

# STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

2009-2010



[www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk](http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk)

# Staplehurst Parish Council

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## Chairman's Annual Report 2009-2010

As Chairman of your Parish Council for the last 12 months, I would like to present a picture of the activities of your 15 member Council. It meets on the third Monday of the month. It deals with issues arising from the wide range of correspondence sent to the Clerk and from the two Planning committee meetings each month and the monthly Amenities meeting. Recommendations from other Council-led groups are considered. These include Publicity & Website, Finance and Policies & Procedures. Reports on projects such as the Jubilee Sports Field and Pavilion and the Staple Drive Play are given, as well as feedback from the many extra meetings members attend in their own time to present the collective viewpoint as representatives of the Parish Council. This highlights the commitment councillors have to making sure Staplehurst has a voice in the decision-making process.

Our thanks and good wishes for a long and happy retirement go to Ann Widdecombe, our outgoing MP. We welcome as our new MP Helen Grant and have written to her to acknowledge her role and invite her to our Christmas meeting! Congratulations to Borough Councillor Hotson on his re-election; we wish him, with his wife, a successful year as Mayor. Thanks are due both to him as our County/Borough Councillor and to Borough Councillor Richard Lusty for their active support of Staplehurst. As Chairman of MBC's Planning, Richard has been supportive and with his monthly surgeries has been able to give advice and support to those with a selection of issues and concerns. Joan and Malcolm Buller continue to do sterling work with Speed Watch which we much appreciate, as we do our police cover provided by PC Marc Pennicott, PCSO Pete Gardner and Community Warden Chris Lomax.

Since becoming the second parish in the borough of Maidstone to achieve Quality Council Status, we had one meeting with Boxley and MBC to discuss what benefits this might bring to our working relationship. Nothing came of that and this year we lost our 'Q' status solely due to having insufficient elected councillors. Our elected members dropped further when with regret both Cllrs. Green and Franks resigned. We greatly miss Cllr. Green's planning expertise and Cllr. Franks for his unstinting commitment to the Jubilee Field project, without which I doubt this project would have succeeded.

We were sorry to lose Maria Norris, the Assistant Clerk. We welcomed Helen Warmington as the Assistant to the Clerk. I am also sorry to report two further councillors have stepped down recently – Cllrs. Fairfax and Smith. However, Jenny Fairfax will continue to help with producing the Annual Report and the Village Update.

## Chairman's Annual Report 2009-2010

The Village Update was part of meeting the criteria for Quality Council status and we regard it as important that we continue to meet the requirements and so enable the Council duly elected in 2011 to apply for Quality Status. Thanks go to those who contribute to the Update and to those who deliver it and make sure every house and business in the parish receives a copy.

We again ran a successful Playscheme last August. Councillors have put in sterling work over the last year to negotiate taking on the responsibility for the Bell Lane toilets which MBC no longer wished to provide as a facility. We will be monitoring over a 3 month period how this is managed.

My thanks as always go to all council members who as volunteers give of their time above and beyond the call of duty. In particular, my sincere thanks go to the Vice Chairman, John Perry. I continue to be indebted to the Clerk for her unstinting support over the last 7 years whilst I have been Chairman.

This Council is entering its final year in office and during the next 12 months, I hope you will come and see what is involved – perhaps some of you with a view to standing for election next year. A parish council can only express the views of the parishioners if they are given; this means the views of all those people who do not use The Forum but whom we meet at the monthly surgery held by Borough Councillor Lusty or in the street. You need to tell us what you would like to see happen here, whether it is a growth in housing, a supermarket, cycle paths, allotments, play areas, policing, or highway issues. If you don't tell us then we can only assume!

*Margaret Arger*

## Councillor Resignations during 2009 - 2010

Wendy Green reluctantly resigned during 2009 because she moved away from Staplehurst. She was an experienced and hard-working Chairman of the Planning committee and her knowledge was invaluable and is very much missed.



# Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31st March 2010

	<b>2009/2010</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	
Parish Precept	70,000.00
MBC Concurrent Functions Grant	29,470.00
Other Project Grants	222,961.00
MBC Playscheme, Summer Activities Grant & fees	4,275.62
Sales, miscellaneous fees & donations	99.00
Interest on investments	55.61
Christmas Lights Project donations	0.00
Jubilee Sports	0.00
Skaters fund-raising, deposit interest and donations	0.00
Village Centre Contingency	171.65
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<u>327,032.88</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
Caretaker wages, equipment & maintenance	1,933.88
Christmas Light Project	5,236.75
Churchyard maintenance	5,483.94
Donations (09/10 to BTCV, CAB, CCDAS Sobell, RBL, Kenward Trust, KAA, Kent Youth)	4,045.11
General Administration	59,892.57
Jubilee Sports Field & Sports Pavilion Project	341,374.26
Parish Street Lighting, Street Furniture, CCTV and repairs	3,673.32
Playscheme	4,827.59
Staplehurst Partnership	350.00
Surrenden Playing Field	2,683.69
Youth Club	1,387.50
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<u>430,888.61</u>
Balance of Income over Expenditure	(103,855.73)
Balance brought forward from previous year	199,165.30
	<u>95,309.57</u>

# Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31st March 2010

## LONG TERM ASSETS

None (see supporting statement below) 0.00

## CURRENT ASSETS

VAT Recoverable	764.04	
Cash In Hand	118,603.15	119,367.19
		119,367.19

## CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accruals	(21,083.79)	
Creditors	(2,973.83)	(24,057.62)
		(24,057.62)
		95,309.57

## REPRESENTED BY:-

GENERAL FUND 29,032.85

### Ongoing Project Budgets:-

Allotment land purchase fund	20,000.00	
Surrenden Playing Field pathway	9,830.00	
Youth Forum/Detached Project	7,250.00	
Staplehurst Partnership Grant	850.75	
Jubilee Sports Pavilion Project	10,750.00	
Balance of underspends c/fwd	1,139.87	
		49,820.62

## RESERVES

Village Centre Contingency		16,456.10
		16,456.10
		95,309.57

## 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 31.03.2010 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		6,000

#### BUILDINGS

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

#### OTHER FIXED ASSETS

As listed on Fixed Asset Register 31.03.2010 held at The Parish Office		158,137
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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](http://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

***Parish Councillors, who are all volunteers, regularly attend meetings of individual committees, internal projects and focus groups, as well as Full Council and public surgeries at the Library. They also ensure the Council is represented on various outside groups.***

## **Margaret Arger - *Chairman and Chairman of the Planning Committee***

I am honoured to have been re-elected to the Parish Council as Chairman. We need to work closely with our Borough Councillors, Policy Authority and County Councillors as well as our MP. Your Parish Council members have been working hard for the past 12 months with many meetings during the day, weekends and evenings and will continue to work to make sure Staplehurst moves forward in a positive and constructive manner for the benefit of our community.



## **John Perry - *Vice Chairman***

I was re-appointed Vice-Chairman last May. During the past year I have continued to be a member of the Amenities and Planning Committees, as well as of the Finance, Policy and Publicity and Website groups.

I represent the Parish Council as a Trustee of the Jubilee Field Management Committee. I have liaised with our internal auditor, ensuring satisfactory accounting standards and internal controls. I have been part of a review of the Parish Council's practices and staffing.

## **Tom Burnham - *Chairman of the Amenities Committee & Member of the Planning Committee***

I was elected as chairman of the Amenities Committee in February 2010, and have also been a member of the Planning Committee and of the Publicity and Website Group. As a regular commuter, I have taken a particular interest in Staplehurst's rail service, and set up a public meeting over the timetable changes in December 2009. I have also represented the Parish Council at meetings on rail services arranged by KCC and SouthEastern Railway.



## **Bill Best - *Member of the Amenities Committee***

I have been helping with some of the many projects undertaken by Amenities, including that for the Jubilee Fields Pavilion and for improved drainage and footpaths at Surrenden Field. I am a member of the Publicity and Website Group, helping with the Village Update and with improving our useful website. As a member of the Policy group I am active in seeking to ensure the Council remains compliant with best practice and operates as efficiently as possible. My thanks to fellow Councillors for their help.

## Parish Councillors

### **Joan Buller - Member of the Planning Committee**

I have served this Parish Council for 27 years. In addition to the Planning Committee, I have worked in the Staplehurst Partnership, Village Update and Website groups. I am the Parish Speed Watch Liaison Councillor and the link councillor with the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme on which I serve as Treasurer. As a councillor, I regularly walk in the village to meet people and to try to be aware of current issues.



