

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday 1st October 2025

Parish Council Meeting

Village Hall ~ 7.00pm

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

Members of the public: Five (5)

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 and Ward Cllr M. Pearce for attending.

Part A. Public Discussions

A member of the public asked what would happen to the air raid bunker located at the back of the old Stoke Primary Academy school. There, she revealed that this area was now inhabited by a variety of animals, such as bats, badgers, newts and foxes, to name a few.

Speaking with the Chairman's consent, Mr P. Dadson of the Rivermead Trust explained that an ecological survey had been carried out earlier this week and that the trust was currently awaiting the findings of this evaluation.

He continued by saying that he was aware that asbestos was present at the location and that there were questions about whether the swimming pool had contaminated the region.

Another public speaker expressed her worries that the Rivermead Trust had now gated off this area and that there was proof that the animals were attempting to tunnel beneath the metal fencing.

She requested that the Rivermead Trust think about making a small opening in the fence so that the animals can enter and exit as needed.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items

None.

The meeting opened at 7.15pm.

1. Apologies for absence

Min 9392:25 It was acknowledged that the Clerk had received apologies for absence from Cllr T. Hall, who had prior work commitments, and Cllr N. Blown, who had subsequently stepped down from his role as Parish Councillor since the last meeting.

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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 9393:25 None.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting**

a). **To receive and approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd September 2025.**

Min 9394:25 The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday, 3rd September 2025, were circulated.

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

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

Min 9395:25 None.

5. **Rivermead Inclusive Trust report**

a). **To receive a report from Mr P. Dadson regarding the opening of the Rivermead at Stoke building.**

Min 9396:25 Mr P. Dadson from the Rivermead Trust was invited to speak by the chairman, Cllr J. Wallace.

He expressed gratitude to the Parish Council for giving him the chance to speak and told the meeting that the school's major construction was finished on the 31st of August and that pupils were on site the following day.

Due to scheduling constraints, he acknowledged that the building contractors had been on site on a number of weekends, including bank holidays, and expressed regret for this.

He advised that he understood that UK Power Networks had also improved the village's power network recently because the school needed its own utility supplies. He hoped that this upgrade was having a positive impact and that power outages were becoming less common in the community as a result.

Mr P. Dadson went on to advise that the contractors still had work to do, including fitting the doors internally with magnetic locks, fencing, and landscaping. It was also recognised that there were issues with the playground's drainage system that still required attention.

He spoke further of several snagging points, where he asked members of the public to report any concerns regarding the building, including its outer fence, etc., to him as soon as possible, as the building came with a one-year warranty.

Although he acknowledged that the trust was still considering using the building next door as a residence for a full-time site member, he also acknowledged that this building still needed repairs, such as rewiring, repointing, and asbestos removal, to mention a few. Since the property already had residential permission, he understood that planning permission would not be needed for these improvements.

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He invited everyone to attend an open afternoon planned to take place on Monday, 10th November, at 3.00p.m. and encouraged any residents who would be interested in running for the role of governor to express their interest.

He closed his report by reminding the meeting that only Year 7 children were currently using the building at Stoke and that it was one of three facilities the trust was now in charge of.

A resident voiced their concerns about the quantity of work that was being carried out at a weekend, especially early in the morning, when Cllr J. Wallace opened the floor to questions.

It was acknowledged that this allegation was outside the Parish's jurisdiction, even though Mr P. Dadson was only able to apologise and offer no further comments.

6. Medway Councillor report

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

Min 9397:25 Ward Councillor Michael Pearce stood up to deliver his report. He talked about the recent, well-attended ploughing match at Beluncle Farm in Hoo, the renovation of the Aveling & Porter Shield for the Thomas Aveling Society by the Men in Sheds group in Lower Stoke, the development of Medway Council's Local Plan and the need for a road safety audit to be carried out in both Lower Stoke and Allhallows, where he confirmed he would be campaigning for the installation of a footpath to connect the two villages.

He also spoke about the administrative procedure for turning the Deangate Golf Course into a country park, which, despite its sluggish beginning, was expected to be finished by the middle of 2026.

He continued by stating that he was in the process of asking Royal Mail to move the post box in Upper Stoke following complaints from residents that they were having to walk through mud and water in the winter months to access it and advised that he had taken note of the comments made concerning Medway Council's contractors following the aforementioned renovations to the new Rivermead Trust building, which he intended to take forward with the Unitary Authority.

