

# Village Update

SPRING 2016

[www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk)

## Chairman's Report

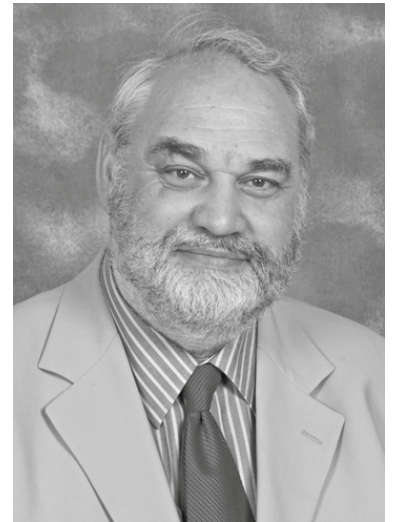
In spite of the extensive Christmas break, the Council has not been idle. This is the time of year when we have to set the Parish precept (which is collected by Maidstone with the Council Tax). We need to balance the Council's books, but we understand that people are hard pressed for money. So for the second year running, we have not increased the precept, which means it equates to £55 per year for a Band D property.

I am delighted to tell you that the Queen has honoured our own councillor Joan Buller in the New Year's honours list. She is awarded the BEM for services to Staplehurst. Congratulations Joan, well deserved!

Our Neighbourhood Plan has gone out to external examination (legal speak for a sanity check), the phase just before a referendum. There is more on this elsewhere in the Update. Although the Fisher's Farm site is zoned for some development in the Plan, we must resist allowing

it to be built without proper regard to infrastructure problems, such as drainage and road traffic. The Parish Council has to consider current residents. With those things in mind, the Council rejected the developer's application on the 18th January, as it left far too many loose ends. No doubt it will return, but it must be better.

Councillor Neal Kemp resigned from the Council at Christmas, as he has moved to Devon. A long commute for anyone! So there is a vacancy on the Parish Council. Why not have a go?



*Rory Silkin*

## COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP – SATURDAY 12TH MARCH

### Can we beat our turn-out of 47 volunteers in 2015?

Staplehurst Parish Council is again organising a clean-up of the built-up area on Saturday 12th 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. When you have cleaned your allotted area sacks need to be brought back to the Youth Club so don't overfill them! We have now purchased twenty bag openers (with help from funding from Councillor Hotson)



so this will make the job easier for the early arrivals. We aim to offer you refreshments after the work is completed. For insurance purposes we have to keep a list of helpers' names. 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 12th March.**

# Staplehurst

*Parish Council*

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The meeting will take place on Monday 23rd May in the South Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre.

The Parish Council hosts this public meeting to provide local electors with a forum for discussion of parish issues and to take reports from councillors and village groups. Please send written reports (500 words max.) and any issues for discussion to the Parish Office by 3rd May 2016.

Reports will be included in meeting minutes for historical interest and published on the village website. Verbal reports and questions will be taken at the meeting if time permits.

## DOG MESS

It's the time of the year again when it becomes apparent that a few dog owners are allowing their dogs to defecate in public areas and failing to clear up. This gives all responsible dog owners a bad name. Please note there are designated red dog waste bins. Dog owners can also use the black litter bins dotted around the village (including those strapped to posts). If none of these are available please take the waste home and use your own black bin.

## PLANNING NOTES

The two largest applications since the last Update were both considered by the full Parish Council – Bovis with 167 dwellings on the western part of Fisher's Farm (MA/14/505432) and Redrow with 185 dwellings on the eastern half (MA/15/510186).

Although Fisher's Farm is identified as a potential site for housing in both the draft Maidstone Local Plan and the draft Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council felt that the information submitted did not address potential problems, particularly with traffic and drainage, and so it could not support the proposals in their present form. It was also felt that there should have been an overall plan for Fisher's Farm as a whole.

The Planning Committee looked at applications for expanding traveller sites in Maplehurst Lane (MA/15/506646) and Park Wood Lane (MA/15/510210) and recommended refusal. In view of the tangled planning history of this area, with plots repeatedly subdivided, MBC was asked to look at it as a whole, rather than individual applications in isolation.

As mentioned elsewhere, MBC has approved the full planning application for development of Iden Park Service Station for housing (MA/15/508655).

MBC's Planning Committee rejected an application for residential development at Woodford Farm, Maidstone Road (15/506037) although we understand that the applicant is minded to appeal.

Finally, the application for a photovoltaic solar farm at Great Pagehurst (13/1456) was refused by the MBC Planning Committee on the grounds of "adverse visual effect upon the landscape character and appearance." The applicant has the right to appeal.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING ABOUT SAINSBURY'S?

