

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL NOTES (for August 2005)

Quality Parish status awarded - Staplehurst Parish Council was very pleased to be awarded the accolade of Quality Parish after an in-depth application process, culminating in the production of its first Annual Report. This Parish has been nationally recognised, certified and approved as conducting its business to a standard expected of an effective, representative and active Parish Council.

Seven areas of this Council's work were tested and assessed. These included having an electoral mandate, a qualified Clerk, properly conducted meetings, good communications with the electorate (mandatory and discretionary), publication of an Annual Report, Accounts and adoption of the local Code of Conduct. In addition to the minimum criteria, the general activity of the Council and its investment in training of its staff and Councillors were assessed. Also scrutinised were its partnerships with other bodies working within the community and any additional functions it carries out beyond the basics expected of a Parish Council.

Staplehurst Parish Council is the second Quality Parish within Maidstone Borough Council (Boxley was first) and is the fourth in the County of Kent (although two of these were Town Councils at Edenbridge and Sevenoaks with far greater resources than a parish).

The Quality status is awarded for four years only and whether or not the parish can reapply in 2009 will rest on having an electoral mandate at the next Parish Council Election. Many other Parishes have been prevented from applying because of this criterion alone. Provided more than 15 people stand for election in May 2007 and the currently high standards are maintained, quality status should be maintained. The current team of Councillors is doing a fine job, but inevitably some may stand down in the future and new people will be needed to replace them. If anyone wishes to know more, prepare themselves as a prospective Parish Councillor and join a winning team, visit the National Association of Local Councils Website at www.nalc.gov.uk to find out what it could entail. Alternatively, please speak to any current Parish Councillor, the Parish Clerk or attend any Parish Council meeting. There is a Public Forum at the end when members of the public can raise questions.

Summer Playscheme - The great team of Play Leaders entertained many rising 5's-11 year olds with a variety of interesting games and activities for three weeks of the summer holidays. A number of professional entertainers also added to the fun, particularly Charlie Chuckle, MBC Play Bus and the Police and Firemen's visits were also much enjoyed. A great big thank you to all staff is very much deserved for their care, energy and enthusiasm, which was much appreciated by all attending. This thank you also includes Assistant Clerk Sue Lynch who provided administrative support and created meticulous paperwork to ensure that all Ofsted criteria were met. Strict adult:child ratios were maintained and most places were fully-booked in advance every day with a waiting list in operation. Something to remember next year - book early to avoid disappointment! Hopefully if more staff also come forward for employment next year, a greater number of places for the children will be available.

Summer Activities - For older young people - 8-18's - a number of 2-hour sessions of Tennis, Rounders and Basketball were headed up by professional sports coaches

throughout August but unfortunately some sessions were under-subscribed, despite a very low cost of £1 each. Thank you to Nick Davis, Wendy Hall and Parish Warden Chris Lomax for making the sporty sessions such fun.

CCTV - A recording system has now been installed at Surrenden Playing Field. Please report to the Parish Clerk the date and time of any incidents of anti-social behaviour, so that these can be followed up with appropriate action.

Youth Club Fence - The new fence installed around part of the Youth Club perimeter has helped to tidy up and improve the area. It is proposed that hedging will also be planted in the autumn to create a more rural aspect to this boundary. Currently open on Tuesdays each week, the Youth Club could be open many more evenings if a greater number of adult volunteers came forward to help. If you wish to find out more, please speak to the Parish Clerk.

Nicholson Walk - The pathway linking the High Street to Surrenden Playing field has now been completed. Signage and a formal opening is envisaged. In the autumn it is planned to carry out some tree and hedge pruning works at Surrenden Playing Field as recommended by a Landscape Management Consultant.

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.

Maidstone Borough Highway-related services - MBC remains responsible for highway services such as Street sweeping, street nameplates, street naming and numbering, park and ride facilities, concessionary fares and public transport matters. Department telephone numbers were provided on the back page of the latest issue of the borough update but the MBC main switchboard operators are very helpful on 01622 602000 if you are unsure who to speak to about any query.

Neighbourhood Policing Unit - Maidstone & Malling Police has recently restructured and launched its new Neighbourhood Policing Unit. PC Tim Stanley with Community Warden, Chris Lomax and Special Constable Ken Baker, they are the local visible presence in our Parish, with emergency back up from the force as necessary. For non-urgent issues, contact the Parish Warden, Chris Lomax on 07811 271254 or PC Tim Stanley on 01622 608069. 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

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.

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.

Doorstep Awareness - 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.

Crime Awareness and Reporting: Rural Warden, Chris Lomax, will be happy to discuss and advise on any community concerns that you have or speak to a group that you belong to. Telephone him on: 07811 271254. Telephone Kent Police on 01622 690055 for suspicious incidents and community issues requiring police attendance or 01622 690690 to report a crime that occurred more than 20 minutes previously. 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.

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 £1.70 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 visits of the Waste Freighter will be on **Saturday 27th August 1130-1230 at Church Green.**

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, Parish Council Minutes & Agendas, Neighbourhood Watch Reports. 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 5th September 2005

Amenities Committee - 8 p.m. on Monday 5th September 2005

Planning Committee - 7 p.m. on Monday 19th September 2005

Full Council Meeting - 8 p.m. on Monday 19th September 2005

Mrs J S Bassett, Parish Clerk
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E-mail: staplehurst1@btconnect.com
The Parish Office is open to the public 9-11 a.m.
Mondays to Fridays (except Thursdays).