

# Stoke St Mary Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of Stoke St Mary Annual Parish Council held on Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025, at Stoke St Mary Village Hall at 7.30pm

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## Public Session

There were two Members of Public in attendance.

### 25.35 Attendance and Apologies

**Councillors Present:** Cllr Daniel Fallance, Cllr Patricia Fallance, Cllr Colin Fisher (Chair), Cllr Rebecca Pow, Cllr Graeme Watt, Cllr Tania Watt

**In attendance:** Sarah Fisher (Clerk), Cllr Sarah Wakefield (Somerset Council (SC)),

**Apologies:** Cllr Rob Hossell

### 25.36 Declarations of Interest – none

### 25.37 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025, were circulated in advance of the meeting and were approved and signed by the Chair, with one handwritten amendment on item no 25.29 “Police”

*Cllr Sarah Wakefield joined the meeting at 7.35pm*

### 25.38 Finance

#### a) Balances (as at 12/9/2025)

Current A/c: £3,370.71  
Deposit A/c: £10,415.56  
\*95 Day notice A/c: £7,000

Cllr Tania Watt confirmed these balances as correct.

\*Higher interest account opened August 2025 – see item 25.25

#### b) Expenditure approval:

	£
i. Parsons Landscapes inv 18301	61.76 APPROVED
ii. PKF External Auditors SO0259	252.00 APPROVED

### 25.39 Half Moon Inn

The PC resolved that the village needed the pub, but we had to find a way of reducing the impact on neighbouring residents, particularly after hours. Chair to speak to SC Licensing Officer to explore options, and then will liaise with landlord and complainants.

### 25.40 Clerk’s report/action list from previous meeting

**a) First Aid Course for MOPs** – it was agreed to book a two hour session run by Hamdon First Aid, to be held in village hall, open to all MoPs free of charge. Cost is £185 plus VAT. Subjects covered: approaching an incident, recovery position, CPR, use of defibrillators. Further courses will be held if sufficient interest. Clerk to organise

**b) Fly tipping incident in May outside Stoke Farm** – Cllr Wakefield to establish whether anything has been done about this by SC, as all evidence was supplied.

*Cllr Wakefield reported as follows (supplementary to her report circulated prior to the meeting):*

- *Early reopening of M5 J26 has helped traffic*
- *Intake at Castle School has been increased for September 2025 only to accommodate increased demand within the catchment area but that cannot be repeated on the restricted school site. Parents first choice of secondary school should ideally be the school in whose catchment area they live.*
- *There has been some closing of community hospital beds as part of NHS reorganisation. SC have queried this but believe this will release resources for greater diagnostic work.*
- *Cllr Wakefield was asked about the impact of the Transformation Programme, and whether it would improve the Planning dept. Cllr Wakefield reported that it should allow recruitment of more planners. 12 week*

*moratorium on decisions in operation to help free resource to complete local plan. Re-evaluation of planning officers' jobs and costs underway, with a view to attracting and retaining candidates. Cllr Pow asked Cllr Wakefield to provide statistics on planning department; how many planners, how many planning applications received, how many applications granted/refused.*

- *Cllr Dan Fallance queried the number of bus charging points being installed at Taunton bus depot. Cllr Wakefield confirmed the buses do not belong to SC so cost is borne by bus company*

The PC thanked Cllr Wakefield for her support.

#### **25.40 Clerk's report/action list from previous meeting cont'd**

- c) **Defibrillator** – purchase of replacement stickers for defibrillator cabinet approved, £65 – £95 plus VAT. Clerk highlighted that the battery may need replacing in 2026 and this should be allowed for in the next budget.
- c) **Councillor Training** – Clerk reminded Councillors that there are funds remaining in the 2025/26 budget allocated to training
- d) **Internal Audit thank you** – resolved to thank IA with suitable gift

#### **25.41 External Auditor Report and Certificate**

External Auditor Report and Certificate for 2024/2025 was received and noted.

#### **25.42 Councillor Portfolios**

**Drainage/flood control** – Cllr Graeme Watt reported of a more effective and convenient alternative to sand bags for homes to use in flood control, and he has a contact who can help with funding towards purchase. One MoP expressed interest. Cllr Graeme Watt will follow up with contact and explore interest in the village. Part A of Somerset Rivers Authority grant work is nearly complete, but bon-firing of removed wood and vegetation from the cross country ditch will need to wait until close-by crops are harvested, to avoid the risk of crop damage. Lots of major debris was extracted from ditches in Stoke Road by our contractor and is being responsibly disposed of. Part B requires Land Drainage Consent, and he now has verbal advice on this from SC and will apply for LDC as soon as possible. An Otter and Water Vole survey may be required, est cost £400, to be funded from the contingency. An additional £400 plus VAT spent on fencing and a gate around the culvert at Stoke Lane, to be taken out of PC approved £1200 contingency. Cllr Graeme Watt met with Matthew Hopkinson from SC (with thanks to Cllr Wakefield for introduction) to review flood control works. Cllr Graeme has asked for SC action on three top drain priorities. Chair highlighted need to review allocation of reserves during next budgeting process (which will start in October).

