

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

MINUTES

Wednesday 1st April 2026

Parish Council Meeting

Village Hall ~ 7.00pm

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

Members of the public: Three (3)

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 discussion ensued regarding the number of potholes within the village, during which one member of the public reported that she had recently twisted her ankle as a result of one.

Complaints were also received concerning the size of the potholes on the High Street in Lower Stoke and New Hall Farm Lane, among other locations.
- A member of the public also asked whether Stoke Parish Council had been consulted regarding the recent road closures. A discussion ensued concerning the road closures on Allhallows Road, together with further pre-planned road closures for Ratcliffe Highway.

Parish Council members confirmed that they had not been consulted regarding any of the proposed road closures or associated road works. Further complaints were raised regarding the diversion of the bus service and the impact these diversions were having on local businesses.

In response, Cllr J. Bansil confirmed that she would be willing to write to Haven to formally raise her concerns in a personal capacity.
- Ward Cllr M. Pearce also addressed the meeting to advise that One Network roadworks were now showing on Medway Council's website, listed as ongoing works for a period of up to 12 months.
- Another member of the public asked whether a large increase in the Precept would become standard practice once the car park had been purchased in order to support ongoing maintenance costs. A discussion took place regarding future maintenance costs, including the possibility of applying for grants and the non-existence of Medway Council within the next couple of years due to the planned reorganisation.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items

None.

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The meeting opened at 7.25pm.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Min 9590:25 It was noted that, shortly before the meeting, Cllr P. Dumke had messaged members to offer his apologies for absence, although no reason was 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 9591:25 Cllr S. Back declared an interest, having recently been co-opted as a member of St Mary Hoo Parish Council.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting**

a). To receive and approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 4th March 2026.

Min 9592:25 The members confirmed that they had received the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday, 4th March 2026.

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 9593:25 Cllr S. Back spoke to address the purchase of a replacement defibrillator for Lower Stoke and confirmed that he had already discussed the matter with the Clerk. He made a number of recommendations regarding potential suppliers, and members reviewed their budgets to determine which budget heading could be utilised.

After careful consideration, it was proposed by Cllr S. Hall that the Clerk utilise £500 from the Defibrillator Maintenance Fund and £500 from the Personnel Equipment Fund. This proposal was seconded by Cllr T. Hall and was unanimously agreed.

5. **Vacancies**

a). To discuss the Parish Council's current outstanding vacancy.

Min 9594:25 It was noted that the Parish Council's new vacancy notice had been placed on the rear of the noticeboard. A vote of thanks was given to Cllr J. Wallace for her assistance in organising this.

6. **Medway Councillor report**

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

Min 9595:25 Ward Cllr M. Pearce thanked the Parish Council for inviting him to attend the meeting. He advised that, following the public session at the start of the meeting, he had made note of the potholes raised as matters of concern and intended to report these separately.

He also confirmed that he was willing to lend his support in writing to Haven to raise concerns regarding their ongoing roadworks and the disruption being caused.

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Cllr Pearce further addressed the meeting in relation to the Catesby application for 350 new dwellings in Allhallows, which had been submitted in January and was due to be considered at a planning committee meeting shortly. He asked for the meeting's support in opposing the application and referred to a template objection that had been drafted by the Alliance of Hoo Peninsula group.

He also spoke about Medway Council's Local Plan and the Save the Hoo Peninsula Fund, which had raised funds to support their campaign. He advised that this had enabled them to instruct a leading environmental solicitor to submit an objection to the Local Plan, raising serious concerns in a letter sent to the Planning Inspector on the 19th March.

He advised that, in view of these findings, it was unlikely that the Local Plan would be adopted this year, and a question was raised as to whether a further consultation would be required.

Cllr M. Pearce then addressed the Redrow development at High Halstow, which had recently been approved at a planning meeting, with eight (8) members voting in favour and six (6) against.

He understood that High Halstow Parish Council intended to proceed with a judicial review in order to challenge the application.

He also referred to two (2) planning appeals that had recently been submitted for new dwellings in Hoo, where he understood that the developers had allowed the applications to remain undetermined for an extended period.

7. **Tasks agreed at the last meeting** ~ Annex A

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

Min 9596:25 The members were advised that the Clerk was experiencing difficulty in obtaining a quotation from an online solicitor for the commercial purchase of the Lower Stoke Car Park and the subsequent renewal of the lease.

Following correspondence with the Men in Sheds group regarding the lack of public liability insurance for repairs to the wooden steps at Button Drive Playpark, the Clerk was instructed to obtain a quotation from Safeplay.

The Parish Councillors then discussed the ownership of the concrete blocks located in the Lower Stoke Car Park, and the Clerk was asked to investigate this matter further.

The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, read the Stoke Village Hall report, during which it was noted that the committee was required to arrange an electrical report. A copy of this report is included at Annex A.

Finally, the Clerk was instructed to chase the SSE grant, following its approval for the purchase of a new noticeboard for Middle Stoke.

8. **Planning**

a). Applications

Min 9597:25 None.

b). Decisions

Min 9598:25 None.

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c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 9599:25 None.

