



Staplehurst Parish Council

Annual Report 2013 - 2014

Chairman's Annual Report 2013-2014

The Parish Council has continued with its proactive policy in respect of services to meet local needs. These services include the provision of security cameras in key areas of our village to make sure that the environment remains, and is perceived to remain, safe for all our residents; provision of our own street cleaning service to ensure that our roads are cleaned to the highest standard; managing and maintaining the Bell Lane public toilets and the funding of a youth worker for the village's youth club. We have also provided support for the UpRockin' event at the skate park which once again proved a great success.

However the Parade area, which is largely privately owned, still gives us cause for concern and we continue to work closely with Maidstone Borough Council to try to ensure that proper standards are maintained.

Another issue that has caused us considerable concern has been the quality of the bus service. We have had numerous reports of buses breaking down, services being withdrawn or not arriving and major problems with children getting to school. Representations have been made to the operator and to KCC.

We have also been in contact with the Regulator and have met with our Member of Parliament. I believe some progress has been made, but we are continuing to monitor the situation closely. I should like to take this opportunity to thank those residents who brought this matter to our attention and provided the much needed evidence to take it forward.

Two main issues have dominated matters over the past year and are likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future. These are the applications to develop a supermarket and future housing in the parish. Both supermarket applications were considered very carefully by the Parish Council.

We supported the Sainsbury's application which will be on a brown field site. However, we opposed the application from Tesco as it involved development north of the railway line and in our view contravened MBC's own policy concerning development in the open countryside as set out in ENV.28.

MBC approved the Sainsbury application and eventually rejected the Tesco application. Tesco submitted a new application which included some revisions, but in our view the changes made were not material and we again opposed it. This application was also rejected by MBC so we now have to wait to see whether Tesco will appeal. In the meantime work has commenced on the D.K. Holdings site which will ultimately be the site of the new Sainsbury's supermarket.

Chairman's Annual Report 2013-2014

In the case of future housing, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Strategic Housing and Economic Development Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA and SEDLAA) instigated by MBC have resulted in an initial allocation for Staplehurst of 905 houses. This is based on just two sites and appears to have been justified on the perceived availability of these sites and the application of 30 dwellings per hectare regardless of the perceived needs for the site.

The Parish Council recognises that there is a need for an increase in the supply of housing in the borough to reflect both national policy and local needs. Nonetheless, the total allocated to Staplehurst has increased significantly and is very high. This raises serious questions regarding the level of sustainability of this proposal.

The Parish Council considers that unless a more strategic approach is taken in respect of the major infrastructure requirements involving all the parties concerned there will be significant problems created for the future. Therefore these issues must be considered before any future development can take place and our Neighbourhood Plan will make the provision of infrastructure as one of its overriding policies.

We also consider that the calculation for affordable housing in rural areas is flawed and that a policy of 40% could lead to serious problems in the future. Affordable housing numbers must primarily be based on local housing needs. MBC has requested responses on their draft Local Plan. The Parish Council along with the Kent Association of Local Councils supports the response made by Kent County Council which argues for a much more realistic target housing figure.

Our Neighbourhood Plan will set out the vision for Staplehurst until 2031. It does have to be in line with MBC's Local Plan. It will have had an extensive consultation, been subject to approval by an independent inspector and finally subject to a referendum. This will then become part of the planning framework. This process will enable our community to set out its views and influence the final outcome. We sought the advice of experienced, professional planning consultants because of the complexity of achieving a plan.

The resultant workshops and consultation sessions have proved very successful to date and we are well on our way to establishing an emerging plan. We believe that the Neighbourhood Plan process will enable Staplehurst to set out its views regarding housing numbers sustainable for this village.

Chairman's Annual Report 2013-2014

There are major issues for Staplehurst and I believe that we must work closely with MBC to achieve the best outcomes for all concerned. We aim to work closely with our Borough and County Councillors and I should like to thank both Councillor Hotson and Councillor Lusty for the help they have given to the Parish Council and to the community as a whole.

