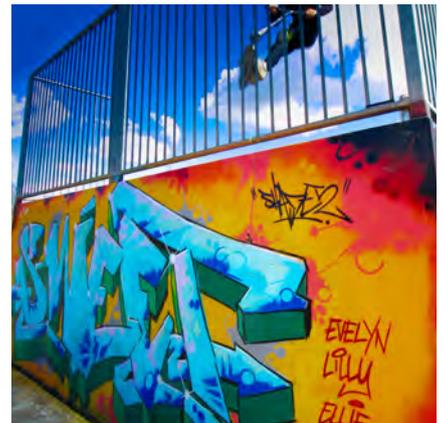


STAPLEHURST

PARISH COUNCIL



www.staplehurst-pc-uk

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Hello to all our existing residents and may I offer a very warm welcome to new residents who have moved to Staplehurst and joined our community!

I am delighted to have been chosen as Chairman by my colleagues for the fourth year and I look forward to continuing to work with my fellow councillors towards community improvements and supporting our parishioners.

Our Annual Report comes to you slightly later this year, due to having to manage changes with our office staff. Like any government organisation, we have a valuable team who assist the implementation of decisions made by our Parish Councillors. In the early months of this year, our previous Clerk moved on to new pastures, but we are delighted to offer a very warm welcome to our new Clerk, Richard Griffiths. Richard has extensive knowledge and experience as a Parish Clerk. He is already a very valuable addition to our team.

I am very pleased to say that coming out of the Covid pandemic, the Parish Council have continued to make significant improvements to our village. Residents will be aware of the improvements at the Bell Lane car park in association with Maidstone Borough Council, further improvements at The Parade, Surrenden Field, the Jubilee sports field and the Wimpey field.

We regularly work to make small but important improvements, such as painting the bollards on Church Hill and the improvements to the Youth Club building. The Parish Council are now in charge of this facility and we are working hard to ensure the youth of our village have a safe, interesting and fun place to visit.

Virtually all of these improvements have been made by sensible money management, acquiring funds and grants from various sources – meaning that funding does not come from the Parish Council finances.

Our Planning Committee is regularly reviewing all planning applications, some of which will have a big impact on our community, so these matters are taken very seriously.

Our Communications Group continues to engage in various manners with residents, utilising our website, social media and our Village Update magazines. Further means of communication are also being looked into, as we feel it is very important because your support is invaluable.

Our Road Safety Group is heavily involved in trying to achieve improvements to traffic issues around the village. Obviously this is not easy but every improvement is received with delight hopefully from everyone.

Our various Council and Community groups have also provided reports, which I hope you find valuable.

At the time of writing, we are going through a heat wave and whilst I am sure everyone is thoroughly enjoying the fabulous weather, the Parish Council take environmental issues very seriously. These are considered during Planning meetings and Full Council meetings and we will continue to work towards a greener environment for our own and especially our children's future.

Further improvements around the village are consistently being worked on by your Parish Council. Many of these are not easy to achieve but I find that, by driving them forward with diligence and persistence, the results are there for all to see.

One of the nicest things about being involved in community activities is the fabulous support we get from our residents. This is something we have become used to! Whether it be through Covid times, village clean ups, assistance after storms or painting the library; we really value the support that we get from you. At the present time we do have vacancies on the Parish Council so, if any of you feel that you could join and work with us, please do get in touch.

Many thanks and very best wishes

Paddy

P.J. Riordan



Find out the dates for Parish Council Meetings. Please scan this code:



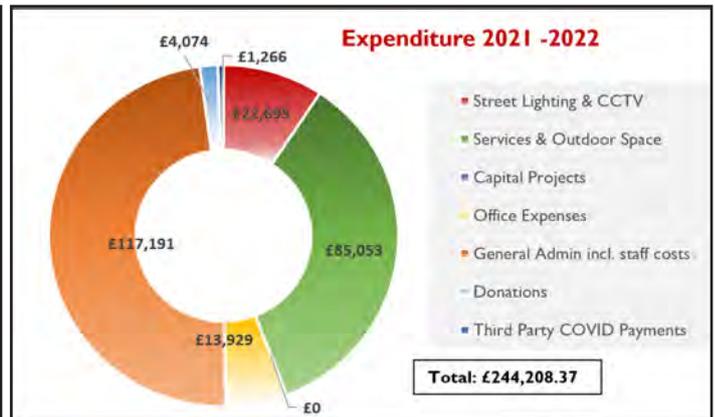
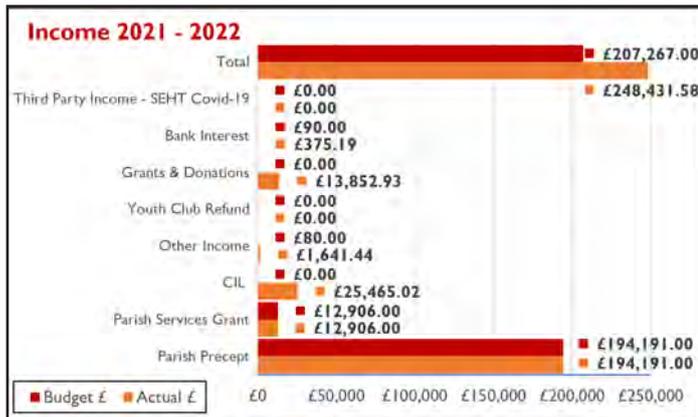
DATE FOR YOUR DIARY
VILLAGE CLEAN UP

