

**Minutes of Stanstead Parish Council Meeting
held at Stanstead Village Community Centre, Stanstead
on Monday 27th January 2025 at 7.30pm**

Present: Stanstead Parish Council (SPC): Cllr D Harkness, Cllr D Wilson, Cllr A Green, G Claydon (Parish Clerk - Minutes)
Babergh District Council (BDC): Cllr S Plumb

Absent: SPC: Cllr D Finch, Suffolk County Council: Cllr R Kemp. No members of the public or press were present.

01.01.25 Election of Chair

Resolved unanimously to elect Cllr D Harkness as Chair.

02.01.25 Chairman's Welcome and apologies for absence

Meeting opened at 19:35 by Cllr D Harkness who thanked all those attending. Apologies for absence Cllr D Finch, Cllr M Holt & Cllr R Kemp.

03.01.25 To receive Councillor's declaration of interest, pecuniary or non-pecuniary in items on the agenda

Cllr A Green declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 19.01 in that they are a member of the Stanstead Village Social Club and that they know personally one of the committee members who will be liaising with the working party.

04.01.25 To consider applications for dispensation

Dispensation granted to Cllr A Green in relation to item 19.01 in that granting a dispensation is in the interest of persons living in the authority's area.

05.01.25 To adopt minutes of the council meeting held on 25th November 2024

Resolved unanimously to adopt the minutes as an accurate record and to be uploaded to the website as a PDF.

06.01.25 To receive reports from: District Cllr M Holt /S Plumb & County Cllr R Kemp

[District Councillor's report January 2025](#) as provided prior to the meeting.

Cllr S Plumb reported that devolution would result in there being one Mayor presiding over Suffolk & Norfolk, with the county councils no longer in existence and the eventual disappearance of the district councils. It was felt at this time that there would be little change for Parish Councils.

[County Councillor's report January 2025](#) as provided prior to the meeting.

07.01.25 Public Forum members of the public are invited to question Councillors and /or speak on any Parish matters

No members of the public were present.

08.01.25 To reschedule 2025 meetings: September from 29th to 22nd and November from 24th to 17th

Resolved unanimously that the 2 new dates be as follows: 22nd September 2025 & 17th November 2025.

09.01.25 Councillor vacancies update

The Clerk advised other priorities had not enabled time to progress this, but that the neighbourhood plan information event might be a useful opportunity to let residents know that there are currently 3 vacancies for councillors and that anyone interested should contact the Clerk by email in the first instance.

10.01.25 To approve invoices /accounts for payment & monitor budget position

Schedule of Payments made since last meeting and already included in the reconciliation at 21.1.2025		
Broadband December	24.99	+VAT
Tree condition surveys	396.89	+VAT
Clerk Wages December + backpay	516.44	
Quarterly playground inspection	75.00	+VAT
Income tax to HMRC	134.00	
Stamps (4x1st)	6.60	
Broadband January	29.99	+VAT
Income Received since last meeting and already included in the reconciliation at 21.1.2025		
None		
Schedule of payments to be made at the meeting		
None		

Signed & Resolved that signed hard copy of schedule of payments be retained on file with minutes once adopted.

Signed & Resolved unanimously that income and expenditure records reconcile to the bank statement at 21.1.2025, hard copy to be retained on file.

Signed & Resolved unanimously that budget monitoring spreadsheet as at 31.12.2024 had been circulated to all Cllrs before the meeting and that it be approved.

11.01.25 Budget Analysis 24-25

Figures spreadsheet sent to Cllrs prior to the meeting. Analysis fully explained in meeting to satisfaction of all SPC Cllrs including:

- Expenditure (net actual) to 21.1.25
- Expenditure (net projected) to 31.3.25
- Income (actual & projected) to 31.3.25
- 24-25 Budget against expenditure /use of Reserves
- Reserves position: CIL, Earmarked & General (projected) to 31.3.25

Resolved unanimously that the budget analysis be adopted as accurate.

