

# Village Update

AUTUMN 2006

## MEDICAL CENTRE UPDATE

Staplehurst Parish Council has long been supportive of improved medical facilities for the parish and was instrumental in encouraging the Maidstone Weald Primary Care Trust (PCT) to build a modern facility. It was generally accepted that the doctors at Rose Cottage Surgery would be transferred to the new centre when completed. However, at the June board meeting of the PCT a policy document advocating Alternative Provider Medical Services (APMS) was adopted. Subsequently a press release identified Staplehurst for this type of service provision. This means that a bidding process will be instigated for a PCT contract to provide medical services in the new centre. The present team in Rose Cottage Surgery will have an opportunity to submit a bid for the contract which will initially be for 5 years.

At present the Rose Cottage Surgery medical services are provided under a PCT managed contract, whilst those at Guelder Rose Surgery were under a General Medical Service (GMS) contract. GMS contracts are open ended, subject to efficiency or a doctor wishing to move on. The PCT have the power to 'gift' the new medical centre to the doctors from Rose Cottage surgery under a GMS contract. Change to APMS or merger to a single practice would constitute a change of service delivery, and require a public consultation.

The Parish Council expects to see Dr. Gildeh's patients consulted by the PCT as to how they wish to see their medical services provided following his retirement.

On August 23, an Appeal Court decision in a similar case of change of service delivery, found in favour of

the appellant, who was a patient of the surgery involved, that a public consultation on such a change should be undertaken.

The Parish Council has met with the PCT and a group of councillors will be monitoring any tendering process. The Parish Council has representation rights, but must adopt an impartial stance until a public consultation takes place, as any expression of opinion could be construed by the PCT as a 'representation of patients' views'. Under legislation the Maidstone Weald Patient and Public Involvement Forum has to be consulted and it is likely that this Forum will be involved in arranging any public consultation.

The Parish Council is aware that there are rumours, petitions and misinformation circulating. If you have any concerns at all about the provision of Staplehurst's medical services please attend the public meetings, the dates of which will be widely publicised when known.

What else can you do?

You should write to the following, expressing your preference as to the method of provision of medical services:-

Rt. Hon. Ann Widdecombe MP., House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Mrs. Rosanne Corben, Chairman, Maidstone Weald PCT, Preston Hall, Aylesford, Kent. ME20 7NJ

Maidstone Weald PPI Forum, 19, Monson Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. TN1 1LS.

### SPEEDWATCH

The Parish Council has purchased Speedwatch Equipment which was displayed on the Council's stall at the Village Carnival and Fete. A number of people have been signed up as volunteers to man the equipment and the first training session has been held

at the beginning of September. Extra volunteers are always welcome and more training opportunities could be arranged. If you would like to help with this initiative please contact the Parish Clerk at the Parish Office. Email: [clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk](mailto:clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk) Tel: 01580 891761

# Staplehurst

*Parish Council*



# SUMMER PLAYSCHEME 2006

A very busy and fun-packed three weeks of play and entertainment was enjoyed by over 130 children at Playscheme this year. The staff team of 12 Play Leaders was again responsibly led by Jensie Shepherd. All staff ensured Playscheme was a fun and safe child-centered environment.

A variety of daily visitors and activities added interest. These included visits and displays by Firemen, Psarms Puppets, Owls, Clown, Police, St. John's Ambulance, Play Van and Recycling Workshop as well as storytimes, French Day, dancing, sports and Party Day with face painting. Every day there were different crafts to make and enjoy which included badges, T shirt decorating, scoubidou, peg pals, finger puppets, masks, pasta jewellery, painting, junk modelling and many others.

Playscheme was financed by grants from Maidstone Borough Council, Staplehurst Parish Council and entrance fees. Marden-based Company Water4Work



provided free chilled water for Playscheme to enjoy, which was much appreciated by all during the very hot weather.