Saturday, 10th September
10am until noon
Meet at the Youth Club

MONEY MATTERS 2021/22

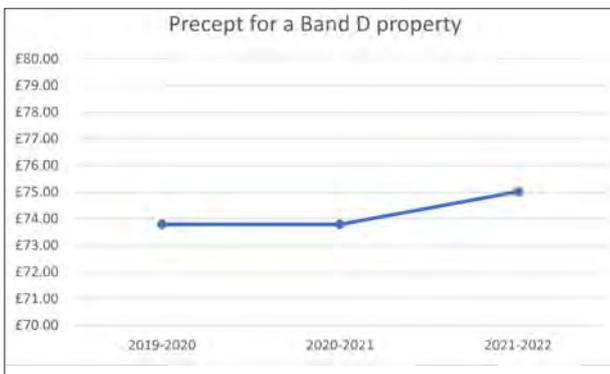
The Parish Council receives **income** through the Precept; an annual sum of money collected with the Council Tax by Maidstone Borough Council. In addition, income is received from County and Borough Council grants, local business donations and developer contributions. Details of the income for 2021-2022 are shown in the graph below left.

Council **expenditure** for 2021-22 was as expected, with some budget categories incurring overspends and other underspends, influenced by the current circumstances. A small sum has been carried forward to committed projects that did not complete within the financial year. The balance has been added to the general fund for any unbudgeted or unforeseen emergencies that may occur. A breakdown of expenditure in 2021/22 is shown below right.



Property Band D is used as the exemplar house for precept and the graph below illustrates the annual precept for a Band D property in Staplehurst over the past few years.

The Parish Council works hard at supporting the local residents whilst trying to keep increases in the precept to the minimum - and well below inflation.



2022/23

In **2022/23** the precept has been set at £210,991.29 which equates to £75.02 per annum for a Band D property - compared to last year, an increase of only 1.66% (from £73.79).

Due to the general increase of the cost of living for all of us, the Councilors were reluctant to increase the precept for residents and, through prudent budgeting, managed to keep the increase to 1.66%, well below inflation. The precept takes account of all the costs incurred in running and improving the Council's services and assets, as well as a number of new projects planned for the coming year.

In **2021 - 22** we were able to spend £8.41 from Section 137 per elector. The Electoral Roll stood at 4,976, thereby resulting in a expenditure donation limit of £41,848.16. The Council actually spent £4,074 on donations illustrated below.

ORGANISATION	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance	£250	Emergency medical services
Royal British Legion	£24	Replacement Poppies x8
Community Centre for Debt Advice Staplehurst	£200	Free face-to-face debt advice service
Samaritans Maidstone & Weald	£100	Emotional support for those struggling to cope
Citizens Advice Bureau Maidstone	£300	Confidential advice service
Staplehurst Parish Magazine	£75	Publication of events and articles in Staplehurst
Kenward Trust	£100	Supporting people affected by substance abuse
Involve Kent	£75	Health and Wellbeing Charity
Heart of Kent Hospice	£250	Expert care for the challenge of a life-limiting illness
Medway Valley Countryside Partnership	£50	Supporting Kent's landscapes & wildlife
Staplehurst Scouts Group	£400	For the Beaver Colony, Cub Pack and Scout Troop
Staplehurst Community Events Group	£100	Donation for Stay Safe campaign
Staplehurst WI	£50	Donation towards the Autumn Village Clean Up
Tim Thomas	£250	Donation The Heart of Headcorn Project
RBL Poppy Appeal	£100	Poppy Wreath Donation
Post Office Ltd	£250	Merit Awards Gift Cards
Staplehurst Free Church	£1500	Donation (s19) to children's play area
TOTAL DONATIONS	£4,074	

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL



CHAIRMAN
Paddy Riordan

Communications
Community Enhancement
Employment*
Finance and Strategy*
Greener Staplehurst
Neighbourhood Plan
Planning
Road Safety
Youth Club

