

**Minutes of Stanstead Parish Council Meeting
held at Stanstead Village Community Centre, Stanstead
on Monday 25th November 2024 at 7.30pm**

Present: Stanstead Parish Council (SPC): Cllr D Finch, Cllr D Harkness, Cllr D Wilson, Cllr A Green, G Claydon (Parish Clerk - Minutes) & 1 member of the public

Absent: Babergh District Council (BDC): Cllr M Holt, Cllr S Plumb Suffolk County Council (SCC): Cllr R Kemp

Meeting Part 1 opened at 7.30pm

01.11.24	Election of Chair Resolved unanimously that Cllr David Finch will continue as chair for this meeting.
02.11.24	Chairman's Welcome and apologies for absence Meeting opened at 7.30pm by Cllr D Finch who thanked all those attending. Apologies for absence received from Cllr M Holt, Cllr S Plumb & Cllr R Kemp.
03.11.24	To receive Councillor's declaration of interest, pecuniary or non-pecuniary in items on the agenda Cllr D Harkness declared an interest in agenda item 13.11 in that he is a member of the Stanstead Village Social Club. Cllrs: D Finch, D Harkness and D Wilson declared an interest in agenda item 12.11 in that they may know one of the contractors tendering for the grounds maintenance contract. Cllr A Green declared an interest in agenda item 12.11 in that they may know all of the contractors tendering for the grounds maintenance contract.
04.11.24	To consider applications for dispensation Dispensation granted to Cllr D Harkness in relation to agenda item 13.11 in that granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area. No other dispensations necessary in relation to agenda item 12.11 due to the process to be used to analyse the tenders received.
05.11.24	To adopt minutes of the council meeting held on 30th September 2024 Resolved unanimously to adopt the minutes as an accurate record and to be uploaded to the website as a PDF.
06.11.24	To receive reports from: District Cllr M Holt /S Plumb & County Cllr R Kemp Apologies received (as above) but please see: District Councillor's report November 2024 as provided prior to the meeting. County Councillor's Report November 2024 as provided prior to the meeting.

	Discussion around 'improving access to GPs' information within the County Councillor's report and concern around wanting appropriate access to GPs for everyone. Resolved to contact Cllr Richard Kemp for further details on this.
07.11.24	Public Forum members of the public are invited to question Councillors and /or speak on any Parish matters One member of the public was present and wanted to thank SPC for assisting in get the church clock working.
08.11.24	Neighbourhood Plan Update In order to progress with this SPC need to complete an 'Application to designate a Neighbourhood Area' with BDC. The Clerk advised the form has been partially completed giving the details and asked if there a second contact could be added as well as the Clerk. The Clerk read the suggestions made by the consultant in relation to what information to add for the: 'Statement', 'intention of neighbourhood area' and 'support for choice'. Discussed the fee proposal (covering the remained of the financial year) provided by the consultant engaged to support SPC which would be used to support the grant application. Resolved unanimously to complete the application as suggested by the consultant and to accept the fee proposal for the grant application.
09.11.24	To discuss Maintenance of Benches Discussion following visual inspection of the 6 SPC benches. The benches have not been maintained for many years. All require either pressure washing or wire brushing followed by staining (preferably with an oil-based stain). The bench within and to the rear of the children's play park near the stream needs a new wooden support on the right side. Resolved unanimously to obtain quote for woodwork repair and quote for works as above. Resolved unanimously to establish a budget for regular maintenance.
10.11.24	Playground: a). To discuss annual inspection report, b). To discuss & agree maintenance schedule for all play equipment c). Signs update a). Discussed the annual playground inspection provided by Playsafety and the work which needs to be done on the gates. Discussed that HAGS (who installed the equipment) should, under the equipment guarantee, rectify as per the recommendation in the annual report. b). Discussed the combination goal which although checked quarterly, has not been maintained /cleaned whereas the quarterly and annual inspections recommend this is done. c). The signs were to be installed by a volunteer who, advised last week, that they were having trouble sourcing the right fixings. Discussed that it would be preferable for the signs to be installed before the next inspection which is due in December. Resolved unanimously to forward to HAGS the sections of the annual inspection report that relate to the gates and request that they rectify the matter under the guarantee provided. Resolved unanimously that the combination goal should be cleaned every 2 years.

