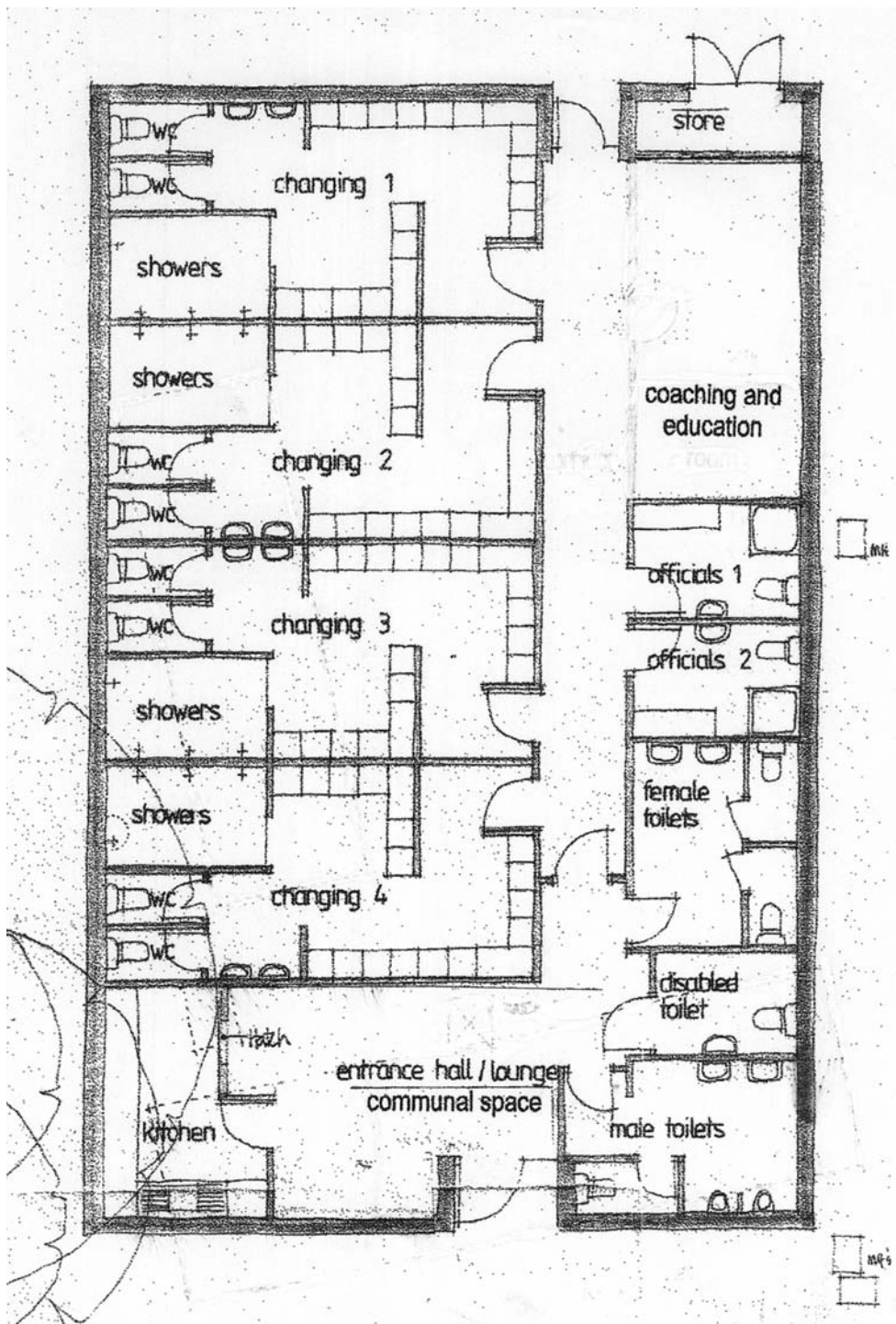




www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT
2008 - 2009



Internal layout of the new Sports Changing Rooms at Jubilee Playing Field

Staplehurst Parish Council

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Staplehurst Parish Council

Established 1894

Staplehurst Parish Council represents an electorate of 4,555 people living within 2,317 dwellings. The population census figure recorded in 2001 was 6,003.

