

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT
2010 - 2011

Staplehurst Parish Council

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Chairman's Annual Report 2010-2011

This has been an eventful year for our Parish. Our thanks go to the Police, the Fire and Rescue Services, KCC and all the voluntary services, following the dreadful fire in the High Street. The Parish Council has set up an Emergency Help Team which could prove invaluable if similar emergencies re-occur. When our only post office was temporarily closed, the Parish Council was active in contacting the Post Office's senior management. I should like to take the opportunity to thank our M.P. Helen Grant for taking this matter up on our behalf.



The full Council meets twice monthly. When the Localism Bill comes into effect, provision of services by the Council is likely to become increasingly important. Current services include street lighting, ownership of Jubilee and Surrenden Fields (the latter on a long lease) and management of the public toilets. These were successfully taken over at the beginning of this financial year. Councillors are involved in many areas affecting the Parish. To highlight three important issues: there is a strong demand for allotments in the Parish and we have set up a group to look at all possibilities. Residents should feel secure when visiting areas of the Parish; available options to deal with anti-social behaviour are being considered. Affordable housing and future housing development in the Parish is also an important issue. The Rural Settlement Group facilitated a survey of needs and residents' opinions. Particular thanks go to Councillor John Kelly.

We have an active Finance Group, which makes recommendations to the Council in respect of the Council's budget and Precept. The Precept calculation for 2011/12 has been affected by two issues. The first is the taking over of the running of the public toilets. The alternative was their closure by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC). The second was the initial decision by MBC to reduce and eventually abolish the grant for concurrent functions. This is given to rural parishes in recognition that these parishes provide services which, in town areas, are provided by MBC. The grant for 2010/11 was worth over £29,000 to Staplehurst Parish Council. Any significant reductions affect the precept calculation. We campaigned strongly with other rural parishes for MBC to review its proposal which MBC has agreed to do. We look forward to working with them to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties. Despite making cost savings and drawing on reserves, we have had to increase the Parish Precept if current services are to be maintained. However, the increase will be less than 10p per week for a Band D property.

Staplehurst Parish Council

Established 1894

As many know, the current Mayor of Maidstone is Councillor Eric Hotson, a Staplehurst resident. Our thanks are due to him as our County/Borough Councillor and to Borough Councillor Richard Lusty for the support they give to the Parish Council and to Staplehurst. Councillor Joan Buller and her husband Malcolm continue to do sterling work with Speed Watch, which is an important tool in regulating speeding through the village; their work is much appreciated. We also much appreciate the work of PC Marc Pennicott, PCSO Pete Gardner and Community Warden Chris Lomax; their presence and contributions are essential to the well-being of our village. Councillors Barry Franks, Angela Knowlden and Steve Smith have left this year. We welcomed Jim Frodsham, John Kelly and Rory Silkin to the Council. Assistant to the Clerk, Helen Warmington, resigned to take up full time study. We thank her for her work and wish her and all our departing Councillors all the very best for the future. Deborah Jenkins, our new assistant to the Clerk, is also Clerk to Frittenden Parish Council and her experience is proving very useful.

I should like to thank all Council Members and our Clerk Sue Bassett. My particular thanks go to Vice-Chairman Tom Burnham for his support and to Councillor Margaret Arger, Chairman of Planning. Margaret had been our Chairman for the previous 7 years; her advice and support have been invaluable.

We shall have the opportunity to reapply for Quality Status if we have a new Council that meets the criteria of having two thirds of its members elected. The 'Village Update', part of the criteria needed to achieve Quality Status, is important for communicating issues to the residents of this Parish. My thanks go to those who produce and contribute to it and to our dedicated volunteers who deliver it.

This is election year and in May 2011 we shall have a new Council. Parish Councils are the first rung on the democratic ladder. However, the Council can only reflect the views of its parishioners if they are freely given – for example, by letter, telephone, personal contact, email or attending Council meetings. We need to hear from you.

John Perry

Councillor Resignations during 2010 - 2011

Barry Franks and Angela Knowlden moved out of the Parish during 2010; they had been councillors for a number of years and their contributions are much missed. They and Steve Smith resigned during the year.

Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31st March 2011

INCOME	2010/2011
Parish Precept	73,500.00
MBC Concurrent Functions Grant	29,071.00
Other Project Grants	31,561.00
Sales MBC Garden sacks	227.00
Interest on investments	53.12
Christmas Lights Project donations	265.00
Village Centre Contingency	173.47
	<hr/>
	£134,850.59
	<hr/>
EXPENDITURE	
Caretaker wages, equipment & maintenance	2,078.02
Christmas Light Project	3,438.40
Churchyard maintenance	4,028.65
Donations	4,825.00
General Administration	55,950.37
Jubilee Sports Field & Sports Pavilion Project	5,674.55
Parish Street Lighting, Street Furniture, CCTV and repairs	5,520.08
Playscheme	1,114.00
Public Convenience Maintenance	8,571.39
Staple Drive Play Area	17,981.00
Staplehurst Partnership	903.17
Surrenden Playing Field	2,456.12
Youth Club (Maintenance, Lease and donation for Youth Worker employment)	3,525.37
	<hr/>
	£116,066.12
	<hr/>
Balance of Income over Expenditure	18,784.47
Balance brought forward from previous year	95,309.57
	<hr/>
	£114,094.04
	<hr/>

Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31st March 2011

LONG TERM ASSETS

None (see supporting statement below) 0.00

CURRENT ASSETS

PAYE overpayment	119.04	
VAT Recoverable	1,061.58	
Cash In Hand	120,056.88	£121,237.50

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accruals	(5,055.00)	
Creditors	(2,088.46)	£7,143.46
		<u>£114,094.04</u>

REPRESENTED BY:

GENERAL FUND 27,832.85

Ongoing Project Budgets:-

Allotment land purchase fund	20,000.00	
Surrenden Playing Field pathway	9,830.00	
Youth Forum/Detached Project	5,250.00	
Staplehurst Partnership Grant	3,750.00	
Jubilee Sports Pavilion Project	10,750.00	
Balance of underspends c/fwd	<u>20,051.62</u>	
		£69,631.62

RESERVES

Village Centre Contingency		16,629.57
		<u>£114,094.04</u>

Supporting Statement to the accounts

LONG TERM ASSETS

Assets have been treated as an expense item at the time of purchase for accounting purposes. As at 31.03.2011 the following assets were held:-

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Jubilee Field	Nil
Land north east of Bell Lane, Staplehurst	Nil
Lease purchase of Youth Club land from KCC	6,600

BUILDINGS

Jubilee Pavilion (insured replacement value)	500,000
Surrenden Pavilion (insured replacement value)	6,300

OTHER FIXED ASSETS

As listed on Fixed Asset Register 31.03.2011 held at The Parish Office	158,662
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The preceding two statements are summaries. Copies of the full Statement of Accounts are available from the Parish Office or can be downloaded from the Parish Council Website at www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk Staplehurst Parish Council accounts are audited quarterly by Iden Business Services and the Annual Audit Return is made to the Audit commission. The requisite Public Notice is given for electors to inspect the accounts annually.

Parish Councillors

John Perry - *Chairman*

I was honoured to be appointed Chairman in May 2010. I am a member of the Planning Committee and of the Finance, Policy and Rural Settlement Groups. I am closely involved with a number of other Parish facilities and projects important to the welfare of our community and represent SPC as a trustee of the Jubilee Field Management Committee. SPC continues to work closely with our Borough and County Councillors and our MP.



Tom Burnham - *Vice Chairman*

I was elected as Vice Chairman of the Council in May 2010, and I am also a member of the Planning Committee and of the Finance, Policy and Publicity & Website Groups. I am a regular commuter, and have attended meetings held by SouthEastern Railway and KCC to communicate the needs of Staplehurst's rail users. I believe that the Parish Council has a role in expressing the needs of users of Staplehurst station – the second busiest in Maidstone Borough.

Margaret Arger - *Chairman of the Planning Committee*

I would like to thank fellow Planning Committee members for their hard work over the year. I have also been a member of the Finance, Policy, Jubilee Field Management and Users, and Rural Settlement Groups, as well as of the team which has taken over and is managing the Bell Lane toilet facilities.



