

**STOKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING
HELD ON 20TH MARCH 2025
IN STOKENHAM PARISH HALL**

PRESENT:**COUNCILLORS:****GAIL ADDISON****KIM GREENING****TIM LYNN****CHARLES ROGERS****JULIAN BRAZIL (District and County Councillor)****JONATHAN ANSELL****CHRIS HART****RICHARD PAIN****PIERS SPENCE (Chairman)****Also in attendance:****Clerk – Mrs G. Claydon****APOLOGIES:****COUNCILLORS:****PAULA DOUST****LIZ ROBINSON****ADRIAN GOODMAN****1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors were invited to declare any disclosable interests, including the nature and extent of such interests they had in any items to be considered at this meeting. They were also reminded to consider whether in the light of recent activities any items within their Register of Interests should be updated. It was advised that any unforeseen request for a Dispensation would be considered by the Clerk at this point only if there was no way a councillor would have been aware of such before the meeting. None.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of full council meeting dated 20th February 2025 were considered before being approved by all present and duly signed as a true and correct record.

3. OPEN FORUM

No members of the public were present.

DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The overarching topic of conversation at both District and County level is the proposed reorganisation of local government (LGR). Cllr Brazil was less than optimistic about the whole process. He feels it is being pushed through with undue haste by central government in the hope that it will solve Councils' well publicized financial problems. He takes the opposite view: given the widespread agreement that the current local government financial settlement is unsustainable, the rush to create unitary authorities with an artificially imposed deadline will create a cliff-edge that will involve redundancies, breaches of contract, and costly synchronization of services and software systems, and is likely to cost far more than it will save.

There is no agreement across Devon on which of the various options is likely to produce the best outcome. SHDC, together with West Devon, Teignbridge and Torbay, has formally backed the 1-4-5 plan. Plymouth is proposing to annexe thirteen parishes in the South Hams. Exeter is proposing a Greater Exeter but has not spelled out where the boundary would be. Devon County, obliged to have elections in May, has put forward five different options, in effect covering all bases in case the elections produce a change of control.

The Chairman asked why the forthcoming Slapton Line Partnership meeting was being held online by Teams rather than in person. Cllr Brazil said that it was to give the newly appointed Adaptation Manager, who would not yet be in post by then, the opportunity to join the meeting remotely. The Chairman responded that this did not make sense: surely it would be better to postpone the meeting by a few weeks, until the officer was in post, and have everyone meet up in person? Cllr Brazil promised to pass on Stokenham's views on this.

The Torcross middle car park was being repaired as it had become a safety hazard being full of potholes. While some questioned the expenditure considering half the area had been lost to the sea, Cllr Brazil felt it was an important part of holiday infrastructure and should be maintained as long as feasible.

Cllr Greening asked whether District had any statutory responsibility for health promotion or public health, to which Cllr Brazil responded that this was County's responsibility. She asked whether District would be involved in trying to keep the Fusion leisure centre in Kingsbridge open. The newly introduced charges at the Cattle Market car park made gym sessions, most of which ran over an hour, very expensive, and since there were a number of users who benefitted from social prescribing, they could ill afford the increased prices. Cllr Brazil agreed to check the charges as he was sure this particular car park was supposed to be long-stay.

Cllr Brazil was asked whether there had been any progress on updating properties' Council Tax bands at the valuation office. Building Control were supposed to report changes to District. South Hams did use Teignbridge building control but there were also private companies so reporting had slipped. Procedures should now be in place to notify District so they place an Improvement marker on the relevant council tax record. The Chairman offered Parish Council's assistance to help District fill gaps in their information across the parish.

Cllr Pain referred to the update by Phil Baker on the new National Planning Policy Framework. As there was a new goal for the amount of housing required he asked whether District would just look for more housing or consider appropriate housing across the District. Cllr Brazil did not think that District could reject a developer wanting to build 3 houses instead of 20 houses. Cllr Addison noted that the Green Park development had stalled again and asked whether anything could be done to make the building site less unsightly and improve the look of the area behind the established houses in Green Park Way. Cllr Brazil said landscaping could be looked at together with the possible removal of shale, litter and building materials against fences. The meeting suggested that government should give developers one year after commencement and then begin charging council tax for the properties permitted for development!

Cllr Brazil left the meeting.

