

Village Update

SPRING 2013

www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

STAPLEHURST COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP – SATURDAY 9TH MARCH 2013

Following last year's excellent response by 80 volunteers who picked up litter throughout the built-up area filling over a hundred black sacks, we are hoping for an even better turn-out this year! Staplehurst Parish Council is repeating this event on Saturday 9th March and we would like to invite YOU to take part. MBC will loan protective equipment and litter pickers, remove the rubbish we collect, provide guidance on safety and give insurance cover. We will be based at the Youth Club (near Sobell Lodge) by kind permission of their committee and we ask you to arrive at 10 am. (If you prefer to start from your own home this can be arranged.) When you have cleaned your allotted area sacks need to be brought back to the Youth Club so don't overfill them! We aim to offer you refreshments after the work is completed.

For insurance purposes we have to keep a list of

helpers' names and it would save time if these were sent to the Parish Office in advance. However, you will be able to register on the day. Children and young people who take part must be accompanied by and under the responsibility of a parent or adult friend. Organised youth groups who wish to join in should contact the Parish Office in the first instance to discuss their plans. Even if you are not able to take part please try to tidy your own boundaries to help make Staplehurst litter free! **We look forward to seeing you on the 9th March.**



UPDATE ON SUPERMARKETS

On January 10th the Maidstone Borough Council Planning Committee unanimously approved Sainsbury's application to build a supermarket in Station Road/Approach as a joint project with DK Holdings.

On the same night the Committee voted against the recommendation to refuse the Tesco's application for a supermarket at Station Approach with a new railway car park in George Street. Although the Planning Officer regarded the new supermarket itself as acceptable, the car park would have breached a MBC policy opposing unsuitable development in the open country. The Committee then decided to defer a decision on the Tesco application for investigation of the layout of the car park and the natural area, mitigation of damage to the open country (including light pollution) and biodiversity.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

29th April 2013 – North Hall,
Staplehurst Village Centre – 8 p.m.

This meeting is for Parish electors and is hosted by the Parish Council to discuss any matters affecting the parish. Activity reports by the Council and local groups will be published. Verbal reports and questions can be taken at the meeting if time permits. Contact the Clerk with reports and specific issues for debate by 31/03/13.

County & Borough Councillor Eric Hotson and Borough Councillor Richard Lusty are invited to speak on their work for this parish during the past year. This will be an interesting evening with refreshments included. All are welcome.

Staplehurst

Parish Council

OLIVER ROAD SCHEME

Following public consultations and an exhibition of their proposals last year, developers Taylor Wimpey submitted a planning application (MA/12/2106) to MBC last year to build 53 new homes on their site south of Oliver Road (the "Wimpey Fields"). The houses would be a mixture of 2, 3, 4 and 5-bedroom types and would include 40% of "affordable" homes (shared-ownership or rented). The new housing would occupy about one-third of the site with the rest used for a conservation area and community woodland.

The Parish Council's planning committee considered the application at a meeting in December when local residents were able to say what they thought about the plans. Although parish councillors thought there were some interesting aspects they felt that several important requirements had not been adequately addressed, particularly drainage and traffic. There were also issues with the layout of the site such as parking provision and that some of the taller houses were placed overlooking existing homes. Councillors would have liked to see some bungalows included. The Parish Council recommended MBC not to grant the application as it stood. At the time of going to press no date had been set for a final decision by MBC.



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Public Consultation ended on the 8th January 2013 and two responses were received. Both responses were positive to the idea of the whole parish being the designated area which MBC has now approved. This can be seen at http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/local_development_framework/neighbourhood_planning.aspx We are the eighth parish to be approved to date. The Parish Council and the Rural Settlement Group will now look to progress the plan for the future benefit of Staplehurst.

BUDGET AND PARISH PRECEPT FOR 2013/14

Parish Councils have to finalise their budgets and precept calculations for submission to MBC at this time. This year has proved particularly difficult because of the uncertainties surrounding the potential loss of the grant for concurrent functions. We currently receive over £20,000 which would result in a loss of over 20% of our overall income. In addition consideration may need to be given to employing a planning consultant if the Neighbourhood Plan is to be progressed. However, the timing for this is still uncertain since it is tied up with MBC's Core Strategy. Therefore we shall be liaising closely with MBC before any final decisions are taken. Nevertheless some allowance in the budget will need to be made to cover possible additional expenditure.

