

# *Stanford Rivers PARISH COUNCIL*

## MINUTES

**Meeting:** PARISH COUNCIL

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Time:** 5.30pm

Toot Hill Village Hall, Toot Hill Road, Toot Hill, Essex

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### **PRESENT:**

**Councillors (6)** Cllr Glover (Chairman), Cllr Jackson, Cllr Adams, Cllr Saridja, Cllr Mrs Jackman  
Cllr Hollington

**Also in Attendance (1)** - Adriana Jones – Clerk

**Members of the Public (3)** – Inc EFDC Cllr Amos, and ECC Cllr Mclvor

**Members of the Press (1)**

### **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The Councils Grounds maintenance contractor was present, and advised that he had recently seen in another location a novel way to keep unwanted people off a grass area which included letting the grass grow around the perimeter of an area, but keeping the grass within it short. This gave the illusion of the grass being overgrown. You could even sprinkle some wildflowers into the mix. This may be a good idea to trial on Sharps Green, as it could act as a deterrent for people driving over the green. Councillors felt that this was a good idea that could perhaps be trialled next year, and should go on a future agenda to formally consider.

He also stated that the two trees on the green could do with being raised off the ground. In addition, the hedge behind the phone box in Toot Hill was being pushed further out every month. The Clerk confirmed she would have a look and advise.

### **P14.1225 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr Tallon.

### **P14.1226 OTHER ABSENCES**

None.

### **P14.1227 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **P14.1228 CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLOR**

Councillors noted that Mrs Jackman had expressed an interest in being co-opted, and it was Proposed by Cllr Hollington, and Seconded by Cllr Glover that Mrs Jackman be co-opted as Councillor for Stanford Rivers Parish Council. This was unanimously **AGREED**. Cllr Mrs Jackman signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the meeting.

### **P14.1229 MINUTES**

Councillors **APPROVED** the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024, and noted the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2024.

### **P14.1230 MEMBERS REPORTS**

- Chairman's Report – The Chairman confirmed that himself, Cllr Jackson and the Clerk had met with the building and Solar Panel contractors who were supporting this Council with works to the Village Hall. He felt their knowledge and expertise were first class, and had been extremely helpful so far to this Council.
- Vice Chairman's Report – No report.
- District and County Councillor reports – EFDC Cllr Amos was present and advised that the new planning arrangements at EFDC would come into effect in October. This would consist of two committees – A and B – which would meet of the first and third Wednesday of each month, and advised that the new arrangements meant that ward councillors were unable to take part in the decision making process or voting on applications within their own ward, however could address the committee and express their views or clarify matters. He advised he would share the terms of reference for the committees once he gets them. The Chairman asked what the rationale was behind this, to which Cllr Amos advised that the PAS report suggested that ward councillors were taking a far too parochial view on things, however he

# *Stanford Rivers PARISH COUNCIL*

felt that the PAS did not back this up with evidence. The Chairman asked if there was a vote on this, to which Cllr Amos advised there was, and it was lost. Cllr Amos advised that when the PAS representative addressed Councillors, they did state that it was important parish council views were heard. This is not a very democratic step, as it is local Councils have the most intimate knowledge about their own areas.

Cllr Amos also touched on the recent Solar Farm application at Berwick Lane, stating that at Prime Ministers Question Time the previous day, somebody had raised the point regarding solar farm applications stating that it was the developer who assesses the quality of the agricultural land, and that this shouldn't be the case – it should be an independent body.

ECC Cllr Mclvor advised that he fully supported Clive, and thought it was a disgrace that ward councillors were unable to vote on applications in their own ward, and that everybody he had spoken to so far supported his point of view. Residents elect ward councillors to represent them, and to lobby and state what's important to them. The EFDC constitution makes it clear that District Councillors have a responsibility to the overall district, but a special duty to their own wards. They have now removed the right to vote, and have complete power. The ability of ward councillors to speak is actually at the discretion of the Council, and he could not think of another Council where this was the case. District Councillors were advised this step was needed as there was a realistic prospect of EFDC losing their powers regarding planning, however he recently found out they had already gone past the 10% threshold. Cllr Mclvor stated that the perception of the public was that this was ridiculous, especially as ward councillors were still able to input and get involved in so many other community matters. He advised that as a District Councillor for Ongar, he would be happy to listen to, and support were appropriate, this Parish Council. He stated that there seemed to be an obsession with the fact that EFDC Councillors were making bad decisions, however this simply was not the case, and that a more balanced Council would in fact make better decisions. The Chairman advised that support with both the Solar Farm application and London Hoist would be helpful.

