



# Minutes

## Annual Parish Assembly Meeting of Preston on Stour Parish Council

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**Held on:** Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 8:00pm  
**Place:** Three Parishes Millennium Hall, Preston-on-Stour

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**Present:** Cllrs Will Spencer (Chair), Anna Corser (Vice-Chair), James Seccombe

**In attendance:** Laura Callow (Parish Clerk)

**Members of the public:** 3

- 14/25 WELCOME and APOLOGIES- Not Present-** Andrew Holman-West, Tom Gurney on behalf of Alscot Estate, DC Dominic Skinner and WCC David Curtis.
- 15/25 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**  
The minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly Meeting 16th May 2024 were confirmed and approved.
- 16/25 THE PARISH COUNCIL YEAR-** Cllr Spencer gave a report. This can be seen under **Appendix A**.
- 17/25 STRATFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL-** Cllr Dominic Skinner was unable to attend. He has given a report which was read out by Cllr Spencer and is attached. **Appendix B**
- 18/25 WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL-** Cllr David Curtis was unable to attend but has given a report which was read out by Cllr Spencer and is attached. **Appendix C**
- 19/25 ALSCOT ESTATE -** Cllr Corser read out the report given by Tom Gurney. The report is attached. **Appendix D**
- 20/25 COMMUNITY REPORTS-**
- **Preston Environmental Group-** Ron Hoe gave an update on PEG. See **Appendix E** for full report.
  - **Parochial Church Council -** No report given.
  - **Village Hall -** Report was read out and is attached below **Appendix F**
  - **The Yoga Studio -** Ben Beswick spoke. Place to give people opportunities to open up to themselves. They hold reiki, yoga and spiritual classes. They have renowned instructors from all over the world come to give classes.
  - **The Village Shop/Café-** Village shop is going steady and a place for all to enjoy.
- 21/25 MATTER RAISED BY PARISHIONERS -** a few parishioners are disappointed with the state of the churchyard. This concern will be shared with Andrew Holman West regarding what has been done. Who is liable for the benches on the green as they are getting to the point of needing replacing/maintaining PC will raise this question with Alscot Estate. PC offered organisations a section on the new upcoming website. MOP asked what is happening with the old forge building? This will be raised with Alscot Estate.
- 22/25 TO CONSIDER CLOSURE OF THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**
- The meeting was closed at **09.05pm**

**Proposed: Cllr Spencer    Seconded: Cllr Corser    All in favour**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**Appendix A**  
**The Parish Council**  
**Chair Annual Report**

Our bi monthly meeting have again been attended by only a small number of parishioners which indicates that generally most residents are happy with how things are. We still only have 3 parish councillors out of a possible 5 which does mean if anyone is unable to attend a meeting the council is not quorate. We would welcome anybody who wants to join as a councillor and co option is not a difficult process.

There has been a small number of planning applications during the year, mostly concerning work on trees in the conservation area.

We have been in contact with WCC Highways department regarding potholes and surface drainage. The main culvert alongside the cow lane has been jettied as far as possible and located an obstruction which is in need of further investigation and the gulley at the crossroads will be linked into this as will the ditch alongside the green. The white lines have been repainted at the crossroads.

Since Alscot Estate have taken over the maintenance of the greens, we have been able to reduce our precept. We have made a grant to the church for cemetery maintenance and to PEG for water quality testing of the river Stour. we are also asking for suggestions for how we could help fund community projects in the village.

The website has been updated for which we are indebted to Cllr James Seccombe for his expertise in this matter.

We are also indebted to County Councillor Izzi Seccombe for all the work she has done for our area over the years and her regular attendance at our PC meetings. Following her defeat in the County elections on May 1<sup>st</sup> we look forward to a similar successful relationship with our new County Cllr David Curtis.

I would like to thank our councillors and clerk for all that they have done over the last year.

