

Village Update

SUMMER/AUTUMN 2005

HEDGES OBSTRUCTING FOOTPATHS

The safety of pedestrians on the footpaths around and in Staplehurst is important. Every householder can and should help by ensuring that there is no shrubbery, tree branches or hedging that obstructs pedestrians. There are still sadly some places where walking is restricted to single file in order to pass hedges. Brambles are of particular danger to taller walkers. Please cut everything to within your

boundary. This will also help the sight lines for motorists.

Another danger is the habit that some motorists have of parking on the footpath. Perhaps those who do so have no idea of the danger they put young children in. It is also of concern to those using disabled buggies or pushchairs.

Planning Guidance

Planning rules and policies are seen to be quite complicated to us mere mortals and serious and costly mistakes happen when householders build extensions to their homes with out proper guidance. So that householders who are contemplating adding additional living space to their properties and wish to get it right first time, listed below is the 'Householder's Guide to Planning'.

Extensions and Alterations to dwellings.

An extension or alteration to a dwelling house including free standing buildings within 5m of the main dwelling house) does not require planning permission UNLESS:-

- Your house is terraced and the extension, together with any previous extensions, represents an increase of 50cu.m or 10% (whichever is the greater) over the original dwelling.
- Your house is detached or semi-detached and the extension, together with any previous extensions, represents an increase of 70cu.m or 15% (whichever is the greater) over the original dwelling.
- The additional work is more than 115cu.m.
- It is higher than the original dwelling.
- It is between the original dwelling and any highway abutting the curtilage and is less than 20m from the road.

- The extension is less than 2m from the boundary and more than 4m high.
- More than 50% of the total curtilage will be covered by buildings (excluding the original dwelling).
- It is a roof extension projecting beyond the plane of the roof slope which faces the highway.
- It is a roof extension that increases the volume of a terrace house by 40cu.m or any other house by 50cu.m.
- It is a roof extension which materially alters the shape of the dwelling.
- It is a porch of more than 3sq.m, more than 3m high, or less than 2m from the boundary of the highway.

In a Conservation Area or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty the controls are stricter, and in addition to the above, planning permission is required if:-

- Any house is extended by 50cu.m or 10% beyond the original (whichever is the greater).
- The work involves cladding and part of the exterior with stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles.
- Any alteration or addition to the existing roof is involved.

Also in a Conservation Area consent is required to demolish any building or part of a building, and consent is also required to remove or lop any trees.

Staplehurst

Parish Council

Summer Playscheme

The Playscheme has been very successful this year, with almost every day being fully booked (up to 60 children per session). We had a particularly good team of leaders and helpers, to whom we give our grateful thanks for their hard work and enthusiasm.

Activities included face painting, clay modelling, puppet making, t-shirt decorating, cardboard modelling and biscuit decorating. The children were able to take home many examples of their work and even the leaders were given some to take home!

We also had various visitors to entertain the children. The Hotfoot Playbus came every Wednesday and the Community Librarian visited on Thursdays for storytelling sessions. Our village policeman, PC Tim Stanley came along to talk to the children; Ps'arms Puppets entertained them one morning, as did Charlie Chuckle, the clown, on another day. Kent Wildlife Trust visited, using puppets to illustrate how to look after the environment, and Tomar Owls were there on another day. Tom Tyrrell from Tomar Owls brought along many of their owls, some of which the children were able to stroke or hold, and many children had their photo taken with an owl. The Playscheme finished with a visit from Kent Fire and Rescue (always popular, especially with small boys!) and party games to end the last morning.



Summer Activities

Sporting activities for the 8-18 year olds were also held during the summer. Two-hour sessions of Tennis, Basketball Skills and Rounders were held on various afternoons, run by professional sports coaches. Thanks to the sports coaches for the hard work, and also to our Village Warden, Chris Lomax, for helping with some of these activities. Other activities, such as golf, fishing, soccer and scuba diving were also available direct from the specialists within our parish.

Final Words

We are sure that the children and young people all had a wonderful time and hope to repeat the scheme again next summer. Thanks again to all those who helped, in whatever guise.

Finally, we would like to thank the Assistant Parish Clerk, Sue Lynch, who organised the whole scheme this year. She spent many long hours working on the events, and without her hard work, none of this would have been possible.

Quality Council St

Staplehurst has joined the few councils in Kent to have been awarded Quality Council Status.

It is intended to enable Parish Councils, whatever their size, to work more closely with others for the delivery of local services and improve the representation of the local community.

