

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Staploe Parish Council Held at 7.45pm on Thursday 15th May 2025 in Wyboston Village Hall

Present: Cllr. J. Ibbett (Chair), Cllr. G. Meola, Cllr. E. Meola, L. Crawford (Clerk), Borough Cllr. S. Sira, and Richard from St Neots Town Youth Football Club. (Cllr. P. Yockney has a dispensation not to attend at present).

Apologies for absence: Cllr. J. Thomson

Vacancies: 2 to replace D. Smith and V. Zwetsloot

2025/036. Election of Chairman

Cllr. J. Ibbett was nominated by Cllr. E. Meola and seconded by Cllr. G. Meola. There being no other nominations she was duly elected as chair.

2025/037. Election of Vice Chairman

Cllr. E. Meola was nominated by Cllr. J. Ibbett and seconded by Cllr. G. Meola. There being no other nominations he was duly elected as vice chair. He would like the position to be reconsidered when Cllr. P. Yockney returns to attending meetings in person.

2025/038. Resignations, Vacancies and Declarations of Acceptance of Office

There are still two vacancies on the Parish Council to replace Damian Smith and Veronica Zwetsloot. A resident of Staploe has expressed an interest in standing as a Councillor and the Clerk will send him the induction pack.

Cllr. J. Ibbett and Cllr. E. Meola signed their declarations of acceptance of office.

2025/039. Declarations of Interest and Registers of Members Interests

Cllr. E. Meola and Cllr. G. Meola declared an interest in the Playing Field.

Councillors will check their registers of interests after the meeting and update them as required.

2025/040. Open Forum

Richard from St Neots Town Youth Football Team explained that the club have started a Wildcats session which is a turn up and play event which is currently attracting 15-20 children aged 5-11 years old. They may form an Under 10's team. They play lots of games (including football). It is held on Saturday mornings and is currently elsewhere but they would like the option to hold the Wildcats sessions on Duloe Playing Field on Saturday mornings.

They currently have one team of U17 girls using the field for evening training in April and May and September – October (training occurs elsewhere from November to March due to short days). They play home games on Saturday mornings on the playing field but this is not every Saturday in the season. Games are played from 9.30am to 12 with potential to extend to 1.30pm with extra time etc. for the U17's.

Older children play games of 40 mins each way. Younger ones play 25 mins each way so if they did start an Under 10's team the games would be shorter.

Councillors agreed to the Wildcats proposal in principal and expressed that they were happy with the current arrangements with the U17's girls but would like to see a written proposal

before confirming whether the Wildcats can use the facilities on a regular basis. The normal cost for hiring the cabins on a regular basis is £6 per hour. Councillors will consider the charge for the Wildcats once they have received the written proposal. Proposals to start an Under 10's team would need further consideration at the time,

Cllr. G. Meola expressed her thanks to BPHA for repairing the path on Duloe Common. The Clerk has written to thank them. Cllr. G. Meola suggested we replace the dead tree on the Common. The Clerk will investigate options.

Councillors proposed that the Clerk write to thank all those who plant and maintain the planters in the three hamlets.

2025/041. Approve the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 20th March 2025 and 8th April 2025.

Having been previously circulated the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meetings. The March minutes were proposed by Cllr. J. Ibbett and seconded by Cllr. E. Meola and the April minutes were proposed by Cllr. G. Meola and seconded by Cllr. E. Meola.

2025/042. Appointments and Responsibilities

- Staffing committee: Cllr. J. Ibbett, Cllr. G. Meola and Cllr. P. Yockney
- Finance committee –Cllr. J. Ibbett, Cllr. P. Yockney and Cllr. E. Meola.
- BATPC – Cllr. J. Ibbett
- Village Hall Management Committee: Cllr. G. Meola, and Cllr. J. Thomson were appointed as representatives of the Parish Council.
- Rights of Way. Both representatives resigned in 2024. The situation is vacant.
- Speedwatch. Richard Squire, Mark and Soo Potts, and Tom Tagg
- Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The Parish Council do not appoint members to this steering group but the members are as follows: Tom Tagg (Chair), Ged Meola (Vice Chair), Charlotte Quince, Kate Abrahams, Lucy Crawford and Lorraine Jewell.
- Newsletter editor: vacant
- Hamlets Exchange “librarian”: vacant.

2025/043. Borough Cllr. S. Sira's Ward Report

Annual Report 2024 / 2025

•All things Universal

Bedford Borough has successfully secured a major international investment: Universal Destinations & Experiences will build Europe's first Universal Studios theme park and resort at Kempston Hardwick.

This multi-billion-pound development will create approximately 20,000 jobs during the construction phase and 8,000 permanent roles in tourism, hospitality, and the creative industries. Alongside the resort, the area will benefit from significant infrastructure improvements, including plans for a larger Wixams train station.

