

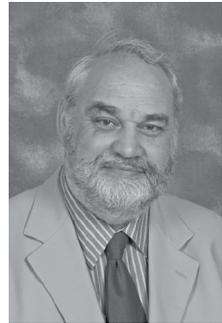


**Staplehurst Parish Council**

# **Annual Report 2015 - 2016**

# Chairman's Annual Report 2015-2016

The Council has had an active year looking at scores of planning applications, commenting on dozens of consultations and considered loads of other matters, large and small, on behalf of Staplehurst people. Chairing the Council is a bit of a white knuckle ride, very exhilarating, but you need to hold on tight! Our Councillors are independently minded with lots of different opinions. However, they all have one thing in common: they are passionate that Staplehurst and its people must come first. If we (and our Borough and County Councillors) don't speak up for the village, no one else will. I give my thanks to the Parish Councillors, to Maidstone Borough Councillors Perry and Brice and Kent County Councillor Hotson.



Planning has been particularly active with several major schemes coming up for attention. There have been the major housing developments, anticipated in our draft Neighbourhood Plan, which need close scrutiny. But there have also been the photovoltaic solar farm applications, which have caused great interest. Those wholly within the village have been rejected, while some in neighbouring villages have been accepted by MBC. All planning applications, however small, are considered seriously on their merits by the Planning Committee who put in a great deal of work.

The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan seems to have been trundling on for ages, but it is progressing towards the endgame. You will soon have a chance to vote on it (professional checking allowing). It may not be as earth-shattering as the referendum on the 23rd June (Staplehurst won't be voting to leave Kent), but it will be important for us.

Part of the Council's job is to manage the budget for the village. I am pleased to say that this year we have not increased the Parish Precept (the part of the Council Tax we are allowed to keep). This means it has been kept steady for two years running.

The village has been fighting bus problems for a long while now; with overcrowding on school buses together with the common problem of late, very late or non-arrivals of buses at other times of the day. Many Staplehurst people are involved, including the redoubtable Facebook followers who

## Chairman's Annual Report 2015-2016

keep Arriva informed of their shortcomings. However, I would like to single out Councillors Spearink and Manning who are relentless in their pursuit of better bus services for Staplehurst. I would also like to tell you that you can inform the Parish Clerk about vehicle accidents in the Parish. No one else keeps records, unless someone is seriously injured, so please let us know what the true picture of these accidents is.

Last year we had an extra event organised by the Carnival and Fete Committee to celebrate the Queen becoming the longest serving British Monarch and this year we will celebrate her 90th birthday.

On the village's behalf I would like to formally thank some particular people for their dedication: our MP, Helen Grant, who has been both visible and active on our behalf, PCSO Peter Gardner and Community Warden Mira Martin for keeping us safe and helping to chase down the crime figures, notwithstanding dwindling budgets. Thanks to all Councillors for their hard work and especially Joan Buller for her huge contribution, leading to the award by the Queen of the British Empire Medal. Well earned.

*Rory Silkin*

# Income & Expenditure Account

## For the year ended 31st March 2016

### INCOME

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Parish Precept  | 123,552.00               |
| VCMC Deposit & Bank Interest  | 10,007.49                |
| MBC Parish Services Grant   | 7,060.00                 |
| LCT Government Support Grant  | 6,880.00                 |
| KCC Grants  |                          |
| <i>(Clean Up, SEHT, Street Lights, Bus Shelter, Railings repaint)</i>                       | 4,221.00                 |
| MBC Grant towards Bell Lane Toilets   | 2,575.00                 |
| Other Income  |                          |
| <i>(Memorial seat, Insurance claim &amp; fee, VCMC bin, electricity refund &amp; rent).</i> | 1,082.94                 |
| MBC Grant to Playscheme   | 1,000.00                 |
| Third Party Funds; <i>Warden Youth Club Project - Golding Homes Grant</i>                   | 1,000.00                 |
| Christmas Light donations   | 260.00                   |
| SPC Bank deposit interest   | 69.04                    |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>   | <b><u>157,707.47</u></b> |