Cllr Mclvor reported that the Ride-London event would not be taking place in Essex in 2025, and that this was not a decision by ECC, but Ride-London's choice. Funding for community groups for activities that encourage young people to participate in activities such as sport clubs, etc, is still available, and it is worth having a look at. Cllr Jackson asked what would happen with the potholes this year if the event wasn't being run, to which Cllr Mclvor stated that the County had changed a lot in the Highway division, with Councillors having more power in prioritising what work should be done. If there are defects that have been present for a long time, Cllr Mclvor is able to direct crews to complete this work when they are in his division. Cllr Hollington asked how this should be done, to which Cllr Mclvor suggested the best way forward was to first report them to ECC and obtain a reference number, and send these reference numbers to him and he can make them a priority. Cllr Mclvor advised that the roundabout on the corner of Stanford Rivers and Ongar parishes was in the design phase to have work done, and that developers would be paying for it. Cllr Mclvor also advised that if Councillors had a specific issue they should contact him directly. ECC also had an emergency out of hours services which was very useful.

Cllr Mclvor advised that he had a Councillor allowance to spend and would be happy to support a parish project for the cost of £500. It was suggested the flower boxes by the gateway signs would be a good project. Cllr Mclvor advised that he had been told that parishes should simply get on with doing maintenance on highway land. He also advised that he was looking at what value the County was getting in terms of the services offered by Ringway Jacobs.

- Parish Councillor reports – Cllr Adams advised that there was an article on the website regarding the Solar Farm application that needs updating. It was noted that the PC no longer used Twitter, and that this should be removed from the website as a link. There was also an issue with updating PHP which is an application language which it out of date on the website, and an email has been sent to the website provider to try and clarify what needs to be done.

## **P14.1231 CLERKS COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE REPORT**

Members **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the Clerk as follows:

- Ride London not happening 2025 as reported earlier.
- Hedge along A113 – received a report at the Toot Hill Village show from a local farmer that the hedge by the narrow section in Little End was protruding into the highway. Clerk visited site and saw no particular issue at this time, and liaised with Cllr Adams who agreed. The hedge was not presently encroaching onto the Highway, however Cllr Adams advised that the new resident had confirmed he would cut it back when needed. It was noted that it gives the impression of a narrow road, which will

# *Stanford Rivers PARISH COUNCIL*

slow the traffic down. Cllr Hollington said that if you get two lorries passing at this location, one will have to go onto the pavement.