Our thanks also go to our MP Helen Grant for her support and for the fact that she has always found time to listen to our concerns despite her busy schedule. We also much appreciate the work of our PCSO Pete Gardner and Community Warden Mira Martin; their presence and contributions are much appreciated and are essential to the well being of our village. We have recently signed a new agreement with the Parochial Church Council covering the maintenance of the Churchyard and I should like to thank our Rector Silke Tetzlaff and her team for their contributions to making this such a successful outcome.

I should like to thank all Council Members for their support and their contributions to the Parish. My particular thanks go to my two Vice-Chairmen, Councillor Tom Burnham and Councillor Paul Kelly, and to the Chairman of Planning Paul Butcher; their advice and support are invaluable.

I should also like to thank John Kelly for chairing the Rural Settlement Group. This Group is made up of both Residents and Parish Councillors and has been a guiding influence in the development of our Neighbourhood Plan.

Finally, I should like to emphasise the key role that the Parish Office plays in supporting our community. This has become even more important with the development of the Neighbourhood Plan; the Parish Council has a strong supporting team. I should like to thank our Clerk Mick Westwood, his Assistant Deborah Jenkins, our Responsible Finance Officer Sue Bassett and our Caretaker Les Reeve for all their hard work and support.

Parish Councils are the first rung on the democratic ladder. However, the Council can only reflect the views of its residents if they are freely given, for example by letter, telephone, personal contact, email or attending Council meetings. Our Village Update remains an important channel of communication and our thanks go to all those who are involved in producing and distributing it, but we still need to hear from you.

John Perry

Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31st March 2014

	2013/2014
INCOME	
Parish Precept	107,748.00
MBC Parish Services Grant	9,446.00
Other Project Grants <i>(MBC Public Toilets £2.5K, Neighbourhood Plan £6,300, Staplehurst Society Planters £756, KCC Christmas Lights £500, Misc £15)</i>	10,071.00
Donations to Uprockin <i>(KCC Grant £1K & public donations £153.19)</i>	1,153.19
Interest on investments	56.95
Christmas Lights Project donations	205.00
Village Centre Contingency	171.07
Kent Community Alcohol Project	900.00
TOTAL INCOME	<u>129,751.21</u>
EXPENDITURE	
General Administration <i>(Staff, Parish Office utilities, equipment, insurance, subscriptions, training, meeting & travel expenses, publicity & website costs.)</i>	61,466.41
Capital Projects <i>(Donation to Village Centre)</i>	5,000.00
Donations	1,140.00
Street lighting, furniture, repairs, planters & caretaker	5,983.84
Playscheme <i>(net of MBC grant £775.00)</i>	1,226.41
Jubilee Sports Field & Skatepark Maintenance	4,488.65
Youth Club <i>(Maintenance of site, KCC Lease/Purchase & Youth Leader)</i>	5,465.00
Surrenden Playing Field & Trees	2,540.97
Churchyard maintenance	6,053.20
Christmas Light Project	2,637.97
Rural Settlement Group/Neighbourhood Plan	10,368.43
Public Convenience maintenance & improvements	6,802.09
Street Sweeping Staplehurst	8,820.00
Skater's Festival	2,533.01
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>124,525.98</u>
Balance of Income/Expenditure	5,225.23
Balance brought forward from previous year	101,551.05
	<u>106,776.28</u>

The above Income & Expenditure Account, the following Balance Sheet and Supporting Statement (at the time of printing) are subject to internal and external audit. Staplehurst Parish Council accounts are audited quarterly by Iden Business Services and the Annual Audit Return is made to Littlejohn LLP, Chartered Accountants. The requisite Public Notice was given for electors to inspect the accounts between 9th May and 6th June 2014 in accordance with the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.

Balance Sheet

as at 31st March 2014

LONG TERM ASSETS

None (see supporting statement below) 0.00

CURRENT ASSETS

VAT Recoverable	1,659.84	
Cash In Hand	105,116.44	
		106,776.28

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accruals	(0.00)	
Creditors	(0.00)	
		(0.00)
		106,776.28

REPRESENTED BY:-

GENERAL FUND 29,032.85

Ongoing Project Budgets:

Allotment land purchase fund	10,000.00	
Surrenden Playing Field drainage	17,000.00	
Balance c/fwd for future budget	36,683.39	
		63,683.39