### EXPENDITURE

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| General Administration <i>(Parish Office staff, utilities, equipment, insurance, subscriptions, training, meetings &amp; travel, publicity &amp; website)</i> | 74,820.14                |
| Street Lighting, furniture, repairs, planters & caretaker   | 19,345.23                |
| Street Sweeping   | 8,820.00                 |
| Bell Lane Toilets maintenance   | 7,782.04                 |
| Rural Settlement Group – Neighbourhood Plan   | 6,765.47                 |
| Jubilee Sports Field & Skatepark maintenance  | 6,473.75                 |
| Youth Club <i>(Site maintenance, KCC Lease/Purchase &amp; Youth Worker)</i>   | 5,945.00                 |
| Surrenden Playing Field & Tree maintenance  | 3,248.09                 |
| Playscheme  | 2,306.00                 |
| Churchyard maintenance  | 2,132.62                 |
| Donations <i>(Guides Roof, CAB, Air Ambulance, CCDAS, Kenward Trust, Royal British Legion, Try Angle Awards, WI, Transport Accessibility Group)</i>           | 2,095.00                 |
| Capital Projects <i>(Surrenden drainage &amp; VCMC Surveys)</i>   | 1,995.00                 |
| Christmas Lights  | 1,661.24                 |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>  | <b><u>143,389.58</u></b> |

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Balance of Income/Expenditure              | 14,317.89                |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 121,626.58               |
|  | <b><u>135,944.47</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 6th June 2016 and end on Friday 15th July 2016.*

# Balance Sheet

## as at 31st March 2016

### LONG TERM ASSETS

None (see supporting statement below) 0.00

### CURRENT ASSETS

|                 |            |            |
|-----------------|------------|------------|
| VAT Recoverable | 6,379.38   |            |
| Cash In Hand    | 132,127.40 |            |
|                 |            | 138,506.78 |

### CURRENT LIABILITIES

|                                 |            |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Accruals                        | (0.00)     |            |
| Creditors (unpresented cheques) | (2,562.31) |            |
|                                 |            | (2,562.31) |
|                                 |            | 135,944.47 |

### REPRESENTED BY:-

|  |           |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| GENERAL FUND                             |           | 48,750.00 |
| Ongoing Project Budgets:                 |           |           |
| Allotment land purchase fund             | 10,000.00 |           |
| Surrenden Playing Field drainage project | 16,500.00 |           |
| Village Centre Feasibility Fund          | 8,505.00  |           |
| Balance c/fwd for future budget          | 27,770.58 |           |
|  |           | 62,775.58 |

### RESERVES (held on behalf of others)

|  |           |            |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Village Centre Contingency                   | 22,234.69 |            |
| Rural Warden Rural Community Alcohol Project | 900.00    |            |
| Rural Warden Winter Warmer Project           | 284.20    |            |
| Rural Warden Youth Club Project              | 1,000.00  |            |
|  |           | 24,418.89  |
|  |           | 135,944.47 |

## 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 31.03.2016 the following assets were held:

### COMMUNITY ASSETS

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Jubilee Field (Freehold)                             | Nil      |
| Land at Marden Road, Staplehurst (Freehold)          | Nil      |
| Land north east of Bell Lane, Staplehurst (Freehold) | Nil      |
| Lease purchase of Youth Club land from KCC           | 9,600.00 |

### BUILDINGS (insured replacement values)

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| Jubilee Pavilion   | 615,297.37 |
| Surrenden Pavilion | 8,801.22   |
| Bell Lane Toilets  | 84,040.61  |

### OTHER ASSETS (insured replacement value)

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| As listed on the Asset Register 31.03.2016 held at The Parish Office | 275,535.09 |
|--|------------|

