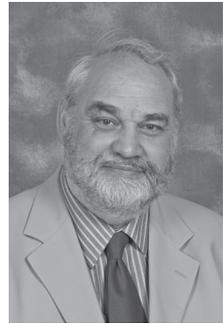


# Staplehurst Parish Council ANNUAL REPORT 2016 - 2017



## Chairman's Annual Report 2016-2017

The Parish Council is very active, but some Staplehurst residents may not be aware of the extent of its work. So I have produced a not very scientific or complete list of what we have achieved this year, in no particular order. We successfully lobbied KCC to limit to 50 mph the A229, to Knoxbridge. Concerned residents had requested this for some time. We arranged the running of the Youth Club during the year. We support speedwatch to educate drivers and make the High Street safer.



We run CCTV cameras, including those on Surrenden and Jubilee Fields.

We fund and maintain Surrenden Field, funded the resurfacing of the children's play area and the replacement of equipment, as well as tidying up and emptying the bins.

We support the Jubilee Field with the able help of the management team and the Monarchs football team. We maintain the planters in the Village.

We run a car accident reporting scheme (kindly overseen by Malcolm Buller). Please report any car accident to him at [staplehurstroadinfo@gmail.com](mailto:staplehurstroadinfo@gmail.com) or the Parish Office. No one else collects this information.

We accepted the transfer of the "Chestnuts" land (on the high street opposite the old Texaco petrol station), to preserve it for the Village.

We supplied new Christmas lights for the Village. We have taken over the Wimpey Field open space in perpetuity. All thanks to Councillor Spearink for his perseverance and continuing hard work.

We ran the popular Children's play scheme during the summer holidays. We organised Village Clean-ups in September and March (thanks to Councillors Buller and Burnham, as well as all those who helped.)

We took advantage of the Community Payback Scheme to clean up the Bell Lane Pond (owned by the Parish Council) together with the associated footpath. All thanks to Councillor Spearink who arranged and supervised this virtually single handed. We arranged the first Staplehurst Merit Award scheme.

We organised a leaflet drop to most of the homes in the Village to publicise the Neighbourhood Plan Referendum, which took place on the 3rd November last. It achieved a whopping 92.6% in favour of the Plan, which has now been adopted into law by Maidstone Borough Council. Thanks to all on the Rural Settlement Group, especially chairman John Kelly.

## Chairman's Annual Report 2016-2017

Due to the tragic closure of the NatWest bank, we are arranging, with great assistance from Borough Councillor Brice, that NatWest provide a mobile bank on Saturday mornings. We hope it will start in the next month or two.

The Council has taken over the arrangements for the Remembrance Day march from the British Legion which had done this for many years. Thanks to Vic Holdaway for all of his service and advice.

The Council provides salt bins to help keep the Village safe in snow. We provide support to the Carnival & Fete Committee in various ways, including the use of Surrenden Field for the Carnival and 10Km race.

We have encouraged the setting up of Staplehurst Family fireworks for Guy Fawkes Night.

We welcomed two new Councillors, Gill Smith and Laurence Whittle.

Lastly, our thanks to borough councillors Perry and Brice, county councillor Hotson, PCSO Peter Gardner and Community Warden Mira Martin for all of their hard work for the Village, as well as to our clerk Mick Westwood and his staff.

*Rory Silkin*

# Income & Expenditure Account

## For the year ended 31st March 2017

### INCOME

Parish Precept	126,700.00
Taylor Wimpey (Oliver Road Open Space Grant)	25,000.00
MBC S106 Grant	13,022.00
MBC Parish Services Grant	9,560.00
LCT Government Support Grant	5,560.00
KCC Grants (Speedwatch)	1,100.00
Other Income (MBC SEHT grant, VCMC bin, electricity refund, rent)	981.30
MBC Grant to Playscheme	500.00
Christmas Light donations	210.00
Third Party Funds; Warden Men's Shed Grant	200.00
SPC Bank deposit interest	67.75
VCMC Deposit & Bank Interest	4.44
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b><u>182,905.49</u></b>