May 2025

The project is the result of close collaboration between Bedford Borough Council, Universal's global team, and various Government departments.

The development has received formal recognition from central Government. The Prime Minister has sent a letter of thanks to the Mayor and Council, highlighting Bedford's critical role in securing this investment and encouraging continued partnership as the project progresses. Additionally, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport has confirmed plans, in principle, to expand the Wixams station to four platforms, significantly enhancing transport links for the area.

Looking ahead, Bedford Borough Council is working to ensure that local people can benefit directly from the opportunities this project will create. Meetings are being arranged between Universal and local education providers, including sixth forms and Bedford College, to align training and courses with the skills Universal will require. Further business engagement sessions will also take place to help local enterprises prepare for growth alongside this development.

The Universal Studios resort is scheduled to open in 2031.

EWR

The most recent consultation was a non-statutory one that ran from 14 November 2024 to 24 January 2025. This consultation sought public feedback on various aspects of the project, including route alignment, station locations, electrification plans, and environmental considerations.

While improved rail connectivity could offer economic benefits, there are serious issues that residents and the Mayor have with the current proposals that remain unresolved. These include:

- *Planned demolitions in the Poets and Cauldwell areas*
- *Uncertainty around the hospital car park*
- *Potential environmental damage across North Bedfordshire.*
- *A lack of clear information on passenger and freight usage*
- *The absence of a publicly available business case.*

Due to these unresolved issues, on the 15th January 2025, a motion had been put forward to the Council to officially withdraw its support for the current proposed route. However, this motion was defeated.

Following this, EWR is expected to conduct a statutory consultation in late 2025 or early 2026. This upcoming consultation will be part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) process, which is a formal requirement for infrastructure projects the Government consider to be nationally significant to the UK.

The statutory consultation will provide another opportunity for stakeholders, including Parish Councils and residents, to review and comment on the proposals.

•East Park Energy Solar Farm

The East Park Energy Solar Farm Development Consent Order (DCO) is considered a nationally significant Infrastructure Project by the Government – this means it will be determined by Secretary of State through an appointed Inspector.

The Applicant has been working with Bedford Borough Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, and Huntingdon District Council for the past 12-15 months in reviewing their Environmental

Scoping and supporting information with the intent of the Applicant making an application later this year.

•Paddington Pub

Bedford Borough Council has formally agreed to surrender its leasehold interest in the Paddington property, located at 157 Midland Road, Bedford. The building, which had been leased in April 2022 prior to the local elections, was intended to reduce the cost of temporary accommodation for the Borough.

However, subsequent detailed assessments revealed significant structural and fire safety issues that made the property unsuitable for occupation.

Initial surveys and fire risk assessments commissioned at the outset identified some required improvements, but further, more detailed inspections carried out in 2022 and 2024 exposed major safety concerns. These included serious issues with fire compartmentalisation, means of escape, ventilation, and drainage. As a result, the property was deemed unfit for use, and residents were relocated by early 2023. An intrusive survey later confirmed that parts of the building had not been constructed according to approved standards, necessitating extensive remedial works estimated at between £750,000 and £860,000.

Faced with high repair costs and ongoing financial liabilities associated with holding a vacant and unsafe property that would have cost an estimated £614,000, the Council negotiated lease surrender at a cost of £313,333 - approved on 4th April 2025 to minimise further financial exposure.

The surrender of the lease is funded through existing Council revenue budgets and removes a significant financial risk.

•Family Hubs

Changes are underway in Bedford Borough to better support children and families through the expansion and transformation of Family Hubs.

From April 2025, services that were previously delivered separately through Children's Centres and other providers will come together under a single, more coordinated Family Hubs model.

These Family Hubs will offer easier access to a wide range of services – including parenting support, early years development, health advice, mental wellbeing, and community activities – all in one place or through digital and outreach support.

With seven main hubs and local 'spokes' across the borough, plus a dedicated web site, families will be able to get help close to home and when they need it most. These hubs will be located at Pine Cones, Queens Park, Eastcotts, Cherry Trees, Daisy Hill, and Bluebells (Bromham).

The changes reflect a focus on making services more efficient, effective, and accessible. The number of available services will be increased by 21% across the Borough.

During the summer term a brand new Family hub designed for young people and their families will be opened in the old Nat West building on Allhallows. This has been co designed with young people and will be a hub for teen aged children and their families.

•School Improvements

Bedford Borough Council has committed to improving educational outcomes across the Borough by investing £200,000 annually from 2024/2025 onwards to strengthen its School Improvement Team. This funding aims to raise standards across all key stages, from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 5, including performance in SATs.

In addition, the Council continues to focus on supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Despite a 46% increase in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) over the past four years - totaling 2,080 - the Council has maintained strong performance, finalising 90% of EHCPs within the statutory 20-week timeframe, a rate well above both regional and national averages.

