



**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting**  
**held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**23.11.01**

Present: Cllrs. R. Barnes (Chairman), Pallett (Vice-Chairman), Ball, P. Barnes, Corlett, Slater and Spillett, SCC Cllr. Bennett, MSC Cllr. Pugh, five members of the public and the Locum Clerk.

1. **Welcome** - the Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everyone for their good wishes during his absence. He advised that that the meeting would be recorded privately.
2. **RECEIVED and APPROVED - NONE**  
**Declarations of interest - NONE**  
**Declaration of Interest Dispensations - NONE**
3. **Minutes** - the minutes of the Council Meeting on September 13<sup>th</sup> were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.

*With the approval of members, the Chairman brought forward Item 5 (in part) so that SCC Cllr Bennett could speak to her report, and then leave to attend other meetings.*

Bobby highlighted matters relating to the recent flooding, the consultations on SCC's Budget and the Library Service, responded to Cllr. Slater's report on local highways issues (noting the need to prioritise), commented on a new practical approach to pothole filling and the grant provided for the Village Hall hearing loop.

5 **Public Forum.**

- Rosey Nugent provided an update on the "SaveGlemValley" campaign, reporting that the Boxted Solar Farm application had been lodged under the application number 23/05127. There were 8 proposed farms in the wider area surrounding Stansfield. It was suggested that this information would be sent to the "Parish Pump" for the benefit of residents who may wish to comment.
- A parishioner commented about the format of the approved advertisement for a new Clerk, specifically about the lack or otherwise of assets owned by the Parish Council. She was assured that the reference was intended to highlight that there were no major assets under the Council's responsibility (such as play areas or buildings – rather than waste bins and other street furniture). In response to a suggestion of amending the minutes, the resident was advised that the minutes were approved and signed, therefore not permitted to be amended (*having become a legal document*).
- Two members of the Village Hall Committee advised that the hearing loop was ready to be installed, the preparatory work being completed. This work was funded through a grant from SCC Cllr. Bennett.

5. **County, District and Parish Councillors' Reports**

**Cllr. Sarah Pugh** (West Suffolk District Council) advised that she was now WSC's representative to the Rural Services Network. Sarah spoke about the current Grass-Cutting Review, "Long Covid" support offered by Citizens Advice Bureau, the draft Local Plan (with six weeks for comment) and upcoming changes to election procedures.

**Parish Councillors** – Cllr. Slater spoke on the detailed study and report that he had produced on highways and footpath matters within Stansfield. The next stage would be to get SCC to address the most important ones.

6. **Planning and Development**

An invitation had been received to comment as part of the Pre-Submission Consultation for the draft Wickhambrook Neighbourhood Plan which closes on December 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Clerk was authorised to provide comment based on a consensus of views from councillors.



**23.11.02**

**7. Community Matters**

- a. **Good Neighbour Scheme** – now well under way. 8 requests for tasks had been fulfilled. The noticeboard had been repaired thanks to a Stansfield Good Neighbour Scheme volunteer. The Village Sign may also benefit from similar generosity.
- b. **Footpath and Highways matters.** Cllr. Slater had produced a comprehensive report and would take the lead in dealing with obstructions, clearance and repairs. It was noted that FP1 & FP2 are contracted out for cutting.
- c. **Communications with Stansfield residents** – given most parishioners’ disinterest in attending council meetings, it was felt that informality was key to community engagement, by reducing the number of formal meetings, coupled with the alternative offer of coffee mornings, councillor surgeries and other less structured events. A Community Engagement Working Group was created, initially led by Cllr P Barnes, who would draft a suitable policy. It was **AGREED** that a notice would be put out, inviting recruits to the group, with a view to meeting in early January
- d. **The Council’s stance on the “Save Glem Valley” campaign.** It was **RESOLVED** to inform residents of the campaign and the relevant planning application details, to encourage residents to consider the pros and cons of Solar Farms and make up their own minds in commenting about this important matter
- e. **The condition and appearance of the Village sign.** A volunteer has come forward to address this matter

**8. Clerk’s Report**

- a) **REVIEWED** and **RESOLVED** - action points from previous meetings not itemised elsewhere on the agenda. **Village Emergency Plan** – a confidential list of resources (to be) provided to WSC. Cllr Pallett is the nominated 1<sup>st</sup> Responder. **Options to deter speeding** – further information required for discussion at the next meeting. The Clerk would provide information from another parish council which was much further advanced in this subject **Defibrillator & VETS** – Training/familiarisation session for volunteers (to be) held on 18<sup>th</sup> November in the Village Hall. **Chapel Graveyard** – excellent work undertaken by volunteers. **Other items** - ongoing or deferred.
- b) **Report on the legality of imposing further sanctions following a Code of Conduct ruling.** In response to comments in the Public Forum at the previous meeting, the Clerk researched and produced a report to the Council (attached). Noting the contents (that such actions had been ruled as unlawful in the High Court and that the Council itself had followed correct procedures in trying circumstances), it was **RESOLVED** to accept the report and its recommendations, and that no further action was required.