## **Appendix B**

### **2023/24 District Councillor Report**

**Cllr Dominic Skinner – Quinton Ward**

**Domskinner4quinton@gmail.com – 07783 740520**

Another busy year throughout the Ward and the District. I have included some highlights, which I hope will be of interest to you. Further detail and information about all may be found on the District Council's website: [www.stratford.gov.uk](http://www.stratford.gov.uk)

## **April 2024**

### **New Open Space Planning Guidance Adopted**

In April, Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Full Council formally adopted its revised Open Space Supplementary Planning Document. Under the new policy, all public open space, as part of new developments, will now be adopted by either the local Town/Parish Council or by the District Council. This was in response to the growing amount of public open space provided with new developments and concerns raised by residents about:

- Charges levied by the private management companies appointed by the developers to maintain the public open space which are not always made transparent at the time of purchase, can change every year and are unlimited.
- The quality of the maintenance work carried out. Also, where a Parish or Town Council decides not to take ownership of public open space, the District Council would generally take ownership of the land, with responsibility for ongoing maintenance.

The option of passing maintenance responsibilities onto private management companies will no longer be included in Section 106 agreements.

## **May 2024**

### **CCTV upgrade**

SDC's Cabinet approves grant funding of £200,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to carry out vital work to upgrade CCTV infrastructure, software and equipment across the District.

CCTV covers Stratford and the surrounding towns. From April 2023 to May 2024, SDC's CCTV team assisted Warwickshire Police in stopping over 91 suspected drink and drug drivers leading to arrest and prosecution.

### **Community Climate Change Fund Phase 1**

The successful projects from Phase 1 are announced. This fund will go some way in supporting important projects within the district to help tackle climate change (and improve community facilities and activities).

## **June 2024**

### **D-Day Landings Commemoration**

On 6 June there were many acts of commemoration across the district to remember the eightieth anniversary of the D-Day Landings with hundreds of beacons lit across the UK and the Commonwealth.

In 1944, Allied forces mounted the largest amphibious invasion the world had ever witnessed; Operation Overlord, D-Day, saw over 5,000 ships and landing craft set down more than 150,000 troops on five Normandy beaches in an action that would bring about the liberation of northwest Europe from Nazi occupation. As the SDC Armed Forces Champion, veteran and serving reservist this was an event that held extreme importance for me and it was an honour to be involved in a national event to mark this occasion representing SDC and the RAF.

## **July 2024**

### **General Election**

A general election was held on Thursday 4 July 2024.

### **Public Safety - Operation Talkative**

SDC supported a new policing initiative called Operation Talkative to encourage reporting of knife carrying. If you have information or concerns about someone carrying a knife, please report it to police by going to [www.warwickshire.police.uk/report](http://www.warwickshire.police.uk/report) or call 101 and quote Operation Talkative.

### **Trees for Farmers**

Applications opened for the free trees for farmers initiative again.

## **August 2024**

### **South Warwickshire Local Plan**

SDC and WDC's Joint Cabinet Committee, endorsed a study from the Advisory Group, on the number of dwellings to be delivered to meet the area's future housing needs in the next version of the emerging Local Plan for South Warwickshire. (Later, at the end of 2024 the government increased the requirement under the 'standard method' to a new figure of 2188 homes per year for south Warwickshire.)

## **September 2024**

### **Climate Assembly**

SDC holds its first Climate Assembly event to promote community engagement with action for climate and nature across the District, including schools, to provide a springboard for more action and to showcase local best practice.

### **Community Safety**

SDC supports and funds new virtual reality to help educate young people on the realities of carrying a knife. The project is being rolled out in schools across the district.

## **October 2024**

### **Delivering Local Needs/Local Choice Rural Housing**

The Cabinet agreed to continue the existing approach to deliver homes for local people in rural areas with the Rural Housing Enabler working with partners to enable local communities to deliver Local Needs/Local Choice rural housing schemes.

### **Winter Fuel Payments**

SDC's Leader, Cllr Susan Juned, wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer about the Government's decision on winter fuel payments

## **November 2024**

### **Armed Forces Covenant Pledge**

SDC's Cabinet approved the District Council's Armed Forces Covenant Pledge and Cllr Juned attended the WCC Covenant signing ceremony. As the SDC Armed Forces champion I was extremely proud to be able to offer firsthand advice and support to council officers during the development of the councils offering to the covenant. After a lot of hard work from our officers

SDC now offers increased support to our serving, veteran and reservist community and their families. This includes extra support when applying for social housing within the district and signposting to suitable council services. This was a project that I was extremely passionate about and I am very proud that SDC now offers far more services and support to our armed forces community than ever before.

