

Stow Maries Parish Council

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 23rd February 2026

in The Smythe Hall, Church Lane, Stow Maries at 7.30 p.m.

The Chairman - Cllr David Hopping welcomed all those present.

COUNCILLOR ATTENDEES & OTHER ATTENDEES

Councillors:- David Hopping, Neil Gilmore, Debbie Driver & Jerry Petts

District: Lisa Whiffen

Essex CC Jane Fleming

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Sayer - Parish Clerk.

Mr. Stuart Cooper - speaking on behalf of Stow Maries Opposition Group & 50+ members of public.

25-6/126 APOLOGIES

Cllr Adam Brown.

25-6/127 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a) None made at this point in the meeting.

25-6/128 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – 19th January 2026

a) The minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting held on 19th January 2026 were reviewed and approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Prop: Cllr Neil Gilmore. Sec: Cllr Debbie Driver.

25-6/129 REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

a) District Councillor Lisa Whiffen was present, but unable to take part in the meeting as discussions took place relating to the homes being planned on the Land west of Hogwell Farm, Hogwell Chase. However, Cllr Whiffen had already sent a report which is detailed below:-

District Councillor Report – February 2026

Maldon District Council has agreed its 2026/27 budget at a meeting of Full Council held on 12 February 2026.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Siddall, delivered his annual budget speech to formally present the proposed budget.

An increase to the Maldon District Council element of the council tax bill has been approved, representing an average rise at Band D of 13p per week or £6.76 annually. It is important to clarify that, although the Council is responsible for collecting the entirety of the council tax, the majority of these funds are allocated to other areas of local government.

This forms part of a comprehensive package of measures designed to balance the budget, and due to prudent financial management, car park charges will remain unchanged. This outcome is beneficial for local high street businesses.

In his address, the Leader highlighted the collaborative efforts of Members from all political groups within the Council, alongside officers, to secure a fully balanced budget for the upcoming year. The budget is founded on robust principles established in recent years and underscores the Council's commitment to investment, financial sustainability, and exceptional service provision for the district.

Signed by the Chairman.....
Cllr David Hopping

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The Leader expressed continued confidence in the Council's ability to deliver optimal outcomes for Maldon District.

Residents will now benefit from a more reliable and convenient way to recycle unwanted clothing and textiles With the introduction of a new bookable doorstep collection service starting this week. The updated service, operated on behalf of the Council by Essex Textiles Ltd, replaces the previous kerbside system where residents needed to leave their textile sacks out with their recycling. Instead, households can now book a weekly collection, with all collections taking place on Thursdays.

The new approach is designed to make textile recycling easier for residents while improving the overall reliability and efficiency of the service.

Maldon District Council can confirm that a banking hub will shortly open in its temporary home at our Council Offices on Princes Road while Cash Access UK continue to progress the hub's permanent premises.

The hub will be open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm and will provide counter services for customers of all major high street banks, including cash withdrawals and deposits, balance enquiries, bill payments and change-giving for businesses.

Community bankers from different banks will also attend on set days to offer more specific account support.

25-6/130 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

a) Cllr Fleming had already sent a report which had been circulated to members and put on the website. Cllr Fleming highlighted parts of the ECC budget changes. A vote of thanks was given to Cllr Fleming for her input at the meeting.

25-6/131 QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

a) Mr. Stuart Cooper from the Stow Maries Opposition Group (SMOG) addressed the members of the Parish Council and public and made the following points:-
He has lived in Stow Maries for 42 years and in the area all his life.

1770 homes added onto a so called "Garden Village" will have a hugely detrimental affect on the Dengie area and he is totally opposed to this planned development.

The roads are already in a bad state of disrepair.

The traffic travelling through the villages is already horrendous and a further 1770 houses will only impact the situation more.

The Dengie Peninsula is an area of tourism, with the development of vineyards, long standing farming families with specialised cattle and sheep.

There are sensitive eco habitations - birds/marshes/nature reserves.

Huge historic significance.

Overload on the current infrastructure which is already struggling. eg Schools/medical facilities are all over subscribed.

Drainage and sewage facilities overloaded.

There is a meeting on 16th March 2026 in The Smythe Hall to discuss in more detail and to forge a plan of how to combat this huge development.

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The Chair gave a vote of thanks to Mr. Cooper and opened the floor for Questions.

Q: Where are we in the process of the Scoping EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment)

A: Still awaiting outcome.

Q: Is there a developer involved

A: Not as far as we are aware at the moment.