**9. RFO Report**

- a. **RECEIVED** and **APPROVED/NOTED** – the following list of payments, the Bank Reconciliation and a Statement of Accounts. Discussing the recent negative interaction with Barclays Bank, it was **RESOLVED** to transfer all but a nominal balance from the current and savings account to the new Unity Trust account, pending further reallocation of funds to take advantage of higher interest rates.

13 November 2023 (2023-2024)

**Stansfield Parish Council  
PAYMENTS LIST**

Voucher Code	Date	Minute	Bank	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	VAT Type	Net	VAT	Total
53	11/11/2023		Unity Trust		Membership subscription	Suffolk Association of Local C	X	144.15		144.15
54	11/11/2023		Unity Trust		Councillor training	Suffolk Association of Local C	S	60.00	12.00	72.00
55	11/11/2023		Unity Trust		Email - Microsoft Exchange Pla	Force36 IT Consultants	S	28.80	5.76	34.56
<b>Total</b>								<b>232.95</b>	<b>17.76</b>	<b>250.71</b>

- b. **Virements to Cost Codes** from other Codes and General Reserves to regularise the budget – **NONE**
- c. **2024 Budget and Precept.** After discussion, it was **AGREED** to appoint a Working Group, led by Cllr R. Barnes, with Cllrs. Ball and Corlett, to consider and recommend a 2024 Budget (with the appropriate precept to underpin that budget) at the January 2024 meeting.



### 23.11.03

#### 10. Agenda items for future meetings – Action points

**11. Next meetings.** The date of the next meeting was provisionally confirmed as Wednesday, January 17th at 7.00 pm in the Village Hall. In light of the Council's policy to offer a more informal approach to engaging with residents on parish matters, it was **AGREED** to hold only four formal meetings a year, the other three for 2024 to be held on **March 13<sup>th</sup>, May 8<sup>th</sup> and September 11<sup>th</sup>.**

#### 12. Exclusion of Public & Press

In accordance with The Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, it was **RESOLVED** to exclude the Public, including the Press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt and confidential information in the remainder of the agenda could be discussed and decided.

**13. Appointment of Parish Clerk & RFO.** With the lack of success in recruitment and to avoid significant ongoing locum fees, it was **AGREED** to accept the offer from David Lines to act as Proper Officer to the Council at a salary of £1 a month, to act also as mentor and coach to Mrs Anne Lines, to be employed as a trainee **Clerk & RFO** at SCP 17 / £14.95 per hour for five hours a week. In line with previously agreed terms and conditions, a (sponsored) laptop would be provided. Training to ILCA level would be supported by the Council.

**The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.00 pm**

Item 8a)



<b>CLERK'S REPORT</b>
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**ACTION POINTS ONGOING / ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Minute Date/No.	ACTION	WHO	TO BE DONE BY
23.07.02.7a VI	Village Emergency Plan Group. Emergency Plan card delivered to all households. Confidential list of resources provided for WSC EP. Andrew Pallett is initial responder.	EPWG	Ongoing
23.05.02.13	Noticeboard repairs	PB	Completed
23.05.02.14c	New website on hold and alternative council email addresses for all members and staff to be arranged	All/Clerk	Ongoing
23.05.03.15h	To approve the list of Standing Orders and Direct Debits for the coming financial year	Clerk	January 2024
23.05.03.15i	To consider the appointment of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor for the coming year	All	Deferred
23.07.02.7a. V	To consider various options to discourage speeding in the village, including the introduction of the Community Speed Watch (2 sites identified). ANPR cameras mentioned as an alternative. Further information required.	PB	Ongoing
23.07.02.7b	Community Engagement Working Group commenced. Surgeries/ social events to be considered.	PB	Completed
23.07.01.7a.I	Chapel Graveyard. SPC ownership verified/ insurance confirmed. Working party undertook excellent work.	MS	Completed
23.07.02.7a.VII	Defibrillator and VETS leaflet. Information card distributed <b>Defib instruction and First Aid training 18/11/23 in the Village Hall.</b>	AP	Completed



## Agenda Item 8b – Report

### Introduction

At the September meeting, in the Public Forum, a member of the public put forward three demands. This report addresses the two of them related to the Parish Council, the third being a personal matter over which the Council has no lawful control. These refer to an incident that took place at the Council AGM in May.