Staplehurst Parish Council has 15 Councillors. Thirteen Councillors stood for election in May 2007 and two persons were co-opted to fill the vacancies shortly thereafter. During the Spring of 2009 two Councillors resigned and the vacancies were filled by co-option in March. One further Councillor resigned in March, which was filled by co-option in April. All Councillors who are in post at the May 2011 election will stand down and offer themselves for re-election (if they wish) together with anyone else who also wishes to join the Council.

Full Council meets monthly on third Mondays at 8 p.m. in the South Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre. The Planning committee meets on the first and third Mondays at 7 p.m. followed by the Amenities committee at 8 p.m. Finance Committee meets quarterly by arrangement.

In addition to membership of the committees, many parish councillors also work within sub-committees on specific areas of activity and projects. In 2008 sub-committees included Website and Publicity, Jubilee Sports field, Staplehurst Partnership & Youth Activities Project. Sub committees include parishioners in an advisory and partnership capacity but have no spending powers or direct influence on the Parish Council. They are extremely useful for gathering local information to progress projects which have wide community benefit and support. Parish Councillors also represent the Parish Council on a variety of outside bodies for good liaison and communication within the community.

The Parish Office is open to the public four mornings a week (not on Thursdays) for enquiries, sales of MBC green sacks and other council-related issues between 9-11 a.m. Planning application papers and other Council documents can be viewed on request. Staplehurst Parish Council adopted Standing Orders in 2002 and updated its Financial Regulations during 2008. Having obtained Quality Status in July 2005, an application for reaccreditation is envisaged in 2009.

Chairman's Annual Report 2008-2009

Staplehurst Parish Council has Quality Status; reaccreditation is due this year. Though thus far this has not brought noticeable benefits, we consider it is important to have a council of quality, highlighting the needs and wishes of the community. The Village Update is part of the process; thanks to all who contribute to it, including distributors. I am sorry to report the resignations of Councillors Collins, Stewart and Wood; we welcome Councillors Best, Fairfax and Sankey. We wish to thank our MP, Anne Widdicombe; our County/Borough Councillor, Eric Hotson and Borough Councillor Richard Lusty, for their active and continuing support of Staplehurst.

Councillor Joan Buller has been a Staplehurst Parish Councillor for 26 years. She has been on the finance, planning and publicity committees and is actively involved in many aspects of parish life. Joan and Malcolm Buller lead proactively with the Speedwatch scheme in our determination to deal with speeding vehicles. Our thanks to them and all the volunteers. Anyone willing to do the training and provide more times of cover would be welcomed.

The Planning committee, led by Councillor Green, carefully considers applications and bases its recommendations on planning guidance and regulations. Where planning issues are contentious, this is especially important; the Council's views are actively represented, including at Town Hall meetings.

David Henley of ZuLogic has helped revitalise the Website; thanks to him and the website group.

Policing is always a concern. Although we must remain vigilant, we are pleased with the good service provided by Pete Gardner, Chris Lomax and PC Marc Pennicott and by the reduction in crime numbers.

The Summer Play Scheme was again a success and we look forward to another successful one in 2009. We are delighted with the work Sue Bassett, the Clerk and Maria Norris, the Assistant Clerk, put into this and their other important contributions to the Parish Council.

Residents are encouraged to come to council meetings and listen to Councillor discussions. There is always an opportunity for residents to express opinions. In closing I would like to thank Councillors for their continued hard work and commitment to Staplehurst.

