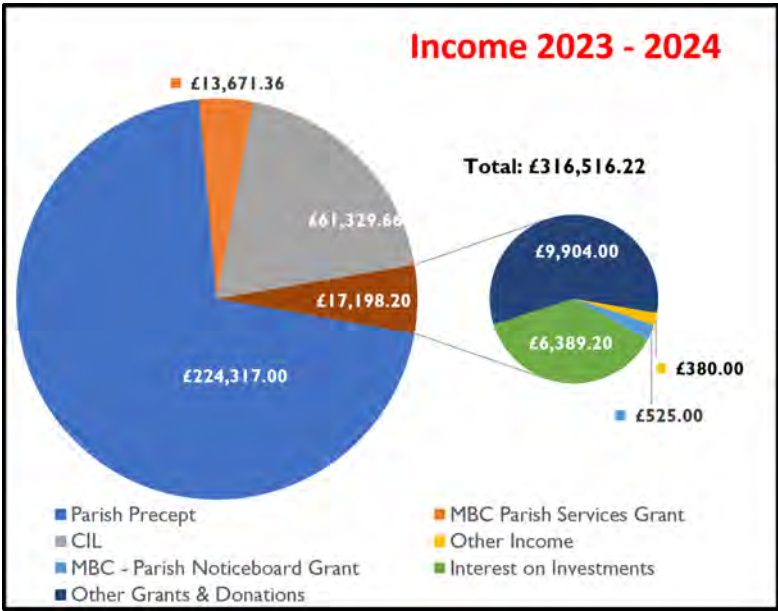
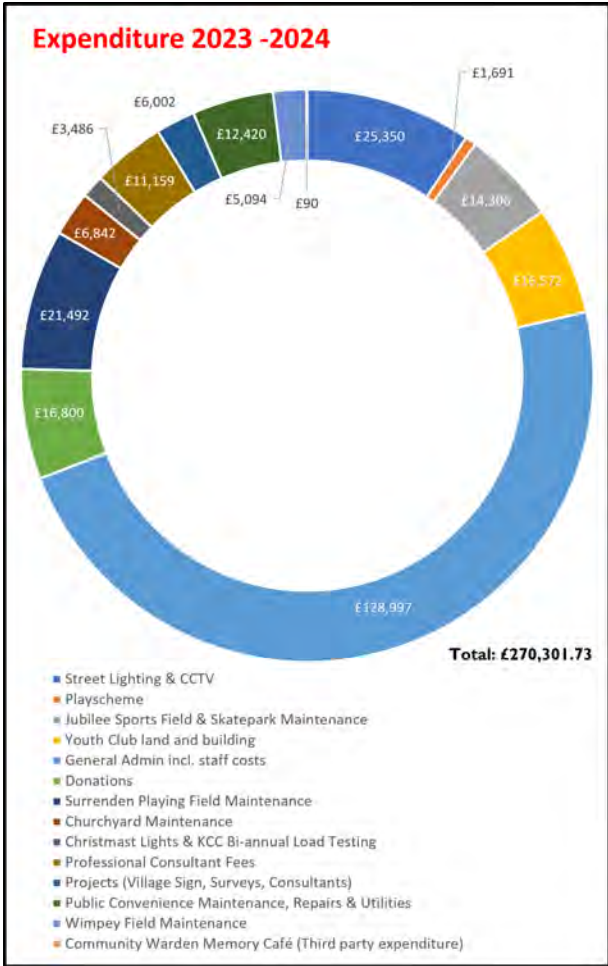
PRECEPT 2024-25

The Parish Precept for 2024-25 has been set at £262,247.00 which equates to £84.96 per annum for a Band D property. This is an increase of 13.25% or £9.94 p.a. compared to last year.

When setting the budget, Councillors were mindful that household costs to residents had risen greatly in the past year.



However, to future proof and improve existing facilities and services in the village, they had no choice but to increase the precept, which takes into account all of the running costs incurred by the Parish Council. Along with a number of planned new projects, the management of Jubilee Field has recently been taken over by the Parish Council, following the early surrendering of the lease by the trustees of the Jubilee Field Management Committee.



GRANTS & DONATIONS

In 2023-24, Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables Parish Councils to spend up to the product of £9.93 per elector for the benefit of people in the area and on activities or projects not specifically authorised by other powers. Electoral Roll stood at 5,537, thereby resulting in a limit of £54,982.41. The Council spent £15,800.00 on donations and £1,000 in grants.

ORGANISATION	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance	£200	Emergency medical services
Royal British Legion	£100	Remembrance Day poppy wreath
Community Centre for Debt Advice Staplehurst	£200	Free face-to-face debt advice service
Staplehurst Scouts Group	£200	Contribution - use of premises by The Men's Shed
Staplehurst Women Institute	£50	Autumn Village Clean-up - refreshments
Staplehurst Men's Shed	£50	Spring Village Clean-up - refreshments
Village Golf & Sports Club	£15000	Contribution from Community Infrastructure Levy towards new toilets facilities
Staplehurst Emergency Help Team	£1000	Start-up Grant
TOTAL DONATIONS	£16,800.00	

STAPLEHURST

PARISH COUNCIL



CHAIRMAN

Paddy Riordan

Communications
SCENIC
Jubilee Field
Employment, Finance &
Strategy
Greener Staplehurst
3G Multi-Sports

COUNCILLORS



Mel Alesi

Communications
SCENIC
Jubilee Field
Road Safety
3G Multi-Sports



Margaret Arger

Planning
Communications
Jubilee Field
Employment, Finance &
Strategy
Neighbourhood Plan
3G Multi-Sports



