

**STOKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING
HELD ON 21ST MAY 2026 IN THE
STOKENHAM PARISH HALL**

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS:

GAIL ADDISON

OLLY BROOKING

ADRIAN GOODMAN

CHRIS HART

RICHARD PAIN

CHARLES ROGERS

STEVE TAYLOR

JULIAN BRAZIL (District and County Councillor)

JONATHAN ANSELL

PAULA DOUST

KIM GREENING

TIM LYNN

LIZ ROBINSON

PIERS SPENCE (Chairman)

Also in attendance:

Clerk – Mrs G. Claydon

APOLOGIES:

COUNCILLORS:

1. ELECTION AND DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

It was AGREED to elect Cllr Spence as Chair and Cllr Doust as Vice Chair and they duly signed Declarations of Acceptance of Office.

2. 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 Received.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of full council meeting dated 16th April 2026 were approved by all present and duly signed as a true and correct record.

4. REPRESENTATIVES AND COMMITTEES

It was AGREED to update the list of representatives on Committees and outside organisations list as below:

Beeson Village Green Committee – Cllrs Robinson and Rogers

Beesands and Torcross Flood Gate Co-ordinator – Cllrs Lynn and Brooking

Coleridge Bus – Cllrs Hart and Doust

Chillington Community Association – Cllrs Addison

Coleridge Association of Parish Councils – Cllr Ansell

Community Voluntary Service and Health Care meetings – Cllr Greening

Drainage Warden – Cllrs Rogers and Brooking

Emergency Plan – Cllr Taylor, Cllr Greening (Cllr Greening subsequently withdrew)

Finance/Bank Mandate signatories – Cllrs Spence, Doust, Addison and Goodman

Footpath Wardens – Cllrs Addison and Rogers
 Kingsbridge & Salcombe Estuary Forum – Cllrs Lynn and Ansell
 Parish Website – Cllrs Spence, Pain and Doust
 Planning Lead – Cllr Pain
 Planning Enforcement Feedback – Cllrs Doust and Taylor
 Snow Wardens – Cllrs Lynn, Brooking and Goodman
 Stokenham Parish Hall Committee – Cllrs Ansell and Doust
 Stokenham Parish Tree Warden – Cllr Spence
 Stokenham Village Green Committee – Cllrs Hart and Greening
 Sustainable South Hams Representatives – Cllrs Pain and Robinson
 Woodland Voles Representatives – Cllr Addison
 Young People and Schools Liaison – Cllrs Doust and Taylor

5. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

The following annual payments were noted and APPROVED:

National Association of Local Councils subscription £722.60

Devon Communities Together £50.00

Coleridge Association of Parish Councils £ Not requested and not paid for a few years.

Data Protection Act £47.00

Society of Local Council Clerks – Annual subscription £253

Insurance renewable June 2026 - £845.19 First payment of a three-year term

Stokenham Parish Hall – Annual Hire fee £660

6. INSPECTION OF DOCUMENT.

The following documents were APPROVED and noted:

- Emergency contact lists for Beesands, Hallsands and Torcross were reviewed and updated.
- No documentation had ever been provided by Devon County Council or South Hams District Council in relation to the placement of bus shelters on land at Beesands, Carehouse Cross, Stokenham and two in Chillington opposite the post office and at Meadowside. Two further bus shelters had been placed by Parson Brinkerhoff on behalf of Devon County Council at Fairfield and Robins Field, Chillington during May 2008 but no legal documentation had been received apart from plans of design. Parish Council was gifted these with the understanding that they were now responsible for ongoing maintenance and insurance of such. This May 2026 all were refurbished and repainted accordingly.
- The Agreement establishing the Stokenham to Torcross Permissive Footpath, between the owners of land the footpath passed across and dated June 2005, was acknowledged. The agreement was due to run for a minimum of 15 years until June 2020. The owner of the section commencing at the church car park had approached parish council to deviate the route at that point due to their planning permission for the barn to be converted to a dwelling. Negotiation to continue along the original line had not been possible and the path was now only accessible through the churchyard Definitive Footpath, along Kiln Lane to join into the section across the Stokeley Caravan Site.
- There were currently no loans, leases or other agreements in relation to land or equipment. Play equipment installed on the privately owned Stokenham Village Green was insured by Stokenham Village Green Association and they remain responsible for its maintenance. Parish council currently paid for the play equipment checks.
- Finances had been reviewed and all monies moved to Unity Trust Bank. The mandate for full online banking access was held by Cllrs Spence, Doust, Goodman and Addison, together with the clerk. Bank balances and inter-account transfers could be actioned but