Margaret Arger

Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31st March 2009

INCOME

2008/2009

Deposit Interest	2,456.63
Grant and Donations towards Christmas Lights	255.00
MBC Concurrent Functions Grant	29,280.00
MBC Grant for Playscheme and Playscheme fees	3,532.76
Other Grants for new projects	222,739.00
Parish Precept	69,000.00
Sales, miscellaneous fees and donations	5,576.50
VC contingency loan interest on deposit a/c	595.57

£333,435.46

EXPENDITURE

Caretakers' wages & equipment	3,363.88
CCTV maintenance and repairs	667.45
Christmas Lights 2008	2,144.75
Churchyard maintenance	4,719.40
Donations to community groups	2,100.63
General administration	61,514.24
Jubilee New Build Project	184,695.18
Jubilee Sports Field maintenance	3,019.70
New Burial area project & Memorial seats	4,563.00
Parish Street Lighting & street furniture	4,127.46
Playscheme 2008 & Youth Activities Project 2008	6,135.00
Staplehurst Partnership	220.00
Surrenden Playing field maintenance	4,742.84
Youth Club Lease and maintenance	962.50

£282,976.03

Balance of Expenditure over Income	(50,459.43)
Balance brought forward from previous year	148,705.87

£199,165.30

Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31st March 2009

LONG TERM ASSETS

None

CURRENT ASSETS

VAT Recoverable	13,135.48
Cash In Hand	189,479.75
	<u>£202,615.23</u>

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Uncleared cheques at year end	<u>- 3,449.93</u>
	<u>£199,165.30</u>

REPRESENTED BY:

General Fund	28,225.35
Village Centre Contingency	16,284.45
Ongoing Project Reserves:	
Detached Youth Project	7,500.00
Staplehurst Partnership Grant	1,200.75
Jubilee Sports Project	104,739.00
Other reserves/underspends c/fwd	41,215.75
	<u>£199,165.30</u>

The preceding two statements are summaries of the accounts. Copies of the full Statement of Accounts will be made available on the Parish Council Website at www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk and paper copies available from Staplehurst Parish Council Office.

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

Parish Councillors regularly attend meetings of individual committees as well as monthly Full Council and public surgeries at the Library. In addition, they give their time to represent the Council in a variety of ways on outside groups and internal project or focus groups:-

Margaret Arger - Chairman

I am honoured to have served as Chairman of the Parish Council for another year which means I am also ex-officio member of and attend every Council committee meeting. I have regular weekly meetings with the Clerk to make sure I keep aware of developing issues. I have attended Chairmanship Training, and seminars and meetings on a variety of issues relevant to the parish. This Council has continued to work to make sure Staplehurst moves forward in a positive and constructive manner to the benefit of our community. I am particularly pleased to see the completion of the Jubilee Sports Project with valuable help from the Football Foundation and supportive partners.



John Perry - Vice Chairman (from March 2009)

As a member of the Amenities, Planning & Finance committees, I have been able to use my professional expertise to research and advise on possible new initiatives. These include Participatory Budgeting strategy, new approaches for the Council's revenue and capital expenditure and assisting with the adoption of the Freedom of Information Act. I have also worked on the Jubilee Field Sports Project, its constitution and management arrangements. I have attended a finance seminar and liaised with the internal auditor.

Wendy Green - Chairman of the Planning Committee

I have continued to research, monitor and make representations about parish planning applications and issues. I attend Development Control meetings to emphasise the recommendations of the planning committee. On behalf of the parish, I have taken a close interest in Gypsy and Traveller Site allocation issues within the Borough. I have helped with the continuing search for allotment sites and worked towards the handover of the new burial ground extension to the Parish Church.



Angela Knowlden - Chairman of the Amenities Committee

As Chairman of the Amenities Committee it has been a pleasure to lead such a dedicated team of Councillors this past year. In addition to the several projects mentioned on page 12, I have worked with the Chairman on staff appraisals. I have taken an active interest in parking and highway issues, playscheme, youth activities and have attended many meetings.

