



STAPLEHURST

PARISH COUNCIL

VILLAGE
UPDATE
WINTER
2024

WELCOME TO OUR NEW COUNCILLORS! WE ARE STILL ONE DOWN!

As we welcome COUNCILLORS Catherine Farragher, Mike Wakeford, and Chris Rhodes to the Parish Council, it's a great time to remind everyone of the rewarding work that comes with being a COUNCILLOR. Joining the Parish Council is a fantastic way to give back to our community, help shape the future of Staplehurst and ensure that the voices of our residents are heard. We are still looking for one more COUNCILLOR, and it could be you! If you have a passion for supporting local initiatives, improving village life, and working alongside a dedicated team, this is your opportunity to make a real difference.



Councillor Chris Rhodes

I am a long-term resident, living in the village for almost 15 years now after moving here to be with my wife and raise my daughters.

I am heavily tied in with Girlguiding in the village and am a serving member of Staplehurst Emergency Help Team, as well as being involved in the Jubilee Field 3G Project and Road Safety working groups.

With my experience of meeting with the Council over the last few years and working with several volunteer groups in the village, joining the Parish Council seemed the next logical step in helping to promote and represent our village for the younger groups that I have many dealings with. I look forward to now serving as part of the Parish Council for the wider community.



Councillor Catherine Farragher

I grew up locally and moved to Staplehurst about 15 years ago. I am so proud of our village and our community. I have a busy home life, and for personal reasons, I stepped down from my role on the Parish Council, but I am thrilled to rejoin and resume my position! I hope that I am approachable and wish to represent the young families in our village.

I have rejoined the planning committee as this is of great interest to me. I am committed to the positive growth of our village.



Councillor Mike Wakeford

I have lived in Staplehurst for four years with my wife Amy, and we have two daughters in their late 20s who now live on the south coast. I am privileged to have the opportunity to serve as a Parish Councillor for Staplehurst and contribute to our wonderful community.

With a professional background in directorship roles within the public and transport sectors, I hope to bring some of the skills and experience I've gained throughout my career to benefit Staplehurst. I am committed to working alongside my fellow councillors and local residents to address the needs of the village and help shape a positive future for our community.

www.staplehurst-pc.uk

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GREENER STAPLEHURST GROUP



The Greener Staplehurst Group needs your help!! We are a small group of just 7 active members who are trying to create a greener, vibrant place for everyone to enjoy. We have done this by building, filling, and maintaining 18 planters around the village. At the Parade, we have additionally created a herb bed for all to use. Another of our projects is creating a wildflower meadow on Marden Road near Jeffrey Close.

If you are able to volunteer some of your time to help us, please contact either of the numbers below, and we will get back to you with any information you might need. Duke of Edinburgh Award teenagers or any students thinking about university entrance would be welcome.  0790344732

ROAD SAFETY GROUP

We thought it would be a good idea to update you all on the work that we have been trying to do regarding the crossroads. We have been looking at a variety of schemes since the year 2000. Like many residents, we are frustrated that more has not been done to safeguard this area.

One consideration was to install a mini roundabout, but there is insufficient space. As the surrounding land is all privately owned, we investigated whether some small parts could be compulsory purchased (CPO) to gain some land around the crossroads, but it transpires that we do not qualify legally to CPO.

The substation also is in the way of widening the road towards Marden. We have been informed that it would cost £1–2 million just to move it, and this is not considered the best use of Kent Highways' budget, especially as there would then be the cost of the road improvements on top. Even bollards on the west side of the main road have been turned down, as there is not enough pavement space to allow this as per the rules and regulations.

As an interesting historical note, the monument erected in 1904 is a privately owned Grade II listed monument, a memorial to Protestant martyrs who died for their faith in the 1550s.

If you would like to train and become one of the Speedwatch volunteers, please contact us.

If you know of any RTAs, let us know via  staplehurstroadinfo@gmail.com.

Use kent.gov.uk to report potholes and SE Water's online 'report a leak' for non-emergency leaks.



