

# Staplehurst Parish Council

## PARISH COUNCILLOR PADDY RIORDAN

TRANSCRIPT OF CHAIRMAN'S VIDEO REPORT - January 2020

Hello everyone and welcome to Staplehurst Parish Council Chairman's video report.

Many of you will have a keen interest in what is going on in relation to the Maidstone Borough Council local plan review and the call for sites. Several councillors attended a meeting with Borough Council officers prior to Christmas and we have now formed a lot of documentary evidence to object to any further development within Staplehurst that conflicts with the Staplehurst neighbourhood plan. We are currently lobbying Helen Grant MP and the Borough Council and we face a very busy period ahead. We will soon be releasing a date for a public meeting which will presumably be held at the Village Centre and we will invite all residents to come along and support us in our efforts to oppose any further large-scale development at the present time. We would obviously be very grateful for your support in what is a particularly important issue.

The Parish Council has recently devised and agreed a budget for the next financial year. I mentioned in the last video report that we were facing a deficit and we were concerned about continually dipping into reserves as this was obviously a trend that could not continue. We have been very conscious of spending; however, the general consensus is that we do not wish to remove or reduce any of the current services that we as a parish council offer to our residents, so we came to the decision to put up our precept request to the Borough Council. This is the figure the Parish Council receives from a small percentage of your council tax and subsequently the sum we have raised it to, equates to an additional 23p per week for an average sized property. This is not a decision we took lightly but we did not want to approve a deficit budget and as previously mentioned we did not want to cut the services that we currently offer. The full detailed figures of the budget will be available for public scrutiny and we hope as residents you feel this rise acceptable.

On a happier note there is movement on the Sainsbury's front. We have not heard any more official information since the letters that were sent out to residents in the immediate vicinity before Christmas; however, it seems that the car park is now closed and some asbestos reports have been carried out prior to demolition.

Just to confirm the information we have in relation to the garage at the crossroads is that Sainsbury's will either put it back as a petrol station or if they choose not to go down that route, they would then sell the property for other use. They have advised us that they do not intend to sit on the property as has happened over the last few years. We will keep you updated as soon as we receive any more information but hopefully there will be some clear visible movement on the project very soon.

Residents may be aware that our parish clerk will be retiring in June of this year. He is an incredibly valuable part of our team and we're all going to miss him. This means we are currently advertising the permanent job role of parish clerk. The advert was initially put in the Wealden Advertiser before Christmas and is in the current edition. It is also fully detailed on the Parish Council website and Facebook page. We will be carrying out the interview process for applicants in February, so if you think this job might suit you please get your applications in. We will be very grateful to meet any potential clerks amongst you!

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You will hopefully notice continued small improvements being made around the village. We are delighted to say that having engaged with KCC, they have put bollards up on the pavement opposite Station Approach. We arranged with them to leave some gaps in the bollards in order that we can put in some flowered planters similar to the ones at The Parade, which will hopefully help to further brighten up the village. Other projects we are hoping to carry out are to get the whole library building painted, although this is at an early stage at the moment, carry out some maintenance and painting at the Bell Lane public toilets and the Greener Staplehurst Group is heavily involved in attempting to plant wildflowers in certain areas and more trees around the village. We also plan further improvements at The Parade.

As many residents will be aware, we have received a lot of support and donations from shops, businesses and local residents which has enabled us to drive forward some of these projects. We are very grateful for these donations, they really make a difference to what work we can do in certain areas and hopefully as everyone sees our efforts come to fruition further donations will come, which we will use to continually enhance the community. We also continue applying to various funding sources for all sorts of projects and community groups around Staplehurst.

The fireworks event which seems a long time ago now was again a great success and the fireworks group have once again decided to donate funds to 5 worthy groups around the village whilst also paying for the large tree lights at The Parade over the Christmas period.

The Parade at Christmas was a great success and congratulations to everyone involved in it. I'm sure next year we will come up with some further innovative ideas. The Parish Office has once again raised the issue of some of the lampposts not being suitable to use for our Christmas lights and hopefully this situation will not happen again this year.

The Parish Council is running an event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE day, when the Second World War in Europe ended. We have formed a group specifically for this event, so please look it up on Facebook as there are various plans for 8th May bank holiday around the village and indeed throughout the country.

Many thanks for your continued support and I look forward to catching up with you again very soon.