

Annual Meeting Minutes of

Stagsden Parish Council

Monday 12 May 2025

7.00pm Stagsden Village Hall, Stagsden

Present: Peter Brown
James Taylor
Jim Watson
Esther Dickson
David Frostick
Julie Betts, Clerk
Councillor Dylan Simmons
Councillor Robert Rigby

The current Chair and Vice Chair stood down but agreed to Chair the meeting until the next meeting

- 1 Appointment of Chairman: To be agreed
- 2 Apologies for Absence: Dick Thompson
- 3 Declarations of Interest were confirmed as previously declared.
- 4 Minutes of previous meeting approved.
- 5 Appointment of Vice Chairman: James Taylor
Prop: Jim Watson, Sec: Peter Brown, all in favour
- 6 Out-going Chairman's Report (Peter Brown)

The full council comprised of Peter Brown, James Taylor, Esther Dickson, Jim Watson, Dick Thompson and David Frostick. I would like to thank them for their regular attendance at meetings and their individual contributions to the running of the council and welcome David Frostick to Stagsden Parish Council.

Julie Betts has continued to serve us as our Parish Clerk making sure we are up to Stagsden Parish Council date with planning, regulations and advice. I also would like to thank Julie for keeping the village website and Facebook page updated.

Thank you to our Borough Councillors Dylan Simmons and Robert Rigby for their help and support for the village over the past year.

Each councillor has an important role to play to make and keep Stagsden the pleasant, rural community it has become.

The council agreed has agreed not to increase its precept for 2025-2026 it will remain at £10,000. The Parish Council has maintained its financial support both to the village hall and church, I would like to thank the borough councillors for their contribution to Stagsden from their Ward Councillor Fund.

The Parish Council continue to provide extra play equipment for the play area which is free to use for all visitors and have agreed to provide planters for the centre of the village.

The Parish Council now have Community Infrastructure Levy contributions of £31390.80 in the bank and are consulting with residents as to what the monies should be spent on.

7 Annual Reports from other village organisations

Village Hall Committee

The Village Hall have had a good year with lots of bookings and an increase in committee to 12 members.

There had been a number of maintenance issues, a replacement was needed for Roger Heron. There had been new kit added into the kitchen and repairs in the ladies toilets.

Quiz and curry night had been successful, plans for a theatre group and a pop up pub later in the year.

There was an issue with the tree in the car park lifting the surface, possibly the tree would be removed. The hedge to the side needed cutting back. There would be CCTV added to monitor the entrance door.

Finances were healthy.

Stagsden Allotments Association

Finances were stable. New members had joined mainly because SAALA had a digital marketing officer and the Association had been able to have an online presence.

Currently there were only 4.5 plots empty. SAALA have 30.5 plots in total.

Sources of income: Plot Rents, there had been a Fish and Chip Supper, Apple Day Lunch, Painting Competition, Curry night, BBQ Breakfast. Bedford Art Group had attended to paint the allotments. Stall outside Chairman's house, Parish Council contribution to insurance.

SAALA had managed to keep the rent the same over the last few years and keep some plots for Stagsden Residents only.

8 Election of Representative to other bodies:

Village Hall Management Committee: Jim Watson
Stagsden Allotments Association: James Taylor

Parish Councillor Responsibilities:

Play Areas: Esther Dickson

Highways: Dick Thompson

Footpaths: Jim Watson

Speedwatch: Esther Dickson

Community Planters: Esther Dickson

Noticeboards: David Frostick

A briefing note on Councillors Roles & Responsibilities was circulated and is attached at Appendix A.

A list of meeting dates was circulated and is attached at Appendix B.

9 Questions / Comments from the general public: None

Meeting Closed 7.27pm.

Stagsden Parish Council

Briefing Note: Parish Council's Roles & Responsibilities

1. What are Parish Councils?

Parish and Town Councils (known collectively as Local Councils) are the first tier of local government and the closest to the community they serve. A Town Council is a Parish Council which has resolved to call itself a Town Council. The Chairman of a Town Council can also be called the Town Mayor. There are some 8,500 Parish and Town Councils in England. As a tier of local government they are elected bodies, with discretionary powers and rights laid down by Parliament to represent their communities and provide services for them. All local authorities are constituted in the same way with Councillors elected by the Local Government Electorate and a Chairman, who must be one of them. Local Councils vary in size and capacity; many are very small, representing a few hundred people, others represent communities of over 30,000 people with budgets over £1m and expenditure and staffing levels per head of population similar to a small District Council.

A Local Council is a body corporate with perpetual succession and a name. It comprises a Chairman (or Town Mayor), and Councillors. The number of Councillors is fixed by the District Council. A Local Council's lawful acts, assets and liabilities are its own and not those of its Councillors.

