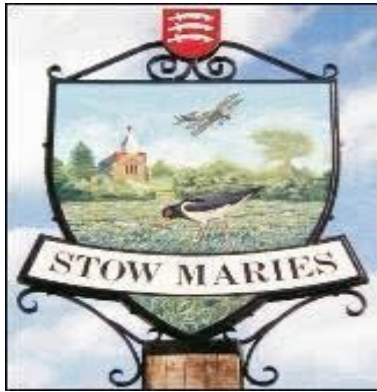




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Locum Clerk to the Council: John Watson

Stow Maries Parish Council

Minutes of the Council Meeting held at the Smythe Hall, Church Lane, Stow Maries, Essex, CM3 6SL on Monday 14th September 2026 commencing at 7.00 pm.

Present: Cllrs A Balfour (Item 8 onwards), A Brown, D Driver, D Hopping (Chair) and J. Petts (Vice Chair)

In Attendance: J. Watson (Locum Clerk), Members 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

There were no apologies for absence.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Public Question Time

Mr Ian Osborne requested clarification regarding the purchase of a bench to be situated near the site of the Village Sign. The Locum Clerk assured him that this would not be going ahead.

6. Approval of Minutes

Proposed Councillor Driver, seconded Councillor Petts that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 6th July 2026 be approved. Carried unanimously.

7. Reports from County and District Councillors

There were no County or District Councillors present at the meeting. The August and September reports from District Councillor Wiffen circulated prior to the meeting were noted.

8. Co-option

The application for Co-option to the Parish Council by Angus Balfour was considered. Proposed Councillor Hopping that approval of this application be deferred to the November Council meeting. There was no seconder to this proposal. Proposed Councillor Petts, seconded Councillor Brown that Angus Balfour be co-opted on to the Parish Council. Carried unanimously.

9. Finance

- i. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Petts and carried unanimously that payments for the month of July 2026 be confirmed.
- ii. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Petts and carried unanimously that payments for the month of August 2026 be confirmed.
- iii. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Petts and carried unanimously that the bank reconciliation as at 31st August 2026 be approved.
- iv. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Petts and carried unanimously that the budget report as at 31st August 2026 be approved.

10. Hogwells Chase Proposed Development/Stow Maries Opposition Group

- i. Councillor Hopping reported that the meeting between representatives of the Parish Council and from the Stow Maries Opposition Group had been very useful and it had been agreed that the two organisations would continue to work together in their opposition to the proposed development at Hogwells Chase.
- ii. Councillor Driver reported that there had been no further developments regarding the Stow Maries Opposition Group.

11. Planning Application Consultation 26/00570/FUL

The Planning Application was considered. Various issues were discussed. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Brown that the Council object to this planning application. Carried with one abstention. It was agreed that the Locum Clerk contact Councillors after the meeting to expand on the issues discussed prior to submitting the objection to Maldon District Council.

12. Standing Orders/Financial Regulations

Proposed Councillor Driver, seconded Councillor Petts that the revised NALC Standing Orders and Financial Regulations circulated prior to the meeting be approved. Carried unanimously.

13. Bridge in Church Lane

Councillor Petts reported on the Bridge in Church Lane and drew Councillors' attention to his written Report which had been circulated prior to the meeting

and which had been loaded on the website. It was agreed that this be carried forward to the next meeting.

14. Love your Bus (IPTU Grant Fund Application)

- i. The Locum Clerk reported that the new service was now running. Stephenson's had provided Stow Maries Parish Council with flyers which Councillor Driver had delivered to all the houses in Stow Maries. There had been a delay in Stephenson's issuing further publicity material.
- ii. The contract signed with Essex County Council was noted.
- iii. The contract signed with Stephenson's of Essex Ltd was noted.
- iv. The Locum Clerk reported that Woodham Walter Parish Council had sent a formal complaint to the Chief Executive of Essex County Council regarding the administration of the "Love your Bus" initiative. A copy of this complaint was tabled at the meeting. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Driver that Stow Maries Parish Council also send a formal complaint to the Chief Executive of Essex County Council
- v. The Locum Clerk reported that the Clerk at Woodham Walter Parish Council been the driving force in negotiating with Essex County Council, Stephenson's and Solicitors in arranging the new service and he recommended that a letter of appreciation be sent to the Chair of Woodham Walter Parish Council to thank their Clerk for her assistance in the "Love your Bus" initiative. It was unanimously agreed that this be done.

15. Highway Speed Control

Councillor Petts reported that he had been in touch with County Councillor Jay in respect of this matter. It was agreed to carry this forward to the next meeting.

16. Website/e-mail addresses

- i. The Locum Clerk reported that all Councillors now had Parish Council e-mail addresses.
- ii. The Locum Clerk reported that he had started to load the required information in compliance with the Practitioner's Guide on the Parish Council Website. In his opinion the current website was not fit for purpose and he had been investigating other options. Due to the cost involved it would not be possible to change website until the new financial year and he would report back to Council at future meetings.
- iii. The written report from the Locum Clerk regarding apportioning the website costs between the Parish Council and Smythe Hall was noted. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Brown and carried unanimously that the Locum Clerk write to the Smythe Hall

Management Committee detailing the costs of running the website and requesting a contribution of 25% of these costs.

17. Village Sign

Councillor Driver reported that the sign had been collected from her by the person who might be instructed to carry out the refurbishment. The Locum Clerk reported that he had applied to the Essex County Council Locality Fund in respect of the costs to refurbish and re-erect the sign.

18. Stow Maries Aerodrome

Councillor Brown reported that the next meeting of the JCC was on 17th September 2026. He was not able to attend and Councillor Petts would be attending in his place.

19. Planning Training

Councillor Hopping reported that he and Councillor Petts had attended a planning training session which had been very useful.

20. Communication

Communications with Parishioners was discussed. It was agreed that consideration should be given to a quarterly newsletter and how this could be distributed. The Locum Clerk would investigate whether Royal Mail would distribute this free of charge.

21. Clerk Report

The Locum Clerk had nothing to report.

22. Exchange of Information

An email had been received from the Chelmsford Association of Local Councils regarding an informal gathering on 1st October 2026 to discuss local government reorganisation. Councillors Hopping and Petts agreed to attend.

23. Exclusion of the Press and Public

It was resolved that, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act 1960 and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

24. Staffing Arrangements

- i. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Brown that the Locum Clerk remain in post until 31st May 2027. Agreed unanimously.
- ii. Proposed Councillor Hopping, seconded Councillor Brown that the Locum Clerk be paid the updated NALC recommend SCP Point 13 backdated to 1st April 2026.

Meeting closed 8.55 pm