Bill Best

I have been active in Finance, Policy, Publicity & Website and Playscheme groups. I reviewed SPC's financial regulations, Standing Orders and electricity supply contracts. I worked with others to improve the Website and encourage its wider use. I considered SPC's liability for Forum postings. Maintenance issues for Jubilee and Surrenden Playing Fields have been part of my remit.

Joan Buller

I have served as a Staplehurst Parish Councillor for 28 years. I am a member of the Planning Committee, Allotment, Rural Settlement, Playscheme, Publicity & Website Groups and the Staplehurst Emergency Help Team. I am an Editor of the Village Update and help organise its distribution. I am Parish Speed Watch Liaison Councillor and link with Neighbourhood Watch. I am working with Age Concern on the new Staplehurst Community Hub. I regularly walk in Staplehurst and meet with residents so as to be aware of current issues.



Parish Councillors



Paul Butcher

I am a member of the Planning Committee and represent the Council on various groups including the Kent Association of Local Councils, Police Liaison, Neighbourhood Forum and SEHT. As Chairman of the Youth Club I take an active interest in its success including helping with fund-raising.

Jenny Fairfax

I have appreciated working with colleagues on the Planning Committee, as well as several projects and groups.



Jim Frodsham

I joined the Allotment Group and the Publicity & Website Group, where I have helped with the improvement of SPC's website.

John Kelly

I have led the work of the Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group for its Housing Survey. I have helped prepare its Development Contributions document and monitored progress on the Local Development Framework. I am a member of the Planning Committee, Allotment and Publicity & Website Groups. I have helped with the improvement of SPC's website.



Paul Kelly

I am a member of the Planning Committee, the Finance, Rural Settlement and Policy Groups. I helped with the new Staple Drive Play area. I represent the Council on the Village Centre Management and Youth Club committees. As the lead Councillor for the Bell Lane Toilets project, I have ensured the facilities are well run. With help from fellow Councillors, two flower tubs were installed at Bell Lane, which I now maintain.

Parish Councillors



Roger Munn

I have represented the Parish Council on the Jubilee Sports Field Management, Headcorn Aerodrome and Churchyard Liaison committees as well as being a member of the Allotment Group, where I have tried to use my local knowledge as a farmer to help find suitable land for allotments.

John Reardon

As a member of the Publicity and Website Group, I have been involved with the upgrading of the Parish Council website. I have provided technical advice on parish IT and CCTV issues. I helped with the new Staple Drive Play Area. I am liaison Councillor with Staplehurst School and Kent Highways.



Matt Sankey

I have been a member of the Playscheme group, the team working on the Bell Lane Toilets, and a Parish Council representative for the Kent Association of Local Councils Area Committee, the Police/Parish Liaison Committee, and for the U-14 Youth Club.

Rory Silkin

I have helped with the proposal to register Church Green as a Village Green, represented the Council on the Staplehurst Patients' Participation Group and chair the Staplehurst Emergency Help Team.



Peter Spearink

I am a member of the Planning Committee, the Policy Group, and Staplehurst Emergency Help Team. I am co-operating with Age UK in setting up the new Community Hub Scheme in Staplehurst. I have attended and reported on numerous conferences and meetings on behalf of the Parish. I am the SPC Representative for Sobell Lodge. I continue to represent the parish at the Local Transport Forum in Hawkhurst, for better transport facilities in rural areas. I represent SPC in contacts with Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

Parish Clerk's Annual Report

The joy in my work as Parish Clerk are that no two days are ever the same and I have the opportunity to work and meet with some very interesting people. The regular Council meetings and Parish Office are the public hubs of the Council's activities. Members of the public are welcome to attend and listen to the Council meetings and opportunities are given before and after Council business for residents to discuss or raise issues with Councillors. Planning Applications can be viewed at the Parish Office (as well as online) and garden sacks purchased. A Parish Councillor also attends the surgeries at Staplehurst Library 10:00-Noon on last Saturdays monthly to speak with local residents.

