

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF STERT PARISH COUNCIL ON MONDAY 8 JUNE 2026

At St James Church, Stert

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

1. **Apologies:** There were none.
2. **Declarations of interest:** There were none.
3. **Minutes of the last meeting:** These were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
4. **Treasurer's report:** LB reported that the PC's bank balance stands at £6,121.73, which was verified by the chairman. This includes £400 earmarked for the next renovation of the telephone box. It also includes the £2,500 precept received in April. Since the last PC meeting the following payments have been made: £50 to the PCC for the use of the church for PC meetings; £82.76 for membership of the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC); £19.20 plus £43.20 for our Wordpress website (This is still being charged to Bill Howkins' card, so LB has reimbursed him. She has now changed it so her credit card will in future be charged and she will reimburse herself. The PC bank account only has a debit card associated with it, which is not advisable to use in internet transactions); £231.65 for renewal of the PC's insurance with Zurich insurance company. This is the first of a three-year long-term agreement (LTA) so the premium won't change for the next two years; £300 cash to Hilary Hawkins, being the PC's contribution to the Stert summer party which took place on Sunday 7 June; £4.25 monthly bank charges. LB had reported at the last meeting that Neville Burrell, the PC's internal auditor of many years, was ill and would be unable to continue as our auditor. Sadly, he has now died, but Hilary Hawkins, a Stert resident, has agreed to carry out the internal audit. She audited the PCC accounts for some years. Her working life was spent either in banks or as internal accountant/bookkeeper for various companies. The meeting agreed to her appointment, a gift voucher of £100 for her and her re-appointment for 2026/7. Hilary has approved the accounts.
5. **Sharing of email addresses:** A village resident who organises fundraising events for the church wishes to use the PC's email list to advise residents of these events. The resident said it was in the PC's interest to keep the church open, among other reasons, as if it closes the upkeep of the churchyard becomes the PC's responsibility. CL said the PC will try to help the PCC where possible with distributing PCC notices but requests must demonstrate a

village wide benefit and will be dealt with on a case by case basis, after consultation with other councillors.

6. **Village maintenance:** The PC considered whether putting the work for village maintenance out to tender was desirable as the annual cost of £500 represented a significant proportion of the annual budget. After discussion it was deemed that £500 represented very good value for money particularly as Alec Edwards has on many occasions responded immediately to situations such as a fallen tree without charging any additional cost. The PC felt it unlikely that, even if a third party could offer a cheaper annual cost, there could be no guarantee of any additional charges not being applied. It was also considered that having this maintenance facility in the heart of the village was extremely useful. It was proposed by FG and seconded by AH that the current arrangement be continued. The proposal was unanimously supported. FG offered to write an ecology policy for the PC, setting out how matters such as 'no mow May' would be implemented.
7. **New internal auditor:** The meeting unanimously approved the appointment of Hilary Hawkins as our new internal auditor.
8. **Village speed limit:** The chairman noted the installation of the Wiltshire Council equipment designed to log the amount of traffic through the village as part of the survey looking towards a reduction in the speed limit to 20mph.
9. **Parish boundary changes:** The chairman had received assurance from our Wiltshire councillor that we will not be affected by proposed changes.
10. **Rights of way:** LB reported that the bridleway (Ster1a) towards Etchilhampton Hill is still being used by motorbikes. She said that in 2005 the then Wiltshire County Council received an application to upgrade the bridleway to a byway open to all traffic (BOAT). It will be considered in the next three to five years by WC but in the meantime it is still not open to any form of motorised vehicles and anyone seeing any unlawful intrusion should take the vehicle registration number and inform the police.
11. **Parish steward:** DB reported that the parish steward is now off pothole duty and back on parish duty.
12. **Christmas and summer parties:** The chairman thanked Keith and Hilary Hawkins for hosting the summer party on their property. It is not yet known how much was raised for church restoration. The PC is currently looking for volunteers to host this year's Christmas party. Anyone interested should contact the chairman.
13. **Any other business:** FG suggested that the PC discuss the proposal for work on trees at Vale Cottage, but it was generally agreed the PC should say nothing and leave the decision up to Wiltshire Council's tree conservation

officer. CL said the PC must be consistent and, if we had not commented on other tree work applications, it would be better to continue that policy.

14. **Date of next meeting:** It was agreed to have the next meeting of the PC on Tuesday 29 September at 6.30pm.