STAPLEHURST COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT NEW IDEAS COMMITTEE

The flower tubs have been looking amazing as ever – thank you to Growing Concern. The volunteers who continue to give up their time to weed the Parade areas have been doing good work too – thank you.

The Youth Hut is open again to the Men's Shed, an art class, and, hopefully, in the new year, a Youth Club once more – watch this space.

Special thanks to the Men's Shed for their work painting the inside of the whole building (please see the related article further on).

The Pavilion at Surrenden Field has come to the end of its life, and we plan to upgrade the building and facilities to benefit all those who use the field.

We have been working hard to ensure that there will be Christmas Lights this year. There's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes – licences to have them installed, checks on the existing lights, and new ones acquired if necessary. We are currently hoping that all the hard work will pay off and that you can enjoy a lovely display this year.

We will also soon have a new defibrillator in the old telephone box opposite the church. Hopefully, no one will ever need to use it, but just in case, there will be one there, as well as at the Library and Jubilee Field.



STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL - TRAINING FOR COUNCILLORS

Throughout the year, Councillors are encouraged to undertake training. Sometimes this is done individually, and sometimes as a group. In October, members of the Employment Group attended HR training. Occasionally, all councillors take part in a Saturday morning workshop, allowing more time to discuss important issues and receive updates and information.

Training courses attended this year have included: Planning, Communications, Dealing with Difficult People, Engaging Effectively with Young People, and Finance.

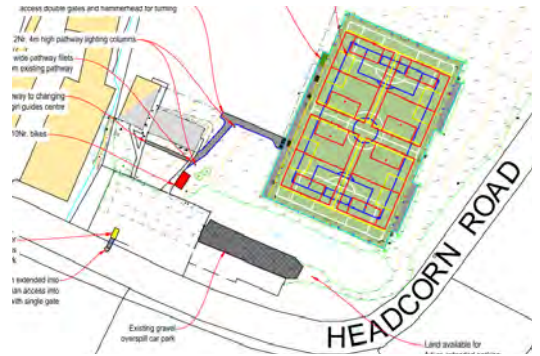
3G MULTI-SPORT WORKING GROUP

Cllr Riordan as Chairman of the Parish Council, is delighted to announce that Staplehurst Parish Council has a grant offer of £741,979 from the Football Foundation towards the capital cost of building the pitch. This is great news.

We are checking the grant offer Terms and Conditions while we await the decision by Maidstone Borough Council on the planning application.

If that is approved, we will work with the Football Foundation “design and build contractor” to build the 3G pitch in 2025.

We have started the tendering process to manage the site if the 3G Multi-Sport pitch is built.



JUBILEE FIELD WORKING GROUP

Those of you walking your dogs, using the skatepark, or playing football may well have noticed that as the later part of the year begins, the weather has really started to become rather... damp!

It hasn't dampened the spirits of those of you using the Jubilee Field, but it does bring its own set of problems!

The skateboarders are soldiering on, clearing leaves off the facilities as the autumn leaf fall does its thing, or have headed indoors for now.

We have had to close the access from the overflow car park to the pitches, as it is just too wet now. The football training and matches continues on-site.

Work continues by the football clubs with maintaining the main pitch, and SPC mowing and lining the junior pitches. We are still waiting for the parts from abroad to fix our mower – fingers crossed that happens soon.

The Kathie Lamb Centre also continues to host all things Guide-related – Rainbows, Brownies, Rangers, and Trefoil too! They are represented there most evenings, and the hall is available for some hires.



For more information, or to book, contact: kathielambcentre@outlook.com

Leaves on Skate Park ramps

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW GROUP

Working with our consultant, we have sent a draft of our plan to the Principal Strategic Planning Officer at MBC, for screening/checking.

He will check the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan and consult with agencies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Depending on the feedback, we hope to have news on Regulation 14* before the end of the year.

This means we would be doing public consultation in early 2025, and residents can have their say.

As always, I would like to thank the Group for their continued hard work and commitment to this important document.

