

**Minutes of Stanstead Annual Parish Council Meeting
held at Stanstead Village Community Centre, Stanstead
on Monday 19th May at 7.30pm**

Present: Stanstead Parish Council (SPC): Cllr D Harkness, Cllr D Wilson, Cllr A Green, G Claydon (Parish Clerk - Minutes)
5 members of the public were present

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

01.05.25	Election of Chair Resolved to elect Cllr D Harkness as Chair, proposer Cllr A Green, Seconded Cllr D Wilson.
02.05.25	Election of Vice Chair Resolved to elect Cllr A Green as Vice Chair proposer Cllr D Harkness, Seconded Cllr D Wilson and to elect Cllr D Wilson as Vice Chair, proposer Cllr D Harkness, Seconded Cllr A Green.
03.05.25	Chair's Welcome and apologies for absence Meeting opened at 19.43 by Cllr D Harkness who thanked all those attending. Apologies for absence received from Cllr R Kemp, Cllr M Holt and Cllr S Plumb.
04.05.25	To receive Chair's acceptance of office form Resolved that acceptance of office forms be signed at the meeting for Chair and both Vice Chairs.
05.05.25	For members to declare any interests they may have on items on the agenda and agree any dispensations to stay a. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests b. Other Registrable Interests c. Non-Registerable Interests Cllrs advised that they have an interest in agenda item 18.05 and dispensations as follows: Cllr A Green - Other registerable interest as club member, dispensation to stay and vote as granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority area. Cllr D Harkness - Non-registerable interest as club member, dispensation granted to stay and vote as granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority area.
06.05.25	To adopt minutes of the council meeting held on 24th March 2025 Resolved unanimously to adopt the minutes as an accurate record and to be uploaded to the website as a PDF.
07.05.25	To adopt minutes of extraordinary council meeting held on 23rd April 2025

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08.05.25	To receive /acknowledge reports from: District Cllr M Holt /S Plumb & County Cllr R Kemp District Councillor's report May 2025 as provided prior to the meeting. County Councillor's report May 2025 as provided prior to the meeting.																		
09.05.25	Public Forum members of the public are invited to question Councillors and /or speak on any Parish matters One member of the public asked about a map they had found on a website which seemed a bit odd as the line went across the curtilage of their property. Resolved to establish what the area on the map represents.																		
10.05.25	To review and adopt the following policies: a. Standing Orders b. Financial Regulations c. Risk Assessment & Management d. Councillors Code of Conduct e. Financial Controls f. Process for online payments g. Fire Risk Assessment h. Complaints Procedure Resolved unanimously to adopt the following policies: a. Standing Orders, b. financial regulations, c. risk assessment & management, d. councillor code of conduct, e. financial controls, f. process for online payments, h. complaints procedure. g. Fire risk assessment needs to be revisited.																		
11.05.25	To receive internal audit report completed by Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC). To discuss auditor's comments /recommendations and to agree the Parish Council action plan Resolved that internal audit report completed by SALC dated 16.4.25 had been received, that comments and recommendations were discussed in full including actions taken to date. Resolved to adopt the action plan (appendix A), to note details within the actions section including retrospective minute recording and to complete all outstanding actions.																		
12.05.25	To approve invoices /accounts for payment, monitor income and monitor budget position to 31.3.2025 <table border="1"><thead><tr><th colspan="3">Schedule of Payments made since last meeting and already included in the reconciliation at 31.3.25 & 18.5.25</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Defibrillator heater</td><td>120.00</td><td>+VAT</td></tr><tr><td>Bank service charges (subsequently refunded)</td><td>5.25</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Bank service charges</td><td>4.25</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Neighbourhood Plan consultancy fees</td><td>3,440.00</td><td>+VAT</td></tr><tr><td>Neighbourhood Plan publicity materials</td><td>430.00</td><td></td></tr></tbody></table>	Schedule of Payments made since last meeting and already included in the reconciliation at 31.3.25 & 18.5.25			Defibrillator heater	120.00	+VAT	Bank service charges (subsequently refunded)	5.25		Bank service charges	4.25		Neighbourhood Plan consultancy fees	3,440.00	+VAT	Neighbourhood Plan publicity materials	430.00	
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	Signed & Resolved that signed hard copy of schedule of payments be retained on file with minutes once adopted. Signed & Resolved unanimously that receipts and payments records reconcile to the bank statement at 18.5.25, hard copy to be retained on file. Signed & Resolved unanimously that budget monitoring spreadsheet as at 31.3.25 had been circulated to all Cllrs before the meeting and that it be approved.																														
13.05.25	To approve and sign Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) return Resolved unanimously to approve and sign the CIL return, for it to be uploaded to the website and emailed to Babergh District Council infrastructure team.																														
14.05.25	To agree & approve end of year accounts /financial information 24-25: a). Receipts & payments, b). Reconciliation to bank statement and f). To note no section 137 spending occurred Signed & Resolved unanimously that that receipts and payments records are accurate and reconcile to the bank statement at 31.3.25 and that no section 137 spending had occurred during 24-25. c). Reserves position Signed & Resolved unanimously that at 31.3.25 reserves held are as follows: CIL £2,516.37, Earmarked £5,751.00 & General £6,296.39. d). Analysis of variances Signed & Resolved unanimously to adopt as an accurate record the explanation of variances in payments for the 24-25 financial year as compared to 23-24. e). Asset Register Discussion regarding who owns the clock on the church, it was confirmed that the clock winder is on the asset register but not the clock itself. The PC will endeavour to establish who owns the clock. Resolved unanimously to adopt the asset register at 31.3.25 as accurate, which shows assets to the value of £36,188.83.																														