- Liaison with neighbouring Parish Councils regarding this councils response to the Solar Farm application.
- EALC annual conference 26<sup>th</sup> September – speakers include Roger Hirst (Police, Fire, and Crime Commissioner), Charlotte Eisenhart (NALC), Christian Vincent (Worknest), David Ball (Cloudy IT), Andy Prophet – Deputy Chief Constable, Essex Police, and Mark Tomkins (Aubergine).
- Improvements to ECC reporting structure, including the ability to report urgent issues online, such as large potholes, fallen trees, or flooded roads, and an option to inform Essex Highways if a known issue has worsened, also a feature that allows users to sign up for updates regarding specific issues, and the ability for residents to upload defect photos enabling ECC to clearly distinguish between existing and new problems.
- Clerk liaising with email hosting provider regarding the .GOV domain hosting for email. Cost to host for one year is £46.92.
- EFDC Local Councils Liaison Committee Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 7pm.
- Christmas Lights have been ordered – Solar lights have been purchased, and the Clerk will place these on the tree this year, providing a cost saving. The cost was £69.10. The Council will need to reevaluate next year in terms of tree and lights.
- EFDC consultation on pavement licencing policy – deadline for responses 30<sup>th</sup> September.
- Complaint from resident following article in N&V about the idea of flowers and visual cues along the verges through Stanford Rivers. Clerk emailed and explained the situation, and after further emails provided the resident with Cllr Mclvor's contact details. Cllr Mclvor has contacted her directly, saying he would be very happy to meet with her to discuss this further.
- Dumped lorry left in Layby at Traceys farm – reported and now removed. Could not be removed for 14 days.
- Police CCTV Registration System for Kent and Essex – emailed to Councillors and placed on social media.
- ECC Community Initiatives Fund open - The CIF aims to empower local communities by offering financial assistance for both capital and revenue projects that improve and support the well-being of residents. For the upcoming year, a total of £300,000 has been allocated to the fund, with grants of up to £10,000 available to successful applicants. Panel convene December.
- Email from Stephen Lloyd Jones, Sustainable Transport Officer at EFDC. Clerk read out a summary.
- Essex Transport Strategy Consultation – closing date 22nd September – has been placed on social media.
- Current Consultation on the NPPF, deadline for which is 24th September 2024.
- Thursday 8th May 2025 80th Anniversary of VE Day – country encouraged to have community events.
- D Day. It was noted that some residents were not happy that the recent D-Day commemoration even was not publicised widely. The Clerk had hand delivered leaflets to all houses in the vicinity of the green.
- Sunday Times request for information about Speederbot for article
- Update published in July on the River Roding Project - <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/hnl/the-river-roding-project-information-page/>
- Notice Board in Toot Hill – front is broken, looks like somebody has hit it with a car – it is stable, but probably could do with being replaced with a bigger one. Will go onto budget to consider.

## **P14.1232 FIRST AID COURSE**

It was agreed at the May meeting to establish if there was appetite in the local community for anybody who may wish to take part in free First Aid / Defibrillator training, and if there was enough interest via an article in N&V to consider running a course, maximum 12 persons. It was noted that there were 13 residents who had expressed an interest in attending, including 2 from the Woodman. Cllr Jackson advised that both he and his wife wanted to attend. It had been agreed the Council would invite at least one from the Woodman, and that as such they could pay for the extra one person if they wanted to, and if there was space. It was **AGREED** to arrange for this to be organised.

## **P14.1233 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH**

No report.

## **P14.1234 VILLAGE ENHANCEMENTS FOR STANFORD RIVERS**

It was agreed at the July meeting that Councillors would consider the placing of planting near to the Gateway signs to Stanford Rivers. Councillors also need to consider the maintenance of this planting if it goes ahead. The Clerk advised that any planting would need to be low as the signs were quite low to the ground and the

# *Stanford Rivers PARISH COUNCIL*

signs could not be obstructed. Cllr Saridja suggested plastic flowers may be the answer, as it would not include any watering or maintenance costs. Cllr Mclvor stated that Fyfield Parish Council recently receiving funding for Village aesthetic improvements, and that he would be willing to do the same for Stanford Rivers. It was **AGREED** to move forward with this project, and that Cllr Saridja would provide details of the plastic flowers to the Clerk.

## **P14.1235 WORKING GROUPS**

### **1. Solar Panels at Village Hall Working Group**

As agreed, the Clerk, Chairman and Vice Chairman had met with representatives of the construction company that the Clerk has been liaising with to discuss the project further. There were a number of main points discussed, including:

- i. Need to complete some investigatory work to establish if the current roof structure is able to hold the weight of the solar panels.
- ii. If Solar Panels should go on both sides of the roof, and the costs and benefits of this
- iii. The need to possibly cut back the trees surrounding the village hall, to enable more light to come in.
- iv. The possibility of selling energy back to the grid (the supply would be linked via the existing supply at the hall).
- v. If the proposal with battery power was worth the cost.
- vi. The possibility of changing to an electric boiler, given the age of the gas tank.
- vii. The need to apply for a Prior Notification application to EFDC.
- viii. That works should take place in March 2025, and will last around 3-4 weeks.