Parish Councillors

Joan Buller - *Member of the Planning Committee*

I have served this Council for 26 years with a particular interest in planning issues. I am also involved with the Staplehurst Partnership, Website and Publicity Group. I help to proof-read the draft Village Updates. My role as the Parish Speedwatch Liaison Councillor is detailed later in this report. I serve as link Councillor with the Neighbourhood Watch Team for which I am Treasurer.



Tom Burnham - *Member of the Planning & Amenities Committees*

I have represented the Parish Council at meetings with Network Rail about improved accessibility at Staplehurst Station through the lift bridge project. I have tried to keep the Council and parishioners informed through detailed reports on the difficulties and delays being experienced. I have researched the Freedom of Information Act and assisted Councillor Perry in this.

Paul Butcher - *Member of the Amenities Committee*

I represent the Parish on the Kent Association of Local Councils and at Parish/Police Liaison meetings. I have attended quarterly liaison meetings with the Parish Church to ensure the maintenance of the churchyard is up to standard. I have been liaising with KCC Youth Worker, Natalie Penfold and Chris Lomax, Community Warden to improve the Youth Club.



Barry Franks - *Member of the Amenities Committee*

My close involvement with the Jubilee Sports Project has taken a great deal of negotiation. In addition to planning for the future management of the building, I have attended regular site meetings with the contractors and liaised with the footballers. I have also represented the Parish on a number of outside bodies. These include the local Police Forum, Kent Association of Local Councils, Maidstone Traffic Management Group and the Staplehurst Partnership.

Paul Kelly - *Member of the Planning Committee*

During 2008/2009 I was a nominated Councillor Representative on the Carnival & Fete Committee, Staplehurst Village Centre Trust and Staplehurst Youth Club. Having sat on the Planning Committee for many years and seeing copious amounts of applications, both large and small, I intend to move my verve to Amenities 2009/2010!



Parish Councillors



Roger Munn - *Member of the Amenities Committee*

As a Council representative on the Churchyard Liaison Committee, I have been continuing to monitor the upkeep of the churchyard at All Saints, to ensure a high standard is maintained. I represented the Parish Council on the Headcorn Aerodrome Committee, which dealt with issues of noise, complaints and usage of the airport that might affect residents of Staplehurst. I then reported these back to the Council.

John Reardon - *Member of the Amenities Committee*

I am an active member of the Website and Publicity Group. I have been involved especially in the development and upgrading of the Parish Council Website. I have been able to provide technical advice on IT issues to assist the smoother running of the Parish Office. I regularly monitor the CCTV equipment at Surrenden Playing field.



Peter Spearink - *Member of the Planning and Amenities committees*

I have represented the council on the Hawkhurst Transport Forum and taken an active interest in highways and disabled issues, including helping to set up the Staplehurst Access Group. I represent the Council at the McCabe Day Centre and Sobell Lodge. I have been a member of the Website and Publicity Group.

Councillor resignations and co-options during Spring 2009

Georgie Collins, John Stewart and Don Wood resigned during 2009 for a variety of personal reasons. Each made a valuable contribution to the Council. Georgie was a member of both Planning and Amenities Committees and gave much valuable legal advice on the allotments issue. John was Vice Chairman as well as Editor of the Village Update and the Annual Report. Don was a member of the Amenities Committee and helped with the Jubilee Sports Project.

William (Bill) Best, Jenny Fairfax and Matthew (Matt) Sankey were co-opted by the Parish Council in the absence of a request for an election to fill the vacancies. Bill is interested in developing youth opportunities and promoting the commercial prospects of Staplehurst. Jenny, as a new resident, looks forward to learning how parishioners' views can continue to be represented through the Parish Council. Matt believes that young residents especially should have access to constructive and enriching experiences.



Georgie Collins



John Stewart



Don Wood



Bill Best



Jenny Fairfax



Matt Sankey

Parish Clerk's Annual Report

2008/2009 as expected has been another busy year for the Clerk and Assistant Clerk. The building of the football changing facility at Jubilee Sports Field is the biggest project in the history of Staplehurst Parish Council. Now nearing completion, it has been an interesting challenge for us all. There has been much liaison amongst the footballers, builders, grant providers and Councillors themselves to ensure the building is just what everyone expects it to be. For a detailed write up, see Page 13 herein.

