

# STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



50 Pepys Way, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3LL

## MINUTES

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026

Parish Council Meeting

Village Hall ~ 7.00pm

Attendees: Cllr J. Wallace ~ Chair Cllr P. Dumke ~ Vice Chair  
Cllr J. Bansil Cllr S. Back  
Cllr S. Hall Cllr T. Hall  
Ward Cllr M. Pearce Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: One (1)

### **PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

The Chair, Cllr. J. Wallace, opened the meeting at 7.00 pm and thanked the Parish Councillors & members of the public for attending.

#### **Part A. Public Discussions**

- A member of the public asked whether the Parish Council would object to the 350 homes that were being proposed in Allhallows. They also asked regarding school placements, as it was known that all of the Peninsula's schools were currently oversubscribed.

Concerned that the peninsula's infrastructure was already struggling to meet its existing capacity, Cllr. S. Back confirmed that he would be pleased to file an objection in his capacity as flood warden.

- A further enquiry was raised concerning a blocked drain outside a property in Middle Stoke.
- Finally, the Clerk raised concerns regarding the closure of the A228 Grain Road at the Grain Level Crossing from Sunday 15 February to Monday 16 February, noting that this coincided with planned works on the Ratcliffe Highway. She advised that this was likely to result in significant traffic being diverted through the village.

#### **Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items**

None.

The meeting opened at 7.15pm.

##### **1. Apologies for absence**

Min 9507:25 It was noted that Cllr P. Dumke had sent his apologies by SMS prior to the meeting; however, no reason for his absence had been provided.

##### **2. To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations,**

**To receive Declarations of Interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of officers. To consider any dispensation requests received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered.**

Min 9508:25 None.

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## 3. Minutes of the last meeting

### a). To receive and approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025.

**Min 9509:25** The members confirmed that they had received the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday, 3 December 2025.

It was proposed by Cllr S. Back and seconded by Cllr S. Hall that the minutes be approved as a correct record. The motion was unanimously agreed.

## 4. Matters arising from the minutes (not otherwise on the agenda)

**Min 9510:25** Following the recent tree surgery works, the Clerk expressed concern that she had not yet received a copy of the contractor's invoice. In response, Cllr S. Hall advised that he would follow up with the contractor to ensure it was forwarded to her.

The Clerk also attested to having received the external auditor's invoice and confirmed that she would arrange for its payment.

## 5. Medway Councillor report

### a). To receive an update on the most recent Medway Council news from Ward Cllr M. Pearce.

**Min 9511:25** Speaking, Ward Cllr M. Pearce expressed his gratitude to the Parish Council for inviting him to attend and discussed a number of items, which included:

- The closure of the A228/Grain Road at the Grain level crossing which was scheduled to take place on Sunday 15th February through to Monday 16th February. Where he understood that the emergency services would have access to the village at all times and a shuttle bus would be in operation.
- The aforementioned planning application for Allhallows, where he disclosed that due to his position as a member of the Medway Council's Planning Committee, he could not pass comment; however, he would be closely studying the developers' proposed buffer zones and policies.
- Confirmation that Medway Council had recently submitted their local plan, which he believed would be the focus of an investigation and a two-inspector inspection later this year. He added that he was in the midst of setting up a Hoo Peninsula Parish Meeting to discuss this matter and that Regulation 19 was yet to be consulted on.
- Confirmation that a new national planning policy framework was being introduced, where the updated policy was currently being consulted on with a deadline of 11.45pm on Tuesday, 10th March 2026.
- Confirmation that he had requested a road safety audit to be carried out on Stoke Road and that he was still awaiting the results from the unitary authority.
- He addressed the concerns that the school bus service from Lower Stoke to the Peninsula East Primary School in Allhallows was being stopped in September, where he disclosed that he was now in talks with the Leigh Academies Trust.
- Finally, he provided an update on the Lower Stoke Car Park, noting that settlement discussions were progressing and that Medway Council would shortly be preparing the final agreement documents.

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Ward Cllr M. Pearce thanked everyone who signed the "Save the Lower Stoke Car Park" petition.

A discussion regarding the car park followed, during which members considered the placement of a grit bin within the car park. They also discussed preparing a public announcement about the purchase of the Lower Stoke Car Park to be shared on social media and on the Parish Council's website.

Cllr M. Pearce concluded his report by reminding members that he would receive his new Ward Improvement Fund at the beginning of the new financial year and encouraged the Parish Council to contact him should they require financial support for their proposed new grit bin.