15.05.25	Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) 24-25: a. To approve & sign Certificate of Exemption b. To receive Annual Internal Audit Report completed by SALC c. To approve & sign Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) d. To approve & sign Accounting Statement (Section 2) e. To approve contact details form f. To approve the Notice for the Exercise of Public Rights Resolved unanimously to approve, sign, date and minute reference: a. certificate of exemption, c. annual governance statement and d. accounting statement. b. To receive and note the contents of the annual internal audit report. f. To approve the notice for the exercise of Public Rights for the period 3.6.25 to 14.7.25. e. To approve the contact details form. And for all documentation to be uploaded to the website and /or forwarded to external audit as per the AGAR requirements.
16.05.25	To review insurance requirements Resolved to approve insurance level of cover as adequate.
17.05.25	Playground update including: a. Wooden gate replacement Resolved unanimously to await outcome of working party discussions with Stanstead Village Community Centre & Social Club regarding proposed changes to car park area. b. Quarterly inspections Resolved unanimously to discuss at July meeting. c. Cleaning of Combination Goal Discussion regarding contacts made to obtain quotes. Resolved to chase up quote. d. Signs Now installed, still awaiting invoice, clerk to establish if PC are to be invoiced or if the PC should accept the work as a gift.
18.05.25	Community Centre update including: a. Working party meeting /advice from SALC update Working party meetings regarding the terms of the new lease, include discussions on SPC wanting SVCC&SC to be responsible for maintenance, repair and insurance whereas SVCC&SC want SPC to be responsible for maintenance, repair and insurance. Discussion around potential extension to car parking area. SVCC&SC have requested that the SPC hand over the responsibility for the broadband to them and provide a grant instead which they feel would make it easier to resolve problems and provide a better service than the current arrangements provide. SALC have provided further advise which states that SPC do not need to register as a charity regarding their interest in the Community Centre. SPC thanked SVCC&SC for providing the carbon footprint document. Resolved unanimously to hand over the responsibility for the broadband contract to SVCC&SC at a date to be co-ordinated between the parties and to