COUNCILLORS



Joan Buller

Planning
Neighbourhood Plan
Employment
Road Safety
Finance and Strategy



Jose Castro

Communications *
Greener Staplehurst
Employment
Youth Club



Matt Clifton

Communications



Eric Hotson

Employment
Community Enhancement
Finance and Strategy



Bill McLaughlin

Planning
Greener Staplehurst
Community Enhancement



Kelly McLean

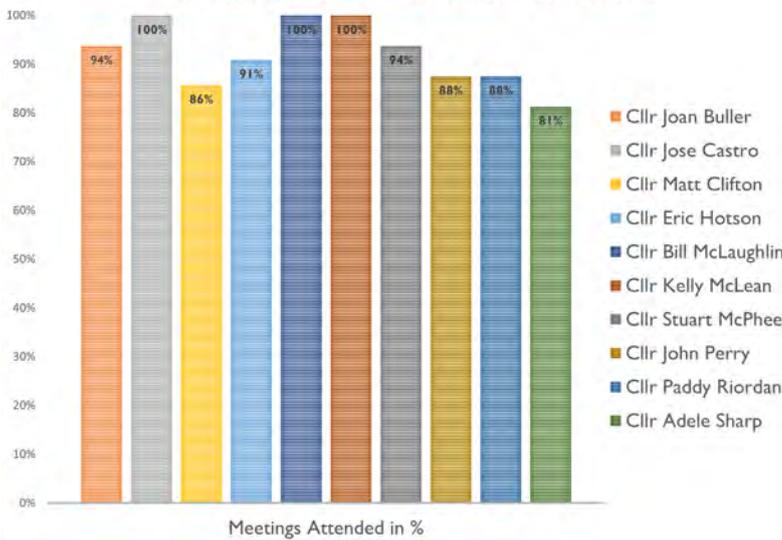
Planning
Road Safety
Youth Club



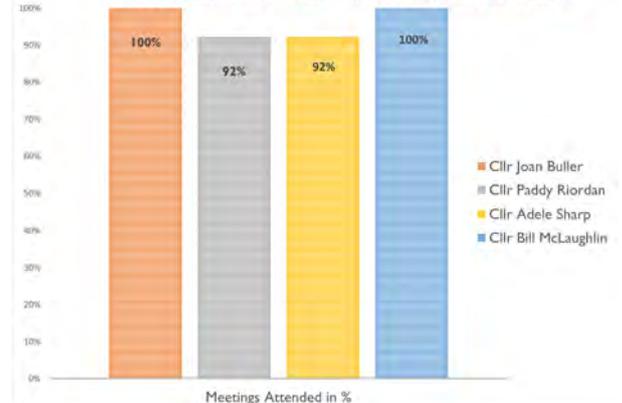
Stuart McPhee

Youth Club *
Greener Staplehurst
Communications
Finance and Strategy

ATTENDANCE TO FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS



ATTENDANCE TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS



SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

PARISH COUNCIL

Statutory consultee for planning applications

Other responsibilities include management of:

- Open spaces, including: Jubilee Field and Skatepark, Surrenden Playing Field, Wimpey Field Nature Reserve
- The Youth Club facility
- Some public footpaths
- Benches and litter bins
- Four bus shelters
- Public Toilets at Bell Lane
- 14 various planters around the village
- 13 street lights
- Christmas motifs on the street lights
- 10 extra salt bins
- CCTV on 4 local sites

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

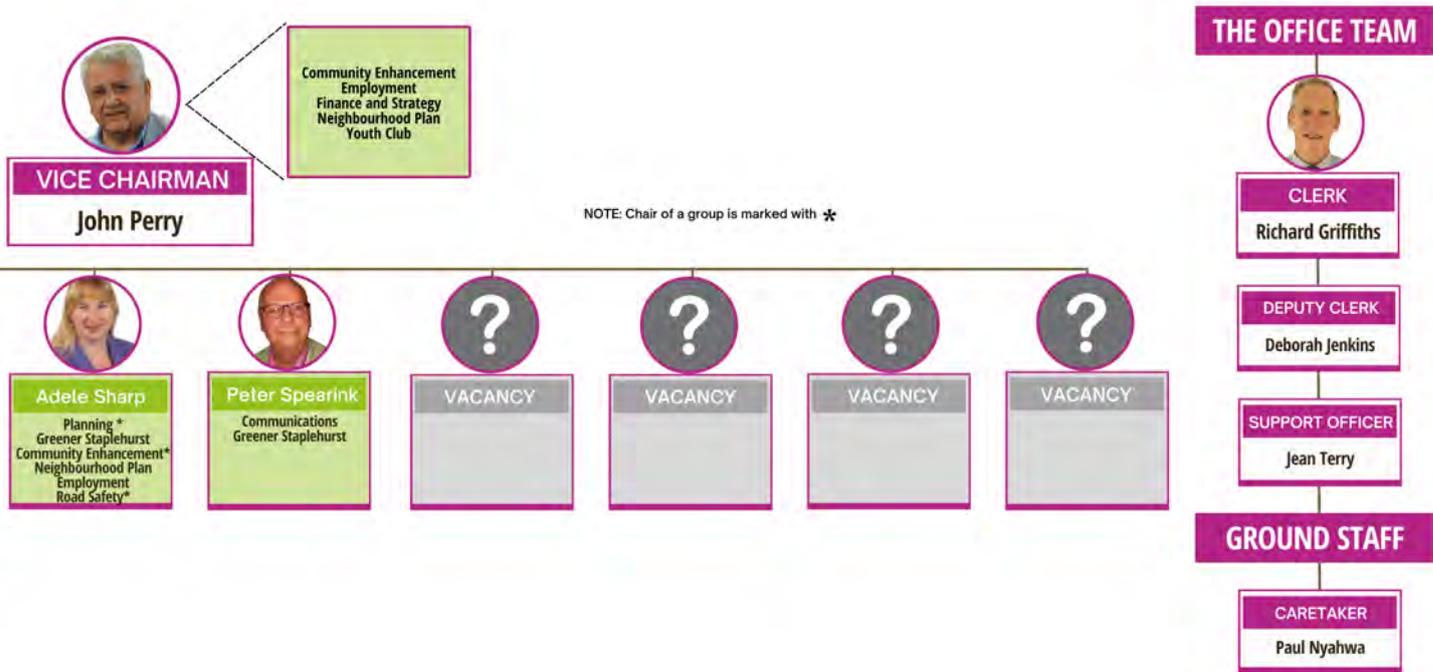
Wider responsibilities, including:

