



17-18 November '07
Staplehurst Arts
Festival mural painted
by local artists

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT
2007 - 2008

Staplehurst Parish Council

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Staplehurst Parish Council

Established 1894

Staplehurst Parish Council represents an electorate of 4,548 people living within approximately 2,250 homes. The population census figure recorded in 2001 was 6,003.

The Parish Council is made up of 15 Councillors. Thirteen Councillors stood for election in May 2007 and two persons were co-opted to fill the vacancies shortly thereafter. The next Parish Council election is due in 2011.

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. and the Amenities committee meets on first Mondays monthly at 8 p.m. The 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 2007 councillor activity included Website and Publicity, Jubilee sports field and skaters' project, Jubilee users group, Staplehurst Partnership and Youth project. Sub committees include parishioners in an advisory and partnership capacity. Whilst they have no spending powers or direct influence on the Parish Council they are extremely useful in gathering local information and progressing 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 on four mornings a week 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 the past year.



5th March 2007 – Staplehurst Health Centre
opens its doors to patients

Chairman's Annual Report 2007-2008

It is with pleasure that as chairman of your parish Council it falls upon me to report on the activities of your duly elected councillors over the last 12 months. I formally thank all councillors for their hard work, not just for attending formal meetings but also many partnership meetings, training days, seminars and conferences. This diligence ensures wide representation of our parish and that we keep up with this fast and challenging world.

Staplehurst Parish Council continues to highlight the needs and wishes of the community and carry on the sterling work of its predecessors within a climate of change and greater community action. We appreciate and thank our MP Anne Widdecombe, County/Borough Councillor Eric Hotson and Borough Councillor Richard Lusty for their active and continuing support of Staplehurst.

Speeding continues to be a concern around and through the parish. The Speedwatch scheme has been proactive in dealing with speeding and thanks go to Joan and Malcolm Buller for their leadership of this initiative and to all the volunteers who go out with the equipment. We would welcome more participation to take the training and provide more frequent speedchecks.

We continue to try to resolve the issue of allotments within the parish following our unsuccessful negotiations with Maidstone Housing Trust, who now own the Bell Lane allotments site. We are in discussion with Maidstone Borough Council to look at allotment provision within the parish.

We have through the excellent work of the planning committee, led by Councillor Green, expressed our concerns regarding a number of high profile applications over the past year. We argued against the loss of visual gaps around the estates where properties have been built at end of terraces.

Our commitment to the youth of the village continues with payment of the youth club site lease/purchase, cutting the grass and general site maintenance. We are pleased the club is now running fortnightly and the council will continue to support the needs and aspirations of our younger people. This is proven by the work of Councillors Knowlden and Franks with the recent YAP08 – Youth Activities Programme.

Policing remains an issue of concern and we were pleased to welcome PCSO Pete Gardner, who with Chris Lomax and PC Marc Pennicott, provide such a good community policing service to the Parish.

We are delighted with the work of the assistant clerk, Maria Norris, with yet another successful Summer Playscheme. Thanks to her and the clerk, Sue Bassett, who are already getting ready for another scheme in 2008.

Income & Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31st March 2008

INCOME

2007/2008

Deposit Interest	4,882.54
Grant and Donations towards Christmas Lights	1,330.00
MBC Concurrent Functions Grant	29,056.65
MBC Grant for Playscheme and Playscheme fees	3,629.89
Other Grants for new projects	27,625.00
Parish Precept	67,000.00
Sales, miscellaneous fees and donations	1,552.11
Skaters fund-raising, deposit interest and donations	154.84
VC contingency loan interest on deposit a/c	225.42

£135,456.45

EXPENDITURE

Caretakers' wages & equipment	2,604.30
CCTV maintenance and repairs	757.00
Christmas Lights 2007	4,527.95
Churchyard maintenance	4,385.00
Donations to community groups	4,132.26
General administration	52,320.08
Jubilee New Build Project	12,606.77
Jubilee Sports Field maintenance	5,282.41
New Burial area project	72.82
Parish Street Lighting & street furniture	2,680.35
Playscheme 2007	4,753.49
Skaters Project Phase 2	35,848.00
Speedwatch equipment maintenance	3.41
Staplehurst Partnership	79.25
Surrenden Playing field maintenance	5,073.47
Village Centre Loan repayment	6,924.32
Youth Club Lease and maintenance	1,366.71