Councillors noted that the Clerk had made the Prior Notification planning application to EFDC, the cost of which was £213.03, and was waiting for the contractor to provide a date on which the investigative works could take place on the hall to establish the suitability of the roof structure. There will be a cost to this investigative work. The Clerk advised that further information including a drawing of the hall roof were needed as part of the planning application, and that she had asked the solar panel provider if he could help with this. Councillors **AGREED** to the extra work needed.

### **2. CCTV at Village Hall**

The working group had yet to meet.

## **P14.1236 OPEN SPACES AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

- a) **Tree on Jubilee Green** – noted that the adjacent resident had watered the tree, and there was still some green life to it. It was noted that the wet winter season would be helpful, and as agreed it would be reviewed again in the Spring.
- b) **Cutting of Grass Areas** – It was noted that any areas that were owned by ECC that were previously being cut by the Parish Councils grounds maintenance contract had now ceased, and that the Clerk had asked ECC Cllr Mclvor to get involved with this matter. The response from ECC received from the Clerk was that Stanford Rivers Parish Council was not permitted to cut any ECC owned land. It had also been confirmed by the Councils insurance that there would be an issue of insurance cover if this grass was cut. Cllr Mclvor had written to Cllr Laureen Shaw - Member CC Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport, advising that he would let us when he heard something.

## **P14.1237 STANFORD RIVERS SIGN ON JUBILEE GREEN**

Following a review of assets, the Clerk had seen that the sign located on Jubilee Green which acts as the marker for the old congregational church needs maintenance, which includes full rubbing down and repainting. Councillors discussed this, accepting that the work needed doing, but considered what colour it should be painted. It was generally accepted that the sign should stand out more, however it should reflect the reason for its marking. The Clerk had obtained a quote of £170 to rub down and repaint. It was **AGREED** that the work should take place, however the exact colour would be agreed by the Clerk and Chairman.

## **P14.1238 TREE RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Council has a duty of care for its trees on Parish owned or leased land. At a minimum it is recommended that a Risk Assessment is completed at least once every 5 years by a qualified arboriculturist. The Clerk advised she had requested three quotes, only one of which had so far been received, for just under £500. It was **AGREED** to move forward with the works, delegating power to the Clerk to decide on the most suitable quote.

## **P14.1239 VEHICULAR SPEEDING AND SAFETY MATTERS IN THE PARISH**

### **a) Community Speedwatch**

Cllr Jackson advised there wasn't too much activity in Stanford Rivers this summer as many of the

# Stanford Rivers PARISH COUNCIL

volunteers had been away.

## b) Speederbot

Cllr Adams provided an update on the Speederbot data, advising that there had been a number of issues which he had reported at the last meeting, however the possible Sunday Times article had kick started things again, and work had been done to reinstate the A113speederbot.org site. This site is independent of the Parish Council, as was the work. Cllr Adams advised he would be obtaining the data independently. This was expected to restart mid September. The data would then have to be built from that date forward, and data given to police a month afterwards. Cllr Adams stated that the Sunday Times article had great potential, but the report never happened.

## P14.1240 CHANGES TO PLANNING AT EFDC

Councillors noted that EFDC had agreed changes to how planning decisions will be made at Local Planning Authority, as reported earlier in the meeting by EFDC Cllr Amos. Attached to the agenda was a brief summary of what was agreed, and the changes that have been made, with the Clerk's emphasis in bold. The changes will mean that the Parish Council will have to ensure that if it wishes to object to a planning application, clear reasons material to the planning merits of the application will need to be detailed, and for the objection to be considered at an EFDC Planning Committee meeting the Parish Council must also state their willingness to attend and speak at said meeting. There are also changes to ward member representation, with ward Members being welcome to speak at committee meetings, ensuring that residents voices are represented, and their views are heard, however ward Members will not be able to cast their vote on whether an application is approved or not.

## P14.1241 CONCLUSION OF EXTERNAL AUDIT 2023/2024

Councillors **NOTED** the conclusion of the external audit for 2023/2024, details of which had been uploaded onto the Parish Councils website and placed on notice boards, and were also attached to the agenda. The auditor has issued an unqualified audit, with no matters brought to the attention of Council.

