

# STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

## DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Annual Parish Meeting ~ 7.00 pm

Lower Stoke Methodist Church

Attendees: Cllr J. Wallace (Chair) Cllr P. Dumke (Vice-chair)  
Cllr N. Blown Cllr K. Mansell  
Cllr S. Back Cllr S. Hall  
Cllr T. Hall Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: Eight (8)

The meeting commenced at 7.05 pm.

### 1. Welcome by the Chairman

The Chairman, Cllr J Wallace, opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

### 2. Minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting 2024

**To receive the last minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting, held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024.**

The minutes from the Annual Parish meeting, held on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024, were submitted.

Following careful consideration, it was proposed by Cllr S. Back, seconded by Cllr T. Hall, and unanimously resolved that the document be approved as a true record of the meeting.

### 3. The Parish Council

**To receive a report from the Parish Chairman on the events and activities of the Parish Council during the last year.**

The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, spoke and provided the following report :

*We started the year still with a full complement for the Council. Each of the members have proven invaluable to the team bringing their own support in many ways.*

*Shane Back for his dedication to the flood and snow warden responsibilities. We now have flood signs dotted about advising people of the key areas of problems. He also has sited many grit bins and keeps them topped up for use in icy conditions. He is also a qualified First Aider and attends our local events in that supporting role.*

*Nigel Blown for his ability to always provide good input in all decision making.*

*Shaun and Tommy Hall for providing sound judgements on certain issues and there when physical help is needed.*

*Karen Mansell for her indigenous checking of minutes and figures and common sensical approach to items requiring decisions.*

*Paul Dumke for being vice chair and again for providing sound judgement.*

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*With the increase in our precept last year we were able to afford the street cleaner - John – who can be seen around the villages Monday to Thursday litter picking to keep the areas neat and tidy. We are very grateful for his continued support.*

*We would also like to confirm that the Parish Council has installed several new grit/salt bins around the parish to help residents during periods of ice and snow.*

*We were also pleased to install a new solar- and wind-powered defib cabinet in Middle Stoke, which will help ensure this vital piece of equipment remains available and operational for community use.*

*We were recently approached by the village Hall committee regarding the roof which is showing signs of deterioration. Unfortunately, they do not have the funds to replace this and asked for our help. We had a sum of money that we have been saving over the last couple of years for improvement to the play park in Heron Way but have agreed to cover initial costs on the roof which will be eventually shared with the Village Hall. We are in the final stages of agreeing a contractor to do this due to the varying quotes required and difficulties in obtaining them.*

*There has also been an issue with the fencing at Heron Way Recreation Ground, which the Parish Council is aware of and is working to resolve.*

*The Doctors Surgery at the Village Hall is now being vacated and we are awaiting confirmation of a date for all the items to be cleared. We will then be in a position to look at how this can now be utilised to provide income to the Village Hall. We also mark the retirement of the Postmaster at the end of March and would like to thank them for their many years of service to the village.*

*The Christmas Light Switch-On event was bigger and better than last year and was very well supported by the community, with the addition of the tractors proving especially popular.*

*The latest issue we have encountered is the Village Car Park that has now been placed on a disposal register at Medway Council. We are running a petition to request that it is not sold for development but given to the Village who will take ownership and maintain it.*

*We understand that the school will re-open in September this year for the much-needed SEN facility by Rivermead Trust. Although we are still sad for our loss of a local Village school there are some in the community who could benefit from this as it enables the Trust to add to their capacity in years 7 & 8. We wish them every success in this next stage.*

*Finally, the Parish Council would like to pass on its sincere thanks to the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, who have been busy working in the background on this important work.*

#### **4. Financial Situation**

##### **To receive a report from the Stoke Parish Council Chairman on the Parish Council's Financial situation**

The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, advised that due to the replacement of the Village Hall roof, the Parish Council's reserves had depleted to £11,500. However, the Parish Council was expecting a VAT refund of approximately £5,000, which would equate to reserves of circa £16,000.

