

# STAPLEHURST VILLAGE UPDATE

#### PARISH COUNCIL

2025

## COMMUNICATIONS

GROUP Contact: Cllr Ani Martin cllr.animartin@staplehurst-pc.gov.uk

We have been working hard on a rolling programme of projects, the most immediate short to medium term goals are to plan and oversee the implementation of the IT changeover to Outlook 365 and to continue the production of the quarterly Village Updates via the new printing company. There was an unavoidable delay to the distribution of this year's Annual Report, which has impacted our schedule, but this should be back on track by the Spring.

Our long-term projects are to produce and publish information booklets (hard copy and online) specifically aimed at new residents in the village and also to upgrade our parish council website. These long-term plans are for implementation in 2026/7.

## VILLAGE CLEAN UF

Another successful cleanup operation took place in September, with 13 stalwart volunteers, equipped with grippers and sacks, hi-vis vests and gloves, taking to the streets of Staplehurst to collect litter. Thank you to everyone involved and especially to the WI members, who prepared hot drinks and biscuits throughout the morning.



### SCENIC GROUP

Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp cllr.adelesharp@staplehurst-pc.gov.uk

#### **Staplehurst Community Enhancement** Neighbourhood Improvement Committee

It's that time of year when we report about mostly maintenance work we have carried out. Our yearly tree survey on the trees for which we are responsible, has been completed. Like many places, we have some Ash dieback trees to deal with as well as a few other dead branches that need cutting back.

We have also had the ROSPA report on the Surrenden playground equipment, with thankfully no major repairs required. Please do let us know via the questionnaire what other play equipment you feel would improve everyone's enjoyment. Some small repairs to the outdoor gym equipment will also take place.



The Youth Club has recently had some much needed roof repairs carried out to help extend the life of the building! More excitingly, the YMCA should be opening a Youth Club on Mondays after the October Half Term. It's something we have all wanted to return to Staplehurst and with all things crossed, it looks like once more we will have a space for our youngsters to meet and socialise safely.

Don't forget Remembrance Sunday on the 9th November this year - thank you in advance to the Parish council staff and the volunteers that make this a legal, safe and thoughtful event each year. Work also continues arranging the Christmas lights for this year.

#### **EFSG - Employment, Finance and Strategy Group**

The group meets regularly to ensure we make the best and correct use of the SPC budget. The current Council budget was approved on the 27th January 2025 with a precept of £300,000, this equates to a 48p per week or £2.06 per month increase on an average Band D property.

From this we are able to manage a number of community facilities such as the public toilets, the Youth Hut / building, Surrenden field and play / gym equipment and the Jubilee Field.

Following Kent County Council reducing their funding for Youth Services in Kent, and Staplehurst not considered a "County Wide priority" we have been searching for the best way to try and find funding for Youth Service Workers at Staplehurst. We included in the budget an assumption that there would be a considerable expenditure to enable this but it currently looks like a scheme at a vastly reduced cost should be available in October.

Whilst there are many things we have no control over, such as inflation, we will continue to work with partners such as Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council to keep costs down as much as we can and to do the best for Staplehurst.

#### www.staplehurst-pc.gov.uk

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### PLANNING COMMITTEE

Contact: Cllr Margaret Arger cllr.margaretarger@staplehurst-pc.gov.uk



Staplehurst Planning Committee is a group of Parish Councillors who have an interest in planning. However, we are not experts. We respond to planning applications within the frame of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Local Plan and our own Neighbourhood Plan which is under review.

When responding we can: support an application, request refusal or just comment. All requests for refusal have to have valid planning reasons and not just 'we don't like it'. For Lawful Development Certificates we can add a comment but we cannot accept or refuse. If we request the application to go to the planning committee, if the planning officer is mindful to approve, it may well be because neighbours/ residents will then have three minutes to make their case, as well as allowing the Parish Council and applicant their three minutes. Again MBC would need to see clear planning reasons to go against the officer, bearing in mind refusal might well result in the applicant going to appeal, which is a lengthy and expensive process.

Planning applications which are approved will likely come with conditions and this is an area of struggle, as not all conditions are met, particularly by developers and this will often result in tenacious requests for action from the Enforcement Team. Please note disruption caused during the building work is not a reason to refuse an application; although conditions can be used to mitigate some impact.