Clearly we could just increase the precept to reflect the loss of the grant; this would mean an increase of 20%. We also need to take into account possible funding under the new Parish Services Scheme although this is greatly

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Our lights were much enjoyed in December and the council are grateful for generous donations from local businesses; Homeleigh Timber Supplies, Magee Gammon Chartered Accountants, Peter Jones Opticians, Radfords Estate Agents and Staplehurst Chiropractic. The quality of our ageing motifs will be considered before next Christmas.

SUMMER PLAYScheme

We have decided to run a playscheme again working with Play Place who have provided very good service over recent years. More details will follow nearer the time.

reduced. We must also review our forecast expenditure to ensure that we are providing a cost effective service. At the time of going to press the precept is not finalised since we have been waiting for MBC to inform us as to the funds available under the new Parish Services Scheme. Based on initial estimates from MBC the grant under the Parish Services Scheme will be reduced by around 60%. Nonetheless we have agreed in principle that the Parish Precept for 2013/14 for a Band D property should not increase by more than about 10% which approximates to about 8 pence per week.

This increase not only allows for the reduction in the grant for concurrent functions, but also covers budgeting for a planning consultant. These additional costs are financed partly through the precept increase, partly from reserves and a one-off support grant from Government; the latter compensates parishes for possible losses associated with the localisation of Council Tax Benefits.

FIRE HYDRANTS

The Fire Service have asked for help from parishioners to report any defects of a fire hydrant itself or the sign showing where it is to the Fire Department on Water.services@kent.fire-uk.org
01622 692121 Extension 2391

Water Services Department, Kent Fire & Rescue
Service HQ, The Godlands, Straw Mill Hill, Tovil,
Maidstone, ME15 6XB



STAPLEHURST LIBRARY

From April 2013 it is proposed to increase Saturday opening hours at Staplehurst library to 9am until 3pm and close at 6pm on Tuesdays. Patterns of use at the library have been monitored and increased hours are being considered for Saturdays as this is when the library is

busiest and when customers prefer to visit.

As part of the consultation on the changes Clare Trumper, Community Development Librarian, will be in the Library on Saturday 23rd February from 10am-2pm.

STAPLEHURST UPROCKIN 20TH JULY 2013

Another Skateboarding event and Family Fun day is being planned. Look out for full details in the next issue of the Village Update.

GARDEN WASTE SACKS

MBC is discontinuing the use of garden waste bags in June 2013. You can hire green waste bins in two sizes: 240 litre bin for £30 per year or 140 litres for £27 per year. For those with very small gardens it is suggested that neighbours share a bin. Until then garden waste bags are available at Spuds and Buds, Henhurst Farm Shop and Paxmans Services.

HEALTH CENTRE

The Health Centre has been in turmoil since the Primary Care Trust (PCT) decided to end its contract for running the Centre and seek a new contractor. The process is now well under way. Bidders have until 6th February to bid. The preferred contractor will be recommended by the PCT by 27th March. However, the PCT is being abolished and replaced on 1st April so the new body may take longer to tell us. Please bear with the current staff during this time of great uncertainty.

SERVICE FOR SGT FITZGERALD – SATURDAY 23RD MARCH

Arrangements for the Service of Remembrance for Sgt Fitzgerald, Staplehurst's missing airman, are well under way. The Mayor and his deputy will attend as well as a representative from the Australian Air Force and hopefully the Italian Air Attache. The Lord Lieutenant of Kent is sending a Deputy Lieutenant. The Brass Quintet of the Central Band of the RAF will be playing and an RAF Chaplain is going to assist the Rector. Sgt Fitzgerald was a member of a Commonwealth crew of South African, Australian and British and although he was in the RAF he

STAPLEHURST PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2012

The winners of our second competition were:

- 1st Skate competition, by Steven Downton
- 2nd Wait ages for a bus, then two come along, by Sara Conon
- 3rd Sheep not gently grazing, by Jill Walter

The top ten pictures have been on display in the Library and all entries are displayed on our web site. The Parish Council would like to thank DK Holdings & Photo Me Gorgeous (Staplehurst) and Maidstone Photo Factory (Headcorn) for their kind donation of the prizes. We would also like to thank Staplehurst Photographic Society in judging the competition and providing much needed support on the night of the presentations. Should we run the competition in 2013? If so do you have any ideas for a theme? Please forward any suggestions to the Parish Clerk.