The administrative work by the Parish Office is now achieved mainly through the internet via emails and website information. Although we are still a long way off becoming a paperless office, communication amongst parishioners, Councillors and Parish Office has become very rapid. However, formal meetings still need to be held in public and minutes from these are usually posted on the website within 5 days. Forum postings on the website continue to be monitored by the Parish Office in accordance with the adopted guidelines. The quarterly Village Update was delivered to all homes in the parish by volunteers and posted to outlying areas. The website received a total revamp and relaunch in March which meant the Parish Office can now more easily and quickly keep the website up to date.

In addition to the background work needed to service every Council meeting and then put into place the decisions reached, the Parish Office was kept busy throughout the year. As well as the Jubilee Project, the Clerk and Assistant Clerk organised Playscheme, Christmas Lights display, continuing search for allotment land, Youth Activities Project, completion of the burial area works, memorial seat installations and a myriad of other issues raised by members of the public, Councillors and other authorities.



Sue Bassett
Parish Clerk



Maria Norris
Assistant Clerk

Committee Reports

Amenities Committee – The Jubilee Sports Changing Rooms was the major project in front of this committee. Other projects were also achieved; Christmas lights; planning and installation of two memorial benches at the north end of the High Street and completion of the extension to the burial ground at All Saints Church. This committee was constantly in touch with KCC and MBC on highways matters. It has been specifically looking at accessibility for less-able residents and parking problems within the parish. Although it still hopes to see some improvements, some schemes have been put on hold by Kent Highways. There is still no new home for allotments; any resident or farmer who may have suitable land for lease or purchase, please contact the Clerk. As Chairman of the Amenities Committee, it has been a pleasure to lead such a dedicated team of Councillors.

Finance Committee – This committee meets quarterly and has the responsibility to monitor the Council's financial affairs and make recommendations to Full Council for expenditure and setting the annual parish precept. It also reviews the Asset Register, Risk Assessment and Financial Regulations. The internal and external audit of the Council's finances are also scrutinised by this committee.

Planning Committee – This committee monitors all applications to check that planning guidelines and policy are followed and makes recommendations accordingly. There were 50 full planning applications; 2 retrospective; 6 listed building; 3 certificates of lawfulness; 4 variations of condition; 10 changes of use; and 8 tree works in the Conservation area. In addition there were 3 appeals, two of which were dismissed and 1 upheld. 16 enforcement notices were issued, of which 6 were not proceeded with, 5 were resolved and 5 are ongoing. MBC agreed with SPC recommendations in 54 decisions and disagreed in 11. Larger applications included 2 in the Lodge Road Industrial area; the development of Fir Tree Close by Maidstone Housing Trust; 62 additional bedrooms at Iden Manor Nursing Home, and an extension at Sobell Lodge. As Chairman of the Planning Committee, I thank members for their careful and diligent consideration of all matters.

Parish Facilities & Projects

Jubilee Changing Rooms Project – The Football Foundation £390,000 award was granted and work began in October 2008 to build the new sports pavilion at Jubilee Sports Field in Headcorn Road, Staplehurst. Construction works were thwarted by very bad weather throughout the winter causing delays, but the building will be ready for use at the start of the next football season. In the autumn, planting will begin on the landscaping scheme drawn up by Councillor Wendy Green.

Her Worship the Mayor of Maidstone, Councillor Denise Joy, officially opened the building in May 2009. The building looked pristine. The Football Clubs had helped to tidy the site and a team from Blantyre House had smartened up the skatepark. Mr Paul Dolan of the Kent County Football Association said “I know first-hand the hard work that has gone on behind the scenes by the Football Clubs and the Parish Council to make this dream a reality. I warmly congratulate everyone involved in the project which will considerably benefit football in Staplehurst for many years to come.”