### EXPENDITURE

General Administration ( <i>Parish Office staff, utilities, equipment, insurance, subscriptions, training, meetings &amp; travel, publicity &amp; website</i> )	74,802.41
Street Lighting, furniture, repairs, planters, Oliver Rd open space, speed watch & caretaker	13,397.51
Projects (Surrenden Play Surface, VCMC Survey)	13,129.15
Third Party Expenditure ( <i>VCMC Contingency Winter Warmer &amp; Youth Club</i> )	10,596.67
Street Sweeping	8,205.00
Christmas Lights	7,455.02
Bell Lane Toilets maintenance	7,343.05
Jubilee Sports Field & Skatepark maintenance	7,081.00
Churchyard maintenance	6,036.12
Youth Club ( <i>Site maintenance, KCC Lease/Purchase &amp; Youth Worker</i> )	5,294.00
Neighbourhood Plan	4,336.66
Donations ( <i>Five Acre Wood School, CAB, Air Ambulance, CCDAS, Kenward Trust, Heart of Kent Hospice, Samaritans, Jubilee Field Drainage, Royal British Legion, Try Angle Awards, WI, Jack Davison Dance School, Youth Club</i> )	3,750.00
Surrenden Playing Field & landscape maintenance	2,777.76
Playscheme	1,610.19
SEHT (Equipment)	607.56
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b><u>166,422.10</u></b>

Balance of Income/Expenditure	16,483.39
Balance brought forward from previous year	135,944.47
	<b><u>152,427.86</u></b>

*The above Income & Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet with Supporting Statement are (at the time of printing) subject to Council approval, 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. In accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the dates set for the period of exercise of public rights commence on Monday 5th June 2017 and end on Friday 14th July 2017.*

# Balance Sheet

## as at 31st March 2017

### LONG TERM ASSETS

None (see supporting statement below) 0.00

### CURRENT ASSETS

VAT Recoverable	4,454.10	
Cash In Hand	148,819.16	
		153,273.26

### CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accruals	(0.00)	
Creditors (unpresented cheques)	(845.40)	
		(845.40)
		152,427.86

### REPRESENTED BY:-

GENERAL FUND		57,740.58
Ongoing Project Budgets:		
Allotment land purchase fund	10,000.00	
Fund for Outside Works	10,000.00	
Surrenden Playing Field drainage project	16,500.00	
Village Centre Feasibility Fund	8,505.00	
Oliver Road Open Space	24,572.57	
Balance c/fwd for future budget	11,083.05	
		80,660.62

### RESERVES (held on behalf of others)

Village Centre Contingency	12,239.13	
Rural Warden Men's Shed Project	200.00	
Rural Warden Rural Community Alcohol Project	900.00	
Rural Warden Winter Warmer Project	53.83	
Rural Warden Youth Club Project	633.70	
		14,026.66
		152,427.86

## 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 31.03.2017 the following assets were held:

### COMMUNITY ASSETS

Land between West Side of High St. & Chestnut Ave. (Freehold)		Nil
Jubilee Field (Freehold)		Nil
Land north east of Bell Lane, Staplehurst (Freehold)		Nil
Lease purchase of Youth Club land from KCC	10,200.00	
Land on South Side of Marden Rd. opp. North Down (Freehold)		1.00
Oliver Road Open Space (Freehold)		Nil

### BUILDINGS (insured replacement values)

Jubilee Pavilion	621,450.34	
Surrenden Pavilion	8,889.23	
Bell Lane Toilets	84,881.02	