### 3G MULTI-SPORT PITCH UPDATE - as of October 2025

The Parish Council submitted the planning application in July 2024, KCC Highways put in a holding objection in November 2024 - we liaised with KCC Highways, MBC Planning Department and submitted further information March

Since then, we have been chasing MBC Planning Department, they circulated draft planning permission in late August 2025 and on Monday 25th September 2025 they put a Unilateral Undertaking Biodiversity Net Gain \$106 agreement onto the MBC portal – this is for a twoweek consultation.

At the time of writing the expectation is that planning permission should be issued the week of the 13th October 2025.

Please see plan here.

#### What happens next?

The Council will work with the Design and Build contractors to confirm the final construction costs, likely to increase Agree funding, or not.

Assess the tender submissions from the three shortlisted sports and recreation management companies that have tendered to manage the site.

This will allow the Council to make an informed final decision at an EGM to progress with the project or not.

The indicative timescale – based on planning permission October 2025 –

Council EGM final decision - January 2026

Construction – Spring 2026

Opening - Summer 2026

Who knows, the waterlogged pitches which mean Junior matches from November to February are cancelled, may soon be a thing of the past.







# **STAPLEHURST SOCIETY**

secretary@staplehurstsociety.org

The Small Holdings & Allotments Act, 1908 (and later legislation) gave councils both the right to obtain land for allotments and the duty to provide them for residents. In 1916, Kent County Council, on behalf of Staplehurst Parish Council, secured a 14 year lease of 3 acres on the north side of Headcorn Road from the Trustees of Christ's Hospital, at an annual rent of £4 10s (£4.50). This land formed part of Fisher's Farm (about 59 acres), rented to Parish Councillor Loyal E. Humphreys. Apart from an incident in October 1917, when Mr. Humphreys' pigs escaped and damaged cabbage plants on an allotment, the arrangement was satisfactory for some time.

Mr. Humphreys died in January 1928, and in 1929 Christ's Hospital decided to sell Fisher's Farm together with the allotment field. This was bought by Mr. Humphreys' executors. As the lease of the allotments was shortly due to expire, the Parish Council became very active, as the following extracts from the minutes

- 18th March 1929 It was proposed... and carried that the Clerk apply for a renewal of the Lease of the Allotment-Field.
- 8th April 1929 The Clerk was instructed to apply to Christ's Hospital for the renewal of the 14 years lease of the Allotment Field.
- 16th September 1929 It was proposed... and carried that the Clerk write to the Ministry of Health and enquire whether the new owners of the Allotment field can disturb the Council from holding possession of the field after the expiration of the present Lease. It was proposed... and carried that the present occupiers of the Allotments be given 12 months' notice to quit.
- 28 October 1929 The Clerk reported on correspondence regarding the tenure and a visit from the Kent County Council's Chief Agricultural Officer. A letter from the Executors stated they could not renew the lease as the land had a 550- ft road frontage and the farm had been purchased at a price uneconomic for agriculture. Their only chance of remuneration, they said, was to sell the frontage.
- 9 December 1929 The Executors offered instead a 14-year lease from 11 October 1930 of adjoining land to the north, on similar terms but with a revised rent. Access to a pond on the western boundary was to be preserved for stock. Loyal E. Humphreys (the son) offered to assist with moving huts and ploughing. "It was proposed... and carried that the Clerk write to the County Council recommending the acceptance of the offer by the Parish Council."

With thanks to Tom Burnham for submitting this article.



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

#### Katie Lam – MP for The Weald Constituency

The first thing that comes across, is that Katie is an optimist, who firmly believes that Britain's best days lie ahead, despite the challenges of the

She was born in North London and when she was six, the family relocated to Guildford. Her interest in politics began early and she credits her father with inspiring her to enter public



Katie became Head Girl at her local comprehensive school, then went on to study Classics at Cambridge and joined the Conservative party, serving as President of the Cambridge Union and Chairman of the University Conservative Association.

Katie's family background is one of courage and determination in the face of devastating injustice before and during the 2nd WW - her maternal grandmother arriving in Britain as a refugee from Germany in 1937. Katie's great, great grandfather, Paul Heide, was a left-wing senator and a fierce critic of the Nazis. In 1933, with the rise of Hitler, the entire family was arrested and stripped of its citizenship and Paul was imprisoned. After several years, he escaped and reached Czechoslovakia, where the family set up a resistance radio station that broadcast across the border. Managing to escape from an SS raid, they eventually reached England and safety.