RESERVES

Village Centre Contingency	12,160.04	
Rural Warden Winter Fund	1,000.00	
Kent Community Rural Alcohol Project	900.00	
		14,060.04
		106,776.28

Supporting Statement to the accounts

LONG TERM ASSETS

Assets have been treated as an expense item at the time of purchase for accounting purposes.
As at 31.03.2013 the following assets were held:-

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Jubilee Field	Nil
Land north east of Bell Lane, Staplehurst	Nil
Lease purchase of Youth Club land from KCC	8,400

BUILDINGS

Jubilee Pavilion (insured replacement value)	579,976.79
Surrenden Pavilion (insured replacement value)	8,295.99
Bell Lane Toilets (leasehold insured replacement value)	79,216.34

OTHER ASSETS

As listed on the Asset Register 31.03.2014 held at The Parish Office	187,306.00
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LEASES - As at 31st March 2014 the following Leases were in operation:-

Lessor	Purpose	Rent	Expiry
Maidstone Borough Council	Bell Lane Toilets	Peppercorn	2015
Maidstone Borough Council	Surrenden Playing Field	65.00	2019
Kent County Council	Youth Club Land Lease & Purchase	850.00	2050
Staplehurst Parish Council	Jubilee Field Management	5.00	2034
Staplehurst Parish Council	Lease of land for Guide Centre	5.00	2088

Parish Councillors

John Perry – *Chairman*

I was appointed Chairman in May 2010. I am an ex officio member of all the Committees and Groups. I am particularly active on the Planning Committee and the Finance, Policy and Rural Settlement Groups. I also represent Staplehurst Parish Council at the Maidstone Area of the Kent Association of Local Councils and I am a member of their Review Team. I am also closely involved with a number of other parish facilities and activities and represent the Parish Council as a Trustee of the Jubilee Field Management Committee.



Tom Burnham – *Vice Chairman*

In addition for occasionally deputising for the Chairman of the Parish Council and the Chairman of the Planning Committee, I have helped to organise the volunteer Clean-Up, assisted with events connected with the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and attended meetings arranged by Southeastern Railway and Kent County Council about our rail service. In connection with this, I submitted comments on the proposed changes to rail services during the rebuilding of London Bridge station over the next four years.



Paul Kelly – *Vice Chairman*

I have served on the Parish council for 15 years. As Vice Chairman I take an active role on many of the Council Groups, including Planning, Policy, Finance, Graveyard and the Youth Club. Working in the Parish gives me a great opportunity to see first hand many of the issues we face as a community as I am dedicated to improving our local environment. As Chairman of the Village Centre Trust, I am endeavouring to improve the facility for the benefit of the whole community.



Paul Butcher – *Planning Committee Chairman*

I have served on the council for 11 years. I am Chairman of the Planning Committee and this last year has been particularly challenging. I represent the Council at the Kent Association of Parish Councils' Area Committee, the Police Liaison Group and the Churchyard Group. Last summer I organised Uprockin' with my excellent team of volunteers. I am also Chairman of the Youth Club and a key member of the Staplehurst Emergency Help Team.



Margaret Ashby

Planning, planning and more planning seems to have been the theme for the last year. Fortunately we have made great strides forward with our Neighbourhood Plan and that may stem the tide in the months ahead. Work on the Parish Council website continues and we have added extra information to our council section. I assist with the production of the regular Parish Update; communication is the watchword for the Council. It has been gratifying to see many parishioners attending our meetings. Long may this continue.



Parish Councillors

Joan Buller

As an experienced councillor of 32 years I have continued to play a key role on the Planning Committee. I am very involved with our emerging Neighbourhood Plan and I am enjoying this fresh challenge. I continue to edit the Update and Annual Report and help organise their distribution. I am one of the organisers of the annual Clean-Up in addition to my regular litter picking. Staplehurst is very special to me and I try to listen and talk to parishioners when I am out and about.



Anne Gosling

The Neighbourhood Plan has been at the forefront for me, contributing and sharing ideas at the presentations. Particularly impressive were the pupils from Staplehurst School. It is their future. A highlight for me was conductor Stephen Higgins' music workshop with mezzo-soprano Frances Bourne – an exciting and stimulating introduction to opera for the children. I also believe we need to ensure secure energy sources, including renewable, which is why I have been in favour of solar energy in recent planning applications.

