

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL NOTES (for August 2006)

PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCY - Fourteen working days public notice of the resignation of Councillor Lin Plant was given on 4th July. If no poll was claimed by 28th July then the Parish Council will be able legally to co-opt someone to fill the vacancy. In anticipation of needing to co-opt to fill the vacancy, please contact the Parish Council if you are interested in offering yourself for co-option or wish to discuss what being a Councillor is likely to entail.

REPORTING ONLINE - The internet is becoming an increasingly useful tool to find out about local information and also to feedback information to “the authorities”. The Parish Council has had a website for many years that is regularly updated and has the Village Forum where anyone can contribute their views or information. Maidstone Borough Council has recently added an extremely useful innovation to its website whereby everyone with internet access (or use Kent Libraries’ computers) can view any planning application in the Borough Area as well as report any problems or defects in the locality. Access www.digitalmaidstone.gov.uk click on “Planning Online” or “Report a Problem” and follow instructions until you reach the desired address or application that you wish to view. You can even send in your comments via the website if you wish.

PLAYSCHEME 2006 - Bookings for Playscheme continue to be taken where space is available - just ‘phone or visit the Parish Office to book in your child (rising 5 to year 6 leaver) at £.250 per session in advance or take a chance and book in on the day at £3 subject to space being available. Playscheme will run until Friday 18th August Mon-Friday 9.30 - 12.30 daily at Staplehurst Primary School.

SKATERS PROJECT - Planning permission is eagerly awaited by the skaters’ group and the construction company is poised ready for action as soon as permission is granted. Installation works are expected to take approximately two weeks.

KENT TRADING STANDARDS - A new email messaging system, designed to alert Kent residents about the activities of doorstep criminals and to obtain intelligence about trades and trading practices has been set up. The messaging system is also used to warn Kent consumers and businesses about current scams and trading practices that are designed to trick and defraud. It is hoped to increase consumer awareness of doorstep criminals and scams and to provide information on how to deal with them. Kent Trading Standards is keen to send out warning messages and to receive information back which provides valuable intelligence for Trading Standards Officers and the police. The Parish Council is subscribing to this network and expects to receive a maximum of two emails a week, which will then be published on public noticeboards. The Parish Council will also set up a new Trading Standards e-group for anyone who wishes to add their email to this and receive the information over the internet. Kindly email the Clerk on: staplehurst1@btconnect.com to join the Trading Standards e-group.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR - Summer is here again and we all like to be out and about enjoying the good weather. Young people are no different and should be encouraged towards healthy outdoor activities but some have yet to learn to respect

the local environment. Many residents understandably do not take kindly to missiles (not always footballs) damaging their homes, gardens or vehicles or to being verbally abused by a gang of youths whilst walking in public areas. From recent incidents that have been reported, it is a small minority of young teenagers who are causing most of the damage and distress in our community and parents of these are being visited by the police when positive ID has been achieved.

Good upstanding residents of Staplehurst, please report any incidents of anti-social behaviour with descriptions of the culprits (including names if possible) to PC Marc Pennicott on 07980 770575 and Rural Warden Chris Lomax on 07811 271254 but do leave a message if they are off-duty. They very often work evenings and weekends so can't be available 24/7. If criminal damage has occurred, please also report this to the Central Crime Recording Unit. High statistics will alert the police to problem hotspots for action so be positive and report incidents - action will be taken.

2007 PARISH COUNCIL ELECTION - The present Council is now well into its final year of the four year term. Although a majority of existing Councillors will be standing for re-election, there may be one or two vacancies to fill. In order to maintain our Quality Parish status an election must be held - this means that 16 or more candidates will need to stand for the 15 places.

Have you ever wondered what being a Councillor involves? Now (and during the remaining nine months) is the time to find out! The simplest way is to observe the present Council during its meetings. Members of the public are always welcome to attend and listen. You could also monitor the work that is being done by reading the Minutes either in the Library or on the Website at www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk Discussions with existing Councillors will give you an insight into the work they do and what is involved. Contact the Parish Clerk for an information pack.

Kent Highways - Call 08458 247 800 any time 24 hours a day 7 days a week to report any local highways issues, such as defects to the roads, footways, signs, drainage and street furniture, etc. Responsibility for the motorways and trunk roads are managed by the Highways Agency on 08457 50 40 30. Defects can also be reported for action via the KCC and MBC websites (there is no need to channel these reports through the Parish Office!). Even if you don't have internet at home, you can use the one at the Library - it really is very easy to do!

MBC Graffiti Removal Service - Private landowners, residents and businesses can now apply to MBC for a graffiti removal service. Subject to assessment for suitability and the work taking up to ½ a day the cost would be £26. Enquiries should be made to MBC Cleansing Call Centre on 01622 602162.