9. Finance

a). Bank balances

Min 9600:25 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
24/03/2026	Current Account	£2,714.21
24/03/2026	Deposit Account	£31,526.00

b). To agree the financial performance against the budget for March 2026.

Min 9601:25 The members carefully evaluated the Parish Council's financial performance against the budget for March 2026. After a brief discussion they concluded that the balances were acceptable.

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

Min 9602:25 The members evaluated the payments made since the last meeting, where they agreed that these payments were acceptable.

d). Accounts for payment.

Min 9603:25 After careful consideration, the below payments were accepted, having been proposed by Cllr S. Hall, seconded by Cllr S. Back and unanimously agreed.

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Staff Wages	Min 1436:18 (JA) Min 8014:24 (JB)	PAID BY BACS	£780.74	February 26 Wages (JA & JB)
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£234.70	Tax & NI charges (February 2026)
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home March 2026
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£58.58	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for April 2026
Mr J. Treveil	Min 7703:23	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£130.00	Deep Clean of all three (3) play parks INV: 1656
KALC	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£437.66	Annual Subscription 26/27 INV: 9996
Land Registry	Min 9576:25	PAID BY CARD	£7.00	Land Registry Search INV: 1000009481831
Go Cardless	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	DIRECT DEBIT	£23.99	Stoke Parish Council Hugo Fox Website INV: 23849
Go Cardless	Min 8095:24	DIRECT DEBIT	£20.99	Hugo Fox Email Package INV: 25067
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£67.64	Broadband, Landline & Mobile Telephone line rental for March 2026
TOTAL			£1,796.30	

e). Payment requests to be discussed for approval and payment.

Min 9604:25 None.

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10. Management of Land and Property

a). To receive the play park inspection report from the month of January & February 2026 for:

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

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

iii). The Street Playpark (Upper Stoke).

Min 9605:25 Cllr S. Back reported that there had been no change in the condition of the play equipment since the previous inspection. However, he commented that the weeds growing behind the fencing at Heron Way required cutting back.

b). Lower Stoke Car Park Lease

Min 9606:25 The Clerk was instructed to chase Medway Council and Mr N. Filmer for the necessary legal documentation in order to proceed with the purchase of the Lower Stoke Car Park and the renewal of its lease.

11. Highways, Transport & Upkeep

To receive any reports relating to:

a). Footpaths

Min 9607:25 Cllr S. Back commented that he was continuing to chase MHS Homes regarding the footpath in Lower Stoke.

b). Lighting

Min 9608:25 No report.

c). Highways and verges

Min 9609:25 No report.

d). Pot holes

Min 9610:25 It was acknowledged that Ward Cllr M. Pearce would assist the village by raising with Medway Council the numerous deep potholes highlighted during the public session, which had been reported on multiple occasions but remained unrepaired.

e). Fly tipping & Street Cleaning

Min 9611:25 Cllr S. Back raised concerns regarding fly-tipping of empty alcoholic drink cans and bottles at Hoppers Lane, Cuckolds Green Road and Stoke Road. He advised that, following discussions at the most recent St Mary Hoo Parish Council meeting, he understood that the local authority was in the process of arranging camera traps in an attempt to identify the culprit(s).

f). Grass cutting

Min 9612:25 The meeting learnt that the contractors who had assisted with the maintenance of the green spaces during the previous financial year were not able to support the Parish Council this year.

In light of this, members agreed to continue using Medway Norse, while noting that additional cuts or the trimming of excess vegetation may need to be arranged between Medway Norse's scheduled visits.

g). Leaking manhole cover on A228 / Grain Road

Min 9613:25 A discussion took place regarding the ongoing leaking manhole cover on the A228/Grain Road. It was felt that the leak had worsened and, as a result, the cover appeared to be rattling out of position.

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h). Noticeboards.

Min 9614:25 The Clerk was instructed to accept the quotation previously obtained for the new noticeboard, following confirmation that the grant application had been approved.

12. Communications

To receive an update on the following methods of communication:

a). Website.

Min 9615:25 Cllr J. Wallace confirmed that her Parish Council email account was now functioning correctly, and the Clerk was instructed to circulate the passwords to all members.

b). Social media page.

Min 9616:25 No report.

13. Internal Committee Updates

a). Neighbourhood Plan

Min 9617:25 The Clerk confirmed that she had requested an up-to-date report on the Neighbourhood Plan from Ms E. Hookway; however, no response had been received in time for the meeting.

b). Stoke Village Hall

Min 9618:25 The members were referred to Annex A for a copy of the report that was read out under item 7(a).

c). Stoke Community Project

Min 9619:25 Similar to item 13(a), the Clerk had requested an update from Ms E. Hookway; however, no response had been received in time for the meeting.

14. External Committee Updates

a). KALC.

Min 9620:25 The Clerk confirmed that she had contacted KALC a week prior to the meeting to establish when the next Medway Regional Meeting would be held; however, no response had been received.

b). Rural Liaison Board

Min 9621:25 Cllr S. Hall referred to the message he had circulated on the 5th March, which included copies of the latest presentations from the Rural Liaison Board.

c). SSE

Min 9622:25 The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, confirmed her understanding that the next SSE meeting was scheduled to take place in September.

