

STANFORD RIVERS PARISH COUNCIL

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Adriana Jones
Clerk to the Council

TO: ALL COUNCILLORS

You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of the **Parish Council** which will be held on **Thursday 8th January 2026** in the **Toot Hill Village Hall**, Toot Hill at **5.30pm** to transact the business shown in the agenda below.



Adriana Jones, Clerk to the Council
 2nd January 2026

AGENDA

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

To **RECEIVE** questions from members of the public at **5.30pm**.

In accordance with an agreed procedure, the time allocated for public questions shall be limited to 10 minutes or such other period determined by the Chairman of the Meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To **RECEIVE** any apologies for absence.

2. OTHER ABSENCES

To **NOTE** any absences for which no apology has been received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To **RECEIVE** any Declarations of Interest by Members.

Any Member with a personal interest in a matter must consider whether it is a Disclosable Pecuniary, Non Pecuniary or Other Pecuniary Interest, and declare it accordingly. A Member who is unsure as to how to declare their interest should seek independent advice.

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To **APPROVE**, as a correct record, the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 13th November 2025.

5. MEMBERS REPORTS

To receive brief reports from Members and to **RECEIVE** any questions emanating from those reports:

- Chairman's Report
- Vice Chairman's Report
- District and County Councillor Reports
- Parish Councillors Reports

6. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

On 19th November 2025, the Government launched its public consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals, asking members of the public and interested parties for their opinions. The consultation specifically wants responses from Parish and Town Councils. The consultation ends on 11th January 2026. Originally, Devolution was scheduled to take place prior to LGR, however on 4th December the Government announced this would change, with LGR taking place prior to Devolution. Attached to the agenda is a summary of Devolution and LGR, containing links to the relevant documents. Councillors are asked to **CONSIDER** and **AGREE** their response to the current consultation.

7. FINGER POSTS

To receive an update on the order of two finger posts as agreed at the November meeting.

8. STANFORD RIVERS SIGN

To receive an update on the creation of a sign to be located on Jubilee Green, and to agree a date to meet to agree the exact location and direction of the sign.

9. BUDGET / PRECEPT 2025/2026

Councillors are asked to **CONSIDER** the budget, and subsequently the precept, for 2026/2027. This will be completed on a 'live' basis during the meeting. Councillors are asked to contact the Clerk prior to meeting if they have something specific they would like to be considered. The District Council has asked to be notified of the Precept request by **31st January 2026**.

Councillors are asked to note that for the current year (2025/2026) the Parish Council element of the Precept for a band D property is £60.58 (£1.16 a week). The calculation to get to this is the amount the Council request in precept divided by the tax base (no. of houses EFDC is expecting to collect council tax from), which for this current year was as follows: £23,462 / 387.30 = £60.58. The tax base for 2026/2027 has decreased to 382. If the Parish Council wishes to show a NIL increase in the parish council element of Council tax for next year, the maximum amount the Council can demand of EFDC in terms of precept would be £23,141.56 (£23,141.56 / 382 = £60.58).

Councillors are also asked to note that to date, no referendum principles have been set for town and parish councils by Government, and this approach has been contingent on town and parish councils taking all available steps to mitigate the need for council tax increases. The government proposes to continue with this approach, and reminds these authorities to carefully consider the impact of their precepts on taxpayers.

Councillors will be asked to **CONSIDER** the 2026/2027 budget and precept. Some of the main points for consideration include:

- Changing from Gas to Electricity in terms of energy supply
- Toot Hill Village Hall income and expenditure
- Grant funding awarded to the church
- Grounds maintenance contract
- Facilitating online and remote meeting access
- Any future projects
- First Aid / Defib training 2026/2027
- More Chairs for the village hall
- Annual Subscription to EALC / CouncilWise

The Clerk will provide an update on these matters at the meeting.