1. That, following a Code of Conduct investigation and decision by the Monitoring Officer of WSC, the Council should limit Cllr. Corlett's participation in the Council's governance activity for a period of time.
2. That the Parish Council should give an apology for the incident relating to the decision and the decision itself of the Monitoring Officer

### Conclusion

**1. In terms of the first demand, it has been deemed that such an action would be unlawful. In effect, it would be imposing a disciplinary sanction over and above that of the Monitoring Officer.**

This was tested in the High Court and the following conclusions have been drawn (**Source - anthonymcollins.com**). It was noted that Justice J Cockerill leant on two other cases in her deliberations - *R (Taylor) v Honiton Town Council and Hussain v Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council*.

*"The High Court Ruling in R(Harvey) v Ledbury Town Council [2018] EWHC1151(Admin) has clarified how a council should deal with complaints against a councillor and has implications for Town and Parish Councils throughout England. Any local authority will be acting unlawfully if it tries to bypass the Code of Conduct procedure under the Localism Act 2011 when addressing alleged misconduct by councillors."*

*"The judgment clearly answers the question as to how the Localism Act is to operate, ensuring that decisions on councillors' actions and the imposition of sanctions must be dealt with independently of the local authority. The key message from the case is that any local authority will be at risk if it departs from the procedures set out in the Localism Act and tries to discipline councillors."*

**2. Referring to the second demand, this appears to be based on the Monitoring Officer's concern that the incident "was not called out by other members of the parish council at the time".**

However, she goes on to note that *"members did later address this separately with Councillor Corlett"*, specifically noting in her decision that *"upon being advised by the Chair and Locum Clerk of the parish council that her conduct was not appropriate, Councillor Corlett wrote a letter of apology"*.

Given the difficult and nature of the early part of the AGM, it does not seem unreasonable to argue that that the Chairman conducted himself and the meeting in as even-handed manner as was possible in a fast-moving, fractious and noisy situation.

The fact that the outgoing Chair's words (before her abrupt departure from the meeting) were that a formal complaint would be made against Cllr. Corlett effectively put the incident 'sub judice' and advice was given at the time that further comment by anyone would be (at the very least) unwise. Further, it seems entirely appropriate that the advice from the Chairman and the Locum Clerk (as noted by the MO) was given in quieter and calmer circumstances, away from such a turbulent meeting.

**As such, it is fair to conclude that the Council acted in an entirely appropriate and timely manner following a turbulent meeting in which the complainants were key actors. Following that, it is RECOMMENDED that an apology of any sorts by the Council appears not to be merited.**

**Stansfield Parish Council**  
**Summary of Receipts and Payments**  
All Cost Centres and Codes

13 November 2023 (2023-2024)

**A. Income**

Code	Title	Receipts			Payments			Net Position
		Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend
14	Locality grant WSC							(N/A)
15	Locality grant SCC							(N/A)
18	Other receipts							(N/A)
20	Precept	8,182.00	8,182.00					(0%)
26	Bank interest	20.00	14.37	-5.63				-5.63 (-28%)
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>8,202.00</b>	<b>8,196.37</b>	<b>-5.63</b>				<b>-5.63 (-0%)</b>

**B. Administration - Staff**

Code	Title	Receipts			Payments			Net Position
		Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend
1	Salaries				3,500.00	952.70	2,547.30	2,547.30 (72%)
2	PAYE & NI							(N/A)
3	Pension costs							(N/A)
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>					<b>3,500.00</b>	<b>952.70</b>	<b>2,547.30</b>	<b>2,547.30 (72%)</b>

