

**MINUTES OF THE STOKE ALBANY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 22nd APRIL 2026 AT 7PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Those Present

Stoke Albany Parish Councillor D Benson, acting as Chair of the Parish Meeting
Stoke Albany Parish Councillors H Perry and M Kelly.
Stoke Albany Parish Climate & Nature Champion P Holmes
20 members of the public

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the fire drill and explained the running order for the evening's proceedings: a presentation of the workings and activities of Stoke Albany Parish Council (SAPC) followed by various community interest presentations.

Parish Council (David Benson)

2. In his capacity as Chair of the Parish Council, the Chair of the Meeting presented on a number of different topics relating to Parish Council business.

3. The attending Parish Councillors were introduced. It was noted that Councillors are part-time, unpaid volunteers, all of whom live in the village and have busy day jobs and families in addition to their Parish Council duties. Their ethos is to "seek to ensure that Stoke Albany is a nice place to live!" There is one vacancy on the Council.

4. The status and role of the Clerk's position was described as a part-time employee of the Council, paid for 6 hours week. The Clerk is a qualified civil servant and acts as Treasurer and the focus for all correspondence and is responsible for publishing the agendas and minutes and for liaison with North Northants Council (NNC) officers.

5. Annual Activities Report. The Chair summarised the Parish Council's activities over the preceding 12 months:

- a. A decision that Parish Council meetings would now take place every 2 months (rather than monthly), with the first meeting of each calendar year being in January.
- b. SAPC had considered 4 significant planning applications, approving all but 1 of these.
- c. The new outdoor activity equipment and picnic tables for the play park had been approved. The project was currently awaiting paperwork to release the funds.
- d. The drainage leak by the small bridge out of the village towards Ashley had finally been fixed.
- e. In response to NNC's Community Governance Review, SAPC had recommended no change to the current arrangements for the number of councillors or the parish boundary.
- f. SAPC had appointed a Climate & Nature Champion, Mr Peter Holmes.
- g. An ongoing issue with HGV traffic on the site of the Old Poultry Farm was being pursued with NNC.
- h. The village benches and Lower Road signpost had been refurbished at a cost of £1050 (comprising £840 grant from NNC and £210 from Parish funds).

- i. SAPC had purchased its own Vehicle Activated Speed Sign with grant funding of £4300 from the office of the Fire, Police & Crime Commissioner. Thanks were due to Councillor Kelly for managing and driving this initiative.
 - j. SAPC had hosted a Defibrillator and Basic Life Support session in the village hall in January 2026, with training provided by the Community First Responders.
 - k. The War Memorial had been deep-cleaned and repointed in February 2026 at a cost of £1040, grant funded by NNC.
 - l. Three royal commemorative plaques had been installed on the Defibrillator kiosk, at a cost of £230, included in the original grant-funding for refurbishment of the kiosk.
 - m. Miscellaneous other issues dealt with by the Parish council: fallen trees, potholes, overgrown vegetation, HGV traffic, fly-tipping, street light faults, dog fouling, blocked drains, speeding.
6. Finance. The Chair then presented SAPC's finance report. Details at Annex A below.
7. Communications.
- a. Website. An image of the community website was presented, and various useful links were indicated, particularly those relevant to Parish Council contact details and meetings, and the various ways to report any problems within the village.
 - b. E-Mail. It was explained that email had been adopted as the Council's preferred communications medium, and all villagers were encouraged to register for email updates with the Clerk at "parish-clerk@stoke-albany.uk".
 - c. Noticeboard. The content of the noticeboard was explained.
 - d. Accessibility. The Chair requested the audience to inform the Parish Council if they knew of any members of the public who might have difficulty accessing web, email or the noticeboard, so that alternative means of communication could be arranged.
8. Allotments. The Chair showed a location map for the allotments, explained that there were 4 x full-plots available to rent for £25 per year, and 2 x half-plots for £12.50 per year. Anyone who wished to go onto the Allotments Waiting List was asked to contact the Clerk.
9. Councillor Vacancy. SAPC is established for 5 councillor seats but currently only has 4 incumbents. Any member of the public who might be interested in becoming a Parish Councillor was invited to have a conversation with the Chair or the Clerk in order to find out more information concerning the nature of the role.
10. Street Lighting. There was a possibility that street-lighting would in future need to be funded from the Parish precept rather than from the Unitary Authority council tax, but there had been no details advertised about likely costs or how this would work in practice. A potential timescale of 2026-2028 had been mooted.
11. Potholes. There was a discussion about the ongoing pothole problem. The Chair pointed out that pothole reporting was on a self-help basis and encouraged villagers to use NNC's online tool for the purpose (link available on SAPC's own website [stoke-albany.uk]). SAPC's recent proposal to form a Potholes Action Group had attracted only two potential members, neither of whom were in a position to lead the initiative; it would therefore not be taken further.

