

Stoke St Mary Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of Stoke St Mary Annual Parish Council held on Thursday, 21st May 2026, at Stoke St Mary Village Hall, at 7.30pm

26.1 Election of Chair

Colin Fisher was re-elected as Chair

26.2 Election of Vice Chair

Pat Fallance was re-elected as Vice Chair.

Public Session

There were 15 Members of Public (MoPs) present.

Following concerns raised by some MoPs about the former Crown Estate land, the Parish Council gave a short presentation to explain what is known, and to outline what lies ahead in terms of the process/the Somerset Local Plan. (A copy of the presentation has since been published on the PC website).

One MoP said he had some questions about the administration of the Village Hall. The Chair pointed out that, although the Parish Council had the right to appoint members of the Village Hall committee, the committee is independent of the Parish Council. The Chair asked the MoP to submit his questions direct to the two members of the Parish Council who are also members of the Village Hall committee (Cllr Dan Fallance and Cllr Tania Watt), and the MoP will do this in writing.

One MoP explained he was the leaseholder of Greenway Farm barns and wished to explain the new activities taking place in the barns, following a complaint about change of use, which was made at the Annual Parish Council meeting on 9th April 2026. The Chair thanked the MoP but explained that Greenway Farm was outside the boundary of Stoke St Mary Parish, and therefore the PC had no jurisdiction over the change of use, and that the matter was in the hands of Cllr Sarah Wakefield (Somerset Council).

Six MoPs left the meeting

26.3 Portfolios – review and appoint Councillor responsibilities:

Staff – Cllr Tania Watt

Finance – Cllr Tania Watt

Planning/Somerset Local Plan – Cllr Hossell and Chair

Taunton Garden Town – Cllr Pow

Flood Control – Cllr Graeme Watt

Highways – Cllr Graeme Watt

Volunteers – Cllr Graeme Watt

Traffic/speed management – Cllr Hossell and Chair

Rights of Way – Cllr Pat Fallance

Play Area – Cllr Pat Fallance

Village Hall – Cllr Dan Fallance

Police – Cllr Dan Fallance

Local Community Networks (LCNs)/Devolution – Chair

Half Moon Inn – Cllr Pow

26.4 Attendance and Apologies

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

Apologies: Cllr Sarah Wakefield (Somerset Council)

In attendance: Sarah Fisher (Clerk)

26.5 Declarations of Interest – none

26.6 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2026 were circulated in advance of the meeting and were approved and signed by the Chair

26.7 Finance

a) Balances (as at 15th May 2026)

Current A/c:	£4,504.35
Deposit A/c:	£9,541.58
95 Day notice A/c:	£7,138.07

Cllr Tania Watt confirmed these balances as correct.

b) Expenditure approval:

	£
i. Somerset Assn Local Councils affiliation 2026/7	241.92
ii. Clerks expenses –	
refreshments for Annual Parish mtg	30.39
Fablon sticky back panels for banners//Hobbycraft	28.00
Cartridge People cartridge for printer	25.75
Screwfix – hose +clips for Haydon SID	33.98
iii. Somerset Assn Local Councils training (Planning/ Cllr Hossell)	40.00
iv. Parsons Landscapes inv 18703 & 18767	193.65
v. Somerset Council – installation of post for Haydon SID	350.00
vi. Parish Online mapping service (1 yr)	75.60
vii. SSM Village hall inv 2039	32.00
viii. Somerset Council allotment rent	25.00
ix. Currys ream of paper (pd on SSM PC debit card)	7.99
x. Alex Tinson Ltd completion part A SRA work (Min no 25.80)	600.00

All above expenditure was APPROVED

c) To approve funding of Otter and Vole surveys in relation to Somerset Rivers Authority work Part B. – Cllr Graeme Watt explained that, following recent communication with SC, the likelihood of needing these surveys is remote, but should the need arise during the course of the work, it would be funded by the contingency fund of £560

26.8 To receive the annual accounts for 2025/26 – Councillors had received all relevant documents relating to the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (**AGAR**) in advance of the meeting.

26.9 Internal Audit - the Internal audit was completed by John Pugh, who raised no issues. The Parish Council thanks John for his support.

26.10 Certificate of Exemption – The Parish Council AGREED to certify itself as exempt from the limited assurance review, and the Chair signed the Certificate of Exemption

26.11 AGAR Section 1 – The Parish Council considered the questions on AGAR Section 1 form for 2025/26 and this was signed by the Chair. It was noted that Assertion box 10 was ticked as “no” as the demands were considered disproportionate

26.12 AGAR Section 2 – The Parish Council approved the AGAR Section 2 form for 2025/26 and this form was signed by the Chair.