Katie's paternal grandfather's family, however, Jews from Amsterdam, were murdered in Sobibor and Auschwitz.

Given the diverse political opinions in her family, Katie believes they provided a good training ground for debating ideas.

After university, Katie worked for Goldman Sachs Investment Bank and by 2019 had become a Vice President. During the Conservative Party Conference, she was introduced to the then PM's Chief Business Advisor, Andrew Griffith, who was recruiting for his team and she accepted his offer to join. When Griffith himself became an MP, Katie went to work for him, fulfilling several roles during her time at No. 10 Downing Street.

Covid, she recalls, as the hardest period of her career. She remembers that the week when the PM shut down much of the economy and the Chancellor delayed announcing furlough, she remained at her desk day and night, taking and making calls to CEOs, trying to reassure them that something would be in place soon and pleading with them not to make thousands redundant.

For a short time after the pandemic, Katie returned to the private sector, working for an Al company. On her return to government, she worked in the Home Office, before being selected for the Weald of Kent constituency.

Aside from her political career, Katie has been a Trustee of the Ivors Academy Trust and is currently a governor at Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children. And in her spare time, she is an award-winning lyricist and scriptwriter.

She has had a fascinating career to date, with a mantra that inspires her for the future, that all can be renewed with the right combination of 'honesty, consistency and hope'. Her ambition is to help the country achieve even greater things, believing it to be the greatest country in the world. She has been our MP since 2024.

In her maiden speech to parliament, Katie said: I will never look at the responsibility of being the Member of Parliament for Weald of Kent as merely a job; I will always treat it as an honour.'

#### **ROAD SAFETY GROUP**

Contact: Cllr Adele Sharp cllr.adelesharp@staplehurst-pc,gov.uk

It's been a few months of road works everywhere making some of us wonder if we've fallen into the Twilight zone and unable to leave Staplehurst! The urgent road works continue to pop up almost with no warning - hopefully an improvement in the long term. The Hawkenbury Bridge repairs are on the scheduled works, due to start in November.



There have been some water and gas repairs, hurrah!, but another water leak on the High Street has 'sprung up' and awaits a repair, having been reported repeatedly since mid August.

We are just doing our yearly review of our Highways Improvement Plan - HIP - with Kent Highways. We have a top 3 priorities plus others - Pedestrian crossing at the petrol garage bus stops and hill top crossing sign; Hawkenbury Bridge improvements; Parking restrictions / enforcement around the school; double / single yellow lines in various places; Sainsburys roundabout safety and others.

SID - our Speed indicator camera - continues to monitor and collate data about vehicle movements going through the village. This helps support our concerns about the weight of traffic needing to use the crossroads.

Our small group of Speed Watch volunteers - they are highly visible when the go out - have had a couple of sessions encouraging people to drive safely. Please contact us if you would like to join the group.



## THE STAPLEHURST **COMMUNITY EVENTS GROUP**

Hello everyone and thank you to the Parish Council for letting us put together a little summary about ourselves here. The Staplehurst Community Events Group (SCEG) are a small group of local volunteers trying to continue to promote and arrange events in the spirit of the original Staplehurst Carnival and Fete committee that started in the 1970's when Staplehurst was a small, but thriving and growing village. The original group sought to hold an annual Carnival and Fete - in its heyday there were as many as 30 floats representing village groups and organisations, along with marching bands travelling along the people-lined high street starting from the station and finishing at the Surrenden Field for an afternoon of fun.



Spinning on 50 years, we still have a couple of dedicated committee members who were involved in the original fete committee, but no longer the volunteers, enthusiasm, or time from residents that is needed for such a large event. We are sorry that we were not able to have a Summer Fete this year due to circumstances beyond our control - we are very much hoping to hold a 2026 Summer fete so please get in touch with us if this is something you would like to get involved with and help make it the success it always is.

As well as the Summer Fete, we also arrange and support a few other annual events including the Staplehurst 5/10K run with NETiming, kindly sponsored by Whites Landscaping which was held in June and was a great success - thank you to the many residents that helped us safely marshal the event. We helped the Staplehurst School PTA with their wellattended Summer Fete, and have also managed to support and give funds to various village organisations throughout the year to, in the words of one Staplehurst school's past Heads, "help them add custard" to their events or weekly meetings, or sometimes just to help tieup their financial ends to help residents live the best life possible in the village. If you lead an organisation, please get in touch if you need some custard!

