

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, HOSTED BY STOURPAINE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON 12TH May 2026, AT 7PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL.**

Present: Chairman: Cllr Peter Partridge, Vice Chair J Jakes, Cllr G Cowie, M Farwell, D Meaden, S Norman, A Woodland.

Also present: Mrs Jan O'Connell Parish Clerk, Dorset Councillor Sherry Jespersen, 16 Members of the public.

1. Stourpaine Parish Council: Chairmans Report: Cllr Peter Partridge:

Thank you to everyone here tonight. We are a small village, and many people involve themselves in supporting the infrastructure that makes this such a nice place to live. Many of you here involve yourselves in community groups that give our residents a sense of purpose and friendship. The Parish Council is one of those community groups who try to represent your views and best interests. We meet every second Tuesday of the month here in this village hall generally starting at 7 o'clock. That's in the evening. We are keen but not that keen to meet at 7 o'clock in the morning.

At the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting I mentioned that we were one person short on the Council. I'm delighted to say that that we are now at full strength having been rejoined by Scott Norman, and at this juncture can I offer congratulations to Scott on his award of the British Empire Medal. The British Empire Medal is an honour awarded for rewarding local hands-on community service. I can think of no more deserving recipient than Scott Norman.

Scott rejoins the Parish Council primarily as a link between ourselves and the Village Hall Committee. As a body we carry no jurisdiction or in fact responsibility for the running of the Village Hall. However, as with any other community group within the village the Parish Council is happy to support where possible. Last month the Parish Council agreed to fund the white lining of the Village Hall car park. We felt that it was unfair for the Village Hall Committee to foot the £1800.00 bill for a car park used not only for the Village Hall users but increasingly by users of the trailway, playing fields, tennis club and of course the Kidzone play area. The Parish Council have also granted £500.00 towards the set-up costs of the 2026 Summer fete. And we all look forward to that!

We have 2 play areas in Stourpaine that the Parish Council are responsible for, Kidzone in Drapers field and the Grace Upward Play Area on Bottom Road. For those that don't know, Grace Upward was a longstanding Stourpaine resident who ran the Stourpaine Youth Club for many years. The Parish Council felt that it was fitting to recognise her years of service to the young people of Stourpaine and so almost 10 years ago the Bottom Road play area was named after her. Both play areas are regularly inspected with equipment maintained or replaced when necessary. In July last year £17,000.00 was spent by your Parish Council in replacing the swings and trail equipment in Kidzone. We are currently pricing the cost of repairs to the climbing frame and hedge cutting at Grace Upward play area. Th Kidzone is particularly popular which is reflected by the number of times that I have to empty the litter bin of picnic paraphernalia. Your Parish Council regularly passes comment on planning applications within the village. We try to reflect the consensus of opinion within the village when commenting. Last year at the Annual Parish Meeting I mentioned the application to build 14 houses off Bottom Road. This had been refused as had the original application to build 32 houses with access from Hod View. There was an appeal to Central Government by the developer, but this was refused. However as

expected, a new application has been submitted. This time for 5 bungalows, a considerable reduction from the original 32 houses. The Parish Council has never been against necessary house building but has always argued for development sympathetic to our village surroundings. There has been no decision yet to grant or refuse, but if 5 bungalows were to be built, I personally would see it as a small victory. I would like to thank our Parish Councillor David Meaden who brings expertise on Planning Regulations and procedure to the Council. I know he spends many an hour reviewing and commenting on applications giving the Parish Council good advice.

At the Annual Parish Meeting last year 2 points were highlighted by residents that required action by the Parish Council. The first action point was the change of speed limit within the village roads. We have commissioned surveys within the village to determine whether current speeds fall within the range to achieve a 20mph standard limit in Stourpaine. Surveys were taken in Havelins and Manor Road. I'm pleased to say that the average speed on these roads qualify s to apply for a change of speed limit from 30mph down to 20mph. We are now in the bureaucratic queue at Dorset Council. I hasten to add that the new speed limit will apply only to the side roads in Stourpaine and not the main A350 which runs through the village.

The second action point raised was flooding and drain management, particularly along Havelins and Manor Road. Following the Annual Parish Meeting of 2025 the Parish Council lobbied Dorset Council Highways. I can report that the Dorset Council Highways Technical Officer has installed an additional inspection chamber along Havelins to improve access for cleaning and maintenance. He has also agreed to regularly clear the drains on a request basis. To this end, the Stourpaine Flood Team will request drain clearance in April and October each year. I would like to thank Rick Pearce for his work heading the Flood Team. With regard to surface water and waste management the Parish Council attended a drop-in session in Pimperne held by the Environment Agency and Wessex Water and have invited a representative of Wessex Water to speak at our 9th June meeting.