**Regulation 14: Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning regulations require the draft neighbourhood plan proposal to be the subject of a pre-submission consultation before it is submitted to the local authority for independent examination. The consultation should last at least 6 weeks.*

STAPLEHURST EMERGENCY HELP TEAM

SEHT has been working hard behind the scenes with the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF), who are 100% supportive of the group and its plans. The KRF visited Staplehurst last month to make two videos about the work we are doing and our efforts with the Duke of Cornwall awards. We were complimented on our professionalism and accuracy of record-keeping, and some guidance was given regarding the Environment Agency floodplain templates.

Insurance has been established to protect the public, our equipment, our trustees, and against any loss of work due to injury.

As always, we are desperately seeking volunteers, both for hands-on callouts and for home-based paperwork and other tasks.

SEHT would like to thank the Parish Council for their support of the 24-hour phone system, the Trustees of the Village Centre for sponsoring two days of Duke of Cornwall activities, Kathie Lamb Centre for the use of the hall and some storage, and the Artisan Market for allowing us a presence each month.



WIMPEY FIELD

What have we been up to at Wimpey Field?

You may have noticed when walking through Wimpey Field Nature Reserve that there have been some major changes recently. A volunteer task force from Medway Valley Countryside Partnership set about reducing large swathes of thick, dense bramble that had grown high up into the oak trees, as well as impenetrable pockets of blackthorn. Both had thuggishly taken over the majority of the site, leaving little biodiversity.

Clearing some of this scrub opens up areas and allows more light in, encouraging a better variety of native plants and flowers to grow, which will appeal to a wider selection of wildlife. Everything cut back has been added to existing dead hedges or used to create new ones. Already, we're seeing teasel, foxglove, and willowherb establishing.

There is a healthy population of slow worms, as seen



during monthly wildlife surveys in the field season. Occasionally, the odd newt (including great crested) also appears under the refugia mats, and common lizards have been spotted basking

on top in the sunshine.

There is always an abundance of songbirds flitting about amongst the trees, including migrant warblers (especially blackcap and chiffchaff), tits, and finches. Last year, a distant turtle dove could be heard.

The open glades usually attract a good number of butterflies throughout the season, although 2024 has sadly been a poor year for this species. Meadow brown, gatekeeper, and speckled wood, which prefer the dappled shade of the woodland, have been the most sighted this year.

Sarah Harrington-James, MVCP

FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP



The Parish Council Employment, Finance, and Strategy Group are currently working on next year's budget 2025/26, which has to be presented to Maidstone Borough Council in January 2025.

As you can imagine, this is quite an involved and important process, which will decide whether there is any increase in your precept, the Parish Council portion of your council tax.

All matters such as employment, green space, council buildings, etc. are considered in detail. It is obviously important to run a positive and balanced budget. I'm very pleased to say that the Parish Council has managed finances very well in recent years, and this budget will be looked into in-depth.

Parish Council finances are overseen by auditors and are totally transparent to our residents.

The Parish Council is currently in receipt of some Community Investment Levy (CIL) funding received from Maidstone Borough Council. These funds can be put forward for various projects around the village.

We are working with KCC Highways to use S106 developers' contributions to improve the Cranbrook Road, but this is a long-term project.

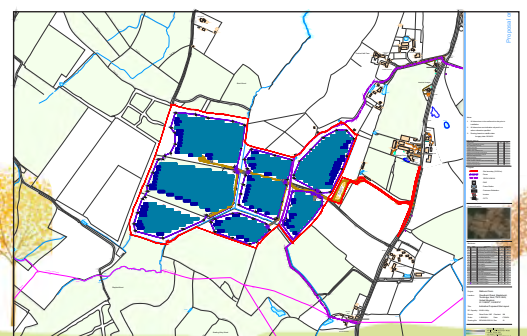
PLANNING COMMITTEE

Our planning committee continues to check applications as they come in and make our recommendations to MBC.

SPC is very keen to support renewable energy, recycling, and making our environment the best it can be.

However a recent initiative by a private company for a solar panel farm, has caused concern amongst residents and councillors alike. Apart from the fact that Staplehurst won't receive major benefits from this type of development, SPC felt this was not the best place to site a major solar farm. The area is in the High Weald, with parts of it in the Priority Habitat inventory of England due to orchards and ancient woodland. There are historical sites in the vicinity too. There are concerns about what happens once the site is no longer a solar farm. There is no assurance it will become farmland again, and it could well become housing in the future.