15. Contractor Works

Min 9623:25 None.

16. Events

a). Christmas 2026

Min 9624:25 The members discussed the Christmas 2026 event in detail, during which it was unanimously agreed that a smaller tree of approximately 20 feet would be required.

Cllr J. Bansil advised that she had been in contact with the Family Hub and was awaiting confirmation as to whether they would be willing to assist with decorating the tree.

The Parish Councillors also discussed the possibility of inviting students from the Rivermead Trust school in Stoke to assist with the decorations.

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17. Date of next meeting

Min 9625:25 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace, reminded members that the Annual Parish Meeting, followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting, would take place on Wednesday 6 May, commencing at 7.00pm at Lower Stoke Village Hall. She invited all members and residents to attend.

Min 9626:25 Cllr S. Back responded to confirm that he would clarify his availability nearer the time, as he believed he already had alternative arrangements on that day.

18. Close of meeting

Min 9627:25 The Chair, Cllr. J. Wallace, closed the meeting at 8.15pm and thanked the everyone for attending.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 6th May 2026 Annual Parish Meeting	7.00pm	The Village Hall
Wednesday 6th May 2026 Annual Parish Council Meeting	7.40pm	The Village Hall

ANNEXES

ANNEX A

7a). Tasks agreed at the last meeting - To receive an update on the tasks agreed at the last meeting.

REF: **Min 9596:25**

GP Surgery Site

Marlowe Park Surgery were previously approached and subsequently arranged for the clearance of items from the site, with the exception of IT equipment.

No formal contract or Service Level Agreement has been identified to support legal recourse. The Parish Council is requested to confirm whether any such documentation is available.

NHS England has been contracted as the responsible body for the removal of the remaining IT equipment, and a collection date is currently awaited.

Further discussions with Marlowe Park Surgery regarding reinstatement of the building to its original condition, including repair of the damaged ceiling, have not progressed.

There has been some interest expressed in leasing the space, and this now being progressed:

Next Steps:

- Continue to liaise with NHS England regarding the removal of the IT equipment
- Continue to pursue Marlowe Park Surgery in relation to required repairs
- Arrange for volunteers to undertaking ceiling repairs
- Promote and advertise the space for community use

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Community Hall Improvements

Funding has been secured and work has commenced to support essential improvements to the hall.

Wherever possible, local contractors have been engaged to deliver the required works, thereby supporting the local community.

To date, funding has been applied for and/or allocated to the following projects:

- Replacement and upgrade of the ladies' and gentleman's toilets facilities
- Repainting of the hall and sanding of the hall floor
- Upgrade of hall seating, including the provision of high-back chairs and sensory pods
- Replacement of double fire doors – funding received works in progress
- Upgrade of window coverings from curtains to blinds, funding received. Works in progress

Additional Points to highlight

The enhancements to the village hall and lease of the GP Surgery are planned and will assist with increasing the loan payments from The Parish Council for the roof repairs.

There is intention to increase the revenue through these avenues, which will allow us to increase the monthly payments.

Tasks agreed 01/04/2026

Cllr J. Bansil to write to Haven to formally raise her concerns regarding ongoing roadworks.

Clerk to upload a copy of the Parish Council's approved minutes from Wednesday 4th March 2026 onto the Parish Council's webpage.

Clerk to organise the purchase of a replacement defibrillator for Lower Stoke.

Ward Cllr M. Pearce write to Haven to also raise concerns regarding the ongoing roadworks.

Clerk to circulate template objection letter for the Catesby application for 350 new dwellings in Allhallows.

Clerk to obtain quotation from Safeplay for repairs to the wooden steps at Button Drive Playpark.

Clerk to speak chase contractors to confirm ownership of concrete blocks in Lower Stoke Car Park.

Clerk to chase SSE for the new balance of grant funding.

Clerk to pay the agreed expenditure costs.

Cllr S. Back to cut the weeds growing behind the fencing at Heron Way.

The Clerk to chase Medway Council and Mr N. Filmer for the necessary legal documentation for the purchase of the Lower Stoke Car Park and the renewal of its lease.

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Ward Cllr M. Pearce to report the numerous deep potholes highlighted during the public session, to Medway Council.

Clerk to accept the quotation previously obtained for the new noticeboard in Middle Stoke.

Clerk to circulate the replacement passwords for the Stoke Parish Council email addresses to all members.

Clerk to chase for an update on the Neighbourhood Plan.

Clerk to chase for an update from the Stoke Community Project.

Cllr J. Bansil to continue liaising with the Family Hub regarding the decoration of the December 2026 Christmas tree.

Clerk to organise and invite all village groups and societies to the Annual Parish Council Meeting, due to be held on Wednesday 6 May.

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 gaining permission to mount a noticeboard on the green triangle in Middle Stoke

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

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 continue liaising with Medway Norse to regarding the ongoing condition of the ladies' public toilets in Lower Stoke.

Clerk to obtain quotes from online solicitors to support the purchase of the Lower Stoke Car Park and the renewal of its lease.