There are a number of people that I would like to thank and first off the rank is Barry Graham for his tireless energy organising the Stourpaine Allotments which is flourishing and in some cases blooming.

My fellow councillors who continue to turn up each month to support their village.

Our Parish Clerk, Jan O'Connell who is a valued member of our team and is very patient with the current Chair of Stourpaine Parish Council.

A regular attendee at the Parish Council meetings is Dorset Councillor Sherry Jespersen. We are grateful for her knowledge in local governance and would be floundering without her expertise.

Lat but not least I would like to thank Felicity Cox. Every year she so very kindly thanks the members of the Parish Council for their work, so this year I've got in first and to say we appreciate her kind words.

2. Dorset Councillor Report: Cllr Sherry Jespersen.

Flooding: Following the severe flooding across North Dorset in January, Dorset Council, Wessex Water, the Environment Agency are working together, along with Councillors and MP Simon Hoare, to put in place infrastructure improvements to reduce the impact of flooding in future years. Public meetings have been held in a number of villages alongside pop-up community events to listen to concerns and explain the mitigation plans. Dorset Council has set aside £5.6m of capital for flood mitigation schemes and I submitted proposals for culvert replacements in Pimperne and Tarrant Gunville to be considered for funding. No decisions will be made this financial year.

Highways: Our roads were badly damaged over the winter, and Highways are gradually making repairs, prioritising the most dangerous and busy areas. Of necessity this can mean road closures and delays, PC are notified of planned works, and I do what I can to alert residents, but people can help by planning ahead and being patient. Everyone is asked to report issues on the Dorset Council website.

20MPH: All the 20mph schemes requested by villages in the ward are now in place or underway. Bryanston and Child Okeford are exploring extending their 20mph areas and will take this forward in due course. Thank you to all the Speed Watch Teams who make such a significant contribution to road safety in their communities. It remains the case that most issues on our rural roads are the result of poor or selfish driving.

C13 Closure at Dinah's Hollow: Work to stabilise the slopes at Dinah's Hollow continues on target. I have regular meetings with the project team and there will be a second site visit in June followed by a stakeholder meeting to gather feedback from Parish Councils. I have been particularly impressed with the care and professionalism of the ecological team who are responsible for protecting the wildlife and vegetation across the site. The flow of traffic displaced from the C13 is regularly monitored and figures I have seen confirm that, though number of vehicles using the A350 has increased, this is within tolerances for this route and much of the overflow has dispersed across local roads. Following the stakeholder meeting there will be a review to see what changes or extra measures should be put in place, particularly for the busy summer period.

Verge Cutting: The Dorset Council Greenspace Team are making the first cut to roadside verges. This involves trimming a narrow strip alongside the carriageway to maintain visibility and keep vegetation away from the drains. The full cut is carried out once a year in late summer. The cut and clear away method, whereby the grass cuttings are not left to rot down and enrich the soil is proving a noticeable success. The wildflowers on verges and wild land have recovered noticeably in recent years and now make a real contribution to Dorset biodiversity. If there are verges causing visibility problems, please report this on the DC website and they will be cut back.

Planning: Officers are working their way through the consultation responses to the draft Dorset Wide Local Plan. Some of these can be viewed on the website. The final draft will be published in the Autumn. There will be an opportunity for comment before it is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

Meanwhile a number of significant changes are being introduced to planning law and regulation. A new area wide Spatial Development Strategy will be introduced covering the Wessex area - Dorset, Wiltshire, Somerset and BCP. This will pass some decisions upwards, out of the hands of DC. Alongside this, more planning decisions will be taken made by officers rather than Local Planning Committees. The aim is to speed up planning decisions, but the result will inevitably be loss of local control.

On a more positive note, DC is working on a design code which I hope will eventually enable us to produce a local Design Template similar to the former Village Design Statements.

There will be a planning forum for Parish and Town Councils on 16 June at County Hall which the PC's might wish to attend.

3. The Allotment: Barry Graham.

-We currently have fewer tenants than usual as some have move away, there are 5 plots that need to be let. Variable weather conditions last made it challenging with a very dry summer, however, we did manage to get a few entries into the summer show.

We have a new secretary who is doing posting on social media on our behalf, we are hoping that this will generate interest in getting the available plots filled. The wet spring weather has delayed moving machinery to the shed, but this will be completed in June.

The monthly working group is still meeting to assist in keeping the available plots managed. We have dug up a lot of metal which we have managed to get rid of. The gully to the entrance continues to be a problem, when it rains it washes the edge of the highway down the hill, we continue to contact Dc Highways to get this issue addressed as this is a safety issue. The compost toilet is working very well! The fruit trees survived last summer, they are flowering and growing and will eventually be a nice orchard. We have purchased and installed 3 bat boxes which we will monitor and observe and record. The bees are still situated in the corner of the allotment and are producing honey. We await SPC to confirm the date of the annual allotment inspection.