10. CLERKS REPORT

To **RECEIVE** the oral report of the Clerk on matters which may be of current interest to Members and which require a formal update, and to **RECEIVE** such correspondence and communication as the Clerk may place before the Council, which at the time of printing the agenda includes the following:

- Possible postponement of local elections in 2026
- Neither of the proposed schemes (Jubilee sign or music club) met the criteria for the CIF grant funding.
- Government Consultation on changes to the NPPF – deadline 10th March 2026. [National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK](#)

11. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

To **RECEIVE** an update on the Stanford Rivers Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

12. ONGAR COMMUNITY NETWORK

A new local 'emergency plan-type' initiative has been launched called 'Ongar Community Network', and is being managed by the local news and information service Everything Epping Forest with the endorsement of Ongar Town Council. Attached to the agenda is a summary of this new group – a volunteer and information service for Ongar and the surrounding areas (High Ongar, Moreton, Willingale, Fyfield and Stanford Rivers). OCN is currently gathering contact information of people willing to help in an emergency, perhaps bad weather - flooding or storms - during or after a major fire, or during long periods of power or water supply issues. Councillors are asked to **CONSIDER** this group, and what action / information they wish to take / provide.

13. VEHICULAR SPEEDING AND SAFETY MATTERS IN THE PARISH

1. **Community Speedwatch** - To receive an update on matters concerning the Community Speedwatch Programme.
 2. **Lorries School Road / Stewarts Farm** – Councillors will recall the Parish Council has been involved with this matter for the last 6-12 months, the latest being that Councillors and/or residents were asked to keep a diary of lorry movements if they felt businesses on Stewarts Farm were going beyond their permitted use. The Clerk received notification from a local resident that they had raised the matter directly with Alex Burghart MP. The issue he raised is that he believes whilst there are several legitimate
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businesses operating from the old farm buildings, most of these lorries are not connected with those businesses and head out every day. Several of them are multi-wheeled and occupy so much of the road that they or any vehicles they meet are forced to mount the verge. Additionally they now see that the weight of these vehicles is depressing the sides of the road and cracks are appearing in the surface in the middle. Alex Burghart contacted EFDC who responded as follows:

Planning Enforcement investigated the site earlier this year after the Council received a complaint that there were a number of lorries on site. The enforcement officers findings were that the previous planning permission does not restrict the amount of lorries allowed on the site. If there are more lorries then this needs to be reported to VOSA by the complainant, as they will need company names and vehicle details. This were reported to the parish clerk. Should the resident consider further works have taken place then they should report a suspected breach via the Councils website so a new investigation can be opened - <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/planning-and-building/report-a-planning-breach/>

The resident advised they will complete a lorry count and report on the relevant website, and would keep the Clerk informed.

3. **HGV Sign damaged Mutton Row** – (Ref: 2990839) – local contractor asked to look at this sign.
4. **Impassable Footway between Little End and Marden Ash** (Ref 2994272) – Cllr McIvor has not responded to the Clerk request to take this matter further.
5. **Damaged Sign Blake Hall Road** – The Clerk had reported to ECC (Ref: 4009104) that the signs on the location on Blake Hall Road bend where the accident took place and the young person died had still not been repaired, and the flowers remained in place. Given it had been well over 6 months since the accident, and considering how dangerous this bend was, the Clerk asked ECC to remove the flowers and fix the signs to try and stop another accident taking place. The response received from ECC is that 'We have risk assessed this enquiry and determined that it does not need immediate action'. Councillors are asked if they wish to take any further action regarding this matter.

14. HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

The final report following the recent Housing Needs Survey that was conducted late 2025 for the entire parish of Stanford Rivers has now been received. A summary of the main findings from this report are as follows:

- Response Rate: 6% (below the Essex average of 25%), with 18 households participating.
- Local Need Identified: 4 households expressed a need to move within five years. Of these, 3 completed Part 2 of the survey and wished to remain in Stanford Rivers. All 3 provided sufficient information to enable a full assessment of their housing need.
- Affordability Challenges: Local property prices significantly exceed what many residents can afford, particularly with low incomes.
- Community Support: 67% of respondents support a small development (8 - 10 homes) for local people, however, concerns about the village roads, local amenities and the character of the countryside were noted.

The Executive Summary from the Housing Needs Survey states that 3 homes for affordable rent homes (1 & 2 bedrooms) were identified. However, the report states it's important to take this information alongside the evidence of residents on the housing register, suggesting that there is more need than the survey suggests. The report therefore offers a recommendation for a balanced sustainable scheme of 10 homes for local need, as follows.

- 4 x 1 bed (Affordable Rent)
- 4 x 2 bed house (Affordable Rent)
- 2 x 3 bed house (Affordable Rent)

A copy of the full report is available for Councillors information if so requested. Councillors are now asked how they wish to progress this matter.

