

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

MINUTES

Wednesday 3rd June 2026

Parish Council Meeting

Village Hall ~ 7.00pm

Attendees: Cllr J. Wallace ~ Chair Cllr J. Bansil – Vice-Chair
Cllr S. Hall Cllr T. Hall
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 7.05

pm and thanked the Parish Councillors & members of the public for attending.

Part A. Public Discussions

- A member of the public spoke to raise concerns regarding cars speeding through the village. A suggestion was made to consider installing a one-way system around Lower Stoke.

A discussion ensued regarding the feasibility of a one-way system. It was noted that lorries exiting Brook Lane would be unable to turn left due to width restrictions.

It was agreed that members of the public would continue to report incidents of speeding vehicles to the police. The Clerk would circulate the email addresses for the Peninsula's Police Constables.
- Another resident spoke to raise complaints regarding holiday homes travelling through the village during the recent road closures. Concerns were also raised that bikes were using some of the roads as if they were dirt tracks.
- Finally, the discussion digressed to requesting that Haven provide a breakdown of works to enable the village to prepare for any future road closures. Following complaints that no information had been forthcoming from the holiday park, the Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Bansil, offered to write to the park manager on behalf of the village to request a schedule.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items

None.

The meeting opened at 7.15pm.

1. Apologies for absence

Min 9673:26 It was noted that Cllr P. Dumke had submitted his apologies for absence via message to members; however, no reason for his absence had been provided.

It was further noted that Cllr S. Back had submitted his apologies due to ill health. In addition, Medway Councillor M. Pearce had also tendered his apologies owing to prior commitments.

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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 9674:26 None.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting**

a). **To receive and approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 6th May 2026.**

Min 9675:26 The members confirmed that they had received the minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 6th May 2026.

It was proposed by Cllr S. Hall and seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Bansil 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 9676:26 None.

5. **Vacancies**

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

Min 9677:26 It was noted that the Parish Council had not yet received any applications for the vacant position. A discussion ensued regarding potential locations to advertise the role, including the village convenience store and the possibility of placing an advertisement in Medway Council's magazine, Medway Matters.

The discussion concluded with Cllr S. Hall requesting that the Clerk provide several printed leaflets, which he offered to distribute and ask local businesses to display.

6. **Medway Councillor report ~ Annex A**

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

Min 9678:26 In the absence of Medway Councillor M. Pearce, the Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, read out his report, which had been circulated to both herself and the Clerk prior to the meeting. A copy of the report is attached as Annex A.

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

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

Min 9679:26 The members reviewed the outstanding actions from the previous meeting, and the Clerk was instructed to follow up on the following items:

- **Replacement defibrillator (Lower Stoke):**

It was noted that the Clerk had been experiencing difficulties in procuring the recommended replacement defibrillator due to the item being consistently out of stock with the Council's preferred supplier. It was therefore agreed that the Clerk would check availability with alternative suppliers and circulate any revised pricing to Members by email.

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- **Noticeboard (Middle Stoke):**

The Clerk was instructed to continue to pursue the supplier for an estimated delivery date for the Parish Council's new noticeboard. The Clerk was also asked to follow up with Medway Council regarding permission to install the noticeboard on the green triangle.

8. Planning

a). Applications

Min 9680:26 None.

b). Decisions

Min 9681:26 None.

c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 9682:26 Members discussed the recent installation of three industrial-sized washing machines at the site of the Lower Stoke Garage. It was recognised, following a review of Medway Council's planning portal, that no prior planning applications for these appliances had been identified.

Accordingly, the Clerk was instructed to formally notify Medway Council of their existence and to contact Medway Councillor M. Pearce regarding this matter.