4. The Tennis Club: Felicity Cox

Membership: Our membership year runs from 1st April to 31st March. At the end of last year we had 90 members, but some have moved away, some are injured and one has joined another club. We now have 76 members: 37 women, 27 men and 12 juniors (under 24). Hopefully more people will join during the year.

Coaching: One of the early changes made in the spring was the introduction of Graham Howell as club coach. Graham has rejuvenated adult coaching, which was dwindling previously, starting with a Thursday morning group session and then adding the popular Saturday morning sessions. This accommodates those who are free in the week and also those working folk who prefer weekends. His sessions have proved challenging, fun and focused and it's notable to see improvement in those who participate. Graham also provides private coaching to adults and youngsters.

League Matches: In the Dorset League, our mixed doubles team won the Winter League, division 5. The summer mixed team have been promoted to Division 4 and had a bit more of a challenge, coming 6th out of 8 which was a very good effort.

The winter, after a similar response from the men, we decided to enter a Ladies doubles team, and they won 4 out of the 5 matches played.

In the summer we had 2 mixed teams in the Shaftesbury League, the A team came 5th/6 in Division 1 and the B team came 6th in Division 2. Again, the teams included several members new to competitive play, so it was a chance to put into practice some of Graham's team tactics. We are entering 2 teams again this year.

Tournaments: The American tournament in July, given our own twist as Stourpainebledon, featured Pimms, strawberries and lots of enjoyable play.

This was followed by a Stourpaine Fun Day in September, where coaching groups were targeted at different levels of play, capped off with a speed gun competition. It's harder than it looks.

Maintenance: We've had the courts moss killed and are in the process of reviewing our major maintenance programme too. The courts were built in 1988, resurfaced in 2013, repainted in 2021 and are due for another repaint probably in another 2 years. This will be followed by a resurface in 5 or 6 years' time. We put money aside each year into a sinking fund to save up for these major projects and the amount we estimate will be required is reviewed annually.

Summary: As a village community tennis club, we pride ourselves on being an inclusive, friendly and active club which offers value for money. We're keen to increase our membership and one of our committee members is working hard to publicise our existence including updating our website keeping our Facebook account updated and we're paying for a digital poster in Lukins, the Pimperne fitness centre.

5. The Gardening Club: David Meaden.

Membership of the club is open to residents of Stourpaine and the surrounding area. Last year we had more than seventy members. Our year runs from our AGM held in February and last year included seven meetings held in the Village Hall at 7.30pm on the second Friday of the month. Speakers are arranged on a variety of gardening and general topics, and these meetings also provide an excellent opportunity to socialise with refreshments being provided. In addition, we held our Annual Show last August, a Social Supper in July and Christmas Social with quiz in December.

To date this year, we have held three successful and well attended meetings on subjects including 'Close Encounters with Mammals', 'The Gilberts Dahlia Year' and 'Kingston Lacy Through the Seasons'.

Three more talks are arranged for the coming months together with our annual plant sale on 16th May, visit to Shillingstone Railway Station in June, evening social supper on 10th July and Annual Show on 15th August. To round off the year we have a Christmas social. All meetings are open to non-members,

On behalf of the village, we maintain the memorial garden in Shaston Road and the planters adjacent to the bus stop.

Potential new members are more than welcome to come along and have a look at what we do.

For more information contact either David Meaden on 01258 452083 or Jackie Arnold on 07545 212989.

6. The Flood Team: Rick Pearce

Since I updated the Parish Council in May 25, I can report that the situation regarding the elimination of blockages to surface water drains is improving, which is helping to hamper the overflow of water under high rainfall conditions. Dorset Council has acknowledged that regular cleaning is required and have made engineering improvements to enhance inspection access, as well as fitting a flap valve to the pipe where water enters the Iwerne at Havelins bridge, this will help prevent back flow onto roads. Following the torrential rains in January which led in part to the failure of the storage capacity within the Wessex Water pumping station on Havelins, Wessex Water have instigated a series of activities to prevent this from happening again. This has included, addressing a previously unknown issue at Durweston and inspection of all village pipework is ongoing to identify cracks that create entry points for surface run off. These will be addressed on a priority basis. Wessex Water will attend the Parish Council meeting in June to provide an update.