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She closed her report by confirming that the Parish Council had again requested a slight increment on the 2025/2026 Precept, which it was hoped would be used towards improvements at the Heron Way Recreation Ground, where it was noted that the flooring required attention.

## 5. Community Reports

### **To receive reports from community groups in Stoke.**

The following eight (8) community reports were read.

#### **1). Peninsula Men's Shed**

The Men's Shed project is now in its fourth year of operation. It is hosted by the Peninsula Methodist Church in the Chapel in Lower Stoke on generous terms which have made it possible to develop a really well equipped wood workshop which provides scope for a range of projects.

We have some twenty or so registered members in the age range from sixties to early nineties and average weekly attendance is about twelve. We welcome anyone with an interest and our current regulars are drawn from around the peninsula - Stoke, Belunclle, Hoo, High Halstow and Frindsbury. Although we are a Men's Shed, and a member of the Men's Shed Association UK, ladies are also welcome if they wish to come and we are currently considering whether and how we might make our facilities more accessible and attractive to them.

Although woodwork is our reason (excuse) for coming together, a number of our members have conditions that make it difficult or impossible to work at a bench, or use big machines. However, for them it is a place of common interest and community and lively debate, tea, coffee, biscuits and the sharing of skills/craft knowledge. We meet every Tuesday, from 9.30 a.m. and generally end our sessions by having a little light lunch together. Everyone who attends is invited to make a donation of £5.00 per session if they are able to do so but it is an important part of our social philosophy that lack of means should never be a bar to joining in.

For many of the members the Shed has been an important source of new friendships and mutual support - not just in terms of skill sharing but in the wider social context of looking out and caring for each other. Because of the value and importance of this social network aspect of the project we are now working on trying to develop our social facilities to the same high standard as our technical ones.

It has always been our ambition to work with other community groups and we have links with the Stoke Community Project, have invited children in to do some holiday projects and are currently developing links with the local Cub Scouts to support them with their DIY badge.. We are also in conversation with Rivermead School, who will be taking over the old primary school building in Stoke next year, about sharing our facilities and doing some work with their special needs students.

We have come this far - and are proud of what has been achieved - with the generous support of not just the Church but also the Lottery Community Fund, the Parish Council, the Nags Head meat lottery and a number of generous individuals and are very grateful for all that help. To maintain what we have and broaden our scope to serve the communities of the Peninsula we will, of course, be looking to a wide range of sources to secure more funding. In the meantime, we invite all the Councillors, and, indeed, anyone else, to drop in to see for themselves what a dynamic project we have and to celebrate with us that community enterprise is alive and well on the Peninsula.

**John Stunell**

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## **2). Neighbourhood Plan**

Since our previous update, the Neighbourhood Plan Committee has continued to make steady progress towards completing the initial draft of the Neighbourhood Plan. The evidence-gathering stage, including the parish-wide online survey and distribution of flyers to all households and local businesses, has provided valuable insights that have informed the direction of the Plan.

We are now approaching the completion of the first full draft. Once finalised, this draft will be submitted to Medway Council for preliminary review. Following this, the draft Plan will be presented to the Parish Council and the local community for consideration and feedback on the initial approach.

This community consultation will play a key role in shaping the final version of the Plan. Once community and Parish Council agreement is secured, the final draft will be prepared and submitted for formal audit.

We thank all residents and stakeholders for their continued engagement and support as we work towards developing a Plan that reflects the aspirations of our parish.

## **Emily Hookway**

## **3). Stoke Community Project**

Over the past year, Stoke Community Project has been busy doing what we love most – bringing people together and promoting a keen sense of community and social responsibility. Here's a little look back at everything we've been up to.

### Easter Fun at The Nags Head

We kicked things off in the spring with a brilliant Easter event, kindly hosted by The Nags Head – big thanks to Julie and the team for always being so generous with their support and donations. The day was packed with fun: arts and crafts, a lively disco, face painting, and of course, an Easter egg hunt that had kids racing with excitement!