Historically, Bedford Borough has faced challenges in Key Stage 2 (KS2) performance, ranking among the lowest-performing local authorities for over a decade. In response, the Education Improvement Governance Group (EIGG) was established in 2022 to tackle underachievement in core subjects such as reading, writing, and maths. A new long-term education strategy has also been developed to drive sustained improvements.

As a result of these combined efforts, Bedford Borough has seen progress, moving out of the bottom five nationally for KS2 results and now ranking 135th out of 152 local authorities.

•Flood Reserve

Last year the Council's Executive conducted a detailed review of the Council's financial reserves to ensure they were not inappropriately allocated.

The review identified an opportunity to re-allocate £150,000 worth of reserves that were being held without a clear purpose. These resources were invested into a new £150,000 Flood Reserve, which will enable the Council's flood team to work more efficiently, deploying funds rapidly wherever flash flooding occurs.

•Local Plan 2040

Recent changes to national planning policy have increased the pressure on councils, including Bedford Borough Council, to deliver significantly higher levels of housing. As part of the Government's national target to build 1.5 million new homes, local authorities are now expected to contribute towards 370,000 homes annually. For Bedford Borough, this has resulted in an increase in the annual housing target from 970 to 1,202 homes - an increase of nearly 25%.

The Borough's current Local Plan 2040, which had been intended to refresh and replenish the Council's land supply, was rejected twice by Planning Inspectors, most recently in November 2023, citing "fundamental concerns about the soundness of the Plan." As a result of these rejections and the changes in national housing policy, Bedford Borough Council announced in early 2025 that it no longer has a five-year supply of housing land. Instead, it currently holds a 3½-year supply.

Without a five-year land supply, the Council's ability to refuse planning applications on sites not identified in its Local Plan is reduced. Under the national "tilted balance" policy, greater weight is given to approving applications unless there are clear technical reasons for refusal, such as flood

risks, highway impacts, or heritage concerns. This situation may particularly affect rural areas, which could face increased pressure for new development.

The Planning Inspector has granted an extension for the Council to continue working on improving the Local Plan. Addressing the Inspector's concerns and revising the Local Plan 2040 is expected to cost an additional £1 million.

While the Council must meet new national housing requirements, efforts are being made to review and potentially challenge certain land allocations to ensure that future development aligns as closely as possible with local needs and priorities.

•Ending double taxation

Bedford Borough Council has confirmed that it will end the long-standing additional maintenance charge applied to residents in Kempston West and Great Denham. For many years, these residents were required to pay an extra £120 per year to cover the maintenance of Borough-owned land—an arrangement not applied elsewhere in the Borough.

Over time, this charge has amounted to approximately £2.2 million in additional payments from affected households. After a series of reviews and public discussions, the Council has decided to phase out the charge entirely, reducing it to zero by the 2025/26 budget.

Although the decision to end the charge faced three formal call-ins, the Council upheld its plan each time, and the policy will now be implemented as scheduled to ensure greater consistency and fairness across the Borough.

•Temporary Accommodation

Last year, Bedford Borough Council made a strategic investment in temporary accommodation by acquiring 31 self-contained apartments to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

These properties provide safe, affordable, and supported living environments, reducing the Borough's reliance on more expensive and less suitable options such as nightly or hotel stays.

This initiative is expected to generate annual savings of approximately £802,000, while also improving the quality and stability of temporary housing provision. Additionally, the Council may be eligible for a 40% discount on one of the property acquisitions through the Local Authority Housing Fund, subject to meeting the relevant criteria.

The investment forms part of a wider approach to improve housing support services and deliver more sustainable solutions to homelessness within the Borough.

•GP Update

Bedford Borough Council has taken a strategic step to improve local access to primary healthcare by establishing a Strategic Health Estates Board in 2023. This board is responsible for coordinating the delivery of new and improved GP surgeries in areas experiencing population growth and infrastructure pressure, including Kempston, Great Barford, Wixams, Wootton, and Biddenham.

To support this initiative, the Council has committed £9 million through its capital programme to accelerate progress on these schemes. Each project is at a different stage of planning and delivery:

- *Great Barford: A new purpose-built GP surgery is proposed for Silver Street, replacing the current surgery in a converted bungalow. The total project cost is £3.43 million, with the business case for the project being approved by the Executive. Construction is expected to begin in 2026 and complete by 2028.*
- *Kempston: Plans are progressing to create a multi-speciality community care centre by redeveloping the Halsey Road Police Station site. A feasibility review has reaffirmed this site as the most suitable option, and £2 million has been set aside for its potential acquisition. The project is currently moving toward an Outline Business Case.*
- *Wixams: Discussions are ongoing with the ICB, Central Bedfordshire Council, and local developers to deliver a healthcare facility in the new town centre. Funding through Section 106 agreements is being coordinated, and long-term plans are dependent on wider town centre infrastructure development.*
- *Wootton: A feasibility study has been completed for a new surgery, with the Bedford Commercial Park site identified as the preferred location. Discussions on funding are ongoing.*
- *Biddenham: The ICB is working with the developer to resolve viability concerns and hopes to begin construction later in 2025.*

These projects are part of a wider plan to support population growth, address GP capacity issues, and modernise healthcare delivery across Bedford Borough. While delivery timelines vary and funding challenges remain, the Council continues to work with the NHS and development partners to bring these facilities forward.