- Principal decision-making authority for Planning applications and building control
- Fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, dead animals, graffiti, dog mess and litter
- Remaining bus shelters
- Anti-social behaviour
- Refuse, recycling and street cleaning
- Illegal parking, parking control, fines
- Hedge cutting - public pathways and roads

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

Many responsibilities, including:

- Roads, highways, street furniture, potholes
- Road safety & speed control
- Road works & closures
- Trading Standards
- Majority of street lighting
- Majority of salt/grit bins
- Library Services
- Public rights of way
- Highways: drainage, culverts, ditch clearing and enforcement of riparian landowner's responsibilities



CLERK'S REPORT

I started at Staplehurst Parish Council on the 10th of July 2022, and I am grateful for all the help from the staff, Councillors and residents for making my first few weeks in Staplehurst so enjoyable.

I was born in Dorset and went to Manchester University to study Leisure and Environmental Management. I initially worked in the Manchester area in Sports Development before working in Saudi Arabia for 5 years managing hotel leisure facilities. On my return to Britain, I started working in leisure and environmental management in Local Government - mostly in Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire: starting as Leisure Centre Manager and then Leisure Services Manager. I managed a range of projects from building new leisure facilities in Towcester and Brackley in Northamptonshire to sorting out complex leisure contract / tendering issues with Chiltern Leisure Trust.

My wife is from Kent and we moved into the area to support her family and I took up a role at Canterbury City Council where I oversaw Parks and Open Space. My main projects in Canterbury were obtaining £750,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to upgrade Westgate Gardens and £250,000 for playground improvements. I also managed 14 miles of the north Kent coast including Beech Huts at Whitstable and Herne Bay, which had some interesting challenges. I then became Strategy Manager, heavily involved in consultation and drafting policies such as The Kent Environment Strategy and Canterbury City Council Corporate Plan.

In 2018, I took early retirement from Canterbury and looked for a role close to home. I spent four years at Hawkhurst Parish Council before moving to Staplehurst this July.

In my youth, which seems a long time ago, I played football, squash and cricket to a good level, but I am now an armchair fan. I enjoy playing golf and walking the dog. I am married with twin boys, who are just leaving university.

Richard Griffiths, Staplehurst Parish Clerk

PERSONNEL

Proper Officer / Clerk	Richard Griffiths	Parish Council Office Community Centre, High Street Staplehurst, TN12 0BJ 01580 891761 Opening hours: 9.00 – 13.00 Monday - Thursday
Deputy Clerk / Responsible Finance Officer	Deborah Jenkins	
Parish Support Officer	Jean Terry	
Caretaker	Paul Nyahwa	
Chairman of Council	Cllr. Paddy Riordan	cllr.paddyriordan@staplehurst-pc.uk
Vice-Chairman of Council	Cllr. John Perry	cllr.johnperry@staplehurst-pc.uk
Chairman of Planning	Cllr. Adele Sharp	cllr.adelesharp@staplehurst-pc.uk

PARISH ACTIVITIES

Community Enhancement New Ideas Committee

Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp

It has been good to be able to get on with some projects post Covid. We continued to manage our regular, necessary jobs (e.g., hedge-cutting and public toilet maintenance) as well as completing some highly visible ones. Surrenden Field now has its extended pathway from the pavilion to the Thatcher Road entrance. There are also improvements being made to the children's play area.

We have more projects in the pipeline. The WW1 commemorative bench hit a few glitches involving acquiring permission from MBC to install, but hopefully it will appear soon. We are also looking at improving the seating, the pavilion and installing adult outdoor exercise equipment.

As we are increasingly trying to be fit and eco-friendly, we are looking into providing some bike parking racks at The Parade as well as opening the disabled toilet (more permissions needed there too).

The old telephone box, beautifully refurbished, now just needs to find a suitable use. We are reaching out to local groups to ask them if they would like to use it as a miniature exhibition space to promote themselves for a month. Let us know if your organisation would be interested.



Employment Group

Contact: Cllr Paddy Riordan

Residents will be aware of two important working groups of the Parish Council, which are the Employment Group and the Finance and Strategy Group.

The Employment Group continues to support all employees. We have assisted them to enable them to work from home whilst we are coming out of the pandemic and ensuring that they have up-to-date and safe facilities to work from within the parish office.

We try to ensure the caretaker has all the tools and equipment



he requires to carry out his duties and valuable work around the village. The group also manages recruitment and had to go through a detailed process to secure a new Parish Clerk. This was done promptly and efficiently by the members of

the Employment Group. We now have our new Clerk firmly in position and he is working hard on the village's behalf. All activities in relation to employment are looked at by the group, including risk assessments, contracts, wages and pensions. So, a big thank you to the group for their hard work throughout the year and to the Parish Councillors and staff for their valued support.

Planning Committee

Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp



The Planning Committee continues to work hard reviewing planning applications and submits recommendations and comments on individual applications as a formal consultee.