## P14.1242 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

1. To <b>CONSIDER</b> any planning applications submitted to the Parish Council for comment as detailed below		
EPF/1742/24	Land Opposite Blackberry House, Toot Hill Road, Ongar, Essex CM5 9QP	A detached stable building and use of land for horse keeping for personal use <b>The Parish Council has NO OBJECTION to this application, subject to permitted development rights being removed from the land. The Parish Council would like to emphasise that they expect this building to be used as a stable for the foreseeable future. It is well known that permission for stables can be a way of circumventing the planning system to allow a building on previously undeveloped land, especially in the green belt, which is then converted to a property in a few years' time. The Parish Council previously had no objection to EPF/1623/21 on this site, however this was due to its innovative and eco friendly design. The Parish Council would not look favourably on any application in the future to convert these stables to a habitable space.</b>
EPF/1775/24	Surrywood, 12 London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PH	Demolition of the existing bungalow and construction of a new Chalet bungalow. <b>No Objection</b>
2. To <b>NOTE</b> any planning applications that have been responded to via the Clerks delegated powers <b>NIL</b>		
3. To <b>NOTE</b> any planning applications upon which EFDC do not accept comments <b>NIL</b>		
4. To <b>NOTE</b> any other planning matters <b>NIL</b>		
5. To <b>NOTE</b> the following planning decision by EFDC		

## *Stanford Rivers PARISH COUNCIL*

EPF/0891/24	New House Farmhouse, Mutton Row, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9QH	Grade II Listed building consent for internal and external works to chimney stack, fire places, sole plate and releveling of floors.	Approve with Conditions
EPF/1415/24 NMA	Land North of Shonks Mill Bridge, Shonks Mill Road, Stapleford Tawney	Non-Material Amendment for EPF/2702/22 ( A Hybrid planning application. Full planning application for a Flood Storage Area upstream of the M25 on land to the north of Shonks Mill Bridge, Shonks Mill Road, near Stapleford Tawney, Essex. It will provide pro	Approve with Conditions
EPF/1371/24	3 Church Cottages, Rosary Cottage, Church Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PS	Erection of replacement granny annexe with integral garage in place of existing garage and outbuildings within the residential curtilage of the main dwelling	Approve with Conditions <i>PC had no objection subject to being ancillary</i>
EPF/0513/24 & EPF/0542/24	The Calf Shed , Colemans Farm, Colemans Lane, Ongar, CM5 9QN	Conversion of former agricultural building into a holiday let by upgrading thermal performance and adding a mezzanine level sleeping platform. The replacement of existing windows and door with white painted timber joinery to match existing, and listed building application for the same.	Approve with Conditions <i>PC had no objection</i>

### **P14.1243 TOOT HILL SHOW**

The Clerk, Chairman and Cllr Adams manned the stand at this years Toot Hill Show, however the event was somewhat scuppered due to a gust of wind taking hold of the gazebo and smashing into a vehicle that was behind the stand. The Gazebo had been pinned into the ground by the Chairman using pegs. As a result, the Parish Council had to pay the cost of a pickup truck to transport the vehicle and its occupant to Cambridge after the event, as well as the cost to replace the windscreen, the total of which was £412.50. The Clerk has received email confirmation from the occupant that this is in full and final settlement of the damage that occurred. The Parish Councils insurance excess is £100, however at this stage this matter has not gone through the insurance company. Councillors were asked to consider if they wished for the Clerk to reclaim funds via the insurance company, taking into account the possible knock on effect this may have on next years insurance, and if it would be worthwhile. The Clerk will also be purchasing a new Gazebo to replace the broken one, the cost of which is expected to be around £100. Councillors **AGREED** not to progress this matter via the insurance, and to purchase a new Gazebo.

### **P14.1244 VAS**

Westcotec have been instructed to visit the VAS by Bridge Farm to assess if it can be repaired, and the cost of this visit is £195 plus VAT. The Clerk has been advised that repairs could cost between £200-1,500, and has asked the contractors to call her when they are on site, under the proviso that if repairs can take place costing £200 or less then it may be possible for the Clerk to authorise the repairs the same day. Councillors **AGREED** that the clerk could authorise a repair of up to £500.