9. Finance

a). Bank balances

Min 9683:26 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
29/05/2026	Current Account	£2,477.01
29/05/2026	Deposit Account	£75,984.93

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

Min 9684:26 The members carefully reviewed the Parish Council's financial performance against the agreed budget for May 2026. The Chairman noted that she was unable to reconcile the figures. It was agreed that the Clerk would liaise further with the Chairman regarding the formula used and would provide a copy of the Parish Council's Excel spreadsheet for clarification.

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

Min 9685:26 The members evaluated the payments made since the last meeting, where they agreed that these payments were acceptable.

d). Accounts for payment.

Min 9686:26 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	£780.74	May 26 Wages (JA & JB)
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£234.70	Tax & NI charges (May 2026)

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Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home May 2026
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£58.59	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: 1988
Nexus Data Systems Ltd	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY BACS	£96.00	Domian renewal for stokekent-pc.gov.uk INV: 100236
Gallagher Insurance Brokers	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£1,738.09	Annual Insurance Premium INV: G6684479
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: 27602
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£71.72	Broadband, Landline & Mobile Telephone line rental for May 2026
TOTAL			£3,189.82	

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

Min 9687:26 None.

10. Internal Audit 2025/2026

a). To review the internal auditors report for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Min 9688:26 The Parish Councillors confirmed receipt of the Internal Auditor's report for the financial year ending March 2026. The report was deemed acceptable; however, it was noted that the Internal Auditor had recommended that the Parish Council implement an IT policy following the adoption of official government email addresses.

b). To approve the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Min 9689:26 It was proposed by Cllr S. Hall to accept the Parish Council's internally audited accounts for the financial year ending March 2026; this proposal was seconded by Cllr J. Bansil and was unanimously agreed.

c). To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2025-26, Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2026.

Min 9690:26 The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, read in turn each of the points from the Annual Governance Statement as per shown below.

1.	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.
2.	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.
3.	We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.
4.	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

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5.	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.
6.	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.
7.	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.
8.	We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.

Following a number of conversations and thorough deliberation, the members responded "Yes" to each area.

Cllr S. Hall spoke to propose the Chairman signed Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2026. This proposal was seconded by Cllr J. Bansil and was unanimously agreed.

Accordingly, the Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, and the Clerk signed Section 1 in front of the members of the Parish Council and the residents who were seated in the public gallery.

d). To approve the Accounting Statements for 2024-25, Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2026 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31 March 2026 plus the explanation of the significant variations from last year (2024-25) to this year (2025-26) and the explanation of any differences to be sent to the External Auditor.

Min 9691:26 The members carefully evaluated the figures provided in Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ending March 2026, where they deemed the Accounting Statement as acceptable.

Cllr S. Hall spoke to propose the Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, sign Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2026. This proposal was seconded by Cllr J. Bansil and was unanimously agreed.

Accordingly, the Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, signed Section 2 in front of the members of the Parish Council, the Clerk/RFO and the parishioners who were seated in the public gallery.

Min 9692:26 Lastly, the council members thoroughly examined the bank reconciliation papers and the justifications for the notable differences from the previous year, which were considered sufficient supporting documentation for the external audit.

11. Management of Land and Property

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

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

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

iii). The Street Playpark (Upper Stoke).

Min 9693:26 In Cllr S. Back's absence, it was acknowledged that there were no inspection reports for May 2026. It was recognised, however, that the Parish Council's independent annual playpark inspection was due to take place shortly.

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Min 9694:26 The conversation then digressed to the quotes received for repainting the play equipment at the Button Drive playpark, where Parish Councillors confirmed receipt of the additional quotes sourced by the Clerk.

It was noted that the previous quote from Safeplay had included repairs to the steps and replacement swing seats, which members recognised required attention. It was further noted that the cost for repairs to the steps was £195.00 plus VAT.

The quotes from the other contractors were considered. It was proposed by Cllr T. Hall that the Clerk revert to Safeplay to enquire whether they were able to carry out solely the repairs to the steps.

Provided that they were to undertake these repairs, members instructed the Clerk to accept the quote from Quality Coats, following completion of the aforementioned works, at a cost of £2,350.00. The proposal was seconded by Cllr J. Bansil and was unanimously agreed.