•Free Parking

To encourage visitors to the Town Centre and assist the local economy, the Council has continued to provide free parking at Lurke Street Multi Storey Car Park for 4 hours every day.

This is running alongside the 4 hours free parking at Allhallows and the first 2 hours free at Queen Street Car Park.

•Customer Hub

The Council officially opened its Customer Hub this year which will serve as an in-person one stop shop for residents needing face to face assistance with Council Services.

The Council is able to offer a tailored service to residents who prefer face to face contact or are not comfortable with online forms of communication, ensuring all residents have equal access to the advice and services they need.

The opening hours for the Bedford Borough Customer Hub are:

- *Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday: 9am-5pm*
- *Wednesday: 10am-5pm*

River Festival

The River Festival has been incredibly successful for the Council this financial year with the footfall over the weekend reaching approximately (429k), 63% higher than the weekend after (223k total for comparison) and 37% higher than the previous River Festival (312k total for comparison).

May 2025

There has been lots of positive feedback on the cleanliness and variety of entertainment options at the festival which housed 140 acts/performances over the weekend and an enhanced cleaning regime which had 93 fantastic volunteers and collected 25.86 tonnes of waste.

In particular, there were a lot of positive comments given to Officers/Councillors or given directly to the Mayor on the family friendly additions this year. These changes included:

- *An all-new family island at St. Mary's Gardens*
- *Green Earth Village on Castle Mound*
- *Schools being invited to play/sing on the community stages.*

The festival generated an estimated £6 million for the local economy.

Investment in the Corn Exchange and Town Centre Regeneration

•Bedford Borough Council has approved a £2.5 million investment to refurbish the Corn Exchange, one of the town's key cultural venues. This work forms part of a wider programme aimed at revitalising the town centre and supporting Bedford's economic and cultural growth.

The refurbishment, scheduled from early 2026 to March 2027, will include full interior redecoration, upgrades to the Harpur Suite and Howard Room, installation of modern acoustic and sound systems, and improvements to toilets and flooring. These enhancements aim to modernise the venue, support a wider range of events and performances, and improve the visitor experience.

This cultural investment complements other recent developments in the town centre, including a £750,000 retail investment by Europe's largest shoe retailer, Deichmann, which is opening a new store in the former Next building.

Together with ongoing projects such as the proposed Universal Studios development, these investments reflect Bedford's growing profile as a regional destination for culture, leisure, and business.

•Commercial Services

Bedford Borough Council has launched a new commercial food waste collection service to help local businesses comply with Simpler Recycling legislation. Starting in March 2025, the service enables businesses to separate food waste from general waste, supporting environmental sustainability.

Collected food waste will be processed at a local anaerobic digestion plant, generating green energy for the National Grid and producing organic fertiliser. This service helps reduce landfill use and carbon emissions, while offering businesses a more cost-effective waste solution.

The council are and will be putting further funding into the roads, pathways and general maintenance.

Ward Fund.

Little Staughton - went towards a speed camera monitor - permanent recording for 24/7 and has been successful in helping to reduce the speed in the village.

Roxton – Roxton Church had a screen and support stand

Staploe - applied for a new noticeboard

Colmworth – Play Equipment

I would like to take a moment to sincerely thank you all for the warm welcome you've extended to me as the newly elected councillor. Your kindness, support, and willingness to help me settle into this new role means so much to me.

I am truly honoured to have the opportunity to serve this community, and I am grateful for the trust you've placed in me. I look forward to working alongside each of you and contributing to the continued success and well-being of your parish.

Thank you once again for making me feel so welcome, and I'm excited for what lies ahead as we work together to make a positive impact.

Cllr. E. Meola expressed his frustration that the Borough Council had not been ahead of the situation when the planning rules changed and this led to the lack of a 5 year housing supply. He asked Borough Cllr. S. Sira to emphasise the impact the lack of this 5 year supply and the lack of a secure Local Plan is likely to have on the whole Borough but particularly on rural parishes such as ours because it leads to the balance being tilted in favour of sustainable development.