### **P14.1245 TOOT HILL VILLAGE HALL**

- a) Solar Panels for Roof – reported earlier in the meeting.
- b) Councillors noted that the annual service on the Boiler at the hall was completed on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024. During the service and relevant testing, two gas leaks were detected outside of the main hall, and after investigation leaks were coming from the pipe from the tank going into the isolation valve and the pipe before it goes into the building. These were rectified the same day. The cost of the service and repairs was £240.00. Cllr Jackson advised that one of the things spoken about as part of the Solar Panel project was the possibility of moving to an electric boiler.
- c) Enquiry received from Denisa Teodor, Election Team from the Consulate General of Romania in London, to hire the hall for a prolonged period of time. The Clerk provided an update on the request, however it was noted that the hall could not be available for the time duration, and that overnight stays were also not permitted.
- d) Radiator loose on wall at far side near fire escape – does this need work to repair. Cllr Tallon to provide an update at next meeting.



# Stanford Rivers PARISH COUNCIL

## P14.1246 NEWS AND VIEWS

The next copy of N&V will be late November. Councillors were asked to advise the Clerk of any articles they would like placed into the next edition.

## P14.1247 FINANCIAL REPORTS

The following payments were **AGREED**.

Reference	To	For	Amount
BACS	Adriana Jones	Clerks Salary Aug & Sep 2024	<b>£1,109.46</b>
BACS	HMRC	PAYE Aug & Sep 2024	<b>£277.20</b>
BACS	David Wickham	Clean Toot Hill VH July & Aug and phone box tidy	<b>£182.00</b>
BACS	Adriana Jones	Reimb Prior Notification Planning Application for Toot Hill Village Hall, and associated plan.	<b>£213.03</b> (£15.51 VAT)
BACS	PKF Littlejohn	Annual External Audit 23/24	<b>£252.00</b> (£42.00 VAT)
BACS	EFDC	Election costs 2 May 2024	<b>£243.72</b>
BACS	PWLB	Loan Repayment	<b>£1,375.63</b>
BACS	Brown Plumbing	THVH Boiler service and replace pipes / gas leak	<b>£240.00</b>
BACS	Toot Hill Village Show	Advert in show programme	<b>£12.00</b>
BACS	Viking Stationery	Stamps and Envelopes N&V	<b>£297.47</b> (£42.47 VAT)
BACS	Adriana Jones	Reimb Christmas Lights	<b>£69.10</b> (£tbc VAT)
D/D	Eon Next	Electricity – final payment	<b>£15.24</b> (£0.73 VAT)
D/D	EDF Energy	Electricity Toot Hill Village Hall – 18 <sup>th</sup> June – 31 July	<b>£84.60</b> (£4.03 VAT)
BACS	Calor Gas	Gas Supply THVH standing charge	<b>£20.59</b> (£0.98 VAT)
BACS	Vlkatech Host	Email hosting 1 year	<b>£46.92</b>

### Bank Balances as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024

Unity Current Account 4775	£ 22,081.21
Unity Deposit Account 4788	£ 86,213.92

**INCOME:**

- £ 20,000 – National Lottery Funding Solar Panels – 5/7/24
- £ 234.00 – Essex Silk Painters 6/4, 4/5 & 1/9 - #55
- £ 224.00 – Essex Silk Painters 5 & 6 July - #56
- £ 79.20 – High Country Ladies Group Hire Apr-Jun - 2/7/24
- £ 215.50 – Brentwood Borough Council hire 4/7 - 25/7/24
- £ 99.00 – Sainsbury Hire 10/8 – 6/8/24

The bank reconciliation up to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 was reviewed alongside the bank statements.

## P14.1248 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS/EVENTS

Councillors **NOTED** the date of the next meeting:

- 14<sup>th</sup> November
- 9<sup>th</sup> January 2025

## P14.1249 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The following matters have been rolled forward to the next meetings:

- Review of Policies and Procedures

## P14.1250 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The public and press were excluded from the meeting, the Council considering that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed.'

***Stanford Rivers PARISH COUNCIL***

**Item: GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT CONTINUATION**

Councillors ***AGREED*** to continue with the current grounds maintenance contractor.

Meeting closed 19.33

Signed .....

Date .....