### Halloween Disco

Things got a little spooky in October at our Halloween Disco. Families came dressed to impress, and it was a great afternoon full of dancing, laughter, and community spirit.

### Family Bingo Night

This year saw our very first family bingo night – and it was a hit! A huge thank you to the Stoke Bingo Group who provided the bingo books and calling. Their support helped make the night extra special and it is something we hope to make a regular event.

### Charity Race Night

Our charity race night – once again supported by our good friends at The Nags Head – was an enormous success. The generosity of patrons helped us raise vital funds which allowed us to run even more community events throughout the year.

### Christmas Celebrations

We rounded off the year with two festive events.

Our Children's Christmas Afternoon Tea was full of seasonal cheer, with plenty of food, gifts for every child, and even a special visit from Santa himself!

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We also hosted a Senior's Christmas Tea, made extra special by the incredible donations we received from local businesses and the Parish Council. Every guest left with a gift and a warm, full belly – it was a truly heartwarming afternoon and a highlight of our year.

In partnership with Stoke Methodist Church and Stoke Parish Council, we also held our first walking nativity and carols. This was an extremely popular event, with a great turn out. Led by Trish, who wrote an amazing script and was both an excellent narrator and director! It was a magical evening full of community spirit!

## VE Day Celebrations

Our Big Lunch this year will be tied into VE day celebrations and will take place on the 10th of May 2025. The street closure has kindly been organised by the Parish Council and the car park will remain closed on from Friday 9th May 7pm till Saturday the 10th May 8pm. Further car parking will be available in the village hall.

The day will feature music from the amazing DJ Zilla, face painters, children's entertainers, RDJ Reptiles Ltd, ice cream and good old fashion family fun and community spirit.

It has been a fantastic year, and none of this would have been possible without the continued support of local businesses, volunteers, and our amazing residents in the Stoke community. Special thanks are owed in particular to in particular The Nags Head and The Nags Head Meat Raffle, Stoke Parish Council, Stoke Methodist Church, DJ Zilla, Rosies Tea Room, B.P, RDJ Reptiles Ltd, Haven, Helen Turner from Uniper, National Grid, SSE, Tesco Strood and Gillingham, Burger Man, Lawsons, MCoys fish bar, and Ajay's, your continued support is greatly appreciated.

Here's to many more events and even more memories in the year ahead!

## **Emily Hookway**

### **4). wHoo Cares**

wHoo Cares started operating in 2016, serving the residents of the Hoo Peninsula (ME3 postcode).

The Hoo Peninsula presents unique challenges in accessing essential services. Despite its large geographical size, the population is spread across various villages, with limited access to centralised support, worsened by poor public transport links. Traditionally, services have been concentrated in the main towns, leaving many residents underserved. Our main objective is to promote the health and well-being of people living in the area, with a particular focus on reducing social isolation and loneliness.

Our approach is centred around our 'Life Planning' process. We conduct a comprehensive assessment to understand the circumstances and needs of each individual, and then customise our support services to provide holistic solutions that promote better health and well-being. In addition to our dedicated staff team, we have a team of trained volunteers who assist our clients through access to groups, activities, and befriending programmes. We are committed to connecting and engaging the community through various initiatives. By organising events, facilitating local networks, and encouraging community participation, we foster a sense of belonging and support. Our goal is to build a connected community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Current number of active partners: 432

Volunteers: 83 (plus 12 in progress)

Volunteer Drivers: 22

Medical appointment transport: 495

Transports: 2,463

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In home befriendings: 1,336

Telephone befriendings: 2,093

Groups attended: 6,433

Life plannings & Reviews: 362

## Current Group List:

Hoo Lunch Club

Cliffe Lunch Club

Grain Lunch Club

Grain Walk & Talk

Games Group

Bowls Club

Afternoon Club

Activity Day

Coffee Morning

Home Ed Group

Carers Support Group

Couples with Dementia

Bereavement Group

Cancer & Beyond Peer Support Group

## Shared Prosperity Fund History Board Project

“Pathways of Pride: Exploring Peninsula Heritage and Natural Surroundings” aims to engage residents of the Hoo Peninsula with their local heritage, culture, and natural surroundings, fostering a sense of pride and community. This project involves the creation and installation of interpretation boards in eight villages, highlighting historical buildings, notable individuals, and significant local stories.