Richard Ash

Planning
Neighbourhood Plan
Greener Staplehurst



José Castro

Communications
SCENIC
Greener Staplehurst



Eric Hotson

Planning (substitute)
SCENIC
Jubilee Field
Employment, Finance &
Strategy



Ani Martin

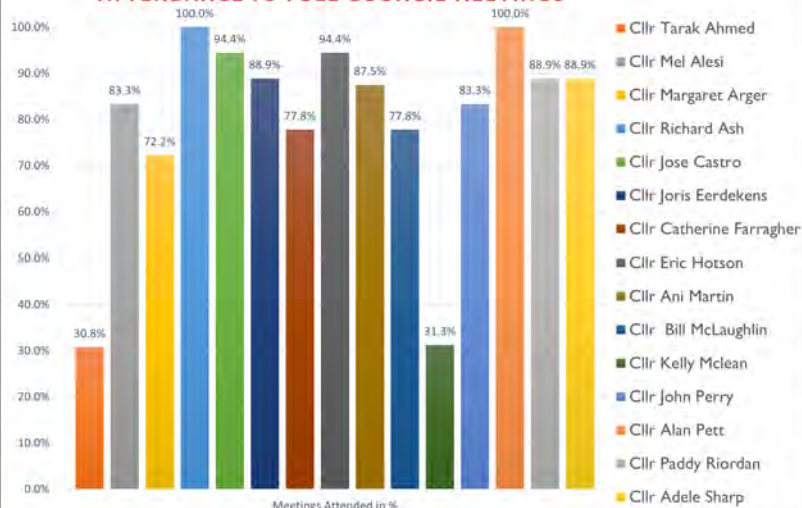
Communications
SCENIC
Employment, Finance &
Strategy



Bill McLaughlin

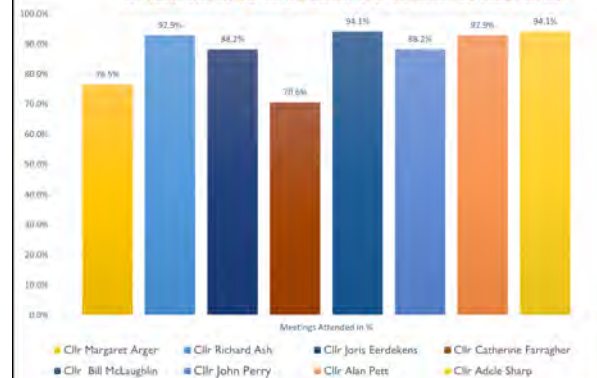
Planning
Jubilee Field
Greener Staplehurst
Neighbourhood Plan
Road Safety
3G Multi-Sports

ATTENDANCE TO FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS



PREVIOUS COUNCIL (May 23 – April 24)