Post Brexit, the Christmas French market has become non-viable for several of the main stallholders. Instead, we're pleased to announce our collaboration with the Staplehurst Artisan market to hold a special Christmas market on Sunday 14th December between 10am - Ipm in the Village Centre, the large "old school" building on the High Street between the main crossroads and the shops where all the monthly Sunday markets are held. The exciting news is that Father Christmas has specifically asked to return to Staplehurst this year but is unable to come in his sleigh as he has done in the past, instead, he will meet with children in our Village Centre grotto! We will have a queuing system so there will be plenty of time to visit the market whilst keeping your place in the queue for Santa.

We can't wait to see you!! Please get in touch on our Staplehurst Community Events Group facebook page with any queries or email us at staplehursteventsgroup@gmail.com



Contact: Cllr Mel Alesi chair@seht.org.uk

A group of volunteers who do as it says - assist in an emergency.

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, with various roles available to suit individual capabilities.

We are currently seeking someone to run our Social Media presence and advertising

- just a couple of hours a week!

Over the last 6 months, SEHT have been busy raising some much-needed funds and we were proud to host a boot fair recently as well as support the village fete. All money raised goes towards equipment and/or training courses which our volunteers require.

The Duke of Cornwall resilience awards have been an important focus, and we encourage local youngsters to take ownership of their preparedness for an emergency.

We continue to be represented at the Kent Resilience Forum, Voluntary Community Services, Communities Prepared and more recently

Further to some enquiries, SEHT would like to support a Wellbeing Cafe/Meet-up space - a safe place for people to meet, chat, drink coffee and make some new friends.

We propose to hold this in the Youth Club but would welcome some feedback as to whether the community would prefer a morning/ afternoon or evening and how regularly. Please email any preferences or interest in volunteering with us to Chairseht@gmail.com

## THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Further info from Pam Payne on 01580 892401 or Gillian Stacey on 01580 892861

Staplehurst WI has had a busy 2025 so far, we have had some really interesting speakers at our meetings. How colour in our clothes each season is decided by the fashion industry and not us - Who knew?

Life on the River Thames by a Waterman, which was full of amusing stories about his work on the river. Great Grandma's Workbox, which made me think of all those members of our branch and what their meetings were like 122 years ago when Staplehurst W.I. was founded. I imagine them all wearing hats of course, I wonder when we stopped doing that!

Our lovely garden party meeting in July, where we ate till the tables were empty, played silly games and had our youngest member, Holly, singing show tunes for us and I of course must mention Staplehurst Manor, who very kindly hosted us for a lovely afternoon tea in August.

Our Produce and Craft show was also our September meeting, where once again our very clever crafters and bakers showed us what can be done if you put your mind to it. Unfortunately, I just look on in awe, my mother was a very clever seamstress, and her talents seemed to have bypassed me altogether.

So please come and join us, our meetings are on the second Tuesday in the month at 7.30pm, usually at the Community Centre South Hall. We have posters up around the village letting you know who is speaking, and you never know, it could be just what you're



SCAN ME

# STAPLEHURST HORTICULTURAL **SOCIETY**



#### Our Society goes from strength to strength!

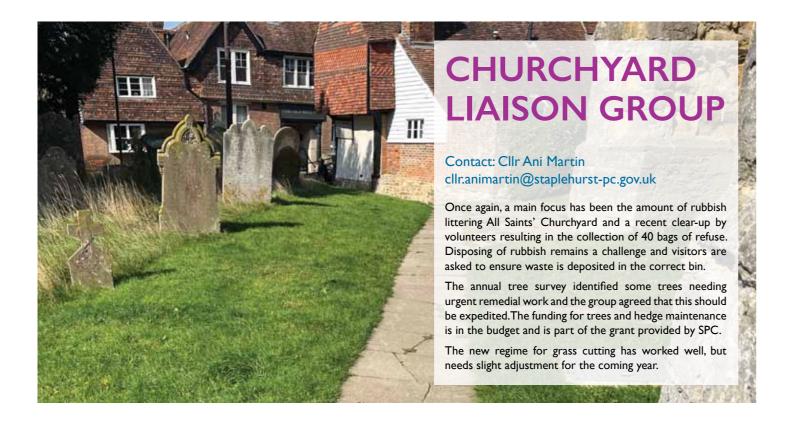
Membership continues to grow, to the point where our monthly meetings (8pm, third Tuesday of the month) are so well attended that we are having to move to the North Hall of the Community Centre, having outgrown the South!