15. FIRST AID TRAINING

In January 2025, a very successful first aid training course was funded by the Parish Council. Councillors agreed to consider running another course, and budgeted for this. Councillors are asked to **CONSIDER** if they wish to run another course in the first quarter of 2026, subject to there being sufficient interest.

16. CODE OF CONDUCT

In December 2025, EFDC adopted a new Code of Conduct, based on the based on the Model Councillor Code of Conduct developed by the Local Government Association (LGA). A copy of this is attached to the agenda. Councillors are asked **CONSIDER** the adoption of this new Code of Conduct.

17. ASSERTION 10 AGAR

From the 2025/26 financial year, Parish and Town Councils must complete a new section in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) called Assertion 10: Digital and Data Compliance. This assertion confirms that the council is meeting modern digital, data protection, and accessibility standards. In practical terms, Assertion 10 requires councils to:

- Use a council-owned (preferably .gov.uk) domain for the official website and for all councillor and staff email addresses.
- Operate an accessible website that meets current accessibility regulations (WCAG 2.2 AA).
- Comply with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, ensuring personal data is processed lawfully and securely.
- Recognise and fulfil the council's role as a Data Controller, with appropriate policies and procedures in place.
- Publish required documents under the Freedom of Information Act and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities.
- Have appropriate IT and email management policies to support secure and compliant digital operations.

The Clerk has been working on these matters over recent months, however the following is required to ensure the Council is able to confirm it is working towards compliance:

- Training for Councillors on Data Protection and Compliance (Clerk to provide update)
- Adoption of IT Policy (to be considered and adopted at the March meeting)

18. GIGACLEAR

Cllr Jackson has asked that the matter of Gigaclear contract renewals with other options be placed on the agenda. Cllr Jackson to provide an update.

19. PLANNING APPLICATIONS & MATTERS

- a. Councillors are asked to **CONSIDER** the following matters:

1. To CONSIDER any planning applications submitted to the Parish Council for comment as detailed below		
EPF/2589/25 LB	Stewarts Farm House, School Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PT	Grade II Listed Building Consent for replacement windows. https://eppingforestdc.my.site.com/pr/s/planning-application/a0hTv00000EXK4j
EPF/1194/25 Full	28, Wayletts, London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9QD	Change of industrial use (B2 Use Class) land to leisure, with introduction of 3 new padel courts with flood lights. https://eppingforestdc.my.site.com/pr/s/planning-application/a0hTv000008bGZ4
EPF/2492/25 Full	Land At Stewarts Farm, School Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PT	Proposed change of use and siting of cabin for short-term tourist accommodation. https://eppingforestdc.my.site.com/pr/s/planning-application/a0hTv00000EBoHa
2. To NOTE any planning applications that have been responded to via the Clerks delegated powers		
NIL		
3. To NOTE any planning applications upon which EFDC do not accept comments		
EPF/2588/25 DRC	Maybanks Farm, Epping Road, Ongar, CM5 9SQ	Approval of Details Reserved by Condition 2 Drainage of EPF/0578/25 (Agricultural steel portal frame Hay storage Barn).
EPF/2592/25 DRC	22, Murrells Farm, London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9QE	Approval of Details Reserved by Conditions 3 Regulation 77, 4 Foul Water Disposal, 5 Details of materials and 6 EVP's of EPF/0522/24 (Change of use from agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses).
4. To NOTE any other planning matters		