We encourage you all to retain an interest in any developments that occurs in Staplehurst and make use of MBC's planning portal to add your own thoughts about applications 'for' or 'against' them.



STAPLEHURST HEALTH CENTRE UPDATE - PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP



Malling Health's contract will terminate in March 2025. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has decided that Staplehurst should become a branch of a larger GP practice. Notice of procurement was sent out in September and has now closed. Three GP Practices have expressed an interest in taking over Staplehurst Health Centre.

Staplehurst Patient Participation Group (SPPG) members were invited by the ICB to submit questions for inclusion in a questionnaire sent to the three interested parties, and their responses will determine who goes forward to the next stage. We don't know who these parties are, and the ICB will make the selection at the end of October. The ICB will communicate with patients about the outcome, and it is anticipated that the process will end by late December. There will then be a three-month handover period.

Our next SPPG meeting will be at the Health Centre on Wednesday, 15th January 2025, at 7pm. Doors will be open from 6pm for patients who would like help uploading the NHS app onto their mobile phones. The NHS app is useful because patients can order prescriptions and access their medical appointment letters or test results, and so on.

Membership of the Patient Participation Group is open to all patients registered at the Practice or carers of patients. If you have any questions, you can email: chairstaplehurstppg@gmail.com

SURGERY CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS:

The surgery will be closed on **Wednesday 25th December, Thursday 26th December 2024, and Wednesday 1st January 2025.**

Other Health Centre News:

Staplehurst Health Centre is now an Armed Forces Veteran Friendly Accredited GP Practice. This means that veterans will be prioritised for healthcare services.

THE DUKE OF CORNWALL COMMUNITY SAFETY AWARD

The Duke of Cornwall Community Safety Award was launched in 2012 in response to significant flooding in Cornwall. The award was created with the aim of educating and training young people in the UK, giving them the opportunity to learn what to do in emergency situations such as severe weather, a pandemic, or a long-term power cut. It encourages them to plan their escape routes, understand how to reach evacuation centres, prepare their own grab bags, and recognise that emergencies cover a wide range of scenarios.

The award is open to young people between the ages of 5 and 18, and a key benefit of the scheme is that it brings families together to discuss and develop plans.

We at Staplehurst Emergency Help Team have embraced this award scheme, running workshops and promoting it at our stand at the Village Centre markets to raise



Elliott & Isaac Cardnell

awareness within our local community in Staplehurst and the surrounding villages.

In the past few months, we have signed up many children at various levels of the award scheme and have recognised several of our local community's children for their efforts.

Our feedback has been very positive, with not just the children taking part but also parents, who are gaining a better understanding of what to do in emergency situations.

The Kent Resilience Forum, fully supporting our promotion of these awards, visited Staplehurst last month to make a video featuring Savannah, our first recipient. We are eagerly awaiting the finished documentary.



Beatrice Banos

Congratulations to Elliott, Isaac, and Beatrice, our most recent community heroes, who have earned their Home Award.

BRING MORE CHRISTMAS CHEER TO STAPLEHURST!

This year, the Parish Council is making a special effort to bring more festive cheer to our village, and we need your help! We are aiming to fund a larger Christmas tree for the Parade, and we are reaching out to local businesses and residents for donations to make it happen. A bigger, brighter tree will be a fantastic focal point for our community, bringing joy to everyone who passes by. If you're able to contribute, please contact the Parish Council office.

We're also looking for groups or individuals who would like to get creative by decorating the inside of the baubles with suitable, removable decorations. It's a wonderful way to showcase your creativity and spread festive cheer!

Let's come together to make Staplehurst shine this Christmas!



WORK AT THE YOUTH CLUB BUILDING - THE MEN'S SHED

Following the completion of safety and other works carried out on the building, the Men's Shed were able to return there for their meetings.

Since then, members of the Men's Shed have been busy completely repainting the inside of the building. Together with other works, the transformation has been remarkable.

