

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

DRAFT MINUTES
Wednesday 4th March 2026
Parish Council Meeting
Village Hall ~ 7.00pm

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

Members of the public: Two (2)

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 queried the recent roadworks, stating she had been informed that the works were being undertaken to support Haven Holiday Park's new swimming pool.
- Another member of the public reported that a workman had told her a footpath was also being installed next to the allotments, and she asked whether this information was accurate.

The members discussed both points in depth, acknowledging that they too had heard the rumour that the works were connected to the new swimming pool, although they believed the suggestion of a footpath being installed was unfounded. It was noted that the works are expected to continue until 10 April, and that local business owners have expressed significant frustration.

- A further discussion ensued regarding the state of Newhall Farm Road and the recent temporary repairs carried out.
- The meeting also learnt that the works to the trees at Button Drive had been carried out following complaints that the branches were touching the overhead power lines.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items

None.

The meeting opened at 7.25pm.

1. Apologies for absence

Min 9548:25 The meeting noted that Cllr S. Back had sent his apologies for his absence due to ill health.

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 9549:25 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 21st January 2026.**

Min 9550:25 The members confirmed that they had received the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday, 21st January 2026.

It was proposed by Cllr S. Hall and seconded by Cllr T. 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 9551:25 None.

5. Vacancies

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

Min 9552:25 The members expressed their thanks to Cllr J. Bansil for her recent work in updating the vacancy poster. They were informed by the Clerk that she had not yet received any formal written applications; however, they agreed to make use of back of the noticeboard in the Lower Stoke to further promote the vacancy.

6. Medway Councillor report

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

Min 9553:25 The Clerk confirmed that she had understood Ward Cllr M. Pearce would be attending the meeting; however, he neither arrived nor submitted a report in his absence.

Cllr S. Hall explained that the first Rural Liaison Meeting of 2026 was being held this evening, and he wondered whether Ward Cllr M. Pearce had attended that meeting instead, unaware that the dates had clashed.

7. Tasks agreed at the last meeting

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

Min 9554:25 The members discussed the list of tasks from the last meeting.

It was agreed that the Clerk would arrange for a large poster advertising the Parish Council vacancy to be placed on the back of the Lower Stoke noticeboard.

Following further discussion, the Clerk was also asked to obtain quotes from online solicitors to support the purchase of the Lower Stoke Car Park and the renewal of its lease.

8. Planning

a). **Applications**

Min 9555:25 None.

b). **Decisions**

Min 9556:25 The parish council members acknowledged receipt of two (2) new decisions.

Approval with Conditions

- **MC/25/2353 - 9 Coronation Cottages, The Street, Upper Stoke**

Discharge of Conditions

- **MC/25/1623 - Land At Middle Stoke Adjacent To 1 & 2 Jubilee Cottages, Grain Road, Middle Stoke**

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c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 9557:25 None.

9. Finance

a). Bank balances

Min 9558:25 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
26/02/2026	Current Account	£1,201.06
26/02/2026	Deposit Account	£39,847.33

b). To agree the financial performance against the budget for January & February 2026.

Min 9559:25 The members carefully evaluated the Parish Council's financial performance against the budget for January & February 2026. After a brief discussion they concluded that the balances were acceptable.

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

Min 9560:25 The members evaluated the payments made since the last meeting, where they agreed that these payments were acceptable.

d). Accounts for payment.

Min 9561:25 After careful consideration, the below payments were accepted, having been proposed by Cllr S. Hall, seconded by Cllr J. Bansil and unanimously agreed.

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Staff Wages	Min 1436:18 (JA) Min 8014:24 (JB)	PAID BY BACS	£780.94	February 26 Wages (JA & JB)
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£234.50	Tax & NI charges (February 2026)
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home February 2026
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£57.87	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for March 2026
Mr J. Treveil	Min 7703:23	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£130.00	Deep Clean of all three (3) play parks INV: 1623
Safeplay	Min 5077:21	PAID BY BACS	£5,310.00	Repainting of Heron Way Play Park INV: 32006
Tree Ventures	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY BACS	£440.00	18 Month Tree Inspection Survey INV: 1929
Lumber Zac	Min 9492:25	PAID BY BACS	£684.00	Tree Surgery at Button Drive INV: 09/12/25
Forvis Mazars	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY BACS	£252.00	External Audit 2024/2025 INV: 2636919
Michael Parkes Chartered Surveyors	Min 9477:25	PAID BY BACS	£960.00	Valuation of Lower Stoke Car Park INV: 16970
Medway Council	Min 5077:21	DIRECT DEBIT	£212.50	Lower Stoke Car Park Lease Qtr 3 INV: (TO FOLLOW)
ICO	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	DIRECT DEBIT	£47.00	Data protection fee 2026/2027 Z2100601