Borough Cllr. S. Sira explained that it is still possible to object to speculative planning applications on the basis of flood risk, highways issues and the effect on heritage assets. She informed Councillors that on the 2nd July there will be a forum meeting with a planning officer present at which our questions regarding the local plan and planning generally can be answered. [However please note since then this forum meeting has been cancelled due to Full council taking precedent].

Cllr. G. Meola would like to ensure that residents and Parish Councils have the opportunity to review and challenge any new land allocations in the Local Plan.

2025/044. Standing Orders and Terms of Reference

Having been previously circulated the Parish Council Standing Orders (which include standing orders for the staffing committee and finance committee) were reviewed without amendment. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group terms of reference were circulated prior to the meeting. The Parish Council do not determine the terms of reference but they did not propose any changes.

2025/045. Social Events

- Fish and Chip night. It was resolved to hold this at 6.30-9.30pm on Saturday 11th October in Colmworth Village Hall and to invite Codswallop to cater again. Cllr. E. Meola will lead the arrangements and the Clerk will book the venue and fish and chip van, advertise the event and prepare the human bingo.
- Summer picnic. It was resolved that the Clerk should contact those new to the villages to find out the best date for our new residents. It will be a “bring your own” picnic on the playing field.

2025/046. Village Hall Report (Cllr. G. Meola)

It is proving difficult to get all the members of the hall committee to respond and to set a date which will be quorate. Therefore no meetings have been held.

2025/047. Planning Applications

Consider how to respond to the following change of use application:

Application number	Type	Description	Location	Deadline	Link
25/00771/CPNMA	Prior notification for change of use	Change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use falling within Class E (commercial, business and service) to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses).	Tythe Farm, Staploe Road, Wyboston	15th May 2025	25/00771/CPNMA

It was resolved to support this application for similar reasons given for the last applications on this site: 23/02102/FUL and 24/01937/FUL. Our response to those applications was that although in theory it was development in open countryside the site is effectively brownfield development, the homes would be replacing / converting existing buildings and the built footprint will be reduced because some buildings will be demolished. The Parish Councillors felt that the plans would provide an aesthetic improvement to the existing farmyard and an improvement to the area around the listed building of Tythe Farm House. They felt that it was unlikely to create a significant increase in traffic vs the current light industrial traffic already experienced.

We do have some concerns which we feel need to be addressed:

- We would like to see some affordable housing included in the scheme. 3 homes have already been created under Class Q agricultural conversions and this will create a further 6 homes. It would be good to see an affordable home included in the plans.
- We are concerned that there are further barns on the site for which applications might be made for conversion in the future and this piecemeal development might avoid the requirements for inclusion of affordable homes.
- We would like to see a high degree of energy efficiency in the design and for solar panels to be added to all the roofs and EV charging points for each new home.
- We would like to clarify whether this site is actually connected to the mains sewer as stated. We are not sure but would like to ask that this be checked.

2025/048. Community Cabins and Playing Field

- Consider whether to permit Wildcats to meet on the playing field. It was resolved that in principle the Parish Council support this but they would like a written proposal from the Football Club before making a final decision. This should then form part of the hire agreement. If an Under 10's team is to start then the Parish Council will need to discuss this further. Proposed by Cllr. E. Meola and seconded by Cllr. J. Ibbett.
- Electricity contract. The Clerk has signed up to the cheapest deal available with EDF which is estimated to cost £413.47 per year. This is above budget which was expected to be £380. The provider we had planned to use (Tomato Energy) was not able to fulfil its proposed cheaper quote (the regulator stepped in).
- Insulation and heating. Emilio will provide a scope of work for circulation to contractors.
- Solar panels. The Clerk is awaiting one more quote for an energy performance certificate. She needs three before we can apply to the Mayor's Climate Change fund.
- Fire safety. The Clerk will ask local fire officers to visit and advise.

- Hire agreement for Duloe Community Cabins (excluding the football club who have their own agreement). Having been previously circulated this was approved. Proposed by Cllr. J. Ibbett and seconded by Cllr. G. Meola.
- A private hirer is due to hold a party on the playing field on 7th June. It was resolved to spend up to £30 for someone to clean the cabins in advance of the hire. The Clerk will find a cleaner.
- Path. It was resolved not to proceed with the path at the current time. The materials are still stored at Falls Farm.
- Cllr. G. Meola asked the Clerk to check that all the land is registered with the land registry.
- The Play Safety play area inspection report was circulated prior to the meeting. There are a few low risk issues. The safety surfacing has shrunk and some tiles are loose. The Clerk will seek quotes to replace the surfacing.

2025/049. Highways and Rights of Way

- Road closures:
 - Lower Honeydon Lane 22nd April to 20th May
 - Shakers Way 16th June to 20th June
- A428 grant application for fixed speed sign in Staploe. We obtained a letter of support from Bedford Borough Council and applied for a Morelock sign for Staploe on 4th May. The grant application deadline is in August so we won't hear until November.
- Cllr. G. Meola asked the Clerk to chase the no parking sign at the end of bridleway 27 (at the corner by the dog bin on Woodhouse Lane). It has fallen / been knocked over and has yet to be repaired.