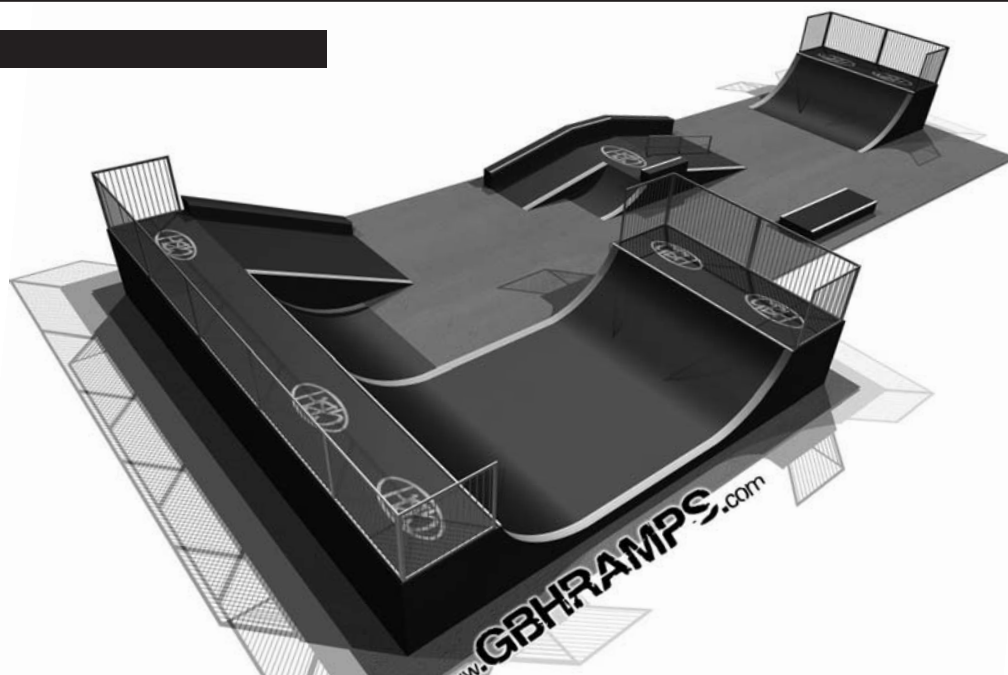
Ofsted inspected Playscheme on the second day of opening and awarded a "Satisfactory" report, which allows a little room for improvement next year! Well done everyone and plans for Playscheme 2007 have already begun.

*Sue Bassett, Parish Clerk*

## SKATEBOARD PARK

**Phase one of the Skateboard Park scheme for the Jubilee Field is nearing completion.**

Funding has been granted and planning permission given for the project by the time this issue of Village Update hits the streets. Construction work for the park should have begun.



## STAPLEHURST VILLAGE CENTRE – NEEDS YOUR HELP

Most readers will know that the Village Centre Management Committee (VCMC) is very concerned about the cost of maintaining the Old School Building. It is the location for so many village activities. Over the past year financial projections have indicated that we might not be able to afford the cost of remaining at the present site. The only alternative apparent so far is to move to a new building on land already owned by the Village. This suggests Jubilee Field from which the Guides have successfully operated for many years, where the new skateboard equipment is shortly to be installed and where the new football changing rooms are planned.

The VCMC is currently assessing the costs and benefits of staying put or moving. This is not a question of what

should happen to the Old School Building. It is one of how we can best provide the community with facilities for the activities and occasions that a village the size of Staplehurst could reasonably expect to enjoy in the twenty-first century. Essentially it comes down to what should Staplehurst have and how can that best be provided.

We welcome your views on this and help from anyone who has experience of this type of assessment project. Please contact us before the end of October by sending your comments, offers etc. to The Village Centre, Old School Building, High Street, Staplehurst, TN12 0BJ or by email to [villagecentrehire@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:villagecentrehire@tiscali.co.uk)

*Don Wood, Chair VCMC*

# Planning Appeals

What are they? A Planning Appeal is the method in which a member of the public can ask for an independent inquiry into a planning application or an enforcement notice, when the appellant disagrees with the decision that the local authority has made regarding their planning application.