We endeavour to visit the sites before we meet as well as ensuring neighbours receive notification of

planning applications. Not all parishes do this, but our committee feels it is an important aspect of our commitment to know what we are commenting about.

Of course, applicants and those objecting to developments can also lobby us, which we take care to declare at planning meetings. Whilst it is MBC that make the final decision, Staplehurst Planning Committee make it their business to be up-to-date on planning policies when responding to applications. When a planning application is referred to the Maidstone Planning committee, we attend either in person or virtually at Maidstone Town Hall to give our 3 minutes further explaining our reasons to recommend approval or refusal.

Increasingly, we see applicants considering green designs, permeable drives, hedgehog access, water collection and thoughtful attention to the impact a development will have on neighbours, which is positive to see. Visit MBC's planning portal to view planning applications and to comment whether they should be approved or refused.



MBC Planning Portal

Finance and Strategy Group

Contact: Cllr Paddy Riordan



The Finance and Strategy Group work on several important specialist areas for the Parish Council. This includes topics such as organising policies for the council or things like insurance policies. Every autumn we start to work on the budget for the next financial year.

The Parish Council take pride in forming a sound, realistic working budget and try to ensure that we do not have any unnecessary extra spending wherever possible. The major means for the Parish Council to gain extra funding is through the precept from residents' council tax, so we take this matter very seriously.

Neighbourhood Watch Contact: Parish Office



Staplehurst has had an active Neighbourhood Watch since 1987. Unfortunately, our present scheme is now struggling. Our Secretary has retired and our long-standing, excellent Chairman sadly passed away earlier this year. We urgently need residents to become involved and new volunteers to come forward to fill key roles. The aim of this valuable group is to look out for our neighbours and report any suspicious activity. We work closely with our Community Warden and our local police. We also alert residents to the latest scams etc. Please

contact the Parish Office if you would like to become involved in this really worthwhile community group.



Join the
Group
Facebook
Group

Communications Group Contact: Cllr Jose Castro



We continue with our commitment to structure the way the Parish Council interacts with the residents and to act as the voice of the Parish Council.

During this last year, we have consolidated and improved the new format for the Village Update and the Annual Report. We have established new sections that cover volunteering in the community, the 'News from the Past' section and a review of the memorials in the village, as well as providing space for prominent

groups where the Parish Council may not be necessarily involved but that we consider that play a relevant role in Staplehurst, such as the Women Institute or the Footpath Group.

We have been assisting our office team in creating some of the posters that have been populating our display boards and social media announcements, such as the ones advertising councillor surgeries, the annual meeting or the reopening of the Youth Club. We have embarked in the major project to try to design a worthy

logo for our council. For this, we have consulted the residents in a survey that we are still analysing. It will point us in the right direction.

For the coming year, we are hoping to come up with different logo designs for the Parish Council to decide whether they adopt any as their logo. We also want to develop further surveying the opinions of our residents on different matters and to improve the way we use some of our social media accounts.

We are in the middle of organising a well-deserved official celebration event for the volunteers that helped during COVID and obtained awards from Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council.

We are considering exploring the possibility of improving the software that the Parish Council use for its work and communications, and to compile a welcome package for new residents that would provide information about the parish and its facilities and organisations.

Our group consist of four councillors and would benefit from new members – any residents welcome, not just councillors. If you have experience in the field of communication and/or care about social media or the use of technology, your expertise would be welcome. Come and join us!

Staplehurst Youth Club Contact: Cllr Stuart McPhee

If you are passing Staplehurst Youth Club – close to the Community Centre - on a Tuesday evening between 7 and 9pm, stop and listen to the excited (loud!) sounds of young people playing and having fun.

One of the successful projects undertaken by the Parish Council this year has been the refurbishment of the Youth Club building and the relaunch of the Youth Club.

After Christmas, a new Youth Club Working Group was formed and faced a number of issues to resolve, from staffing to funding and sewerage pumps not working, to leaking roof and insurance requirements – the working group successfully faced all challenges.

With the help of experienced youth workers from KCC and some useful external funding grants, we relaunched the Youth Club in June. Already, 30+ young people attend each week to meet with their friends and participate in a variety of activities from outdoor ball games to table-tennis, pool, card and board games and cooking and painting. There are also PC games and Wii facilities – and Wi-Fi availability. Something for everyone. It is all at no charge for young people attending. We have plans for additional one-day events during the summer including an all-day event at Surrenden Fields and the visit to the village centre of a specialist "gaming bus". Maybe even some excursions later in the year.

We still need more grownup volunteers to help on a rota basis. It is a very rewarding activity.



Join the
Youth Club
Facebook
Group



Please use this QR code to apply or contact Councillor Stuart McPhee for an informal discussion.



Cllr Riordan and Cllr McPhee testing the equipment

Greener Staplehurst Group

Contact: David George



The Greener Staplehurst Group has been engaged this year in several activities, such as creating new flower borders, planting, weeding, watering and general maintenance. The village now has sixteen wooden planters in use - built by members of the group - plus a large planter kindly donated by Maidstone Borough Council. This has been placed at the Jubilee Field entrance and has been replanted. Additionally, a new mixed flower bed, situated between the High Street and Chestnut Avenue, has been enlarged.