payments required two signatories for authorisation. All councillors present at a meeting approve all payments before release each month.

- A Permissive Path had been created between Helmers Way and Orchard Way with the agreement of the landowners, Stokenham Church and Taylor Wimpey, who held a ransom strip. Parish Council had care and maintenance of the footway entrance/boundary but not the public paths either side, which belonged to Devon County Council on the Orchard Way side and Taylor Wimpey on the Helmers Way side. Two trees had been planted by parish council on the green area within the Helmers side following permission from Remus the management company.
- Chillington playing field to include the lease to the Hall Committee was transferred to parish council in August 2016. Drainage works had been installed along with benches, picnic tables and apple trees. Further apple trees were planted 2025.
- Parish documents including Minutes from 1894 to circa 2017 along with later produced documents were deposited at Devon Records Office September 2022.
- Freedom of Information and Data Protection policy documentation had been created in 2018. In line with the additional audit Assertion 10 introduced this March 2025/26 audit these had been reviewed and personal information held updated, to be reassessed annually.

7. OPEN FORUM

Simon Garner and Oliver Pawley were in attendance on behalf of the Torcross Action Group. They thanked parish council for its support, deemed instrumental in the success of the Environment Agency bid for funding to reinforce the Torcross sea defences, and much appreciated by everyone in the village. Both noted that action had been taken quickly as we were dealing with just the EA, who had been open and created a successful two-way dialogue. Communication from County regarding the A379 Slapton Line, on the other hand, was felt to be opaque; residents did not know what was proposed for the road nor how the cost added up to £20 million.

The Chair welcomed the distinction between the EA's work on sea defences and County Highways' work on the road. It had largely been down to luck that the EA had intervened when there was a narrow window to draw down funding with a plan that looked realisable, and so the money was found. The road seemed to be in a different category, with no firm commitment to rebuild and everything entirely dependent on obtaining funding. No one at parish council level had any idea whether the £20m would be found and what it might buy if it did materialize.

Cllr Brazil arrived.

Cllr Brazil explained that the EA had a statutory responsibility to protect lives and property, and their scheme to protect the village would use their own engineers and contractors. County Highways had submitted detailed plans for the road to the Department of Transport, but it was fair to say that everyone was in the dark as to what might happen if the DoT were to say no. The next full Slapton Line Partnership meeting was scheduled for 19th June. Working groups, including the Minor Roads Network, were progressing well: Phase 1 plans prioritized improving north-south routes, with a view to shifting traffic quickly out of population centres. The east-west routes of most interest to residents of Slapton were slated for Phase 2. Cllr Brazil warned of the possibility that eventual improvements to this route could make Slapton a rat run. The roads had been video surveyed and 200 potential improvement sites identified; these were then graded by buildability and cost. The intention is to deliver the 50 most cost-effective upgrades to make Three Mile and Five Mile Lanes commutable.

Peter Stone, from Torcross, thought £20m was a ridiculous amount of money to spend on sea defences and said locals would prefer the £20m to be used to replace the road. Reference was made to the recent talk by Prof Gerd Masselink and Cllr Brazil noted that in the end nature will

have its way – people cannot stop the march of coastal erosion. The demise of the road had moved the Slapton Line Partnership into adaptation mode: the road is still a consideration, but one among many. Oliver Pawley asked Cllr Brazil what specification was attached to the £20m road budget and whether this involved putting the road back where it is now. Options would be reviewed once highways have word from the Department of Transport, but the Slapton Line Partnership is proceeding on the assumption that the road will not be rebuilt – not because they know this to be true, but because as long as there is an expectation that the road will be rebuilt, work on adaption will take a back seat. This fact has hamstrung adaptation efforts for years.

