STURRY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of Sturry Parish Council

which took place on Wednesday 9th September 2026 at the Sturry Social Centre.

Meeting opened at 7pm

134-26 **To note those, present and record any apologies:**
Present: Cllr Steve Birch (Chairman), Cllr John Hogben (Vice Chair), Cllr Ann Davies, Cllr Chris Gartland, Cllr Gill Betts, Cllr Kathleen Warner and Cllr George Spence

Also In Attendance: Matthew J. Bridger (Locum Clerk & RFO), Alan (Caretaker), Ken (Cemetery Superintendent) and Cllr Mark Mulvihill.

Apologies: Cllr Dil Rai (work commitments), Cllr Ashley Bubb (no reason provided).

Resolved: That the reason for absence be accepted in accordance with Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

135-26 **Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), Other Significant Interests (OSI's) or a Voluntary Interest:**
There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI), Other Significant Interest (OSI), or Voluntary Interest made.

136-26 **To consider and adopt the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 8th July 2026:**
The Council considered the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 8th July 2026.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 8th July 2026 be approved as a true and correct record for signing by the Chair, subject to an agreed amendment of Anne Deckker removal as attendee. (**Proposed:** Cllr Hogben, **Seconded:** Cllr Gartland) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to publish signed minutes on the Parish Council website.

137-26 **To consider and adopt the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on Monday 20th July 2026:**

Item Removed: Meeting was cancelled; no minutes to adopt.

138-26 **Public Open Session:**
No members of the public wished to speak.

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139-26 Monthly Reports.

The Council received and noted information and reports relevant to the Council:

1. **Correspondence Received:**
    - **CPR & Defibrillator Training:** The Clerk presented correspondence regarding a free CPR and Defibrillator training session for residents offered by Kent Fire & Rescue Service. Agreed to organise a session for October/November 2026 and invite local businesses and residents.

    - **Dignity & Respect Policy:** Noted that a review of the Dignity and Respect Policy was requested by Cllr Davies. **Review to be undertaken by Cllr Betts and Cllr Davies.**

    - **Civility & Respect Pledge:** The Clerk presented correspondence regarding the Civility and Respect Pledge. **Resolved:** That Sturry Parish Council sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge. (**Proposed**: Cllr Warner, **Seconded**: Cllr Hogben) **Carried unanimously.**

    - **Payroll Outsourcing:** The Clerk presented correspondence regarding payroll processing options and proposals to outsource to an external provider. **Resolved:** That the Council outsource payroll services and set up an account with DH Payroll. (**Proposed**: Cllr Spence, **Seconded**: Cllr Betts) **Carried unanimously.**

    - **Council Logo Modernisation:** The Clerk presented a digitised, modernised version of the existing Council logo. **Resolved:** That the digital, modernised Council logo design be approved for official use. (**Proposed**: Cllr Betts, **Seconded**: Cllr Spence) **Carried unanimously.**

2. **Clerk's Report:** Submitted a written report **(taken as read) (Report attached to minutes as a supplementary document)**

3. **Councillors Training / Courses attended:** Clerk to circulate upcoming dates for 'Nuts and Bolts' training. Cllr Betts reported on Asset Management training, emphasising the need for effective long-term planning, Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) preparations, and budgeting for devolution and professional fees. **Action:** Clerk to include a £5,000 provision for devolution and professional fees as a draft line item for Council consideration during the 2027/28 budget planning process.

4. **Chairman and Councillors reports:**

- ***Cllr Gartland:*** *Reported on a school laser light event requesting Council lighting equipment (awaiting details); noted installation of new park benches and completion of the dog park (thanking Cllr Hogben for his donation).*

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- ***Cllr Warner**: Attended the Sabora summer event, AI site visit, library coffee morning at St Nicholas Church, attended the KCC Warden's meeting at the Coffee Corner, and a site visit to the bridge. Noted the Open-Air Cinema was very well received.*
- ***Cllr Hogben**: Attending KALC meeting regarding Kent-wide parish twinning; reported on 1,000 tonnes of fly tipping in Sturry, which was investigated by the Environment Agency, traced locally, cleared, and the site reinstated to Type 1 with a warning issued to the landowner.*
- ***Cllr Birch:** Thanked Community Payback for their ongoing work.*