Simon Green

I am a member of the Planning Committee, the Neighbourhood Plan team, Policy and Finance Groups and I am particularly interested in planning issues. Staplehurst is a thriving village, but with limited infrastructure and we need to address this without accepting excessive development. I am Business Manager of a small national charity and previously ran a small local business and an environmental charity in Kent. I try to apply those skills in helping the Parish Council support and lead the local community.



Neal Kemp

I have enjoyed my first year on the council and dealing with the challenges presented as well as those that lay ahead, especially with the Neighbourhood Plan and local development issues. I am on the planning committee and represent the council on the River Beult consultations and recent flooding issues. Next year will become increasingly important for the village with the final stages and consultations on the neighbourhood plan and hopefully its formal adoption. I implore as many residents as possible to become involved.

Sam Lain-Rose

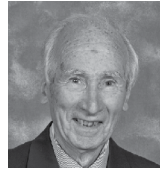
This time last year I was getting comfortable with my role as Parish Councillor and learning the ropes. I am an active member of the Council on many groups and represent the Parish Council on various committees. I have been very involved in the Finance and Strategy & Policy Groups as well as sitting on the Youth Club and Village Centre committees. It is an exciting time as we move on with our emerging Neighbourhood Plan and end up with a strong vision for Staplehurst.



Parish Councillors

Barrett Manning

I have been an active member of the Local Transport Accessibility Group with particular interest in the No. 5 Arriva bus service for students. From April 2014 we should see a general improvement in services. I represent the Parish Council on the Carnival & Fete Committee, Knoxbridge A229 Residents Group and serve on the Surrenden Playing Field Group, the Allotment Project Group, Headcorn Aerodrome Consultative Committee, Staplehurst Primary School Liaison and Staplehurst Library Users Group.



John Reardon

My work shift pattern has caused me to miss various Monday night Parish Council meetings, but has given me more opportunity to deal with issues during the weekdays. This year the biggest issue for me was to work with the Parish to petition KCC to drop their plans for the Kent Freedom Pass which culminated in a radio interview on Kent Radio's Breakfast Show which was very nerve-racking. I am involved with the constant managing of our website and arranging ongoing maintenance of Surrenden Field.



Adele Sharp

I have lived my whole life in Staplehurst. Although I have travelled extensively this is where I want to be. In my role as a Councillor I enjoy helping our community. Staplehurst has a great community atmosphere, being of town size, but keeping its village feel and ethics. I believe that it is important to ensure that our community's best interests are kept in mind when facing the future whether the issues are about public toilets, education or housing plans.



Rory Silkin

I have served on the Strategy & Policy group, helping to re-draft the Council's Standing Orders and I helped prepare the new Churchyard Agreement. I also chaired the Staplehurst Emergency Help Team. I have only missed one Parish Council meeting! I represented the Council on the Patient Participation Group, representing the patients at the Health Centre and I chaired the Friends of Staplehurst Health Centre.



Peter Spearink

I have assisted the residents of the Lime Trees estate in getting yellow lines and those of Knoxbridge who are seeking speed restrictions. I continued to support a second supermarket, but did not support further expenditure on the Neighbourhood Plan. I have maintained 100% attendance at Parish Council meetings. I have worked to improve the reliability of the No5 bus through the Local Transport Forum, especially the school buses. I have arranged several visits by the Mayor and members of MBC cabinet to local businesses.



Parish Clerk's Annual Report 2013-2014

Speak to any parish clerk and they'll tell you how busy they are. There's an exception to every rule, but in this case I'm yet to meet him or her. Those of a certain age will remember Citizen Smith's "Power to the People!" The Government's more formal approach to power sharing, through the Localism Act, means we are seeing increasingly more business pushed down the local government hierarchy – and it stops at your Parish Council.

Last year was once again very busy for your Parish Office with no sign of any respite. The Neighbourhood Plan occupied a lot of time and continues to do so. Engaging professional consultants was clearly beneficial in providing knowledge and skills to guide us, but the Neighbourhood Plan belongs to the community of Staplehurst whose input is critical. Your Parish Office staff therefore spent much time and effort organising engagement events. We are particularly grateful to all the individuals, businesses and local groups who showed support in different ways, whether distributing leaflets, providing welcome food and drink at events or simply coming along to have their say.