It was recognised that the Parish Council would purchase replacement swing seats directly and undertake their own installation.

b). Lower Stoke Car Park Lease

Min 9695:26 The members assessed the two (2) more detailed solicitor quotes requested at the last meeting and, following a short discussion, it was proposed by Cllr S. Hall and seconded by Cllr J. Bansil to instruct Surrey Hill Solicitors at a cost of £2,300.00 plus VAT, with additional fees of approximately £500.00 plus VAT for property searches and HMLR fees. The proposal was unanimously agreed.

Min 9696:26 Cllr S. Hall then raised the matter of the large tree in the Lower Stoke Car Park and enquired whether a quote could be obtained from a previous contractor to pollard it.

Members discussed the possibility of a preferred suppliers list and asked the Clerk to enquire with KALC whether this would be permissible without the need to obtain three separate quotes on each occasion.

Min 9697:26 Finally, Cllr J. Wallace confirmed that she had obtained the contact details for a contractor specialising in tarmacking. It was noted that, once the Parish Council had formally taken control of the Lower Stoke Car Park, the contractor could be approached to address the expanding potholes.

12. Highways, Transport & Upkeep

To receive any reports relating to:

a). Footpaths

Min 9698:26 No further report.

b). Lighting

Min 9699:26 No report.

c). Highways and verges

Min 9700:26 No report.

d). Pot holes

Min 9701:26 No report.

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e). Fly tipping & Street Cleaning

Min 9702:26 The members again raised concerns regarding the ongoing fly-tipping occurring on Hoppers Lane, Cuckolds Green Road and Stoke Road, which they recognised Cllr S. Back had previously updated them on in connection with camera traps being organised by a neighbouring Parish Council.

f). Grass cutting

Min 9703:26 The Parish Councillors commented on the length of the grass between cuts undertaken by Medway Norse and also discussed whether Medway Council had again participated in “No Mow May.”

g). Leaking manhole cover on A228 / Grain Road

Min 9704:26 No report.

h). Noticeboards.

Min 9705:26 Following on from Item 7A **Min 9679:26**, it was acknowledged that the Clerk was continuing to chase Medway Council for permission to install a new noticeboard on the green triangle in Middle Stoke, and was also following up with contractors for an estimated delivery date for the new noticeboard.

13. Communications

To receive an update on the following methods of communication:

a). Website.

Min 9706:26 The Clerk informed members that the Monitoring Officer had recently emailed all Medway Clerks to confirm that Parish Councillors’ home addresses would now be kept confidential. Accordingly, the Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council’s website would be updated to remove these details.

Min 9707:26 The Chairman requested that the Clerk send a WhatsApp message to notify members when any urgent emails had been issued, asking them to check their SPC inboxes, as there were concerns that notifications of new emails were not appearing on devices.

b). Social media page.

Min 9708:26 No report.

14. Internal Committee Updates

a). Neighbourhood Plan

Min 9709:26 The Clerk confirmed that no up-to-date report had been received recently but would follow this up and request a further update in time for the next meeting.

b). Stoke Village Hall

Min 9710:26 Cllr J. Wallace informed members that, having attended the last Village Hall Committee meeting, the surgery had now removed all of their IT equipment from the old premises. The Committee was in the process of arranging repairs to the ceiling, which would be undertaken by volunteers.

It was also noted that Cllr S. Hall had offered his assistance in attempting to source insulation.

It was understood that, once the repairs had been completed, the premises would be made available for rent again.

Min 9711:26 Cllr J. Wallace also updated members on the ongoing renovations to the Village Hall. It was acknowledged that the Main Hall had recently been redecorated, with new fire doors installed and blinds fitted to the windows in place of the previous curtains.

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A community survey had also been undertaken to determine the requirements of residents within the village.