£143,417.59

Balance of Expenditure over Income	(7,961.14)
Balance brought forward from previous year	156,667.01

£148,705.87

Balance Sheet

For the year ended 31st March 2008

LONG TERM ASSETS

Interest-free Contingency Fund loan to VCMC	4,507.00
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CURRENT ASSETS

VAT Recoverable	2,627.67
Cash In Hand	144,056.72
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	£151,191.39

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Uncleared cheques at year end	- 2,485.52
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	£148,705.87

REPRESENTED BY:

General Fund	28,190.83
Village Centre Contingency	15,688.88
Ongoing Project Reserves:	
Detached Youth Project	5,000.00
Staplehurst Partnership Grant	1,500.00
Burial Authority Provision	5,927.18
Jubilee Sports Project	54,150.73
Other reserves/underspends c/fwd	38,248.25
	<hr/>
	£148,705.87

The preceding two statements are only a summary 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 from The 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



Margaret Arger - *Chairman*

My husband and I have lived in Staplehurst over 31 years. I have been a council member for 9 years and am honoured to have been re-elected to the Council as Chairman. In addition, I am an ex-officio member of both the planning and amenities committees and chairman of the finance committee. I am a trustee of the Village Centre Management Committee and a member of the village Action Group. I believe strongly we must work closely with our Borough and County Councils, Borough and County Councillors, Police authority, as well as our Member of Parliament to ensure Staplehurst moves forward in a positive and constructive manner.

John Stewart - *Vice Chairman*

The past year as Vice-Chairman has enabled me to maintain an overview of the work of all the Parish Council's committees and to take an active part in their decision making. I have continued to edit the Village Update, via the Publicity and Website group, as part of the Quality Council initiative aiming to improve communications with the parishioners of Staplehurst. Also I have been part of the Staplehurst Partnership which is currently undertaking an electronic survey of the views and needs of the Parish.



Wendy Green - *Chairman of the Planning Committee*

Over the past year I have been involved in several projects and activities for the Parish Council, these include investigating over 120 planning applications, attending Development control meetings at the Borough Council, attending the monthly surgery in the library, dealing with the traveller invasion of the Jubilee Playing Fields, looking into the commissioning of a memorial bench, responding to consultation documents dealing with Public Rights of Way and Green spaces initiative, meetings with the Highways Manager, researching the possibility of creating a Village Green, writing for the Village Up Date. I have also secured a room for the Staplehurst Archive in the Village Centre, and have been working with the Carnival and Fete Committee on this year's 40th Carnival and Fete celebration. Quite a busy year!

Angela Knowlden - *Chairman of Amenities committee*

As Amenities Committee Chairman, I am particularly pleased to hear from residents who have queries or requests because we have, after all, been elected by you to help Staplehurst. We need the help of villagers sometimes to identify specific problems or ideas. The Amenities Committee continues to monitor pathways, roads, signage and hedges within the village and also arranges for the cutting of grass on the various playing fields and open areas that the Parish Council is responsible for. This past year has seen the completion of the Skate Park and the continued hard work of the Jubilee Field Management Committee towards the building of the new football Changing rooms. I am a member of the Youth Focus Group and also on the Highways Committee.



Parish Councillors

Joan Buller - *Member of the Planning Committee*



I have served Staplehurst Parish Council for 25 years. In addition to the Planning Committee I am in the Website, Village Update and Rural Partnership Teams. I am the Parish Speed Watch Liaison Councillor so I help write and deliver regular newsletters as well as being a team member by the roadside. All data collected by our volunteer teams is analysed before being forwarded to the police. I am also the link councillor with the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme on which I serve as Treasurer.

Tom Burnham - *Member of Planning & Amenities committees*

I was co-opted to the Parish Council in May 2007 and since then have been a member of the Amenities and Planning Committees. We moved to Staplehurst in 2000 and have two children at Staplehurst School. I believe two challenges faced by Staplehurst are to expand the facilities available to residents without losing the remaining the village character, and to listen to the views of all local people, not just those who are active in local organisations and the Village Forum at present.



Georgie Collins - *Member of Planning & Amenities committees*

I moved to Staplehurst just over three years ago and am married with one child which I try to juggle around working in London as a solicitor. I sit on on both the Planning and Amenities Committees. I am interested in architecture, design and horticulture and am enjoying getting to grips with the role of Parish Councillor and look forward to becoming an active member of your Parish.

