

**STRETE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF STRETE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025 IN**  
**STRETE VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT COUNCILLORS:**

Ralph Clark (Chairman), Ian Cumberlidge (IC), Peter Hales (PH), Cllr Helen Darch (HD), Cllr Laurel Lawford (LL), Cllr Julian Brazil (JB)

Also in attendance: Hannah Iles (HI), Parish Clerk

**OPEN PUBLIC FORUM:**

No members of the public present

**DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

Fleet of vans that service public facilities is to be replaced with electric vehicles (£170,000.00 total cost for purchase of 17 vehicles). DEFRA willing to buy the land and the community woodland trust will plant trees. If there is any land suitable for purchase and planting, advise LL. Three candidates interviewed for the SLP Adaptation Manager lead role. Recommendation to be sent by the end of the week advising who the successful candidate is. Following the appointment LL will push for a SLP meeting. LL will forward Strete play park requirements to Rob Sekula to see what assistance SDHC can provide in rectifying defects and grounds issues. LL meeting with representatives from Blackbird Woods to see the site on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January. Projects part-funded by localities grants expected to commence in February. LL visited Strete Gate to see the fence blocking the damaged steps down from the car park to the beach after Strete Parish councillors informed LL of serious injuries that had been sustained in the vicinity. LL agreed the area where the steps have been blocked does appear to be problematic and suggested SDHC could look at doing this work. Quote already received by SPC for approximately £3000+VAT.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

Financial settlement announced for Devon County Council was disappointing. The rural delivery grant has been repurposed, creating a large loss in funding. Increase in employers' national insurance for council employees has not been compensated fully by central government. Increased funding for adult service offset against spending and thus barely any net increase. To qualify for further tranches of Safety Valve funding DCC need to keep their SEND budget under control. However, they are struggling and have an accumulative deficit approaching £200,000,000. There was a huge backlog of EHCPs. The waiting list has gone down, which is positive, but costs to DCC have increased as more EHCPs are approved. Potential of devolution discussed and confirmed devolution will involve reorganisation of council; county and district councils will be removed and replaced with unitary councils. County voted to cancel the elections in May and move to fast track. Districts have come together to say they need time to look at how unitary councils will work for Devon. Parish and town councils have not been mentioned in discussions. JB reasoned combining districts will produce opportunities for economies of scale but could see inequalities in spending on local services across unitary councils (based upon current population figures Devon could be split into two unitary councils, covering geographically large areas). Central Government are dictating the changes, there has been no public consultation.

**Action: Cllr JB to contact Lisa Edmonds regarding yellow lines at approach to Strete Gate car park.**

**STRETE ESTATE REPRESENTATIVES**

No representative attended.

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ Ralph Clark, Chairman Strete Parish Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Kate Gill (KG)

**1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>, 2025.**

These were agreed by the meeting and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record. PH noted HD to be added to list of present councillors. Amendment made and initialled.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have in any items to be considered at this meeting. To grant any requests for dispensations as appropriate. HD declared an interest in the budget due to her employment by SHDC and precept and IC in the buddle holes contract.

**3. PLANNING AND PLANNING MATTERS**

**Reference:** 4041/24/ARC  
**Proposal:** Application for approval of details reserved by condition 8 (WSI) of planning consent 2257/24/LBC  
**Site Address:** Higher Fuge Farm, Fuge, TQ6 0LL

Archaeological survey required before significant work, which was submitted in previous application, starts. This application is for the archaeological survey to take place. This is of significant local interest. Strete Parish Council can find no reason to object to this application and, therefore, supports the application. Strete Estate are allegedly filming the renovation and development of Higher Fuge Farm.

**4. FINANCE**

Figures to be updated at the meeting (end of financial year):-

- a)Current Account Balance £8,924.8
- b)Reserve Account £ 11,956.46
- c)Monitoring/Spend to-date:

Spending on track against budget. No significant under/overspend anticipated at tax year end.

d)To approve payment of the following cheques/ bank transfers. Invoices have previously been circulated.

Invoices

Strete Village Hall Rent+ WIFI (month)	£47.50
Ian Cumberlidge (buddle holes)	£184.00
C Ellis (bus shelter repairs and maintenance)	£68.00 (village maintenance)

Expenses

None claimed.