	provide a grant of £300 per financial year to contribute towards the cost, proposer Cllr D Harkness. Resolved unanimously to obtain advice from SALC regarding whether it is possible for SPC to take on the responsibility for maintenance and advice regarding potential funding due to limited financial resources. Resolved to obtain an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) as this is required before a new lease can be issued. b. To confirm installation of textile recycling bank Resolved unanimously that the textile recycling bank has now been installed in the car park at the Stanstead Village community Centre.
19.05.25	Neighbourhood Plan update including: a. Working party meeting update Discussion around the good support for this initiative with 11 people present at the first working party meeting including 3 councillors and 1 consultant. The next stage is to look at examples of surveys other parishes have done, bring a draft survey to the next working party meeting and agreed what should be included in the Stanstead survey. The survey will then be compiled by the consultant, presented to the council for approval and subsequently delivered to Stanstead residents for completion. b. To confirm Grant monitoring report completed Resolved that the grant monitoring had been completed satisfactorily and circulated to councillors.
20.05.25	To approve changes to the bank mandate Resolved that Cllr D Finch be removed from the bank mandate via the online process which only Cllrs can action.
21.05.25	Church clock update The clerk advised that the church clock has now been serviced and apologised that council had not been informed and that the invoice had not been processed due to it having been received into the spam folder. Contractor advised of the issue and invoice to be processed by end of May.
22.05.25	Defibrillator update Resolved to thank the defibrillator co-ordinator for their work in getting the defibrillator back up and working. Invoice for the installation still to be processed.
23.05.25	Notice Boards - revamp update 4 contractors contacted for quotes, 2 said no, 1 now too busy, 1 no response. Resolved to seek a further quote for the work.
24.05.25	Bus Shelters - cleaning update Resolved to accept the quote received for an annual clean of the 2 bus shelters.
25.05.25	Benches - maintenance update Resolved to postpone until September meeting.

26.05.25	Village sign - maintenance update Still awaiting visit regarding advice on maintenance.
27.05.25	Trees on Suffolk County Council land (village green) update The clerk advised they had received a response which included: The Winter and Cyclical Team have said that they do not consider any remedial works necessary at this time (either trimming, pollarding or the removal of the tree etc) and they do not deem any works are required for immediate safety reasons. However, they have caveated this by saying that they will continue to monitor the condition of the tree going forwards, should this deteriorate further. Our Highways Assessment Officer will also include this on any of his inspections of the village (and respond to any future reports etc). I recommend at this stage that you or your residents continue to report any further safety concerns as they occur and we will reinspect as needed.
28.05.25	Gov.uk domain and village website update The clerk advised that further discussions have taken place with Community Action Suffolk but that they would need to wait until after the exercise of public rights period has ended to implement the move to a .gov email. Resolved unanimously not to change the email address until after 14.7.25.
29.05.25	Parish Council Facebook page update It was acknowledged that other work had taken priority over this initiative.
30.05.25	To agree future meeting dates Resolved unanimously that future meetings will be held at 7.30pm, unless otherwise specified, on the following Mondays: 28th July 22nd September 17th November 26th January 30th March 18th May Annual Parish Assembly Meeting 7pm 18th May Annual Parish Meeting 27th July 28th September 30th Nov
31.05.25	To sign clerk's timesheet and approve payment of overtime Resolved unanimously to sign clerk's timesheet and to pay 49 hours overtime for the period 6.1.25 – 30.3.25.
32.05.25	Matters to be brought to the attention of the Councillors /items for the next meeting's agenda: • Tree condition survey /maintenance schedule / quotes for pollarding 2 x willow trees at the Community Centre to a height of 4 meters • Thermal imaging project update • Co-option of new Parish Councillors • Planning Applications received

33.05.25	Date of next meeting – Monday 28 th July 2025
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Meeting Closed at 21:25

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

Date:28.7.2025..... Time:19:40.....

Signature: Hard copy retained on file has been signed and all pages including of
Appendix A have been initialled

Appendix A

Actions Required from SALC Internal Audit Report for the accounting Period 24-25

Internal Audit Report and Action Plan emailed to Cllrs on 24.4.25, shared at PC meeting 19.5.2025 min ref 11.05.25