We have looked after the Communal Herb Bed, which is to be dedicated to the memory of a daughter of a GSG member, who together with her sister and her mother, helped weed and plant the area when it was first created. A new water butt is to be added to the one already serving this area, plus a compost bin which is being constructed by Staplehurst Men's Shed. We would remind residents that they are welcome to plant any herbs in this area and to pick what they need for the pot, at any time. It's yours, so please make use of it.

In February, a number of tree saplings were planted in several grassed areas with mixed results and our intention is to plant six half-standard trees in the Autumn, suitably protected by posts and guards. A new gate has been added to the pond in the Wimpey Nature Reserve to allow easier access for maintenance. Additional dead hedging is being constructed to encourage insects and small animals to live there. Maintenance is ongoing.

On the 14th of May, in association with All Saints' Church, we held our first Eco Day. Within the church, stalls were selling green products, and there was an art display, a musical lunchtime interlude and a free raffle for an unusual modern bird feeder, supplied by Martin Ralph and his son. We are hoping that this will become an annual event like the Bioblitz.

The Greener Staplehurst Group was set up, not only to make the village a pleasant and pretty place to live in, but also to encourage everyone to be greener and help reduce our carbon footprint. The Committee meets once a month. There is also a volunteer group that meets regularly to help take on the projects including weeding! If you would like to join the GSG committee or volunteer a bit of time to do gardening around the village (and meet new people), please contact Mina McPhee email kk_mina@yahoo.com



Join the
GSG
Facebook
page

David George
Chair of Greener Staplehurst Group

Road Safety and Speed Watch

Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp

Our little group continues to work hard to keep our roads as safe as possible. Sadly, having previously built up some good contacts with Kent Highways, they have had a restructure, so we are having to renew those contacts and relationships.

We continue to update our HIP (Highways Improvement Plan) with our current push being to improve the area around the Primary school with dropped curbs and double yellow lines. We also have lobbied for improvements to the Hawkenbury River Bridge. Unfortunately, we did not get selected for the '20 is plenty' scheme, so we can only hope that drivers will slow down around the school area.

Local residents continue to let us know about areas of concern, including overgrown hedges that need cutting back. At the time of writing this article, it is still officially bird nesting season so we cannot cut hedges yet, but all too soon it will be the end of August and we will all be able to tidy up our overgrown hedges – let's hope the wildlife appreciates it!

Lastly, please keep us informed of accidents in Staplehurst, as this helps provide more data. If you would like to join our Speed Watch volunteers, please contact us and help reduce speeding in Staplehurst.



Patients Participation Group

Contact: Andrew Watson



Our village's Health Centre is part of the Weald Primary Care Network (WPCN), the purpose of which is to deliver our healthcare requirements. Given the current shortages of doctors and nurses across the NHS, the ways in which services are to be delivered are having to be changed – for example physio appointments could be delivered on a Saturday morning at short notice, but not necessarily in Staplehurst. Such appointments might be in other surgeries in the West Kent cluster, such as Marden or Yalding.

It is hoped that Craig Brown, who runs the WPCN's Strategy and Business Development, can attend our next meeting in late October, to outline the latest ideas. Any patient on our Health Centre's books will be welcome – mothers, carers, senior citizens... everyone. Details will be announced in the Parish Council webpage and social media.

Meanwhile, it is hoped to re-introduce the popular health lectures later in the year. In the past, these used to be organised by Robin Oakley and the Health Centre's Friends; but since Covid, the Friends have been disbanded, and other organisers have still to be found.



Join
the
Group

The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Review Group

Contact: Margaret Arger



The Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Review Group membership includes both residents and parish councillors - who continue to be proactive in their commitment to reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan. Meeting monthly, we are fully aware of the importance of all planning applications being judged within the context of the Neighbourhood Plan and how this relates to the current MBC Local Plan. The group feels very strongly the Neighbourhood Plan is playing an important role in planning applications decisions but needs to be looking to the future, taking into consideration the 700 new homes built since the Neighbourhood Plan was adopted, Sainsbury's opening and the effect Covid has had on all our lives. Infrastructure, sustainability and environmental issues affecting Staplehurst continue to be important when looking at any further development.

We have asked the Parish Council to request, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), confirmation from Southern Water as to whether there has been any discharge of any untreated sewage into the river Beult, which is a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), over the last 5 years and also to UK Power Networks with regard to solar power being connected to the network.

We are also requesting the Parish Council to commission a new "Housing Needs" survey so that future development will meet the needs of all residents.

However, any review cannot be taken in isolation and the effect on our environment of developments in our neighbouring parishes, both within our own borough and beyond, also need to be considered. The Neighbourhood Plan is a living document for our future.

My sincere thanks to the group members for all their hard work.

Margaret Arger, Chairman



Staplehurst Library User Group

Contact: Malcolm Buller

Staplehurst is probably the only village in Kent that still has an active Library User Group. Our aim is to help promote the wonderful service that we have enjoyed in this building for fifty years. This anniversary was marked by a small celebration on March 24th and a larger event on July 16th when staff encouraged children with craft activities and a story time. Our competitions for children were displayed and prizes awarded by SLUG, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors.

We have also been putting leaflets through the doors of properties on the new estates which highlight what is on offer in Staplehurst Library. We have started a new Poetry Group which has blossomed. In the era of cutbacks, we are mindful of the enormous importance for the well-being of a thriving community that such infrastructure is protected.