12.01.25 Budget Setting (forecast) 25-26

Figures spreadsheet sent to Cllrs prior to the meeting. Fully discussed all elements of the budget forecast including the use of reserves for some of the expenditure with the rationale behind this decision.

Resolved unanimously that budget for 25-26 be adopted including the use of reserves.

13.01.25 Setting the precept 25-26

Figures spreadsheet sent to Cllrs prior to the meeting. Fully discussed the impact of the budget forecast, projected income, CIL /earmarked /general reserves position and rational for using reserves for some elements in the forecast, in relation to the precept needed /impact on band D properties.

Resolved unanimously that the precept required be agreed at £11,898 which equates to a 9.98% increase or £6.36 on band D properties. Precept form to be submitted to Babergh District Council before 31.1.2025.

14.01.25 To discuss and adopt the internal control report

Cllrs were reminded that they are expected to declare any changes and any Gifts of Hospitality as required under the Code of Conduct paras 9 and 10 and that they should ensure they are familiar with standing order and financial regulations (both adopted May 2024).

Resolved to adopt the internal control report and upload to website.

15.01.25 To agree Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) as internal auditor for 24-25

Resolved unanimously to appoint SALC as internal auditors for 24-25.

16.01.25 Neighbourhood plan update

Discussed grant application and an information event for Stanstead residents which it was proposed to hold on a Saturday afternoon in March 2025 at Stanstead Village Community Centre. Once date confirmed this will be publicised to residents.

Resolved unanimously to submit grant application.

17.01.25 Maintenance of Benches update

Bench No.3 (located to rear of Children's playground by the stream) - Minor woodwork repair completed voluntarily, during the repair it was noted that one bolt is missing to its left front leg, despite this the bench remains stable and secure. Awaiting quote for maintenance under minute ref 09.11.24.

Resolved unanimously to accept the repair as gift.

Resolved unanimously to include replacing missing bolt as part of the maintenance previously agreed under minute ref 09.11.24.

Resolved unanimously to obtain additional quote(s).

18.01.25 Playground:

a). To discuss weekly and quarterly inspection reports & agree actions

Weekly inspection highlighted issue with 2 x metal gates not closing, chair was advised and was to contact HAGS. Discussed query raised about the wooden gate to the playing field.

Grounds maintenance contractor advised of mole activity on the playing field, chair was advised and contractor has been appointed to address.

Resolved unanimously to defer wooden gate situation until the next meeting.

Resolved unanimously to defer discussion of quarterly inspection due to Cllr absence.

b). To agree contractor(s) for quarterly & annual inspections for 25-26

Quotes obtained for quarterly and annual inspections from 3 providers.

Resolved unanimously that HAGS will complete the quarterly inspections and that Rospa Play Safety will complete the annual inspection.

c). Signage update

Discussed why the 2 signs not yet installed. Awaiting quote from 1 provider.

Resolved unanimously to obtain another quote.

d). Cleaning of combination goal update

Awaiting quote from 1 provider.

Resolved unanimously to obtain another quote.

19.01.25 Stanstead Village Community Centre

a). To receive Land Registry title deed

Resolved unanimously that copy had been sent to all SPC councillors.

b). To agree terms of reference for the working party

Resolved unanimously that a working party be established to meet with Stanstead Village Community Centre and Social Club committee members with the purpose of discussing the terms of the lease agreement. The working party will have no delegated authority and as such report(s) will need to be presented to SPC for decision at the Parish Council meeting(s).

c). To discuss & agree details for textile recycling bank

Form completed at the meeting.

Resolved unanimously to submit form as completed.

20.01.25 Positive Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment update

The Clerk advised they have the SALC sexual and general harassment policy and procedure document as a starting point for SPC's policy. Risk assessment and action plan to be undertaken.

21.01.25 To discuss rural funding digest grants available

Discussion around whether there are any grants for the clock servicing.

Resolved unanimously to check for grants for works to clocks.

22.01.25 Thermal imaging project update

See minute ref 19.11.24, ongoing.