Who do they affect? Planning Appeals affect all those persons who may be connected to or affected by a controversial development.

## How do they work?

What are planning appeals? Over the past few months the Parish Council has been involved in several planning appeals concerning different developments in and around the parish. The parish has been asked to comment on planning appeals by letter representation and by public speaking representation.

There are different types of appeal; these being a Public Hearing; Public Inquiry, and written submission inquiry, where the appeal is heard via paper submission.

The Parish Council has been involved in all three. With the Public Hearing a more informal approach is used by the Planning Inspector. The Planning Inspector is a professional Planning Architect who is appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Planning Inspector at a public hearing will listen to both sides of the argument in the public forum. Any member of the public is allowed to speak and to give their side of the argument. The inspector hears all of the evidence and then will make his decision based on the information given. These hearings in general last between one and two days depending on the number of people who speak and the complexity of the case. A site visit will also be carried out by the inspector, prior to or during the hearing. A decision should be forth coming within six to eight weeks after the hearing. However when an application is controversial this may take longer. Any member of the public can receive a copy of the appeal decisions as long as they make it known at the hearing.

A Public Inquiry is similar in procedure to a Public Hearing apart from the fact that the parties involved are represented by barristers and anybody who speaks at

the inquiry has to take the oath. The Planning Inspector carries out the inquiry in a much more formal manner, but as with the hearing any member of the public who wishes to speak may do so as long as they make sure that the inspector is made aware of their intentions before the start of the full inquiry. As with the Public Hearing a site visit is carried out where certain relevant members of the public and the opposing parties can attend. The inspector will have already made a previous visit in order to be aware of the site in question.

Residents will hopefully be aware that recently the parish held a Public Inquiry in the Village Centre. This inquiry was regarding the illegal occupation of a site within the parish of a large static caravan, horse paraphernalia, motor vehicles and other detritus. The inquiry was well attended by members of the public and lasted two days. A formal site visit was carried out and arguments from both sides were heard. The inspector was very impressed by the number of people who stayed the course for both days and thanked them for their patience and stamina. We hope to have a decision shortly and will keep the parish up to date via the usual outlets.

A written Inquiry is one where all consultees are required to submit their evidence via paper documentation. The Parish Council is asked to write in support of their recommendations, along with other parties involved in the appeal. The inspector then addresses the arguments in closed camera. Members of the public are permitted to write to the inspector if they so wish with their comments and concerns.

Planning Appeals are not entered into lightly as they can prove to be very costly. If for example the Borough Council loses a planning appeal the cost can be considerable. They therefore are very careful not to get into a situation where a lot of planning appeals are being lodged. They make sure that the appeals that they do defend are for a very good reason based on planning policy and the affect on the environment.

If you would like more information on how planning appeals work then you can access the Planning Inspectorate website at <http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk>

## Parish Council Information

The Parish Office is in the Village Centre. It is open on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 9 to 11 am. The phone number is 01580 891761. The email address is: [staplehurst1@btconnect.com](mailto:staplehurst1@btconnect.com)

The Parish councillors are Margaret Arger (Chairman), Joan Buller, Paul Butcher, Barry Franks (Vice-Chairman), Wendy Green (Planning Committee Chair), Paul Kelly, Angela Knowlden, Trevor Martin (Amenities Committee

Chair), Roger Munn, John Reardon, Chris Rogers, Georgie Collins, John Stewart, John Swannick and Donald Wood. Parish Council Surgeries are held at the Library on the last Saturday of each month, from 10am to 12pm.

A Parish Councillor, Richard Lusty (our Borough Councillor), or Eric Hotson (Borough and County Councillor), Chris Lomax (Community Warden) and/or Marc Pennicott (our Community Police Officer) attend, and are willing to talk over any problems.