Maidstone Borough Highway-related services - MBC remains responsible for some highway services such as Street sweeping, street nameplates, street naming and numbering, park and ride facilities, concessionary fares and public transport matters. MBC Contact Centre to report most issues requiring attention is 01622 602162

Neighbourhood Policing Unit - PC Marc Pennicott with Community Warden, Chris Lomax and Special Constable Ken Baker, are the local visible policing presence in

our Parish, with emergency back up from the force as necessary. If you witness any anti-social behaviour contact the Parish Warden, Chris Lomax on 07811 271254 or PC Marc Pennicott on 07980 770575. These are not 24/7 contact numbers so do leave a message and they will get back to you when next on duty. The Neighbourhood Policing Unit is able to assist with basic quality of life issues and nuisance behaviour, however, all urgent calls for assistance should be directed to 999 with all incident reporting to 01622 690690 or to Maidstone Police Station on 01622 690055. If criminal damage has occurred as a result of anti-social behaviour, please ensure you also report this to the Central Crime Recording Unit on 01622 650065.

Report it! Unless reports of anti-social incidents with descriptions of the offenders are made, then the police might be forgiven for thinking that no problems occur here. Do not condone the behaviour of a small number of bullies who desecrate our public areas or property with impunity. Report it on 01622 690690! If a greater number of good parishioners made reports of any anti-social incidents they witness then such annoying incidents could be dealt with quickly and positively. If you prefer, calls to Crimestoppers are free and anonymous: 0800 555 111. Life-threatening incidents, crimes in progress or serious injury Road Traffic Accident requiring urgent police attendance should be notified by dialling 999 in the usual way.

Dog Mess - Thankfully only a small minority allow their dogs to defecate in public areas without clearing up the mess. If you witness such anti-social behaviour, telephone 01622 602117 in confidence and give the Dog Wardens details of the perpetrators. Visits to problem areas can be timed to be most effective and fines imposed when the offenders are caught.

Dog Mess Disposal - RED DOG WASTE BINS are for the disposal of dog waste only. Emptied by a specialist contractor with protective equipment for this messy job, please consider those who empty ordinary litter bins and remember that LITTER BINS ARE NOT FOR DOG WASTE! **Scoopit Bags** - special red plastic bags are available free from the Parish Office or from the Town Hall in Maidstone.

Bogus Caller Initiative: Unless vigilant, elderly residents can easily become victims of doorstep traders. Bogus Caller Initiative information packs, with stickers to remind residents of good practice when dealing with doorstep callers, are available from the Parish Office or Rural Warden, Chris Lomax at Staplehurst Library. If you are unsure about anybody - don't let them in! If they are legitimate they will write you a letter or show you some identification to check out. If you think a bogus caller has called at your door, report such incidents to the police immediately on 01622 690055 and give a good description of the person and/or vehicle.

Rubbish Dumping Tip-Off Line - 01622 602162 - Use this number to report any undesirable activities such as fly-tipping, dumped cars, littering etc. and help to keep this borough and parish as clean and tidy as possible. The same number can also be used to request a "pull-out" (or rear of property) collection service for those who are unable to wheel or carry their refuse to the front boundary of their homes. Further information is available from MBC website www.maidstone.gov.uk.

Garden waste, Newspaper & Glass recycling - MBC Green Garden Sacks are available from Spuds 'n Buds or the Parish Office at £1.95 per roll of 5. Garden waste will only be collected if in the MBC printed green sacks and left beside your wheeled bin (or put in a blue-lidded wheelie bin hired from MBC specifically for garden waste). For residents who have been issued with coloured boxes, NEWSPAPERS in the BLACK BOX & GLASS in the YELLOW BOX is collected on a regular basis. Please check with Maidstone Borough Council for collection dates in your road by telephoning: 01622 602162 or website at: www.maidstone.gov.uk

Garden Waste - When using the garden waste sacks, please do not put the following items in the sacks:- turf, soil, stones, animal waste or bedding, large branches, logs, tree stumps or kitchen scraps. The bags should not be unreasonably heavy or overloaded as collection crews have to lift them to shoulder height for emptying.

Bulky Collection Service and Waste Freighter - Residents with large items of household waste to dispose of, should telephone the MBC Cleansing Hotline 01622 602162 to arrange a collection. A small charge is now made for this service. Alternatively the Tovil tip and waste freighter are available for householder's use. The next visit of the Waste Freighter will be on **Sunday 6th August 1400-1500 at Northdown.**

Parish Information – Copies of the Minutes of Parish Council Meetings are available at Full Council Meetings, at the Library and on the staplehurstvillage.org.uk Website. The Clerk maintains a number of e-groups for those who wish to register their internet address to receive useful information about local issues e.g., Weekly MBC Plans List and Parish Council Minutes & Agendas. If local residents have any queries regarding Parish Council or local authority issues, they are encouraged to write to or contact the Parish Clerk for the facts.

Parish Council Meetings held in South Hall at Staplehurst Village Centre:-

Planning Committee - 7 p.m. Monday 7th August 2006

Amenities Committee - 8 p.m. on Monday 7th August 2006

Planning Committee - 7 p.m. on Monday 21st August 2006

Full Council Meeting - 8 p.m. on Monday 21st August 2006

Mrs J S Bassett, Parish Clerk
Parish Office, Village Centre, Staplehurst.
Telephone/Fax: (01580) 891761.
Website: www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk and
E-mail: staplehurst1@btconnect.com
The Parish Office is open to the public 9-11 a.m.
Mondays to Fridays (except Thursdays).