## 6. Tasks agreed at the last meeting

### a). **To receive an update on the tasks agreed at the last meeting.**

Min 9512:25 The members discussed the list of tasks from the last meeting.

It was agreed that Cllr J. Bansil would recreate the posters advertising the outstanding vacancy using Canva and forward the updated version to the Clerk for display on the Parish Council's noticeboards and on social media.

The members also learnt that Cllr J. Wallace and Cllr S. Back would be meeting a contractor at the Heron Way Playpark to discuss the installation of some possible new play equipment utilising a grant and assess the recent work following the repainting the existing apparatus.

Finally, the members discussed the proposed road closures and the introduction of a one-way system. Concerns were expressed that the local MP might not be receptive to their suggestions. It was agreed that the Clerk would review previous correspondence and obtain the contact details for the MP's Communications Officer, Mr C. Nettleingham-Ryan, to enquire whether support could be provided.

## 7. Planning

### a). **Applications**

Min 9513:25 Cllr J. Wallace acknowledged receipt of the new planning application, which had been submitted since the last Parish Council meeting.

- **MC/25/2353 - 9 Coronation Cottages, The Street**  
**Change of use of grass verge to a vehicle crossover and hardstanding.**

Following a brief discussion, the members decided that they would make no comment.

The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, reported that she had recently experienced difficulty accessing the Upper Stoke noticeboard due to a resident parking a vehicle directly in front of it. She queried why residents were not making use of on-street parking or converting their front gardens into parking bays, as proposed in the current application.

A discussion followed, and it was agreed that a notice should be placed on the Upper Stoke noticeboard advising that access to the board is required at all times.

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## b). Decisions

Min 9514:25 The parish council members acknowledged receipt of two (2) new decisions.

### Discharge of Conditions

- **MC/25/2257 - Land At Court Lodge, Farmhouse, The Street**

### Refusal

- **MC/25/2257 - Land At Court Lodge, Farmhouse, The Street**

## c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 9515:25 None.

## 8. Finance

### a). Bank balances

Min 9516:25 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace, referred members to the bank statements included in their meeting packs and guided them through the account balances, as detailed below:

Date	Account	Balance
16/01/2026	Current Account	£2,070.42
16/01/2026	Deposit Account	£42,763.84

### b). To agree the financial performance against the budget for December 2025.

Min 9517:25 The members carefully evaluated the Parish Council's financial performance against the budget for December 2025. After a brief discussion they concluded that the balances were acceptable.

### c). Accounts paid since the last meeting to be ratified.

Min 9518:25 The members evaluated the payments made since the last meeting, where they agreed that these payments were acceptable.

### d). Accounts for payment.

Min 9519:25 After careful consideration, the below payments were accepted, having been proposed by Cllr S. Back, seconded by Cllr T. Hall and unanimously agreed.

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Staff Wages	Min 1436:18 (JA) Min 8014:24 (JB)	PAID BY BACS	£780.74	December 25 Wages (JA & JB)
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£234.70	Tax & NI charges (November 2025)
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home December 2025
Staff Wages	Min 1436:18 (JA) Min 8014:24 (JB)	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£780.74	January 26 Wages (JA & JB)
HMRC	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£234.70	Tax & NI charges (January 2026)
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home January 2026
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£58.59	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for December 2025
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£58.59	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for January 2026
Mr J. Treveil	Min 7703:23	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£130.00	Deep Clean of all three (3) play parks INV: 1299

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Safeplay	Min 5077:21	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£5,310.00	Repainting of Heron Way Play Park INV: 32006
TLC	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY CARD	£42.90	Additional batteries for xmas lights INV: 18756454
Mrs M. Cooper	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Grinch Visit @ Xmas Lights Switch On INV: 002
Pick a posy	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY CARD	£54.95	Chairman Christmas Present INV: IN7017
Amazon	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY CARD	£48.20	100 x Foam Glow Sticks INV: 204-3969141-2757126
Stoke Community Project	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY BACS	£150.00	Seniors Afternoon Tea Event INV: 29/11/2025
Mr S. Back	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY BACS	£50.98	Wheelbarrow & Sandbag Sacks INV: TBC
B&Q	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY CARD	£202.35	15 x Bags of Rock Salt INV: 1059022946
Amazon	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY CARD	£33.97	Laptop charger + Stationery INV: 204-6368106-4046703
Go Cardless	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	DIRECT DEBIT	£23.99	Stoke Parish Council Hugo Fox Website INV:TBC
Go Cardless	Min 8095:24	DIRECT DEBIT	£20.99	Hugo Fox Email Package INV: TBC
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£66.42	Broadband, Landline & Mobile Telephone line rental for December 2025
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£8,387.81</b>	

## e). Reserves & Forward Planning

### f). Additional costs

### g). Budgets

### h). Projects

Min 9520:25 The members carried out a thorough review of the figures for Reserves and Forward Planning, including additional costs and proposed projects. The Clerk was asked to make the following amendments to the budget figures.