Paul Kelly - *Member of the Planning Committee*

Having moved my business and home to the village in 1996, I have sat as a member of the Parish Council since 2000. During this time I have been involved with the 'Carnival and Fete' and 'Youth Club' committees and hopefully have been of some help! In 2002, I took on board a Governorship at Staplehurst Primary. This is a most enjoyable, if not challenging post!



John Perry - *Member of Finance, Planning and Amenities committees*

Since joining the Parish Council last May I have been a member of the Finance, Planning and Amenities Committees. During this period, on behalf of the Finance Committee, I have reviewed the internal financial controls of the Parish Council and have drafted new clauses to the current Financial Regulations. The Amended Regulations will now have the internal financial controls incorporated into them as a specific annex. In addition I have helped to draft a register of assets/equipment and I am working closely with the Council's Internal Auditor to ensure the appropriate levels of internal financial controls are in place.

Parish Councillors



Peter Spearink - Member of Planning and Amenities committees

Since joining as a new Councillor last May I have been a member of the Planning & Amenities Committees, Full Council and Website and publicity sub committee. I have maintained 100% attendance and am privileged to have done my best over the last year.

Paul Butcher - Member of the Amenities Committee

As a resident for 25 years and running a local business, I understand day to day problems of local people affecting this parish. I represent the Parish Council on the Police/Parish Forum, Churchyard Liaison and am also Chairman of Staplehurst Youth Club and play an active role in running the club.



Barry Franks - Member of Amenities committee

I have been a pro-active member of the Parish Council for over 8 years during which time I have taken a special interest in the Jubilee Sports Field. It is particularly gratifying therefore that with the very active support of the Football Clubs the Parish Council has now successfully obtained a grant of £390,000 from the Football Foundation towards the building of new changing rooms and improved car parking at the Jubilee Field.

Roger Munn - Member of the Amenities Committee

I have lived and worked in Staplehurst for most of my life, as a farmer. This has given me a sound knowledge of the local area. I am married with two children, who have now left home. I am representing the Parish Council on Jubilee Sports Field, Headcorn Aerodrome and Churchyard Liaison committees.



John Reardon - Member of the Amenities Committee

I am on the Amenities Committee which deals with environmental and local community issues. In particular I have been supporting the future development of the Jubilee Sports Field and enjoy contributing to the work of the Parish Council. I am an active member of the Staplehurst Cricket and Tennis Club.

Don Wood - Member of the Amenities Committee

I moved to the Amenities Committee at the beginning of the year and have been on a very steep learning curve getting to grips with its much wider remit and lack of guidance/regulation depending on your viewpoint. I am still active on the Jubilee Sports Field project on which we anticipate a very rewarding result for our £390,000 grant.



Parish Clerk's Annual Report

2007/2008 was an increasingly busy year for the Parish Clerk which has resulted in my working full time. Assistant Clerk Maria Norris works 20 hours per week and continues to provide much valued administrative support. During the year a second office and storeroom was leased to give us a more efficient working environment as well as space for visitors to the office to view plans.

The administrative work is becoming ever more internet-based with a majority of information, consultations and correspondence now exchanged by email or website based. The forum postings are monitored by the Parish Office in accordance with the adopted guidelines. Updating the website at www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk is carried out regularly from the parish office. Village Updates were published and delivered quarterly (mainly by volunteers) during the past year. These can also be viewed on the website which is building up an historical archive of information including Council Minutes and Parish Magazine Reports as well as containing an updated Business Directory, Village Life and Tourist information pages and a photographic archive of interesting local events. If parishioners don't have internet access themselves, Staplehurst Library has this facility that can be used by members of the public.

In addition to the background work needed to service every meeting and put into place the decisions of the Parish Council, the main issues and projects that have kept the Parish Office busy during the past year have included the following; completion of Phase 2 of the Skatepark, another successful Playscheme, continuing work towards the Football Foundation application for funding of the Jubilee Sports Field changing room project, the loss of the allotments and search for alternative sites, improved Christmas lights display, discharge of the Village Centre Mortgage and partnership working to establish another Charlton Football scheme. The influx of travellers in May 2007 onto Jubilee Sports Field, then onto the Lodge Road area, created a great deal of additional work, but thankfully with the help of Maidstone Borough Council and the Police they were eventually moved on elsewhere.