### LEASES - As at 31st March 2016 the following Leases were in operation:-

| Lessor                     | Purpose                                | Rent       | Expiry |
|----------------------------|--|------------|--------|
| Maidstone Borough Council  | Bell Lane Toilets *renewal in progress | Peppercorn | 2015*  |
| Maidstone Borough Council  | Surrenden Playing Field                | 75.00      | 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

## **Rory Silkin – *Chairman***

I have chaired Parish Council meetings throughout the year together with meetings of the Finance and Strategy Groups; always a refreshing challenge! I have sat on the Planning Committee which has been particularly active this year and have represented the Council at Maidstone Area meetings of KALC as well as at Borough planning meetings when necessary. I also 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.



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

In the last year I have chaired most meetings of the Planning Committee in view of Cllr Butcher's continued illness and have continued to be involved with the Publicity and Website Group and the Village Centre Development Group among others. I joined the Rural Settlement Group and helped to organise our Village Clean-Up. The progress of our Neighbourhood Plan and the Maidstone Local Plan has highlighted the conflict between providing much-needed housing and protecting our local community and its infrastructure.

## **Paul Kelly – *Vice Chairman***

As in previous years I sit on the majority of Council Sub Committees: Strategy & Policy, Finance, Churchyard, Village Enhancement, but Planning has been at the forefront. I have, and will continue to, highlight the many basic utility & infrastructure problems associated with all proposed developments within Staplehurst. Earlier this year, I stepped down as Chairman of Staplehurst Village Centre, but still remain as a Trustee of Staplehurst Youth Club. I continue to be dedicated to Staplehurst and its residents, always trying to improve our village environment.



## **Paul Butcher – *Planning Committee Chairman***

Unfortunately, illness has again limited my council work, but I have kept in constant touch with all that is happening and attend meetings when I am able. I am Chairman of the Planning Committee and my thanks go to Councillor Burnham for leading this in my absence. I am a member of the Finance, Village Centre, Churchyard and Police Liaison groups and Chairman of the Youth Club.

# Parish Councillors



## Margaret Ashby

Planning has been dominant this year; there seems no end to the number of applications, including a number for extra Traveller sites and pitches. The Publicity and Website Group are giving more prominence to our Facebook site. Communication with the whole village is proving challenging. I have taken part in the now weekly Parish Council Surgery in the library. I have become a trustee of the Village Centre and hope to make some improvements to the site until the final decision on its fate is made.

## Joan Buller

My main challenge has been working on planning issues and I have often represented the Parish at the MBC Planning Committee and at appeals. I have continued working on the Neighbourhood Plan to achieve the best for our community. I am the editor of the Updates and Annual Report. With Councillor Burnham I organised the Annual Clean-Up and I head up our litter-picking team. I am also active in the Speedwatch and Playscheme groups. I have now served for 33 years on the council; Staplehurst is very special to me.



## Chris Claridge

Staplehurst – The Village with a Voice. Staplehurst faces a challenging future with increasing Central and Local Government demands on an already stretched village infrastructure. Staplehurst has a vibrant population of 6,500 and the role of the Parish Council is to be the Voice of the Village; supporting and safeguarding local interests, ensuring local and national Governments know what Staplehurst wants. 2015 was a year spent watching, listening and understanding; 2016 will be a year of creating and driving initiatives, ensuring Staplehurst is a village with a voice that is heard.

## Anne Gosling

I have been deeply involved in plans to develop the Village Centre, working towards creating somewhere that the village will be proud of, with up-to-date facilities for all kinds of activities – theatre, sports, dance, conferences, wedding receptions – in a warm and welcoming environment. As plans mature, we hope all of you in the village will take an interest and have your say. My one disappointment was the lack of support for the Pagehurst Solar Farm project – we are going to need reliable home-grown sources of electricity in this uncertain world.