## Board locations:

Upnor: Riverside promenade

Cliffe Woods: Green outside the parade

Grain: Grain Coastal Park

Stoke: Outside village hall

High Halstow: Green in village hall car park

Allhallows: Green opposite the parade

Hoo: Green outside of parade

Chattenden: Pathway outside village hall

## Peninsula Care Ltd

At the start of the year, wHoo Cares officially opened Peninsula Care Ltd a paid-for caring in the community company. Peninsula Care Ltd services go beyond basic companionship by offering activities tailored to enhance mental stimulation, dignity, and joy. We are dedicated to fostering meaningful human connections through its Befriending service for individuals living with dementia.

Through its Befriending service, Peninsula Care Ltd pairs trained and compassionate companions with people living with dementia to provide regular social interaction, reduce feelings of isolation, and promote mental and emotional well-being. These connections are designed not only to bring joy and comfort but also to honour the unique stories, preferences, and identities of each person. Peninsula Care Ltd is more than a service—it's to create a world where people living with dementia feel supported, connected, and cherished.

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## SROI

In September, wHoo Cares received our previously commissioned Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of our work with residents of the Hoo Peninsula. The analysis drew on qualitative and quantitative research with staff, volunteers and partners.

These outcomes were found to all contribute to improved quality of life for those receiving wHoo Cares support and wHoo Cares volunteers. This has an associated benefit for public services as older people with a better quality of life rely on services less, freeing resources for use elsewhere.

WHoo Cares generates estimated figures of between £2.5 million and £4 million in social value. This breaks down into 'for every £1 invested around £5.80 - £9.30 of social value is created'.

Also when interviewed, 82 'partners' said that their quality of life would be worse if we we did not exist.

## Trips

Last year we took our partners on four trips. These were to Chatham Dockyard, Bluewater, Herne Bay, and Polhill Garden Centre.

This year we have five trips planned: shopping trips to Bromley, Hempsted Valley, and Elm Court, seaside trip to Southend-on-sea and a museum trip to the Royal Engineers Museum

## Outreach & Other News

In August wHoo Cares finally acquired a mini-bus. The bus has allowed us to start schemes like accessible shopping as well as increase the number of transportations offered.

We have held many successful events over the past year, however we are partially proud of our Christmas day meal event which brought together many isolated people, most of which did not have anyone else to spend Christmas with. We provided a meal, gift and most importantly company for those in need. Around Christmas time we also held a very successful Christmas party with some of the highest numbers we have seen at an event. Also, on Christmas Eve a few of our team members went out and delivered some Care Packages filled with goodies to a number of isolated partners.

This year we have attended multiple fairs and fetes representing wHoo Cares and our services. We will continue this into the summer.

In march of this year our operations manager made a radio appearance to represent wHoo Cares and highlight our services.

At the start of the year we started our accessible shopping bus scheme that transport people from the peninsula villages to the multiple supermarket offerings in Strood. This has been a very successful scheme and has often been booked to capacity.

In January our Healthy Way program began. Healthy Way is a free 12-week course where each week participates are taught simple healthy habits that can be use anywhere and help to live a healthier lifestyle, lose weight and feel happier.

wHoo Cares has just started its own paid-for Handyman Service. The project started as a result of many of our partners telling us stories about scams, and being taken advantage of.

## Other future projects

As a community based organisation we are always evolving and developing our approach and bringing new schemes to the residents of the peninsula.

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This year we will be developing an allotment based group, that brings isolated people together through a shared activity.

Through a partnership with Talk Club, we are hoping to bring a mens mental health group to the peninsula.