ATTENDANCE TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

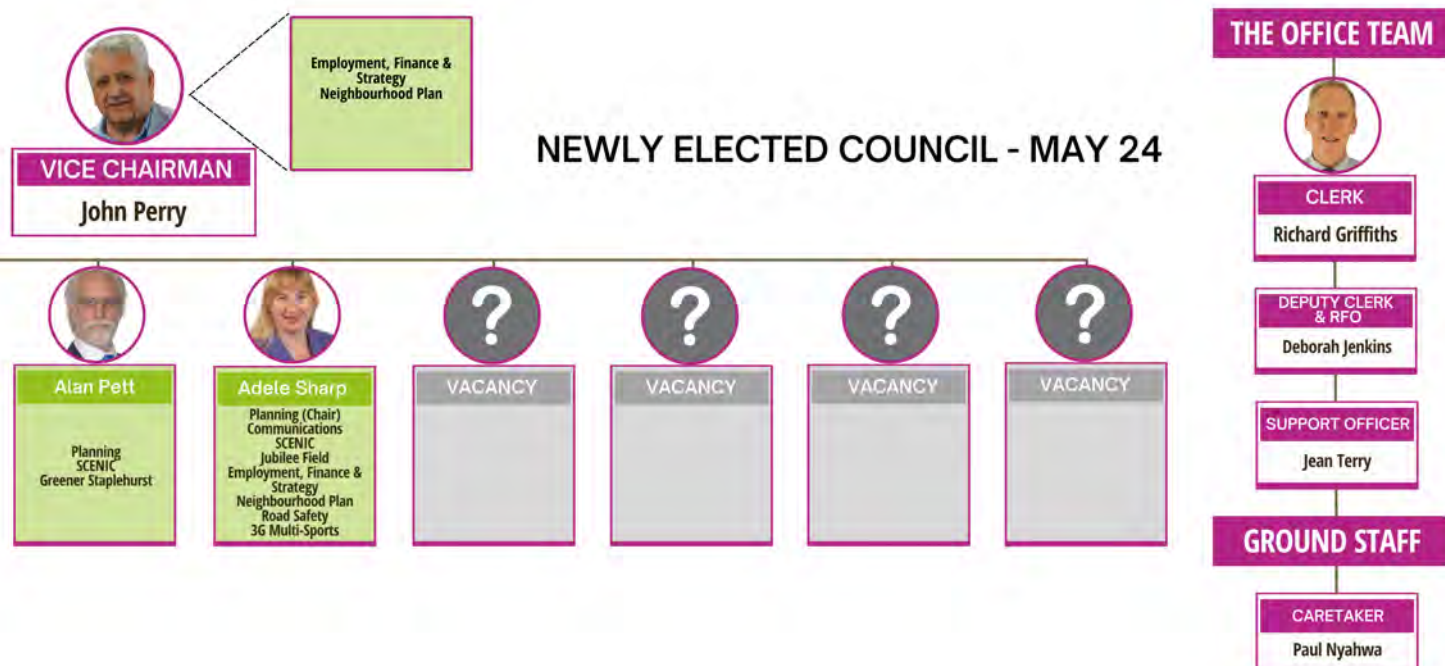


PERSONNEL

Proper Officer / Clerk	Richard Griffiths	Parish Council Office Community Centre, High Street Staplehurst, TN12 0BJ 01580 891761 Opening hours: 9.00 – 13.00 Monday - Thursday
Deputy Clerk / Responsible Finance Officer	Deborah Jenkins	
Parish Support Officer	Jean Terry	
Caretaker	Paul Nyahwa	
Chairman of Council	Cllr. Paddy Riordan	cllr.paddyriordan@staplehurst-pc.uk
Vice-Chairman of Council	Cllr. John Perry	cllr.johnperry@staplehurst-pc.uk
Chairman of Planning	Cllr. Adele Sharp	cllr.adelesharp@staplehurst-pc.uk

Find out the dates for
Parish Council
Meetings.
Please scan this
code:





CLERK'S REPORT

It does not seem five minutes since I was writing last year's report and 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. These events are well-established: the village clean-ups, the Play Scheme, Bio-Blitz, Skateboard Jam and the Remembrance Parade; and are much appreciated by the community. Praise also needs to go to our Parish Councillors and volunteers, who worked so hard on them.

The meeting cycle – Parish Council meeting once every three weeks, followed by a Planning Committee – is established and works well, giving opportunity for the Council to discuss a range of matters, and gives the Planning Committee enough time to meet deadlines for commenting on planning applications. It does require a lot of office time in preparing agendas, publication, meeting minutes and supporting the Council deliver the agreed actions, but this is the "Bread and Butter" work of a Parish Office.

Part of the role of a Parish Council is to act as a voice for the community. 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 sinks at the prospect of reading 'War and Peace' when the word 'consultation' appears on a meeting agenda! However, Councillors step forward and lead the consultation feedback. A recent example is the consultation on Staplehurst Conservation Area management plan – which will hopefully add weight to protecting the precious areas of Staplehurst.

We have also undertaken a Housing Needs Survey and Residents Survey and the Office is analysing the Residents Survey results, which will be published in the near future. This will help the Parish Council and the Review of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan to reflect your views moving forward.

As an Office we receive a lot of comments / complaints regarding potholes, (too many of them), yellow lines (lack of them) and fly tipping. Unfortunately, we do not possess a "mystery power to get these fixed".

- Potholes and yellow lines – KCC Highways
- Fly tipping - Maidstone Borough Council

We must go onto websites and report them the same as any member of the public. Often the resident knows specific details and has photo evidence. It is best if they report via the Parish Council website/local information/report it, and then use the links for the issue you wish to report.

As I write, the formalities are being completed for the transfer of land for allotments. I know that this has been a long-term project – many, many years – so it is good to complete the process this year. 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 the village caretaker Paul.

I must thank my fellow staff members Deborah, Jean and Paul for all their hard work during the past year. Without them the Parish Office / Council would not function. We look forward to supporting the new council through the coming year.

**Richard Griffiths,
Staplehurst Parish Clerk**

PARISH ACTIVITIES

Employment, Finance and Strategy Group Contact: Cllr Paddy Riordan



This group considers all Parish Council employment matters and factors that affect the overall running of the PC. We like to ensure our office staff and our caretaker are well looked after and have all the needs to carry out their work. It is very important, when considering these matters, that finances are thought about at all times, as we are dealing with public money. It is obviously very important to look after this and to ensure transparency to residents.

We are currently trying to obtain Wi-Fi in the hall used for council meetings, to cut down extensive use of paper and make council agendas easier for public viewing.

Being an eco-friendly Council is an important factor and should be considered in all aspects of council management.

Communications Group

Contact: Cllr Jose Castro

The aim of the group is to structure how the Parish Council interacts within its members and with the community. During this last year, we spent the first part renewing and structuring the team. Once this was consolidated, we set some projects for the future, some of which are nearly completed:

We want to enhance the quality of our regular printed publications, the Village Update and this Annual Report, providing valuable information to our residents but also with the intention of making it an interesting read.

After some years working on a Parish Council logo, which included some research, consultation and evaluation of different ideas, it finally looks like we have found something that we think will represent the Council. We are waiting for the final permissions.

Our future goal gravitates around increasing the engagement of the residents in our public meetings, social media, voluntary events and coming up with ideas and new projects. We will discuss and propose how we will use the logo to make our role in the community more visible, continue with our long-term project to modernise the software that the Parish Council use for its work and communications, launch campaigns to recruit volunteers for local events – either organised by the Parish Council or by community groups -, and reach nearby parish councils to share ideas and collaborate.

Our group consisted of six councillors during this last year and would benefit from new members. Any residents are welcome and, if you have experience in the field of communication, including social media, photography or the use of new technology, your experience will be welcome. Join us!



Road Safety Group Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp

Our small group of councillors and residents are working hard to lobby for improvements in Staplehurst.

We are pleased to hear reports from residents that the Sainsbury's shuttle bus is now running more efficiently and is being used. If you haven't taken a trip yet, give it a go!

As you know, we were able to get yellow lines around the school, which means there are now enforcement powers if people ignore the parking issues.

