

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL NOTES (for December 2006)

SPEEDWATCH TRAINING – Several more volunteers have now been trained to use the Speedwatch equipment and teams will be out and about with increasing frequency. Any drivers who choose to ignore the lawful speed limit will have their car registration numbers noted and details of persistent offenders will be passed to the Police for action in due course. You have been warned! Watch Your Speed as Speedwatch Volunteers are too!

If anyone else wishes to receive Speedwatch Training, the next session will be at South Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre on Saturday 2nd December. Please come along on the day or contact the Clerk if you wish to put your name down for future training events.

VILLAGE UPDATE - The Winter 2006 edition will shortly be delivered to every household in this parish, mainly by volunteers but to outlying areas by post. Thank you to all who help to deliver this newsletter and keep postage costs down. If you would like to volunteer to help deliver the next edition, we would like to hear from you now!

SKATEPARK – The long awaited opening of the skatepark was a jubilant affair thanks to County Councillor Hotson, Borough Councillor Lusty and Elaine Downton who in partnership with the Parish Council had helped to establish the facility at Jubilee Playing Field. It is now being well-used by many young people, but there have been one or two problems arising therefrom. The Guide Centre very kindly opened its doors on the opening afternoon and refreshments were provided for the assembled supporters and skaters. However those using the guide centre cannot be expected to provide ongoing toilet, refreshment and first aid facilities to the skaters. In addition, whilst the skating equipment is designed for skateboards and BMX bikes, it is not suitable for ordinary road or mountain bikes. Skaters and parents of young people using the equipment should be made aware of these issues and take care to use proper equipment, to look out for one another and enjoy this facility wisely and carefully by taking turns and clearing any debris (including litter) away from the area. A temporary pathway has now been laid to the equipment pending design and installation of Phase II next spring when permanent seating, litter bins and pathways will be installed together with an extended skating area.

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS – May 2007 is the month when a new Staplehurst Parish Council will be elected. It is expected that most of the existing Councillors will re-stand for election but it is clear that some new candidates will need to come forward as well. It is likely that an information session will be held in February 2007 for any elector who is interested to find out more (without obligation) about what being a parish councillor could entail. This session could also be used as a “get to know your Councillor” event so you can be sure your votes are well placed when at the ballot booth

in May. In the meantime, local electors are encouraged to attend parish council meetings to listen to the issues that currently face the Parish Council.

REPORTING ONLINE - The internet is a very useful tool to find local information and also to feedback information to "the authorities". The Parish Council has had a website for many years and has the Village Forum where anyone can contribute their views or information. Planning Applications can now be viewed online at www.maidstone.gov.uk and anyone can report any problems or defects in the locality (including highways issues). You can even comment on services or answer surveys via the website too.

Kentcarshare – this free, simple, secure, internet-based service enables people to register their car journeys on-line and find others to share the costs. Car sharing can be used to get to work on a daily basis, going to the shops once a week or even for social events that happen just once in a while. A pilot scheme has been running for 1 year and has over 1,700 registered users across Kent. There is every chance of finding a potential car sharer close to your home or place of work. New users are automatically entered into a prize draw to win one year of free car tax. Contact www.kent.gov.uk/carshare for full details.

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. You can also report defects online too at www.kent.gov.uk/highways Responsibility for the motorways and trunk roads are managed by the Highways Agency on 08457 504030.

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

PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER (PACT) – This new initiative was begun at a public meeting on 27th November and it is hoped that some good understanding and partnership working will be established to improve policing in rural areas. Under the new PACT initiative, a panel of people drawn from the police, local residents, parish council and businesses will set priorities for action and consider how to deal with them in this parish.

Report it! PC Marc Pennicott with Community Warden, Chris Lomax and Special Constable Ken Baker, remain the local visible policing presence in our Parish, with emergency back up from the force as necessary. If you witness anti-social behaviour contact the Parish Warden, Chris Lomax on 07811 271254 or PC Marc Pennicott on 07980 770575. However, these are not 24/7 contact numbers so do leave a message and they will get back to you when

next on duty. All urgent calls for assistance should be directed to 999 with crime-incident reporting to Maidstone Police Station on 01622 690055.

Unless reports of anti-social incidents with descriptions of the offenders are made, then the desecration of our public areas or property will continue with impunity. Report it on 01622 690055 and provide the PACT panel with the opportunity to think up ways of dealing with it! If you prefer, calls to Crimestoppers are free and anonymous: 0800 555 111 but may not be referred back directly to this parish. 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). Residents may have noticed a change in the

green garden refuse sacks. The bags are now made to conform to Health and Safety guidelines for the disposal of garden waste. Therefore they are now smaller in size and transparent (to ensure they have not been contaminated with anything other than garden vegetation). Further information on garden waste is available from Maidstone Borough Councils website. www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk.

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

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 25th November 0900-1000 at Poyntell Road Pond and Sunday 10th December 1400-1500 at Northdown**. The first visit by the Waste Freighter in 2007 will be on Sunday 7th January 1630-1715 at Church Green. Maidstone Borough Council will probably also be operating a Christmas Tree Recycling Scheme – look out for details on the MBC website or local press.

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 8th January 2007

Amenities Committee - 8 p.m. on Monday 8th January 2007

Planning Committee - 7 p.m. on Monday 22nd January 2007

Full Council Meeting - 8 p.m. on Monday 22nd January 2007

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).