

STERT PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of a meeting held at St James Church on Monday 3rd March 2025 at 6.30pm

Present: Chair: Chris Lawrence (CL)

Clock Inn: Ann Harris

Bill Howkins (WH)

Treasurer: Lucy Barker (LB)

Stewardship: David Bromhead (DB)

Clerk: Jay Brown (JB)

Summary of Projects and Action points raised

| Project or Action | Assignee | Current Status | Misc Info |
|---|----------|----------------|---|
| New Council Members and Volunteer teams | All / JB | Ongoing | Please contact any member of council or email stertpc@gmail.com |
| Website and Online doc storage | JB | Resumed | To go ahead and narrow down the remaining 27 companies |
| Grist Environmental Lagging progress towards agreed planning | CL | Ongoing | Email sent to Grist |
| Trail bikes misusing pathways | LB | Complete | Purchase and placement of a sign have been actioned |
| Reducing Speed Limit | CL | Complete | Email sent to Highways |
| Summer Party Organising | | On Hold | Volunteer team, premises required |
| Parish Defibrillator | | On Hold | Volunteer team required for once a month simple check. |
| Village Perks Mass Chimney Sweeping June | JB | Complete | janethawkins@btinternet.com or contact Janet on 077 033 59 104 |
| Village Perks Smoke Alarm Testing | JB | Ongoing | JB to work out how to collect information that meets standards criteria for a team to be sent out to village. |

*For the full meeting notes, please refer to the main notice board at Stert House

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1. **Apologies:** Apologies were received from Alec Edwards (AE) and Lewis Cowen (LC).
2. **Declarations of Interest:** There are no declarations of interest.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting:** The minutes from the meeting held on Monday, 9th December 2024, were accepted as an accurate record.
4. **Public Participation:** No residents attended this meeting.
5. **Councillors and Volunteers:** It was reiterated that the ongoing reliance on the same teams has been taking its toll for some time. There is a critical need for younger volunteers to step in, especially as our current members reach pivotal stages in their lives. Without fresh faces joining both the council and volunteering groups, the village will continue to miss out on community-wide projects and the benefits they bring. The Parish Council have recognised that rising talent has not naturally emerged over the years, leaving us to contend with inevitable attrition and the slippery slope of a diminishing sense of wider village unity. Stert Villagers are encouraged and extremely welcome to provide help at any level they can, for as little time as can be spared. Villagers should contact any council member, ask neighbours and email stertpc@gmail.com. CL has asked JB to aid with this essential task.
6. **Treasurer's Report:** LB reported that the Parish Council's bank balance stands at £4,032.26 (verified by CL). Since the December PC meeting there have been 2 items of expenditure: £50 to the PCC for use of the church and £50 to the Clock Inn Park as a contribution to their Christmas party. £300 is allocated to the reserve fund earmarked for telephone box refurbishment. Neville Burrell has confirmed that he is prepared, as in previous years, to carry out the audit of the parish accounts for the year 2024/5.
7. **Stert PC Website and Emails:** On 14 February 2025, JB received approval to proceed with establishing a website and online document storage. As this next stage is unpaused, JB will continue the project. 27 companies will be approached regarding these services.
8. **Grist Environmental:** CL presented the key points agreed with Grist Environmental and addressed the matter of the non-provision, despite many years having elapsed. CL will follow up to obtain an update on both the bund wall and the 3-meter hedging. DB suggested that adding hard-standing areas might be beneficial, given the current issues with muddy roads.
9. **Walking and Bridleway Misuse:** LB raised concerns about trail bikes misusing the bridleways—particularly along the bridleway leading from the Stert junction with the A342 up towards Etchilhampton Hill and the resulting damage. It was agreed that the installation of appropriate signage would help mitigate this issue.
 - a. **Footpath Concerns on the A342:** There are ongoing issues with the footpaths along the A342. The Local Authority's third-party remediation efforts appear insufficient and, in some cases, might simply be disingenuous. AH has brought up these concerns for the second consecutive meeting, noting that the local

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authority has not adequately addressed her feedback. CL advised another attempt to secure a satisfactory response.