## **December 2024**

### **Devolution and Local Government Review**

On 16 December 2024, the government published the 'English Devolution White Paper' identifying the Government's intended approach to the devolution of powers from Westminster to more local "Strategic Authorities." The White Paper was clear that to achieve government objectives this will also require Local Government Review. This review would result in the abolition of the remaining two-tier local government (County and District) across the country and establishing unitary government in their place (plus parish and town councils in our area).

## **January 2025**

### **South Warwickshire Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation**

The public consultation for the South Warwickshire Local Plan opened on 10 January.

### **Launch of the Parish Forum**

On Thursday 30 January the District Council launched the Parish Forum, chaired by Natalie who is the Portfolio Holder for Law & Governance. The meeting was held on Teams and sixty six Town and Parish Chairs and Clerks attended from across the District to discuss Devolution and Local Government Review, the newly created Parish Liaison Officer role at the District Council and the South Warwickshire Local Plan. The next meeting is on Thursday 26 June.

### **Community Climate Change Fund - Phase 2 opens**

Following the success of Phase 1 of the Community Climate Change Fund, Phase 2 was launched with £55,863 available for green projects.

## **February 2025**

### **Council Tax**

Stratford-on-Avon District Councillors set the district element of the Council Tax. The amount residents will be asked to pay for a Band D property is £169.12, an increase of £5. This is an increase of 3.1%, which for an average home represents just an additional 42p per month to the District Council next year.

This means that all the services provided by the District Council cost £3.25 a week for a Band D household. This contributes to meeting the cost of providing a wide range of services including recycling and waste collection, planning, street cleaning, housing, housing benefits, leisure services and children's play areas. Stratford-on-Avon remains a low-taxing authority, 18th lowest out of 164 district councils across the country in 2024/25.

Anyone who thinks they could be struggling to pay their Council Tax is encouraged to contact the District Council as soon as possible by calling 01789 260990 or email [revenues@stratforddc.gov.uk](mailto:revenues@stratforddc.gov.uk), where the team will be able to advise what help is available.

### **Budget**

Following Full Council approval on 24 February, provision was made within the 2025/26 budget to fund a number of items. This includes the following:

- £30,000 for Women's Aid Domestic Violence project support, training, community awareness and work with partners to ensure the availability of their services within the district.

- £50,000 Trees for Parish Councils scheme.
  - £50,000 for a Business Conference, to stimulate the local economy, increase networking opportunities, showcase local talent, innovation and promote education and training for local businesses.
  - £80,000 to fund a screening programme in partnership with the Graham Fulford Charitable Trust (GFCT) which focuses on prostate cancer awareness and early detection. The dates for the screening are on the back page of your Council Tax booklet and we encourage residents to book onto a session.
  - £100,000 to support Cycle Schemes aimed at promoting sustainable transportation.
  - £250,000 to fund various projects with the aim of enhancing and improving community facilities, services, and overall infrastructure, thereby fostering a stronger and more vibrant local community.
  - £520,000 for the Climate Change Fund ensuring the Council can continue its commitments to climate change for next year.
  - £600,000 to be used to directly target cost-of-living hardship through selected partners.
  - £2.5m for affordable and temporary housing to help reduce temporary accommodation costs.
- The District Council may also introduce a second home premium from April 2026 and will be conducting a public consultation during 2025.

### **Parish Champions**

The District Council decided to split the Parish Champion role, previously held by a single District Councillor across the District, into two posts. There will be coverage on a geographical, east and west, basis.

### **Ukrainian Medical Charity**

On 24 February, Stratford-on-Avon District Council was presented with a certificate of merit from the Order of St Pantaleimon in Ukraine in thanks for the ongoing support given to help Ukrainian Medical Charity with the war in Ukraine. Since September 2022, the District Council offices in Stratford-upon-Avon have been used as a donation point to help Ukrainian Medical Charity (previously known as Medical Aid Ukraine). The donations received are sorted and then sent to hospitals most in need in Ukraine.

Donations for Ukrainian Medical Charity can be made at the Council offices from 9am to 5pm weekdays. Or if you are not likely to be going to Stratford, you can ask your friendly District Councillor to take it with them when they go! Medicines need to be in date; however, packaging can be missing or damaged and bandages can be out of date.

March 2025

### **South Warwickshire Local Plan**

The consultation for the South Warwickshire Local Plan closed on 7 March 2025. A total of 19,367 representations via the portal from 4,682 respondents. A further 1,402 submissions were received via email or letter, with a total of 6,084 responses received.

Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils would like to thank residents, Parish Councils, landowners, businesses, developers and agents for taking the time to respond to the consultation. The team will be reviewing the responses in detail to help inform the next stage of the South Warwickshire Local Plan.

A consultation summary statement will also be prepared later on in the year which will provide more information.

### **Devolution and Local Government Review**

On Monday 17 March Full Council agreed to support the District Council's interim plan for local government reorganisation in Warwickshire. Two possible options are being considered, as part of the interim plan:

- A single unitary council for Warwickshire
- Two unitary Councils (one for North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, and Rugby Boroughs; another for Warwick and Stratford Districts).

Cllr Susan Juned, Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District said: "The Government has made it clear it wishes to see the end of two-tier working in Local Government. This will see the end of district and borough councils and county councils. In their place will be new unitary councils. This interim plan has been agreed by all five District and Borough Councils in Warwickshire as a starting place for the direction we want to take. There is a clear preference for a north and south unitary option, but we have to build the data and vision for the case we will put in our final submission in November." More work will be done to identify which structure will feature in the proposal submitted by 28 November 2025.

## **Appendix C**

### **Warwickshire County Council**

#### **Annual Report**

#### **Cllr David Curtis**

Until May 2 I didn't really expect to be your new County Councillor so I'd like to introduce myself with a little background:

I've lived in the district for over 40 years, mainly in Stratford but 4 years ago we moved to Alderminster. I was elected to SDC in 2019 as member for Shottery Ward and since 2023 I've been a member of the Cabinet with responsibility for Finance and IT. I've also been Chair of Alderminster PC since 2024 and, following County elections, I am now Member for Stour and the Vale and I plan to meet as many of the Parishes in my Division as soon as possible. My daughters also live nearby and my 3 grandchildren go to their village school so, as you can see, I'm invested in this area and will do my best to represent your interests.

Professionally I played viola in a professional string quartet for 30 years, touring and recording, and for the past 20 years I've been an orchestral conductor, unusual but extremely rewarding.

Little to add by way of a Report except to say at the time of emailing we are uncertain which party(ies) will form the Administration at County until the Shadow Authority Elections which are due in 2027. It seems likely that as Reform are the largest party they will expect to form the Administration and we should know more after the Annual Council meeting tomorrow, Friday

The SDC Administration believes a South Warwickshire Unitary presents the best option for this area but at this stage nothing is certain. All Districts and Boroughs in Warwickshire have until November to make their final submissions. Local Government Reform is coming so we have to find the best solution for our residents.

There is cross-party concern that devolution and the larger unitary authorities could see a 'democratic deficit' with greater responsibility placed on Parish Councils. SDC is mindful of this and aims to offer more support to Parish Councils.

## **Appendix D**

### **Alscot Estate Report for May 2024**

#### **Regenerative Farming**

The event, An Introduction to Regenerative Farming, at Clifford Chambers with Wild About Clifford and PEG was very well received and there has been a positive reaction to the incentive as well as it highlighting opportunities for the local community to be involved going forward, which we hope will progress.

We are now seeing the first crops, sown in September, flourish, with the herbal leys creating some magnificent colour - the purple flowering Phacelia and red Crimson Clover being most visible at this time of year. Soil samples have recently been taken across the arable and permanent pasture fields, and sent off for analysis. This will help us to build a valuable baseline dataset as the regenerative farming system develops. There is a page dedicated to Home Farm (in-house farming) on the Alscot website <https://www.alscot.co.uk/home-farm>

### **Ditching in Preston on Stour**

This project has commenced and the section between Top Lodge and Silvesters is now complete. There is still work to follow below Silvesters and to also create the surface water run off on drainage channel between the graveyard and the old orchard.

A job in reference to the broken roadside culverts has been opened online. It has still not been addressed. To get this issue pushed up the list with WCC we need as many people to report as possible, please can you click on the "Yes, send my report link" below and a new page will open with all the report details, please can you scroll down the left hand side to the box that says update and leave an appropriate message, such as "issue not resolved" etc then click continue, fill in details and submit. <https://www.fixmystreet.com/report/7088159>

### **Estate Cricket Match**

Following the success of previous years, the Estate Cricket Match will be held on Thursday 29th May from 6pm. It is an opportunity to gather as a community and enjoy cricket and a social evening, whilst supporting Warwick Cricket Club. All are welcome.