Section	Page	Narrative and Comment /Recommendations	Action	Date actioned	Scheduled
1 Proper book keeping	3	Council's gross income and expenditure level is below the threshold of £200,000 and has been for three (3) continuous years. Council's operating under this limit may choose either to report on an income and expenditure basis or on a receipts and payments (R&P) basis. Council has elected to report its financial matters on a receipts and payments basis. Comment: The spreadsheet and other documents refer to income and also expenditure, rather than receipts and payments. For clarity it would be useful to adopt the notation relevant to the basis of accounting.	Amended on: Reconciliation at 31.3.25. Spreadsheet for 25-26. Email sent to cllrs to advise of this. Included pleasing comment on spreadsheet layout. PC noted actions	15.4.25 24.4.25 19.5.25	May 25 On agenda (end of yr accounts min ref 14.05.25) Note now amended. Audit Actions Completed
3 Payment Controls	5	A total of £724.03 was claimed for the period 19/01/2024 – 28/02/2025 A total of £898 remains unclaimed for the period 1-31 March 2025. Recommendation: The Council may wish to consider submitting VAT reclaims on a more frequent basis than annually, in order to maximise the opportunity to earn interest on funds.	NB This was an unusually large amount at the very end of the financial year due mostly to the neighbourhood plan invoice VAT of £688 and Norway Maple felling VAT of £166. PC considered the audit recommendation but given the circumstances felt that the current	19.5.25	May 25 On agenda (end of yr accounts min ref 14.05.25) Note clerk comment.

			system for reclaiming VAT was sufficient. Reclaim VAT on schedule 5	Clerk	
5 Budgetary Controls		The budget for the year 2024/25 was set at the meeting of 29th January 2024. Comment: The actual budget figure agreed was not minuted, so it is not possible to verify that the budget figure reported as set is the one agreed by councillors. The budget for the year 2025/26 was set at the meeting held 27th January 2025. Again, whilst the minutes indicate the budget was 'fully discussed', the actual budget adopted was not minuted. Recommendation: Best practice is that the budget figure is recorded in the minutes, for the avoidance of any dispute afterwards	May meeting Retrospectively record for audit purposes, the actual budget figure for 25-26, which was £11,898		May 25 On agenda (audit report min ref 11.05.25) Make minute – Done Audit Actions Completed
		The precept for the year 2024 – 2025 was discussed at the meeting of 29th January 2024 and set at £10,455.00 which would be an overall decrease of 0.23% for a Band D equivalent property. Comment: council has followed good practice by recording the detail of the precept being set and the impact that this would have on a Band D dwelling. Recommendation: Best practice would include minuting the current Band D charge for the parish, the new charge and the difference in pounds and pence as well as percentage, as the public should not be expected to know this information and work out the implications of a 0.23% reduction themselves.	Jan 2026 meeting Ensure best practice is maintained when setting budget for 26-27		Jan 26

		The precept for the year 2025/26 was agreed at the meeting held 27th January 2025 and largely was recorded in accordance with best practice.			
6 Internal Controls	9	The Annual CIL Statement has been produced but is in draft form awaiting approval and signature at the May 2025 meeting.	May meeting approve CIL Upload to website by 31.12.25 (per report), think BDC say end 30.6.25		May 25 On agenda Min ref 13.05.25
8 Payroll Controls	11	From paperwork seen, the council completed its re-declaration of compliance with The Pensions Regulator on 9th December 2022 as reported at the meeting of 18 th October 2022. Re-declaration will be required at some point after 2nd July 2025.	Noted on annual diary to do August 25. To be minuted Sept 25		Aug 25 & Sept 25
9 Asset control	12	The replacement values on the asset register total £64,921.91. The insurance cover is for more than this, so cover is adequate Recommendation: The council may wish to review its asset register to separate replacement costs into the same categories as the insurance policy, in order to ascertain that the insurances do reflect the assets.	10.4.25 Requested examples of good asset registers as advised I wanted to change the one we use. 11.4.25 Felixstowe a good example (Haverhill's also sent) need time to look at these.		Sept 25
11 Year End Procedures	14	As Council is a smaller authority with gross income and expenditure not exceeding £25,000 in the year ending 31st March 2025 it will be required to complete AGAR Form 2, the Accounting Statements of which were seen in draft form	Complete Form 2 Present to May meeting AGAR forms presented and signed	19.5.25	May 25 On agenda Min ref 15.05.25