# Parish Councillors



## Simon Green

Simon stood down from the Council in May 2015 because of his move from Staplehurst. As a Councillor he was very active on the Planning Committee and gave a huge input to the Neighbourhood Plan.

## Neal Kemp

Neal left the Council in January 2016 as he moved away from Kent. He was an extremely thorough Councillor and gave valuable advice on the many roles he undertook especially on Planning, our Neighbourhood Plan, the River Beult and flooding issues.

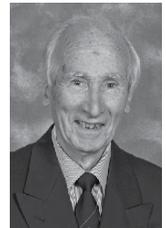


## Sam Lain-Rose

What a busy year it has been. I have taken on many roles as a Parish Councillor, including being actively involved in the Village Centre Redevelopment Group which is looking at all the possible options for the Village Centre site. I am pleased to say that the Council has taken the pro-active approach to start a Youth Parish Council on which I am leading. I am also involved with the other groups such as Finance, Staff and Strategy & Policy.

## Barrett Manning

One focus of my work has been the Knoxbridge speeding issues. Residents met with County, Borough and Parish Councillors in March 2013 and all agreed to support the reduction of the speed limit in this area. After many trials and tribulations KCC Highways has agreed to this and will advertise the proposal to the public on 22nd April. Work could commence after about three months. It is hoped that the new 50mph limit will reduce casualties in this area. I am an active Councillor member of the Carnival and Fete Committee.



## 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.

# Parish Councillors



## John Reardon

I have missed various Monday evening meetings due to work commitments; I work a 24/7 shift pattern. However, this does mean I am in the village more often. I have attended various meetings with Kent Highways to discuss their maintenance programmes. I am involved with the Surrenden Field improvements, organising new paths once the lease is extended. Running the Parish Council website and monitoring the Facebook page is a constant source of work, but with the improvements to smartphones, broadband and 4G mobile data it can be done almost anywhere.

## Patrick Riordan

I have recently joined the Parish Council because, as a long-time resident in the village, I would like to assist in all the good work that is in progress. There are many issues at present including new housing, public transport, traffic, parking problems, litter, new green areas etc. There are also many groups that are set up to enhance the amenities within the village. As a new Councillor I am hoping to help with many of these matters and use my local knowledge to push things forward in a positive manner.



## Adele Sharp

I am a member of Police/Parish Liaison, Rural Settlement, SPPG, Surrenden Playing Field and Village Enhancement Groups. As a Councillor I remain committed to doing the best for Staplehurst as a community. It has been important to me to represent the community's views on various subjects such as the Neighbourhood Plan and to see the village flourish. I believe that it is important to ensure that our community's best interests are kept in mind when facing the future, whether it is issues about public toilets, education or housing plans.

## 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 and 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.



## Parish Clerk's Annual Report 2015-2016

“Talk to the Council about it” - how many times have you heard that phrase and then wondered “which council?” Considering the range of services provided by local government it can be difficult to know who does what. Take a look elsewhere in this Annual Report to read about what the Parish Council does or go to the ‘Parish Services’ page on the village website.

What about issues such as potholes, overgrown footpaths, missed bin collections, fly-tipping etc.? In the Parish Office we try to share our knowledge of who does what to make life easier for Staplehurst residents (potholes and footpaths are Kent County Council, bins and fly-tipping Maidstone Borough Council). More information is on the ‘Other Contacts’ and the ‘Parish Council Notes’ pages on the village website. For Parish Council Notes, what I really recommend you do is buy a parish magazine produced by those talented people at All Saints Church so you can read the ‘Notes’ before they hit the village website.

In many ways the Parish Office is the engine-room of the Parish Council. Caretaker Les empties the bins at the playing fields and collects the litter that some people think looks more attractive on the ground or in the hedges. You may also see him with paintbrush or screwdriver doing odd jobs around the village. In the office itself Sue looks after the money and produces all the financial reports including the statements contained in this publication. Deborah keeps an eye on all the planning applications to ensure that the Parish Council has a say on proposed developments and also publicises them for the information of residents. I thank them all for their dedicated efforts this year.