### **Art At Alscot**

Part of Warwickshire Open Gardens, visit Art at Alscot between Friday 27th to Sunday 29th June and there will be 15 artists exhibiting - the event is free to attend.

## **Appendix E**

### **PEG Report May 2025**

Hi, I'm Ron Hoe Chair of PEG, Preston's Environmental Group.

We are proud to be celebrating our 11 year and seem to be going from strength to strength as we now have 38 paid up members the most we have ever had.

Our aim is to encourage a connection with nature and help Preston become more wildlife friendly. This has never been more important that it is now.

So what have we done since this time last year

We have organised monthly group walks, which are open to all, by the way, and our two stand out events have been a 2 night stay at Slimbridge Wetland Centre and a most enjoyable talk by Brigit Strawbridge about the importance of bees and the role gardens play in helping the environment. Brigit was our first ever speaker back in 2015 by the way.

Now for a commercial break!



Coming up on Saturday 14th June is a Moth Trap and Bacon Baps Event. This is a rather wonderful event usually very well attended and highly recommended. Tickets £8 for members £10 for none members. See me if you'd like to join us you won't regret it.

Along with these activities we have a few ongoing projects. Possibly the one closest to our hearts are the wildflower areas we manage. We would like to thank Alscot for their continued support with this. One is at the entrance to the village and established 10 years ago. Its by far the richest in terms of the different wildflowers and will put on a wonderful show any time soon.

We have another behind the lime tree in front of the village cafe and the third and newest area is in the top grave yard. This year we received a grant and help from Warwickshire Wildlife Trust acting on behalf of seven Trent. This scheme included advice loan of equipment and supply and sowing of wildflower seeds.

Establishing wildflower meadows is a long term process and so we're not expecting anything too spectacular anytime soon but hope that year on year it improves in much the same was as the patch at the entrance to the village has.

Next is our project testing the quality of the water in the River Stour.

Derek O'Rourke a member of our group has diligently and conscientiously gone out in all weather every week to perform the tests. And the results are not good. We submit this information to a group who are coordinating this project. They use the data, in conversations with Water Authorities Local and National government. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to our Parish Council for helping with the funding of this project.

Our work on this undertaking actually attracted the attention of our local Lib Dem MP Manuela Perteghella recently. She came to the village, helped Derek and Brocky perform a water test and then joined some of our members for coffee. She was charming and very enthusiastic about environmental matters.

Now some less good news. We have recently noticed that some kind of herbicide has been used rather in discriminately in very ugly way in our churchyard. Not only does it look ugly but it will have had a deviating effect on any kind of wildlife it comes into contact with. This goes against everything PEG holds dear and is especially deplorable in a churchyard connected to an estate trying to regenerate the health of its soil. Which we are highly delighted about by the way.

Peg has written to the Parish Church Council stating our concern and asking why this was thought necessary. We look forward to hearing from them in due course.

I would like to end by saying PEG sees one of its jobs as looking out for nature and shouting out if it sees this kind of thing happening. I believe we are a force for good in this village, at the time when it is most needed.

Thank you.

Ron Hoe

Chair - Preston on Stour Environmental Group

## **Appendix F**

## **Village Hall Committee**

The management committee of the village hall is responsible for the maintenance of this vital facility. In the past year the hall has been repainted externally. We have also installed our AV system which has proved to be most successful. In the next year we hope to refurb the kitchen. The committee also organise most of the village social events. These include Prestfest, the village BBQ, the harvest supper, quiz night and May Day. Monies raised go towards the running costs of the hall as electricity, insurance, broadband, cleaning and rates all have to be paid. We also run a film night once a month, benefitting from the AV equipment, and recently started a table tennis evening once a fortnight.

For an aging committee, these events all require hard work, we should all be grateful for these efforts which of course also involve many non-members. All of the above are responsible for maintaining a strong sense of community in our village.

As is the case every year, the hall committee needs new members to help in sharing its large workload, please consider joining.

Mick Jennings

I would just like to add that our forthcoming events for this year are PrestFest on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June, the village BBQ on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June and the Harvest supper on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October.

Also Margret has asked me to thank Laura for her help in putting the village hall monthly update onto the village website.

Richard Brocklehurst  
Treasurer  
3 PM Hall