5. **County and District Councillors reports:** KCC Cllr. Mark Mulvihill submitted a written report **(taken as read)** and provided oral updates regarding Broad Oak bus service dates. **(Report attached to minutes as a supplementary document)**

   District Councillors Harry McKenzie and Keji Moses submitted a written report **(taken as read);** noted contact regarding proposed parish boundary changes with Fordwich, which Council unanimously supports. **(Report attached to minutes as a supplementary document)**

6. **Community Warden report:** Submitted a written report **(taken as read) (Report attached to minutes as a supplementary document)**

7. **Cemetery Superintendent's Report:** Submitted a written report **(taken as read) (Report attached to minutes as a supplementary document)**

8. **Report from Committees:**

- ***Events Committee:** Report presented by Cllr Gartland and taken as read. Council considered recommendations:*

  ***Outdoor Cinema 2027:** Approved holding the event in August 2027 due to daylight constraints in earlier months. (**Proposed**: Cllr Hogben, **Seconded**: Cllr Betts)* **Carried unanimously.**
  ***Screen Upgrade:** Reserved an upgraded 16m² screen for £2,600.00 with a £300 deposit, coded against **Account 4990 (SUNDRIES)**. (**Proposed**: Cllr Hogben, **Seconded**: Cllr Betts)* **Carried unanimously.**
  ***Christmas Light Competition:** Authorised Clerk to announce competition and allocate a maximum budget of up to £2,800.00 to be coded against **Account 4059 (CHRISTMAS LIGHTS)**, with any excess expenditure funded via **Account 4027 (CONTINGENCY)**. (**Proposed**: Cllr Warner, **Seconded**: Cllr Spence)* **Carried unanimously.**
  ***Grant Funding:** Authorised Clerk to submit formal grant applications to KCC and Canterbury City Council for 2027. (**Proposed**: Cllr Spence, **Seconded**: Cllr Davies)* **Carried unanimously.**

- ***Staffing Committee:*** *Cllr Betts reported on summer recess meetings. Noted David was appointed as permanent Clerk but resigned after one week due to another job offer; Matthew Bridger currently acting as Locum Clerk. Official recruitment process to commence following the next Staffing Committee meeting.*

140-26 Sturry Scouts Group Grant Application:
The Council considered the grant application submitted by Sturry Scouts Group.

Resolved: That the grant application from Sturry Scouts Group be approved. (**Proposed:** Cllr Betts, **Seconded:** Cllr Gartland) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to process grant payment to Sturry Scouts Group.

141-26 Council Laptop:
The Council reviewed quotations ranging from £149.99 (eBay) to £319.00 (Discount Laptops) for an unused council laptop requested for purchase by Alan (Council Caretaker).

Resolved: That the sale of the surplus council laptop to Alan at market rate (£150) be approved. (**Proposed**: Cllr Spence, **Seconded**: Cllr Warner) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to arrange receipt of payment and transfer of hardware and then remove from asset register.

142-26 Document Archive:
The Council reviewed quotations for a fireproof document safe/filing cabinet for council archives.

Resolved: That the safe quotation be approved and purchased, to be allocated to budget line **Account 4031 (OFFICE EXPENSES)**. (**Proposed**: Cllr Davies, **Seconded**: Cllr Gartland) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to place order for delivery.

143-26 Bank Account:
The Council considered updating bank signatories.

Resolved: That Cllr Steve Birch and Cllr George Spence be added as additional authorised signatories on the council bank account. (**Proposed:** Cllr Betts, **Seconded**: Cllr Davies) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to submit updated mandate to the bank.