As Parish Clerk I’m usually the one you can see scribbling away at Parish Council meetings, occasionally piping up to give councillors guidance or information. Yes, Parish Council meetings are open to members of the public and you can speak on agenda items or other matters of local importance in the public forum before and/or after the meetings, so why not come along to see and hear ‘Localism in action’. There is, of course, a bit more to the job than taking notes and writing minutes - there is often a lot of preparatory work involved in what goes on, whether it’s writing news articles for the website or ensuring that all the Village Clean-Up equipment is in the right place at the right time the Parish Office engine-room kicks into gear to deliver what’s required.

As an aside, an occasional misconception is that the Parish Office manages the Village Centre. That responsibility actually lies with the good people of the Village Centre Management Committee – see their new website at [www.staplehurstvc.org](http://www.staplehurstvc.org).

I mentioned ‘Localism’ a few sentences ago. The Localism Act 2011 is just one example of legislation that has been driving responsibility for local decisions and services further down the local government pyramid. It is a time of rapid change and increasing financial pressure on local government, which presents a great challenge for all of us involved in the sector. My fellow clerks in other parishes are as one in saying that it feels like we are running to stand still, but somehow we enjoy it. That I can say I do so too is in no small measure due to the efforts of all those in the local community, councillors and non-councillors, who willingly give of their time to make a difference - thank you for your support!

*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.

In 2015-16 we considered 110 applications for full or outline planning applications, a marked increase on the 57 in 2014-15. There were 41 other cases, including 5 applications related to tree work (4 in 2014-15), 4 for listed building consent (6), 7 for "certificates of lawful development" (5) and 4 for "prior notification" (10) - the latter typically involve conversion of redundant agricultural buildings.

Most of the applications are relatively small. However, 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.

Larger developments included the Fisher's Farm and Stanley Farm sites in Headcorn Road, where we are awaiting a final decision by MBC. Although the Fisher's Farm site is allocated for housing in the draft MBC Local Plan as well as in the draft Neighbourhood Plan, we have concerns that it is not being planned as a single site and that the detailed planning applications fail to address infrastructure issues adequately - particularly regarding drainage and traffic.

After several changes to the information presented, the application for a photovoltaic array at Great Pagehurst Farm was finally refused by MBC, as was the similar application for Pullen Farm off Frittenden Road.

We continue to get a number of applications for gypsy and traveller sites, which are governed by different national planning rules from other developments. The relevant government guidance was recently changed and we hope that when MBC finally adopts its Local Plan it will give a basis for these applications to be assessed more consistently by MBC in future.

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

The Parish Council and Rural Settlement Group tirelessly worked on the bringing the Neighbourhood Development Plan forward, assisted by Richard Eastham of Planning Consultants FERIA Urbanism.

The final draft of the Plan was submitted to MBC in July 2015 after feedback from the Regulation 15 consultation had been carefully considered. For the whole Neighbourhood Plan story and documents see: [http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/neighbourhood\\_forum1.aspx](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/neighbourhood_forum1.aspx)

Despite constant delays, lack of staffing and decision changes made by MBC, the Plan was accepted as being in general conformity with the existing Local Plan and that of the new emerging Local Plan. MBC finally took the Plan to a Regulation 16 Borough wide consultation in October 2015 which lasted for 6 weeks. The responses can be seen at: <http://consult.maidstone.gov.uk/portal>

Following the consultation MBC appointed the Examiner, Clare Wright, and further delay was subsequently created by the request for a complex Basic Conditions Statement. The Examiner now has all the documentation and we eagerly await the outcome of her recommendation as to whether the Plan can go to Referendum. The Plan is your plan so please vote at the time of Referendum.