We are often asked this question and the short answer is that we don't know. Every few weeks the Parish Council asks Sainsbury's whether they have made a decision yet and receives a polite response that plans are still under review for the food store on the former GMS and DK Holdings site at the station and for the filling station in the High Street. Planning permission for the store (MA/11/1944) was given on 15 March 2013 with a condition that construction started in three years. Sainsbury's have very recently applied (16/500622) to demolish an existing unused building in order to maintain the planning permission as development would then be considered to have started, but without requiring the pre-development conditions or section 106 contributions specified in the original consent. Meanwhile the former GMS factory was given temporary permission for use for car parking for two years from July 2014. Planning permission for the redevelopment of the High Street site as a filling station (MA/12/0220) was given on 23 April 2012, again with a three-year period for starting work, which has now expired. It is worth remembering that the same site also had planning permission for residential development with seven houses and six flats (MA/08/0205 renewed as MA/11/0618) which has also expired. As far as we are aware, there has been no application at present to renew either of these permissions. Given that MBC has recently given planning permission for the redevelopment of the Iden Park Service Station for housing, this raises the possibility that there could be no filling station on the A229 between Linton Road, Maidstone and Cranbrook Common, a distance of nine miles.

## STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Staplehurst Parish Council continues to progress the work on the Neighbourhood Plan that sets out a sustainable vision for the area. The Staplehurst NP Steering Group was happy that the Plan reflected the views of those who had responded during the early consultations, whilst setting out a clear and deliverable vision for the future.

MBC successfully organised a Borough-wide public consultation which concluded on the 4th December 2015. A mixed-bag of comments was subsequently made by residents, land owners, developers and agents. All these comments are recorded at: <http://consult.maidstone.gov.uk/portal/stapndpr16oct15?tab=list>

MBC has subsequently appointed Planning Inspector Clare Wright to conduct an independent examination of the plan. Hopefully this will lead to a full recommendation that the plan meets the basic conditions, is user friendly and is appropriate to go forward to Referendum. Residents are reminded that all registered electors will have the chance to vote on the Plan at this Referendum. Some early clarification has been sought by the Planning Inspector and the Staplehurst NP Steering Group, assisted by Richard Eastham of FERIA Urbanism, has forwarded the necessary information for the attention of Clare Wright.

## NEAL KEMP

We are sorry to lose the services of Neal Kemp who had to resign from Staplehurst Parish Council in January because of a move to North Devon. Neal was co-opted to the Parish Council in November 2012 and has been a valuable member. His input has been very helpful on the Planning Committee where he has always taken the trouble to examine details. He has also represented the Parish Council at many outside meetings, particularly related to flooding and drainage issues. Neal has said that once he is settled in Devon he will try to become involved in his local parish council. We wish him and Lesley all the best in Devon.



## PARISH COUNCIL SURGERIES

The first 2016 Parish Council Surgery was held in the Library on Saturday 30th January and 14 residents came to meet Borough & Parish Councillor John Perry with Parish Councillors Chris Claridge, Barrett Manning and Peter Spearink.

Most of the 50 questions answered centred around the proposed housing developments, roads, traffic and the No.5 bus. The issues raised are now on 2016 agendas of the relevant Parish Council working groups.

The Parish Council recognises the value of this surgery, so the Council will now hold a WEEKLY surgery at the Library each Saturday from 10 until 11am. **COME ALONG!**

## UPDATE DELIVERY

Over the years various Parish Council publications have been hand delivered to residents by a team of volunteers. Due to increasing demands on everyone's time it has been increasingly difficult to manage delivery of the Village Update. The Parish Council decided to trial contracting out the delivery. Leafleteers Ltd were chosen and they delivered the last Village Update. The Council have offered them the contract to deliver the Village Updates for 2016 and they have accepted. We thank the volunteers and will be contacting them to explain our reasons. We know there will be many opportunities for you to support your Parish Council in a variety of ways.

## LOCAL PLAN AND INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The Maidstone Borough Local Plan Consultation closes on 18th March. Copies may be consulted in libraries, the Parish Office, Maidstone Gateway and on-line at [www.maidstone.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/localplan). The focus of the 7th March Parish Council Meeting will be our response to this. We particularly invite residents to attend and contribute their views. **PLEASE COME!**

## SUMMER PLAY SCHEME

The Parish Council will again be organising a summer play scheme working with Play Place. In a change of venue this year, we will be back at the primary school. We will be running for three weeks from 1st August. As a result of feedback the second week will additionally offer a 12-3pm slot each day so 9am until 3pm will be an option for you. There will be more details nearer the time.

## JOAN BULLER, BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL (CIVIL LIST)

Our very own Parish Councillor Joan Buller was awarded the British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours List 'for services to the community in Staplehurst, Kent'.



The award rightly recognised over 32 years of service on the Parish Council and her tireless work for numerous community activities and organisations. Joan's efforts span all age groups including the running of the weekly social group for Staplehurst's more senior citizens to organising a play scheme for young children during the summer holidays, which is very popular with children and parents alike. Joan's commitment, words and actions throughout the years have resulted in an extraordinarily selfless and caring contribution to the whole community. It goes without saying that the award is more than deserved and we are very lucky to have such a devoted and lovely lady living in our community. Congratulations Joan!