The Shed exists as a place where men come together to socialise, make new friends, play pool and scrabble, share ideas and skills, and participate in practical projects. Tea and coffee are provided. Current



Youth Club before

membership ages range from 50 to 90+.

The Staplehurst Shed has been running for seven years, and many early members are still involved. However, we are keen to welcome new members. So, if you want some conversation, a bit of banter, or just to get out of the house for a few hours each week, why not come



Youth Club after

along and see us?

To find out more, contact Richard James, Leader, on 07976 009522 or via email at



thestaplehurstshed@outlook.com

The building is available for hire for other groups or individuals. Contact the Parish clerk if interested.

MY COMMUNITY VOICE



My Community Voice is an opportunity for residents and community groups to connect directly with the police on issues such as anti-social behaviour (ASB) and general everyday matters.

Neighbourhood Policing is having a positive effect, and the police are maintaining a higher profile around Staplehurst, including "Drop-in sessions" at the Staplehurst Parade.

The meetings are announced between 7 to 10 days in advance in the www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk and you can register and subscribe to the service.

For more information visit <https://www.kent.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/wsi/watch-schemes-initiatives/kent/my-community-voice/> Or www.kent.police.uk

EVENTS

VOLUNTEERING OPTIONS

The following organisations – and many others we are aware of – are looking for volunteers. Please scan the QR codes hidden in the balloons to contact them. In the current times, it is increasingly difficult to find an extra hand, and funding is scarce to keep them running.

Volunteering offers a range of personal benefits beyond just helping others. It's a chance to develop new skills, boost your confidence, and gain valuable experience that can benefit both your personal and professional life. Volunteering connects you with like-minded people, helps build lasting friendships, and fosters a strong sense of community. It's also incredibly rewarding – knowing that your time and effort are making a real difference can bring a deep sense of accomplishment and purpose. Whether you're supporting a local cause or helping those in need, volunteering enriches your life as much as it does others.

Scan these QR codes to contact these organisations that are currently looking for volunteers



COUNCILLORS SURGERIES

Councillor Surgeries are held on the last Saturday of each month at the library, providing a valuable opportunity for residents to meet with both a Borough Councillor and a Parish Councillor. Whether you have concerns about local services, questions about planning, or ideas for improving village life, the Councillors are there to listen and offer guidance. It's a great way to get direct support, raise issues that matter to you, and ensure your voice is heard in the decision-making process. Drop by and connect with your local representatives to discuss any community matters that are important to you!



VILLAGE CLEAN UP

Thank you to our 12 resident stalwarts who came out again for our October litter pick. Many commented on how generally tidy our village is, thanks to the daily and weekly collections made by a small band of regulars. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated residents working hard to keep Staplehurst looking good. Thank you, too, to the WI members who provided a welcome hot drink and biscuits.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

NOTABLE FIGURES OF STAPLEHURST

INTERVIEW WITH COUNCILLOR JOHN PERRY – THE WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR OF MAIDSTONE



John has been a management consultant for most of his professional working life and has travelled all over the world. He was brought up in Petts Wood and later Sevenoaks, where he attended Sevenoaks School before becoming interested in politics while at university, where he studied history and classics. As a member of the Conservative Party, he campaigned in the 1960s for entry into the Common Market.

However, marriage and then children somewhat curtailed his political activities, as he concentrated on family life and running his business. When John and his wife moved to Staplehurst in 2006, he reconnected with politics and joined Staplehurst Parish Council, also becoming a Borough Councillor.

A member of the Church of England, John worships at All Saints. John and Jan's three children visit often but have also lived and worked abroad. Two of his grandchildren have dual nationality.

John himself worked for the UN for a time and represented the UK at many conferences. His job essentially revolved around international diplomacy, describing his role as an extension of the Foreign Office. He has thoroughly enjoyed his career and still runs his business, which includes several foreign clients. He continues to love what he does. Currently, he is very involved in the development of Albania's new airport and air traffic control.

John holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA), so he has veered away from his original study of history and classics.