**Tiegan Gardner**

## **5). Methodist Chapel Report**

The Chapel has been pleased to offer its space to the Parish Council to enable meetings to take place whilst the village hall has been unavailable and we welcome all here this evening.

We continue to be a presence in the community and still have the Peninsula Men's Shed meeting on a Tuesday and the Drop In happens on a Wednesday.

We continue have an evening fellowship / service on the second Sunday evening of the month and we would love to see more people come along and join with us. There is no obligation to be a Methodist just pop along. We are currently exploring the use of AI and if it can enhance our worship or our faith journey.

The Chapel along with the Community Group hosted the first Walking Nativity and whilst there were a few glitches the feedback was generally positive. What a joy to step into advent as the village told the Nativity story in a rather unique way. Coming together afterwards to light the trees and to celebrate was enjoyed by all including our minister Robin as well as some members from our circuit who came along to support us.

It is and was again a real joy and a privilege to be able to erect the Memory Tree at the chapel over Christmas as well as the Star that hung above the Chapel door, huge thanks again must go to all who helped make it possible. The subsequent service in early January to dedicate the ribbons and to remember those loved ones whilst not large in number in attendance it was really appreciated.

The intention is to perhaps ask if January is the right time to dedicate the ribbons from the tree and have the service of remembering or if people would like it to perhaps happen in February or even in the Spring.

While it is right that we dedicate the ribbons it does not have to be straight after the lights go out on the tree. We could always leave the tree up til epiphany after all if it's good for the royal family....

The most important thing is that people can tie their ribbons on the branches and remember and know that we are thinking and praying for them and their loved ones.

That all said

It really was quite lovely coming through the village and the tree in the car park and then star and tree at the Chapel as well as all of the houses beautifully lit, it once again made the village welcoming and warm.

We continue as always to pray for our community and would like them to know that we would love for them to join us at some point. If the lights are on and the door is open please do come in - a warm welcome will await you.

**Trish Robb**

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## **6). Rivermead Trust**

Report to follow.

## **7). Stoke Village Hall**

Report to follow.

## **8). Chris Spalding Report ~ Read by Cllr P. Dumke**

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From: Councillor Chris Spalding

Sent: 07 May 2025 10:15

To: Clerk Stoke Parish Council

Subject: RE: Invitation to Stoke's Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 7th May 2025

Hello Jenny

Please give my apologies but I am unable to attend the annual parish meeting tonight. As one of the three military veterans on Medway Council, I am heavily involved in the VE Day 80 commemorations taking place tomorrow and already have other commitments.

It was not helpful that I was only given seven days notice of this event.

Councillor's diaries tend to get filled weeks if not months in advance.

Had there been more notice then perhaps I could have attended.

This is not limited to yourselves. I was given a couple of weeks notice for Allhallows annual parish meeting but by then I already had other commitments.

Next week at the Annual Meeting of Medway Council, the meetings agenda and diary for the year will be approved.

You and the parish council may wish to note certain dates such as full council meetings and planning committee meetings.

We are now halfway through this council's term. I intend to shortly publish and deliver to all residents a newsletter covering the past two years, current issues and future matters.

In terms of immediate issues, I can advise the following;-

### Car Park

I am still working behind the scenes to secure the car park for the village.

The petition will at some point need to be presented to Medway Council. I am willing to do this and would suggest 17 July 2025 as the appropriate meeting.

### Community Funding

I continue to make enquiries about grants and other donations for community funding such as the village hall roof and purchase of the car park.

While not in a position to confirm or promise anything at the moment, there may be some good news in the near future.

### Middle Stoke Development

It is my understanding there is interest in the development site in Middle Stoke that has outline planning permission.

Should the interest party proceed, I believe a new planning application will come in.

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I am monitoring my weekly notifications list and will advise as and when I become aware of something definite.

Regards

**Chris Spalding**

6. **Conclusion**

The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

**The meeting closed at 7.56pm.**

DRAFT