<p>1. Appeal: 22, Murrells Farm, London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar. Appeal against refusal of application EPF/0960/25 for the demolition of a former farm building granted change of use to residential and the erection of a new dwelling to a similar mass and footprint. The Parish Council supported this application. Written representations. APP/J1535/W/25/3375933. Deadline 22/1/26</p> <p>2. EFDC Committee: EPF/1216/25 FPP Proposed Solar Farm at Land East of Tawney Common, Theydon Mount, Epping, will be considered at EFDC Planning Committee B on 21st January 2026.</p> <p>3. Mobile Phone Upgrade: Pre-planning notification consultation for a mobile phone base station upgrade at CS_13697264, Land at Ongar, North Weald, CM16 6GQ. The site is needed to provide enhanced 2G, 4G and 5G coverage and capacity for VMO2 to ensure that its customers experience access to the latest technologies currently available. The upgrade will also meet the extra demands on the network in this area as new technologies improve increasing the demand for 4G & 5G technologies. Site is just south of the EOR line.</p>			
5. To <i>NOTE</i> any planning decisions by EFDC			
EPF/1970/25	12, Surrywood, London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PH	Removal of existing attached side garage and its replacement with a side extension and gable roof, construction of two front-facing dormer windows and one rear dormer, addition of new front porch and infill of recessed front	<i>3/12/25 Approved with Conditions PC had no objection</i>
EPF/2108/25	22, Murrells Farm, London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9QE	Prior Approval for change of use of agricultural building into two new dwellings.	<i>10/12/25 Refused – numerous non compliance reasons PC had no concerns</i>
EPF/1941/25 DRC	22, Murrells Farm, London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9QE	Approval of Details Reserved by Conditions 3 Regulation 77, 4 Foul Water Disposal, 5 Details of materials and 6 EVP's of EPF/0522/24 (Change of use from agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses).	<i>17/12/25 Split Partially approved PC unable to comment</i>

20. TOOT HILL VILLAGE HALL

- a) Solar Panels – Works to complete EIC certificate following installation of solar panels scheduled for 8th January 2026. As previously advised via email, the Smart Meter was unable to be installed on 16th December, however the Clerk has now rescheduled this for 19th January. No response yet from the post office in registering address of the hall.
- b) Five Year electrical Inspection – resultant works to remedy the issues found at the five year inspection have been scheduled to take place w/c 5th January. This includes establishing why two of the lighting columns at the entrance to the hall are not working, and continue to cause issues.
- c) Fire extinguisher service schedule for Friday 2nd January 2026.
- d) Regular hirer for Friday mornings has now moved to a location closer to home.
- e) Gigaclear free internet service due for renewal February 2026 – Clerk has completed the relevant renewal forms.
- f) Ceiling Tiles - Unfortunately the ceiling tiles in the garage are too small and do not fit the current ceiling, which are bespoke tiles. The Clerk will provide an update at the meeting.
- g) Calor Gas / Gas Tank / Boiler – Councillors are asked to consider if they still wish to continue using Calor Gas, or if they wish to move to an electrical boiler. The Clerk will provide a further update at the meeting.

- h) EDF Electricity Costs – The clerk has written to EDF Energy requesting they conduct an urgent investigation into the electricity costs being charged for the hall. The Clerk will provide an update at the meeting.

21. FINANCIAL REPORTS

To Approve payments, and to note the current status of accounts:

Reference	To	For	Amount
BACS	Adriana Jones	Clerks Salary Dec 2025 & Jan 2026	£1,167.92
BACS	HMRC	PAYE Dec 2025 & Jan 2026	£292.00
BACS	HMRC	Employers NI Dec 2025 & Jan 2026	£93.88
BACS	D Wickham	THVH Cleaning and phone box tidy Nov & Dec 2025	£230.00
BACS	CloudNext	Hosting of email services	£59.98 (VAT £9.99)

Bank Balances as at 31st December 2025

Unity Current Account 4775	£ 2,194.29
Unity Deposit Account 4788	£ 37,633.35

INCOME:

- £ 211.90 – Interest Deposit Account
- £ 98.00 - Pilates Sep & Oct (10/11)
- £ 35.75 –Ongar Young Farmers Sep (18/11)
- £ 70.00 - Essex Silk Painters Nov (U000069 24/11)
- £ 144.00 – Including Sport hire First Aid / Band Practice (4/12)
- £ 228.80 – Folk Club hire Sep-Dec (4/12)
- £ 212.00 – Hill Antiques event Jan (9/12).
- £ 70.00 – Essex Silk Painters (U000070 10/12)
- £ 232.00 – EFDC Hire May Elections (19/12)
- £ 28.60 – Ongar Young Farmers hire Jan (23/12)

- b. To review the bank reconciliation up to 31st December 2025 alongside the bank statements.

22. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS/EVENTS

Councillors are asked to **NOTE** the date of the next meetings:

- 8th January 2025
- 19th March 2025 (note this is the third Thursday in the month)
- 14th May 2025
- **16th July 2025 (note date change)**
- 10th September 2025
- 12th November 2025

23. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

To put forward any items for the next meeting, or to keep on the agenda.