144-26 **Cemetery:** The council considered and agreed the following;

- **Gravestone Safety Works: Resolved:** That the quotation from Richard Marsh for gravestone safety works at St Nicholas Churchyard be approved (**Proposed:** Cllr Hogben, **Seconded:** Cllr Warner) **Carried unanimously.**
- **Cemetery Insurance Claim:** Update received. Noted that the cemetery is currently underinsured; Clerk is investigating insurance coverage. Claim settlement update noted.
- **Skip Hire: Resolved:** That the hire of a Cemetery skip be approved to clear accumulated waste. (**Proposed:** Cllr Gartland, **Seconded:** Cllr Betts) **Carried unanimously. Action:** Cemetery Superintendent to ensure skip arrives, is filled, and removed promptly to preserve cemetery aesthetics.
- **Topsoil Purchase: Resolved:** That the purchase of a 1-ton bag of topsoil for the Cemetery be approved. (**Proposed**: Cllr Warner, **Seconded**: Cllr Spence) **Carried unanimously. Action:** Cemetery Superintendent to issue work order to Richard Marsh, arrange skip delivery/collection, and order topsoil.

145-26 **Website:** The Clerk provided an update on the current website and presented a report from 3 different suppliers with quotes for a new compliant website.

Resolved: That the proposal from Aubergine262 to construct a new compliant website and transfer hosting be approved, coded against **Account 4045 (IT)**. (**Proposed:** Cllr Warner, **Seconded:** Cllr Hogben) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to proceed with Aubergine262 contract onboarding.

146-26 **Council Office Bin Collection:** The Council discussed waste collection arrangements. **Resolved:** That the current office bin contract with BIFFA be cancelled and office waste disposal be consolidated under the existing Cemetery waste contract. (**Proposed:** Cllr Warner, **Seconded:** Cllr Spence) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to issue formal cancellation notice to BIFFA.

147-26 **Co-option:** The Council noted new vacancy on the Council.
Resolved: To proceed with co-option to fill vacancies. (**Proposed:** Cllr Gartland, **Seconded**: Cllr Spence) **Carried unanimously.**

Noted that total casual vacancies currently stand at 2 spaces.
Resolved: To establish official Council social media accounts (Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook) to improve resident engagement. (**Proposed:** Cllr Betts, **Seconded:** Cllr Warner) **Carried unanimously.**

Resolved: To advertise casual vacancies via social media and physical noticeboards, with an application deadline of 21st October 2026. (**Proposed**: Cllr Hogben, **Seconded:** Cllr Warner) **Carried unanimously.**
Action: Clerk to publish vacancy notices across noticeboards and digital channels.

148-26 Finance:

1. **Receipts & Payments:** Deferred as Rialtas system access was unavailable.

2. **Payments for Approval:** Resolved: That the schedule of payments be approved. (**Proposed:** Cllr Davies, **Seconded:** Cllr Gartland) **Carried unanimously.**

3. **Purchase of Trees:** Council discussed the purchase of trees and types as well as the Woodland Trust Tree Scheme. **Resolved:** That 10 silver birch trees be purchased at £10.00 each (Total £100.00) for installation by Community Payback. (**Proposed:** Cllr Birch, **Seconded:** Cllr Gartland) **Carried unanimously.**

   Action: Clerk to contact the Woodland Trust regarding free/subsidised tree schemes for 2027.

149-26 Procurement Arrangements for Tree Works:
Resolved:

1. To approve the use of Hart Lee Tree Surgery Ltd as sole supplier for tree work without obtaining three competing quotes for each instance, for a period of 6 months in reliance on Financial Regulation 5.13, due to demonstrated value for money, familiarity with council assets, reliability, and absence of viable local alternatives. (**Proposed:** Cllr Warner, **Seconded:** Cllr Gartland) **Carried unanimously.**
2. Noted Financial Regulation 5.13 justification requirements.
3. Noted mandatory £30,000 threshold under Financial Regulation 5.6 remains unaffected.
4. Agreed arrangement shall be reassessed no later than Full Council in March 2027 under Financial Regulation 5.1. (**Proposed:** Cllr Spence**, Seconded:** Cllr Davies) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to circulate copy of the Tree Report to all Councillors.