4. PLANNING & PLANNING MATTERS

TEAMS MEETING – REVISION OF NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

Cllrs Pain and Doust had attended a District Teams meeting chaired by Phil Baker, Interim Head of Strategic Planning, to update on policy and how this would affect determination of applications. The following is an amalgam of both councillors' reports.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It was originally published in 2012 and has been revised five times since then - the latest being on 12 December 2024. The new government had increased the amount of housing that it wanted to build per year and had consequently

required councils to update and increase their targets. With the increased targets, South Hams' comfortable 5.4 year supply became a 2.53 year supply overnight. The government applied a 0.8% housing need multiplier as a starting point – i.e. supply should increase by 0.8% annually – BUT then added an additional uplift to address affordability in the South Hams. The logic here – that a big increase in supply of houses will suppress prices – is flawed, as there is no evidence that this works. What evidence there is shows that the only beneficiaries of delivering such a huge uplift are inward migrants to the area and volume housebuilders. Under the new NPPF any Local Plan more than 5 years old or that could not show a housing supply of 5 years (under the new targets) would be considered out of date. However policies that were included in the Local Plan that aligned with the policies of the NPPF would be considered pertinent. So in effect this only rendered policy SPT3 Provision for new Homes redundant. Phil Baker specifically drew attention to the new paragraph 11d which stated that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development where the Local Plan was out of date – unless adverse impacts would demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Neighbourhood Plans – produced by local communities, often years in the making, closely scrutinized, and requiring a referendum before being adopted by district council as part of the Local Plan – were also going to be subject to the same rules: they would only be considered relevant if they were adopted less than five years ago and if they contained policies and allocations to meet District's identified housing target.

Parish councillors took this on board but were unanimous that a proportion of any additional housing should be affordable enough for locals to purchase.

The following applications were considered and comments forwarded to District planning:

- 3449/24/HHO Householder application for single storey extension with layout alterations & environmental upgrades to existing dwelling Orchard View, Kellaton – Response 31st March – Parish Council appreciated that their previously expressed comments and recommendations had been taken on board in this revised application and the changes made were acceptable. It would be helpful to have more detail on the heating (as opposed to ventilation) strategy – was an air source heat pump proposed and, if so, where would it be sited? The earlier proposed bat void should be included and conditioned on any permission, and it would be prudent to have a bat specialist present when the roof was opened up as bat droppings had previously been recorded.
- 3969/24/FUL Erection of 3 no. dwellings with associated access, parking, landscaping, biodiversity enhancements & private amenity space Land At Sx 795 428 Brooklea Lane, Chillington – Response 10th April. – **Object** The proposal, to build just three dwellings on a 2.5-acre greenfield site, represents a shocking waste of land, and should be dismissed summarily per NPPF, para 130 c): “Local planning authorities should refuse applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land, taking into account the policies in this Framework.” Although the site is well integrated in the village there are significant problems of access. Primary access is shown through the existing development at Brooklea Lane (which itself involved the illegal removal of a Devon bank), but there is a real risk that any development will create irresistible pressure for the opening of an additional access onto Butcher's Lane (known locally as Frittiscombe Lane), a popular walking and cycling route out of the village and not capable of supporting increased vehicular traffic. Council's principal objection, however, is that in an area where there is a proven and established need for affordable housing for local families, the proposal to build three large and no doubt luxurious dwellings with extensive private amenity space in what is currently a wildlife-rich greenfield site in the heart of the village, is indefensible, insulting, and represents a giant two-fingers to the local community. Council feels that the LPA's response to this proposal will be a real test of their interpretation of the revised NPPF.

- 0467/25/FUL Retrospective permission for the installation of timber, pedestrian access steps to property Pebble Cove, Hallsands – Response 3rd April – No comment.

PLANNING CORRESPONDENCE

- Nothing further.

5. CO OPTION

No applications had been received.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT

The accounts would be sent for internal audit on completion of end of year. As banking arrangements had recently been reviewed, discussed and amended it was AGREED no further areas needed to be reviewed by Hawthorns Accounting.

Cllr Brazil arrived at the meeting.

7. PARISH CAPITAL PROJECTS POLICY

The draft policy setting out projects to be pursued had been circulated previously and was APPROVED for ongoing use.

8. INVESTMENT

It was advised the completion of transfer of parish funds to Unity Bank had taken place although Lloyds had not closed the savers account as they paid the monthly interest in following transfer of the money held. This interest was being remitted to the Unity current account. It was AGREED to move a portion of reserves to a 6-month fixed-term bond with Unity Trust at 4% APR. This was prudent investment and the income would be used for community benefit.

9. BT TELEPHONE BOXES

District agreed posters placed in phone boxes advising of proposed removal were premature. BT responded that due process meant notifying planning and District would consult parishes so any comments could be input to the formal consultation, when received. It was AGREED that there had been minimal response to local consultation in Chillington so the box could be removed.

10. DISABLED ACCESS PICNIC BENCH

Since placement of the picnic bench on the open space youths had moved it into the middle of the grass so a quote for permanent installation, to allow disabled access, was requested. It was AGREED that Greenspace, as the chosen contractor, would carry out work to secure the bench at a cost of £50 for labour with a permanent place and additional materials to be agreed on site.