The Parish Clerk and Assistant are available during public opening hours to help and advise residents on a wide variety of local and Council issues. However, a majority of work is now conducted by email and website. All Council Minutes, Agendas, reports, policies, links and useful local information can be found at www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Since May 2010 four people were co-opted to fill Councillor vacancies; Jenny Fairfax, Jim Frodsham, John Kelly and Rory Silkin. Deborah Jenkins (also Clerk to Frittenden Parish Council) was appointed as Assistant to Clerk to replace Helen Warmington. May 2011 is the start of a new four-year term for the Council. Strenuous efforts (public meeting and much publicity) were made by this Council to ensure a contested election, but this was not to be. The new Council term will begin with one vacancy to be filled.

The past year has been as busy as ever for this Council which took on the responsibility for maintaining and cleaning Bell Lane Toilets, installing a new play area at Staple Drive, flower tubs and improvements to two Bus Shelters. In addition, several focus groups worked diligently to maintain and improve the Website, monitor and manage the Council's budget, review policies and electricity suppliers, search for allotment land, carry out and publish the Housing Survey and establish an Emergency Help Team. Individual Councillors have also taken on the responsibility of liaising with many organisations and voluntary groups working within or supporting the local community. Improvements to highways, drainage and cleansing have also been pushed by Councillors to ensure action is taken by the responsible higher authorities.

The provision of Summer Playscheme and Christmas Light display are also a regular feature of this Council's work, as well as the maintenance of Surrenden Playing Field, Parish Street lighting, street furniture, playground equipment and the skatepark. Quarterly copies of the Village Update were distributed by post and volunteers to every household in the Parish (2,485) together with a number of local businesses. The Speed Watch equipment is regularly used to educate drivers to keep within speed limits.

Committee Reports

Amenities Committee – considered issues including the provision of allotments, antisocial behaviour and the Parish Council website. During the year it was agreed that, as almost all Councillors were members of the Committee, this Committee would be suspended for an experimental period until May 2011, and a second Full Council meeting would be held each month, dealing primarily with Amenities matters. The new Council will decide whether to continue with this arrangement, or whether to return to a separate Amenities Committee.

Tom Burnham

Planning Committee – continues to express concerns regarding the different view the Planning Officer holds on certain applications from that of this Committee. Committee members include their local knowledge in their comments and will often ask for an application to go to Development Control meetings at Maidstone Town Hall to allow neighbours to have their say. Development Control is often sympathetic, but unable to support us on clear planning grounds. We wait for further news on the proposed golf course development. We recommended refusal for the development at Parisfield, Headcorn Road and the proposed 5 properties in the grounds of Surrenden Manor. The Committee has requested written confirmation from Highways that they have viewed the sites as their response on applications often appears lacking in content. I would like to thank the Planning Committee members for their diligence and careful consideration of all planning matters.

Margaret Arger

Parish Facilities & Projects

Alcohol Control Zone – this group was set up to review the consumption of alcohol in public places in the Parish, particularly by under-age drinkers, and associated anti-social behaviour. A number of meetings have taken place with MBC, Trading Standards, the Police Community Support Officer and the Community Warden. All evidence of incidents involving public order issues is recorded as an essential first step to obtaining an alcohol control zoning or bye-law. A Pole Cat security camera, which is very flexible, will be installed for a trial period. This trial will be carefully monitored.

Allotments Group – has continued to search, in vain, for land to provide much-needed allotments in the Parish. Landowners have been approached without success. If you know of any possible areas please contact the Parish Council.

Bell Lane Toilets and Planters – SPC has taken over responsibility for the Bell Lane toilets from MBC. Minor additions have been made and further refurbishments are planned. 4 Parish Councillors helped with siting two large flower tubs nearby. These have been painted, planted and are currently maintained by a Councillor.

Bus Shelters & Memorial Seats – clear sides have been fitted to two of the Parish Council's northbound shelters, near Pinnock Lane and at Chestnut Avenue. The shelters will be repainted soon. KCC awarded SPC a 50% grant and the Mayor, Cllr. Eric Hotson, gave a contribution from his Borough Member's fund. Extra notice boards for the use of Staplehurst groups have been placed at the shelters. A third memorial seat has been placed at the bus stop near Chestnut Avenue, paid for by John Briffa in memory of his wife "Sandy". It will be maintained by the Parish Council.

Emergency Help Team – with the backing of the Parish Council, this team of volunteers co-ordinates details of any voluntary help available in a major emergency. Information is held in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The Team meets regularly to work on producing the Staplehurst Emergency Plan and train for future emergencies.