### **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 with Chris Lomax, Community Warden, to improve the Youth Club.

### **Jenny Fairfax - Member of the Amenities & Planning Committees**

As a member of these two committees, as well as of the Publicity and Website and Policy Groups and while representing the Council at Sobell Lodge committee meetings, I've seen the valuable individual and team contributions their members make to try to benefit Staplehurst's residents and businesses.



### **Barry Franks - Member of the Amenities Committee**

I have maintained a close involvement with the Jubilee Sports Project, planning for the future management of the building. I have also represented the Parish on a number of outside bodies, including the local Police Forum, Kent Association of Local Councils, Maidstone Traffic Management Group and the Staplehurst Partnership.

### **Paul Kelly - Member of the Amenities & Planning Committees**

As well as actively serving on these two committees, I am also on the Finance and Staplehurst Rural Settlement Group. I am a nominated Councillor Representative on the Staplehurst Village Centre Trust and Staplehurst Youth Club. I was the lead Councillor in the successful negotiations with Maidstone Borough Council to take over maintaining the Bell Lane toilets and am actively involved in the improvements planned for the Staple Drive Play Area. I like to take an active role in following through with planned projects and future developments that will enhance our community.







### **Angela Knowlden - *Member of the Amenities Committee***

For personal reasons, I stood down as Chairman of this committee in February, but remain involved in its valuable work and continue to attend many meetings. I would like to thank the team for their hard work, just some of which includes highways and parking issues, youth activities, the public toilets, summer Playscheme and the Staple Drive play area. I have helped the Chairman on staff appraisals and interviews. I've enjoyed my time as Chairman of Amenities and wish next year's Chairman good luck and would like to thank Tom Burnham for his help this year.

### **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 represent the Parish Council on the Headcorn Aerodrome Committee, which deals with complaints about and usage of the airport that might affect residents of Staplehurst. I have been actively involved in improving Surrenden Field by planting 40 donated trees there.



### **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 have been working on the project to improve the drainage and footpaths at Surrenden Field, where I also regularly monitor the CCTV equipment.

### **Matt Sankey - *Member of the Amenities Committee***

I was the Council representative on the Carnival and Fete Committee. I was involved with the negotiations on the Bell Lane public toilets and have attended discussions about the Youth Club.



### **Steve Smith - *Member of the Amenities & Planning Committees***

I was co-opted on 17 August 2009 to fill the vacancy left by Wendy Green in the absence of a request for an election to fill the vacancy. I am particularly interested in helping elderly and disabled residents.



### **Peter Spearink - *Member of the Planning Committee***

I continue to maintain my unrivalled attendance record. I have missed just one meeting in three years and that was because I was in hospital. Please refer to the Councillors' Reports on the Website for details of some of my activities on your behalf over the last year.

## Parish Clerk's Annual Report

2009/2010 was yet another very busy year for the Clerk. Enormous progress and changes were made in a number of areas, mainly to administrative issues, research, further improvements to the website and ongoing negotiations. Final accounts for the Jubilee Sports Pavilion were settled with the builder's administrators. The drawing down of the final tranche of grant from the Football Foundation involved a great deal of paperwork. The premises are now leased to the Jubilee Field Management Trustees. The Parish will take over running the Bell Lane Toilets from MBC. The Staple Drive Play Area is to be improved. Changes in the parking regime at The Parade also brought a flurry of activity and complaints through the Parish Office, as have a number of larger than usual planning applications.

The Council and Clerk were sad to receive the resignation of Assistant Clerk, Maria Norris, in August 2009. Helen Warmington joined as Assistant to the Clerk in October. The expertise of Wendy Green in planning matters was a great loss to this Council when she moved out of the Parish in July 2009 and was no longer eligible to be a Parish Councillor. Barry Franks also resigned in March 2010 after having worked with much dedication on the Jubilee Project.

The Parish Office's work is achieved mainly through the internet, although a paperless office still remains a long way off. In accordance with legislation, formal meetings of the Parish Council (Full Council, Planning & Amenities Committees) are always held in public. The Agendas and Minutes of such meetings are usually posted on the website within 5 days, but paper copies can be obtained from the Parish Office.