The arrival of PCSO Pete Gardner in the parish was welcome to boost local community policing support with PC Marc Pennicott and Parish Warden, Chris Lomax. The Parish Office liaised closely with them regarding local issues of concern and policing statistics were reported to the Parish Council on a monthly basis and recorded in the Minutes. The Speedwatch Equipment was used by trained volunteers regularly during the past year and details of vehicles caught exceeding the limits were passed onto the police for action.

Many issues raised by members of the public were not the direct responsibility of the Parish Council, but Maria and I are happy to assist where we can with the benefit of local knowledge, contacts and partnership working with others.

Committee Reports

Planning Committee – Yet again this year we have been kept busy with a constant flow of planning applications. Householders continue to extend and improve their homes rather than move. During the past year, recommendations on 111 full planning applications were made by this committee but only 70 were determined. There were also 9 outline, 3 listed building, 4 certificates of lawfulness, 7 tree works in the Conservation area and two advertisement consent applications. In addition 7 enforcement notices were issued. Of the 70 applications that reached determination by MBC, 54 of the recommendations made by this Committee agreed with MBC with only 16 that did not concur. There were a number of larger and more controversial applications to consider this past year. These included the outline approval for 14 dwellings at Parisfield, Headcorn Road and approval of 13 dwellings on the Texaco garage site, High Street. In addition the extra-ordinary proposal for the new eco-style house now in the process of being constructed at Crossways, Five Ash Lane was given long and detailed consideration by this committee. This Council also voiced its concerns at MBC Development Control committee on several applications where the parish view differed from MBC. Overall the work carried out by Staplehurst Parish Council Planning committee continued to be of a high standard which has been recognised within Maidstone Borough Council and other parishes.

Amenities Committee – Amongst many projects, this committee has worked hard on, a vehicle barrier with new sign as Jubilee Sports Field has been put up to ensure the field is secure whilst the field is in use. Young people have continued to enjoy the skatepark and phase 2 was officially opened in October 2007. A Youth Focus Group has been formed to consider local youth provision and to assist the Youth Club in achieving its aims. Much success has been achieved in this area. The Jubilee Sports Changing Room project will hopefully soon reach its conclusion thanks to the hard work of two members of this committee and a 74% grant from the Football Foundation. Jubilee Field was verti-drained to enable football to be played more frequently. Following the loss of allotments at Bell Lane, strenuous efforts have been made to secure an alternative site without success to date, but the search will continue. Regular inspection and maintenance reports on play equipment, carried out by the Village Caretaker, are considered for action by this committee. The Christmas lights project is increased annually and another successful playscheme was enjoyed by many young people. The Charlton Football Scheme was also supported by this Council and has enabled many young people to play supervised football. The amenities committee is currently looking at ways to improve the Matta pathways on Surrenden Playing Field and continues to progress a variety of local projects.

Parish Facilities & Projects

Speedwatch – Our band of volunteers have been out and about in Staplehurst with the Speedwatch equipment throughout the year. The roads agreed with the police to be monitored are seven sites; in Station Road, Cranbrook Road, High Street, Marden Road and Headcorn Road, all in both directions. Teams are pleased that the majority of drivers are keeping to the speed limits, which is encouraging as this is the prime purpose of Speedwatch. However, excess speeding is reported to the police and action taken. Regular newsletters are sent to all volunteers to keep information and enthusiasm high. With changing commitments some are able to be more active than others and so more training is often requested for those in waiting so that we can deploy our equipment more often. We hope that all parishioners will set the good example and help slow down the inconsiderate minority.

Parish Office – When the Health Authority district nurses and health visitors moved into the new Health Centre during 2007, the opportunity arose for the Parish Council to lease a second office and store room adjacent to the existing Parish Office. Visitors to the Parish Office since January 2008 could not fail to have noticed the more pleasant, spacious and efficient working environment that has been achieved. The Clerk and Assistant now have room for residents to sit in comfort whilst they view planning applications or discuss parish issues as well as adequate storage for archive files, stationery supplies and the Speedwatch Equipment.

