

FARNHAM WITH STRATFORD ST ANDREW PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 12 January 2026 at the Riverside Centre

Councillors present: Ian Norman (Chair), Rosemary Conibeer (Vice Chair), Richard Ayres, Tim Plant, Annabel Warne and Jeremy Williams.

In attendance: Katherine Abbott (Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer), Sally Noble (District Councillor), Andrew Reid (County Councillor), Annette Robinson (Senior Public Rights of Way Officer, SCC Highways)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Richard Sayer.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest for items on the agenda.

3 Reports of the District and County Councillors

Cllr Reid (SCC) and Cllr Noble (ESC) had both provided written reports which were summarised and noted.

The Parish Council referred to the damage done to road verges and private property during the recent SZC-related road closures and the use of inappropriate alternative routes. It asked what could be done to avoid further damage during future closures and if the damage already caused could be made good. SCC was also asked if it could influence SZCs traffic management processes and apply some scrutiny to these plans. Cllr Reid undertook to make enquiries. (Clerk's note: As agreed, a communication was sent to residents to encourage them to report incidents via the online tool and direct to the Community Relations team at SZC.)

4 Public rights of way issues affected by the Sizewell C and Scottish Power East Anglia One north and East Anglia Two developments

The Chairman welcomed Annette Robinson, Senior Public Rights of Way Officer, SCC Highways department to the meeting. Ms Robinson referred to the four Rights of Way affected by proposals for temporary closures and alternative routes during the commencement of construction of the two-villages by-pass from February/March. Ms Robinson stated that each alternative route would be subject to a road safety audit and the signage on the alternative routes – to be provided by SZC – had been recommended to be comprehensive, appropriate to the routes and clearly indicating the alternative route to the closed route. Ms Robinson asked for the Parish Council's feedback, on behalf of residents, of the local perspective of the proposals and the probable impact on the local community.

The Parish Council unanimously accepted, in principle, the proposals for the temporary closure of the four specified Rights of Way and the proposed

alternative routes as presented to it. It noted that this would be undertaken in two stages and was currently timed to commence in February or March 2026. The Parish Council sought comprehensive permanent signage appropriate to the routes, including way markers to clarify the closed and alternative routes featuring links or codes to an Ordnance Survey/Discover Suffolk map facility. The Parish Council welcomed Suffolk County Council's plans to clearly specify the required style of signage and to monitor the location and adequacy of its installation by Sizewell C operatives.

5 Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8 December 2025 were approved without amendment.

6 Matters arising

The following updates to previous minutes were provided and noted:

Footpaths – As requested, the Clerk had written to a resident to ask that the overgrown hedgerow outside their home be cut back as it was affecting access to the footpath and the bus stop. A deadline of 31 January had been set for this to be completed.

Allotments – There was a discussion of an outstanding rent and what action the Parish Council might wish to take in this regard. Cllr Plant was asked to speak to the tenant again.

7 Questions from members of the public

An enquiry regarding bus services during the period of road closures was noted. The Clerk had responded with the contact details of the provider.

The Council had received a request from the Editor of the *Ebb and Flow* newsletter for a contribution to its costs. It was unanimously agreed that a donation under Section 137 of £100 would be made as the newsletter provided a valued services to residents. (Clerk's note: Section 137 of the Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 authorises a local council to make a discretionary spend (subject to a statutory limit) for the direct benefit of its area, or part of its area, or all or some of its inhabitants.)

8 Quarter 3 Income and Expenditure statement of activity

The Responsible Finance Officer referred to the circulated document which provided details of all income and expenditure in the quarter and the financial year to date. This was received, noted and reconciled.

9 Review and approval of the Budget for 2026/7

The Responsible Finance Officer referred to the updated draft Budget which had been reviewed initially in November 2025. To prepare the draft Budget, which specified income, expenditure and estimated the end of financial year position, the RFO on behalf of the Parish Council had taken into consideration:

- the current year's spending levels for ongoing services for which the PC was legally responsible
- costs of any additional spending plans or projects
- provision for contingencies and reserves. Auditors strongly recommended that the Council should hold sufficient reserves for the operation of the Council for no less than 6 months of income.
- levels of anticipated income – from services for which it is responsible, in this case, allotment rents and the refund of VAT payments

The Parish Council also undertook a monthly monitoring of its expenditure and income at each of its meetings. In addition, it undertakes two reviews of a draft budget which specifies income, expenditure and estimate of the end of financial year position.

It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote agreed that the draft Budget for 2026/7 be approved.

10 To set the Precept Request for 2026/7

The Responsible Finance Officer referred to the Precept as the tax that Parish Council's charged their local electors to meet their budget requirements. Parish Councils did not receive any direct funding from central government and relied on the Precept to meet the running costs of the services or facilities it provided. The Precept is part of the Council Tax and was collected from local electors via their Council Tax payments.

Following its comprehensive review of the draft budget (at item 9), the Parish Council reluctantly but unanimously agreed that it needed to increase its Precept for the 2026/7 financial year due to the impact of inflation and the cost of delivering services having increased significantly in the last few years.

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that the Precept for 2026/7 be set at £12,700.

For a typical Band D household (which represented an average property in the area), the increase in the Parish Council element of Council Tax equated, in monetary terms, to approximately £7.26 per month.

11 Responsible Finance Officer's report

The RFO provided the following report.

The current balance of available CIL funds (restricted) was £1416.06. The current balance of unrestricted funds was £3205.95.

The following invoice for approval to pay was submitted to the Parish Council for consideration:

Clerk/RFO salary (Gross) - £444.00

The invoice was approved and once paid, along with the Section 137 contribution

agreed at item 7, the balance of unrestricted funds would be £2661.95

12 Clerk's report

There were no other items raised by the Clerk.

13 Urgent items

There were no urgent items of business.

14 Next meeting

The date in February 2026 and indicative items for the agenda were noted.

The Meeting closed at 9.53pm