Income	2025/2026	2026/2027	Percentage Increase
Bank Interest	£850.00	£250.00	-70.59
Other Income	£0.00	£600.00	100%
Expenditure	2025/2026	2026/2027	Percentage Increase
Staff Salaries	£11,314.00	£9,800.00	-13.38%
Stationery & Postage	£1,200.00	£800.00	-33.33%
Village Hall Maintenance	£1,000.00	£0.00	-100%
Sundries	£1,000.00	£2,000.00	100%
Cleaning	£1,700.00	£1,200.00	-29.41%
Car Park Cleaning	£0.00	£300.00	100%
Car Park Rates	£850.00	£2,000.00	135.29%
Street Cleaning Equipment	£650.00	£200.00	-69.23%

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## **i). 2026/2027 Precept**

**Min 9521:25** The members held an in-depth discussion regarding the Parish Council's finances, with particular focus on the situation relating to the Lower Stoke Car Park.

After exploring all available borrowing options—including a potential loan from the Local Government Loan Board and the possibility of borrowing directly from Medway Council over an extended term—it was concluded that the most cost-effective approach would be to utilise the interest-free loan period offered by Medway Council. This would be arranged over four years to align with the renewal of the Parish Council's next tenancy agreement.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr S. Hall, and seconded by Cllr T. Hall, that the Parish Council request an increase of £15,000 to this year's precept, resulting in a total precept of £48,300.00. The proposal was unanimously agreed, and the members and Clerk duly signed the precept form.

## **9. Management of Land and Property**

**a). To receive the play park inspection report from the month of December 2025 for:**

**i). The Button Drive Playpark (Lower Stoke).**

**ii). The Heron Way Playpark (Lower Stoke).**

**iii). The Street Playpark (Upper Stoke).**

**Min 9522:25** It was noted that there had been no change in the condition of the play equipment since the previous inspection.

A further discussion took place regarding the forthcoming meeting and obtaining a grant for the Heron Way play park.

**b). Heron Way Play Park Fencing**

**Min 9523:25** The Clerk confirmed that she had spoken with Mr. K. Mortley prior to the Parish Council meeting, and he had advised that he and his team were aiming to complete the repairs to the back fence over the coming weeks.

## **10. Highways, Transport & Upkeep**

**To receive any reports relating to:**

**a). Footpaths**

**Min 9524:25** It was noted that Cllr S. Back continued to pursue MHS Homes regarding the footpath in Lower Stoke, which runs between Heron Way and the High Street. However, members understood that no works were likely to be carried out until the next financial year.

**b). Lighting**

**Min 9525:25** No report.

**c). Highways and verges**

**Min 9526:25** No report.

**d). Pot holes**

**Min 9527:25** Cllr S. Back informed members that he had recently documented the large potholes and forwarded the photographic evidence to the Clerk for reporting to Medway Council.

**e). Fly tipping & Street Cleaning**

**Min 9528:25** No report.

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**f). Grass cutting**

Min 9529:25 With permission from the Chairman, Ward Cllr M. Pearce spoke to confirm he was still trying to assist the parish council in regaining control of their green spaces for the forthcoming financial year.

**g). Leaking manhole cover on A228 / Grain Road**

Min 9530:25 No report.

**h). Noticeboards.**

Min 9530:25 No report.

**i). Heron Way Play Park repainting**

Min 9531:25 Please refer to item 6A, ref: Min 9512:25 .

**11. Communications**

To receive an update on the following methods of communication:

**a). Website.**

Min 9532:25 No report.

**b). Social media page.**

Min 9533:25 No report.

**12. Internal Committee Updates**

**a). Neighbourhood Plan**

Min 9534:25 No report.

**b). Stoke Village Hall**

Min 9535:25 No report.

**c). Stoke Community Project**

Min 9536:25 No report was received; however, members noted that the Stoke Community Project had been very active towards the end of last year and had several events planned for later this year.