Salaries

Clerk's wages (month)	£451.50
HMRC PAYE (month)	£8.40

All payments approved.

**Action: Dog waste bin ordered as agreed at December meeting. Clerk to make payment of £183.54 to settle invoice.**

**Action: Cllr HD to make payments in relation to clerk's wages**

**Action: Clerk to make all payments approved.**

## 5. BUDGET AND PRECEPT

Parish calculator tool used to calculate the Band D parish rate at £63.88, an increase of £0.30/month per household from the previous year. Considering anticipated cost increases, councillors believe this to be a fair increase. Councillors approved the budget. Precept request of £21,420.00 to be submitted to SHDC .

**Action: Clerk to submit precept request for £21,420.00 to South Hams District Council before 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025.**

## 6. PARISH COUNCILLOR APPLICATIONS

Paul Green application accepted. Paul Green to be invited to the next meeting. Other interested parties did not submit application before or after the closing date.

**Clerk to action formalities with SDHC and PG. Second vacancy to be readvertised after next council meeting on 27th February 2025.**

## 7. PLAYPARK MAINTENANCE

Waiting for weather to improve. Mole hills to be cleared before grass cutting starts in February.

**Actions: Cllr RC to advise Greenspace regarding significant mole hills and Clerk to contact Cllr LL to see if SHDC can assist.**

## 8. VILLAGE GREEN

- Dog waste bin has been ordered.
- Bench – waiting for further contact regarding DEFRA grant funded bench.

## 9. ROAD SAFETY

Lisa Edmond at Devon County Council confirmed clearing of gullies on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 (scheduled for January, April and spring).

Field Studies Centre have agreed to clear vegetation along their boundaries and road sweeper will be visiting as part of the three-monthly cycle.

Community Speedwatch Group have planned a meeting in the village hall for the week of 3<sup>rd</sup> March and speeding observation anticipated to commence around 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

**Action: Cllr RC to advise clerk if letters need to be sent to residents regarding hedge cutting recharges**

**Action: Clerk to check with LE that gully clearing is still on schedule.**

**Action: Clerk to contact Sgt Ed Thomas of Dartmouth Constabulary and ask about policing of yellow lines at Strete Gate**

## 10. SLAPTON LINE PARTNERSHIP

RC asked councillors how profile can be raised.

**Action: Councillors to consider how profile of the line can be raised to obtain more support for its protection.**

## 11. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE FUNDING / ACTIVITY REPORTS

Nothing to report.

## 12. GOV.UK DOMAIN

Councillors in agreement to appoint PCW to set up gov.uk accounts for Strete Parish Council.

**Action: Clerk to contact PCW**

## 13. OTHER ONGOING MATTERS IF NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE

Kings Arms Update – pub was busy over Christmas and new year. No report received. Update on subscription service expected in February/March this year.

Connecting Devon & Somerset – Airband (fibre broadband) update since meeting – Carol Voaden MP lobbied parliament on issue. Next phase, the gigabit contract expected to be rolled out over 2 years. Devon part of contract 4 but no information about what areas will be covered.

## 14. CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk has access to Lloyds bank account.

## 15. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

### Cllr Ralph Clerk

#### **Strete Village Hall**

Pasty and Quiz night on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025. £8pp

Sea shanty evening 22<sup>nd</sup> March £12.50pp

8<sup>th</sup> May VE day celebration, 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, includes beacon and church bell ringing.

#### **Highway Safety and Road Works**

A379 at junction with Totnes Road near the post office & shop – weather permitting Devon Highways hope to have this resurfaced before the end of March.

Totnes Road – whilst locations for repairs and passing bay improvements have been identified, there is no indication from Devon Highways when funding will be available to commence works.

Hedge cutting on Totnes Road by Strete Estate underway.

#### **Village Green**

Grass growth has slowed with colder weather.

Additional dog bin ordered. To be installed asap once received.

#### **Community Wood**

Correspondence received from Cllr Laurel Lawford who, in turn, has received correspondence from Mr Keith Rennells of Park Life SW seeking funding for wood management works on behalf of the trustees. Pam Wills expects to meet up with them both soon to discuss proposed works. Volunteer assistance would be welcome once commencement date is known.

