

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF STERT PARISH COUNCIL

Monday 23 March 2026

Present: Chris Lawrence (CL), chairman; Alec Edwards (AE), vice chairman; Lucy Barker (LB), treasurer; David Bromhead (DB), parish clerk, Ann Harris (AH), Lewis Cowen (LC), Frances Greenburgh (FG) (remotely). Plus 2 members of the public.

1. **Apologies:** There were no apologies.
2. **Declarations of interest:** There were none.
3. **Minutes of previous meeting:** The chairman signed these as an accurate report of the meeting.
4. **Vale Cottage:** Sam Deacon, as a member of the public asked to speak about her concerns. These included: Inconsistencies in the plans for the various planning applications, failure of WC to consult its ecologist, failure to ensure only native trees are planted where stipulated. A Certified Ecologist should be appointed to mitigate the ecological damage done and in particular to ensure a biodiversity net gain (BNG) of plus 10% is achieved.

Public participation then closed and the PC meeting resumed. An email dated March 23 from the owner had been circulated among councillors. In it, the owner apologised for the earth work on the paddock which had not had planning approval. The owner had not been on site when the excavation work had taken place. WC has given approval for the topsoil to be returned to its original topographical levels, excess subsoil and topsoil will be stored to the side of the paddock for the time being. There will be no development of the paddock. The intention is to meet the highest standards of BNG. Councillors agreed that closer (daily) supervision of contractors is needed.

5. **Treasurer's Report:** LB reported that the parish council's bank balance stood at £4,357.04, including a £350 reserve for the next refurbishment of the phone box. Since the last meeting the following expenses were made: £50 to the Clock Inn for their Christmas party, £50 to the PCC for use of the church and £4.25 per month bank charges.
6. **New internal auditor:** LB reported that our current auditor, Neville Burrell, was too unwell to continue in the post and a new auditor needs to be found. It would ideally be someone in the village but completely independent of the parish council. The auditing of the PC accounts had to be finished by the end of June.
7. **Village speed limit:** The first step for a 20mph speed limit through the village is an assessment which will cost the PC £825 (for our 25% share). If the assessment finds a new speed limit is needed, the installation cost will be between £500 and £1,000.

8. **Boundary changes:** Details of Devizes Town Council's recommendations for changes to the parish boundaries had been circulated to all councillors. Among them it is suggested that Sleight village and Sleight farm be transferred to Stert parish. Councillors agreed to object to this proposal as Stert parish council is unable to take on any further responsibilities.
9. **Precept:** This was not discussed.
10. **Rights of Way:** LB reported that the bridleway (Ster 1a) up Etchilhampton Hill is still being used by motorcycles. One biker who was stopped and informed that motorised vehicles were not allowed to use the path politely disagreed and said the status of it had been changed to being open to all traffic. LB is to contact Wiltshire Council's Rights of Way department to find out whether this is the case or not.
11. **Parish steward:** DB said that the parish steward was not available for work in the parish as he has been seconded for pothole repair. He said he had no response from WC with regard to flooding of a property in the village.
12. **Summer party:** The village summer party in aid of the church is to take place next to the tennis court of Garden House on Sunday 7 June from 2pm. It was suggested that the parish council's contribution should be more than the £200 given to the last barbecue there, so it was agreed to give £300.

LC reported that the PCC, meeting earlier in the day, had approved other fundraising events, including the café in the church during the car boot sale on Saturday 16 May, a harvest supper in the barn in September and a Candles Around the Pond event on Saturday 7 November so it could be connected with Remembrance Sunday. CL suggested that the PC could contribute to events that were open to all residents and this would be discussed at a later date.

13. **Any other business:**

(i) Car marshals would be needed for the car boot sale but Clive Boyes no longer organises this. CL asked if marshals were necessary and it was agreed that someone at the entrance to the village was needed to direct traffic to the farm entrance at the top of the hill. An email is to be sent around the village asking for volunteers.

(ii) LB asked about trees being planted on the bund at the Grist recycling centre. CL replied that it was being reviewed.

(iii). CL advised that the PC had been notified of a new planning application at Saddlepack Farm: PL/2026/01913. There will be no public consultation as this is a prior notification application.

14. **Date of next meeting:** The next parish council meeting will take place at the church on Monday 8 June at 6.30pm.