

STAGSDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Parish Council

Held Monday 12 May 2025
in the Village Hall at 7:30pm

PRESENT:

Peter Brown, James Taylor, Esther Dickson, Jim Watson, David Frostick, Cllr Robert Rigby
Cllr Dylan Simmons, Mayor Tom Wootton

APOLOGIES: Dick Thompson

Action/Power

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Robin Coates and Peter Truscott attended the meeting for an update with regards to the continued anti-social behaviour. Mr Coates asked if there was an news on the road being closed. The Chair explained that there was opposition from residents to closing the road as they had complained it was dangerous sitting on the A422 waiting to cross traffic.

The Public
Bodies
(Admission to
Meetings) Act
1960 as
amended by
s100, LGA
1972

It was agreed to pass to Bedfordshire Police and Cllrs Rigby and Simmons and The Mayor agreed to consider using cameras.

Clerk to purchase signage for the area.

Clerk

Peter Truscott asked for an update on the pub. There was no update and a decision was still required from Bedford Borough Council.

84/25 **MAYOR TOM WOOTTON**

The Chair welcomed The Mayor. The Mayor agreed to answer any questions.

85/25 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Thompson.

LGA 1972,
Sch 12 para
40

86/25 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The meeting considered the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2025.

LGA 1972,
Sch 12, para
41

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 17 March 2025.

Signed (Chairman)

87/25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

As previously declared and as recorded in the minutes.

88/25 **REPORTS**

(a) **Borough Councillor's Report**

The Borough Councillor report had been circulated prior to the meeting, attached at **Appendix A**.

Note

Cllr Thompson had asked what measures were being taken to mitigate problems when Universal open? Cllr Rigby reported that it was early in the process all planning issues are being dealt with by the Government. Borough Councillors agreed to report back with updates.

Note

Cllr Rigby said he thought that there should be a return of shops to Bedford High Street.

The Mayor said the Council were determined to bring back shoppers and the commitment had started with 4 hours free parking he hoped that this would encourage improved retail in Bedford.

Notes

Cllr Taylor said that the Lurke Street car park was leaking badly when he used it. Cllr Rigby to investigate.

Cllr Simmons said that the Local Plan was failing, if it does there will be 3 years without a land supply which could mean 3 years of speculative applications. This could be harmful for parishes without a NHP. Cllr Simmons recommended that Stagsden consider working on a Neighbourhood Plan for protection.

PC Agenda July
25

89/25 **UPDATES ON CURRENT ISSUES**

(a) **Crime Statistics**

The Crime Statistics were circulated and acknowledged, **Appendix B**.

Note

(b) **Village Hall**

Cllr Dickson thanked the Village Hall Committee for the VE Day celebrations.

Note

(c) Allotments Report – No update

(d) Vacancy

There was one vacancy on Stagsden Parish Council.

(e) Village Green/Spring Lane Development

There had been meetings with Astrum. It had been agreed to stone pick the site, top soil and level the central area. Rough area to be rotivated. Update at next meeting.

Note

(g) CIL Projects: Extension to Pedestrian Pavement

Update next meeting.

DT

Cllr Taylor did not understand why the cost for a new pavement was so high. The Mayor said he would ask Mr Prigmore to revisit. The Mayor said there were also problems with making cycling lanes safe for users.

Consider requesting extended the 30mph to the bypass – Agenda for next meeting.

Agenda July
25

(h) East West Rail

Cllr Watson agreed to attend meetings on behalf of Stagsden in future.

Note

90/25 **PLANNING**

(a) To Consider Planning Applications

Town &
Country
Planning Act
1990

25/00637FUL, Land South of Burdelys Manor Farm, Stagsden
Installation of 70 kw solar panels, battery and associated cabling within the field adjacent to the main dwelling (Development already carried out.

RESOLVED: No Objection

(Prop: Cllr Brown, Sec: Cllr Watson, all in favour)

24/01949/FUL, Dylwick Lodge Wick End, Erection of self-build dwelling, detached garage and installation of PV Panel array following the demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings.

RESOLVED: No Objection

Signed (Chairman)

(b) Report of Planning Applications:

There were no updates on previous planning applications.

Note

(c) Planning Responses

Defer to next meeting.

91/25 **FINANCE**

(a) Schedule of Receipts and Payments – April/May 2025, **Appendix C.**

The Council received the schedule of receipts and payments made during April and May 2025.