Life wasn't just about the Neighbourhood Plan - the Parish Office was involved in many other activities. In the summer the children's Play Scheme ran at the Kathie Lamb Brownie and Guide Centre at the Jubilee Field; at the skate park the UpRockin' 2013 festival attracted skateboard and bike enthusiasts from near and far and at the Carnival & Fete councillors joined in the fun with their stall. This spring 40 volunteers donned their protective gloves, walked the village roads and picked up over eighty sacks of litter in the annual Village Clean-Up.

Even the supposedly routine tasks of the Parish Office team offer variety that is the spice of life. The wide range of Parish services and amenities includes the village caretaker, playing fields, street sweeping, CCTV cameras, salt bins, street lights, Christmas lights, bus shelters, public toilets, community notice boards and planters. In some cases the Parish Council complements borough or county council provision and we recognise it's not always clear who does what - for example some bus shelters belong to the Parish Council and some to the borough, some street lights are maintained by the Parish Council, but most are maintained by the county. If in doubt, please ask.

One role we don't undertake in the Parish Office is to manage and take bookings for the Village Centre, although many people think we do. This role is undertaken by a hardworking management committee who do a great job looking after their users (such as the Parish Council) very well!

The Parish Council meets regularly on the first and third Monday of each month, slipping to a Tuesday if it's a bank holiday. In practice this means the Council and Planning Committee usually meet every two weeks, a frequency that horrifies some of my fellow clerks. However, it also means that councillors are always dealing with current issues, striving (as volunteers, remember) to do their best for Staplehurst. Not everyone agrees all the time, but then meetings would be boring if that were the case – and as someone challenged with the task of minuting meetings, I can assure you, 'boring' they are not! Members of the public may attend meetings to listen and may speak before and after, so why not come along to see some grass roots democracy in action?

Finally, a 'thank you' to the Parish Office team, councillors and community volunteers who contributed to an interesting, challenging and enjoyable year. Here's to the next one!

Mick Westwood
Parish Clerk

Parish Activities

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee met 24 times between 1st April 2013 and 31 March 2014. Its role is to advise MBC on all applications for planning permission in Staplehurst in the light of local factors. To this end members study the plans and documents submitted by the applicant and usually make a site visit. We deliver letters to neighbouring properties to inform them of planning applications and there is an opportunity for residents to address the Committee before and after the meeting. If the application is considered by the Borough Planning Committee rather than being decided by an MBC planning officer, a representative of the Parish Council often attends to emphasise the points made in our written recommendation.

During the year the Committee considered 68 applications for full or outline planning permission (62 in 2012-13). It reconsidered 11 where additional or amended information had been submitted (10 in 2012-13). There were 6 applications related to tree work (12 in 2012-13), 4 for listed building or conservation area consent (2 in 2012-13), 5 applications for “certificates of lawful development” (8 in 2012-13), and 3 consultations over developments outside Maidstone Borough, but close to the boundary of Staplehurst (2 in 2012-13). There were 4 requests for “screening opinions” on whether large developments needed a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (4 in 2012-13).

The developments considered by the Committee included proposals for housing at the Bell Hotel in the High Street, alterations to the Taylor Wimpey development in Oliver Road, a development next to Surrenden Mews, a new Tesco supermarket proposal and a plan for a large photovoltaic generation array at Great Pagehurst Farm.

Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan is your plan and it is important you have your say in the future of Staplehurst. The Parish Council and Rural Settlement Group (RSG) continued working on the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. The process was deemed so important that the Parish Council opted to bring on board planning consultants FERIA Urbanism, ably led by Richard Eastham.

It was very important that Staplehurst residents had a say in housing, community facilities, infrastructure requirements, transport, education and economy whilst identifying where future funding could be utilised.

Consultation events were held in September and October 2013 which led to future events in January, February and March 2014 at various venues throughout the village.

The RSG continued to monitor developments resulting from a second Land Call and the draft Local Plan. In February 2014, MBC announced the long awaited results of the Land Call and subsequent land allocations. This amounted to a figure of 19600 houses allocated for the borough with 905 of those allocated on two sites within Staplehurst.