- b. Bridleway at Etchilhampton Hill: Evidence of fly-tipping near the Devizes gates was noted. This issue will be reviewed further, and any additional concerns to be communicated to the Parish Council.(Post meeting: this has now been cleared).

10. **Parish Steward:** DB commended Parish Steward Kevin Dorman, describing him as a genuinely dedicated individual who is enthusiastic about serving the Parish. JB mentioned that the Steward outside his property filled a large pothole, which now serves as a turning circle at the village entrance. For any queries—from pothole repairs to other matters—please liaise with DB, who is currently administering the Parish Stewardship. The Steward has also completed tarmac repairs on two manholes, a success that was warmly acknowledged by all.

- a. Salt Spreading: JB noted uncertainty regarding the salt-spreading policy, observing that the salt bins appeared not to be full and wondering if villagers were responsible for salting. CL explained that the Parish owns a spreader (attached to one of AE's vehicles), which is used only during inclement weather. Given that last winter was relatively mild, its use has been limited. DB was tasked with transferring responsibility for refilling the bins to the Steward.
- b. Rutting Near Stert Manor Farm: Concerns were expressed regarding worsening rutting on the left of the A342 as one leaves Stert Manor Farm.

11. **Summer Party and Organising:** CL raised the issue of whether the Council should financially support the Church BBQ scheduled for 2025 or if an independent event should be hosted by the Council. JB observed that many villagers appreciated last year's BBQ and felt that a separate, non-profit event might benefit those facing challenges in participating in larger gatherings. Although there is recognition that finding volunteers and suitable venues is challenging, it was agreed that funds will be allocated if these issues can be resolved. A total figure of £400 has been budgeted for Xmas and summer parties combined.

12. **Double Yellow Lines at Stert Village Entrance:** CL confirmed that a request concerning the installation of double yellow lines at the Stert village entrance (distinct from Manor Farm) has been submitted and an approved response received from Highways.

13. **Reduced Speed Limit for Stert Village:** CL clarified that the original 30mph speed limit was introduced in Stert without the Council's knowledge. Both JB and LB suggested that a reduction to 15mph might be more appropriate, especially given villagers' concerns and recent experiences with speeding vehicles. However, LB noted that a minimum of 20mph is likely required by Highways regulations (given factors such as the absence of a local school).

- a. Mixed Responsibility Road: JB inquired about the main village road, which is showing a mixed status (Unique Street Reference Number, USRN 18501383).

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General concerns expressed that if the road were to be fully adopted by the Parish Council, the position of the Parish Warden might be jeopardized, as well as Wiltshire Council responsibility for speed limits, road repairs etc.

- b. CL requested that JB clarify what this mixed status means for Stert.
- c. CL will approach Highways to negotiate a reduction in the speed limit.

14. Parish Defibrillator: CL introduced AH's account regarding the Clock Inn's defibrillator unit. The approximate initial cost is £750 with an annual expense of £15. The Clock Inn's defibrillator, which is checked weekly by volunteers (despite a monthly minimum requirement), also incurs a cost of £130 for two sets of pads that last two years. Available units might also be suitable for our Telephone Box.

- a. Discussion: There was an in-depth discussion weighing the benefits versus the outcomes, taking into account the critical time window required for effective CPR. In summary, optimal CPR would involve two people staying with the patient while another retrieves the defibrillator promptly.
- b. Viability: The project is currently not viable unless a dedicated volunteer team is established to perform the monthly checks initially.

15. Stert Villager Group Benefits

- a. **Chimney Sweeping:** Our thanks to Redhorn Magazine, Andrew Underwood and his team will be operating in the area this June. For group discounts, please contact: janethawkins@btinternet.com or contact Janet on 077 033 59 104
- b. **Fire Smoke Alarm Assessments:** JB has discussed with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service the possibility of arranging free smoke alarm assessments for qualifying villagers. Should a sufficient number of residents qualify, the Fire Service is prepared to dispatch a small team to complete all assessments on a single day. JB will develop a method for distributing, collecting, and organising the necessary information.

16. Planning Consent submissions: None

17. Date of next meeting: The date of the next meeting was set for 2nd June

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