He concluded his report by advising that documents from a recent cabinet report from the Medway Council had disclosed that Mulberry Centre would be relocating from its current location on the Hoo Primary Academy campus to a different building in Gillingham. This move would allow the Primary Academy to increase its capacity, which would cost £6 million.

Min 9398:25 Mr P. Dadson from the Rivermead Trust asked for permission to speak after hearing the Mulberry Centre report. He advised that the trust had previously been kept in the dark about these changes and that The Mulberry Centre was under its jurisdiction. He said he was only recently made aware of these plans, and if accepted, the works would not be completed for at least another two to three years.

Min 9399:25 Additionally, Cllr J. Wallace addressed Ward Cllr M. Pearce to voice her concerns about the Leigh Academies Trust's alleged plans to discontinue their minibuss service starting next year. Based on the absence of a suitable walkway between the two villages, she believed it was too dangerous to expect children and their parents from Lower Stoke to walk to Allhallows School.

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In response to her concerns, Cllr M. Pearce advised he would discuss this matter with the school and try to save the bus service from being discontinued by proposing a means-tested alternative.

Min 9400:25 Cllr J. Bansil also expressed concern that working parents would be negatively impacted if this bus service were to be discontinued; she was certain that parents might be willing to contribute towards its running costs.

7. **Tasks agreed at the last meeting**

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

Min 9401:25 The members evaluated the tasks agreed at the last meeting and the Clerk / Parish Councillors were asked to continue working on the following points:

- Clerk to continue chasing the repair of the large pothole at Sharnal Street.
- Clerk to send Cllr J. Wallace the Parish Council's financial spreadsheets.
- Clerk to forward invoice for the repairs to the village hall roof onto Cllr J. Wallace.
- Clerk to remind the contractors repainting play equipment at the Heron Way Recreation Ground that half term will take place from Monday 20th October for a period of 2 weeks.

8. **Planning**

a). Applications

b). Decisions

Min 9402:25 Cllr J. Wallace acknowledged that no new planning applications had been filed or decisions had been made since the last Parish Council meeting.

c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 9403:25 None.

9. **Finance**

a). Bank balances

Min 9404:25 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace referred the members to the bank statements provided in their meeting packs. She talked them through the balances (details of which are shown below):

Date	Account	Balance
25/09/2025	Current Account	£1,822.61
25/09/2025	Deposit Account	£47,906.17

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

Min 9405:25 The members carefully evaluated the Parish Council's financial performance against the budget for September 2025. After a brief discussion they concluded that the balances were acceptable.

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

Min 9406:25 The members evaluated the payments made since the last meeting, where they agreed that these payments were acceptable.

d). Accounts for payment.

Min 9407:25 After careful consideration, the below payments were accepted, having been proposed by Cllr S. Hall, seconded by Cllr S. Back and unanimously agreed.

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September / October 2025

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Staff Wages	Min 1436:18 (JA) Min 8014:24 (JB)	PAID BY BACS	£757.48	September 25 Wages (JA & JB)
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£225.25	Tax & NI charges (September 2025)
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office September 2025
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£56.75	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for September 2025
Mr J. Treveil	Min 7703:23	PAID BY BACS	£130.00	Deep Clean of all three (3) play parks INV:875
Go Cardless	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	DIRECT DEBIT	£23.99	Stoke Parish Council Hugo Fox Website INV:17708
Go Cardless	Min 8095:24	DIRECT DEBIT	£20.99	Hugo Fox Email Package INV: TBC
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£67.12	Broadband, Landline & Mobile Telephone line rental for September 2025
TOTAL				£1,316.58

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

Min 9408:25 The members discussed hosting a Christmas event and requested the clerk enquire if the Mortley Group could help them find an appropriately sized tree for the car park and assist the Parish Council in helping them stand it upright.

They discussed the possible need to source a larger-size container and to ask the new Vicar of the St Peter's & St Paul's Church to switch on the lights.

They agreed to ask a few of the tractors to join their celebration, which they planned to hold on Sunday 30th November, as they wrapped up their conversation.

f). To receive an update on the 2024/2025 External Audit.

Min 9409:25 The members were directed by the Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, to the emails she had received from Forvis Mazars LLP, in which the external auditors requested additional information. As a result, the AGAR was not approved by the deadline of Tuesday 30th September.