### OTHER ASSETS (insured replacement value)

As listed on the Asset Register 31.03.2017 held at The Parish Office 279,391.94

### LEASES - As at 31st March 2017 the following Leases were in operation:-

Lessor	Purpose	Rent	Expiry
Maidstone Borough Council	Bell Lane Toilets	Peppercorn	2028
Maidstone Borough Council	Surrenden Playing Field	80.00	2019
Kent County Council	Youth Club Land Lease & Purchase	850.00	2050
Staplehurst Parish Council	Jubilee Field Management	5.00	2035
Trustees of Jubilee Field	Lease of land for Guide Centre	5.00	2088

# Parish Councillors

## **Rory Silkin – *Chairman***

I have chaired Parish Council meeting throughout the year together with meetings of the Finance and Strategy Groups. I have sat on and occasionally chaired the Planning Committee which has been particularly active this year, and have represented the Council at Maidstone Area meetings of KALC. I chair the Trustees of the Friends of the Staplehurst Health Centre organising health related presentations and supplying items to the Centre that the NHS doesn't supply, such as textbooks and additional kit, and as a Council nominated trustee of the Village Centre I have been instrumental in the VC's proposed adoption of a new, modern constitution.



## **Tom Burnham – *Vice Chairman and Planning Committee Chairman***

As a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, I was particularly pleased that after some delays outside our control, the Plan was finally adopted in December 2016. I've continued to be Chairman of the Planning Committee, which has taken me off the beaten track at times while viewing sites of applications. I have been a member of the Village Centre Development Group and helped to organise the volunteer litter-picks in March and September, which demonstrated residents' commitment to our community.

## **Patrick Riordan – *Vice Chairman***

I am proud to say I represent the Parish Council as Vice Chairman. I am also Chairman of The Jubilee Field Management Committee and member of - Primary School Liaison, Village Centre Development Group, Communications Group, Wimpey Field Group, Strategy & Policy Group and Planning Committee. I never thought I would get so involved in various aspects of the village; however, working towards village improvements is very important to me. Whilst much has been accomplished this year, work is ongoing and whilst it is not easy it is most enjoyable when things are achieved. As a keen football enthusiast, the sports facilities at the Jubilee Field are something I wish to nurture and develop for adults and children alike. As part of the planning committee I take a keen interest in endeavouring to make positive steps towards village improvements, amenities and working within the vision of our Neighbourhood Plan.



## **Margaret Ashby**

This year the planning committee has been as busy as ever with a lot of both small single dwelling and large major developments coming forward. Having the Neighbourhood Plan in place has been a great help in deciding these matters. The newly named Communications Group is facing all the challenges provided by the ever changing demands of social network sites like Facebook. As a trustee of the Village Centre more interesting times lay ahead as decisions regarding the building's future have to be made. Never a dull moment on our Parish Council.

# Parish Councillors

## Joan Buller

Last November I was present at the count when our Neighbourhood Plan was widely supported by our parishioners and this will be our greatest asset when working on planning issues, especially at the MBC Planning Committee and at appeals. I have been the editor of the Updates and Annual Report, organising their distribution. With Councillor Burnham I organised the Village Clean-Up and I head up our litter-picking team. I am also active in the Speed Watch and Playscheme groups. I have now served for 34 years on the council; Staplehurst is very special to me.



## Paul Butcher

Sadly Paul Butcher passed away last September and he is much missed on the Council. He was Chairman of the Planning Committee, a member of the Finance, Village Centre, Churchyard and Police Liaison groups and Chairman of the Youth Club. He gave so much to the community of Staplehurst.



## Chris Claridge

Staplehurst is a growing Village that needs a Voice to help address the challenges of increasing costs, limited infrastructure and resources and increasing population. Staplehurst has a vibrant population of 6,500, soon to increase to more than 8,000, and the Parish Council could be the Voice of the Village; supporting and safeguarding local interests and ensuring local and national Governments understand Staplehurst's needs. 2016 was to have been be a year of creating and driving initiatives. It was not but with newly energised leadership maybe 2017 will be.