# STAPLEHURST INFRASTRUCTURE

Forty three years ago I moved to a new three bedroom house in Staplehurst which cost £3,045!

The word 'infrastructure' was probably then unheard of, and Staplehurst's lack of it was not an issue.

The village has grown hugely in size and population in the last forty years and the only improvements to services have been the construction of a new school, public library, the hideous parade of shops, a small housing development and day centre for the elderly and the replacement of temporary buildings at the station. It is not realistic to call the conversion of the old school into the village centre an improvement, for as predicted by many, the building has been constantly in need of repairs which are uneconomic in terms of cost against the income that the centre can earn from lettings.

The village shops, whilst providing a valuable service and many of the day-to-day needs of residents, do not offer the range and choice of goods, especially foodstuffs, which modern families demand, and so we trek to Maidstone, Cranbrook etc. to do a main weekly shop. Whilst we have facilities for golf, football, cricket and tennis we still have no indoor sports facilities. Whilst our railway station attracts commuters from as far afield as Rye and Maidstone with some 700 cars parked at the station, it still does not have facilities

which will enable persons in wheelchairs to board and alight the train, despite constant pressure on the railway authorities from the parish council.

The A229 running through the village is classified as a primary route but it still gets inadequate maintenance from Kent Highways. The line for a future bypass for the A229 west of the village was removed from the last Maidstone Borough Plan on the spurious grounds that 'a bypass was unlikely ever to be built'!

Dear reader, you are probably saying, 'If all these things are wrong why don't you move, you grumpy old devil?' My answer is that I think Staplehurst, although it is now really a small town, still has a lot to offer as a community, if one gets involved in village life. I just wish that more residents would come and listen in to parish council meetings, make comments in the public question time and really make their views known on all the current issues. Unless we, the people of Staplehurst, support our Parish Council and make our views heard at Borough and County level, we shall not get the infrastructure improvements that are so desperately needed.

*Robin Oakley  
(Retired Parish Council Chairman)*

## PARISH COUNCIL VACANCY AND CO-OPTION

To co-opt someone you have to persuade them to help you or support you in what you are doing. That's exactly what Staplehurst Parish Council did to Lin Plant when she joined the previous council to both help and support in a practical and professional manner.

She brought with her a commitment to the youth of the parish in her work with the Youth Forum and in the work she contributed with former councillors Maureen Green and Anne Hanish with the new play area on Surrenden Field.

She was keen to stand at the following election and was delighted to be elected and to see her efforts for the play area come to fruition.

Lin was an active participant on the Amenities committee and her opinions were always expressed with a view to the best for the community as a whole. She was never afraid to give a differing viewpoint, often from her legal background and having lived abroad for a number of years, which contributed to council meetings having open and frank discussion.

Lin was also active with the Publicity Group which

brings you this publication.

Lin moved out of the Parish in July and Staplehurst Parish Council is very sorry to have lost her skills to East Sussex and wish her and her family well for the future. We understand she has already offered herself for election in her new parish.

We have recently co-opted Georgie Collins to both help and support us in our endeavours for the remainder of our term in office. Elections are due in May 2007.

If you are keen, articulate, prepared to listen, have a sense of humour, have time to attend meetings and work for the best of Staplehurst (and not necessarily just your own opinion) then please contact the Parish Clerk for details of how to stand for election.

Please come and see what your Parish Council is doing and if you don't tell us your views you can't blame us for not knowing!

## HEDGE TRIMMING

Now is the time to really cut back those trees and hedges! Be ruthless! An autumn prune is good for the plants, but also good for those of us who walk.

All shrubbery should be kept inside your boundary to give safe passage to toddlers, six-footers and all.

If branches are obscuring a light or road sign please help us all by keeping them trimmed back!

## MCCABE DAY CENTRE LUNCHES

New members are invited to join the Thursday and Sunday Lunch Club. Contact Robin Oakley on 01580 891516 for details.