

Stoke St Mary Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of Stoke St Mary Parish Council held on Thursday, 16th July 2026, at Stoke St Mary Village Hall, at 7.30pm

Public Session

There were three Members of Public (MoPs) present.

Written question received: *As an Ex-chair of Shinfield Parish Council, south of the M4 at Reading which took 4000 new homes and is adjacent to a further 4000 in Arborfield which have been developed over the last 15 years, I would like to ask how is the Parish Council is going to work with Somerset Council and Wimpey Homes to maximise the benefits and limit the disadvantages to the existing and future community through master planning and phasing of the delivery of housing, physical infrastructure, green infrastructure, and community facilities, etc.*

There was a long discussion about Plan A (total objection) vs Plan B (mitigation). The Parish Council (PC) position is that it will deal with a planning application or a masterplan when either is published. Until then, the PC's view is neutral. The PC thanked the MoP and welcomed his input, noting his involvement would be most welcome in future.

Cllr Wakefield referred Cllrs to her recently circulated report, and also made some points concerning the ex Crown Estate land, following questions raised at a recent meeting of the Save The Blackdown Vale campaign. 1. The consultation period is unlikely to be extended due to staffing issues and deadlines. 2. The landscape value impact assessment will be taken into account site by site, not county-wide. 3. Visual Landscape Impact Assessment would be done for each approved site before Sept 2027. 4. Further engagement opportunities – workshops available for larger settlements. 5. It is too early to say whether the land will or won't be included in SC development plan (this was in the context of there being 165k potential houses in the call for sites, vs target of 75k). Cllr Wakefield noted that SC's planning consultation was not intended for Parish Councillors (see item 26.27) but more for planners. Cllr Wakefield agreed to query the buffer zone for National Parks and National Landscapes.

Cllr Wakefield left the meeting at 8pm, the Chair thanked her for her support.

26.22 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)

26.23 Declarations of Interest – none

26.24 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2026 were circulated in advance of the meeting and were approved and signed by the Chair

26.25 Finance

a) Balances (as at 15th May 2026)

Current A/c:	£2,447.93
Deposit A/c:	£9205.14
95 Day notice A/c:	£7,167.76

Cllr Tania Watt confirmed these balances as correct.

b) Expenditure approval:	£
i. Parsons Landscape inv 18823	129.10
ii. Parsons Landscapes inv 18886	252.48
iii. Parish Online annual sub website/email	336.00

All above expenditure was APPROVED

26.26 Discussion of Local Government Association Civility & Respect Document “Bias and redetermination” – Cllr Graeme Watt reminded the PC that it remain balanced and not allow personal views to influence decision making. He made three proposals: a) councillors should exercise a degree of self-control, b) reaffirm support for the clerk in his/her challenges c) be welcoming and tolerant (not reactive) to the Chair. Chair proposed a vote on these proposals – **approved NEM COM**

26.27 New Town/Taylor Wimpey – this matter was also covered under “public session”. Update on Freedom of information (FOI) requests; 1. Chair’s FOI based on concerns about broken promises on HELAA timings; will complain to ICO about response to his FOI but has to wait 40 working days. 2. Cllr Hossell reported that after a long delay, he received 81 documents which he will review. He asked for an internal review of the redactions. Clerk reminded PC that these FOIs were generated because the PC had not been approached yet by either Taylor Wimpey (despite their claims otherwise) or Somerset Council. Chair proposed a resolution: which was discussed and **approved NEM COM**, with some amendments as follows:

“Stoke St Mary Parish Council considers that the HELAA/consultation process has been designed to exclude proper scrutiny by the people affected by development.

- *The delay in publishing the HELAA, scheduled for September 2025, but not published until the last possible day in June 2026, and three days before the consultation was published, enabled developers to push forward their plans while we, and those we represent, were left ignorant*
- *The publication of a 500+ page set of documents with a five-week window of consultation is designed to preclude any but professional opinion*
- *A questionnaire blatantly designed to produce answers fundamentally favourable to large-scale development will, if anyone responds, be illegitimate before the results are published.*

We will register our concerns and share this resolution with other Parish Councils and Somerset Council”

Clerk had received a request from Campaign to Save The Blackdown Vale campaign group for a donation towards costs. Cllr Tania Watt expressed concerns regarding independence/bias, and PC approved a contribution of £500 **dependent on advice sought from Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC).**

26.28 Clerk’s report/action list from previous meeting –

Update on planning enforcement notices: Cllr Wakefield had responded to our request for these notices to be reinstated (and sent to PCs). Cllr Wakefield observed that planning enforcement activity is rare and the planning team are unlikely to take on more responsibilities than they currently have, in terms of alerting us to these notices.

Consider request by MoP for parcel delivery box in SSM – the PC felt this was impractical on a number of levels; the PC doesn’t own a suitable site, such a service usually exists in a manned shop or retail outlet, and the PC does not have spare resource for managing it. Clerk will respond to MoP.

26.29 Councillor Portfolio Reports –

Staff – Cllr Tania Watt reported that national pay award for 2026/27 has still not yet been announced but will be backdated to April 2026.

Finance – nothing to add to item 26.29

Volunteers – Cllr Graeme Watt reported there had been one volunteer activity, clearing a ditch at Stoke Lane/Stoke Road junction, which proved effective. Heat has restricted further activities.

Drainage/flood control – Cllr Graeme Watt reported that the Somerset Rivers Authority Part B work will be completed end July.

Highways – nothing to report.

Traffic – Chair reported there are plans to download data from Haydon Speed Indicator Device (SID). SA potential second SID (on Corfe Road) is now in the hands of Neroche PC who apparently have funding for this.

Rights of Way – nothing to report

Play Area – some minor issues with lid to litter bin, this is in hand, and the relocating of the picnic table has been well received.

Village Hall – bookings remain low. Significant costs ahead re double glazing and curtain replacement. Some negative comments had been made about pop-up pub bookings causing some upset, and Cllr Dan Fallance apologised for this, indicating this was unintended. Cost of hall hire for Save The Blackdown Vale campaign will be waived.

Police – Cllr Dan Fallance confirmed there is a new digital online police reporting system. Major incident in Bridgwater otherwise quiet.

Local Community Networks (LCNs)/devolution – Last meeting (AGM) took place last week but Chair was unable to attend (and there was no option to attend remotely). Chair believes LCN 18 will be abandoned.

Half Moon Inn – SC have accepted nomination of pub as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) which gives the community “right to bid” if it is put on the market. ACV lasts five years, and will run to 14th July 2031.

Taunton Garden Town Advisory Board (TG TAB)– Cllr Pow due to attend next meeting tomorrow. Cllr Pow will ask if there is any written policy that guards against reputational risk (re branding) of TGT vs the Taylor Wimpey plans.

26.30 Planning – Cllr Hossell reported he had that morning received notice of an Environmental Impact Assessment for the Nexus 25 site (submitted by Summerfield Developments). Cllr Hossell will monitor.

26.31 To confirm revised IT policy (carried forward from May meeting). All councillors approved the policy, with some minor typo amendments.

26.32 Date of next meeting: Thursday, 17th September at 7.30pm

The meeting closed at 8.57 pm.