The SID camera, which we move between 3 locations, collects data that seems to show that it is encouraging us all to slow down; not totally all to 30mph but going in the right direction. It also collects data about the volume of traffic travelling through Staplehurst and the crossroads, ensuring, should further developments be proposed, traffic issues must be taken into account. It is already on record that the crossroads are at capacity.



Speaking of crossroads, we have reminded Kent Highways repeatedly about the need to repaint the lines there and at the Sainsbury's roundabout. We are assured that this is on the 'maintenance work list' and will happen as soon as weather permits.

During these cash strapped times, we appreciate that Kent Highways are unable to facilitate many of our proposals, nonetheless we continue to lobby for various projects to improve the A229 and surrounding roads, including extending white / yellow lines, speed limit reductions and signs.

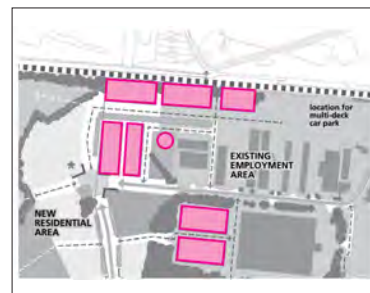
We feel the frustration of parishioners that what seems a logical solution to us is blocked by bureaucracy and lack of KH funds. Nonetheless we shall continue to lobby for us all.

Planning Committee Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp

Parish Councillors can also be on the planning committee, that meets every 3 weeks, to review planning applications in Staplehurst. As a committee, we look at planning conditions and consider comments from neighbours, before submitting our recommendations as a formal consultee to the Maidstone Planning committee. Although we have no obligation to do so, we try to post a notification to neighbours about planning applications to enable everyone to comment.

Most of what we see are extensions and associated works, but there are also the larger developments that we consider. When assessing the appropriateness of developments, we always look at planning conditions which come from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Maidstone Local Plan and our own Neighbourhood Plan. These give guidelines about what is considered acceptable and what isn't.

MBC then consider the application at their planning meeting, where applicants and other relevant parties interested can speak for 3 minutes about their thoughts on the application. There is also the ability for parishioners to comment for or against an application via the MBC planning portal. MBC also provide pre planning advice for applications.



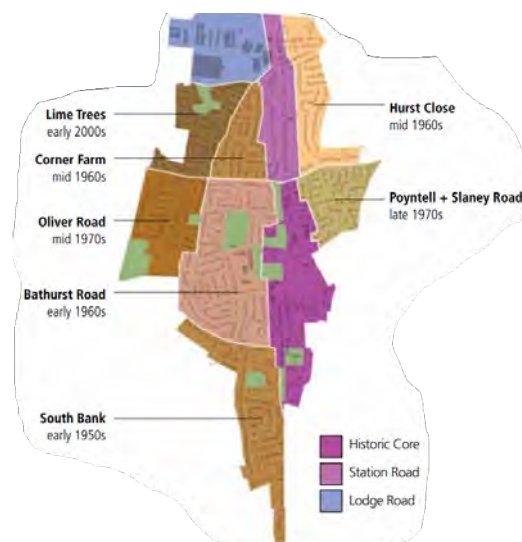
MBC Planning Portal

Neighbourhood Plan Review Group Contact: Cllr Margaret Arger

The Neighbourhood Plan Review Group has had a busy year as have you with a Housing Need Survey and a Residents Survey to be completed. A big thank you to all those who took the time to respond. We are very grateful. The finding will give hard evidence as to what our neighbourhood needs and requires over the coming years from planners and developers.

Membership of the group includes both residents and Parish Councillors, who continue to be proactive in their commitment to reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan and making sure we have a document fit for purpose. Meeting monthly, we are fully aware of the importance of all planning applications being judged within the context of the Neighbourhood Plan and how this relates to the MBC Local Plan, which was recently approved.

My sincere thanks to the members of the group for the hard work and continued commitment.



Staplehurst Community Neighbourhood Enhancement Improvement Group (SCEnic) Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp

Our small group endeavours to enhance Staplehurst.

The most recent project was getting the maintenance completed that was required at the Youth Hut so it could reopen. Hopefully, normal service will soon resume. We do need volunteers to enable the regular Tuesday evening Youth Club meeting, so contact the PC Office if you think you would like to devote a couple of hours each week to this worthy cause for our youngsters.

We are hoping to get a defibrillator for the South End of the village by installing it in the old telephone box. There are also defibrillators at the Kathie Lamb Centre, Library and Sobell Lodge.



The Surrenden Field, beside the Primary School, continues to be a popular place for children, those using the exercise equipment and dog walkers. We are working on a number of little projects currently. The pavilion has seen better days, so we are making plans to replace the building and make more use of it. Maybe a latte and pastry or treats for our four-legged friends will be available in the near future.

A big thank you to Growing Concerns, who maintain the big tubs in the village. They continue to look lovely.

If you have some ideas for things to enhance the village, please email the office so we can look into it.

Greener Staplehurst Group Contact: Natasha Thomas

The group, still made up of a few dedicated volunteers including little hands, is the caretaker to areas around the village. While we all hang in for a proper Spring, the village greenery has woken up and our work has started. We always have wider ambitions as with this year but the key areas we look to elevate are:

Parade incl. Maddie's bed – Thanks to improved brickwork, enabling us to hold more soil, more woodchip helping keep weeds at bay, will continue to be pride of place for the village. We've had a flush of Spring bulbs & flowers and will soon welcome further colourful displays. We plan on applying for an additional bed to extend our planting.

Jeffrey Close – Previously treated to wildflower seeds and most recently 8000 poppy seeds were planted, along with some other lovely things we should see flower soon.

Poyntell Pond – We continue to maintain and make necessary adjustments to plants/trees.