## CLEAN FOR THE QUEEN

As part of the celebrations for the Queen's 90th birthday, Saturday 5th March has been declared as a day to "Clean for the Queen." This is the week preceding our annual clean up. If any group would like to take part please contact the clerk. Any rubbish collected can be stored at the Youth Club grounds and will be added to our pile of a week later.

## MOBILE POLICE STATION

You can call in and chat with officers at The Parade between 1:45 and 2:45pm on the following Mondays: 14th March and 28th March

## CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

We thank supporters who contributed towards the cost of the Christmas lights display along High Street and Station Road. The Parish Council is grateful for the kind donations from Helen's Coffee House, Murcatto Wines, Radfords Estate Agents, Spuds 'n Buds and W J Crouch Butchers Ltd. We know that there were problems with some lights this year and shall be addressing them with a view to putting on a better and brighter display for Christmas 2016.

## Arriva buses

Over the last couple of years the Arriva bus service to get our children to schools in Maidstone has been heavily criticised. This was for a variety of reasons including timings, capacity, consistency (due to multiple breakdowns) and timetable changes. Over this period a small dedicated group of parents, with support from the Parish Council and affected schools, has been lobbying Arriva and various KCC officers, with our MP Helen Grant. The good news is that after a lot of work Arriva agreed to provide a new 5X bus from Cranbrook to the Oakwood Park and London Road schools in Maidstone. This is timed at 07:16 (Parish Church stop) and started on the 10th January. Reports so far have been mostly positive. This addition alleviates pressure on other services such as the 605 going to Vinters Park Invicta Girls Grammar School leaving Staplehurst (Parish Church stop) 07:21. The Parish Council would like to thank Tina Jordan and her group for this valuable work which is still on-going.

## ACCIDENT DATA

The Parish Council is setting up a data-base to record traffic accidents in the parish, however minor, so that a better record of problem areas can be mapped. This will help us build a case for improvements in these areas. At present only those collisions needing the police to attend are recorded by the authorities which paints a false picture. A form setting out the type of information we will need is available on the Village Website or from the Parish Office to where your completed forms should be returned. By the end of March, it will be possible to email a submission direct to the group within the Parish Council managing this data-base.

## PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Local electors and the press have a right to listen to Parish Council Meetings, but not to take part. At the beginning and after the closure of the Parish Council Meeting the Chairman will invite members of the public to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes each relating to issues on the Agenda or about issues of local concern. You are requested to state your name and address prior to speaking. The Parish Council as a planning consultee makes recommendations to MBC which makes the decision. All meetings are held in the South Hall, Village Centre. Planning Committee meetings begin at 7pm with Full Council following on at 7.30pm (if planning agenda is short). Contact the Clerk for details or check the website calendar page.

### Meetings in 2016 are:

Monday March 7th	Monday March 21st
Monday April 4th	Monday April 18th
Tuesday May 3rd	Monday May 16th
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING	Monday 23rd May
Monday June 6th	Monday June 20th
Monday July 4th	Monday July 18th

## CARNIVAL AND FETE

### Looking forward ...and back

The Carnival and Fete Committee are currently planning 3 events this year. The popular 10k takes place on June 5th and is again sponsored by Scuffs and Scratches.

As usual, it's the last Saturday in June (25th) for the Carnival and Fete and whilst still being planned, it is hoped to feature a Dog Show. Finally Sunday 20th November will see the return of the French and Christmas Market. Looking back, we're pleased to say last year we were able to donate over £4250 to 15 local good causes. Like to help? Contact Jenny Wilden on 892764 to find out more.



# Parish Council Information

### COUNCILLORS

Rory Silkin (Chairman)  
Tom Burnham (Joint Vice Chairman  
& Acting Chairman of Planning)  
Paul Kelly (Joint Vice Chairman)  
Paul Butcher (Chairman of Planning)  
Margaret Ashby  
Joan Buller  
Chris Claridge  
Anne Gosling  
Sam Lain-Rose  
Barrett Manning  
John Perry  
John Reardon  
Adele Sharp  
Peter Spearink  
**ONE VACANCY**

### 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.

### SURGERIES AT THE LIBRARY

Borough Councillor Perry's surgery will be on the first Saturday of each month, together with a Parish Councillor from 10am until noon.

In addition the Parish Council will be holding a surgery every Saturday from 10am until 11am.

PCSO Pete Gardner will hold Police Surgeries on Saturdays 5<sup>th</sup> March, April 30<sup>th</sup>, May 28<sup>th</sup>, June 25<sup>th</sup>, July 16<sup>th</sup> and August 20<sup>th</sup> from 10am to 11am.

You are welcome to talk through any local problems or ask questions about local issues.