Community Speedwatch

Contact: Malcolm Buller

Our volunteers have been recording the registration plates, makes, colours and speeds of vehicles at the times they have passed by our (SID) monitoring equipment by the roadside. Each vehicle exceeding the speed limit by 10% plus 2 mph is logged and this information passed via computer to Kent Police. We can only stand at approved sites within 30mph or 40mph areas (for safety reasons).

The A229 is unsurprisingly the busiest road and volunteers have to stay alert. Since our last report, 153 vehicles have been added to the database, 18 of which triggered automatic letters from the police advising motorists of the consequences of speeding. These letters are for second offences or first offences of excessive speed (45+ in 30, 60+ in 40). Any regular offenders will receive a visit from a uniformed officer.

Our volunteers undergo training via computer – Kent Police Speedwatch or Community Speedwatch online – to fulfil safety requirements for insurance. Then the local Parish Team Leader gives roadside training. Make a difference by slowing the traffic through our village and helping save lives. Come and join us.



Road Accidents and Incidents

Since the last report there have been just three accidents reported to the Parish Council via staplehurstroadinfo@gmail.com (or directly) which is quite surprising. If you see that an accident has occurred, sadly witnessed it or are involved, please let us know. This information is important, especially as the official statistics only log fatalities and serious casualties, so shunts, road closures, damage to property, etc. seemingly never happen. Anything on our borders (e.g., Hawkenbury or Hertsfield river bridges) and within our rural or built-up parish need recording. All information is valuable so date, time, exact location, direction of travel, vehicles/pedestrians involved, damage, injuries, emergency service involvement and definite/probable/possible causes will help – even if you only have some of this. Please don't leave it to others!



Staplehurst Community Centre

Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp



Photo's: Richard Hawkes

It is hard to remember, but in May 2021 we were still in the grip of Covid and restrictions applied. The use of the village halls was curtailed then and has taken a while to recover. However, the halls are in great demand now, with various new users. For example, we have had a couple of very popular Comedy Nights. And having installed our new Noticeboard, it is easy for you to keep an eye on developments.

Speaking of which, the redevelopment of our village halls is gathering pace. We staged an exhibition showcasing our plans in May, which was well attended and enthusiastically received. We are planning to put the plans on display in September at the Library so that a wider audience can see them. We are completing the surveys and statements required by Maidstone Council prior to submitting our planning application, probably in August. We have bats in the roof! However, they will be providing them with alternative accommodation, as required by law, so that commuting bats can rest up.

And you thought the only commuters in the village went by train!

Rory Silkin,

Chairman Staplehurst Community Centre CIO.

Staplehurst Emergency Help Team

Contact: Andrew Watson

A practice exercise for the opening up of a 'shelter' in one of the halls in the village will be organised for late October. The aim is to give residents some experience in how KCC's Resilience Team have trained us to operate, just in case another 'incident' such as a mains gas leak or a serious fire – (remember the Post Office fire back in 2010? – which closed the A229 for hours) force a number of residents out of their homes for several hours. They would need to be in the warm and dry, and provided with food and drink. All residents and children will be very welcome to take part, acting as families who have had to leave their homes. Free tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided.



Details will be announced in the Parish Council website, social media and display boards.

Additionally, the Parish Council will hold an official celebration on September 4th at Hush Heath winery for those volunteers that made the COVID division of the Staplehurst Emergency Help Team such a success story during the pandemic. This was acknowledged by two separate awards from Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council. Staplehurst Parish Council wants to present these awards officially to the volunteers that stepped in during difficult times to protect and comfort our most vulnerable residents.

The Payback Team

Contact: Cllr Jose Castro

The Parish Council has continued to engage the help of Community Payback. Under the supervision of Hazel Aitkin, people on probation, who have committed an offence and who have been sentenced to carry out unpaid work as part of their community order, have been carrying out jobs around the village on Saturdays.

Significant tasks undertaken have included painting the railings in the High Street, putting in new "dead hedges" at Wimpey Field Nature Reserve and painting the Youth Club facility.



impact on the way in which the people on probation approach all the tasks set, more often than not, with a sense of pride.

New Community Payback Manager Joe Coomber, who joined the team on our Community Spring Litter Pick, was full of praise for the projects undertaken throughout the village and appreciated the support of the Parish Council in overseeing those projects

Left: Cllr Castro, Hazel Aitkin & Joe Coomber

Community Payback, also referred to as 'Unpaid Work', is primarily a punishment, whereby people who have committed an offence 'pay back' the local community by carrying out work that benefits the community – but it also offers people on probation an opportunity to learn new skills, whilst getting their lives back on track.

Councillor Jose Castro and/or Chairman Paddy Riordan are generally on hand to join in with the teams, and this, together with the appreciation shown by local residents, has had a noticeable



Work at the Nature Reserve

Staplehurst Community Events Group

Contact: Bob Ham

SCEG is a totally independent group of local residents who arrange events for the village, with any surplus money generated used to benefit the local community.