Simon Garner wanted to know exactly where the passing places were proposed. He was told that a map of the proposed works would be available shortly.

Four members of the public left the meeting.

DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Brazil said County had made savings of £10 million, not by cutting services, but by turning departments around and making them run better. They had reduced reliance on agency staff, removed consultants, used less alternative provision out of area and done everything in area. This produced better outcomes for children and vulnerable people. The need to make savings in tough financial times was due to central Government transferring funds from rural to urban councils. Governments of all stripes have for years been transferring of the burden of taxation from national to local level.

The Local Government Review was trundling on relentlessly, but still subject to change and uncertainty. County was investing £4m in road maintenance and reacting when people call in on potholes. Director of Highways Rob Richards had advised that in recent years all they were doing was managing decline. Now with record investment they were able to do the required works and hopefully within 3 years' time they would be maintaining and improving highways year-on-year.

Children's services had been in a perilous state for 10 years, but the Department for Education had recently congratulated Devon County on its progress and Ofsted was reporting tangible improvements. A survey had shown staff satisfaction was up from 60% to 70.

District had been badly hit by the financial settlement from Government – the message seemed to be “we are getting rid of you, so why do you need money?” They would struggle on, relying on their reserves to take them through to when the change occurred. County's budget was £2 billion versus District's £100 million, so a time could come when County might need to step in to help.

Fusion Leisure had gone into administration and responsibility for leisure centres would transfer to Parkwood on 1 June 2026. They had been awarded a one-year management contract – prospective changes following LGR meant that a longer contract was not possible – but this arrangement would ensure continuity, with no loss of staff, and users unlikely to see any difference in day-to-day running. Senior officer Steve Mullineux had done a first-class job. Cllr Rogers applauded this, but noted that the Kingsbridge building needed a good clean outside as it was looking shabby. Cllr Brazil agreed to take this message back.

Hope Wood, South Brent, was a new Plymouth and South Devon community forest. The Woodland Trust had provided 25,000 trees and fencing, with Sustainable South Brent having an organic garden in the middle. Another site had just been approved at West Charleton overlooking Bowcombe Creek, which is to have 15,000 trees planted by volunteers.

Cllr Rogers attended the Road Wardens presentation. He put forward his take on the information imparted and asked for Cllr Brazil's view. Cllr Brazil was cautious: he felt the scheme did rely on committed local people as they do a better job, but it comes with problems.

Cllr Brazil stated he was going to be doing the Slapton Line walk on Bank Holiday Monday. Cllr Doust noted that whilst working at Beesands Teas by the Sea many people were asking why £20m was being spent at Torcross for the few people living there!

Cllr Pain raised a planning question asking if an applicant was applying for two properties but only owned one could this be to try and save money on application fees.

8. PLANNING & PLANNING MATTERS

The applications below were considered at this meeting and the following observations submitted to District:

- 3187/25/LBC Listed Building Consent for replacement of rear glass roof Old Post Office, Stokenham – Response 21st May – No comment
- 0968/26/FUL Replacement extension to 2 residential units (Victoria and Buggy) Division of ground floor window of Victoria into two windows Stokeley Coach House, Kiln Lane, Stokenham – Response 15th May – Extension till 22nd May – No comment.

PLANNING CORRESPONDENCE – Nothing further received.