Parish Facilities & Projects

Finance Group – makes recommendations to full Council on expenditure and prepares the annual budget and precept requirement. Annually it reviews the Asset Register, Risk Assessment and Financial Regulations, together with other reviews, to ensure best practice and careful control of public money. Regular reports are received from the Internal Auditor as part of the internal control process. A review of the internal audit function and its effectiveness takes place annually.

Jubilee Sports Field – is owned by the Parish. It has a number of football pitches, a skate park and a modern sports pavilion. The Jubilee Field Management Group manages these facilities; SPC is represented on this Group. Several of those who use the skate park raised money towards the re-painting of its skating surface; this was commendable and underlines the strong community spirit in our Parish. In conjunction with the JFMG, the Parish Council is reviewing the drainage at Jubilee Field.

Playscheme – with the approval and overall supervision of MBC, SPC worked with an independent company, PlayPlace, to run the scheme. Play activities were led by Jensie Shepherd, an experienced teacher and Play Manager, and other staff. They worked hard to offer enjoyable and safe activities for 3 weeks in August.

Policy Group – was established to review current Council policies, practices and procedures and, where appropriate, instigate new ones. This year it has taken on the new role of reviewing possible tasks and projects that the Council could undertake. The Group makes recommendations to the full Council for consideration and approval.

Publicity & Website Group – has conducted a major review of the Parish Council's website to improve the facility and encourage its wider use in the community. There was a prolonged exercise to check SPC's liability for postings on the Forum. The Group is responsible for the Village Update.

Parish Facilities & Projects

Rural Settlement Group – formed of residents and Staplehurst Parish Councillors, the group considers development in the parish and reports to the Parish Council. Working with MBC and Action with Communities in Rural Kent, it has published a Housing Survey in February 2011. The group is looking at how financial contributions from developers within the Parish could be used to benefit Staplehurst and is beginning work on a Parish Plan. It is hoped the group's work will influence any future development in Staplehurst.

Speed Watch – Volunteers have been deployed in Staplehurst throughout the year with the Speed Watch equipment. 118 vehicles had their details recorded in 2010. Regular offenders' details are sent to the Police for the issue of warning letters. An active part was taken in the widely reported Speed Watch "All Out Day" across Mid-Kent. Staplehurst teams are now trying to do the same at least once a month. More volunteers are needed. If you are interested, please contact the Parish Office.

Staple Drive Play Area - with a grant from MBC which matched the funds provided by SPC, this play area has been provided with new equipment meeting current safety standards, while the existing swings have been upgraded.

Village Green Registration - discussions with the landowner at Church Green continue; SPC is carefully considering its options and potential responsibilities. Thanks to resident Simon Green for his continued commitment to this work.

Youth Club – SPC agreed to fund the employment of a paid youth worker, Mike King. Under his leadership, the Club has welcomed new members and is thriving.

Council Members

at 31st March 2011

This report is a review of the Council year 2010 - 2011. Details of current Councillors at the time this Report is issued can be found on the Staplehurst Parish Council website, in the Summer 2011 Village Update or from the Parish Office.

Member of Parliament HELEN GRANT 01622 769898
Kent County Councillor ERIC HOTSON 892312
Maidstone Borough Councillor ERIC HOTSON 892312
Maidstone Borough Councillor RICHARD LUSTY 891353

–ooOoo–

Community Police PC MARC PENNICOTT 07980 770575
Police Community Support Officer PETE GARDNER 07772 226134
Community Warden CHRIS LOMAX 07811 271254

–ooOoo–

Parish Clerk Mrs J SUSAN BASSETT 01580 891761
Parish Council Mobile for Emergencies only 07539 692588
Assistant to Parish Clerk
To September 2010 Mrs HELEN WARMINGTON
From September 2010 Mrs DEBORAH JENKINS 01580 891761

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Staplehurst, Tonbridge, Kent. TN12 0BJ
Parish Office Email: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk
Parish Website: www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Staplehurst Parish Office is open to the public from 0900-1300 Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and on Thursdays by appointment.

Planning application papers and other Council documents can be viewed at the Parish Office on request; most are also now available online.

MBC garden waste sacks can be purchased at the Parish Office.



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