A local Council must act within the law. It can only spend, raise or use money if it has a statutory power to do so, otherwise it acts ultra vires (beyond its powers). Local Councils have a wide range of powers under different acts of Parliament. Most of these powers are discretionary, ie the Council *may* do something, rather than it *must* do something. The exercise of these powers may be subject to various consents, from, for example, the owner of land or another public body such as the Highways Authority. Almost all Local Council powers are concurrent with those of the District Council, i.e. the power may be exercised by either the Parish/Town Council or the District Council.

A Local Council has the unfettered right to raise money by precept (a mandatory demand) on the District Council. The precept required by the Local Council is then collected by the District Council as part of the council tax levied on tax payers in that Parish. Local Councils act as a sounding board for local opinion and have important rights of consultation. County and District or Unitary Councils are obliged by law to consult the Local Council on certain matters affecting the Parish.

The range of services and amenities provided by Local Councils varies enormously. All play an important role in maintaining and improving local services and facilities, supporting local voluntary organisations and activities and influencing and lobbying on local development.

While some larger councils are run along party political lines, there is no expectation that you have to join a political party. The vast majority of parish councils are not split by party politics.

Parish Councillors are volunteers who are either elected or co-opted onto the Council, once elected Councillors serve for a period of 4 years. Stagsden has Seven Parish Councillors representing the village.

You can become a councillor if you:

- are British, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union
- are 18 years of age or over
- are registered to vote in the area or if you have lived, worked or owned property in the area for at least 12 months before an election.

Stagsden Parish Council has bi-monthly meetings, always the 3rd Monday of the month.

Parish Councillors have a responsibility to be well informed about diverse local issues and views and:

- Prepare for and attend meetings
- Take part in discussions at meetings and form sound judgements based on what they hear, and then abide by majority decisions
- Ensure with the other Councillors that the Parish Council is properly managed
- Represent all the village and not small sections of it
- Maintain proper standards of behaviour

Residents and the public are welcome to attend Parish Council meetings. There is a 15 minute session on the agenda for members of the public to speak.

2. Roles & Responsibilities

Parish Councillors

Main purpose

Representing the views of all residents within your parish.

Secondary purpose

- As part of a local council you will have responsibility for running local services which may include: open spaces, play areas, village halls, community car schemes and potentially much more.
- Deciding on how much to raise through the council tax in order to deliver your council's services.
- Influencing and shaping the long term development policy for the parish, and as part of the planning process, comment on planning applications in the parish.
- Improve the quality of life and the environment in their local area.
- Working to identify issues which are important to the lives of the residents you represent.
- Working to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies.
- Attending meetings

Chairman

The Chairman is elected by the members of the Council at the Annual Council meeting and serves for twelve months (Section 15 (1) of the Local Government act 1972).

The Chairman's main role is to run council meetings. He/she can suggest the content and design of the agenda, but as legal signatory, the Clerk has the final say. The Chairman is responsible for ensuring that effective and lawful decisions are taken at meetings of the council and, assisted by the clerk, guides activities by managing the meetings of the council. The Chairman is responsible for involving all councillors in discussion and ensuring that councillors keep to the point. The Chairman summarises the debate and facilitates the making of clear resolutions and is responsible for keeping discussions moving so that the meeting is not too long. The Chairman has a casting vote. His/her first vote is a personal vote as a member of the council. If there is a tied vote, the Chairman can have a second, casting vote.

The Chairman will often be the public face of the council and will represent the council at official events. He/she may be asked to speak on behalf of the council in such circumstances should only express the agreed views of the council and not his/her personal views.

The Chairman cannot legally make a decision on behalf of the council.

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer

The clerk is employed by the council (under section 112 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972) to provide administrative support for the council's activities. Any other staff, although employed by the council, answer to the clerk who is their manager and is responsible for their performance.

The clerk's primary responsibility is to advise the council on whether its decisions are lawful and to recommend ways in which decisions can be implemented. To help with this, the Clerk can be asked to research topics of concern to the council and provide unbiased information to help the council to make appropriate choices. The clerk has a wide range of other responsibilities which are set out in his/her job description.

The clerk must recognise that the council is responsible for all decisions and that he/she takes instructions from the council as a body. The clerk is not answerable to any individual councillor - not even the Chairman. The Council must be confident that the clerk is, at all times, independent, objective and professional.

'Proper officer' is a title used in statute. It refers to the appropriate officer for the relevant function. In town and parish councils, the proper officer is normally the clerk. In financial matters, the proper officer is known as the Responsible Financial Officer.

Julie Betts

Stagsden Parish Council Meeting Dates 2025-2026

Monday 12 May 2025, Parish Council Annual Meeting (7pm)

& Parish Council Meeting (7.30pm)

Monday 14 July 2025, Parish Council

Monday 15 September 2025, Parish Council

Monday 17 November 2025, Parish Council

Monday 19 January 2026, Parish Council

Monday 16 March 2026, Parish Council

All meetings are held at Stagsden Village Hall and start at 7.30pm,

Apart from Annual Meeting starts at 7pm.

Public speaking time is in the first 15 minutes of the meeting.

Julie Betts, Clerk

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