9. INTERNAL AUDIT AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

It was AGREED as follows;

- (a) the annual internal audit report – ACCEPTED
- (b) and action any recommendations or findings from previous audit considered before approving the Annual Governance Statement – No actions or recommendations. Annual Governance Statement read out and completed in meeting - ACCEPTED

10. ACCOUNTS AUDIT STATEMENT

It was AGREED as follows;

- (a) receive the Accounting Statements 2025/26 as presented, signed and dated by the Responsible Financial Officer – APPROVED
- (b) if agreed, approve the Accounting Statements and for the Chair to sign and date such within the meeting – APPROVED

11. INSURANCE

Quotes for renewal of parish council insurance were received from Zurich and current insurers Clear. CAS declined. After consideration of policy content it was AGREED to remain with Clear Insurance at £845.19 this year, with an agreement for 3 years.

12. BIKE RACKS

A resident had requested an update on the provision of bike racks around the parish in view of increased use of electric bikes. It was AGREED that Cllr Addison would consider potential sites and return to advise.

13. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

An invitation by Caroline Voaden MP for two representatives to attend a discussion on neighbourhood plans in Planning Policy along with other Town and Parish Councils at Halwell & Moreleigh Community Hall on Thursday 11th June from 13.45 – 15.15 was tabled but no one proposed for attendance.

14. CHILLINGTON PLAY AREA

To

- (a) Consider quotes for the repair to the section of footbridge owned by parish council up to £5000 – Quotes had been sought with only two alternatives being received to consider. It was AGREED to ask Greenspace Maintenance to proceed with the quote to install recycled plastic posts and wooden boards at a cost of £2655.44, but quote was amended to request all boards (rather than alternate boards) be non-slip at an additional £90.00.
- (b) Consider a request for reinstatement of the rugby/football goal nets or alternative arrangement – AGREED in principle.
- (c) consider quotes for replacement of the goal nets or alternative provision up to £5000. Discussion took place regarding usage and it was felt that the current multi-use goal posts were flimsy, encouraged inappropriate climbing, and were well past their sell-by date. It was AGREED to replace the current posts with five-a-side goals at a cost of £2646.00 and create a marked-out pitch, cost to be obtained, asking for local input to encourage a team which could bring inter-parish usage.
- (d) Approve necessary play equipment safety report work by replacement of the zip wire seat and chain at a cost of £228 plus labour - AGREED

15. CHILLINGTON BURIAL GROUND

To consider;

- (a) whether Stokenham Parish Council wish to accept an offer to take on responsibility for Chillington burial ground – DECLINED.
- (b) if applicable, whether to seek legal advice to ascertain if the land used for Chillington burial ground can be passed to Stokenham Parish Council – Not required.

16. REPORTS

- Cllr Rogers – Advised a Devon Highways operative had cleared all buddles, grips and easements down to Lannacombe. He hoped that the inside outlets had been addressed during work. Following his earlier discussion with Cllr Brazil on Road Wardens he outlined attendance at a Highway conference and felt it was not something that would be beneficial for Stokenham, as it stood. Works done ad hoc locally by parish would continue.
- Cllr Robinson – Noted the benches at Beeson Village Green were now installed on the hardstanding funded by a parish council grant. With regard to South West Water sewage system at Beesands toilets, workmen were only seen in attendance for an hour and a tanker was still attending every day. Cllr Rogers noted Graham Lynn had advised the septic tank was originally solely for the six fishermen's cottages but now served Britannia Café, the Crab Pot and other properties adjacent.
- Cllr Taylor – Raised the lack of visibility due to vegetation at the triangle at Coleridge Cross which Cllr Brooking offered to take his tractor and clip
- Cllr Spence – The South Hams Tree Warden Network was recording notable, ancient and veteran trees around South Hams for the national database. He was able to register these on the database and urged people to advise of trees that could be surveyed and recorded.
- Cllr Doust – Attended the inland road network Slapton Line Partnership committee and would respond to any questions. She would also attend the 19th June main meeting. Previously she met residents of Beesands along with Dan Field and Lou Hoskins to walk around the village and identify places where residents could evacuate.