Village Gate Posts – Each with slightly different planting, we are still experimenting to get the most impact.

Chestnut Avenue – A challenging area, will be treated to more of the things that work, and make those moments stuck at the traffic lights a little brighter.

Jubilee Field Entrance – The team are looking to replant this to celebrate the Monarchs.

We meet 'in the field' bi-weekly with individual work continuing adhoc across Spring/Summer and share progress across social media and through updates to the Council but we are looking forward to this season of growth.



3G Multi-Sport Working Group Contact: Cllr Paddy Riordan

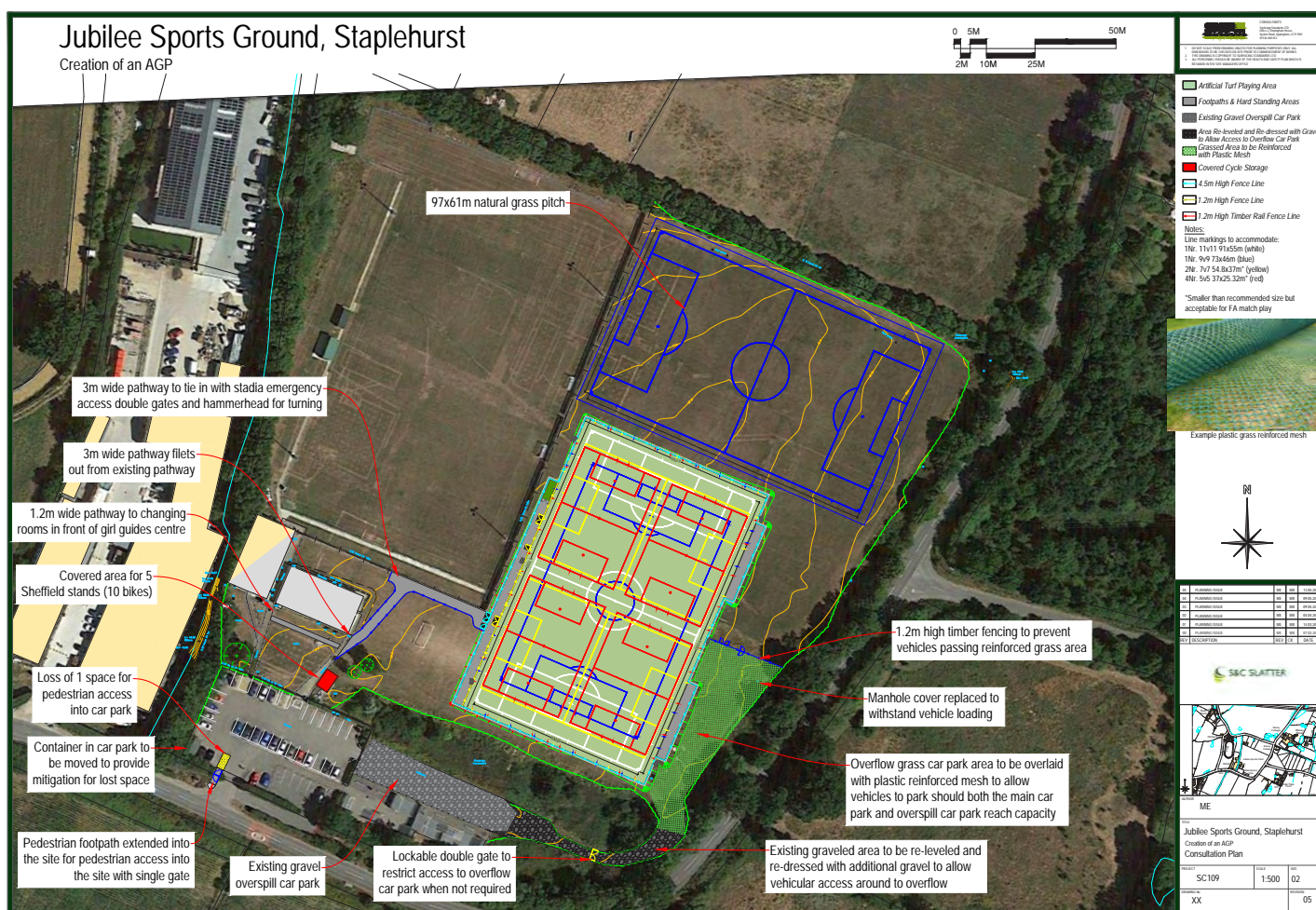
As part of council plans to improve facilities at the Jubilee field, residents will be aware of the proposal to install a 3G Multi-Sports pitch. The Council has set aside £30,000 for the project and it will be supported by significant funding by the Football Foundation and S106 money provided by developers which must be used for green space facilities such as the Jubilee Field, Surrenden Field and the Lime Trees play park.

Improvements have already been acquired at Surrenden Field and Lime Trees, and ideas are in place to make further improvements to Surrenden Field.

I believe it is of paramount importance, if we install the 3G Multi-Sports pitch, to ensure the whole facility is run and managed in the best interests of our community. I am aware of concerns of the current monopolisation of the Jubilee Field and about potential parking issues, which residents are already experiencing. So, if the 3G pitch does go ahead, these have to be factors for careful consideration. The Council have agreed to submit a planning application, which includes enhanced car parking, and residents will be able to comment on the Maidstone Borough Council planning portal. If the 3G pitch does go forward, I think this would be a wonderful facility for our community.