Over the past year in particular, Councillors have worked within a number of specialist Groups to monitor and progress work in areas of Finance, Policy, Publicity & Website as well as dealing with staffing issues. Councillors have assisted the Parish Office with organising Playscheme, preparing the Quality Parish reaccreditation, Christmas Lights project and Registration of Village Green. Councillors have liaised with various outside bodies and members of the public to see the Station Footbridge completed, supported Police and Trading Standards initiatives, monitored Clapper Farm Lane proposals and attended monthly surgeries at Staplehurst Library.

As this Council enters its final year in office, local residents would do well to engage and support those Councillors who may seek re-election in May 2011, and/or consider whether to stand themselves to ensure a contested election is held. If this happens, this Council will then be able to regain the Quality Status it so richly deserves.

## Committee and Group Reports

**Amenities Committee** – lengthy negotiations with MBC over the Bell Lane toilets are concluded. Arrangements have been made for the Jubilee Pavilion and Sports Field to be managed on behalf of all the groups and organisations which use it. This committee's work includes Christmas lights; the summer Playscheme; contacting KCC and MBC on highways matters; refurbishing the Staple Drive play area and it is looking at options to improve drainage and footpaths in the Surrenden Recreation Ground. Having been elected as chairman of the Amenities Committee in February 2010, I thank all its members for giving their hard work and specialist knowledge freely for the benefit of the residents of Staplehurst. I should like to pay particular tribute to my predecessor as Chairman, Councillor Angela Knowlden, and to former Councillor Barry Franks, whose depth of local knowledge will be hard to replace.

*Tom Burnham*

**Planning Committee** – continues to express concerns regarding the different view the Planning Officer holds on the various applications with which we have dealt over the year from that of this Committee. There are no confirmed planning consents for the rumoured further 450 houses in Staplehurst which the Borough is considering. The Rural Settlement Group plans a Housing Needs Survey which may well confirm the Parish Council's view that the infrastructure is lacking to support such further large-scale development. Out of 85 full planning applications, 67 decisions by MBC agreed with Parish Council recommendations. MBC disagreed with 13; 8 applications were withdrawn. I would like to thank the Planning Committee members for their diligence and careful consideration of all planning matters.

*Margaret Arger*

**Finance Group** – meets quarterly to monitor the Council's financial affairs. It 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. Internal Audit controls are reviewed also on a regular basis.

**Policy Group** – reviews current Council policies, practices and procedures and instigates new ones. The group also reviews the Standing Orders of the Council. It then makes recommendations to the Full Council for consideration and approval. It has produced a training plan for Councillors and Council staff and is monitoring the Council's compliance with employment law. A ruling requiring two thirds of Councillors to be elected, rather than co-opted, meant

## Committee and Group Reports

this Council became ineligible for re-accreditation, losing its status as a Quality Council. Notwithstanding, the Council works in compliance with the requirements of the accreditation criteria for Quality Council status.

**Publicity and Website Group** – over the year it produces four editions of the Village Update, which is delivered to every home and business in Staplehurst. The website has continued to expand and includes Council Minutes, notes from subgroups, and Councillors' reports. It is increasingly used for news, announcements and photographs of local interest. The website's Forum was re-launched in March 2009 in its current format; the group has continued to try to make The Forum easier to use. David Henley of Zulogic has provided additional help.

## Parish Facilities & Projects

**Allotments** – Although there is a reserve fund to provide allotments and a large waiting list for them, searches for suitable land have still not resulted in the re-establishment of allotments in the parish.

**Bell Lane Toilets** – As MBC would otherwise shut these, this Council has been carefully investigating the costs, legalities and responsibilities involved with a view to taking them over from May 2010.

**Hawkhurst Transport Forum** – The Parish is represented by Councillor Spearink who lobbies for bus service improvements.

**Jubilee Sports Field, Changing Rooms & Skate Park** – Staplehurst now has three football pitches, modern sports changing facility and a skatepark. This parish can be justly proud of these facilities which were created and are maintained by local people in partnership with the Parish Council.