A great deal of hard work is involved as a Parish Council must meet clear criteria before submitting their application.

1. 80% of the council must have been elected.
2. You must have a qualified clerk with accredited qualification.
3. All councillors must attend meetings on a regular basis and the council meet at least six times a year with public participation.



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4. There must be an Annual Report
5. Accurate and transparent financial arrangements.
6. Formally adopted code of conduct
7. There must be communication with the Parish via a newsletter, the website, regular surgeries and consultation on planning issues, press reporting, information leaflets and questionnaires on local issues.

The accreditation as a Quality Council runs for four years with a three month period in which to re-apply or loose it.

Staplehurst Parish Council needs to consider what functions it might wish to see delegated from the Borough as Quality Council Status appears to be just the first step in the future modernisation of local government.

It also highlights how important the role of the Parish Clerk is and will be in being proactive towards the changes.

Quality Council Status is an acknowledgement of the hard work of both previous councils in laying the framework and the present members continuing hardwork and commitment.



Total Hosepipe Ban

Just to remind you that Mid Kent Water Company brought into force a total hosepipe ban from the beginning of August. (including the use of sprinklers).

My time in Staplehurst - PC Tim Stanley

It has been just over one year since I joined the Partnership in June 2004 and became the local officer for Staplehurst and Marden. There have been several problems for the village to overcome since then.

I inherited the ongoing situation with persons congregating outside the shops, being abusive to passers by and acting in a disorderly manner that was frightening to residents. This was resolved with robust policing from the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit in the short term. The parish council together with Maidstone Borough council (MBC) funding the CCTV outside the parade has assisted to maintain this as a peaceful shopping area.

Following on from this were problems with disorderly behaviour in the Pope Drive, Butchers Close area. The local residents made their feelings known by reporting each incident to the control room. This gave me the evidence I needed to support an application for a SWIFT camera. This is funded by MBC and operated by a Police Community Support Officer from the police station. Once installed the reported complaints stopped immediately.

An incident of note that springs to mind resulted in a large number of officers using the railway station car park as a rendezvous point. I received a number of excited calls wondering what was happening in the village. Fortunately it did not involve the village but the surrounding areas. However, "Kim and Gary's" burger van had a good day.

Recently the Mini-Moto craze hit Staplehurst. A Parish councillor recommended I publicised the legal status of these vehicles in the press and the Kent Police website. The KM kindly ran an article and I have had no further calls since! There is now a link to a clear and comprehensive Home Office article on the front page of the Kent Police website.

The summer holidays have passed so far with relative ease for the parish with only 9 substantive crimes reported since the end of July. However, there have been a number of worrying incidents involving persons practising their swing arm in the village by driving golf balls down roads and local parks. One such incident involved a golf ball narrowly missing a 22month old baby. This must stop before a serious injury results. In the meantime a number of properties have suffered damage.

Those young adults who enjoy golf but are unable to afford travel to and cost to play should contact Chris Lomax, KCC Community Warden who would be happy to hear from them. He may be able to arrange discounted rates/transport to the venue and so forth.

It is with some regret that I am now leaving as I have thoroughly enjoyed the 14 months service I have completed here as a local officer. I have delayed my departure until a replacement was found. PC Marc Pennicott is currently a local officer in Rochester and so is already experienced with working as a community officer. He will be receiving a thorough handover to ensure he is fully aware of all current issues when he joins the team on 25th August. I will be transferring to a Maidstone response team on 1st September 2005. His contact details remain the same: 01622 690690.

Village Caretaker

As the village caretaker, Charlie Samuel has been serving Staplehurst behind the scenes for nine years now. His role covers a diverse number of tasks. He looks after the Surrenden playing field by keeping it clean and tidy, as well as disposing of all the rubbish. He looks after our children by regularly checking the play area equipment no less than three times a week during the summer months and once a week during the winter. This involves filing a 31-point inspection report with the Parish Office each time. He also greases the equipment and conducts general maintenance every three months. On each visit, he helps to keep our village safe by ensuring that the CCTV equipment is working correctly. Moreover, he provides invaluable support to the Parish Council by doing all the odd jobs around Staplehurst. This includes painting bus stops, removing graffiti, trimming hedges, salting pathways during the snowy winter months, painting the bollards and seats in the parade, as well as other general repairs. He also tidies up after vandalism incidents and on occasion, liaising with the Village Warden and Parish Clerk. And as if this were not enough, he is also on hand to receive emergency callouts from Council Officers. In essence, he is our Man Friday, and for that we thank him.

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

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 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.