



STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES 8TH DECEMBER 2025

PUBLIC FORUM

A resident asked for more detail in the Confidential minutes. – Note the minutes are confidential for contractual reasons and often only the final decision is published

Kent County Councillor report – (Standing item) - NA

Maidstone Borough Councillor's Report (Standing Item):

Cllr Perry raised several points;

MBC issued an Article 4 directive regarding HMO due to Invicta House being put up for sale. Also motion of no confidence in the leader – due to some ideological decision rather than "borough lead" decision – failed.

Local Government Review – MBC voted for option 3a – West Kent (Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling) due to historical links, similar operation areas as the Police and NHS plus an all-round better fit.

Option 4d – put forward by Medway Council, could have leverage with the Government. This option places Maidstone in a "Central Kent area" with Ashford and parts of Swale and Folkstone.

Cllr Riordan stated that he is attending the Overview and Scrutiny Panel regarding Invicta House – Article 4 Directive.

Also, the MBC Planning Committee meeting has been moved to 18th December 2025.

Cllr Surgery Saturday 27th December 2025, 10am – 12noon at Staplehurst Library

Present: Cllrs Sharp, Martin, Alesi, McLaughlin, Farragher, Perry, Pett, Riordan, Castro, Hotson, Ash, Arger and the Clerk.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllr Melville, Wakeford, and Rhodes
2. **COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS regarding items on the Agenda:**
 - 2.1. Declarations of Lobbying - NA
 - 2.2. Changes to the Register of Interests - NA

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

2.3. Interests in Items on the Agenda – Cllr Perry item 4.4, Associated of the Church of England

2.4. Requests for Dispensation – Cllr Perry to speak and vote on item 4.4 – Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Arger seconded to agree to dispensation for Cllr Perry agreed majority 11 for, 0 against and 1 abstained.

3. APPROVAL OF FULL COUNCIL MINUTES: (5 minutes)

Pages 2416 –2423 17th November 2025 available at [Full Council - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge \(staplehurst-pc.gov.uk\)](http://Full Council - Staplehurst Parish Council - Staplehurst Parish Council, Staplehurst, Tonbridge (staplehurst-pc.gov.uk))

Cllr Pett proposed, and Cllr Alesi seconded to approve the minutes of the 17th November 2025, agreed by majority 11 for, 0 against, 1 abstained.

Duly signed by the Chairman.

4. FINANCE REPORTS & PROPOSALS

4.1 Payment list, previously authorised by Council or under delegated authority and paid, Summation and Balance sheet for noting (1 minute)

<u>Approved Payments 12th November - 3rd December 2025</u>	<u>Amount</u>
HMRC - Tax & NI October	2656.26
CSG Global Education - White Line Marker Jubilee Field	67.15
Forvis Mazars LLP - Annual Audit Fee	1008.00
Heliocentrix Ltd - Business Basic October	147.46
Heliocentrix Ltd - Managed IT Silver x3 Workstations October	138.60
Bradley Hawkins - Chestnut Ave/A229 Annual Hedge Cut	525.00
Dean Fuller - Mowing/White Line Marking Jubilee Field June	460.00
Dean Fuller - Mowing/White Line Marking Jubilee Field Oct	395.00
Dean Fuller - Mower Petrol	25.01
Mr J Melville - Reimburse Steel Drum re Christmas Tree	75.59
Rumwoods Ltd - Plants & Plant Pot GSG	36.57
County Fire Protection - Fire Alarm Service	108.00
Staff Payroll & Pension Costs - November	9277.42
P&F Cleaning - Bell Lane Toilets Clean/Open/Sund November	1010.00
Mr J Melville - 12ft Nordman Christmas Tree re The Parade	159.99
Heliocentrix Ltd - Keyboard & Mouse Parish Office RG	45.59
Alex Harvey - JF Pavilion Deep Clean	1000.00
NALC - Training Event RG	42.00
Streetlights - Xmas Motif Erect/Connect/Test	1440.00
Choice Support - Planter Maintenance November	519.00
Staplehurst Community Centre - Parish Office Rental Apr-Dec	3150.00
Amazon (UK) Ltd - Christmas Tree Fairy Light Batteries	64.32
Sevenoaks DC - JF premises Licence Holder Changes	23.00
Adobe Systems - Monthly Subscription Nov-Dec	19.97
Sainsbury's - Milk Parish Office	2.10
British Gas Lite - SF Pavilion Electricity Oct-Nov	40.47
MBC - Parish Office Council Tax Room 1 December	62.00
MBC - Parish Office Council Tax Room 2-3 December	72.00
MBC - Bell Lane Toilets Council Tax December	100.00