2025/050. Assets and Insurance

- Report from asset inspection. The phone box is in need of attention. Will George has checked it and made recommendations but has yet to quote.
- Review land and asset registers. Having been previously circulated these were approved as an accurate record. Proposed by Cllr. J. Ibbett and seconded by Cllr. G. Meola. The aluminium noticeboard in the cabins was transferred to the Village Hall asset register as it belongs to them (but was bought by the Parish Council). The Parish Council insures all the Village Hall assets as they are stored in the cabins but the noticeboard is actually owned by the Village Hall.
- Consider insurance quotes and renew insurance. The Clerk presented the insurance quotes. Our existing insurer Clear Councils has quoted £649.41 and Community First have quoted £560.35 both with equivalent cover and a 3 year deal. It was resolved to choose Community First.
- Street light at Honeydon triangle– update on repairs. UK Power Networks need to repair the light and recharge us but they are taking a long time to do so. The Clerk will chase this. She has reported a potential claim to our insurers as Andy Muskett reported that the light was probably hit by a high vehicle.

2025/051. Finances

- Receive internal audit report May 2025. Having been previously circulated this was received by the Parish Council. The Numbers Quarter in Bedford conducted the audit. There were no issues raised. The report will be available on the website from 16th June.
- Having been previously circulated it was resolved to approve the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements for the Parish Council's Annual Return for 2024/25. Proposed by Cllr. J. Ibbett and seconded by Cllr. G. Meola. The accounting statements are presented on p13 and the full Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) with all supporting documents will be available on the website from 16th June.

- Performance against budget 2024-25 is presented on p14-16. Scribe don't advise doing a performance against budget until after the first quarter so the 2025-26 performance will be presented in July.
- Allocate reserves. It was resolved to transfer £200 of unspent tree money to the earmarked tree reserve because the playing field tree inspection did not take place in 2024 and will be done in 2025.
- VAT reclaim. The reclaim for 2024/25 will be £3,191.36. The new accounting system (Scribe) has saved a lot of time on this.
- Review direct debits. There are direct debits in place for electricity for the cabins (around £31 per month) and street lights (around £55 per month), for water and sewage for the cabins (around £50-£75 per quarter depending on useage) and for the Information Commissioner (£35). It was resolved to retain these direct debits.
- Receipts and payments, sign schedule of payments & check bank reconciliation. The receipts and payments were checked against the invoices and receipts by Cllr. J. Ibbett and Cllr. G. Meola and are presented on p17.
- The bank reconciliation was checked against the bank statements by Cllr. J. Ibbett and is presented on p18.

2025/052. Policies

- Review code of conduct. Having been previously circulated the code of conduct was reviewed without amendment.

2025/054. General Power of Competence

- Determine the Council's eligibility to use this power. The Parish Council is not eligible to use this power because the Clerk is not CILCA qualified but the Parish Council is able to do everything it needs to using existing legislation.

The meeting closed at 10pm

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

STAPLOE PARISH COUNCIL

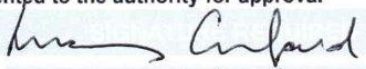
Restated Boxes 7 & 8 of 31st Mch 24 down from £42,656 to adjust for rounding pence correctly

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	26,617	42,655	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	14,324	14,514	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	31,628	18,067	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	5,916	6,181	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	23,997	33,864	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	42,655	35,190	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	42,655	35,190	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	46,523	46,515	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	✓			The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	✓			The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval


Date 15/05/2025

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

15/05/2025

as recorded in minute reference:

MAY 2025 / 051

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

 REQUIRED

May 2025

Net Position vs Budget 31st March 2025								
Cost Centre Name								
01 Regular Receipts								
	Code Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	Comment
			Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
	1 Precept		£14,513.00	£14,514.00			£1.00	
	2 Bank interest		£500.00	£948.51			£448.51	Interest rates increased and we received CIL income
	3 Community Cabin hire		£500.00	£512.00			£12.00	One extra hire from a church group
Total			£15,513.00	£15,974.51			£461.51	
02 Other Receipts								
	Code Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
			Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
	5 Ward Fund			£1,678.00			£1,678.00	Received for Duloe noticeboard
	6 Donations for campaigns							
	7 Ticket sales for social events							
	9 Newsletter advertising							
	10 Other (eg. refunds, book sales)							
Total				£1,678.00			£1,678.00	
03 Staff Costs								
	Code Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
			Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
	11 Clerk's salary				£6,211.53	£6,181.04	£30.49	Salary award slightly lower than budgeted.
	12 Clerk's employment expenses (WFHA & mileage)				£312.00	£292.58	£19.42	
	13 Clerk's training				£50.00		£50.00	
Total					£6,573.53	£6,473.62	£99.91	
04 Grounds Maintenance								
	Code Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
			Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
	14 Playing Field grass cutting				£1,330.00	£1,375.00	£45.00	One extra cut needed vs budget
	15 Duloe Common grass cutting				£110.00	£110.00		
	16 Tree surveys & works				£200.00		£200.00	Tree survey not completed. Do this summer.
Total					£1,640.00	£1,485.00	£155.00	
05 Community Cabins								
	Code Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
			Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
	17 Electricity for cabins				£320.00	£380.58	£60.58	Electricity prices increased
	18 Water & sewerage for cabins				£240.00	£231.55	£8.45	
	19 Community Cabin maintenance				£300.00	£557.28	£257.28	New locks required
Total					£860.00	£1,169.41	£309.41	
06 Street Lights								
	Code Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
			Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
	20 Power to street lights				£604.02	£631.89	£27.87	Electricity prices increased
	21 Street light inspection & repairs							
Total					£604.02	£631.89	£27.87	

May 2025

07 Asset Inspection & Maintenance			Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
Code	Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
22	Play area inspection				£75.00	£78.00	-£3.00	
24	Defibrillator costs				£35.00	£10.37	£24.63	
25	Other maintenance				£200.00	£114.00	£86.00	
26	Play area works (consumables / labour)							
59	Sundries for playing field					£17.47	-£17.47	
60	CCTV maintenance					£75.00	-£75.00	Lenses needed cleaning
Total					£310.00	£294.84	£15.16	
08 Other Assets Purchased			Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
Code	Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
23	Play area works (assets purchased)							
27	Other assets purchased							
Total								
09 Administration			Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
Code	Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
28	Audit fees				£320.00	£460.00	-£140.00	Previous auditor retired. New one more expensive.
29	Councillors expenses				£30.00		£30.00	
30	Clerk's other expenses (postage & sundries)				£40.00	£49.51	-£9.51	
31	Councillor training				£30.00		£30.00	
32	Insurance				£549.24	£596.71	-£47.47	
33	Subscriptions				£209.00	£212.00	-£3.00	
34	Hall hire (meetings)				£255.00	£171.00	£84.00	Fewer meetings required. Extra meeting held in Councillor's house.
35	Web costs & IT				£295.00	£662.95	-£367.95	Signed up to Scribe Accounting package - not in budget
36	Other administration				£100.00	£51.00	£49.00	
58	Office costs				£100.00	£16.63	£83.37	
Total					£1,928.24	£2,219.80	-£291.56	
10 Communication			Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
Code	Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
37	Newsletter				£369.10	£123.79	£245.31	Only one short newsletter produced and shared with neighbourhood plan
Total					£369.10	£123.79	£245.31	
11 Social Events			Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
Code	Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
38	Social events				£45.00		£45.00	Used social events reserve to subsidise the fish and chip night.
Total					£45.00		£45.00	
12 Donations			Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
Code	Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	
39	Village Hall support				£375.59	£375.59		
40	Other donations					£50.00	-£50.00	Donation made to St Neots museum
Total					£375.59	£425.59	-£50.00	

May 2025

13 Other Payments			Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
	Code	Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
	41	Other payments						
	75	Ward Fund					£1,678.00	-£1,678.00
Total							£1,678.00	-£1,678.00
Total Regular Payments								-£118.46
Total regular receipts - payments								£579.97
14 Earmarked Reserves				Receipts		Payments		Current Balance
	Code	Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
	42	Village Hall savings						
	43	CIL Honeydon Barn 1					£1,679.66	-£1,679.66
	44	Neighbourhood Plan			£6,587.00		£11,438.49	-£4,851.49
	45	Tree inspection and works						
	46	RAIDIUS funds						
	47	Street light inspections & repairs					£125.00	£464.50
	48	Decking savings					£1,000.00	-£1,000.00
	49	Election fund						
	50	Dennybrook campaign fund						
	51	Extra grass & hedge cutting (field & Common)					£148.50	-£148.50
	52	Football Club deposit						
	53	Social events			£338.00		£479.86	-£141.86
	54	Play area assets						
	55	Literature & information						
	56	Insurance claims			£2,729.00		£2,729.00	
	62	CIL Upper Goodwick						
	63	CIL Goodwick Farm						
	64	CIL Tally Ho					£4,751.69	-£4,751.69
	65	Gov domain						
	66	Cabin maintenance						
	67	Defib parts & maintenance						
	68	Freedom of Parish						
	69	Asset replacement (office)						
	70	CIL Honeydon Barn 2			£3,359.33			£3,359.33
Total					£13,013.33		£22,352.20	-£8,749.37
NET TOTAL				£15,513.00	£30,665.84	£12,705.48	£36,854.14	-£8,406.32