## Anne Gosling

I have continued to be deeply involved in plans to develop the Village Centre, working with the Trustees to provide a warm, welcoming and well-equipped space for community and social activities. Along with the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan, it is an inspiring example of local ownership. I hope that everyone in the village will actively support the Trustees in this exciting endeavour by registering as members when the Village Centre Trust becomes a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).



## Paul Kelly – Vice Chairman

Paul Kelly decided to step down from the Council after many years of loyal service. He was one of our vice-chairmen, a member of the Planning Committee and Finance Group. He also was very involved with the Youth Club and is still their Chairman. We miss him for all his hard work and humour. The many improvements in our community are a direct result of his efforts.



# Parish Councillors

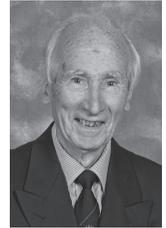


## Sam Lain-Rose

There has been a lot going on this year. I have continued to be an active player on the Village Centre Redevelopment Group which organised the Stage 1 Consultation Event, with the Village Centre Trust. In addition, I successfully lobbied Blakemore Retail to introduce a cash machine into their SPAR store, following the NatWest closure. In addition, I have been involved in the Jubilee Fields, Finance, Staff and Strategy & Policy Groups. I have specifically concentrated on dealing with Parish Council internal matters, such as employees and policy.

## Barrett Manning

Member of the Allotment Group and still looking for a parcel of land for a community allotment, Carnival & Fete Committee who enjoy the company of six new members who have brought new ideas for this year's Fete, Headcorn Aerodrome Consultative Committee, Transport Accessibility Group, Police/Parish Liaison Group, Staff Policy Group, Staplehurst Library Users Group (SLUG), Staplehurst Primary School Liaison Committee, Surrenden Playing Field Committee, and Staplehurst Primary School Garden Club. I moved to Staplehurst from Surrey in 1962 where there were no street lights and reminded many of the WWII blackout days, five pubs, a police station, a primary school (now the Village Centre), ten retail outlets, a reliable bus service to Hastings without changing buses and steam trains were still running to London. There was a magnificent community spirit that prevailed throughout the village as was witnessed by the involvement of many in making a success of the initial Carnival & Fete. The most important development in the past year is the completion of the Neighbourhood Plan after four years of consultation and overcoming many hurdles on the way.



## John Perry

I continue to take a keen interest in the financial affairs of the Parish Council and I remain an active member of the Finance Group. I am also a member of the Strategy and Policy Group and the Rural Settlement Group and represent the Parish Council on the Headcorn Aerodrome Consultative Committee. As one of the Ward Members for Staplehurst on Maidstone Borough Council I have continued to argue against overdevelopment in rural areas such as Staplehurst and that the necessary infrastructure must be in place. I currently chair the Planning Committee at Maidstone Borough Council.

## John Reardon

Work commitments (24/7 work pattern) mean I miss some Parish Council meetings but I continue to work with other Parish Councillors for the benefit of the Parish. I attend meetings with KCC Highways to discuss issues reported. I also assist a small group in improving Surrenden Field. Managing the Parish Web Site and Facebook page continues to be demanding as more and more embrace social media.



# Parish Councillors



## Adele Sharp

It's been a busy year as always, with plenty to keep us all occupied. Planning continues to be a main focus and I was pleased to join the committee for this serious role, even doing my maiden 'speech' at MBC planning last year to put forward the views of Staplehurst. I have taken part in the SPC surgery at the library. I continue to work hard as a trustee of the Village Centre for all those who use it. I remain committed to doing the best for our Staplehurst community.

## Gill Smith

As one of the newest members of the Parish Council (having been co-opted in December 2016) I have spent the time since then learning how the Parish Council works and getting up to speed with the issues that face Staplehurst. I am currently a member of the Planning Committee and the Neighbourhood Plan Review Group. I have helped with drawing up the plans for this year's Playscheme and I continue to be a member of the Staplehurst Library User Group. I am looking forward to also becoming involved with other Parish Council activities over the next few years.