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

MBC - Youth Club Council Tax December	121.00
British Gas Lite - JF Pavilion Electricity Oct-Nov	435.66
British Gas Lite - Bell Lane Toilets Electricity Oct-Nov	34.10
Positive Energy - Electricity Youth Club October	82.79
Business Stream - Bell Lane Toilets Water Sep-Oct	62.93
Castle Water - Jubilee Field Pavilion Potable Water Oct	163.97
British Gas Lite - JF Pumping Station Electricity Sept-Nov	16.69
Telecoms World - Virtual Phone No. SEHT Oct	14.39
Telecoms World - Broadband Youth Club Oct	29.40
Npower - Streetlight Energy October	52.33
British Gas Lite - Parish Office Electricity Oct-Nov	185.66
Countrystyle Recycling - Waste Collection October	101.82
Business Stream - JF Pavilion Waste Water Aug-Nov	725.20
Lloyds Bank - Charges November	8.50
TOTAL CURRENT ACCOUNT EXPENDITURE	24,704.94

TOTAL PETTY CASH EXPENDITURE

0.00

Noted, Cllr Riordan asked for some clarification on the payment list process. Clerk agreed that the RFO will contact him and write to all Cllrs.

4.2 Contracts

Following a debate Cllr Arger proposed and Cllr Hotson seconded to recommend the resolution below; agreed unanimously.

Resolution: To approve the Employment, Finance and Strategy group recommendations below		
Contract item	Company	Value 2026/27
Grass mowing – youth Club x 8 cuts pa	Forestry First Ltd	£520.00
Hedge cutting – Youth Club x 2 cuts pa	Forestry First Ltd	£600.00
Mowing A229/Chestnut Avenue x 8 cuts pa	Forestry First LTD	£680.00
Hedge Cutting Jubilee Field 1 cut pa	Forestry First LTD	£780.00
Grass mowing & strimming Wimpey Field x 48hrs pa	Contrast Garden Maintenance	£1,200.00
Grass mowing Surrenden Field – including hedge line x 16 cuts pa	Landscape Services Ltd	£1,967.62
Hedge cutting A229/Chestnut Avenue 1 x cuts pa	Contrast Garden Maintenance	£250.00
Budget code; Various		

4.3 Draft Council budget 2026/27

Note that decisions on items 4.4. and 4.5 will impact on the 2026/27 budget. Following a debate which highlighted;

The Employment, Finance and Strategy group have focused on keeping the budget as tight as possible.

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

- There is a small increase in the tax base so keeping the precept the same as 2025/26 would lead to a small reduction in the parish portion of the Council Tax.
- Jubilee Field budget is to be finalised.
- Running costs – relate to the running costs of the Parish office – lease, utilities, IT etc.
- Surrenden Field - includes additional costs for the pavilion replacement.
- Village Update – focus on hard copies to every household but will be reviewed in 2026/27.
- Fees and charges based on recent comparable figures.

Note some decisions later in the agenda will impact the 2026/27 budget. The Employment, Finance and Strategy Group will review in December 2025 and report back with a recommendation to adopt the 2026/27 budget in January 2026 Council meeting, to enable the Parish Council to request the precept figure from MBC by the deadline end of January 2026.

4.4 Council contribution to Churchyard maintenance

Following a debate which highlighted;

- That previous budgets were low due to “grace and favour work,” now a formal contractor.
- The churchyard is an important open space to the village as a whole.
- The agreement includes “contribution of a sum as it considers appropriate” toward the maintenance.
- Two years ago, All Saints Church went out to tender for the ground’s maintenance contract, this is the last year of the contract.
- The cutting of the Churchyard was impacted by the warmer autumn when extra cuts were required. Potentially the same this year
- We should encourage voluntary working to try and keep the costs down.
- Church accounts for 2024 show a small loss.

Cllr Farragher proposed, and Cllr Arger seconded to recommend the resolution below; agreed by majority 9 for, 3 against, 0 abstained.