This new sports pavilion and improved facilities are the culmination of many years’ work by Staplehurst Parish Council in partnership with Staplehurst Monarchs and Staplehurst & Monarchs United Football Clubs. In addition to the Football Foundation providing major funding support, Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Staplehurst Parish Council, the Football Clubs and Staplehurst Guide Centre all contributed partnership funding to reach the £500,000 project cost. Councillor Barry Franks has been the king pin of this whole project.

Staplehurst Monarchs Club Development Officer Nigel Dawson stated: “This is a major milestone for our village football clubs, but more importantly secures the future development of football in Staplehurst. The new facilities will allow our senior teams to return to the village and provide sports education for local boys and girls. This project will firmly place Staplehurst football back on map where the true winners will be the local community. Staplehurst Monarchs and Staplehurst & Monarchs United can now follow their grass roots development plan aimed to stem the decline in 11v11 football”.



FootballFoundation
football's biggest supporter

Parish Facilities & Projects

Allotments – Searches for suitable land have not yet resulted in the re-establishment of allotments in the parish. The number of potential allotment holders grew and Councillors have continued to explore solutions.

Burial ground extension – A pathway was laid and new gates installed to the new area of the burial ground. This project is now ready to hand over to the Church Authorities.

Hawkhurst Transport Forum, on which Councillor Peter Spearink represents the Parish, successfully lobbies to get bus service improvements.

Parish Caretaker – Les Reeves works hard to keep the parish tidy. He collects copious amounts of litter, regularly inspects and maintains the play equipment and reports on any damage, so that repairs can be carried out.

Playscheme 2008 – Another successful Playscheme ran in August with most days fully booked. A wide variety of activities were set up by the team of 8 staff headed up by our experienced Play Manager, Jensie Shepherd. Playscheme staff team worked hard to ensure all children had an enjoyable and safe environment in which to play and socialise. A similar scheme is being prepared for 2009.

Sobell Cheshire Home and Staplehurst Access Group - The current main aim of the group is to improve access for the disabled.

Speedwatch - Volunteers have been monitoring the speeds of traffic in Staplehurst with the Speed Watch equipment throughout the year. The majority of drivers are keeping to the speed limits, but those who exceed the thresholds are sent warning letters by the Police. These thresholds have recently been reduced and a large increase in the number of vehicles recorded is expected. Regular training for new volunteers is carried out by the police. The scheme's success is thanks to volunteers; more volunteers equal a reduction in traffic speed through Staplehurst. Anyone interested should please contact the Parish Office.

Staplehurst Partnership – Several Parish Councillors have been working alongside local volunteers. An online survey was carried out during 2008, which provided detail and statistics to underpin all kinds of project grant applications. Grant funding is attainable if suitable projects are drawn up and this will not happen without action by Staplehurst residents.

Council Members

at 31st March 2009

MARGARET ARGER – Chairman	07857 242826
JOHN PERRY – Vice Chairman	895189
WENDY GREEN – Planning Chairman & Finance cttee	891607
ANGELA KNOWLDEN – Amenities Chairman & Finance cttee	890639
WILLIAM BEST – Planning & Amenities	07956 202120
JOAN BULLER – Planning committee member.....	892746
TOM BURNHAM – Planning & Amenities	890338
PAUL BUTCHER – Amenities committee member.....	Ex. Dir.
JENNY FAIRFAX – Planning & Amenities.....	893489
BARRY FRANKS – Amenities committee member	891514
PAUL KELLY – Planning committee member	892700
ROGER MUNN – Amenities committee member.....	891861
JOHN REARDON – Amenities committee member	07802 231692
PETER SPEARINK – Planning & Amenities	891015
MATTHEW SANKEY – Planning & Amenities	Ex. Dir.

–ooOoo–

Member of Parliament ANN WIDDECOMBE	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
Assistant Parish Clerk Mrs MARIA NORRIS	01580 891761



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