	Resolved that if the volunteer is unable to obtain the necessary fixings that the signs be returned to SPC.
11.11.24	To discuss Parish Notice Board Discussion around the need to revamp the 2 x notice boards possibly with the addition of a cork base and doors with Perspex or similar. Resolved unanimously to seek contractor(s) to quote for this work.
12.11.24	To open and discuss grounds maintenance tenders 4 tenders received by the 18th November 2024 deadline. All opened at the meeting by the Clerk without revealing who the contractors were by labelling them as A, B, C and D. The Clerk read and a Cllr logged the price per element of the contract for each of the tenders. An estimated number per year was applied to some of the elements of the contract eg where more than one per year would be required (actual number per year were used where possible); this served to estimate a maximum cost per year for the contract. A different Cllr then calculated the estimated maximum cost per element for each of the tenders and the Clerk logged the resulting cost. Estimated annual cost per tender were then calculated by a Cllr and logged by the Clerk. It was established that 3 of the tenders were subject to an annual increase and that 1 was a fixed price for the term of the contract – this was also the lowest cost tender. The 2 tenders with the highest costs were rejected due to budget constraints. Of the remaining 2 tenders discussion took place with regard to: cost, obtaining references to ensure quality of service provision and consideration of carbon footprint in relation to distance travelled to provide the service. Resolved unanimously to exclude the 2 tenders with the highest costs due to budget constraints. Resolved to accept the lowest cost tender due to cost including being fixed for the term of the contract but that this would be subject to quality being established by way of references if required, proposer Cllr D Harkness, Seconder Cllr A Green unanimously agreed. The Clerk then revealed who the lowest cost tender was from, which was SPC's current contractor. Resolved unanimously to accept the tender due to the good quality of work already being known by SPC and that the Clerk would send out a letter to the successful contractor to advise of SPC's decision (including clarification that SPC would like the Churchyard wild area to be trimmed only). And that the Clerk would send out a letter to each of unsuccessful contractors.
13.11.24	Stanstead Village Community Centre Update including: land registry, lights, textile recycling bank, broadband & lease SPC have been notified that the solar panel installation should take place within the next couple of months, discussion around how they are being funded from various grants /how and when payments are being made and the documentation required by funders for audit purposed. SPC have previously resolved under minute ref 4.09.24ex to fund £930.00 from neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and discussed its position on how /when to pay and documentation required for SPC audit purposes. Discussion regarding the complexities of the current situation with the community centre, including the reduction in committee members. Cllrs are

	all in agreement that a working party would be the best way forward due to the time available and the number of items for discussion on SPC agenda. Resolved unanimously to write a cheque at the meeting for the solar panel project and to request that a copy of the invoice, a bank statement showing the payment as having been made to Greenscape, a copy of the roof survey and a copy of the Community Centre’s latest accounts are forwarded to SPC, for audit purposes. Resolved unanimously to apply for a textile recycling bank. Resolved unanimously to form a working party and to arrange to meet with members of the Stanstead Village Community Centre and Social Club committee.																																													
14.11.24	To approve invoices /accounts for payment /monitor budget position to 30th September 2024 <table><tr><th colspan="3">Schedule of Payments made since last meeting and already included in the reconciliation at 21.11.2024</th></tr><tr><td>Broadband October</td><td>24.99</td><td>+VAT</td></tr><tr><td>Clerk Wages October + 16 hrs overtime</td><td>535.42</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Annual playground inspection</td><td>78.00</td><td>+VAT</td></tr><tr><td>Broadband November</td><td>24.99</td><td>+VAT</td></tr><tr><th colspan="3">Income Received since last meeting and already included in the reconciliation at 21.11.2024</th></tr><tr><td>Recycling credit</td><td>153.00</td><td></td></tr><tr><th colspan="3">Schedule of payments to be made at the meeting</th></tr><tr><td>Website hosting</td><td>35.00</td><td>+VAT</td></tr><tr><td>Payroll Services</td><td>45.00</td><td>+VAT</td></tr><tr><td>Grounds maintenance for the year</td><td>3190.00</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Clerk annual allowance</td><td>312.00</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Stamps & Stationery expenses</td><td>46.87</td><td>+VAT</td></tr><tr><td>Clerk wages November</td><td>353.46</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Grant for Solar Panels at community centre</td><td>930.00</td><td></td></tr></table> Signed & Resolved that signed hard copy of schedule of payments & income (noted that recycling credit received) be retained on file with minutes once adopted. Signed & Resolved unanimously that income and expenditure records reconcile to the bank statement at 23rd September 2024, hard copy to be retained on file. Signed & Resolved unanimously that budget monitoring spreadsheet had been circulated to all Cllrs before the meeting and was approved.	Schedule of Payments made since last meeting and already included in the reconciliation at 21.11.2024			Broadband October	24.99	+VAT	Clerk Wages October + 16 hrs overtime	535.42		Annual playground inspection	78.00	+VAT	Broadband November	24.99	+VAT	Income Received since last meeting and already included in the reconciliation at 21.11.2024			Recycling credit	153.00		Schedule of payments to be made at the meeting			Website hosting	35.00	+VAT	Payroll Services	45.00	+VAT	Grounds maintenance for the year	3190.00		Clerk annual allowance	312.00		Stamps & Stationery expenses	46.87	+VAT	Clerk wages November	353.46		Grant for Solar Panels at community centre	930.00	
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15.11.24	To discuss ‘New Positive Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment’ and training on Discussion on the legal responsibility for SPC to ensure they are compliant with this duty and the training that is available to PCs through Suffolk																																													

