

STOKENCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT MAY 2025

UNITARY COUNCIL

As a result of the recent unitary elections, there have been some boundary changes and changes to councillors. Congratulations to Cllrs Shade Adoh and Robert Carington on being successfully re-elected. We said a very sad farewell to Carl Etholen who recently retired. On behalf of the residents and the parish council, I would like to record a note of thanks for Carl's outstanding support and contribution to our parish over the years and will be missed by us. Due to the boundary changes, we also no longer have the support of Cllr Darren Hayday as the boundary changes for Ridgeway West now extends to Studley Green, Horsleys Green, Beacons Bottom and Water End. We thank our unitary councillors for their continued support and more so as they embark on their next four-year term with us.

FINANCE

For the financial year 2025/26 Stokenchurch Parish Council has set the precept for a Band D property at £45.68 which remains unchanged from last year. This will generate a total precept of £98,178 that Stokenchurch Parish Council will use to manage and maintain the facilities and services within the parish.

Unlike our County Council, we do not receive funding from central government or business rates so we are only able to carry out the work we do through the precept and income received by way of rents and hall income generated during the course of the year.

Stokenchurch continues to have one of the lowest precepts in the county and substantially less than neighbouring parishes on a Band D property:

The budget enables the Parish Council to continue to provide a range of services whilst maintaining our reserves at £47,000. The biggest expense in our budget is spent on open spaces and grounds maintenance at around 36% of our budget.

We continue to also manage devolved services for Buckinghamshire Council and to a high standard thanks to the professional services of our grass cutting contract CF Agricultural Services but the grant does not cover the actual cost of this work.

Within this proportion of budget this includes maintaining:

Village Greens

Commons

Longburrow Hall Playing Fields

Studley Green Playing Fields

Allotments – Stokenchurch and Water End

Cemetery located next to St Peter & St Paul's church

Marlow Road Cemetery

Hedges

Footpaths

Verges and grass areas around the village under devolved services within the 30mph speed limit within the parish

War Memorial

Bus Shelters within the village

Dog Bins throughout the village

Christmas Tree

We hope the above information reassures you that the Parish Council look after your money and spend it wisely. We generate approximately 35% of our own income from leases and hall hire which helps to minimise the precept levied on your council tax bills. We hope that by being able to ensure no increase to our parishioners in Band D properties this year demonstrates our ongoing commitment to looking after public money and maintaining a tight grip on our finances.

PROJECTS

Upgrading of existing play equipment at Longburrow Hall recreation area – The Parish Council carried extensive research with play providers and have been listening to residents over the last few years with feedback to upgrade and improving existing play equipment and have identified a play equipment supplier subject to funding. We are pleased to confirm that we have been successful in one grant funding application with £19,597 received. We are awaiting a decision from The Sawmill Trust too.

Installation of EV charging points within the village

Planting of flowers throughout the village – this project is underway with installation of planters and hanging planters expected mid June.

Allotments

Improved lighting at Longburrow Hall car park for hall users

Further CCTV Cameras at Longburrow Hall

New and improved website

Upgrade of play equipment at Cricket Ground and Beacons Bottom

COMMUNITY LITTER PICKS

The Parish Council has organised a number of litter picks over the course of the year and will continue to do so. It's great to see many parishioners out voluntarily picking up rubbish.

We are due to be judged at the beginning of June in the 'Best Village Competition'. Please continue with the great work in showing pride in our community by keeping our parish clean.

KINGS HOTEL & CAR PARK

Sadly there has been no change in the Kings Hotel situation with a court hearing date of October scheduled. Whilst we appreciate parishioners frustrations, we are unable to progress anything forward on your behalf. We have been working with building control officers, Buckinghamshire councillors, our local MP but unfortunately nothing can be escalated.

We continue to monitor the situation, but as you will appreciate it would be unwise for the council to provide a running commentary on contested legal matters. However, when the legal action is eventually resolved, with the best will in the world, any rebuild will be subject to plans and approvals and appointing of contractors. I would realistically suggest we may be living with the situation as it is for another couple of years at least. With regret there is nothing we can do to improve this situation, it's simply outside of our control.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Charlie Fox of CF Agricultural Ltd continues to provide an excellent service cutting our commons and verges. We have also have a local contractor, Mark Sole, to manage the grounds of the parish cemetery and to also look after the Kings Hotel Garden adjoining the A40 whilst the hotel remains closed. Am sure you will agree with me both contractors are providing a first-class service and all these areas have never looked better.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Parish Council reviews planning applications at the monthly Parish Council meetings and where appropriate in cases to refer to Buckinghamshire Councillors for support and departments where deemed necessary in cases of trees, environmental and breaches of planning control.

THE COUNCIL

The Parish Council elections took place in May 2025 and as a result it was an uncontested election. We sadly said farewell to Cllrs Ryan Pearse and Richard Ghost who didn't stand for re-election and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them both for their support and contribution during their term. We say a warm welcome to Cllrs Simon Bays and Louise Turvey who joined the council this month and we look forward to working alongside them. I was duly elected Chairman and pleased to confirm that Cllr Tracy Ramsden was appointed Vice Chairman.

We still have a parish councillor vacancy for the Beacons Bottom/Studley Green/Horsleys Green/Water End which will be advertised in due course. We have ten councillors – Camilla Baker, Simon Bays, Val Jenkinson, Racquel Burnham, John McNeill, myself, Tracy Ramsden, Robin Thomas, Louise Turvey, Tracy Young.

STAFF

We said farewell to both Don Springham last November and Shelley Adnett earlier this year.

We have three new members of staff. Portia Mendy joins us as clerk to the council. We also welcome Tracy Martin, our admin officer and Derick Wilson our responsible finance officer.

It is pleasing to see the attendance here this evening, and we look forward to seeing you on a regular basis. We actively encourage the public to attend our Parish Council meetings. We meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm here at Longburrow Hall and also once or twice a year at the Studley Green Community Centre for the benefit of parishioners in our hamlets.

Representatives of a number of local organisations are here to bring you up to date on what they are doing in the village.

Thank you again for coming along this evening and I now hand across to our first update of the evening.

Victoria Nuthall
Chairman, Stokenchurch Parish Council.