**C. Administration - Office**

Code	Title	Receipts			Payments			Net Position
		Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend
4	Clerk's expenses				150.00		150.00	150.00 (100%)
8	Insurance				200.00	264.00	-64.00	-64.00 (-32%)
9	Village hall hire				180.00		180.00	180.00 (100%)
11	Website				950.00	999.00	-49.00	-49.00 (-5%)
12	Stationery				20.00	64.32	-44.32	-44.32 (-221%)
19	Phone costs				23.00		23.00	23.00 (100%)
23	Training - clerk and councillors				200.00	120.00	80.00	80.00 (40%)
34	Other					45.00	-45.00	-45.00 (N/A)
36	EE Mobile subscription				250.00	213.30	36.70	36.70 (14%)
38	Mileage					32.40	-32.40	-32.40 (N/A)
39	Email monthly fees				350.00	223.20	126.80	126.80 (36%)
40	IT Support							(N/A)
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>					<b>2,323.00</b>	<b>1,961.22</b>	<b>361.78</b>	<b>361.78 (15%)</b>

**D. Admin - Audit and Accounti**

Code	Title	Receipts			Payments			Net Position
		Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend
7	Internal audit fees				170.00	169.00	1.00	1.00 (0%)
42	Annual Licence					138.00	-138.00	-138.00 (N/A)
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>					<b>170.00</b>	<b>307.00</b>	<b>-137.00</b>	<b>-137.00 (-80%)</b>

**Stansfield Parish Council**  
**Summary of Receipts and Payments**  
All Cost Centres and Codes

13 November 2023 (2023-2024)

**E. Administration - Other**

Code Title	Receipts			Payments			Net Position
	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend
6 Subscriptions				270.00	188.40	81.60	81.60 (30%)
10 GDPR				35.00		35.00	35.00 (100%)
25 Election costs				50.00	81.91	-31.91	-31.91 (-63%)
37 Locum Fees				2,800.00	2,584.00	216.00	216.00 (7%)
41 Annual Fees					35.00	-35.00	-35.00 (N/A)
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>				<b>3,155.00</b>	<b>2,889.31</b>	<b>265.69</b>	<b>265.69 (8%)</b>

**F. Grants**

Code Title	Receipts			Payments			Net Position
	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend
16 Other grants							(N/A)
28 Donations to charitable causes				50.00		50.00	50.00 (100%)
29 Stansfield village Hall				600.00	600.00		(0%)
30 Stansfield village Hall Broadband				168.00	403.00	-235.00	-235.00 (-139%)
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>				<b>818.00</b>	<b>1,003.00</b>	<b>-185.00</b>	<b>-185.00 (-22%)</b>

**G. Community Services**

Code Title	Receipts			Payments			Net Position
	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend
13 Verge cutting							(N/A)
17 Other payments				100.00		100.00	100.00 (100%)
24 Hedge cutting							(N/A)
27 Chapel ground maintenance - str							(N/A)
31 Village project				100.00		100.00	100.00 (100%)
32 Emptying of dog bins				85.00	91.52	-6.52	-6.52 (-7%)
35 Wildlife project							(N/A)
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>				<b>285.00</b>	<b>91.52</b>	<b>193.48</b>	<b>193.48 (67%)</b>

**Summary**

<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>8,202.00</b>	<b>8,196.37</b>	<b>-5.63</b>	<b>10,251.00</b>	<b>7,204.75</b>	<b>3,046.25</b>	<b>3,040.62 (16%)</b>
<b>V.A.T.</b>					<b>388.40</b>		
<b>GROSS TOTAL</b>		<b>8,196.37</b>			<b>7,593.15</b>		

## Stansfield Parish Council

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Name and Role (Clerk/RFO etc)*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Name and Role (RFO/Chair of Finance etc)*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Bank Reconciliation at 13/11/2023</b>		
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2023		8,366.54
	<b>ADD</b>		
	Receipts 01/04/2023 - 13/11/2023		8,196.37
			16,562.91
	<b>SUBTRACT</b>		
	Payments 01/04/2023 - 13/11/2023		7,593.15
<b>A</b>	<b>Cash in Hand 13/11/2023</b> (per Cash Book)		<b>8,969.76</b>
	Cash in hand per Bank Statements		
	Petty Cash	01/04/2023	0.00
	Unity Trust	13/11/2023	500.00
	Barclays reserve account	16/10/2023	3,025.80
	Barclays current account	16/10/2023	6,105.23
			<b>9,631.03</b>
	Less unrepresented payments		661.27
			8,969.76
	Plus unrepresented receipts		
<b>B</b>	<b>Adjusted Bank Balance</b>		<b>8,969.76</b>
	<b>A = B Checks out OK</b>		