The rainfall in January 2026 was intensive, with 7cm falling in 10 hours. The rain fell on already supersaturated ground, causing significant surface run-off from fields, which had a direct impact on some properties in the northern and western quadrants of the village. In addition, groundwater rose to its highest recorded levels, but fortunately appeared to have little direct impact on most properties. However, because surface water drains worked more effectively and the Stour flood plain providing relief on this occasion, property damage was far less than experienced in 2013. Whilst some residences were affected, Stourpaine was more fortunate than some other villages and towns in North Dorset. However, further local system improvements are needed to reduce the impact and prevalence of such events. The Environment Agency, Wessex Water and Dorset Council have all been engaged and provided verbal commitments (to me) to view the flood risk to the village as an integrated system and

agreed to work collaboratively, with each other and with landowners to devise a solution that offers the best achievable level of flood resilience. We hope to start discussions in the early summer when local investigations have concluded and analysis of engineering solutions in other Wessex villages can be considered. To support me (as co-ordinator), the Flood Resilience Team now consists of 10 residents drawn from different areas across the South side of the village. The ambition is to bolster this, before winter arrives, with a broader cadre of volunteers willing to offer support when timely action by a few people can make all the difference against an imminent threat to a person's home and treasured possessions. Members of the village 'book club' ably demonstrated what is possible when the call for help was raised by a fellow member in January. So in summary, progress towards achieving the goal of a village resilient to severe rain and rising main river levels is progressing but will not be achieved without agency and landowner collaboration, resident advance planning and an ongoing offer of support from village residents.

7. The Table Tennis Club: No report submitted.

8. The Coffee Morning: Barbara Thomson.

The main news is that, very sadly, the new owner, who took over the Post Office in Child Okeford earlier this year, decided that he could not continue to run the outreach service which we and other neighbouring villages had benefitted from for several years. This closed, very appropriately, on Friday 13th March. This means that anyone wanting Post Office services has to go to Blandford, or if they have transport to Child Okeford. Our last day was the Tuesday of that week and we gave Serena, our regular Post Office lady, a small gift and a 'Thank you' card for coming to us. She did not just deal with cash withdrawals, selling stamps, accepting parcels etc. but helped customers sort out Post Office related problems. However, the Hub itself continues to take place in the Village Hall every Tuesday between 10am and 12 noon.

Catherine and I continue to run it with a rota of volunteers, we hope to have enough helpers so that nobody has to be on duty more than once a month. In this regard we would be very pleased to hear from anyone who would like to join the team, even if they were only available for occasional duties. The only good thing about losing the Post Office outreach is that, as it ran from the kitchen, we had to be there early to get all of the equipment we needed out before 9am so that the Post Office could be set up for opening at 9.30am. Now we can arrive later to be ready for our 10am opening time.

We still have a regular core of people who come every week and enjoy a cup (mug) of coffee or tea (we have several different varieties) and biscuits while chatting to each other and we do have a few visitors from Durweston. We are trying to publicise its existence more and Jacky Arnold has painted 2 signs which are put up on the day, one by the gate to the hall car park and the other on Sandra's house gate near the church. It was Sandra's idea, hoping to attract custom from people walking on the Trailway.

Since my report last year we have handed over a further £644.59 to the Village Hall, this being the donations received (April 2025-March 2026) less the cost of the coffee etc. and including £36.00 from the sale of Jacky Hardy's Cards.

So as I have said before, do come along and meet people you already know and get to know others you didn't.

9. The Village Hall: Peter Winchcombe.

-We have had another busy year and bookings are going well, Scott Norman has joined the Committee to liaise between the PC and the VH Committee. You will notice that we are letting the grass grow on the field, our lawn mower is not sufficient to cut the grass, the barriers have been moved, we are planning to sell the longer grass when it is mowed to a local farmer. We have been unable to get a football or Rugby team interested in using the pitch, so we are exploring other ideas.

Scott has secured funding from the PC to have the VH car park re white lined, and we will be installing a sign with a QR code which users of the car park may make any donations towards the upkeep of the car park. The new white lining will offer wider parking spaces and 3 disabled bays, there is just some paperwork to be finalised with DC before the work can commence, the car park will be closed for approx. 24 hours whilst work is carried out.

The VH committee has agreed to a quote from DC to carry out some of the mowing of the grass with the team of volunteers carrying out other cuts in-between.

10. The Summer Scheme: Cllr J Jakes.

-The Summer Scheme ran very successfully last year, with 28 children, 13 parents and 18 volunteers of the 4-week period. The grant from the PC enabled us to provide lunches for the child. We carried out lots of craft activities and things the children created were exhibited at the Village Show. Thank you to Anabel Elliot for allowing the children to take photographs in her garden, this year the photo theme will be trees. Thank you to Barbara Thomson and Jean Palmer for helping out with the scheme.

11. The Church: No report submitted.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.