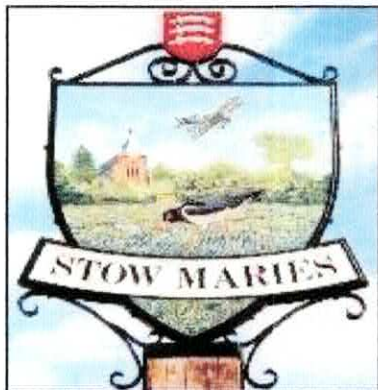




Stow Maries Parish Council
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Locum Clerk to the Council: John Watson

Stow Maries Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held at the Smythe Hall, Church Lane, Stow Maries, Essex, CM3 6SL on Monday 6th July 2026 commencing at 7.00 pm.

Present: Cllrs A. Brown, D Driver, D Hopping (Chair) and J. Petts (Vice Chair)

In Attendance: L. Wiffen (District Councillor), J. Watson (Locum Clerk), Five member of the public.

MINUTES

1. Opening of the Meeting

The Chair declared the meeting open.

2. Recording of the Meeting

No persons present indicated that they intended to record the meeting.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor J. Jay

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest

5. Public Question Time

There were no questions from members of the public.

6. Approval of Minutes

Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Petts that the minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 11th May 2026 be approved. Carried.

7. Reports from County and District Councillors

District Councillors L. Wiffen had issued a written report prior to the meeting but this had not been circulated. She spoke briefly about issues regarding waste collection in the District. It was agreed that Councillors would read the report and raise any issues direct with Councillor Wiffen.

Councillor Wiffen left the meeting

8. Finance

- i. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Brown and carried unanimously that payments for the month of May 2026 be confirmed.
- ii. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Brown and carried unanimously that payments for the month of June 2026 be confirmed.
- iii. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Brown and carried unanimously that the bank reconciliation as at 30th June 2026 be approved.
- iv. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Brown and carried unanimously that the budget report as at 30th June 2026 be approved. It was noted that, if future expenditure was in line with the budget, the bank balance at the year end would be £734.
- v. Unanimously agreed the Locum Clerk should close the Barclays Bank account.

9. Internal Audit/AGAR

The email dated 5th June 2026 from PKF Littlejohns confirming notification of exempt status was noted.

10. Love your Bus (IPTU Grant Fund Application)

- i. The proposal that the Parish Council participate in the "Love your Bus" project was considered.
- ii. Proposed Councillor Driver, seconded Councillor Brown and carried unanimously that legal advice was not required in respect of the revised offer letter dated 24th April 2026 from Essex County Council.
- iii. Proposed Councillor Driver, seconded Councillor Brown and carried unanimously that the Locum Clerk/RFO be authorised to sign the revised offer letter dated 24th April 2026 from Essex County Council.
- iv. The Clerk reported that following discussion with the Clerk of Woodham Walter Parish Council it had been confirmed that legal fees to review the draft contract from Stephenson's of Essex Ltd could be between £600 and £1,800.
- v. Proposed Councillor Driver, seconded Councillor Brown and carried unanimously that Stow Maries Parish Council would join with Woodham Walter Parish Council in obtaining legal advice in respect of the draft contract from Stephenson's of Essex Ltd, any cost to be shared between the two Councils.
- vi. Proposed Councillor Driver, seconded Councillor Brown and carried unanimously that, subject to legal advice being received and the terms of the contract being agreed with Woodham Walter Parish Council, the

Locum Clerk/RFO be authorised to sign the Contract with Stephenson's of Essex Ltd

11. Highway Speed Control

A brief report was received from Councillor Petts. No action was necessary and this matter would be carried forward to the next meeting.

12. Website/e-mail addresses

The Locum Clerk reported that, due to the excess amount of time he had spent on the Love your Bus project, he had not clarified the problems with the website and email addresses. A report would be made to the next meeting.

13. Village Sign

- i. The written report dated 29th June 2026 from the Locum Clerk was noted.
- ii. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Petts and carried unanimously that the Locum Clerk would go out to tender to have the sign taken down and transported to South Woodham Mens shed for refurbishment. The Locum Clerk was given delegated authority to proceed with this without further referral to Council
- iii. Proposed Councillor Driver, seconded Councillor Petts and carried unanimously that the Locum Clerk should investigate whether funds for the refurbishment and renewal of the sign and the installation of a bench next to the sign could be obtained from the Malson District Council Locality Fund.
- iv. It was also agreed that, failing monies being available from the Locality Fund, the Locum Clerk should seek sponsorship to replace the sign.

14. Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome

Nothing to report

15. Stow Maries Opposition Group (SMOG)

Stuart Cooper gave a brief report on SMOG.

16. Clerk Report

- a) Sharepoint – No action had been taken to set up a sharepoint group. It was agreed no further action would be taken.
- b) Halt Bridge, Church Lane – An email had been circulated by the Locum Clerk and District Councillor Wiffen had agreed to take this matter up with the Planning Department at Maldon District Council.
- c) Grass Cutting – Correspondence had been received from two parishioners re the cessation of the grass cutting. The Locum Clerk had responded explaining the position
- d) Smythe Hall – No response had been received from Smythe Hall re offsetting website costs against hall rental.
- e) Councillor Co-option – agreed to advertise vacancy on Facebook. Noted applicants could live within three miles of Stow Maries boundary.

17. Exchange of Information

No information was exchanged.

Meeting closed at 8.25 pm

9th July 2026