LGA 1972,
s150 (6)

RESOLVED

To approve the schedule of receipts and payments for April and May 2025

(b) Annual Return

The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer reported that the financial accounts for the financial year 2024-2025 had been subject to internal audit. A copy of the Internal Audit Report had been previously circulated and had confirmed that the financial position is correctly stated and that the Parish Council appears to be well run, effectively and efficiently organised and meets the various legislative and other standards required of it.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Internal Audit Report for the year ended 31 March 2024 be acknowledged, Appendix D

(Prop: Cllr Brown, Cllr Taylor, All in favour)

Annual Return 2024/2025: Section 1 Annual Governance Statement, APPENDIX E

Parish Councillors considered Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement for the year ending 31 March 2025.

Parish Councillors confirmed their responsibility for ensuring a sound system of internal control including the preparation of the accounting statements by answering “Yes” to the relevant section of the Annual Return.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Governance Statement (at Section 1 of the Annual Return) for the year ended 31 March 2025 be approved.

(Prop: Cllr Watson, Cllr Taylor, All in favour)

Annual Return 2024/2025: Section 2 Accounting Statements, APPENDIX F

The meeting considered the Accounting Statements, Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2025 (circulated prior to the meeting) which identified a total balance at year end of £25,518 compared to the balance brought forward as at 31 March 2024 of £31,650.

In accordance with Regulation 15(2) of the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015, the Parish Council will make available the financial statements and other documents for public inspection for a period of 30 working days which must include the first 10 working days of July and, as such, it had been determined that the notice of the period for the exercise of public rights must be displayed showing information is available for inspection from 3 June 2025 to 14 July 2025. Arrangements for the public inspection would, therefore, be made in line with these timescales.

RESOLVED

That The Accounting Statements (at Section 2 of the Annual Return) for the year ended 31 March 2025 be approved.

(Prop: Cllr Taylor, Cllr Brown, All in favour)

(c) Budget Update 31 March 2025

The year end Budget Update for 31 March 2025 was circulated and attached at **Appendix G**.

Note

RESOLVED

To acknowledge the Budget Update for 31 March 2025.

(Prop: Cllr Dickson, Cllr Taylor, All in favour)

Reserves 31 March 2025

Reserves held are for the following projects:

**£31,390 CIL Money (Extension of pavement to A422)
£1,200 Pension (Agreed at £84.55 per year 2011)
£5,000 Play Equipment
£10,000 Public Open Space Reserve
£1,200 Defibrillator
Total Reserve £48,790**

92/25 Amenities

(a) Play Areas

The pigeon spikes had been installed on the top of the swings and seemed to be working.

(c) Rights of Way/Footpaths – No update

(d) Highways

Borough Councillors to report overgrown hedges and trees along the A428.

DS/RR

93/25 NEW MATTERS FROM COUNCILLORS FOR DISCUSSION AT NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

- Neighbourhood Plan
- 30mph extension to A422
- New Defib case and Defibrillator, Note Borough Councillors offered to contribute to Defib case.

94/25 CORRESPONDENCE, APPENDIX F

See Correspondence List attached.

Signed (Chairman)

Meeting closed at 8.45pm. The next Parish Council meeting will be held on
Monday 14 July 2025, at 7.30pm.

MINUTES AGREED: _____ **Date:** _____ **2025**

APPENDIX A

Borough Councillor Monthly Report – April 2025

- **Universal Developments/Wixams Station**

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.

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.

- **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.

Signed (Chairman)

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.

- **Stability Plan 2025/26**

Bedford Borough Council has launched a new Stability Plan 2025–2030 to address the financial pressures facing the Borough and a sustainable future. The Council is facing a projected £33 million funding gap over the next five years with significant increases in service demand, particularly in Adult and Children’s Social Care, inflation, rising contractual costs, and the upcoming Government-mandated Business Rates Reset in 2026, which alone is expected to reduce the Borough’s income by £10 million annually.

The Stability Plan sets out five main areas of focus: modernising service delivery to make services more efficient and resident-focused; ensuring value for money through comprehensive service reviews; maximising income and commercial potential; strengthening financial governance around projects and reserves; and investing in prevention and workforce development to reduce long-term costs. Key steps include reviewing non-statutory service charges, reassessing procurement and commissioning practices, and investing in technology to drive efficiencies.

The MTFS outlines the financial forecast through to 2030, confirming that while the situation is serious, it is manageable with disciplined action. Expert advice, including advice from Theresa Grant OBE, has helped to shape these plans to align with national best practices.

- **GPs**

Bedford Borough Council has approved plans to build a new, purpose-designed GP surgery in Great Barford to meet the needs of the growing local community and improve healthcare access in rural parts of the Borough. The new facility will be constructed on Silver Street, on the site of the former primary school, and will replace the existing surgery, which currently operates from a converted bungalow that is no longer fit for purpose.