13 External Audit	15	The Council agreed the publication of the external audit report, at their meeting held 30th September 2024. Comment: The minutes should have explicitly stated that the council reviewed the external auditors report and considered the content, in order to evidence support for a positive assertion to statement 7 of the Annual Governance Statements. See the Practitioners Guide 2024 s5.103.	Sept Meeting ensure this is explicitly minuted.. Internal auditor confirmed SPC should answer Yes to assertion 7 for 24-25 fin Year in an email dated 11.4.25 which contained "For section 13, still tick YES on the governance statement 7, on the basis it can be inferred council considered the external audit report, but for this September, make sure you minute they did!"		Sept 25
14 Additional Information	16	Comment: It was noted that minute 3.07.24 resolved to accept a resignation of a councillor. This is unnecessary as a resignation is effective and irreversible once received by the Chair – it is sufficient to note a casual vacancy has arisen. What isn't in the minutes is any mention that Democratic Services at Babergh District Council have been advised and a casual vacancy declared. At the same meeting, minute 17.07.24 discusses the need to encourage more people to take up the role, which is an example of good practice. With the recent resignation there should be a fresh notice of casual vacancy already on display. Evidence was seen on the district council's website of the Register of Interests for all four current parish councillors	Bring to attention of Cllrs and Note for future reference Email sent to cllrs advising of this	24.4.25	May 25 On agenda (audit report) Make minute Min ref 11.05.25

14 Additional Information	17	Comment 1: MR C W's register of interest remains listed on the BDC website, but the parish council minutes show he resigned in July 2024. Equally, BDC are not advertising a casual vacancy (see above). The clerk has addressed these points with BDC.	15.4.25 email sent to BDC advising of resignations: CW July 24 & DF recently, to remove details from BDC website & advise of casual vacancies. Notice of casual vacancies posted on village website under latest news & to village notice board x 2 Email sent to cllrs to advise of this Cllr advert x 150 printed for distribution to households	15.4.25 22.4.25 24.4.25 2.5.25	May 25 On agenda (audit report) min ref 11.05.25
14 Additional Information	17	Comment 2: At the 'Extraordinary' meeting held 16th September 2024 the minutes record that three councillors declared an interest in the matter of the community centre and social club. The minutes record dispensations were given. The minutes do not record the type of interest being declared (disclosable pecuniary, other registerable, non-registerable) nor the type of dispensation given (partial or full). As the declaration and dispensation are defences for the councillors against accusations of malpractice, it is important that the minutes provide the required detail. The dispensations were	23.4.25 agenda proforma amended to combine declaration of Interests (pecuniary, other registerable, non-registerable) and dispensations to stay. Retrospective minuting of declarations and dispensation for audit	12.4.25 23.4.25	

		clearly necessary to enable the meeting to be quorate during the relevant discussion and vote, but the public won't know that if it isn't minuted. It is noted that at the meeting held on 30th September 2024 the nature of the declarations made were minuted, but not at the meeting held 25th November 2024. Recommendation: The Council adopts a standard method of correctly minuting declarations and dispensation	purposes at 23.4.25 meeting. Recording format of these checked with internal auditor and further advice sort. Make cllrs aware of internal auditor's advice "Councillors with a long-term dispensation still need to declare the interest for the sake of transparency each time it comes up ("Chair, just to remind everyone, I have an XYZ interest because..., but I have a dispensation to both stay and vote.") 4 years: Just a reminder the legislation says dispensations may be granted for a <i>period up to 4 years</i>, because that is the gap between ordinary elections. The next ordinary parish elections in Suffolk are in May 2027, so a dispensation cannot be granted that	24.4.25	Ongoing Re-do May 27
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Signatories
Initials

			extends beyond that date”. Extra note from clerk – if you know you will have an interest in an item on the agenda these should ideally be emailed to the clerk prior to the meeting so that decision can be made ahead of the meeting where possible (as per our Standing Orders 13 d & g). Email sent to cllrs advising of this.	24.4.25	
14 Additional Information	17	ICO Registration no. Z2846600, expiring September 2025	Noted on annual diary to do Sept 25		Sept 25

July and /or Sept 2025 add to agenda to review internal audit report
GC