

Annual Meeting of the Parish

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish
held at the Village Hall, Stokeinteignhead
on Tuesday, 26 May 2026 at 7.45 p.m.

Present:

Twelve electors of the Parish.

The following minutes will be considered for approval at the next meeting of the Annual Parish Meeting and may be subject to change until that time.

Part I

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING, COUNCILLOR APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

The Chairman of the Parish Council welcomed all those present.

There were no Councillor apologies.

2. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 6 APRIL 2025

Resolved by those present and voting that the minutes be approved and signed as a correct and accurate record.

3. PRESENTATION BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DEVON RESILIENCE INNOVATION PROJECT

An informative presentation was given by representatives of the Devon Resilience Innovation Project (DRIP) on works completed to date to mitigate flooding in the village.

The full presentation can be viewed on the Parish Council's website.

Those present thanked the representatives for an insightful presentation.

4. RETIRING CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The retiring Chair, Councillor Carol French opened with thanks to fellow councillors for their help and support during the year, noting that the council had worked effectively as a team and that members had each brought different skills to parish business. Special thanks were also extended to her Vice Chairman Councillor Karl Pedersen for his support through the year, and to the Clerk for his guidance during meetings and his work behind the scenes. The report described the year as busy but rewarding and highlighted the value of councillors attending outside meetings and training sessions to strengthen the council's knowledge and capacity.

The annual review then summarised key activity across the parish. VE Day had been marked in May with a church service, a meal at the pub, and beacon lighting in the evening, which was described as a successful event. The council had considered a range of planning applications over the year, from small matters to more contemporary schemes, with environmental considerations remaining a central factor in the council's approach. Routine maintenance had continued at the village green at Pools Weir, and buddle holes and drains had been kept clear across the parish, including additional clearance work paid for by the Parish Council.

Flooding remained a priority, with works at the lower end of the village now completed. The report also highlighted continued commitment to environmental matters and biodiversity, with specific thanks to Councillor Dot Simmons for leading that area of work. Efforts had also continued to improve emergency vehicle access in lanes where sat-nav systems could direct vehicles incorrectly, although it was acknowledged that this issue had not yet been fully resolved.

The retiring Chair also reported progress on the restoration of the Linhay in Deane Road. New oak supports had been installed to replace the old front timbers, and thatching work was due to start at the beginning of June, identified in the meeting as the following Monday.

The report closed with further thanks to everyone who had contributed during the year and with disappointment that attendance at the meeting was again low, despite the amount of work undertaken on behalf of the parish.

3. PUBLIC SESSION

Residents opened with concern about the very limited turnout and questioned whether the meeting had been advertised widely enough or early enough. It was suggested that publicity needed to start two or three weeks in advance and rely not only on Facebook and the parish website but also on larger, more visible notices around the village.

Councillors responded that posters had been put up at several village locations, the notice had appeared on Facebook thirteen days prior, and the website had carried the information, but accepted that the same people often saw those channels repeatedly while others remained unaware. The discussion ended with agreement in principle that future publicity should use every available route more consistently.

The conversation then widened into a broader reflection on public participation. Some present felt that attendance tended to remain low unless a problem arose, while others noted that residents often preferred to raise concerns informally in the village rather than speak at a meeting. Councillors reiterated that matters are easier to progress when concerns are sent to the Clerk in writing, since

informal conversations could be forgotten and did not always provide a clear route for action. At the same time, residents pointed out that not everyone was comfortable putting concerns in writing or speaking publicly, which was recognised as an ongoing challenge for community engagement.

A resident asked for an update on the previously raised problem of ambulances and other emergency vehicles being directed up Ridge Road and becoming stuck. The response given was that the police had been contacted but had not yet replied, while Devon County Council had explained that the road ends were classed as Category 11 and the adjoining sections as Category 9 because of the properties served, whereas the middle section remained Category 11 as it mainly accessed fields and agricultural properties. County had also advised that upgrading the middle section would require substantial works and that available money would be better spent elsewhere on the lower-category network.

Further detail was then provided on sat-nav routing. County had said that the main mapping systems had already been updated and that both Google Maps and Waze no longer directed traffic along that route, with screenshots supplied to show the preferred route via Higher Gabwell. The remaining problem was said to lie mainly with older in-car systems and stand-alone GPS devices. Residents stressed that, despite that progress, the issue still posed a potentially serious risk if an ambulance was delayed at a critical moment, and the council noted that the concern had now been formally logged with the relevant authority.

The discussion moved on to whether any further practical steps could be taken. One suggestion was to contact the ambulance service directly to confirm that its own systems were up to date and would not still direct crews incorrectly, particularly as non-local crews might be unfamiliar with the area. There was also renewed discussion about warning signage, including whether the parish could fund a sign itself, but this was explained to be more complicated than it first appeared because only a limited set of compliant sign types could be used, the wording previously proposed had been incorrect, and siting required proper approval and positioning. The parish's focus remained on preventing emergency vehicle misdirection while continuing to press highways for support.

Another resident raised concern about works near Lower Gabwell, referring to excavation activity, stables, and the installation of a very large septic tank. The reply was that the residents concerned had already been directed towards Teignbridge and advised to contact their District ward councillor so that the issue could be pursued internally. It was also acknowledged that responsibility appeared unclear between planning and environmental functions, and that there remained uncertainty over whether any formal breach had actually occurred or whether the works might fall within permitted development.

The final substantial strand of public discussion centred on the restored Linhay. Residents praised the recent repair works, including the new oak supports and imminent thatching, and asked what use would now be made of the building. The Chair emphasised that, after significant expenditure, the Council did not want to impose a solution without parish input and wanted the village to help shape the next stage. Suggestions included an earlier dedicated meeting on the Linhay, a display of village history, a plaque explaining the structure and its 2026 restoration, seating, exhibition use for walkers, vintage machinery if safety could be addressed, and links to the village poetry trail. The discussion also noted the practical need to clear out the remaining salt, repaint the rear wall, replace the sand, and manage the way leaves and debris quickly blow back into the space.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.38 p.m.

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Cllr Karl Pedersen
CHAIRMAN – STOKEINTEIGNHEAD PARISH COUNCIL