For more information, scan the QR code or go to:

<https://www.staplehurst-pc.uk/community/staplehurst-parish-council-13607/3g-all-sports-pitch/>



Jubilee Field Working Group Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp

The Jubilee Field is a place for Skateboarding, guiding, football and public perambulation (walking!). As well as those using the Jubilee Field to exercise, walk or walk their dogs, the site is well used by others.

Our skateboarding area is well used and appreciated by local youngsters as well as those able to travel from nearby villages. We have plans to improve the ramps and install lighting in the future.

The Girl Guides Kathie Lamb Centre is also well used for Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Trefoil as well as Yoga and other hires. A lovely space for our young ladies – and the mature ones! There is always room for more volunteers, so please contact the Guides if you are interested.

Football is, of course, the main event at the Jubilee Field from our teeny tiny youngsters to teenagers in the Junior Groups as well as our Senior Groups. Staplehurst has a proud history and Junior and Senior sections are doing well currently.

The opportunity of a 3G pitch, through the support of the football federation, has been carefully considered to ensure everyone using the Jubilee Field get the most from it. The 3G pitch potentially brings opportunities to improve all the facilities on the site, should it get planning permission.



Staplehurst Community Events Group

Staplehurst Community Events Group, (formerly Staplehurst Carnival & Fete), have been putting on events for almost 60 years and we want to continue doing that, BUT

WE NEED YOUR HELP!



It is with great sadness that the Staplehurst Community Events Group have made the very difficult decision to cancel the Summer Fete this year due to lack of new committee members and helpers. This annual event is something that, as a group, we look forward to organising for the whole community, and it also gives local groups the opportunity to raise much needed funds. We have not taken this decision lightly, but we cannot organise such an event with the few committee members we have at the present time. Hopefully we will be able to go ahead with the event again next year if new committee members and helpers come forward.

We aim to do a Christmas event at the beginning of December, but again this will depend on new committee members and helpers coming forward.

If you would like to join our committee or go on our helpers list, then please contact us on:

Facebook – Staplehurst Community Events Group

Email – Staplehursteventsgroup@gmail.com

Please, leave a short message with your name and telephone number and we will get back to you.

Churchyard Liason Group

Contact: Cllr John Perry



Under a longstanding agreement between the Parish Council and the Parochial Church Council (PCC), the Parish Council is responsible for funding the maintenance of the Churchyard of All Saints' Church Staplehurst. Technically it remains a donation but, in reality, it covers the actual cost of the general maintenance, which principally covers tree and shrub maintenance and grass cutting. Any work of a capital

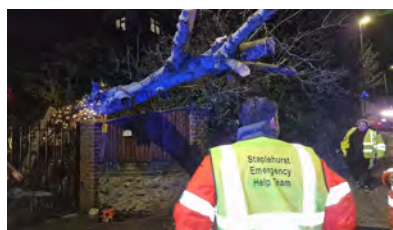
nature would be covered by the PCC's own insurance.

The work is overseen by a Churchyard Liaison Committee, which includes members of the PCC and the Parish Council. The Committee meets several times during the year; its main objective is to agree a budget for the work, which is initially prepared by the PCC. Once agreed, the figure will be included in the Parish Council's budget for calculating the precept for the following year. It should be noted that the Parish Council only pays for the actual costs incurred. The amount budgeted would be subject to an ex-post facto adjustment.

The Churchyard is considered to be an integral part of our community, which residents can appreciate and find solace, and the Committee's aim is to ensure it continues to be maintained for the benefit of all our residents.

Staplehurst Emergency Help Team

Contact: Cllr Mel Alesi



Staplehurst Emergency Help Team has recently been reformed. We are taking action to improve the community's ability to help itself and the Emergency Services in a crisis.

SEHT is a voluntary body working in partnership with the appropriate responders and supported by Staplehurst Parish Council.

Taking guidance from the Kent Resilience Forum and Communities Prepared, we have a number of members trained in areas of interest to them, ie. Flood Wardens, Snow Wardens, Utilities Coordinators, Fire Marshals, First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, Welfare etc.

Since October 2023 SEHT has attended 12 incidents, some of which have been a direct call out from Kent Police. Our chainsaw operator has been especially busy with the number of storms of recent, and our Welfare team with bottled water distribution.

SEHT needs volunteers: out at incidents, based at welfare centres, assisting the committee and/or fundraising – we have room for all.

Chair@SEHT.org.uk / <http://seht.org.uk/> /
<https://linktr.ee/staplehurstseht>
or find us on facebook



Staplehurst Community Centre

Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp

At last, it seems the weather is improving, the sun is shining and the birds are singing!

Our volunteer / trustees are continuing the move forward to improve facilities at the Centre, moving forward with the plans to improve access between the 3 halls.

It's taking careful planning to ensure that making these improvements are done in a number of phases to guarantee minimal disruption to our regular hires.

We continue to have our regular classes of Kick boxing, Adult Ed Art classes, dance classes, Yoga, Pilates and the ELS toddlers' group, as well as the monthly Market and Sarah's Sound therapy. We also have availability for conferences or parties.

Once again, a big thank you to our volunteers, working hard behind the scenes, making things happen. If you have some spare time to give, whether with gardening, DIY skills, fundraising or event planning and would be interested in joining our volunteer group, please contact us at secretary@staplehurstcommunitycentre.org



Photo courtesy of Richard Hawkes

The Men's Shed

Contact: Richard James

Once again we have had to spend several months in exile, this time waiting for work to be carried out on the Youth Club Hut. We are extremely grateful to Bill Best and the Staplehurst Scouts for enabling us to meet in their hut.