THANK YOU

Thank you all the volunteers who help the Parish Council in so many different ways. We are fortunate to have a great team working in the Parish Office and beyond! All this effort benefits our community and makes Staplehurst a better place. Don't forget that your councillors are volunteers too!

died while flying as a crew replacement with a South African Air Force squadron. The service is to be held on 23rd March at 12.00 noon in Staplehurst Parish Church and the Parish Council are particularly keen to see many local people attending to make amends in this small way for the 66 years that his name was missing from the war memorial which has been restored with his name in its rightful place. Please give your support to show that the present generation still care for the memory of our war dead.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Recently Staplehurst Parish Council has been involved in a number of important issues affecting our community. Perhaps the issue that has generated most interest is the development of a supermarket in Staplehurst. As already been indicated, at its meeting on the 10 January 2013, MBC's Planning Committee approved Sainsbury's application; but, did not support the Officers' recommendation to refuse Tesco's application. The latter was deferred until a subsequent date. Staplehurst Parish Council spoke in favour of the Sainsbury application and in support of the Officers' recommendation in respect of the Tesco application. We remain concerned at possible development north of the railway and it is our intention to speak at the deferred meeting when it is convened.

We have taken the first steps required to develop a Neighbourhood Plan and MBC have now approved our proposal that the plan should cover the whole designated parish area. Neighbourhood Plans are a key part of the localism agenda. However, there are a number of hurdles that will need to be cleared before a plan can be agreed. We do believe that having a Neighbourhood Plan would enable Staplehurst to manage its own agenda and given that it would be supported by a local referendum it would carry a lot of weight. However, we also recognise that Neighbourhood Plans must ultimately be in line with MBC's Core Strategy so there is still some uncertainty regarding the timing of the Plan. In addition, as other Parish Councils have found out, we recognise that this requires expertise that is not always readily available amongst Parish Councillors and residents so we have

agreed in principle to seek the advice of a planning consultant although before doing so we shall need to liaise closely with MBC.

The third issue concerns the loss of the grant from MBC for Concurrent Functions which currently represents around 20% of our precept. The parishes, including Staplehurst, carried out an extensive petition which asked for support to retain the existing Concurrent Functions Grant and if this was rejected to consider polling residents to support a differential rating system. The latter would mean that parished areas would recover the costs of additional services through their own precepts, but would pay a lower borough wide council tax to compensate for double taxation. The petition was strongly supported and with over 3500 signatures MBC had little option but to call the matter in. As Chairman of Staplehurst Parish Council I was given the honour of presenting the petition to a full meeting of MBC. After quite a long debate it was agreed that the matter should be referred back to the Cabinet for reconsideration. Our argument was that the proposed Parish Services Scheme was over complex, lacked transparency, was unfair to the smaller parishes and above all was unnecessary. Unfortunately the Cabinet did not agree and the Members would not change their position. So we are now only left with the option of accepting the Parish Services Scheme and possibly going for a poll on differential rating. The latter will be considered by the parishes at the next meeting of the Maidstone Area Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC).

We believe that Staplehurst Parish Council should continue to take a pro-active role on issues such as concurrent functions to ensure that the interests of our community are taken into account.

John Perry

Parish Council Information

COUNCILLORS

John Perry

(Chairman)

Tom Burnham

(Joint Vice Chairman)

Paul Kelly

(Joint Vice Chairman)

Paul Butcher

(Chairman of Planning)

Margaret Ashby

Joan Buller

Anne Gosling

Simon Green

Neal Kemp

Sam Lain

Barrett Manning

John Reardon

Adele Sharp

Rory Silkin

Peter Spearink

CLERK

Mr Mick Westwood

RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER

Mrs Sue Bassett

ASSISTANT to CLERK

Mrs Deborah Jenkins

Address:

The Parish Office,
Village Centre, High Street.
Staplehurst TN12 0BJ

Email: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Tel: 01580 891761

Opening hours:

9am to 1pm Mondays to Fridays,
except on Thursdays when it is by
appointment.

Meetings

March Monday 4th Monday 18th

April Tuesday 2nd Monday 15th

April Monday 29th (planning 7pm)

Annual Parish Meeting

April Monday 29th NORTH HALL at 8pm

May Monday 13th

Two Parish Councillors will attend a surgery at the Library on the second Saturday of each month from 10am until noon. Borough Councillor Lusty's surgery will continue on the last Saturday of each month. PCSO Pete Gardner will be holding a surgery between 11am and noon on Sat 16th March, Sat 20th April and Sat 25th May.