For 10 months of the year, we have interesting guest speakers, covering a range of topics and for two months in the summer, we have a summer BBQ and a members' garden safari, ending with a social get together and the inevitable tea and cakes. We have an annual outing to a garden of interest and have just piloted a social coffee morning which proved very successful.

Our guest speakers have commented that our society is warm and welcoming and that they are delighted to have such a large audience whilst a number of other societies that they have visited have poor attendances or have actually closed. Our new members have commented that they feel welcome from the beginning and are enjoying their membership.

Membership is open to all, young and old, experienced or beginner. Join us!





## THE MOTE MEDICAL PRACTICE

# STAPLEHURST PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

Our Health Centre's transition to the MOTE MEDICAL PRACTICE STAPLEHURST has had its fair share of challenges, but our recent survey suggests that patients are finding the services much improved. We held PPG meetings in July and early October, the former including a presentation by C24 III Service and the latter being our AGM.

The Chair liaises regularly with the Practice Manager and the Deputy Manager and our Facebook page, which provides news and updates for patients, continues to recruit new followers.





#### **Exciting Developments at Our GP Surgery**

Since acquiring the GP surgery, we have made great strides in improving patient care and enhancing services.

A key improvement is the introduction of a personal patient list system, ensuring patients benefit from continuity of care by regularly seeing the same healthcare professionals. We've also welcomed a new full-time GP onsite, further strengthening our clinical team

We're excited to share that we have formed a new Mote & Wallis Health Primary Care Network (PCN), giving us full control over how funding is allocated. This exciting development has allowed us to introduce valuable new roles, including:

- Clinical Pharmacist: Providing expert medication reviews, reviewing hospital discharge summaries, and supporting prescribing to improve patient outcomes.
- Care Coordinator: Bridging primary and secondary care while offering essential social support to our patients.
- First Contact Physiotherapist: Helping patients with musculoskeletal issues such as back, neck, and joint pain through expert assessment and diagnosis.

More roles will be added soon, expanding our ability to meet community needs.

To ensure smooth operation across both surgery sites, our lead practice manager now oversees both locations, splitting her time equally and supported by a dedicated senior management team.

Four months into the merger, we've reviewed our processes and are making excellent progress to deliver consistent, high-quality care at both sites. We've also welcomed new reception staff members and an apprentice to provide friendly, efficient support for our patients.

There is still much more to do, but we are proud of the great progress made in this short space of time and remain committed to continually improving the care we provide to our community.

Mrs Michelle Tarrant – Lead Practice Manager
On behalf of the practice partners,
Dr H Reece-Jones, Dr R Beavington, Dr N Pulham, Dr K Eason
The Mote Medical Practice, Maidstone & Staplehurst

## **AFTERNOON CHAT CLUB**

Contact: Julie Grice 07549 012657

Our club meets on Mondays at the McCabe Centre from 2 to 4pm.

We welcome residents from the village, over 60 years of age. Members can enjoy an afternoon of games, quizzes and of course tea or coffee with biscuits and occasionally cake.

We hold a weekly raffle and a lucky dip, which gives all members a chance to win £10.00. In the past we have enjoyed visits from various singers, hand bell ringers, and a guide dog. Valentine's Day was celebrated with red roses and chocolates. We held an Easter competition, and our members all took home an Easter egg. Plans are currently under way for our Christmas celebrations.

We have a few spaces available, so if you feel you would like to join us, please pop along and say hello.



## STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE

Contact: Cllr Margaret Arger cllr.margaretarger@staplehurst-pc.gov.uk

The Neighbourhood Plan review group meetings have been on hold due to the increased time given to the public consultation and the extra time required by Maidstone Borough Council for a Modification Statement, which summarises how the current Neighbourhood Plan has been amended as part of the review process. It also sets out the extent of the modifications, which could be significant enough to warrant further examination and referendum.

At our August meeting we collated all the responses received to date under

Regulation 14. Thank you to everyone who responded.

As always, I am grateful to the members of the group who have stuck to the task, and hopefully the end is in sight!