**13. External Committee Updates**

**a). KALC.**

Min 9537:25 The Clerk was asked to continue seeking confirmation of the date for the next KALC meeting.

**b). Rural Liaison Board**

Min 9538:25 It was understood that the next Rural Liaison Board meeting was due to be held during March.

**c). SSE**

Min 9539:25 The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, reported that the most recent SSE meeting had taken place and that the Clerk would be advised of the outcome of the grant application in due course.

**14. Contractor Works**

Min 9540:25 Cllr S. Hall confirmed that he would follow up with the tree surgeons and request that they forward a copy of their invoice to the Clerk.

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15. **Correspondence**

**a). Public Toilets – Lower Stoke**

**Min 9541:25** The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, reported that she had recently received confirmation that the ladies’ toilets had been vandalised, resulting in the facility being closed.

Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk should write to Medway Norse to enquire whether the toilets had since been reopened and to request details of the extent of the damage.

16. **Events**

**a). Christmas 2026**

**Min 9542:25** The members held a discussion regarding the 2025 Christmas Lights Switch-On event and agreed that planning should begin earlier this year with the aim of making the event bigger and more engaging.

It was agreed that Cllr J. Wallace and Cllr J. Bansil would form an events working group and keep members updated on their plans and ideas.

17. **Date of next meeting**

**Min 9543:25** The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace, spoke to remind everyone that the next Parish Council Meeting would take place on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March at 7.00pm in the Village Hall.

18. **Section 100A(4)**

**Min 9544:25** It was noted that there was no requirement to vote under Section 100A(4), as there was no longer a need to discuss any matters in closed session.

19. **Confidential Matters**

**To receive an update on the following matters:**

**a). Doctors Surgery Update**

**Min 9545:25** The members noted that management of the Doctor’s Surgery had now been taken back over by the Village Hall Committee, and that this had been reflected within their recent reports.

**b). Lower Stoke Car Park Lease**

**Min 9546:25** Please refer to the discussion held under item 8i, ref **Min 9521:25**.

20. **Close of meeting**

**Min 9547:25** The Chair, Cllr. J. Wallace, closed the meeting at 8.37pm and thanked the everyone for attending.

**The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:**

<b>Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026 Parish Council Meeting</b>	<b>7.00pm</b>	<b>The Village Hall</b>
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## **Tasks agreed 21/01/2026**

Clerk to write to Medway Council to formally object to the proposed development of 350 new homes in Allhallows.

Ward Cllr M. Pearce to address concerns regarding the closure of the A228 Grain Road at the Grain Level Crossing and the part closure of the Ratcliffe Highway on the same dates.

Clerk to upload a copy of the Parish Council's approved minutes from Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025 onto the Parish Council's webpage.

Cllr S. Hall to chase contractor for invoice following recent tree surgery works.

Clerk to liaise with Cllr J. Basil regarding new poster for the Parish Council's outstanding vacancy.

Cllrs J. Wallace & S. Back to meet contractor at the Heron Way Recreation Ground to discuss possible grant and to inspect recent to play apparatus.

Clerk to contact Lauren Edwards Communications Officer to discuss the idea of a one-way system to assist with the management of traffic during planned road closures.

Clerk to place a notice in the Upper Stoke noticeboard to confirm that access to the board was required at all times.

Clerk to pay the agreed expenditure costs (including external auditor).

Clerk to send onto Medway Council a copy of the Parish Council's signed Precept form for the Financial Year 2026/2027.

Clerk to continue chasing contractors regarding final repairs to the Heron Way Recreation Ground back fence.

Clerk to ensure she has reported ALL the large potholes documented in Cllr S. Back's photographic evidence onto Medway Council.

Clerk to write to Medway Norse to regarding the closure and condition of the ladies' public toilets in Lower Stoke.

Clerk to continue liaising with Medway Council regarding the purchase of the Lower Stoke Car Park and its subsequent lease.

## **Tasks carried over**

Cllr S. Back to investigate the possibility of installing flashing speed signs in the village.

Cllr S. Back continue to chase MHS homes concerning the poor condition of the footpath between Heron Way & the High Street, in Lower Stoke.

Clerk to continue liaising with Ward Councillor M. Pearce regarding regaining control over the grass cutting at the Stoke Recreation Grounds.

Clerk to finalise access to the Parish Council email address for Cllr J. Bansil.

Clerk to chase for copy of KALC minutes from the last meeting and circulate to all members.