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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: 23695
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£66.42	Broadband, Landline & Mobile Telephone line rental for February 2026
TOTAL			£9,255.21	

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

Min 9562:25 The Clerk asked whether, given that the members had not fully spent their budget, she might look into purchasing a replacement defibrillator for the Lower Stoke Village Hall, noting her concerns about the age of the current apparatus.

Following discussion, the Clerk was asked to liaise further with Cllr S. Back.

f). To consider the readoption of the Parish Council's Financial Regulations.

g). To consider the readoption of the Parish Council's Financial Risk Assessment.

Min 9563:25 The members re-evaluated both the Parish Council's Financial Regulations and Financial Risk Assessment in finer detail. Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr S. Hall that both the Financial Regulations and Financial Risk Assessment be accepted for adoption. This proposal was seconded by Cllr J. Bansil and was unanimously agreed.

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 9564:25 It was noted that there had been no change in the condition of the play equipment since the previous inspection.

Min 9565:25 The Clerk asked whether, as spring was approaching, she should contact the Men in Sheds group to confirm whether they were able to carry out the previously identified repairs to the wooden climbing-frame steps at Button Drive Recreation Ground.

Following a brief discussion, the Clerk was instructed to get back in touch with the group.

Min 9566:25 Cllr J. Wallace also updated the members on the recent meeting she and Cllr S. Back had attended with a contractor at the Heron Way Playpark regarding a quotation for a grant to carry out much-needed renovations. She referred members to the quote, previously circulated by the Clerk, which totalled approximately £16,000.

Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that the purchase of the Lower Stoke car park was a more pressing priority, but the quotation would serve as a useful starting point when the Parish Council was in a position to begin renovation works in the play parks.

b). Heron Way Play Park Fencing

Min 9567:25 It was noted that the works to the rear fencing at the Heron Way Playpark had now been completed, and the Clerk was therefore asked to write to the contractors to thank them for their hard work and to remove the item from the agenda.

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c). Lower Stoke Car Park Lease

Min 9568:25 Following the decision made at the last meeting to purchase the Lower Stoke Car Park over a four-year period on an interest-free basis, using the Parish Council's Precept as collateral, members were informed that the Clerk had contacted Medway Council to confirm this arrangement and to request the necessary increase in funds for the next financial year.

They also discussed the purchase price of the car park, and concerns were raised that the figure had been based on only one valuation of the land. The Clerk was therefore asked to obtain an additional valuation for comparison.

11. Highways, Transport & Upkeep

To receive any reports relating to:

a). Footpaths

Min 9569:25 It was noted that Cllr S. Back was still pursuing MHS Homes regarding the footpath in Lower Stoke; however, members understood that the works were unlikely to be carried out until the next financial year.

b). Lighting

Min 9570:25 No report.

c). Highways and verges

Min 9571:25 No report.

d). Pot holes

Min 9572:25 The members raised concerns about a large pothole that had formed on the A228/Grain Road between Upper Stoke and Middle Stoke, heading towards Strood, which several parish councillors had independently reported.

e). Fly tipping & Street Cleaning

Min 9573:25 No report.

f). Grass cutting

Min 9574:25 Cllr J. Wallace reported that she understood Medway Cllr M. Pearce was still attempting to speak with Medway Norse to establish whether the Parish Council could resume responsibility for maintaining its green spaces. She also noted that the contractor who had supported the Parish Council between cuts last year was no longer able to continue.

g). Leaking manhole cover on A228 / Grain Road

Min 9575:25 A discussion took place regarding the ongoing leak on the A228/Grain Road, and members felt that there might now be two leaks rather than one.

h). Noticeboards.

Min 9576:25 The Clerk suggested carrying out a Land Registry search to confirm the ownership of the grass triangle in Middle Stoke, where the members had proposed to install the new noticeboard.