12. Litter & Fly-Tipping. The Chair pointed out that fly-tipping reporting was on a self-help basis and encouraged villagers to use NNC's online tool for the purpose (link available on SAPC's own website [stoke-albany.uk]). The consensus among the audience was that litter was only really a significant problem on the approach roads to the village. There was little appetite for an organised litter-pick, especially given the danger posed by fast-moving vehicular traffic on the approach roads.

At this point in the proceedings, the meeting adjourned for a ten-minute tea-break.

Wilbarston Solar Farm (David Benson & Gavin Wills)

13. The Chair of the Meeting presented 9 informational slides which had been provided by Innova, the developers of the proposed solar farm. He explained that a full formal planning application was expected sometime in April or May, and that further advance information could be found by contacting Wilbarston Parish Council or Innova.

14. Mr Gavin Wills was introduced as a member of the Solar Farm Working Group, a public collective formed to consider the pros and cons of the proposal, and to help shape the development. Mr Wills explained some of the nuances of the proposal, pointing out the large scale of the development and the potential fire and noise problems that might arise. He encouraged members of the public to engage with the working group to make their views known.

15. The Parish Climate & Nature Champion, Mr Peter Holmes, pointed out that there were some genuine ecological benefits to be had from the proposal, particularly in terms of re-wilding and increased biodiversity.

Stoke Feast (Dawn Brownsword)

16. The Chair of Stoke Feast organising committee, Mrs Dawn Brownsword, made a plea for volunteers to run stalls or deliver flyers. This year's Feast would be held on the Lower Green on the evening of 22nd June, from 6.30pm until 8pm.

Save The Bells (Andrew Bimson & David Benson)

17. Mr Andrew Bimson reported on the state of the Save The Bells campaign. Some £30K out of a required £55K had been raised so far from private contributions; the next steps would be to seek corporate contributions and run various fund-raising events locally. The target date for re-installation was end of 2026. During renovation the bells would be out of action for about 3 months. Volunteers were requested to help with the refurbishment, in order to save labour costs within the overall budget.

18. David Benson reported that Desborough Ward Councillors had kindly donated a significant grant of £1200 towards the campaign, and that he would be giving a presentation on the history of the village, in the Village Hall at 7pm on 29th April, with all proceeds going towards the Save The Bells fund. Tickets available from Wilbarston Post Office priced at £5.

Climate & Nature (Peter Holmes)

19. The Parish Climate & Nature Champion, Mr Peter Holmes, gave a presentation on ecology matters within the county and parish, along with a short quiz, both of which were very well-received. He also reported that he was working on an ecological map of the parish, with a view to putting it online via the community website.

20. In his capacity as Chair of the Parish Council, David Benson thanked Peter on behalf of the parishioners for stepping into this newly-established role, and for bringing such energy and enthusiasm to it.

Neighbourhood Watch (Mike Parish)

21. Mr Mike Parish reported that despite three years of asking, no-one else had offered to step up to the role of Neighbourhood Watch Warden. However, with immediate effect he would reluctantly be stepping down himself, and the role would therefore be vacant. Anyone interested in taking on the role was requested to contact the Parish Council.

22. In his capacity as Chair of the Parish Council, David Benson thanked Mike on behalf of the parishioners for having fulfilled this important role over many years.

Musical Evening In The Church (Katherine Malin)

23. Mrs Katherine Malin notified the meeting that there would be a Musical Evening in the Church on the evening of 9th May, starting at 7.30pm. Tickets available from Fiona Harding (07809 413169) or Sarah Champion (07753 819321), priced at £20 to include canapes and a glass of wine.

Open Forum / Q&A

24. There were no further questions or issues raised by members of the public.

25. The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions, and asked for feedback on the format of the meeting, which was met with general approval.

26. The meeting closed at 9pm.

Annex A - Annual Finance Report

	2025-26	2024-25
Receipts	£	£
Precept	9,563.00	8,702.00
Interest on Investments	209.14	151.05
Rental Income	425.00	475.00
VAT Reclaimed	209.41	183.65
Grants	5,361.07	841.40
Total Income	15767.62	10353.10
Payments	£	£
Administration	270.08	248.24
Clerks salary and pension	5,174.67	5,012.34
Insurance	315.91	338.82
Poppy Wreath / Scout Donation	50.00	50.00
Bus Shelter Rent	50.00	50.00
Village Hall	56.25	131.25
Website and Bank Charges	110.20	108.60
Village Overheads and Mowing	2,286.75	2,643.03
Memberships and Training	355.35	348.86
Defibrillator / TVAS	3,810.00	0.00
VAT	899.98	208.98
Total Expenditure	13379.19	9140.12
General Fund	£	£
balance at 1 April	6,581.03	5,368.05
Add receipts	<u>15,767.62</u>	<u>10,353.10</u>
Total	22,348.65	15,721.15
deduct payments	<u>13,379.19</u>	<u>9,140.12</u>
Balance at 31 March	8,969.46	6,581.03