## Peter Spearink

I have maintained my 100% attendance record for another year. I am involved in many activities and a full report is on the Parish Website. Briefly I am the parish rep to Sobell Lodge, the Destination Plan at MBC, the No5 bus group, the Emergency Team, Wimpey Field group, River Beult information group and Maidstone Riverside Charity Run. I also take an active role in deciding the new street names and organise the annual visits of the Mayor to Staplehurst which also includes work on economic development as does the Destination Plan. I also manage the Community Payback teams every Saturday.

## Laurence Whittle

Recognising the tides of change that approach Staplehurst it is important that the strong sense of community that currently exists is maintained. With this in mind I joined the Parish Council in December 2016. In doing this it is my goal to help develop two-way communication with residents, as it is important to me that all voices and opinions are heard.



# Parish Clerk's Annual Report 2016-2017

It took time, over three years in fact. On Thursday 3rd November 2016 the 93% 'yes' vote in Staplehurst's own referendum rewarded a great team effort by residents and councillors, the Neighbourhood Plan Group and our skilled advisers Feria Urbanism. After all the hard work it was great to see the plan receive such a strong endorsement from the Staplehurst community. On a personal level, as the plan had taken up such a lot of my time, the positive result was certainly a highlight of my year.

The Parish Council's land portfolio has expanded with the transfers of 'Wimpey Field' and the land between Chestnut Avenue and High Street. It has also secured an extended lease on the public conveniences at Bell Lane. Property transactions seldom happen quickly and we certainly learnt the value of patience! What seems like a new acquisition, but is not, is the transformation of the pond area at the western end of Bell Lane. What was once almost completely impenetrable has now been cleared and is already on the way to becoming an attractive birch grove. This is in large measure thanks to the enthusiasm of Councillor Spearink and to the efforts of the Community Payback team, engaged following a meeting Councillor Spearink and I held with the area co-ordinator last autumn.

Things have changed in the Parish Office too. We have said 'goodbye' to Sue Bassett who has retired after twenty-five years' service to Staplehurst Parish Council including sixteen as Parish Clerk. Sue was my 'teacher' when I became Parish Clerk in 2012; I thank her for her support at that time and also since then as the Council's Finance Officer. My colleague Deborah Jenkins has taken on the finances in addition to dealing with planning matters and I know this business is in very capable hands. Deborah and I now make up the office-based team, supported by caretaker Les and deputy Chris who help maintain our facilities and keep them tidy.

A good deal of the Parish Office's work revolves around the twice-monthly council meeting cycle: prepare agendas, publish details, attend and minute meetings, follow up actions. No sooner is one agenda prepared than the next one starts to take shape. From January 2017 we have dropped three full council meetings, so we now have 21 in the year instead of 24. We have retained all 24 planning committee dates as the volume of planning activity and associated deadlines leave us little choice. As an aside, I know the Parish Council planning committee members appreciate receiving residents' comments on planning matters, but please make sure you also send your comments to Maidstone Borough Council who decide the applications.

The Parish Office is open to public visitors four mornings a week, Monday to Thursday. It is appreciated that daytime during the week is not always convenient so the increased frequency of Saturday morning surgeries (now weekly instead of monthly) offers another opportunity to speak to a parish council representative. Parish Council meetings themselves are open to the public and there is always an opportunity to speak in public forum before and after the formal proceedings.

This page is just a small snapshot of the Parish Office's year and is barely adequate to do justice to the hard work undertaken by my office colleagues and by the volunteers who make up the Parish Council. One thing for sure is that the increasing demands on parish councils mean there will be no letting up for any of us!

*Mick Westwood, Parish Clerk*

# Parish Activities

## ***Planning Committee***

The Committee meets before each Full Council meeting to consider planning applications affecting Staplehurst. MBC (which makes the final decision) is obliged to consult the Parish Council about most types of planning application and we may also comment on other planning matters. The Parish Council is able to request that an application should be considered by MBC's Planning Committee, rather than be decided by a planning officer under delegated powers, although this is a power that we try to use judiciously. When a Staplehurst application comes up at the MBC Committee, a representative of the Parish Council attends to give a three-minute speech, and I'd like to thank Councillors who have undertaken this.