Cllr J. Wallace requested that the Clerk post a notice on the Parish Council's website and noticeboards confirming that the audit was still ongoing and that the paperwork will be published as soon as possible, in accordance with the external auditors' recommendations.

10. Management of Land and Property

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

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

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

iii). The Street Playpark (Upper Stoke).

Min 9410:25 No further report was provided.

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b). Heron Way Play Park Fencing

Min 9411:25 The members deliberated over the three quotes that the Clerk had submitted for new fencing material for the Heron Way Play Park. These quotes varied in gauge and ranged in price from £129.00 to £244.00.

Following a brief discussion, a budget of £250.00 was agreed for the repairs, and Cllr P. Dumke graciously agreed to forward to the Clerk his suggestions for the appropriate gauge fencing.

c). To receive an update on the Stoke Parish Council's Store Room

Min 9412:25 Following a decision made at the last meeting, it was agreed to delay the storage room improvements until the following spring. It was requested, therefore, that the Clerk update her records and add this to the agenda for debate after April the following year.

11. Highways, Transport & Upkeep

To receive any reports relating to:

a). Footpaths

Min 9413:25 No report. Cllr S. Back acknowledged that he was still pursuing MHS Homes regarding the condition of the footpath in Lower Stoke that runs between Heron Way and the High Street. He advised that he was aware that MHS did not have any further funding available to carry out any further improvements until the start of the next financial year.

b). Lighting

Min 9414:25 No report.

c). Highways and verges

Min 9415:25 No report.

d). Pot holes

Min 9416:25 The members acknowledged that the large pothole situated outside Fisherwood House on Sharnal Street in High Halstow had now been highlighted with white paint, and they asked the clerk to continue chasing Medway Council to arrange for its immediate repair.

They also commented that there had been no further changes to the potholes previously identified.

e). Fly tipping & Street Cleaning

Min 9417:25 Cllr S. Hall reported that there was now a large fridge freezer that appeared to have been abandoned outside the garages in Mallard Way, which he had reported by an application to Medway Council.

f). Grass cutting

Min 9418:25 Ward Councillor M. Pearce acknowledged that he was aware of the Parish Council's continuous struggle to regain control over the Stoke Recreation Grounds' grass cutting, and he agreed to liaise further with the Clerk.

g). Leaking manhole cover on A228 / Grain Road

Min 9419:25 No report.

h). Noticeboards

Min 9420:25 The Clerk was reminded to contact Men in Sheds again regarding the Middle Stoke noticeboard repairs.

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12. Communications

To receive an update on the following methods of communication:

a). Website.

Min 9421:25 The Clerk confirmed she had paid the additional bill due to the web hosting company to organise access to Cllr J. Bansil's Parish Council email address.

b). Social media page

Min 9422:25 No report.

13. Internal Committee Updates

a). Neighbourhood Plan

Min 9423:25 The members were directed by the clerk to a draft copy of the Neighbourhood Plan that Mr P. Egan had supplied.

After discussing it, the members decided that this report appeared to be very comprehensive.

Mrs J. Allen, the Clerk, also asked whether the Neighbourhood Plan committee would be open to a second opinion from a barrister who volunteers for the High Halstow Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan working group and specialises in environmental and planning law. The Clerk was advised by the Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, to contact the Stoke Neighbourhood Plan group to see if this recommendation could be useful.

b). Stoke Village Hall

Min 9424:25 Mr N. Blown, in his role as Stoke Village Hall trustee, informed the meeting that the committee would be writing to the doctors' surgery to request that they pay the remaining balance on their account and give them 14 working days' notice to do so and to organise the clearance of their equipment.

Additionally, the idea of bringing the doctor's surgery before a small claims court was raised.

c). Stoke Community Project

Min 9425:25 Cllr J. Wallace advised that the Stoke Community Project would be holding their annual Children's Halloween Party in the Nags Head Public House Garden on Friday 31st October.

She also advised that she understood their plans to hold a Seniors Afternoon Tea event in the Stoke Village Hall during the month of November were in full swing alongside a Children's Christmas Party in December, a Santa Run and participation in the tractor run event, scheduled to take place on Sunday 21st December.

