

FARNHAM WITH STRATFORD ST ANDREW PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 13 October 2025 at the Riverside Centre

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

In attendance: Katherine Abbott (Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer).

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ian Norman.

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) had provided a written report which was noted. A written report had also been received from Cllr Noble (ESC) and this too was noted.

4 Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11 August 2025 were approved without amendment.

5 Matters arising

The following updates to previous minutes were provided and noted:

Allotments – As requested the Clerk had written to two tenants and requested their prompt attention to overgrown allotments. One tenant had given up the tenancy, and their allotment was being advertised; the other tenant had acted and the Parish Council thanked them for their quick response. (Clerk's note: A new tenant had taken the tenancy for the recently vacated allotment).

Stray horses – As requested the Clerk had written to the owner of several horses which had strayed from their field. The owner had recently advised that she had installed a sturdier fence at the field and was confident the horses would no longer be able to escape.

Community engagement and consultation – Cllr Conibeer reported on recent discussions related to the possible joint approach by the Riverside Centre and the Parish Council to enable them to apply for funding for potential projects. A draft survey was being prepared and required paperwork completed. Cllr Conibeer said that it was not necessary for the Council to decide about its involvement at this point.

6 Questions from members of the public

Footpaths A resident had written with observations about footpaths within the villages; these had been reported to the County Council via its online reporting tool.

HMO As requested the Clerk had written to East Suffolk Council regarding the proposed House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) in Stratford St Andrew. Cllr Conibeer reported that the proposed conversion represented a change of use (in planning terms) from residential to commercial and, initially, six bedrooms were proposed. HMO with six occupants did not require planning consent but, under housing law, a licence with the district council was required. This licence ensured that the property met all relevant safety and living standards and was appropriately managed. It addressed important issues such as fire safety, overcrowding and general tenant protection. There was no statutory requirement to inform external parties beyond those with a direct interest in the property of the proposals. There were no housing constraints to prevent that number of tenants being housed in the property. East Suffolk Council had stated that its Private Sector Housing team was actively working with the owner to ensure the conversion was of a good standard.

Planning permission would be required for properties seeking to operate as a 7-bedroom HMO or larger and, therefore, should the owner wish to increase numbers and operate a larger HMO, a planning application would need to be submitted, at which point the Parish Council and other parties would have an opportunity to provide comments. If a planning application was submitted, ESC had confirmed that the adequacy of the parking for up to ten vehicles would be reviewed and assessed as part of any formal planning process, along with all other usual planning considerations.

7 Thermal Imaging Surveys 2025/6

Councillors Pass and Warne recommended that the Council refrain from participating in the upcoming survey period due to the low level of engagement from residents during the previous year. This was agreed and the invitation would be declined.

8 Updates from external meetings

(i) Community Partnership 21 August 2025

Councillor Williams summarised the key areas discussed at the Partnership's meeting. The Partnership had agreed that the following would be its key priorities:

To increase awareness of transport services available and work to ensure gaps were filled

To promote the offer of existing health resources and activities around physical health, mental health and dementia and create new opportunities based on identified gaps in provision

To enable communities to share skills and knowledge within and between communities to increase resilience and preparedness in the community, and

To facilitate opportunities for local people to care for the environment and

biodiversity

(ii) SZC Southern Transport Forum 3 September 2025

Cllr Pass reported that the two villages bypass project currently faced challenges around water levels and drainage. Filling points for tankers had been upgraded in conjunction with Anglia Water and the hauliers. The appointed contractor was Galliford Try. A further 14 buses would join the fleet shortly.

(iii) Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 8 September 2025

The Clerk had attended a seminar on the new assertion which required a strengthened focus on demonstrating digital and data compliance as part of the Council's AGAR document which was a crucial part of the internal audit process. The Clerk outlined the need to evidence actual compliance in practice through demonstration of adherence with the mandatory IT and data requirements for small authorities and a clear understanding of the legal requirements of GDPR and the Data Protection Act. Also required was the transition of the Council to a council-owned gov.uk domain name for its website (which was already in place) and to gov.uk email systems for Councillors (the Clerk already had a gov.uk email address). The Parish Council noted the various requirements and agreed that the Clerk commence work to ensure policies etc reflected key changes to digital governance and data integrity.

9 Appointment of an Internal Auditor

The Responsible Finance Officer recommended that the Council continue to use the services of SALC for the next internal audit. This was agreed unanimously.

10 Income and Expenditure in Q1 and Q2 2025/6

months of the financial year:

The balance of unrestricted funds: £5265.75

The balance of restricted funds: £1581.06 (£120 committed to maintenance work w/c 6 October) so would then reduce to £1461.06

Income in Q1 £8824.23 (£9000 Precept + £138.80 VAT refund - £314.57 overspend in 24/5)

Income in Q2 £7.60 (interest on savings account July – September) transferred to unrestricted funds

Expenditure in Q1 £1649.02

Expenditure in Q2 £1917.06

The Clerk/RFO salary for authorisation was £413.20 (Gross) and an invoice for one replacement pad for the defibrillator for £77.65 (to reimburse the RFO). The two invoices were approved, and the revised balance of unrestricted funds was noted at £4774.90 (after payment). The RFO was asked to purchase a second pad for the defibrillator, and this cost would be reflected in next month's figures.

11 Internal Control Statement 2025/6

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 required the Council to review its systems of internal control annually to provide positive assurance on

the adequacy of its financial management systems. The Responsible Finance Officer presented a report on the internal control tests in place.

The report was reviewed. It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote resolved that the internal controls were sound, adequate and effective.

12 Insurance schedule

The Responsible Finance Officer reminded the Council that it had, last year, approved a three-year policy with Zurich to achieve a reduced premium cost. For audit purposes, that decision needed to be ratified and minuted. It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote agreed that the annual premium of £393.52 be paid and the policy with Zurich therefore continue.

13 To receive the Responsible Finance Officer's verbal report

There was nothing further to report in addition to item 10, above.

14 To receive the Clerk's verbal report

The Clerk referred to the meeting dates for 2026 and that meetings would continue to be held on the second Monday of the month at Riverside.

15 Urgent items for discussion

There were no urgent items.

16 Items for the next meeting

10 November 2025: Review and adoption of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations; Clerk's pension re-enrolment and declaration; early draft of the 2026/7 budget; update from external meetings

The Meeting closed at 9.06pm