In 2016-17 we considered 78 applications for full or outline planning applications, rather fewer than the 110 in 2015-16. There were 49 other cases, including 11 applications related to tree work (5 in 2015-16), 2 for listed building consent (4) – although some of the full planning applications covered listed buildings, as with the Railway Tavern, 7 for “certificates of lawful development” (7) and 7 for “prior notification” (4) - the latter typically involve conversion of redundant agricultural buildings for residential use.

Although many of the applications are relatively small, we recognise that they are important to the applicants and their neighbours. We give them careful consideration and members of the Planning Committee often visit the sites, as well as reviewing written information from applicants and residents.

We were notified of 7 cases where the applicant had appealed to the Planning Inspectorate following refusal of permission by MBC. This can either involve written submissions only or a public hearing, and in the latter case the Parish Council is represented by one of the Councillors.

The housing proposals for the Fisher's Farm and Stanley Farm sites in Headcorn Road caused great controversy, particularly in respect of the planned changes to the road layout at Cuckold's Corner, which were intended to increase vehicle throughput at the expense of pedestrians. At a tense meeting, the MBC Planning Committee approved the Fisher's Farm applications (Bovis and Redrow) but rejected the Stanley Farm one. However, the conditions requiring works at Cuckold's Corner were struck out. We shall continue to press for improvements to the detailed layout of the Fisher's Farm sites.

## ***Jubilee Field***

The Parish Council owns and maintains Jubilee Field. The Council is responsible for the annual repainting of the skate park, cutting back the hedges and when necessary the trees. Grass cutting is currently outsourced to the Jubilee Field Management Group. Jubilee Field is a publicly owned open space. Football is a major activity and there are designated football pitches and a modern sports pavilion. In addition, there is a Brownie and Guide Centre and a skate park. Staplehurst Parish Council is represented on the Jubilee Field Management Group which manages the Jubilee Field facility. In recent years we have made a number of improvements including better lighting, upgrading the CCTV and improving the drainage; although it is accepted that further work needs to be carried out regarding the latter given the

recent bad winters. The Parish Council recognises the importance of this facility for the enjoyment of the community as a whole.

### ***Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan***

The Parish Council, Neighbourhood Plan Group and Rural Settlement Group (RSG) successfully concluded the lengthy and often complicated process of bringing the Neighbourhood Development Plan to completion in 2016. We were ably assisted by Richard Eastham of Planning Consultants Feria Urbanism.

The plan went to Referendum on the 3rd November 2016 with the following question; 'Do you want Maidstone Borough Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Staplehurst to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'

The results were as follows:-

- Votes cast: 1,586 (33.77% turnout)
- Yes: 1,468 (92.56%)
- No: 118 (7.44%)
- Rejected: 0

The official 'making' of the plan by Maidstone Borough Council took place on the 7th December 2016. The plan now has legal force, forming part of the statutory development plan for the Maidstone Borough and it must be used when determining planning applications for the Staplehurst area.

[www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/uploads/staplehurst/099\\_Q\\_161207\\_Made-Plan.pdf](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/uploads/staplehurst/099_Q_161207_Made-Plan.pdf)

The Parish Council wishes to thank everyone who participated in this process.

### ***Churchyard***

The Parish Council funds the maintenance of the churchyard without support from MBC. We have been working closely with the Rector and a group of volunteers from All Saints Church. Together we have a rolling programme based on an annual budget, covering such works as tree husbandry, grassed areas and hedges. The partnership between the Parish Council and the Parish Church is working very well.