14. External Committee Updates

a). KALC

Min 9426:25 The Clerk was assigned the responsibility of verifying the date and time of the next KALC meeting.

b). Rural Liaison

Min 9427:25 Cllr S. Hall informed the meeting that regrettably he was unable to attend the last Rural Liaison meeting that had been scheduled to take place on Tuesday 16th September.

c). SSE

Min 9428:25 Mrs J. Allen, the Clerk, attested that she had forwarded the completed grant funding application papers to SSE in order to release the monies for the Heron Way Recreation Ground's play equipment repainting.

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15. **Contractor Works**

Min 9429:25 None.

16. **Correspondence**

a). **To discuss issuing a vote of no confidence against Ward Cllr C. Spalding.**

Min 9430:25 Cllr S. Back spoke to refer the member to correspondence he had asked to be included in their meeting packs, which gave details why he wanted to bring forward a vote of no confidence against Ward Cllr C. Spalding.

Following a discussion, a number of changes were proposed.

Cllr J. Wallace urged the clerk to note that she sat in the room during the voting process but did not participate in the vote itself.

Accordingly, it was suggested by Cllr S. Back that the members adopt a vote of no confidence against Ward Cllr C. Spalding and that a copy of the statement outlining the reasons for the vote be posted on the Parish Council's website and social media account and forwarded to the Kent Messenger. This proposal was seconded and passed by a majority vote.

17. **Date of next meeting**

Min 9431:25 The Chair, Cllr. J. Wallace, spoke to remind everyone that the next Parish Council Meeting would take place on Wednesday 5th November at 7.00pm in the Village Hall.

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

Min 9432:25 The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace read out loud the statement listed on the agenda in relation to Section 100A(4).

Accordingly, it was proposed by Cllr S. Back that the public be excluded from the next item. This proposal was seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr P. Dumke and was unanimously agreed.

The meeting closed to the public at 8.10 pm and the five (5) parishioners left.

19. **Confidential Matters**

To receive an update on the following matters:

a). **Village Hall Constitution + Doctors Surgery Update.**

Min 9433:25 The members discussed the Village Hall Constitution and the vacant doctor's surgery premises in further detail.

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

Min 9434:25 The members discussed the Lower Stoke Car Park Lease and the Clerk was asked to get in touch with KALC.

20. **Close of meeting**

Min 9435:25 The Chair, Cllr. J. Wallace, closed the meeting at 8.25 pm and thanked the members for attending.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 5th November 2025 Parish Council Meeting	7.00pm	The Village Hall
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Tasks agreed 01/10/2025

Clerk to upload a copy of the Parish Council's approved minutes from Wednesday 3rd September onto the Parish Council's webpage.

Clerk to chase Medway Council regarding the highlighted pothole on Sharnal Street.

Clerk to forward financial spreadsheet onto Cllr J. Wallace.

Clerk to send copy of invoice for repairs to the Village Hall roof onto Cllr J. Wallace.

Clerk to chase contractors regarding the repainting play equipment at the Heron Way Recreation Ground.

Clerk to pay the agreed expenditure costs.

Clerk to speak with the Mortley's Group regarding Christmas Tree for the Lower Stoke Car Park.

Clerk to post a notice on the Parish Council's website and noticeboards confirming that the 2024/2025 audit was still ongoing and that the paperwork will be published as soon as it was received back from the external auditors.

Clerk to liaise further with Cllr P. Dumke regarding the gage measurements for the replacement mesh for the Heron Way playpark and to order the materials accordingly.

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 liaise further with Ward Councillor M. Pearce regarding regaining control over the grass cutting at the Stoke Recreation Grounds.

Clerk to correspond with the Men in Shed's group concerning the noticeboard for Middle Stoke.

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

The Clerk to speak further with Mr P. Egan of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.

Stoke Village Hall Committee to write to Doctors Surgery to give them 14 working days' notice to pay their outstanding arrears and clear their equipment from the premises.

Clerk to verify the date and time of the next KALC meeting.

Clerk to continue chasing SSE to release the grant monies for the repainting of the Heron Way Playpark.

Clerk to action amendments to vote of no confidence and post a copy of this statement on the Parish Council's website and social media account.

Cllr S. Back to liaise further with the Kent Messenger regarding vote of no confidence.

Clerk to liaise further with solicitors regarding Village Hall Constitution + Doctors Surgery.

Clerk to liaise further with KALC regarding Lower Stoke Car Park lease.