Regardless of the meeting place, the Shed exists as a place where men come together to socialise and make new friends, play pool, scrabble, share ideas and skills and participate on practical projects. Tea and coffee are provided. Current Membership ages range from 50–90.

The Staplehurst Shed has been running for 7 years and many early members are still involved. But we are keen to welcome new members. Why do people join? Whether it is retirement or some other reason, men are typically more prone to feeling isolated.

But you don't need to be retired or to feel lonely. You might just want some conversation or a bit of banter and a laugh with a bunch of blokes. At the very least, we offer an opportunity to get out of the house for a few hours each week.

To find out more, contact Richard James, Leader, 07976 009522 or thestaplehurstshed@outlook.com



The Women's Institute

Contact: Caroline Highwood

After our Centenary year in 2022, 2023 saw us returning to a more typical programme of events. As a sociable WI, we relish embracing various opportunities alongside our regular evening meetings.

Throughout the year, we enjoyed a diverse range of talks, including "Victims' Voice" by Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott, a delightful session on "Sloe Seduction" featuring delicious sloe chocolates, performances by our Staplehurst's Ladies Choir, and an insightful presentation on Buttercups and Goats, focusing on a goat sanctuary in Boughton Monchelsea.

Our social calendar was filled with highlights such as a festive Christmas party, a delightful Christmas lunch, a garden party hosted in a member's beautiful garden, and a craft and social tea event in August. September marked our annual Produce Show, where members showcased their culinary, gardening, and crafting skills, resulting in a vibrant collective display.

We initiated a regular walking group, which allowed us to enjoy fresh air and coffee-fuelled camaraderie. In April, we participated in a Walk the World event, organizing a sponsored walk in support of the WI charity, Associated Country Women

of the World, culminating in a well-deserved coffee and cake session.

In collaboration with six other local WIs as the "Magnificent Seven", we explored outings and talks that might be financially challenging for a single WI. This partnership also expands our social circle and introduces us to new ideas.

In March, we attended the West Kent Federation AGM, where we were treated to engaging talks by Dr. Annie Grey, a renowned food historian, and Linsey Barrell, also known as Ms. Cherry Bombe, who entertained us with a lively talk on burlesque.

Beyond our meetings, we actively engage in community activities such as serving teas and coffees at the Village Clean Up, participating in fundraising quizzes, and collecting donations for local food banks.

In essence, we are a welcoming, dynamic group that thrives on gathering and participating, both within our club and in the wider community. We extend a warm invitation to anyone interested in joining us. Why not give us a try?

Contact Caroline Highwood at chighwood5@gmail.com or 01580 892787.



McCabe Day Centre - Report on Lunch Clubs

Contact: Caroline Highwood

The Lunch Clubs at McCabe Day Centre provide lunch for McCabe Day Centre residents and Staplehurst residents over the age of 60.

The Thursday Lunch Club meets at the McCabe Day Centre every week, except for a short break at Christmas and during August to mid-September.

We offer a freshly cooked two-course meal with tea and coffee for £4, which includes a raffle. In addition to enjoying the food it is a good opportunity for the members to meet and chat together.

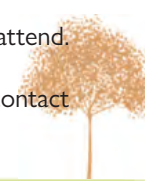
Transport is available for those less able at a cost of £2, which goes towards the hire of the Weald Club for the Disabled minibus.

Once a month we also offer Sunday lunch, usually on the second Sunday of the month. This is always a roast dinner with all the trimmings plus dessert and tea and coffee for £5, which again includes a raffle.

We enjoy an annual coach outing to Eastbourne in the summer, usually on the last Thursday in July. This has become very popular; our members enjoy strolling along the promenade, doing a bit of shopping, often having a fish and chips lunch and even an ice cream! We also provide a special Christmas lunch with festive food and organize parties to celebrate special events.

Our Annual General Meeting is held in September, and all people interested in the work of the Day Centre are welcome to attend. All the cooks and helpers at our lunch clubs are volunteers and we aim to provide a happy, cheerful time for everyone.

We can accommodate up to 36 members, and we do have a few vacancies at the moment. For further information, please contact our Chairperson, Caroline Highwood, on 892787.



Staplehurst Library User Group

Contact: Malcolm Buller

The Library User Group, which comprises local residents who use our Library and Parish Councillors, has continued to meet regularly. Following the excitement of the Golden Jubilee celebrations for Staplehurst Library in 2022 and 2023, we have focused on ways to encourage increased use of the Library and on liaison with Kent Libraries. The comment by the deputy leader of Kent County Council in January 2024 that Kent has more libraries than it needs raised a good deal of concern in Staplehurst. While we were assured that there were no immediate plans to dispose of Staplehurst Library, the need to demonstrate the value of the Library to our community is more important than ever.

The Poetry Group continues to meet in the Library, with a small but enthusiastic group reading poetry and writing their own verse.



Patients Participation Group

Contact: Andrew Watson

The PPG is a group of patients that are interested in health and healthcare issues as well as members of the practice staff. Parish Councillors also attend the meetings. We meet to try and make a positive contribution to the facilities offered at the practice.

As you are all no doubt aware, Malling Health's contract was renewed in 2023. There continues to be a need for permanent doctors, as there remains a shortage, and we have to rely on locums. We are currently advertising for a GP to add to the two we have, Dr Rumfeld and Dr Verma. Our Practice Manager is Lucy Page and we have 4 nurses.

The change from Lloyds Pharmacy to Staplehurst Pharmacy seems to have gone well and they have their own website, which can be used for prescription re-ordering – with which patients have no need to visit the surgery.

It would be wonderful to see more of you at the next PPG meeting to consider how to make the facilities available more widely known within Staplehurst.

