

# Village Update

WINTER 2005

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

We have reached the final stages of 2005 with the clocks going back, halloween, November 5th and Remembrance Sunday all past with Christmas still to come and, at the time of writing, we still have leaves on the trees, blue sky and sunshine.

At last, we have finally seen activity on the school playing field with the beginnings of our medical centre. It has been a long process to get this far and we can only hope the finished building will fit the needs of the community and will make our GPs feel the wait was worth it!

If I have a wish for 2006, for the Council, it would be that more members of the Parish attend its meetings

and see for themselves how much hard work is involved and that no decision is made without looking at the benefit to the community as a whole.

The Council has 18 months left of its present term before the next election and it would be nice to think there could be increased interest and involvement in its workings. There will be increasing demands on Parish Councils to modernise and improve delivery of local services enhancing the representation of the local community.

We hope you all enjoy the Christmas lights.

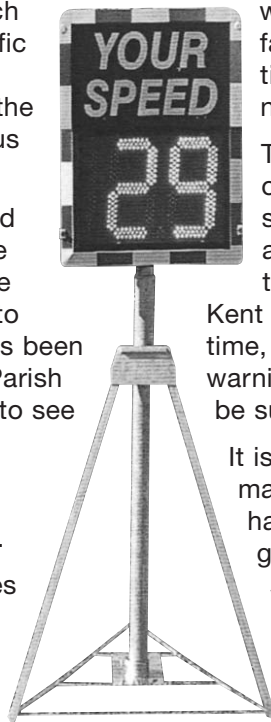
*Margaret Arger, Chairman*

## Speedwatch

Kent Police will shortly introduce Speedwatch throughout Kent. PC Tony Howland, the Traffic Management Officer for Maidstone and Malling, has been giving illustrated talks on the latest developments for this project to various Parish Councils throughout our area.

The project's aims are to cut road deaths and injuries/collisions by 7% per year, to improve road safety and quality of life and to increase public awareness. This fits in with the need to reduce speed through Staplehurst, which has been raised many times in the past, both by our Parish Council and villagers, and we are very keen to see how this project could help us. The Parish Council has voted to support the initiative in principle and may put some money in next year's precept to purchase some equipment.

Speedwatch will use Speed Indicator Devices (not speed guns), which will flash up "Your Speed" and "xx Miles per hour" from a distance of 50 – 100 metres. These must be within an area marked by warning triangles showing "Speedwatch." The signs



will be manned by 3 volunteers (to ensure that no falsification occurs), one to note the speed and time and the other two to note the registration number (and make/model/colour if possible).

These notes will then be passed on to our co-ordinator, who logs them on the database. If the same registration is entered for a second time in a rolling 12 month period, the database highlights this, and a first warning letter will be sent out by Kent Police. If the same registration comes up a third time, the database highlights it again and a final warning letter will be sent. Any further violations will be subject to an automatic fine and penalty points.

It is possible for parishes to share devices. Funding may be available from sources such as MBC (who have not yet decided if they will fund them) or grants from Kent Peoples Trust.

Volunteers are needed to help run this project in Staplehurst. Please speak to the Clerk for further information, or to register your interest in volunteering. Training will be held on Saturday mornings at Kent Police College.

# Staplehurst

*Parish Council*



# Staplehurst Medical Centre

**FROM DIANE BEECHING - PRIMARY CARE TRUST COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER**

Many residents will know that preparatory work on the site of the new health centre, behind the library, started in September and builders were due to dig the foundations for the health centre in October. We needed to carry out further tests before we could finalise the foundation design of the health centre. So the start of the building work was delayed slightly and foundation work was due to begin on the Health Centre at the end of November. By the time you read this, work should have started!

The PCT know that local residents are concerned about contractors' vehicles making the roads muddy or parking in the main shopping parade for long periods of time. The builders have assured us that

they will keep vehicles wheels clean as much as possible and that there will be space for contractors' vehicles to be parked on site. The PCT is meeting with representatives from the local community on a regular basis, so that we know what people's concerns are as much as possible, and help to resolve them. Our intention is to provide regular updates for the Parish News and Village Update. Plans of the new Health Centre are on display in the library and at Rose Cottage Surgery.

If there is anything that you think we should know about, please contact Diane Beeching at the PCT on **01622 713141** or email **diane.beeching@maidstonewealdpct.nhs.uk**.

## Creative Staplehurst 8th – 23rd October

Last year this event was met with enthusiasm about celebrating and displaying any and all creativity in the village so this year we planned to expand. The core remained the weekend of 22nd/ 23rd October at the Centre but the fortnight leading up to it became a Creative Festival. This took the form of a number of open studios, the United Reformed Church Art Exhibition, the All Saints Trafalgar work shop, The Marsh Warblers Nelson concert and an open day at Brattle Farm Museum.