16 Current Balance = Balance B/Fwd - (Receipt Budget - Actual Receipt) + (Payment Budget - Actual Payments)

Transactions for Approval at Staploe Parish Council Meeting held on					15th May 2025
Receipts to Main Account					
Payment Ref	Date	Supplier	Description	Total	
002	14.04.2025	Bedford Borough Council	First half of precept	£7,755.00	
014	08.05.2025	St Neots Town Youth Football	Community Cabin hire	£125.00	
015	12.05.2025	Megan Bates	Community Cabin hire	£24.00	
015	12.05.2025	Megan Bates	Community Cabin hire deposit	£20.00	
Total				£7,924.00	
Payments from Main Account					
Payment Ref	Date	Supplier	Description	Total	
001	01.04.2025	Starboard Systems	Accounting software	£43.20	
003	16.04.2025	Wyboston Village Hall	Wyboston Village Hall hire 8th April	£15.00	
004	09.04.2025	Wyboston Village Hall	Wyboston Village Hall hire 30th April NDP	£20.00	
005	09.04.2025	Wyboston Village Hall	Wyboston Village Hall hire 22nd May NDP	£20.00	
006	14.04.2025	Peterborough Print	Printing for Neighbourhood Plan	£11.40	
007	13.04.2025	James Dougan (JDSI)	CCTV maintenance	£90.00	
008	09.04.2025	Society for Local Council Clerks	SLCC subs	£110.00	
009	16.04.2025	Groundworks	Neighbourhood Plan repayment	£1,888.00	
010	22.04.2025	EDF Energy	Electricity for Community Cabins	£30.73	
011	25.04.2025	SSE Energy	Electricity for street lights	£54.73	
012	28/04/2025	Currys Business	MS Office & Virus check software	£95.96	
013	01.05.2025	Starboard Systems	Accounting software	£43.20	
016	15.05.2025	Playsafety	Annual play area inspection	£96.00	
017	15.05.2025	The Numbers Quarter	Internal audit fees	£300.00	
018	15.05.2025	Duloe Village Hall	Insurance contribution	£392.39	
019	15.05.2025	Wyboston Village Hall	Wyboston Village Hall hire 15 May	£30.00	
020	15.05.2025	Wyboston Village Hall	Wyboston Village Hall hire 23 July	£30.00	
021	15.05.2025	Wyboston Village Hall	Wyboston Village Hall hire 17 Sep	£30.00	
022	15.05.2025	Wyboston Village Hall	Wyboston Village Hall hire 19 Nov	£30.00	
023	24.06.2025	Lucy Crawford	Clerk's Salary and WFH allowance Q1	£1,205.63	
024	24.06.2025	Bedfordshire Pension Fund	Clerk's pension Q1	£393.63	
026	15.05.2025	Lucy Crawford	Clerk's expenses	£15.75	
Total				£4,945.62	
Plus three payments made at the end of the last financial year which need to be approved at this meeting:					
Payment Ref	Date	Supplier	Description	Total	
2024/25 141	31/03/2025	The Wildlife Trust	Mapping for Neighbourhood Plan	£168.00	
2024/25 142	31/03/2025	Clare Steward	Printing for Neighbourhood Plan & newsletter	£175.80	
2024/25 143	31/03/2025	Bedford Borough Council	Installing grit bin	£99.40	
Total				£443.20	
Payments from Debit Card Account					
Payment Ref	Date	Supplier	Description	Total	
012	28.04.2025	Currys PC World	Software (MS Office & Virus check)	£95.97	
025	15.05.2025	Amazon	Ink for printer	£39.68	
Total				£135.65	

Staploe Parish Council

Prepared by: Lucy Crawford
Name and Role (Clerk/RFO etc)

Date: 15/5/2025

Approved by: Jo Ibble
Name and Role (RFO/Chair of Finance etc)

Date: 15/5/25

Bank Reconciliation at 15/05/2025			
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2025		35,190.42
	ADD Receipts 01/04/2025 - 15/05/2025		7,924.00
			43,114.42
	SUBTRACT Payments 01/04/2025 - 15/05/2025		2,422.23
A	Cash in Hand 15/05/2025 (per Cash Book)		40,692.19
	Cash in hand per Bank Statements		
	Petty Cash 15/05/2025	0.00	
	Barclays Main Account 15/05/2025	5,763.24	II
	Barclays Payments (Debit Card) A 15/05/2025	55.98	II
	Barclays Savings Account 15/05/2025	2,909.66	II
	Unity Trust Savings Account 15/05/2025	31,963.31	II
			40,692.19
	Less unrepresented payments		
			40,692.19
	Plus unrepresented receipts		
B	Adjusted Bank Balance		40,692.19
A = B Checks out OK			