It was noted that the recent fire inspection had been satisfactory, and the Committee was in the process of organising a summer fayre in August, along with a 'Bake Off' competition, with categories for both adults and children.

c). Stoke Community Project

Min 9712:26 No report was received; however, the Clerk commented that she was aware that members of the Committee were taking a break from organising numerous events this year, following a particularly busy year previously.

15. External Committee Updates

a). KALC.

Min 9713:26 The Clerk confirmed that she was continuing to chase the KALC Clerk for a list of dates for the Medway Regional Meetings for 2026/2027.

b). Rural Liaison Board

Min 9714:26 Cllr S. Hall confirmed that he was awaiting confirmation of the date for the next Rural Liaison meeting.

c). SSE

Min 9715:26 The Chairman, Cllr J. Wallace, confirmed that the next SSE meeting was scheduled to take place in September.

16. Contractor Works

Min 9716:26 The Clerk was reminded to instruct Safeplay to carry out the relevant repairs to the playpark steps at the Button Drive playpark and, once completed, to instruct the contractor to proceed with repainting the play equipment.

17. Events

a). Christmas 2026

Min 9717:26 It was acknowledged that Cllrs J. Wallace and J. Bansil were yet to meet, and the Clerk was asked to defer the matter to the next meeting.

18. Date of next meeting

Min 9718:26 The Chair, Cllr. J. Wallace, spoke to remind everyone that the next Parish Council Meeting would take place on Wednesday 1st July at 7.00pm in the Village Hall.

19. Close of meeting

Min 9719:26 The Chair, Cllr. J. Wallace, closed the meeting at 8.30pm and thanked the everyone for attending.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 1st July 2026 Parish Council Meeting	7.00pm	The Village Hall
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ANNEXES

ANNEX A

6a). Medway Councillor report ~ To receive an update on the most recent Medway Council news from Ward Cllr M. Pearce REF: **Min 9678:26**

Volunteering across the Hoo Peninsula:

With Volunteers' Week running from 1st to 7th June, I want to begin by thanking everyone who gives their time to support Stoke and the wider Hoo Peninsula. That includes Stoke Parish Council, Stoke Village Hall, Stoke Community Project, Peninsula Men's Shed, church groups, youth groups, litter-picking and environmental groups, schools, community events, fundraising, and everyone who quietly does the practical work that keeps our community going. Having volunteered locally since 2012, I know how much effort happens behind the scenes, and how easily it can be taken for granted. Thank you to everyone who keeps stepping up.

Potholes:

Following residents' feedback, I reported Potholes at four locations: (1) near the school and recreation ground (ME3 9SL), (2) near South View on High Street (ME3 9RD), (3) on the double bend near Nord Farm Cottages, between Allhallows Road and Stoke Road (ME3 9PA), and (4) along the A228/Grain Road near the Thamesport turning (ME3 0EP). I await updates from Medway Council on what action will be taken and when. Residents can report potholes through Medway Council's website, or they can email details to me (michaelpearcehoopeninsula@gmail.com).

Deangate Ridge Country Park works and on-site signage:

Residents across the Hoo Peninsula have contacted me about ongoing fencing and groundworks at the emerging Deangate Ridge Country Park, as well as the lack of clear public information on-site. I have repeatedly requested temporary information boards at the main access points, with a simple map and plain-English explanation of what is happening, why, and for how long. Park users should not be left guessing. While the Council claims signage will be "limited and simple" due to tight budgets, this does not excuse poor communication. This justification is particularly unacceptable given that Medway Council failed to draw down £260,000 from the external Rural England Prosperity Fund, which was explicitly ring-fenced for Hoo Peninsula improvements, simply because it ran out of time to spend it. Furthermore, following the sudden installation of a Pay & Display machine in the park's car park, I have received no information regarding when charging will commence, nor any clarification on how the parking charge exemption promised to members of Deangate Ridge Indoor Bowls Club will work in practice.