A short discussion followed, and the Clerk was instructed to proceed with the necessary enquiries.

i). Heron Way Play Park repainting

Min 9577:25 The members learned that, following the aforementioned meeting at the Heron Way Playpark with the grant playpark contractors, Cllr J. Wallace and Cllr S. Back had received positive feedback regarding the recent repainting works. Accordingly, payment had been approved and the works were now complete.

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12. Communications

To receive an update on the following methods of communication:

a). Website.

Min 9578:25 The members learned that access to their emails had finally been restored and that Cllr J. Wallace would be trialling the system before the members were also granted access ahead of the next meeting.

b). Social media page.

Min 9579:25 No report.

13. Internal Committee Updates

a). Neighbourhood Plan

Min 9580:25 The Clerk was asked to follow up with Mr P. Egan for an update on the situation regarding the Neighbourhood Plan.

b). Stoke Village Hall

Min 9581:25 The Clerk was asked to follow up with Stoke Village Hall to request either an update or a copy of their most recent report.

c). Stoke Community Project

Min 9582:25 There was no report, and it was understood that the team would likewise not be running an Easter event this year.

14. External Committee Updates

a). KALC.

Min 9583:25 The Clerk was asked to find out who had taken over as the KALC Clerk and to establish the date of their next meeting.

b). Rural Liaison Board

Min 9584:25 It was understood that the next Rural Liaison Board meeting was scheduled to take place this evening.

c). SSE

Min 9585:25 The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, reported that the Clerk had been informed that the application submitted by the Parish Council for the SSE grant had been successful, and that she understood the company was now reviewing the way grant applications would be awarded going forward.

15. Contractor Works

Min 9586:25 The Clerk was asked to contact the contractors to confirm when the concrete blocks used to secure the Christmas tree in the Lower Stoke Car Park would be removed.

16. Events

a). Christmas 2026

Min 9587:25 The members discussed the size of the Christmas tree used in 2025 and expressed concerns that it had been too tall. They suggested using a smaller tree for 2026, decorating it with additional lights, and inviting local youth groups or the Rivermead Trust in Lower Stoke to assist with the decorations.

The discussion then moved on to the possibility of using mains-powered lights instead of battery-operated ones.

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Cllr J. Bansil confirmed that she would be willing to write to local businesses to enquire whether they could contribute financially or offer support in other ways towards a village event.

Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to provide Cllr J. Bansil with a copy of the Parish Council's letterheaded paper template.

17. Date of next meeting

Min 9588:25 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace, spoke to remind everyone that the next Parish Council Meeting would take place on Wednesday 1st April at 7.00pm in the Village Hall.

18. Close of meeting

Min 9589:25 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 1st April 2026 Parish Council Meeting	7.00pm	The Village Hall
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Tasks agreed 04/03/2026
Clerk to write to Medway Council to formally object to the proposed development of 350 new homes in Allhallows.
Clerk to upload a copy of the Parish Council's approved minutes from Wednesday 21 st January 2026 onto the Parish Council's webpage.
Clerk to organise for an enlarged poster to promote the Parish Council's outstanding vacancy and place it on the back of the Lower Stoke Notice Board.
Clerk to chase Ward Cllr M. Pearce for a copy of his recent report.
Clerk to obtain quotes from online solicitors to support the purchase of the Lower Stoke Car Park and the renewal of its lease.
Clerk to pay the agreed expenditure costs.
Clerk to liaise further with Cllr S. Back regarding a replacement defibrillator for the Lower Stoke Village Hall.
Clerk to liaise further with the Men in Sheds group regarding the repairs to the wooden climbing-frame steps at Button Drive Recreation Ground.
Clerk to write to the relevant contractors to thank them for all their hard work in repairing the back fence to the Heron Way Recreation Ground.
Clerk to arrange a Land Registry search to confirm ownership of the grass triangle in Middle Stoke and make the necessary enquiries with the appropriate party regarding siting a new noticeboard on this land.
Clerk to chase Mr P. Egan for a copy of his most recent Neighbourhood Plan progress report.
Clerk to chase Village Hall committee for a copy of their most recent progress report.
Clerk to chase the Stoke Community Project for a copy of their most recent progress report.
Clerk to continue liaising with SSE concerning the Parish Council's recently approved grant.
Clerk to liaise with the contractors regarding the removal of the concrete blocks in the Lower Stoke Car Park.
Clerk to forward a copy of the Parish Council's letterheaded paper template to Cllr J. Bansil.

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

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

DRAFT