Parish Activities

The two sites allocated were Hen and Duckhurst Farm (370) and Fishers Farm (535). Such numbers have an impact on the Neighbourhood Plan as such a large number was not anticipated.

For more details see 'Future of Staplehurst' at: http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/future_of_staplehurst.aspx and copies of the current draft neighbourhood plan and relevant documentation can be seen on the Fera Urbanism website at <http://www.feria-urbanism.eu/neighbourhood-planning/4581838413>

A six-week formal Regulation 14 consultation on the draft plan is planned to take place in June 2014. The emerging output from all the Neighbourhood Plan work will inform Staplehurst's response to the MBC's public consultation about its own borough-wide Local Plan.

Harrietsham PC and Coxheath PC are further into the process and we look forward with interest to the outcome of their referendums.

Allotments

Over the past three years the Parish Council Allotment Group has searched the centre and outlying areas of the village for land suitable to accommodate a community allotment site, but without success. At the last count there were 36 residents of Staplehurst interested in joining a local community allotment many of whom currently travel to allotment sites outside Staplehurst. Whilst the Parish Council is exploring the possibility of suitable land in future planning applications anyone prepared to offer land should contact the Parish Clerk.

Churchyard

The All Saints Church open churchyard is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council, but the Parish Council contributes to the cost of grass cutting, hedge trimming and tree maintenance. We also maintain the fences and gates to a safe condition. The PCC can also request extra funds in emergency cases.

Finance Group

This group makes recommendations to full Council on expenditure and prepares the annual budget and precept requirement. Annually it reviews the Asset Register, Risk Assessment and Financial Regulations together with other reviews to ensure best practice and careful control of public money. Regular reports are received from the Internal Auditor as part of the internal control process. A review of the internal audit function and its effectiveness takes place annually.

Funds received from MBC have reduced by over two thirds. In addition we have had to allow for one-off expenditure on the Neighbourhood Plan and street lighting and an increase in the general reserve. These are important items and have meant that we have had to propose a further increase in the precept for 2014/15. Nevertheless the increase represents less than 10 pence a week for a Band D property.

The Finance Group has no specific powers; it makes recommendations for the Full Council to consider and to approve.

Parish Activities

Jubilee Field

The Parish Council owns and maintains the Jubilee Field. We are responsible for the annual repainting of the skate park, cutting back the hedges and when necessary the trees. It also has football pitches, a modern sports pavilion and the Girl Guide centre. Staplehurst Parish Council is represented on the Jubilee Field Management Group who manage these facilities. In the last few years we have installed new drainage facilities and have installed a state of the art security camera with improvements to the lighting and signage. This year we have repaired the access gate adding a jockey wheel for easier movement. We recognise the importance of this facility for the enjoyment of the community as a whole.

Playscheme

Play Place has again worked with the Parish Council to deliver another successful Playscheme. Last summer our scheme ran at the Guide Centre and we were very grateful to use these excellent facilities. The children enjoyed many activities in a safe and friendly environment.

Publicity and Website

It has been another busy year for the Publicity and Website Group. In order to reduce the workload the Parish Council has opted to produce three Village Updates per year in future. This means that along with the Annual Report there will be four publications which are being delivered to every house in the Parish. We would always welcome anyone who wishes to assist with door to door deliveries. The website continues to be heavily used and developments/improvements are in the pipeline.

Rural Settlement Group

The Rural Settlement Group which formed in early 2010 is made up of volunteers from both residents and parish councillors. Meeting once a month, the RSG mainly supports the Parish Council in the ongoing development of a Neighbourhood Plan. The RSG closely monitored MBC's draft Local Plan which now proposes a new housing figure of 19,600. For details of RSG's work see: http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/future_of_staplehurst.aspx

Speed Watch

The Speed Watch team, ably led by Malcolm Buller, have continued to monitor the speed of traffic through our village reminding drivers of the importance of keeping to the speed limit. Our volunteers have also been surveying the crossroads to help inform our Neighbourhood Plan.

Parish Activities

Staplehurst Emergency Help Team

This year we have spoken to a group of Emergency Planning professionals and discovered that KCC base their emergency template on ours. Before Christmas none of our team was aware of the black-outs, but we had a call-out during the subsequent black-outs when we opened a community shelter and went house-to-house to inform people. The mobilisation went like clockwork. Please come and help!