Resolution: To consider:

- a) approval of an increase in the annual donation of 4.2% to £17,500

Budget code – Churchyard

Cllr Farragher suggested the additional cost is paid only if required, proposed and Cllr Arger seconded to recommend the resolution below; agreed by majority 7 for, 5 against, 0 abstained.

Resolution: To consider:

- a) an additional increase of £1,767 to cover an extra grass cut towards the end of the season.

Budget code – Churchyard

4.5 Appointment of Human Resources and Health and Safety Consultant

Following a debate, which highlighted that some legislation has changed and is changing further, that a consultant is now required, Cllr Arger proposed, and Cllr McLaughlin seconded to recommend the resolution below; agreed unanimously.

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

Resolution: To approve the HR Group recommendation to appoint Peninsula as Human Resources and Health & Safety Consultants on a 5-year contract at £3,039.60 plus VAT per year, at £253.30 plus VAT per month.

Budget Code – Administration

4.6 Appoint an RFO Locum

Following a debate Cllr Riordan proposed and Cllr Farragher seconded to recommend the resolution below; agreed unanimously.

Resolution: To consider the appointment of Local Council Consultancy for an RFO Locum for January 2026, for 12 weeks, 20 hrs per week up to £40ph

Budget code – Staffing

5 CLERKS REPORT ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS

The Clerk raised several points;

- Jubilee Field Pavilion – in consultation with the Chairman agreed fixing of the Toilet – JBPH Contractors Ltd £75.00 plus VAT
- IT - in consultation with the Chairman agreed:

Purchase of 6 x Bluetooth mice and removal and destruction of files on one tower computer – Heliocentrix £68.20

Purchase of keyboard mice for Parish Office – Heliocentrix £45.59

In consultation with the Chairman agreed purchase of 5 x encrypted USB sticks Heliocentrix £39 plus VAT

- In consultation with the Chairman agreed purchase of 2 x large village maps Simply Print £55 plus VAT
- In consultation with the Chairman agreed purchase of a banner to promote Youth Club - Simply Print £180 plus VAT

Cllr Arger proposed, and Cllr McLaughlin seconded to approve all of the above – agreed unanimously.

Cllr Hotson raised a number of queries;

2396.31 – JF pavilion cleaning – as they could not clean one changing room, have we got a reduced fee? Clerk recollection is that it was not the cleaning contractors' fault that the changing room was not cleared, therefore paid in full. Clerk to confirm.

2396/4.1 – Cllr Perry, have you met up with the RFO – Cllr Perry still arranging.

2343/6.8 – Cllr Riordan, have you arranged the school car parking community meeting? Cllr Riordan no, still trying to organise.

Clerk noted that the next Council meeting 12th January 2026 will be Planning Committee 7pm and Council meeting 8pm.

6 PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION and DECISION -

6.1 Devolution – standing item verbal update - NA.

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....

6.2 3G Multi-Sport pitch verbal update (moved to confidential due to contractual issues)

6.3 Jubilee Field budget monitoring report – 1st April – 30th September 2025

Following a debate the budget monitoring report for the Jubilee Field, 1st April – 30th September 2025, as per appendix A, was noted.

7. Update report CORRESPONDENCE & PARISH ISSUES for decision or noting:

8 Chairman's Report NA

8.1 Committee and working group minutes for noting - noted.

8.1.1 Planning Committee minutes 24th November 2025

8.1.2 Road Safety Group meeting to be confirmed.

8.1.3 Jubilee Field Working Group minutes 27th November 2025

8.1.4 SCEnic minutes 13th November 2025

8.1.5 NDP Review Group next meeting to be arranged.

8.1.6 Communications Group meeting to be confirmed.

8.1.7 Greener Staplehurst Group meeting - to be arranged.

8.1.8 3G Multi-Sport working group next meeting 11th December 2025

Cllr Castro asked if we could arrange a Greener Group meeting as there has not been one for a while.

9 REPORTS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS – NA

Public Forum – no further comments but Scouts may forward a report.

10 Confidential

Finance, Strategy and Employment Group meeting notes 18th November 2025 – Note External Auditor apologised to our esteemed RFO.

10.1 3G Multi-Sport pitch update report

A debate took place on the capital costs of the 3G Multi-Sport pitch. Report due in January 2026.

Meeting closed 9.30pm

These minutes are not verbatim, the decisions are accurate.

Signed by Chairman.....Date.....