The weekend of the exhibition included the Photographic Society, a wide range of paintings and drawings, craft work, furniture, leather work and music from the Weald Music Centre. This year we also had art from the children in the playgroups and the school with some welcome art from adolescents and young adults. It is difficult to attract pupils in the secondary schools all of which are distant from the village and appear to have no interest in its activities and resources.

In general the whole event was well supported although we are convinced that there must be ways of increasing attendance and interest in this unique event that does much to put Staplehurst on the cultural map of Kent. We also find that despite our best efforts to publicise what was available many complained that they did not know about it. At the same time they tell you that they don't take the local papers, go to the Website Forum or look at public notices!

There is now an expectation that the event will be repeated and grow next year and the main stakeholders are having a meeting to plan it.

We feel that this must be a free community event and therefore we are very grateful to the Parish Council for all their interest and support and for meeting the costs of hiring the Centre.

## Staplehurst Partnership

The Staplehurst Partnership will be launched on December 15th in the Village Centre. An invitation to join the event accompanies this publication. Over twelve months ago, the Parish Council action plan sub-committee looked at how best to take the Village action plan forward. Most of the 'quick wins' and a number of the bigger projects were complete or under way. What remained were some of the major 'issues' that confront us as a community.

It was decided that the Parish Council could not address these things alone. Representatives of local business and community organisations were asked to join an 'action plan steering group'. Advisers from Maidstone Borough and Kent County Councils and other outside bodies were invited to meetings.

In grappling with the key issues, the steering group recognised that real progress would probably need sizeable outside funding. These days, that requires a local community 'healthcheck – a wide-ranging review of the issues and what needs to be done - and a more formal community partnership. Bringing these two things together is what the Staplehurst Partnership is all about. It will oversee the healthcheck. But it has to create a more productive dialogue, a partnership, between the major outside players who have an impact on Staplehurst – local authorities, government agencies, emergency services, etc. – and a broadbased representation of all local interests.

So please come along on December 15 to hear more and see how you can play a part.

By the time you read this newsletter, we will have our Christmas Lights in place along the High Street, from The Bell Lane junction to Surrenden Manor.

This year we have received additional funding from Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council, which has enabled us to add more lights to extend



# Introducing PC Marc Pennicott

Prior to taking over as Community Police Officer from Tim Stanley in September 2005, I worked as a Police Officer for nearly seven years as a patrol officer and within CID. I also spent two years as a Neighbourhood Officer in Rochester and enjoyed being part of the community. I am now becoming as much a part of the community in Staplehurst and Marden as I was in Rochester and thoroughly enjoy this work.

So far I have spent my entire career working in the Medway Towns and can assure you that you live and work in one of the safest environments around and are far less likely to be a victim of crime than in the rest of the county. However, it is crucial that residents work together with me to ensure that Staplehurst will remain a safe place to live and work. The only way to achieve this is by residents giving me as much information as possible. Hopefully you will find me approachable and I will treat any information you give me in the utmost confidence.

Since arriving in Staplehurst, I have been working hard on unsolved crimes and any further crimes that have been committed; however we have to be realistic about what can be achieved. In all communities there are those who seek to engage in

criminal activity and it is important that residents make it more difficult for them to operate by reporting what they see and taking care of their possessions.

With the festive period almost upon us it is even more crucial that you keep your houses and vehicles secure, ensuring that your valuables are not on display. Like most law abiding citizens, criminals will usually choose the easy option. If you leave items on display in your vehicles or homes then a thief is more likely to break in. As long as you stick to this advice then you should be fortunate enough not to become a victim.

If you wish to speak to me regarding any matter then you can contact me on any of the following or alternatively turn up to the Village Surgery, which is held on the fourth Saturday of each month in the Library.

**Office:** 01622 604391

**Mobile:** 07980770575

**Email:** marc.pennicott@kent.pnn.police

I look forward to speaking with all of you soon and if you see me cycling around the village and think I look tired then I most certainly will be - working hard for Staplehurst and Marden!

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## Planning Guidance for Listed Buildings

In and around Staplehurst there is a wealth of listed buildings. Listed buildings have to cover strict planning guidance rules, in order to maintain and enhance their appearance and condition for future generations. All development which affects the character of a listed building requires listed building consent regardless of whether planning permission is required. Any change which affects the structure or the visual appearance of a listed building is deemed to affect the character of that building and therefore requires listed building consent.