## STAPLEHURST MEN'S SHED

Contact: Richard James - Leader, 07976 009522 or thestaplehurstshed@outlook.com

Our Men's Shed's primarily a social club that welcomes men of all ages from 18 years onwards, held in the Youth Club building every Thursday morning (10-12).

Started in 2017 by Don Elliot (pictured), helped by Stan Twort. They worked hard to set up some coffee mornings, which grew into the group we know today. So, it was with great sadness that we recently learned of Don's death. "One of the best and most genuine of men".

We offer a warm friendly environment with unlimited tea and coffee, comfortable settees for a good chat and a laugh, plus a pool table and a number of table games such as scrabble and Mexican rules group dominos.

Due to the age and fitness of our members we've only undertaken a few projects recently, such as painting a graveyard bench and erecting a real shed. We'd like to rekindle that aspect of the Shed, to run alongside the social side, and we'd welcome new members interested in carrying out more practical activities or community work.

We would also be very happy to support and assist anyone or group interested in the establishment of a Men's Shed workshop here in Staplehurst.





# Surrenden Field Pavilion Public Consultation

Staplehurst Parish Council wants to hear what you have to say about the proposed Surrenden Field Pavilion upgrade

Scan the Qr code or follow the link to complete our questionnaire - Hard Copies and supporting documents are available from the Library and the parish office

https://forms.office.com/e/BRJRWh6kem





The Staplehurst Scout group finished the Summer term in the traditional way with field camps. The Beaver section went to Bexon with a space explorer's theme for the weekend. This was the first overnight camp for the Beavers and everyone had a great time and completed a number of badges to end the term

The Squirrels enjoyed a second birthday in some style, capping off a very successful season for the section which continues to grow. Both the Beavers and the Squirrels put on a super circus show in front of a large audience, which must have been nerve racking for them all, but they rose to the occasion in fine style. There was no lion tamer - but perhaps next year!

Our Cubs and Scouts joined together for a week - long summer camp in Sheldwich and learnt many new outdoor living skills as well having lots of fun with games and challenges. Unfortunately, not many of our Scouts liked the idea of camping this year and it has taught us that we need to find new ways of re-energising the Scout Troop as we face the stiff competition for their time and attention with social media, and the many other attractions that come into their lives as they approach their teenage years.

So, we are determined to kick-start the Scout Troop back into life and we are planning new activities and adventures for the autumn term. We will also be having a 'give-scouts-a go' free trial for anyone who wants to get a taste for the sort of things we do and this will include a bring-a-mate (or brother or sister) along as well. No previous experience with Beavers or Cubs is necessary. The more the merrier.

Finally, a huge thank you once again to Staplehurst Transits for their logistical support in getting the huge volume (and weight) of tents, equipment and food to and from camp.



#### GIRL GUIDING STAPL FHURST

#### Contact: Karen Meikle districtcommissioner@staplehurstgirlguiding.org.uk

The Rainbows, two Brownie and Joint Guide and Ranger units who meet in Staplehurst, have had a busy summer with fun packed unit meetings covering a huge range of topics, including first aid, water fights, camp fires and outdoor cooking, speaking out about local issues, particularly Road Safety at the Parish Council. Badges and Awards have been gained, games played, friendships developed and our young members' confidence grown!

The Guides went hiking with Hawkhurst Guides, the Rainbows and Brownies got the train to Headcorn and then walked back to Staplehurst. Everyone had the opportunity to meet together for craft and a film afternoon.

As the new District Commissioner (I took over from Jackie and Nicole in May, to whom we give huge thanks for leading Staplehurst Girlguiding forward) it is great to see the dedicated volunteers who give so much each week to help the young members develop and grow.

Just before I took over, the District celebrated one amazing volunteer, Doreen, who celebrated 60 years of volunteering with Guiding. If you would like to volunteer with Girlguiding Staplehurst (you don't have to do 60 years) please get in touch on the email below or visit: https://www.girlguiding.org.uk

Girlguiding | Help all girls know they can do anything | Girlguiding - you can also register girls and young women who would like to join on this page. If you would like to volunteer but are not able or not wanting to commit to weekly meetings, we are in search of a booking secretary for the Kathie Lamb Guide Centre.

As we go into the Autumn term we are looking to hold more unit meetings, participating in the Remembrance Parade and our Christmas Bazaar on 30th November at the Kathie Lamb Centre.



Parish Council Website



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