The new GP surgery will be able to accommodate a larger patient list and offer modern, accessible facilities, including space specifically intended for training future GPs. The project is part of a wider programme aimed at upgrading primary care services across Bedford Borough, with similar developments progressing in Kempston, Wixams, and Wootton.

The estimated total cost of the Great Barford project is £3.43 million.

- **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.

- **Deichmann Opening**

A major investment has been secured for Bedford Town Centre, with Deichmann, Europe’s largest shoe retailer, moving into the former Next building. This £750,000 investment marks another step forward in the ongoing regeneration of the Town Centre, supporting the vision of creating a vibrant and thriving Bedford for the future.

Crime Statistics

Police UK Category	Crime Sub Category	Offence Start Date	Recorded Date	Offence	Address 1
Criminal Damage and Arson	CRIMINAL DAMAGE	20/04/2025	21/04/2025	CRIMINAL DAMAGE TO A VEHICLE	A422,BEDFORD ROAD
Vehicle Crime	THEFT FROM A VEHICLE	31/03/2025	01/04/2025	THEFT FROM A MOTOR VEHICLE	Bedford Road
Vehicle Crime	THEFT OR UNAUTH TAKING OF A MOTOR VEH	15/04/2025	15/04/2025	THEFT OR UNAUTH TAKING OF A MOTOR VEH	

Income & Expenditure April/May2025

Stagsden Parish Council		+ account	
Bank	63622.05	400.00	64,022.05
Totals	5,063.94	1,811.65	

Date	Current A/C	Income	Expenditure	Payee/From	Detail
1.4.25	60369.76				
14.4.25		5000		Bedford Borough Council	Precept
17.4.25			120.00	DM Payroll Services	payroll admin
9.5.25			753.01	Gallagher Insurance	Insurance
9.5.25			100.00	Eyelid Information	Website
9.5.25			47.00	Commissioner	GDPR/Data
9.5.25			216.82	Julie Betts	Protection Cert
9.5.25			54.00	Julie Betts	April salary
9.5.25			216.82	Julie Betts	HMRC April
9.5.25			54.00	Julie Betts	May salary
9.5.25			250.00	Julie Betts	HMRC May
		63.94	63,558.11	Julie Betts	Home office
			63,622.05	Nat West	Interest

Signed (Chairman)

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Stagsden Parish Council

www.stagsden-pc.gov.uk PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2024/25 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			✓
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick 'not covered')			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

30/04/2025

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Carol Carter

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date

30 April 25

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Signed (Chairman)

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

Stagsden Parish Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025, that:

	Agreed		Yes means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

Clerk


Chair

Clerk

www.stagsden-pc.gov.uk PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

Signed (Chairman)

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

Stagsden Parish Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	31,500	25,518	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	10,000	10,300	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	9,997	41,306	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	3,479	3,571	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	22,649	12,783	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	25,518	60,770	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	25,518	60,770	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	25,799	23,449	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



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



as recorded in minute reference:



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



Signed (Chairman)

12

Stagsden Parish Council

Brought forward

25117.94

Budget Update as at 31.3.25

Budget

Actual

Receipts		
VAT	0	176.73
CIL	0	31,390.80
Interest	10	763.87
Precept	10000	10,300.00
Grants	0	0.00
Councillor funding	0	8,250.00
Allotments	600	600.00
Refund from Insurance		124.60
Total Receipts	10610	51,606.00
Payments		
VAT		176.73
Election Costs	300	0.00
Staff costs (Salary/Expenses)	3580	3,570.76
Admin (Stationery & Postage)	210	25.60
Councillor expenses	100	0.00
Training	50	0.00
Subscriptions	250	3.00
Hall Hire	100	0.00
Village Hall	750	0.00
Grass Cut	500	540.00
S137/Community Action	250	0.00
Allotments	600	853.08
Bank Charges	50	25.00
Legal Fees	120	35.00
Audit	400	355.00
Insurance	700	815.48
Play Areas	1000	19.99
Open Space	400	30.45
Maintenance of village furniture	200	29.97
Defibrillator	150	63.95
Stagsden Historical Society	400	400.00
Councillor grants	200	9,310.18
Website	300	99.99
Total Payments	10610	16,354.18
carry forward		60,369.76
Current account		400.00
		60,769.76

Signed (Chairman)

Correspondence Received

22.4.25	Recycling	Bedford Borough Council	Bulky Waste
22.4.25	Diane Malley	Payroll provider	Updates for new year
22.4.25	Mazars	Auditor	Audit documents