### ***Finance Group***

This Group has no specific powers, but makes recommendations to Full Council on expenditure and prepares the annual budget and precept for approval. Annually it reviews the Asset Register, Risk Assessment and Financial Regulations and undertakes reviews to ensure best practice and careful control of what is public money. Regular reports are received from the Internal Auditor. He is an important part of the internal control of the Parish Council's activities and a review of the internal audit function and its effectiveness takes place annually; this is reported back to Full Council. Over recent years we have undertaken a number of activities with the aim of improving services to our residents, but at the same time we have always been careful to ensure our finances remain sound.

### ***Wimpey Field Nature Area***

Taylor Wimpey finally handed over the field and woodland together with the £25k for future maintenance in March. Since February the Community Payback team have been working each Saturday morning to lift all the oak trees and clear the ground ready for the TWIG group to come and start their massive task of cutting almost all of the wild vegetation back to ground level. This is so that we can implement

the rolling three year rotation cycle of grassland maintenance. A disabled friendly path is to be created from the entrance to the picnic area as soon as possible. Four benches have been sponsored already by local business and two disabled access picnic benches will be bought in time for summer. We hope to run several one day workshops and learning days right from the start so look out for details on the Friends of, and Helping page on Facebook.

### ***Parish Services***

The Parish Council is a group of unpaid volunteers who help provide a number of services. These include the Bell Lane toilets, street cleaning, maintenance of the Surrenden and Jubilee Fields and employing a village caretaker. There is also a volunteer tree warden and a very active group of litter pickers. The planters are also provided and serviced by the Council.

### ***Playscheme***

Play Place has again worked with the Parish Council to deliver our summer playscheme. We are very grateful to the Primary School for the use of their excellent facilities. We offered all day sessions in the second week and this was well supported. The children enjoyed a wide range of activities in a safe and friendly environment. MBC gave us a small grant towards our scheme. The 2017 scheme will again be held in the School.

### ***Publicity and Website***

The Parish web site and Facebook page continue to be heavily used as a source of information. Currently we have 379 people following the Parish Council on Facebook. As the use of electronic media increases we have reviewed the operation of the group. From April it will be known as the Communications Group (Comms). We will oversee all aspects of information out to parishioners, being written and electronic. Ex Parish Councillor John Kelly has stood down from the group. The group would like to thank John for his support over the last 8+ years.

### ***Rural Settlement Group***

The Rural Settlement Group (RSG) has been a mixed bag of volunteers, made up of residents and existing Parish Councillors. The RSG has played an integral part in successfully bringing the Neighbourhood Development Plan to a successful completion in 2016 and Staplehurst now has a 'plan for the future' [http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/uploads/staplehurst/099\\_Q\\_161207\\_Made-Plan.pdf](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/uploads/staplehurst/099_Q_161207_Made-Plan.pdf). The RSG has continued to monitor the draft Local Plan as it proceeds to being made in 2017. The RSG also worked on updating the Housing Needs Survey 2016. <http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/uploads/staplehurst/Staplehurst%20Housing%20Survey%20report%2009%2012%202016%20final.pdf>.

### ***Speed Watch***

Thanks to the backing of the Parish Council and KCC Councillor Eric Hotson, the purchased Speed Detection Equipment has been a great improvement on its ten-year-old predecessor. Speeding vehicles are now detected at some considerable distances so we have started logging details before the driver has noticed our fluorescent jackets or display screen.

The other important change has been the computer system (CSW-online) which links all offenders in Kent and Sussex. It trains volunteers initially on-line before they are given a session at the roadside by each parish's own Team Co-ordinator. New sites can be accurately located and approved on-line so we have added another one in each of the Headcorn and Marden Roads. Every time we go out we are helping to remind drivers that Staplehurst wishes to be a safe place in which to live.

### ***Staplehurst Emergency Help Team***

With an 'Emergency Plan' now offered as a template to other rural communities by KCC, our objective is to familiarise team members with its procedures, so putting it into operation will be 'instinctive' should the need arise. To increase awareness within our village our training exercise for this year is designed to involve residents of all ages.