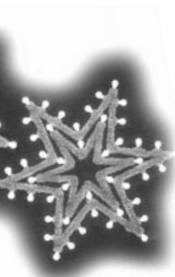
In considering applications to alter or extend a listed building, priority will be given to the preservation and enhancement of the listed building. There is a strong presumption against any proposal to demolish a listed building. In considering such applications the following criteria will be considered-

- 1) The importance of the building both intrinsically and relatively, bearing in mind other buildings of special architectural or historic interest in the

neighbourhood, and the contribution to the local scene made by the building, particularly if it is in a Conservation area.

- 2) The architectural merit and historic interest of the building, both internally and externally.
- 3) The condition of the building and the cost of repairing and maintaining it, in relation to its importance. In considering such costs due regard will be paid to the economic value of the building once altered or repaired.
- 4) The acceptability of alternative uses for the building, whether proposed by the applicant or not, which would enable the building to be retained in a condition which will secure its preservation.

With priority being given to the protection and preservation of historic buildings, where such property has become redundant and is unoccupied, the Borough Council will consider new alternative uses to enable the building to be productively occupied and thereby properly maintained. The best use of a historic building is the use for which it was designed and wherever possible this original use, particularly if it is residential, will be encouraged to continue. If the use of the building has been changed from its original purpose, consideration will be given to whether it can revert to it. In consideration new uses particular attention will be paid to the opportunity to preserve the architectural and historic features of the building.



the display. Our thanks go to County (and Borough) Councillor Eric Hotson and Borough Councillor Richard Lusty, both of whom used part of their parish allowances to fund the lights.

Some High Street businesses have also kindly contributed to the running costs of the display.

# The Village Centre

The Village Centre in the old school building continues to give pleasure to many in the Village. It is a valuable resource which we are fortunate to have and provides facilities for most of the interest and activity groups in Staplehurst which are such a vital part of village life. It is used heavily by them and by the individual villagers who hire it for their special occasions. A part of its charm is its traditional village school appearance with complex roof lines and many arches, gables and tall chimneys. But all this leads to high maintenance costs which are made worse by the wanton damage caused, it has to be said, by a few local youths.

In the last ten months the Management Committee have dealt with the aftermath of fires, skateboarding on the roof, pitched battles between opposing gangs on the roofs using tiles and slates for ammunition, fire extinguishers being let off, broken windows, graffiti, and large amounts of litter. All of this is in addition to the more expected items of a flat roof that had to be recovered, the treatment of an outbreak of dry rot and the upgrading of electrical systems.

The Management Committee is about to review the financial viability of the Centre, how it operates and the facilities it offers in order to establish what it should provide to meet the future needs of the Village on a sustainable basis. Change is inevitable and we shall consult widely. We hope that all of you who have used the Centre or would have liked to will freely give their opinions and those of you who have relevant skills and experience will offer a little of your time to help us in the process. Contact Don Wood on 01580 891388 or come along to the Annual General Meeting at the Centre on 28 February when we shall report on progress.

**Latest News.** The Committee with the help of Village Centre users has just cleared a skipful of rubbish out of the air raid shelters. There remains a few instruments, hats etc. left by the now defunct Staplehurst Marching Band. The Committee will dispose of these unless they are claimed by somebody associated with the Band by 31 December this year. Contact the Parish Clerk, Sue Bassett on 01580 891 761.

## 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), Paul Butcher, Joan Buller, Barry Franks (Vice-Chairman), Wendy Green (Planning Committee Chair), Paul Kelly, Angela Knowlden, Trevor Martin (Amenities Committee Chair), Roger Munn, Lin Plant, John

## Do you think our Public Transport could be improved?

Are you interested in:

- Increasing and improving our local transport services
- Promoting community and voluntary transport services
- Increasing accessibility to and from out of Village facilities Schools etc.
- Promoting environmentally friendly methods of travel like cycling and walking
- Ensuring timetable information is available locally
- Voicing the concerns of residents on transport matters

The Parish Council is looking for a team of volunteers to look into all aspects of transport in and around the Parish. Ideally the group would become the a point of contact for all transport issues within the Parish. The amount you do will of course depend on the time each individual is able to commit and personal interests. There is no minimum or maximum age limit and volunteers are wanted from all sectors of the community. Are there any students out there who could conduct a needs survey for instance?

If you feel you could help if only occasionally then please contact Barry Franks on 01580 891514 - NOW!!!

## The Grey Zebra project

This is an innovative approach to youngsters and drug use providing confidential advice via their website [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) or by phone. Started in 1996 by the Kenward Trust it is part of the Kent's 'Tackling Drugs Together' initiative for Rural as well as urban areas.



Reardon, Chris Rogers, 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 new Community Police Officer) attend, and are willing to talk over any problems villagers might have.