23.01.25 To discuss changes to bank account /issues encountered & agree actions

Discussed issues encountered with online banking, the Clerk's prompt actions to highlight these to all Cllrs and the Clerk's complaint raised with Lloyds Bank. All Cllrs are now de-registered from online banking, new

online banking forms signed at the meeting for all Cllrs present and the Clerk.

Resolved unanimously: to complete form for absent Cllr, to submit all forms for reinstatement of online banking and to progress using online banking.

24.01.25 Church clock update

Advised that the church have now had the ladder replaced and have a volunteer who will change the time twice a year.

Resolved unanimously to obtain quote(s) and arrange for clock servicing.

25.01.25 To receive tree condition survey report dated 28.11.24 & agree actions

Tree condition survey was emailed to all Cllrs in November 2024, the Clerk was requested to obtain quotes for the works as per the report to tree T5. Discussed report recommendations regarding tree T5 and the 3 quotes received.

Resolved unanimously to request funding from County Cllr R Kemp to fell and stump grind tree T5 the Norway Maple on the church green.

Resolved unanimously not to replace the tree due to the number of trees already on the church green.

26.01.25 Village sign maintenance update

The Clerk advised that further contact had not yet made with the sign painter regarding regular maintenance requirements.

Response received from SCC regarding minute ref 24.11.24 (tree nearest village sign): *"although Suffolk Highways will not look to remove this tree, we have no issues with the Paish Council undertaking low-level maintenance on this tree to trim back or remove any branches that are obstructing or causing damage to either the sign or shelter."*

27.01.25 Trees on Suffolk County Council land (village green) update

The Clerk and one Cllr met on site with SCC highways. Response received from SCC regarding minute ref 24.11.24 (dead maple): *"Following our meeting, I have referred the larger of the 'problem' trees (the Maple), to one of our Arborists and have requested a full condition/safety inspection of this tree – I've passed along the concerns that you and other residents raised over this tree, along with my own (especially after I observed the cracks in the trunk of this tree). I'm afraid there is no date scheduled for this inspection, but I have asked to be updated as soon as this is carried out. Once inspected, the Arborist will list any works that they deem necessary, and these will be ordered by Suffolk Highways. As soon as I have received a response, I will be back in touch."*

28.01.25 Gov.uk domain and Village website update

The Clerk advised that grant funding for this initiative has now been fully utilised.

Resolved unanimously to progress with the switch to using a gov.uk domain for website and emails for the Clerk and Cllrs.

29.01.25 Parish Council Facebook page update

Work on this is underway /ongoing.

30.01.25 To discuss fully funded electric vehicle charge points
Resolved unanimously that there is no available space for this at the Community Centre.

31.01.25 To discuss Devolution white paper
See BDC Cllr comments in minute ref 06.01.25.

31.01.25/2 Parish Clerk

a). To sign appendix to Clerk's contract

Signed and Resolved unanimously to retain copy in HR folder held by Cllr D Finch.

b). To sign Clerk's timesheet

Signed and Resolved unanimously to pay 17 hours overtime.

Resolved unanimously to pay (using pre & post April hourly rates) the full annual leave entitlement of 33.6 hours not taken between 1.1.24 -31.12.24.

c). To discuss paid annual leave in relation to advice from SALC

Resolved unanimously to pay (using pre & post April hourly rates) 7.12 hours additional annual leave accrued on 59 hours overtime between 1.1.24 - 31.12.24, at the prescribed rate of 12.07% as advised by SALC.

32.01.25 Matters to be brought to the attention of the Councillors /items for the next meeting's agenda

To discuss /agree quote for Notice board revamp

To discuss /agree quote for bus shelter cleaning x 2

Playground a) wooden gate, b) quarterly inspection report Dec 2024

Positive Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment

33.01.25 Date of next meeting – Monday 24th March 2025

Meeting Closed at 21:54

Name:David Harkness..... Position:Chair.....

Date:24th March 2025..... Time:19:33.....

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