150-26 Procurement Arrangements for Tree Works:
Resolved:

1. To authorise expenditure of £3,430.00 (+ VAT £686.00) with Hart Lee Tree Surgery Ltd across 5 sites (Sturry Anglican Methodist Union Church, Dog Walking Area, Sturry Cemetery, Forge Green, and Centenary Wood), coded against **Account 4023 (MAINTENANCE - GENERAL)**. (**Proposed:** Cllr Betts, **Seconded:** Cllr Gartland) **Carried unanimously.**
2. Noted urgent falling hazard posed by dead trees/limbs within 1-2 months.
3. Resolved under Financial Regulation 5.13 to waive 3 quotes requirement due to hazard urgency and mobilisation efficiency. (**Proposed:** Cllr Hogben, **Seconded:** Cllr Spence) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to issue instruction to Hart Lee Tree Surgery Ltd.

151-26 **Mill Road Bus Shelter:** The Clerk presented quotes for the demolition of Mill Road Bus Shelter.

Resolved: That DDS Group be appointed to carry out the demolition of Mill Road Bus Shelter, coded against Account 4023 (MAINTENANCE - GENERAL). (**Proposed:** Cllr Betts, **Seconded:** Cllr Gartland) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to issue contract to DDS Group.

152-26 **Appointment of Councillors to Committees:**

1. **Events Committee:** No new appointments.
2. **Finance Committee: Resolved:** To increase committee size to 6 members and appoint Cllr Betts, Cllr Davies, and Cllr Hogben. (**Proposed:** Cllr Spence, **Seconded:** Cllr Warner) **Carried unanimously.**
3. **Staffing Committee:** No new appointments.
4. **Planning Committee: Resolved:** That Planning reports be circulated to all Councillors; any items requiring full discussion can be requested for inclusion on the Full Council agenda. (**Proposed:** Cllr Spence, **Seconded:** Cllr Davies) **Carried unanimously.**

153-26 **Items for inclusion on the next agenda:**

1. Pothole Self-Sufficiency Project

154-26 **Date of next meeting:**
Wednesday 14th October 2026, 7:00pm at Broad Oak Village Hall

155-26 **To exclude the public under Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act) 1960 and sections 100 & 102 of the Local Government Act 1972:**
Resolved: That under Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act) 1960 and sections 100 & 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for closed session items. (**Proposed:** Cllr Birch Seconded: Cllr Gartland) **Carried unanimously.**

156-26 **Westbere Butts:** The Council discussed draft terms of reference and legal requirements regarding land management.
Resolved:

1. That Council approve sharing the draft terms of reference with relevant advisors for review.
2. That expenditure of up to £2,000.00 be authorised to instruct legal counsel and professional bodies regarding the draft terms, to be coded against Account 4017 (CONSULTANCY/CONTRACTS). Three quotations to be circulated to all Councillors for final spending sign-off under delegated powers. (**Proposed:** Cllr Betts, **Seconded:** Cllr Davies) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to progress legal review options and obtain quotations.

157-26 **Insurance:** The Council reviewed ongoing insurance renewal negotiations and asset valuation requirements.

Resolved: To delegate authority to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Council (Cllr Birch), to select and accept the best-value insurance quote prior to policy expiry on 30th September 2026 or convene an Extraordinary Meeting if required. (**Proposed:** Cllr Spence, **Seconded:** Cllr Davies) **Carried unanimously.**

Action: Clerk to obtain up-to-date asset valuations for Council property and finalise insurance renewal.

23-26 **Community Governance Review (CGR) and to consider grouping with a neighbouring Parish Council:** The Council evaluated options, financial implications, and administrative impact regarding the Community Governance Review and potential grouping with a neighbouring Parish Council.

Resolved: That Sturry Parish Council does not proceed with a parish merger. (**Proposed:** Cllr Betts, **Seconded:** Cllr Warner) **Carried unanimously.**

27-26 **Close of Meeting.**
The meeting closed at 7:51pm.

Signature: _____ **Date:** 14/10/26

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