- It was stated that a traffic survey needed to take place, although costly was the best way to fight it and to ensure it is done at a time when the roads are at their busiest as it was felt that the Bushey Hill one was done when it was quiet.
- It was stated that Councillors must be lobbied.
- Wildlife surveys needed to be carried out.
- The railway is only single track and not able to cope with additional numbers planned.
- It was mentioned to take pictures now of the flooded fields/overflowing ditches
- Capture dash cam footage for the traffic
- Involving Cold Norton.
- To form a what's app group to record the flooding/accidents etc.
- It was also mentioned that the land supply was only 4.1 years and not 5 and due to changes to the National Planning Policy Framework(NPPF) which was updated in 2024 the government's mandatory housing targets were 575 new houses each year and therefore planning decisions are favouring development.
- It was also stated that it is important to be fully aware of the planning process so that things can be put in place prior to the outline planning application arriving at MDC.
- A recent meeting of the Dengie Hundred Group of Parish Councils established that all the Parish Councils in the Dengie are of the same mind to fight these developments.
- The scoping document is the change to get all the ducks in a row.
- The development at Althorne that was recently refused was turned down on "Visual Impact as the developer can do nothing to mitigate the harm.

25-6/132 PLANNING MATTERS

- a) **Planning Applications** - no applications to discuss.
- b) In answer to the request that has been received from North Fambridge Parish Council requesting support to object to Application No: 25/01119/OUTM PP-14574871 *Proposal: Outline application with all matters reserved other than access for the erection of up to 198 dwellings, provision for non-residential uses comprising of uses within use class E, F1 or F2, with associated open space, allotments and infrastructure. Location: Land West Of Hurndall Avenue North Fambridge Essex.* Clerk to send an objection along the lines of the letter received from North Fambridge Parish Council, adding in other pertinent responses. Mr. J.Watson the new clerk to action.

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- c) In the absence of Cllr Brown no further information was available regarding the crowd funding on the large development reference no. 352500926SOR.
- d) The Dengie Hundred Group of Parish Councils are on the same page with regard to fighting large scale development, as it affects everyone, although in different degrees depending on where the development is located.
It was decided to set up a Whats App group for all Councils and a Sharepoint site.
- e) **Planning correspondence received** over the course of the month and circulated via e-mail:
 - i) Planning application listings were noted.
 - ii) Planning decisions and appeals listings were noted.
 - iii) No decision/appeals to review for Stow Maries
- f) **STOW MARIES GREAT WAR AERODROME**
 - i) Cllr Neil Gilmore attended the zoom meeting on 28th January 2026 and the finances of the group had turned a corner in that the Squire Group part of Cathay Pacific will donate £20,000 per year for 3 years. Children up to the age of 10 will gain free entry and there are two air shows planned one for 24th May and the other 16th August.

25-6/133 FINANCE

- a) Members approved the payments and receipts for February 2026.
- b) Members approved the back pay for the Parish Clerk and noted that a P.45 had been issued ending 28th February.
- c) Approval for Cllr Petts training was given for £260.00.

25-6/134 HIGHWAY & PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ISSUES

- a) *No update available for Halt Bridge. Chair looking to meet with Alasdair Dore as he raised concerns as to the difficulty experienced when traversing under the bridge. Clerk to arrange.*
- b) Cllr Petts to update members and the next meeting regarding the speeding.

25-6/135 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- a) Cllr Driver to update members at the next meeting as the result of the "Love Your Bus" application will be known then.

25-6/136 STOW MARIES PARISH VILLAGE SIGN

- a) **Cllr Gilmore has sent pictures of the sign to the Clerk who has been advised by neighbouring Cold Norton that Bakers of Danbury did a good job on their sign.**

25-6/137 CLERKS RESIGNATION

- a) Hand over is arranged for Thursday 26th February.

25-6/138 STANDING ORDERS/FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Items a) and b) to be dealt with at the March meeting.

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25-6/139 BIODIVERSITY POLICY

a) It was agreed that Cllr Gilmore would lead this project with the help of Cllr Petts and welcomed the new Clerk's suggestion to discuss the matter. Another item to be tabled for the March Agenda.

25-26/140 WEBSITE

a) Item to be discussed at the March meeting.

25-26/141 INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

a) All items listed on the Agenda will be dealt with at the March meeting.

25-6/142 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING – It was decided to have the meeting Monday 23rd March 2026 at 7.30 p.m. as SMOG were having their meeting on the 16th March.

Cllr Gilmore very kindly said a few words of thanks to the departing clerk Mrs Sarah Sayer and a presentation of flowers and wine were made to the Clerk who thanked everyone and Cllr Gilmore welcomed the new Clerk/RFO Mr. John Watson.

25-6/143 ALL BUSINESS HAVING BEEN TRANSACTED THE CHAIR THANKED EVERYONE FOR ATTENDING & CLOSED THE MEETING at 20.57 p.m.

Signed by the Chairman.....
Cllr David Hopping

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