	Association of Local Council's (SALC). The Clerk advised that from information received already it is indicated that a risk assessment and action plan will be required to ensure compliance. The Clerk advised they are booked to undertake the SALC free training. Resolved unanimously to acknowledge this duty and to progress as identified in the upcoming training.
16.11.24	To discuss feedback on 'Public right of way improvements' The Clerk advised they had publicised this on the website and Stanstead Village Group Facebook page but had received no feedback to date.
17.11.24	To discuss Rural Funding Digest Grants available Resolved To continue forwarding emails received to SP Cllrs and to defer to the January meeting.
18.11.24	To acknowledge no comments on Planning Application DC/24/04698 Resolved unanimously to note that Cllrs were consulted via email but that no comments were required.
19.11.24	To discuss community thermal imaging project Discussion around the timeframe needed for consulting with the community, the lack of available dates for this period, training required to use the camera and volume of other work at the present time. Resolved unanimously to establish if there is interest from parishioners for the 2025/26 period.
20.11.24	To discuss internal control report The Clerk raised the need to allocate the task of completing the internal control report for the 2024/25 financial year in readiness for the audit. Resolved that blank template be emailed to the Cllr who agreed to take on this responsibility.
21.11.24	To discuss changes to bank account Discussed amending bank mandate to remove 1 Cllr who resigned in July 2024. Discussed the introduction of charges from 14th January 2025 by our current bank such as: a monthly fee of £4.50 to hold a business account and 50p per cheque written. Discussed whether we should look to change banks bearing in mind we may need to move to online payments (which we are not currently doing) to obtain free banking. Discussed that SPC are already set up to use online banking although have not done so to date for payments due to needing clear guidance/policy to do so. The Clerk advised that the new financial regulations adopted on 30th September 2024 give clear guidance on using online banking and therefore recommends that SPC start to use this method for payments from after the meeting if Cllrs are able to log on using the details provided. SPC could then potentially change to an alternative bank in the future should they wish to. Signed & Resolved unanimously that bank mandate to remove 1 Cllr be posted.

	Resolved unanimously that Cllrs should attempt to log on using the details provided and if successful that SPC start to use the online payments facility from the first payment needed after the meeting.
22.11.24	Church clock update The Parish Council were notified: that a village resident is keeping an eye on the church building, that a ladder which would reach the clock face was being gifted to the church, that it would be installed for the church and that it appears the electric to the church clock had been turned off. It was suggested that a 'Clock - do not turn off' notice be sited at the electric point. Resolved unanimously to arrange for the clock to be serviced to coincide with 'daylight saving time' in spring so that the time could also be changed.
23.11.24	Survey of Parish trees /maintenance plan update The Clerk advised that the survey was due to take place on 25th November 2024. Resolved unanimously that the tree condition report be forwarded to Cllrs once received and that work needed /maintenance plan be discussed and a budget established for this.
24.11.24	Village sign maintenance and trees on Suffolk County Council land update The Clerk advised that SCC highways had been contacted via Cllr R Kemp but that they had still not fully answered the question as to whether SPC would be allowed to remove the tree near the sign and the dead tree. 1 Cllr felt that it is BDC that are responsible for maintaining the green even though it is SCC owned land. Resolved to contact Cllr M Holt for help with establishing if BDC can remove the tree near the village sign or agree to keep it trimmed so that it doesn't overhang /obscure the village sign or, if not, if we can have permission to do this ourselves. Also if they can remove the dead tree. Proposer Cllr A Green, Seconder Cllr D Finch. Resolved unanimously to again contact the artist who painted the sign regarding what SPC should do to maintain its condition.
25.11.24	Bus stop in Lower Road update Overhanging branches have now been cleared away by BDC public real team and SPC wish to thank Cllr M Holt for his help and support with this positive outcome. Discussion was had in relation to maintaining /cleaning the 2 bus stops within the SPC area. Resolved unanimously to seek quotes for cleaning of the 2 bus stops and to consider establishing a budget for this in the future.
26.11.24	To discuss Gov.uk domain and Village Website The Clerk discussed the recent information event they attended and likely ongoing costs for the provision of a gov.uk domain for the village website and gov.uk email addresses for the Clerk and up to 7 councillors. Discussion around: the importance of SPC having official and secure methods of communication, the need to publish contact details for councillors and what the acceptable format options are for the main part of the email addresses.