John is the longest-serving Parish Councillor in Staplehurst, having served continuously since 2007. His professional diplomacy has stood him in good stead as Mayor. Duties can involve as many as twelve engagements in one week, and recently, three events were held on the same day. However, he is ably supported by his wife Jan, and together they hope they are doing a good job. John is loving his time as Mayor, despite it being tiring, and he has to pace himself. He loves visiting churches, although they can be challenging – because of his eyesight problems, steps, stairs, and uneven stone slabs can often be tricky to navigate without assistance.

John meets up with other mayors at charity events, and during his term of office, he is supporting three charities: Diabetes UK, The Torch Trust, and Demelza Children's Hospice. More recently, John has become involved with the Heart of Kent Hospice and launched its Shaun the Sheep Free Art Trail, which has raised thousands of pounds for charity.

As Mayor, John tours many schools, care homes, and charities, which he very much enjoys. He is particularly keen to support small, new charities, as well as promote Maidstone and especially Staplehurst as much as possible.

In terms of village improvements, John remains involved in and lobbies on planning and flooding issues. There are plans to introduce a wetland to the north of the village to slow down the flow of the River Beult, and there has been a lot of maintenance work in the Sweetlands area clearing ditches, and so on. The other main issue that John is working hard on is around the drainage problems within Staplehurst.

We're very proud to have him as our Mayor.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS FROM THE PAST (7)

We continue with this interesting section that opens a window to the village's past and shows us that some things never change. No matter how much work we put into improving the lives of our residents, some tasks feel Sisyphean. In this edition, we have mail and sewage issues, mentions of Chapel Lane and The Quarter, and the Bell Lane footpath. Almost 100 years ago, and things haven't changed one bit.

Again, we want to thank Tom Burham for the painstaking task of deciphering the previous clerk's handwriting. Tom takes this on as a pastime, and we can only admire his ability and speed to read our Parish Council archives

17th February 1928 – A letter was read from the Postmaster General stating that the question of an additional despatch of letters from Staplehurst connecting with the 9.15 p.m. train was carefully considered before a reply was sent to the Council in November last and that he regretted that the request could not be justified. It was resolved that the Clerk write again suggesting that the early despatch in the afternoon be discontinued in order to save the expense at that the suggested later despatch be substituted.

It was agreed that the Sanitary Authority be asked to compel the owners of the cottages in Chapel Lane to connect their drain with the Main Sewer when this has not been done, also to call attention to the unsatisfactory condition of the Emergency Tank at the Quarter.

16th April 1928 – The Clerk having stated that a site for building 4 cottages was now offered by Mr. Cutbush [of Chittenden Farm] on his land near the sewage works at the Quarter, it was agreed that the Clerk write and inform the Rural District Council of the offer.

The Clerk was instructed to call the attention of the Rural Sanitary Authority to the overflow of sewage near the old site of the stable formerly owned by Roberts near the Station.

30th April 1928 – A letter was read from the Post Office signed by Secretary stating that if the early despatch of letters were abolished in the afternoon an appreciable number of letters for London and neighbouring places which secure delivery the same day would be delayed until the following morning. A final despatch by the 9.15 p.m. train would still involve expense which would not be justified, therefore the Postmaster regrets that he does not see the way to comply with the Council's request.

A letter was read from the Rural District Council stating that the overflow from the cesspools near Mr. Offen's cottage at the Station was being dealt with, and notice had been served on the owners to cut off the overflow and clean out the ditch.

10th December 1928 – A letter was read containing several signatures complaining of the state of the footpath in Bell Lane where the paving stones had become uneven and dangerous. Agreed that the Footpath Committee have power to act and do what is necessary to the path in question.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tractor Parade – Sunday, 22nd December – 6pm

Christmas Tree shredding – Saturday, 4th January – 9:00am to 1:00pm – The Parade

PARISH COUNCIL INFORMATION

Parish Council meetings - 7.30pm at the Infant Hall - Staplehurst Primary School

9th December 2024, 6th January, 27th January, 17th February 2025

Clerk - Richard Griffiths

Deputy Clerk / RFO - Mrs Deborah Jenkins

Parish Support Officer - Mrs Jean Terry

Caretaker - Paul Nyahwa

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For more information visit: www.staplehurst-pc.uk



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