**Volunteer activities** – a programme of drain clearance due to start, as well as a programme of cleaning of traffic signs. Additionally, aim to clear/dig out brook section that runs through SSM which hinders floodwater drainage. It was agreed that work undertaken by volunteers is done for the benefit of MoPs, not SC, and we should continue to rely on SC for 4 yearly cleaning schedule as a basic requirement.

**Highways/Traffic/Speed management – Shoreditch speed limit change** – Cllr Hossell's written report confirmed that work has commenced with some new signs erected and others amended, though one speed limit is incorrect and plans are missing a few signs/markings from previously agreed proposal. Kate Brown at SC Highways agreed to update plans and will forward when ready. Incorrect sign already added to contractor's snagging list. Some road markings were omitted from plans. PC agreed to approve spend up to £1,000 out of contingency to complete work.

**Speed Indicator Device (SID) in Haydon** – Chair reported that funding from Somerset & Avon police appears to be closed again but proposed we go ahead with purchasing anyway. Chair has sought three quotes - £6,098 plus VAT and £3,200 plus VAT – both exclude installation. Third provider has not replied. It was agreed to go with lower quote, from Elan City (also recommended by local PCs). Additionally, we need to erect metal pole but this has to be done by regulated providers. It was resolved to commit £4,000 plus VAT for purchase and installation of SID. In the meantime, Chair has applied to Police Community Trust for funding a second SID, and if successful we will use as a mobile device for Shoreditch and Stoke St Mary.

**Rights of Way** – There have been no complaints received, though small obstructions on bridleway remain

**Play Area** – Cllr Pat Fallance reported that the play area seems to be remarkably neat, and emptying of litter bin is working well

**Village Hall** – Cllr Dan Fallance reported that costs are under review. All WCs working and in good repair, lights have been faulty but now repaired. There is a potential six month booking lease.

**Police** – Cllr Dan Fallance mentioned recent burglary at local farm. Police called earlier this week to late night disturbance outside pub involving 2 or 3 people. Police attended but didn't press charges. Chair reported that Avon & Somerset Police now have a Rural Crime Strategy and when available it will be circulated to PCs.

**LCNs** – Chair believes LCN structure needs reconfiguring to make it work.

**Taunton Garden Town** – Next meeting in November.

#### 25.43 Planning

Cllr Hossell circulated his report in advance of the meeting:

**Somerset Local Plan** – no further update from SC since “call for sites” in Jan/Feb

**Higher Broughton Barn Farms** – Crown Estate have requested meeting involving architects and PC, to review plans prior to presenting to village.

##### **New Planning Applications**

·**37/25/0011/LEW** – Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for the existing change of use of land into residential curtilage at Stoke Court, Ash Road, Stoke St Mary. Target decision date 06/10/25

·**37/25/0010/LB** – Various external and internal alterations at The Granary, Haydon Lane, Stoke St Mary. Conditional Approval was granted 03/09/25

##### **Recent Planning Applications- Updates**

·**37/25/0009/NMA** – Application for a Non-Material Amendment to application 37/24/0008 for changes to external door and window positions of single storey extension, garage conversion to now form bedroom with no extension to rear of former garage and erection of a single storey extension to front of dwelling and former garage at Ballacraigne, Ash Road, Stoke St Mary. Approved granted 15/08/25

·**37/25/0007/CQ** – Application for Prior Approval for proposed change of use from agricultural buildings into 2 No. dwellings (Class C3) and associated building operations at Stoke Wood Alpacas, Stoke Road, Stoke St Mary. Approval was REFUSED as there was an extension contrary to Class Q development.

·**24/25/0006** – Change of use of land from agricultural into gypsy/travellers site to form 16 No. pitches with associated works including siting of static homes, touring caravans, roadway, treatment plant and formation of hardstanding, entrance gates, parking and landscaping at Greenacres, Oxen Lane, **North Curry** (retention of part works already undertaken). Target decision date 26/08/25. Already many rejections submitted, and we considered it would not be appropriate to comment on this application in North Curry, given we are not fully aware of the history.

A discussion took place concerning the need to have greater access to local plan before it is finalised. Chair attending and speaking at Transport and Planning committee of SC (8<sup>th</sup> October).

#### 25.44 Clerk's hours – nothing to report

#### 25.45 Date of next meeting: Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at 7.30pm

The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

**MINUTES SIGNED BY CHAIR AT PC MEETING 20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2025**