

# Stoke St Mary Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Stoke St Mary held on Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025, at Stoke St Mary Village Hall at 7.30pm

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**Councillors Present:** Cllrs Colin Fisher (Chair), Dan Fallance, Patricia Fallance (Vice Chair), Rob Hossell, Graeme Watt, Tania Watt

**Apologies:** None received

**In attendance:** Cllr Sarah Wakefield (Somerset Council) (SC)  
14 Members of Public (MOP)  
Clerk – Sarah Fisher

1. The Chair welcomed all present and thanked Councillors for their support and work over the last year
2. **Apologies** – none received
3. **Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting** (9<sup>th</sup> May 2024) were approved
4. **Review of 2024/25.**

**Traffic;** Shoreditch speed limit approved, awaiting implementation. Speed Indicator Device in progress, priority for Haydon but can be subsequently moved around the parish. Awaiting Memorandum of Understanding from SC, then will apply for funding to Avon & Somerset Police

**Roads;** potholes – fixing these are beyond PC skills and liability, but can be reported direct to SC via easy-to-use page on SC website (details on our website). Around 120 drains have now been cleared and work continues, will focus on where water should go/how to direct. Grant from Somerset River Authority will fund work on drainage around Stoke Road/Stoke Lane junction, up to Haydon Lane. Blocked underground drain at junction of Broughton Lane and Stoke Road – will seek a solution but may have to wait for SC to clear. Volunteers invited for work on drains and play area (and other things), and PC encourages MoP involvement. All activity is risk assessed and fully insured – please contact [Cllr.Graeme.Watt@stokestmaryparish.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.Graeme.Watt@stokestmaryparish.gov.uk) to volunteer

**Play area;** project now complete, PC looking for volunteers to help with routine maintenance programme (cleaning equipment, hedge cutting, varnishing).

**Devolution/Local Community Networks (LCNs)** – Chair reiterated that SC almost bankrupt with a much reduced workforce, so PCs will continue to take on more responsibilities. Our LCN area needs review/change as area is not working, despite best efforts of LCN Chair.

**Pub;** Chair acknowledged that having a functioning pub was a very positive thing

**Church;** Chair wished to mark the fact that our Church, now without a rector, is a valued part of village life

**A358** – confirmed as not going ahead. SC have said they would campaign for a Henlade bypass.

**Taylor Wimpey** – Cllr Hossell explained that the recent planning appeal for 130 homes in Ruishton went in developers' favour, largely because SC's Local Plan is now out-dated, and

has lost status, (new one due Mar 2029) and, as Cllr Wakefield pointed out, due to the fact Somerset does not have sufficient housing supply for 5 year plan.

**Higher Broughton Farm Barns** – Crown Estate confirmed recently they were progressing plans and expect to have more detailed designs available in June.

**New website/emails;** new website (required for compliance) now up and running and will be developed further. Councillors all have dedicated gov.uk email addresses.

## 5. Issues facing the parish 2025/26

**Flooding;** SRA grant (see “Roads” above) should reduce flooding at key points in Stoke Road.

**Planning;** absence of a Somerset Local Plan is a key problem in controlling developers. Chair feels we should be encouraging small scale development (eg Higher Broughton Farm Barns) which enhances villages, but does not change them. “Call For Sites” – c 1500 sites came forward in Somerset and we expect to be vulnerable to development by major developers. SSM PC campaigning for PCs to be involved in review of sites before review is finalised and a “10%” campaign, which focusses on limiting growth within rural villages to 10% over the next 5 years. Also intend to gain “Area of Local Landscape Value” status for Blackdown Vale, which might offer protection from developers, but help needed on this campaign.

**Footpaths;** PC has a duty to conserve ROWs. Volunteers needed

**Reporting;** PC will try to raise awareness amongst MoPs on how to report issues to SC. Details will be on our website.

## 6. Parishioners Forum

- An MoP raised the issue of communications, pointing out the website is passive. Discussion followed but it was felt that the already established village Whatsapp group was the best communication channel, for enlisting volunteers, promoting events, alerts, etc. (Post meeting note – the Whatsapp group is an open group but members need to be invited by existing members. If you would like to be invited please contact [clerk@stokestmaryparish.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@stokestmaryparish.gov.uk))
- Cllr Wakefield reported;
  - o Quality of road repairs improved with new contractor
  - o SC made budget this year but deficit next year, further savings required
  - o New staffing structure in place, expect to see some improvements
  - o Council tax still lower than other areas
  - o SC determined to keep afloat and to avoid bankruptcy
- An MoP acknowledged the improvements to the play area but suggested that having the bench under the tree was not practical (bird droppings), and the positioning of the bench made supervising children difficult. Chair responded that all equipment had been sited on expert advice, but PC will look at it again.
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The Chair thanked Cllr Wakefield for all her hard work.

The Chair thanked all present for attending and the meeting closed at 8.30pm.