Strategy and Policy Group

This was established to review current Council policies, practices and procedures and where appropriate instigate new ones. During this year it has reviewed the Council's Standing Orders. The Group makes recommendations to the full Council for consideration and approval.

Surrenden Field

Surrenden Field continues to be a vital amenity in the Parish. There is a constant programme of maintenance. This year has seen work to reduce the tree line along the eastern border with Crowther Close. The large trees along the western border have had dead branches removed and a full inspection to determine their ongoing health. Further discussions on drainage have taken place, but no definite decision has been made.

Transport Forum

The Parish sends two councillors to each meeting of the Local Transport Forum, together with a local resident. We continue to lobby the bus companies for improved services; a difficult task of late. We also attended a meeting with Helen Grant MP, arranged by our Parish Council Chairman, to protest at the deteriorating service especially for school children. Mrs Jordan represented the parents. We are pleased to say that after much lobbying from individuals via emails to all parties, from the Parish Council and by a dedicated Facebook page, the service this last few months has improved markedly and we hope this will continue.

Village Enhancement Group

This working group covers a number of activities to improve the appearance of Staplehurst, including the services of the Village Caretaker, the annual volunteer litter-pick, the planters around the village which are maintained under contract by the locally-based charity Growing Concern, the public toilets in Bell Lane and our supplementary street-sweeping contract, which enhances the service provided by MBC. The Group is also responsible for ten salt bins which were topped up for the winter, but were fortunately scarcely needed.

Youth Club

Staplehurst Youth Club is continuing to be supported by the Parish Council which funds Mike King's work as Leader-in-Charge on Tuesday evenings. In addition, we have had a second night added by CXK which is funded by KCC on Friday evenings. There is good work being done and we hope that progress continues to meet the needs of our young people.

Parish Council Members & Contacts at 31st March 2014

Parish Council Chairman – **John Perry**
 Parish Council Vice Chairman – **Tom Burnham**
 Parish Council Vice Chairman – **Paul Kelly**

Margaret Ashby
 Joan Buller
 Paul Butcher
 Anne Gosling
 Simon Green
 Neal Kemp

Sam Lain-Rose
 Barrett Manning
 John Reardon
 Adele Sharp
 Rory Silkin
 Peter Spearink

Parish Clerk MICK WESTWOOD 01580 891761
 Parish Clerk mobile for council emergency contact 07539 692588
Email: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Responsible Finance Officer SUE BASSETT 01580 891761
Email: rfo@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Assistant to Parish Clerk DEBORAH JENKINS 01580 891761
Email: assistantclerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Police Community Support Officer PETE GARDNER 101
Email: peter.gardner@kent.pnn.police.uk

KCC Community Warden MIRA MARTIN 07969 584179
E-mail: mira.martin@kent.gov.uk

Member of Parliament HELEN GRANT 0207 219 7107
Email: helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk

Kent County Councillor and (until 22/05/14)
 Maidstone Borough Councillor ERIC HOTSON 01580 892312
Email: erichotson@maidstone.gov.uk

Maidstone Borough Councillor RICHARD LUSTY 01580 766689
Email: richardlusty@maidstone.gov.uk

Parish Office, Staplehurst Village Centre
 High Street, Staplehurst TN12 0BJ
www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Staplehurst Parish Office is open to the public 0900-1300
Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and on Thursdays by appointment

Staplehurst Parish Council, Parish Office
Staplehurst Village Centre
High Street, Staplehurst
TONBRIDGE, Kent TN12 0BJ

Parish Council papers may be viewed in the Parish Office on request;
most are also now available on-line at **www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk**.

Planning application papers may be viewed at the Parish Office on request or
on the Maidstone Borough Council website at **www.maidstone.gov.uk**.

Parish Councillors hold a surgery at the Library, normally on the second Saturday of
the month, for local residents to come and discuss parish issues. Borough Councillor
Lusty holds a surgery in the Library on the last Saturday of each month. Full details
appear in the calendar on the village website at **www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk**.

Front cover photographs show Neighbourhood Plan in action
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