

Parish Council Annual Report for year ending March 2026

Welcome

I have been asked to comment on the work of Stanstead Parish for the year ending March 2026.

It has once again been a busy year.

I want first of all to thank Gail Claydon who worked hard as our clerk for much of the year before stepping down in January. We were sorry to see her retire - she had worked tirelessly for the parish and kept us on the straight and narrow, to bring our policies and procedures up to date and to bring the council into the 21st century.

But every cloud has a silver lining and we are delighted to welcome Julia Howard as our new clerk. She has made a brilliant start, bringing her experience of other parishes to help streamline and modernise our proceedings. We are very lucky she agreed to join us.

I also want to thank Andy Green and Diana Wilson who helped keep the council running last year when our numbers fell to three, the minimum required for the council to operate.

It is great to see that there is now more interest in the council and that we have four new and enthusiastic members – John Gaskell, Tom Jeeves, Klaire Peck and Sarah Richards. Each has brought something different to the council, adding diversity of ideas, energy and dynamism.

Various activities during the year were as follows:

- The Parish made progress on a Neighbourhood Plan. A very successful survey was prepared, circulated and completed by over half the houses in the village. The response rate shows how passionate residents are about our village. Unfortunately, we have not been able to progress the plan as yet owing to the removal of grant funding, but we are hopeful that grant funding will be reinstated. In the meantime we will be using the results to inform our activities (e.g. pressing for lower speed limits).
- We now have new village noticeboards (many thanks to Sarah Richards and her husband for their help with that)
- We had a what we hope will be the first of an annual litter picks. Almost 20 residents took part and we collected 8 bags of litter.
- Both bus shelters were cleaned on 26 July and there have been some pleasing comments about this
- The Community Centre – we see this as a vital resource for the village. Funding support has been given towards fixing the fire alarm system. We continue to negotiate a new lease.

- Klaire Peck has taken over weekly inspections of the Playground (many thanks Klaire) and new signs are now up on gates. It is good to see the playground being well used.
- The new textile bin at community centre is being well used
- The willow trees at the back of the Community Centre have been trimmed (thanks to Andy Green for helping to make this happen and holding the contractors to account)
- Residents were offered a thermal scan of their homes to see where heat was escaping. Thanks to Tom Jeeves and his wife for organising this. Nine houses were surveyed, which is about 6% of houses, a higher take up than in most villages. The results were very interesting.
- The new grass cutting contract has been put in place and is working well
- Clock on the Church Tower. Many people won't know that this is the Parish's war memorial. There have been some problems birds getting access and an unsafe ladder have stopped people being able to get to it for servicing. Thanks to Diana Wilson, the ladder has been replaced and it is now possible for servicing to take place
- We now have publicly available email addresses for council members so that residents can contact them with comments and concerns.

I want to thank Messrs Kemp, Holt and Plumb for their support and encouragement, both in terms of grants, but also for keeping us informed of what is going on in local government and for cheerfully turning up to our meetings even in the depths of the winter. Their support is much appreciated. Of particular note is Richard Kemp's retirement from Suffolk Council after over 40 years of cheerful public service. He will be missed.

Website – a reminder to all those residents in the village that it is worth keeping an eye on the latest news pages on Parish council tab of the Stanstead website as well as useful websites tab. We regularly post things we feel may be of interest to parishioners e.g. grant funding availability, events such as careers fair, neighbourhood plan events. Plus surveys /have you say on various topics such as; rights of way, policing, community led housing, planning consultation. We plan to upgrade and renew our social media presence this year.

We are also looking forward to hearing from younger residents of the village in the coming months about what we can do for them

David Harkness