#### **Blindwells Property Construction Works**

There is no visual appearance of any significant progress being made. Ongoing.

#### **Slapton Line**

Left over government funding from 2018 breach is being used in Stokenham and Slapton areas. Petition set up to secure government funding to protect the A379 Slapton Line and Adaptation Works to the unclassified back roads has reached 1800. More lobbying is needed to progress this.

SHDC advised some interest in the Adaptation Manager advert has been received. No indication to date if there has been any follow up on this.

#### **Strete Gate Access Road**

Slapton Field Studies Centre have agreed to remove overgrown vegetation and weeds before the end of February. The proposal is to sweep the area on 4<sup>th</sup> March and arrange yellow line marking and white car park marking to encourage

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responsible parking in the access road.

Contact with the Police still to be arranged to discuss enforcement of previous yellow line abuse.

#### **Community Speed Watch**

Target date for community presentation in the Village Hall is week commencing 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

Subject to Police availability, it is hoped to commence operational observations from week commencing 31<sup>st</sup> March.

#### **Strete Estate**

Nothing to report.

### **16. COUNCILLORS' REPORTS.**

#### **Cllr Peter Hales**

**Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and update.** Nothing to report.

**Planning Application 1343/24/ADV**, relating to three illuminated free-standing signs at Blackpool Sands Café, has been approved with conditions relating to a revised landscape scheme, a refreshed tree protection document and the provision of timers for the lighting.

**Planning Application 3096/24/LBC** (Listed Building consent) and **3097/24/FUL** – Internal and External renovations. Coxs Farm Strete TQ6 ORW. The PC supported these applications at the November meeting but pointed out to the planning officer the need to respect the dark skies policy in Strete Neighbourhood Plan in relation to the proposed Velux windows in the replacement side roof.

The applications were approved by the planning officer on 30th December following submission by the architect of additional details relating to the proposed roof lights, which will be conservation grade and not Velux. The Planning Officer made the following comment in his report “....repair works are deemed to offer a positive intervention and the detailed elements of the scheme are considered to be both sensitive and appropriate for the building and as such accord with both local and national conservation plan policies and is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions.”

**Planning Application 3516/24/HHO** - Householder application for two storey rear extension & demolition of conservatory. Quack Cottage, Hansel. This application was supported at the November PC meeting. Slapton PC declined comment as it is just outside their Parish border. The drainage officer has objected on a technicality associated with run-off, and the applicant has submitted a revised Surface Water Drainage Strategy Plus Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The application remains under consideration by the Planning Officer.

**Planning Application 3762/24/LBC** – Proposed listed building consent for underpinning of south-west corner of Farmhouse: Demolition of unroofed 20th century outbuilding to enable construction access. Higher Fuge Farm Fuge TQ6 OLL. This application was supported at the December PC meeting and is under consideration by the Planning Officer. Historic England have indicated that they will not offer advice and are presumably content. The application is extensive and under consideration by the Planning Officer.

**Planning application 3780/24/HHO** – Householder application for installation of wood burner flue, solar PV panels to garage & shed to rear garden (part-retrospective) The Hayloft, Lower Court Barns, Strete TQ6 ORW. This application was considered by the PC at the December meeting and concern was registered about the retrospective nature of the application. There is an objection from the occupants of the adjacent Buttermilk Cottage – “....Not in keeping within the conservation area of Strete or barns complex in which the proposed solar panels are proposed.....” and concern regarding bats and nesting birds. The application is under consideration by the Planning Officer.

**4041/24/ARC** - Application for approval of details reserved by condition 8 (WSI) of planning consent 2257/24/LBC Higher Fuge Farm, Fuge, TQ6 OLL Condition 8 of 2257/24 relates to the requirement for an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation, which is needed before work can commence. This is the applicant responding to that requirement and an extensive scope of archaeological investigation work (40 pages) is attached to the new application. The document provides a fascinating insight into the history of the site. I suggest that it is not necessary for the PC to comment on this application.

#### **Kings Arms Liaison**

The Pub completed a busy Christmas and New Year season which was highly appreciated by village residents. Following a short break, it is currently only open Friday through Sunday during January but will run a Burns Supper event on Saturday 25th January. More extensive weekday opening is expected in February.