11. REPORTS

- Cllr Doust emailed her report –
She attended the District meeting on the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. She recommended all councillors read Sections 11 and 14, alongside the Joint Local Plan statement on planning application 3268/24/FUL. To avoid repetition her observations have been combined with those of Cllr Pain in Item 4 above.
She attended Stokenham Parish Hall AGM. The Parish Hall committee thanked Parish Council for their grant to the hall. Their finances had improved enabled by a cut to the wages bill and they were in a better place than they had been for quite a while. The only concern was electricity prices. They also needed to make it clear to any groups using the hall that they had to have their own public liability insurance.
The probation service was doing works around the outside of the building. There was an issue with tree roots pushing out the wall at the side of the Wesley Smith Room. The

committee were going to get it removed and the wall rebuilt and they hoped the probation service would do this work as well. Sam Brooking had been removing garden waste for them free of charge. New signs were being put up around the hall to meet statutory requirements. They now had the money to install a new commercial dishwasher and had installed a new sound system for the hard of hearing costing £1,000. The History Group were holding a drop in day with a History Fair with lots of information from local historians - Nigel Hannaford, Nick Tolchard, Dean Small, Richard Balkwill, Stephen Pedrick, Johnny Christmas and of course Fran Ansell on Saturday 29th March from 11-3, they were also hoping to get new members to sign up.

- Cllr Rogers – Believed that parish County footpath work would no longer be channelled through him by the officer due to long-term sick leave. He recommended councillors report any footpath complaint or problem direct via the online system to get matters listed and dealt with.
- Cllr Greening – Advised that the two Chillington defibrillators were not showing on The Circuit so the ambulance service would not pick up and recommend them. She had started updating the Emergency Plan, changing Emergency Grab Bag to Emergency Preparedness. Current advice also recommended stockpiling certain essentials, such as 5 litres of bottled water and a supply of non-perishable food. She further reported that the Village Green Association now had the grass cutting covered. Some discussion followed about parish council representation on the Association. It was acknowledged that Cllr Hart was the nominated representative, but he had yet to be invited to a meeting.
- Cllr Ansell – Did not attend the Hall meeting which was covered by Cllr Doust but noted the History Club had been required to obtain public liability insurance to hold their event within the Parish Hall.
- Cllr Pain – Asked if Stokenham Parish Hall had looked at PV panels to reduce costs. He highlighted that companies such as Octopus fit batteries and panels.

CLERK'S REPORT

- Noted that the capped Hydrant at Kellaton had been reported by villagers who were advised of two more nearby. South West Water were aware of this matter and need for attention.
- It had been advised by the maintenance contractor that the fence along the Chillington play area car park was rotten and falling over and asked what action, if any, to take.
- Martin Nuttall-Smith had emailed to ask if anyone would have an objection to him widening the top pedestrian gate by nine inches to allow better access for a small tractor. They had a new person to mow the top of the green and cut paths to the playground and benches but in view of costs were going to let the rest of the green go wild in line with the parish council suggestion as policy for the South Hams area. It was noted that this wall sits within a Conservation Area also affecting the setting of an adjacent Listed Building. It was questioned why anyone would tamper with such an old stone wall when there is a 10ft gate nearby with good access on the highway and any tractor or mower would have already travelled there on public highway so this should not be a problem. Any minor works could well undermine this wall creating a far more difficult and expensive job than envisaged. The neighbours would also need to be considered. It was suggested Martin speak to the Rew family and contact planning/highways.
- Devon Association of Local Councils had set up an online meeting for small and medium councils on 8th April 10-11.30a.m. so that they could provide an update on local government reorganisation in Devon.
- Mark Skinner, South Devon Community Energy had agreed to speak at the Annual Parish Meeting which was booked for Wednesday 14th May at Stokenham Parish Hall.

- Greenspace had recommended the acquisition of rubber mulch mats for newly planted trees. 15 (to do 13 in park and two at Helmers Way) could be purchased for £119.85.
- South Hams National Landscapes were commencing updating their management plan for 2026. They intend to hold a Teams workshop on 22nd April 6pm with a Sustainable South Hams representative present. An attendee from parish was requested and this would be handed to Cllrs Pain and Robinson as sustainability representatives.
- Results for the Transport Survey had been collated and received just prior to this meeting. These would be circulated but with no following funding this information would be held awaiting any opportunity for projects.

12. FINANCE AND CHEQUES

Balances were provided and the below transactions were approved:

Current £4431.39

Instant Access £120,000.00

Received

Interest to close Lloyds Account Mar - £35.00

Broadhempston Parish Council – DCC wrongly sent Chapter 8 training so reimbursement £163.36

Payments:

HMRC Mar – Tax & NI £263.09

Wages Mar £1389.69

DCC Mar– Pension £450.74

Chillington Community Association – Grant for outside lighting £629.85

Greenspace – Maintenance Oct – Mar 25 £255.00

- Weed Clearance £206.50

Hawthorns Accounting Sers. – Payroll Oct 24 – Mar 25 £184.00

P. Spence : Adams Apple/Noyces – Apple trees for Helmers and £183.34

BT – Telephone and Broadband £344.17

13. NEXT MEETING

The next full parish council meeting would be held on 17th April 2025 commencing at 7.30p.m in the Wesley Smith Room, Stokenham Parish Hall.

Meeting finished: 21.41p.m.

Signed Chairman Dated: 17th April 2025.