### ***Surrenden Field***

Over the last year discussions have been held with Maidstone Borough Council to extend the lease we have on the field. This has now been agreed in principle and we expect to complete the process soon. In the meantime contractors have renewed the safety surface below all the equipment in the Play Area. We are looking to provide a path from Nicholson Walk to the Bower Walk entrance in the summer of 2017.

### ***Transport Forum***

Councillors continue to attend the bi-monthly meetings of our Local Transport Accessibility Group. This has been a difficult year generally with the level of breakdowns and cancelled buses. Sadly after various bus timetable changes, we are aware the bus service, especially for students has deteriorated recently. We support the work of parents campaigning for improved reliability and service where we can.

### ***Village Centre Redevelopment Group***

The Parish Council formed the Village Centre Redevelopment Group in September 2015 following consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan that identified the Village Centre as an area that needed improvement.

The Group is made up of Parish Councillors, a Borough Councillor, Village Centre Trustees and residents. The Group has been active this year and engaged with architects to provide concepts for two primary options identified by the Group, (a) refurbish and extend and (b) redevelop and demolish.

In January 2017, the Group held a Consultation Event, to gather feedback on the proposed options that were presented by Open Architecture and local businesses People & Place Architects, Hawkes Architecture, and resident Malcolm Buller. The evidence is being analysed and further work on initial investigations continues, with the Council investigating the possibility of the inclusion of the youth club site with relevant stakeholders.

### ***Youth Club***

The Parish Council continues to fund our Youth Leader, Mike King, for the Tuesday evening Youth Club. This is a valuable asset; we thank Mike and his team of volunteers for all their hard work and dedication to our young people.

## Parish Council Members & Contacts at 31st March 2017

Parish Council Chairman – Rory Silkin  
Parish Council Vice Chairman – Tom Burnham  
Parish Council Vice Chairman – Patrick Riordan

Margaret Ashby  
Joan Buller  
Chris Claridge  
Anne Gosling  
Sam Lain-Rose  
Barrett Manning

John Perry  
John Reardon  
Adele Sharp  
Gillian Smith  
Peter Spearink  
Laurence Whittle

More information about Parish Councillors is available on the Staplehurst village website at [www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/parish\\_council.aspx](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/parish_council.aspx).

Parish Clerk MICK WESTWOOD ..... 01580 891761  
*Email: [clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk](mailto:clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk)*

Deputy Clerk and Finance Officer DEBORAH JENKINS ..... 01580 891761  
*Email: [assistantclerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk](mailto:assistantclerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk)*

Police Community Support Officer PETE GARDNER ..... 101  
*Email: [peter.gardner@kent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:peter.gardner@kent.pnn.police.uk)*

KCC Community Warden MIRA MARTIN ..... 07969 584179  
*E-mail: [mira.martin@kent.gov.uk](mailto:mira.martin@kent.gov.uk)*

Member of Parliament HELEN GRANT ..... 0207 219 7107  
*Email: [helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk)*

Kent County Councillor ERIC HOTSON ..... 01580 892312  
*Email: [eric.hotson@kent.gov.uk](mailto:eric.hotson@kent.gov.uk)*

Maidstone Borough Councillor JOHN PERRY ..... 07770 734741  
*Email: [johnperry@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:johnperry@maidstone.gov.uk)*

Maidstone Borough Councillor LOUISE BRICE ..... 07817 362860  
*Email: [louisebrice@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:louisebrice@maidstone.gov.uk)*

Parish Office, Staplehurst Village Centre. High Street, Staplehurst TN12 0BJ  
[www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk)

Staplehurst Parish Office is open to the public 0900-1300  
Monday to Thursday. Closed Fridays.

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](http://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](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)**.

Parish and Borough Councillors hold Saturday morning surgeries at Staplehurst  
Library for local residents to discuss issues. Full details of dates and times appear  
in the calendar on the village website at **[www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk)**.

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