We organise the popular French Market (which this year is on 27th November); the Santa Sleigh (with our friends Paddock Wood and District Lions); the Christmas Lights competition (held for the first time in 2021, but to be repeated this year); the 5k and 10k run, held in early June (this year sponsored by Whites Landscaping); and the annual Village Fete (usually held on the last Saturday of June), although due to our small committee we put all our efforts this year into organising the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event, which took place on the Surrenden Field and was well attended and enjoyed by all. We were very grateful to both the National Lottery and David Wilson Homes for their significant support of the event, which cost us around £5000 to put on.



SCEG is in need of more help, so if you'd like to find out more, join the group, or perhaps be a helper, we'd be pleased to hear from you, via our Facebook page or email staplehursteventsgroup@gmail.com



Access the
Facebook
page



Churchyard Liason Group Contact: Cllr John Perry

Staplehurst Parish Council contributes to the maintenance of the churchyard and is represented on the Churchyard Liaison Group. A number of meetings have taken place during the financial year in order to agree the proposed expenditure and to monitor the work undertaken to maintain the Churchyard in a good condition.

Staplehurst Women's Insitute



On 14th of June 1922, the village of Staplehurst launched its first WI meeting. They were practical ladies who were the wives of farmers and whose menfolk were involved in the wars. They were resilient, hard working, creative and enjoyed their friendships and community support.

So here we are 100 years later. Not a lot has changed in our mutual support of each other and our community involvement for our village. Communications and technology have moved us on, and we support local activities wherever we can.

So far this year we have celebrated by planting a silver birch tree by our longest serving member, Ann Stevenson, in the Herb Garden by the library. We have also placed a centenary bench near the bus stop at the Marden Road end of the village with ribbon being cut by our past

President, Alison Vesma. These have now been handed into the care of the Parish Council for posterity.

On the very day, 14th of June 2022, we took off to the Weald of Kent Golf Club for a Centenary celebration meal.



homemade jams, chutneys and cakes, and craft items made by our members. There will be displays of our history, events and visits. Refreshments of tea, coffee, soft drinks, cakes and biscuits will be on sale. In the North Hall we are hosting a Craft Fair where local traders will be selling their goods. There will be a second-hand book stall and our children's tombola. Every ticket bought wins a prize.

Now you have read all that, if you think you would like to join us, you can always come to a few meetings as a visitor before you decide. We have outings, monthly lunches at negotiated prices, craft sessions, speakers, a darts team, ten pin bowling sessions and so much more.

Our meetings are held every 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in the Community Centre South Hall.

Please phone Caroline Highwood 01622 892787.



Jubilee Field Management Committee

Contact: Cllr Paddy Riordan

I am pleased to say that we have continued to make improvements to the Jubilee field in the last year. Residents will be aware of the fabulous painting of the skate park in keeping with the users' trends & fashions. This was kindly funded by Maidstone Borough Council's "Welcome Back Fund" which was to encourage and support various groups to get back to normal after the pandemic lockdown periods. Additional parking has been installed using road stone which can be removed or repositioned if required for further sporting facilities. This was kindly funded by local business Magnetic Shields.

The Jubilee Field Management Committee have continued to progress the goal of achieving an all-weather sports surface, which will provide not only for the youth footballers of the village but a whole range of sports for various user groups. The JFMC also arranges for the care of the hedges and trees at the Jubilee field and also the pitch management and grass cutting.



We have installed a new drainage system for the Girl Guide Group, which has assisted with ensuring that the Kathie Lamb guide centre does not suffer any flooding.

So, all in all it has been another positive year in supporting our Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan to improve the sports' facilities at the Jubilee field for the whole community.



The Men's Shed

Contact: Richard James

Exile on Main Street (Rolling Stones) or Exiled from the High Street (Men's Shed). We are back meeting at the newly repainted and regenerated Youth Club, having decamped to the Scout Hut for a few months following the closure of the old Youth Club in December. Thanks to the Scouts and the Parish Council.

The Shed is a social hub for men to come together to socialise and make new friends, play pool, scrabble, share ideas and skills, participate on practical projects or join the choir. Tea and coffee are provided. Current Membership ages range from 50 - 80+. Retirement means massive changes with more time to



fill. Men typically find it more difficult to build social connections, which can lead to feelings of isolation.

However, you don't need to be retired or to feel lonely. You might just want a bit of banter with a bunch of blokes. At the very least, we offer an opportunity to get out of the house for a few hours each week on Thursday morning, between 10am until

12pm (subject to review).

New members are welcome so why not come along and join us? To find out more, contact Richard James, Leader, 07976 009522 thestaplehurstshed@outlook.com



The Village Golf Club

One of Staplehurst's best kept secrets, Village Golf Club is a 12-hole, 1697 yards, 39 par, pitch and putt style golf course set in attractive parkland on the outskirts of the village.

The course can be played by all standards. Whilst it is perfect for junior players and those new to the game, the tree lined fairways demand accuracy. This makes it ideal for the more experienced player who wants to improve their short game, or who simply wishes to fit in a quick round at the weekend or after work.

We are a membership only club. However, membership is very affordable.

Although the club is open to members only, guests accompanied by a member are very welcome for a minimal £5 charge.

The atmosphere is relaxed and informal. The setting is quiet and tranquil (apart from the occasional passing train) and is especially beautiful in spring and autumn.

Facilities are limited; there is no clubhouse, but there is a toilet and ample parking spaces are available.



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