#### **Local Bus Transport Liaison.**

Central Government has announced that the nationwide subsidised single fare is now £3 maximum. However, there is also a ‘Super Saturdays’ programme through January - Single bus tickets across Devon and Torbay will be capped at £1 on Saturdays 11th, 18th and 25th January 2025. The offer is valid when boarding at any stop within Devon or Torbay (not Plymouth).

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There is little else to report from the various bus engagement forums – however, Stagecoach recently deployed 20 Zero Emission buses in Exeter and are due to deploy a further 21 in North Devon later in the year. Devolution in Devon and Torbay will doubtless influence the organisation of bus services, but no information is available at present.

#### **Sustainability and Environmental**

We are still awaiting details of how and when the DEFRA grant aided picnic bench will be provided.

#### **Liaison with other Parish Councils**

**Broadband Connection.** Following the news from 'Connecting Devon and Somerset' (CDS) that the villages of Strete, Slapton and Blackawton (and many other South Hams locations) had been taken 'out of scope' from the CDS contract with Airband, an online meeting took place on 18th December between CDS and the three Parishes to discuss the situation and explore alternative solutions. The aim of the Airband contract was to bring 'Superfast' broadband connections (about 30Mb/sec download) to wider rural areas but due to mismanagement Airband seem to have dealt with the easier wins and 'low hanging fruit' first and then declined to service the more remote and technically difficult rural areas.

The current situation is complex and varies greatly between the village centres and the wider Parish areas. In Strete Village, the distribution cabinets have all been provided with fibre broadband connections but with copper connections remaining between distribution cabinets and individual properties, which yields a typical download speed of 30Mb/sec. In the rural areas of Strete Parish the situation is much poorer, and this is the scope that the Airband contract was to have tackled.

Separately from the 'Superfast' project, Central Government has also begun 'Project Gigabit' which is a £5billion programme run by a new government agency called 'Building Digital', with a target to provide a gigabit connection (i.e. 1000Mb/sec) to 90% of the rural population by the end of 2030. This will involve replacing the final copper connections with new fibre cables to individual properties (Full Fibre To The Premises or FTTP) plus addressing the hard to reach areas. Project Gigabit will overbuild the Superfast project over the next few years and seems likely to be implemented by BT under a frame agreement on behalf of Building Digital. Note that Gigabit will be administered centrally, whereas Superfast was administered locally by CDS, an organisation set up by Devon and Somerset County Councils.

Currently it is unclear what the timescale will be in the local area to pick up the dropped Airband work scope. As reported in the local press, MP Caroline Voaden has been lobbying the Ministry (Dept Industry Science & Technology) and just last week there was an announcement that a contract has been let for Devon, but with no detail about scope. We shall have to await developments.

#### **Cllr Ian Cumberlidge**

##### **Footpaths/Bridle ways.**

Apart from the fact that, already, Spring growth is starting to appear...!

I am not aware of any problems along our footpaths, etc.

##### **Play Park.**

Some minor maintenance problems still exist, but mostly, the playpark is 'ticking-by' ok.

I/we will have to remove some 40 mole hills fairly soon, before any grass cutting takes place, as the

Moles have been pretty busy over the Christmas period...! Some of the equipment, (wooden poles, swing seats, could do with a bit of a clean-up, as they are a bit mouldy, (& therefore slippery), due to the damp wet weather, probably. Some small fixtures to replace.

##### **Tree Warden.**

I am not aware of any issues at present.

##### **Strete Gate.**

All seems to be running OK, apart from the occasional "Fly-tipping". The latest one being a full set of car seats left in the top corner, under the Pine Tree...! (Now removed...!)

##### **Lengthsman Report.**

Since our last PC meeting, I have carried out a small amount of work to ease flooding, mainly on Totnes Road.

The first 4 buddle-holes/run-offs on Totnes Road have been cleared of silt, mud, etc. The outlets needed clearing also, but not a massive amount. It amounts to 3hrs labour. Unfortunately, since then, the hedge-trimmer has done its "worst", so they need clearing again, but minimal.

## **17. CORRESPONDENCE**

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ Ralph Clark, Chairman Strete Parish Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Thursday 27 February 2025 at 7.00pm in the Village Hall

Meeting closed at 9.13pm

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ Ralph Clark, Chairman Strete Parish Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025