### ***Churchyard***

This has been the first full year that the Parish Council funds the maintenance of the churchyard without support from MBC. We have been working closely with the Rector and a new group of volunteers from All Saints Church. Together we have planned a rolling programme based on an annual budget, covering such works as tree husbandry, grassed areas and hedges. The new 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.

### ***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.

### ***Oliver Road Open Space***

The housing estate at the end of Oliver Road is nearing completion and the date on which the wild area of Open Space, at the southern end, is to be handed over to the Parish Council is drawing near. The Council will thereafter maintain that space for the use and recreation of Staplehurst people. Nothing will be allowed to happen to it unless the Council wishes it. This is a great opportunity for another "lung" to open up in our village without fear of someone trying to build on it. You are welcome to have a look right now!

### ***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 Guides for the use of their excellent facilities at the Jubilee Field. The children enjoyed a wide range of activities in a safe and friendly environment. MBC gave us a small grant towards our scheme. The 2016 scheme will be held in the Primary School.

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

Over the last year the Staplehurst Parish Council website has been a popular source of information for residents. Website statistics show the Latest News and the Forum pages are the most popular. Some will also see we have a Facebook Page. This is to provide the Latest News information to anyone who has liked the page. Currently we have 296 likes. Councillors are still committed to produce three Village Updates and the Annual Report every year and arrange delivery.

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

The Rural Settlement Group is a mixed bag of volunteers made up of residents, some of whom are existing Parish Councillors. The RSG has played an integral part in bringing the Neighbourhood Development Plan forward to a stage where hopefully a Referendum will be held in 2016 and has also started work on updating the existing Housing Assessment from 2010. For further details see: [www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/future\\_of\\_staplehurst.aspx](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk/future_of_staplehurst.aspx)

### ***Speed Watch***

The Speed Watch team has continued to monitor the speed of traffic through our village, reminding drivers of the importance of keeping to the speed limit. Having ten years of use from the equipment, the Parish Council have agreed to fund the purchase of a new system which will enable volunteers to make an even greater difference by reducing the speed of vehicles for the safety of everyone in Staplehurst.

### ***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***

No one can disagree that there is a serious winter drainage issue on the field and has been for many years. Over the last year we have had the drainage pipes cleaned to see if a blockage was the ongoing cause. It would seem not. We have plans to create a path just like Nicholson Walk connecting the Play Area with Nicholson Walk and the Bower Walk entrance. Whilst we have quotes for the work and funds available we need to negotiate a lease from MBC. Currently the lease has 3 years left and once it is extended we will move forward with our plans.

### ***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 only marginally better. Our working relationship with Arriva management at Armstrong Road took a turn for the worse when the two managers who had previously been so helpful left or were promoted. We have not found their replacements to be quite so amenable and Arriva no longer send a representative to the meetings. On the other hand great improvements have been made regarding school buses.

### ***Village Centre Development Group***

The Parish Council formed the Village Centre Development Group in September 2015 following consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan that identified the Village Centre as an area that needed investigation. A policy was formed within the Submission Plan.

The Group is made up of Parish Councillors, a Borough Councillor, some of the Trustees of the Village Centre and residents. The Group has looked at the possible opportunities for the site. The two main options being explored are refurbishment of the existing building with an extension and redevelopment of the site.

In 2016 the Group commissioned a Condition Report on the current site to understand the improvements and key areas that require maintenance and investment. This report has been very useful and the Group continues to open-mindedly look at both options with the view to ensure that the site delivers a fit-for-purpose building with long term viability for the village.

### ***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 2016

Parish Council Chairman – Rory Silkin  
Parish Council Vice Chairman – Tom Burnham  
Parish Council Vice Chairman – Paul Kelly

Margaret Ashby  
Joan Buller  
Paul Butcher  
Chris Claridge  
Anne Gosling  
Sam Lain-Rose

Barrett Manning  
John Perry  
John Reardon  
Patrick Riordan  
Adele Sharp  
Peter Spearink

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  
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*

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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  
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](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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