**Memorial Benches** – Planning, funding and installation of two benches; one in memory of 'Teddy' Day (part-funded by her husband Peter) at the corner of Cornforth Close and one in memory of Allan Rimmer, Roger Nicholls and Trevor Martin at Chestnut Avenue by the 'bus stop.

**Old Persons' Forum** – An MBC initiative, it meets quarterly and embraces various agencies with an interest in the wellbeing of older citizens. Councillor Spearink represents the Parish.

**Playscheme 2009** – Playscheme staff led by Jensie Shepherd, an

## Parish Facilities & Projects

experienced teacher and Play Manager, worked hard to provide an enjoyable and safe environment for 3 weeks in August. The opportunity for play and social contact are important for our younger residents.

***Sobell Cheshire Home*** – The new bridge with a lift at the railway station has been opened. In August, there was a Full Council meeting at Sobell Lodge, offering easier and more inclusive attendance for the disabled.

***Speed Watch*** – Volunteers have been deployed in Staplehurst with the Speed watch equipment throughout the year. Councillor Buller is the liaison between the Council, volunteers and the Police, to whom regular offenders' details are sent for the issue of warning letters. It is encouraging that the majority of drivers keep to the speed limits. However, in the last year 210 vehicles have had their speeding recorded, with one at 47 mph in the High Street approaching the traffic lights.

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***Staplehurst Partnership*** – Several Parish Councillors and local volunteers have analysed and put together the results of a detailed survey and produced a report which has been adopted by the Parish Council and will be integrated into their work. It seeks to promote Staplehurst's best interests for any future development in the parish, which MBC has identified as a Rural Service Centre. It will also provide information for MBC's Local Development Framework process. The Council is very grateful to resident Roy Laming for his valuable input.

***Surrenden Playing Field*** – On the recommendation of MBC, there was surgery to several trees. 40 trees donated under the Kent Free Trees scheme were planted by Councillor Roger Munn. Investigations continue on how to improve the drainage and pathways.

***Village Green Registration*** – The possibility of registering the main part of Church Green as a Village Green to prevent its development and preserve it for the benefit of Staplehurst continues. Thanks to resident Simon Green for his expertise.

# Council Members

at 31st March 2010

MARGARET ARGER – Chairman & Chairman of Planning .....	07857 242826
	argerma@hotmail.co.uk
JOHN PERRY – Vice Chairman .....	895189
TOM BURNHAM – Planning committee & Chairman of Amenities .....	890338
	tom.burnham@btinternet.com
BILL BEST – Amenities, Policy Group, Publicity & Website Group ....	07956 202120
	bill@bbest.myzen.co.uk
JOAN BULLER – Planning committee, Publicity & Website Group .....	892746
PAUL BUTCHER – Amenities & Planning committees .....	07860 818992
JENNY FAIRFAX – Amenities & Planning committees, Policy Group, Publicity & Website Group .....	893489
PAUL KELLY – Amenities & Planning committees, Finance Group .....	892700
ANGELA KNOWLDEN – Amenities committee .....	890639
ROGER MUNN – Amenities committee .....	891861
JOHN REARDON – Amenities committee, Publicity & Website Group .....	07802 231692
MATTHEW SANKEY – Amenities committee .....	Ex. Dir.
STEVE SMITH – Amenities & Planning committees .....	891098
PETER SPEARINK – Planning committee .....	891015
	Peter.spearink@btinternet.com

As at 31 May 2010, Jenny Fairfax and Steve Smith  
had resigned from the Parish Council

-ooOoo-

Member of Parliament ANN WIDDECOMBE .....	01622 769898
Since 7 June 2010 – HELEN GRANT	
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 to the Parish Clerk Mrs HELEN WARMINGTON .....	01580 891761



The Parish Office is open to the public from 9am – 1pm four mornings a week and on Thursdays by appointment for enquiries, sales of MBC green sacks and other council-related issues. Planning application papers and other Council documents can be viewed on request.

Village Sign, Staplehurst, Kent

*The sign was erected by the Women's Institute. Behind are the tied cottages dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century for Loddenden Manor workers.*

*Pen and Ink by Malcolm Buller  
of Staplehurst.*

Published by: Staplehurst Parish Council  
Editor: Jenny Fairfax  
Parish Office, Staplehurst Village Centre, High Street,  
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