- 26.13 Elector's Rights** – The dates of the Exercise of Public Rights was agreed as 3rd June 2026 – 14th July 2026.
- 26.14 Taunton Garden Village/Taylor Wimpey** – this matter had largely been covered under “public session”. One MoP expressed concern about the speculated scheme on a number of levels, lack of infrastructure, impact on ancient woodland, sheer intensity of housing, and Cllr Graeme Watt added his concerns about flooding. Cllr Pow emphasised the need to wait for actual evidence of the plans, at which point the Parish Council would take a balanced approach to the issue and report back.
- 26.15 Insurance** – agreed to renew with Clear Council; third year of a three-year contract. Increase in premium was reasonable and well within budget, and cover considered adequate.
- 26.16 Clerk's report/action list from previous meeting** – none
- 26.17 Councillor Portfolio Reports** –
- Staff** – Cllr Tania Watt reported that national pay award for 2026/27 has not yet been announced but will be backdated to April 2026. Clerk appraisal due Oct
- Finance** – nothing to add to item 26.7
- Drainage/flood control** – Cllr Graeme Watt will work through agreed plans. Land Drainage Consent has now been granted for Part B Somerset Rivers Authority work so this will go ahead soon.
Two volunteer activities since March meeting; installation of Haydon Speed Indicator Device (SID), and Open Gardens/Somerset Day activities
- Highways** – Cllr Graeme Watt planning sign cleaning session, and will determine whether any signs need replacing/repair by SC.
- Traffic** – Haydon SID working accurately. Chair reported Somerset & Avon Community Trust being wound up so grant is probably no longer available for another SID. In talks with Neroche PC and Taunton Racecourse regarding SID on Corfe Road
- Rights of Way** – one tree is hanging low over Bridleway T26/13
- Play Area** – Cllr Pat Fallance experiencing no issues, area is generally kept tidy. It was agreed to relocate picnic table for reasons of hygiene (currently attracting bird mess from tree above).
- Village Hall** – bookings slowing down. There was a good pop-up pub night a few weeks ago, though debris found in the play area where some participants had been sitting
- Police** – Cllr Dan Fallance confirmed the last three months had seen an increase in criminal activity. There is a new police reporting system due, which should feed us information more quickly
- Local Community Networks (LCNs)/devolution** – Chair confirmed AGM in July but future of our area LCN is in doubt, with very poor participation from members
- Half Moon Inn** – Chair is in process of renewing ACV (Asset of Community Value) which expires 26 May 2026. New ACV will run for five years to May 2031
- Taunton Garden Town Advisory Board (TG TAB)**– Cllr Pow attended recent meeting (24th April). A progress report was given on the Taunton Garden Town “Masterplan.” Chair of the Chamber of Commerce noted that concerningly there seemed to be little join up between the Garden Town Plan and the development of the Taunton Town Council “Neighbourhood Plan.”
- Cllr Pow raised issue of Taylor Wimpey/“Taunton Garden Village” project and asked TG TAB to distance themselves from it, so that there was no potential conflict of interest in terms of council staff in particular as well as a potential reputational risk given that the Taylor Wimpey “project” appears to have availed themselves of the ‘Garden’ terminology and were appearing to be riding on the back of the Taunton Garden Town values. SC have made representations to Taylor Wimpey in terms of the impression the TW brochure gives of SC support.
- A presentation was given by SC Head of Transport which stressed the focus is on a move away from the car, to connected places. The concept of “quiet lanes” was also highlighted.

26.18 Planning –

Application no 37/36/0002 – conversion of garage into ancillary accommodation for use as annexe at Woodside, Stoke Road, Stoke St Mary. This application has been approved.

Cllr Hossell pointed out that the Parish Council no longer receives notice of enforcement actions. Clerk to contact Cllr Sarah Wakefield to request that SC reinstate notifications

Freedom of Information Request (FOI) submitted to SC to establish what communication there had been between SC and Taylor Wimpey, reference “Taunton Garden Village”. Response not received within stated timeframe, so Parish Council will lodge complaint to Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO). Similarly, FOI submitted by Chair reference “call for sites” results has been refused. Chair will complain to ICO.

26.19 Review and Confirm Policy Documents:

Code of Conduct – approved

Standing Orders – approved

Financial Regulations – approved

The above policy documents will be marked as “reviewed and approved” on website.

IT policy – Cllr Graeme Watt to make a few changes and will re-present at July meeting for approval.

26.20 Annual Parish Meeting – no matters arising from this that haven’t already been dealt with. Cllr Graeme Watt was thanked for organising the Flooding Roadshow, which went well

26.21 Date of next meeting: Thursday, 16th July at 7.30pm

One MoP expressed gratitude to the Parish Council for their continued work.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.