Village Caretaker – Charlie Samuell worked for twelve years in Staplehurst as the Parish Caretaker, but has now retired with some reluctance. He regularly inspected the play area equipment and latterly the skatepark for safety and must have cleared up tons of litter and broken glass over the years. He also maintained the parish street furniture by painting bollards, litter bins, gates, benches and bus stops and cut back overhanging vegetation. He was dedicated to keeping Staplehurst as clean and tidy as possible and his genial character and smiling "can do" approach will be a hard act to follow. A presentation of a framed picture of Staplehurst was made to Charlie by Chairman Arger at the Annual Parish Meeting in recognition and appreciation of his work in this parish. Les Reeve has now taken over Charlie's duties and appears to be enjoying the job just as much as Charlie did.

Staplehurst Village Centre – Whilst the Village Centre is run independently of the Parish Council by Trustees, the Parish Council has made donations over the years in order to help pay off the mortgage that was raised to

Parish Facilities & Projects

purchase the building in 1989. During 2007 this mortgage was fully discharged and a check over past accounts reveals some interesting statistics. The total sum donated by the Parish Council to discharge the mortgage was £440,498.53. The Village Centre site as it stands today is worth in the region of £1m, so even with the sale value of the old Village Hall site added to the pot, the investment made in 1989 has produced approximately 100% investment return over 18 years or average of 5.5% per year. Throughout the past 18 years the Village Centre Management Trustees have endeavoured to ensure that the Village Centre has been as self sufficient as possible and broken even on income and expenditure most years. There currently remains outstanding an interest-free loan from the Village Contingency Fund held by the Parish Council of £4,807, but it is understood this will be repaid soon.

Parish Precept – Some people might hope that the Parish Precept will be reduced now that the Village Centre Loan has been repaid. In fact, due to the Concurrent Functions grants received from Maidstone Borough Council, the donations to discharge the Village Centre loan have not had such a large impact on the Parish Precept as Council Tax payers might expect. Much of the funding to repay the Village Centre Loan was covered by MBC concurrent functions grant and did not come directly from the Parish Precept. It is unlikely, therefore, that Parish Precepts in the future will lessen. Due to increased activities and improvements of service within the Parish Council, overall expenditure has been increasing. There is concern, however, that the MBC Concurrent Functions grants will be reduced by 10% in the next financial year, which will undoubtedly mean that the Parish Precept is likely to rise from the current £29.52 per Band D property in 08/09.

Jubilee Sports Field – The final phase of the Skatepark was completed and officially opened in October 2007. Skaters from Staplehurst and many others attracted in from other areas have been enjoying this facility to the full. The area is monitored by the Parish Caretaker regularly for safety and litter clearance. Unfortunately a mindless few have caused danger to skaters by littering the area with broken bottles and drinks cans but most skaters use the facility responsibly and even help to clear the site themselves. It is good to know that we do have a majority of socially responsible young people in our parish. The next big project for the Parish Council to achieve at Jubilee Sports Field will be the building of the long awaited Football Changing Facilities. The Football Foundation grant offer has been accepted and work should begin during the second half of 2008.

Council Members

at 31st March 2008

MARGARET ARGER - <i>Chairman (ex-officio members)</i>	Ex. dir.
JOHN STEWART - <i>Vice Chairman & ex.officio member</i>	892982
WENDY GREEN - <i>Planning Chairman & Finance Committee member</i>	892607
JOAN BULLER - <i>Planning committee member</i>	892746
TOM BURNHAM - <i>Planning & Amenities committee member</i>	890338
GEORGIE COLLINS - <i>Planning & Amenities committee member</i>	891352
PAUL KELLY - <i>Planning committee member</i>	892700
JOHN PERRY - <i>Finance, Planning & Amenities committee member</i>	895189
PETER SPEARINK - <i>Planning & Amenities committee member</i>	891015
ANGELA KNOWLDEN - <i>Amenities Chairman & Finance Cttee member</i>	890639
PAUL BUTCHER - <i>Amenities committee member</i>	Ex-directory
BARRY FRANKS - <i>Amenities committee member</i>	891514
ROGER MUNN - <i>Amenities committee member</i>	891861
JOHN REARDON - <i>Amenities committee member</i>	07802 231692
DON WOOD - <i>Amenities committee member</i>	891388

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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

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

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Parish Clerk Mrs J SUSAN BASSETT	01580 891761
Assistant Parish Clerk Mrs MARIA NORRIS	01580 891761



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