Local Government Reorganisation:

I remain deeply concerned about the Government's plans to abolish Medway Council, Kent County Council, and all district and borough councils county-wide to create a handful of massive unitary authorities. We expect Whitehall ministers to announce their chosen option this summer, with a decision likely in July 2026. While full implementation takes effect in April 2028, preparations begin immediately, and transitional shadow arrangements will gather pace following the local elections in May 2027. Aside from my concerns about council tax increases, my core worry is that these sprawling new bodies will be remote, focused on regional strategy rather than delivering ultra-local services and protecting community assets.

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Parish Councils may be expected or invited to take on devolved responsibilities, but this cannot happen by default without proper funding, rigorous risk assessments, and genuine public engagement. Local voices must be heard now, before top-down decisions are locked in.

Medway Council's Local Plan and the campaign to Save The Hoo Peninsula:

The Local Plan remains one of the biggest issues facing the Hoo Peninsula, and I continue to lead the Save The Hoo Peninsula Campaign against proposals that would place unacceptable pressure on our villages, roads, services, countryside and farmland. Following the Planning Inspectors' Initial Queries letter of 27th March 2026, Medway Council responded on 29th April 2026 and proposed a six-week consultation on documents unavailable during the 2025 Regulation 19 consultation. The Inspectors have now set a four-week consultation from 8th June to 6th July 2026. Their original letter followed concerns raised by the campaign, through Richard Buxton Solicitors, about 28 new or materially amended documents published after consultation closed, and identified areas of "particular concern" and "significant concerns". The Inspectors have also made clear that the Local Plan is unlikely to be adopted this year. The campaign has raised around £6,930 through Crowd Justice, with fundraising continuing.

Tasks agreed 03/06/2026

Clerk to circulate email addresses for the Peninsula's Police Constables.

Cllr J. Bansil to write to the Park Manager at Haven Holiday Park, Allhallows, to request a schedule of their proposed works.

Clerk to upload the approved minutes from the Annual Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 6th May 2026 onto the Parish Council's webpage.

Clerk to provide printed leaflets for the Parish Council's outstanding vacancy and pass them to Cllr S. Hall for distribution around the village.

Clerk to check availability of a replacement defibrillator with alternative suppliers and circulate revised pricing to members.

Clerk to chase the supplier for an estimated delivery date for the Parish Council's new noticeboard.

Clerk to chase Medway Council for permission to install the noticeboard on the green triangle in Middle Stoke.

Clerk to report the presence of three new industrial-sized washing machines at the Lower Stoke Garage site to Medway Council's planning enforcement team.

Clerk to liaise further with the Chairman regarding balancing the Parish Council's financial performance spreadsheet and to provide a copy of the documentation, including the formula used.

Clerk to arrange payment for the agreed expenditure.

Clerk to submit the signed AGAR forms to the external auditor, upload copies of the signed documents to the Parish Council's website, and produce a Notice of Appointment for the exercise of public rights.

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Clerk to check the date of the Parish Council's independent annual playpark inspection.
Clerk to contact Safeplay to arrange repairs to the Button Drive playpark steps only and, once completed, instruct the appointed contractor to repaint the play equipment.
Clerk to source replacement swing seats for the Button Drive playpark.
Clerk to instruct Surrey Hill Solicitors in relation to the purchase of the Lower Stoke Car Park.
Clerk/Parish Council to obtain a quote to pollard the tree in the Lower Stoke Car Park.
Clerk to contact KALC regarding the possibility of establishing a preferred suppliers list.
Clerk to remove Parish Councillors' home addresses from the members webpage.
Clerk to chase for an update on the Neighbourhood Plan in time for the next Parish Council meeting.
Clerk to chase KALC Regional Secretary for a copy of the scheduled meeting dates for 2026/2027.
Cllrs J. Wallace and J. Bansil to meet to discuss plans for the Christmas 2026 Village Event.

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