

Report by Cllrs Thomas and George to Staplehurst Parish Council Meeting 23/09/19

SPC for a Greener Staplehurst

Councillors Thomas and George would like to engage the wider SPC as well as the community to get involved in creating a greener Staplehurst. One that lives in symbiosis with its environment, working to create a village which will be here for future generations supporting both fauna and flora that was here 100's of years before the residents.

We would look to address the following areas through this project:

- Making the village greener – literally. Using planting which considers longevity, water usage and sustainability we will look to improve the general look and feel of the village. Introducing wild flower beds where appropriate, considering the key valuable assets we have and further enhance the use of these – this would include linking in the other groups which have done great work in this area already and see how we can leverage their great work across the village.
- Engage local business to sign up to 'making a difference through business' – this is something that has been done through the country and is often driven by business by we'd like to approach our local business and find out more about how they are currently trying to improve their impact on the immediate and wider environment. This may include any from reducing packaging, removing plastic straws/bags etc., only selling products which considers harm e.g. Free-range eggs over caged, and a carbon offsetting scheme. We can then provide all participants with benchmarking figures, tips from other local business to improve and potentially even help them to group up to make use of large-scale discounts on packaging to make it more economical for all.
- Engage with the nursery's and school's as well as the care homes to share key education packs and get them to sign up to a 'seeds of change' project – where they look to increase their reduction and recycling efforts. Speak to key members of staff on what they already do but also what could potentially be done in the future. Children pose an incredible opportunity to take key messages home to family's and change the way things are done not only in schools but in homes too. This will also include leveraging some existing initiatives the Kent Wildlife Trust has set up to encourage wildlife in your garden or getting outside to appreciate the beauty of nature.
- Work with Maidstone on their current projects which includes a Biodiversity Strategy, wildflower meadows and increased tree coverage.
- Tackle littering and fly tipping with key signage and messaging – encouraging the Parish to act as guardians of the village and holding the borough to account for supporting the clean up of the village, implementing and holding up fines and encouraging residents to further partake in clean up days. We'd also look at areas of recurring issue and look to implement tactics to negate future issues.
- Set clear policy and directive for the council to sign up to and maintain across all endeavours. This will also set a directive and show the village we are serious about this across the Village and more importantly across the Parish Council.

The issues of global warming, loss of biodiversity and loss of green spaces as the need for housing takes precedence, are not ones that will be dealt with overnight. We have the opportunity and responsibility as the caretakers of the environment to do what we can to make a change, many changes, to improve this in whichever way we can. This is just a snapshot of some of the areas we will look to review and engage the village on, it will take time, years in fact to make any really impact on all of these but given our passion we would like the support of the council to take this initiative forward.