<https://www.mhstaplehurst.co.uk>
gp.g82681@nhs.net

Monday - Friday: 8am - 6.30pm .

When possible:- Tue 7.30 - 8am & Wed 6.30 - 8pm



Staplehurst Monarchs Youth FC

Contact: Lee Seal / smufc@yahoo.co.uk

We fielded 21 teams this season, 14 male and 7 female. Progression was measured by the introduction of an U21s men's team to aid the transition from boys' to open age football. We also had an U18s Girls' team for the first time. In total, we provided team sport for more than 300 people during the season ranging from 5 to 47!



We also continued to run Mini Monarchs, a development group for 5 and 6 year olds at Staplehurst School on Saturday mornings together with Wildcats (Girls aged between 5 and 11) and Squad Girls (older girls) during the summer months at Jubilee Sports Field.

At this time, with the season incomplete, it looks like we will enjoy some success in terms of trophies with the U9 Girls and U16s Boys doing well in their respective leagues, and three of our teams (U11s/U13 Royals and U16s) all reaching cup finals.

Next season, we will be adding more teams to the club and look forward to our club presentation day on Sunday 19th May.

Staplehurst Monarchs FC

Contact: Nic Stonebridge

May marks the end of the most successful season for the Senior club. Our first team reached the play off final, the furthest we have ever been, and were unlucky to not beat our opponents, Larkfield, who are promoted on their third time of trying. To be competing at this level of football is incredible for a village team (as the Kent Non League podcast said "where even is Staplehurst?") and we are proud to put our village and club firmly on the map! We now look to next season, where hopefully we will be competing for promotion once again. Our U23 development team have a new management team in place and will move from strength to strength in what is a very difficult league, competing against teams from Chatham Town, Ashford Utd and Maidstone Utd. Finally, our women's team have now completed their first ever competitive season, finishing 7th in the league, and we will look to build on this. We will also add a Development team to the Senior club next season, bridging the gap from junior to senior football.

We continue to fund raise to build a clubhouse at Jubilee Field, and we thank everyone for their support so far – if you would like to donate, please visit our crowdfunding page ([crowdfunder.co.uk/p/help-us-build-a-clubhouse](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/help-us-build-a-clubhouse) or scan the QR code).



We would like to thank all of our players, supporters and sponsors for their wonderful support this season and look forward to welcoming you back to the Jubilee Sports Field soon.



"Crowdfunded Project"



The Community Payback Team Contact: Cllr Jose Castro



We have enjoyed the benefits of having the Community Payback Team in Staplehurst fortnightly till March for about a year. During this time, the team has looked after the Parade -cleaning the carpark area and weeding the planters-, they have spent time conditioning the surroundings of the Community Centre -including clearing an inside yard that was taken over by vegetation-, they tidied up Poyntell Pond, assisted with various jobs at the Jubilee Park -weeding, painting or digging a ditch for the tannoy system- and multiple other chores that are regularly advertised in our website and social media and are well liked by residents.

Since March, the supervisor for the group in Staplehurst has changed jobs and the Community Payback Team has ceased attending our village until a new supervisor is recruited and formed. This will take several months. The Parish Council has expressed its dissatisfaction with this.

The Parish Councillors that regularly accompany the group are considering recruiting a team of volunteers to help with those tasks that the Community Payback Team has been performing and that save a considerable amount of money to our residents. These very specific tasks will be announced with a considerable amount of time, and the result of their work will be advertised in exactly the same way we have done when we had the group. We are very conscious of the increasing difficulties to recruit volunteers, but we are confident that we will succeed, given the very positive acceptance by the whole community to all jobs carried out, which are usually very visible and necessary. Keep an eye open for our posts and join us!



Before

After

The Staplehurst Trefoil Guild

Contact: Pam Payne

This is a guild of ladies who have all had some connection with Brownies, Guides, Rangers and Girl Guiding. We meet once a month at the Kathie Lamb Guide Centre.

Our Walking Group has been to Mote Park, Leeds Castle, Sissinghurst Castle and footpaths around the village.

The Craft Group made 400 "Friendship Bags" for the LaSER (London and South East Region) annual meeting at Tonbridge School. Also, a quilt has been sewn for Project LINUS UK, a charity for children with long term illnesses. Individual members were motivated to make goods for sale in the Making Miracles shop in the Chequers Mall to raise funds for families who have lost a baby, so that they can have quality counselling.

Our monthly meetings have embraced hearing about the projects of the Greener Staplehurst Group and the amazing work of Hypo Hounds who are trained to support children with Type 1 Brittle Diabetes. Naturally we had a Coronation celebration tea.

We have packed Christmas boxes for Poland, played Scrabble,

assembled as many Christmas goods as we could for the Marden Food Bank and had a time when we could explain what good books we had read.

This year's outing was to an eclectic garden at Goddards Green in Cranbrook.

The Unicorn hosted our delicious Christmas Lunch. We celebrated 80 years of Trefoil by a giant event on Folkestone Leas called "Red Around the Coast".



What an active and busy group we are. If you are new to the village you might like to join us.

Pam Payne

The Village Golf Club



The Village golf club at Clapper Lane is a wonderful facility for all age groups.

The Trustees constantly work hard to improve the facility and, for any golfers who haven't been there, it is well worth a visit. A new toilet block has been added, and the grounds are very well kept, providing a very relaxed and enjoyable facility for our community.

The Parish Council were very pleased to make a donation from CIL funding, which the trustees of Village Golf have used to install new toilet facilities. They have also improved and extended the car parking space.

Very well done to everybody involved!



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