- Cllr Goodman noted the inland road network discussion and raised Port Lane to Coleridge as there were hardly any passing places. This has been identified and was in hand to be done. Cllr Addison was concerned about the removal of Devon banks but was advised that a full environmental survey would be done before any works would be permitted.
- Cllr Ansell – Advised the Stokenham Parish Hall Committee appeared to be going ahead with insulating the ceiling and putting plasterboard up. They had spoken about sealing the floor to stop draughts coming up but Cllr Ansell personally felt this was not possible. There was a feeling that parish council had not followed up discussions but Cllr Pain advised he mentioned another person with a quieter air source heat pump. The Chair noted air conditioning is likely to become a requirement for hospitals, residential homes, and other public buildings within the next decade and air-to-air heat pumps could provide this. It has been said that the hall committee wished parish council to install heating the Wesley Smith Room end of the parish hall. Cllrs Pain, Spence and Doust were tasked with meeting the committee again.
- Cllr Greening – Advised the Start Circle of Friends and Village Green Association fete is on 11th July and being opened by Caroline Voaden MP. Parish council had taken a stall and would need a gazebo. Cllr Taylor suggested a survey as had been raised in training.
- Cllr Addison – Chillington hall had an area behind that housed a shipping container. This was a hidden area and there had been some vandalism. The committee thought they might move the fence to the very end of the wall but being rotten it needs replacing. The storage element was rammed but the floor had gone so they needed a complete rethink of the back area. It was questioned whether an extension could be considered.
- Cllr Hart – Noted an amount of vandalism which included bikes coming down the drive towards the hall and then through the play equipment.

CLERK'S REPORT

- Jim Gale, Environment Agency National Operations Centre Manager, had offered input to emergency plan escape routes for Beesands and Torcross.
- The Apple Press had been reserved for 17th October as due to increased membership slots were getting booked up.
- Lynda Sudlow Community Liaison for Network Plus has requested to be able to attend full council in June or July to discuss works in Chillington to upgrade the Combined Sewer overflow on behalf of South West Water during September 2026. In responding it has been confirmed that they will be working within gardens and will attend the 16th July parish council meeting.
- National Emergency briefing will be screened 6.30p.m. 3rd June 2026 at Stokenham Parish Hall. Roger English has agreed to attend to assist in the discussion following viewing. The online tool advises that Caroline Voaden MP has signed up to join the call for Government to screen the film on television. Yesterday the team launched an official UK parliamentary petition calling for a UK-wide public briefing from independent experts on the risks posed by climate change and nature loss - and the opportunities if the public respond at scale and with urgency – do councillors wish this link forwarded to sign up?

17. FINANCE AND CHEQUES

Balances were provided and the below transactions were approved:

Current £939.53

Savings £159,265.34

Investment for 6 months on £90,000 provided interest paid on maturity of £91682.88 which was transferred to deposit account 21st May and included in savings. Agreed in meeting £90,000 would be reinvested (rate now 3.85% as of 5/5/26).

Received – Interest on savings paid 3 monthly next due end June.

Payments:

Bank Service charge £7.00

Hosted (Broadband and Telephone) £55.06

Microsoft 365 – Annual Renewal £84.99

Beeson Village Green – Grant towards grass maintenance £250

Start Circle of Friends – Grant for creating a bespoke website to inform community £900

HMRC May – Tax & NI £344.52

Wages May £1421.37

DCC May– Pension £463.82

Hawthorns Accounting Services – Audit 2026 £213.00

Claydon – Refreshments for training event £11.41

Clear Councils - Annual Insurance premium (1st year of new 3year term) £845.19

Devon Association of Parish Councils – Good Councillor training £379.44

Greenspace – Maintenance and materials for five parish bus shelters £1708.98

Orchard Link – 2yrs Annual subscription and 2yrs hire of oak press £146.00

18. NEXT MEETING

The next full parish council meeting would be held on 18th June 2026 commencing at 7.30p.m in the Wesley Smith Room, Stokenham Parish Hall.

Meeting finished: 9.40p.m.

Signed Chair Dated: 18th June 2026.