	SPC to consider what email address is used by other councils with a similar name to SPC. Discussed capacity for ensuring updates to village website continue due to volunteer who has been doing this having to step down from the role. SPC wish to thank the volunteer who has been doing such a fantastic job with this over the years and the valuable support this has been for SPC and the wider community. SPC acknowledged the resulting additional work for the Clerk. Resolved unanimously to go ahead with moving to gov.uk domain for the village website and 5 email addresses with the option to extend this to 8 emails should this become necessary. Resolved unanimously that SPC should use 'stansteadparishcouncil.gov.uk' as long as this does not conflict with others of a similar name. Resolved that the Parish Clerk will update the SPC required areas of the website only. Proposer Cllr D Harkness, seconder Cllr D Wilson.
27.11.24	To discuss Facebook pages: establishing a Parish Council Facebook page and management of Village Facebook pages Stanstead has 2 village Facebook pages which have been managed by the same volunteer (as above) who is having to step down from the role. SPC wish to thank the volunteer who has been doing such a fantastic job with disseminating information on behalf of SPC over the years and the valuable support this has been for SPC and the wider community. The Clerk advised to cover this void they have been posting on the Stanstead Village Group as this does not require admin access but that postings come from their personal Facebook account which is not ideal. Thus, if SPC would like information to continue being disseminated on Facebook then a SPC Facebook page should be created so that people who access the information can see it is from a legitimate source. SPC acknowledged the resulting additional work this would cause for the Clerk. Resolved to progress creating a SPC Facebook account. Proposer Cllr D Harkness, seconder Cllr D Wilson.
28.11.24	Councillor vacancies update Advertising for councillors is still outstanding due to other current priorities.
29.11.24	To discuss and comment on proposed 'Prohibition of Vehicles Weighing over 7.5 tonnes (Except for Access) - A1092 (Westbound) Long Melford to Baythorne End / B1063 (Southbound) Clare' Resolved unanimously that SPC have no comments.
30.11.24	To discuss and comment on 'gambling act 2005 Babergh and Mid Suffolk statement of principles consultation' Resolved unanimously that SPC have no comments.
31.11.24	To discuss correspondence received The Clerk asked if all Cllrs should be sent correspondence relating to such things as requests for grant and the rural funding digest. Resolved unanimously that these types of correspondence should be sent to all Cllrs.

32.11.24	Matters to be brought to the attention of the Councillors /items for the next meeting's agenda To move the September 2025 meeting Councillor Vacancies
33.11.24	Date of next meeting – Monday 27th January 2025

Resolved unanimously that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press were excluded from the meeting part 2 due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed and that Meeting Part 1 therefore be closed at 10:21

Meeting Part 2 Opened at 10:21

1.11/2.24	To agree the Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2024/25 and other employment matters Resolved unanimously to agree to the request as set out in the NJC Salary Pay Award 2024/2025 email sent to Cllrs on 19 th November 2024 at 22:18. Resolved unanimously to amend the Clerk's current contract in the interim and for it to be reviewed with the intention of using the SALC template in the future.
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Name:David Harkness..... Position:Chair.....

Date:27th January 2025..... Time:19:39.....

Signature: Hard copy retained on file has been signed and all pages initialled