

STURMER PARISH COUNCIL

Karen Simmons

Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

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Minutes of meeting **Tuesday 17th February 2026 AT 7:30PM**

COUNCILLOR	
Cllr Gareth Morley	In attendance
Cllr David Porth	In attendance
Cllr Terrie Jones	In attendance
Cllr Sean Mercer	Apologies received
ECC Cllr Peter Schwier	Absent
BDC Cllr Diana Garrod	In attendance

25/108	NOTE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
	As above
25/109	INVITE ANY DECLARATION OF INTEREST FOR THIS MEETING
	None declared
25/110	APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13th Jan 2026
	Proposed and seconded
25/111	RECEIVE COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS
	<p>ECC – frequent media posts re potholes and repairs. Other ECC reports will appear online shortly.</p> <p>Cllr D Garrod – her District report was published to our website at the start of February.</p> <p>Additional comments: - Some residents have found the new bin lids to be warped. Braintree District Council has voted to freeze its share of Council Tax in 2026/27, therefore there will be no increase to BDC’s element of Council Tax charges in the coming year.</p>
25/112	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION
	<p><i>This provides an opportunity for members of the public to raise questions and comment on items on the agenda or of import. Time for this session is limited to 15 minutes (03 minutes per person)</i></p>
	<p>Comments included: -</p> <p>New bins seem to be poor quality (not the weight expected) and many of the lids are warped or damaged.</p>

	<p>Questions were asked about different elements of the waste collection service. Cllr Garrod added that there was a lot of information available for residents on BDC’s website. If any residents have problems finding the information, they can get in touch with her or the Parish Council.</p> <p>Potholes are worse than ever. Repeated complaints made regarding traffic noise, swerving, hooting, road rage, home shaken by lorries going over holes, vastly varying speeds during transit through village. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the response from Essex County Council to the level of road issues in the village.</p> <p>Highways Engineers have been in attendance and marking holes – much of the paintwork markings have since been washed away.</p> <p>Flooding especially dangerous outside Pub and Crunch Croft. Permanent flow of water – only reducing when it ices up and becomes a danger to traffic. Drains on Hill Lane are blocked at the road eroded where the flow is so fierce. The drains sit higher than the road surface and are also damaged. All of these points have been logged in the ECC reporting system.</p> <p>The amount of grit thrown up in some areas from poor repair work and total erosion of the carriageway is now impeding some injured and disabled residents from leaving their homes. The grit is causing damage to vehicles parked on driveways.</p> <p>Two vehicles that are still parked in layby restrict other resident parking and has caused damage to the highway itself.</p>
25/113	REVIEW & COMMENT ON CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS/APPEALS
	<p>VG52 – Woodlands Hotel purchase has fallen through. Parish Council needs to now check the status of the village common deregistration.</p> <p>West Suffolk Affordable Housing plan – You can apply if you live in Essex and work in Suffolk.</p> <p>Toppesfield Neighbourhood Plan – No comment</p> <p>Abbots’ Court reconversion of 2nd Floor into living accommodation – no objections.</p>
25/114	<p>RECEIVE REPRESENTATIVES REPORT:</p> <p>a) Footpaths – Cllr S Mercer</p> <p>All FP checked and clear. Farmer has removed fallen tree from FP17. Dug out ditch, cleared and repairs made to footpath by Pub. Water flow should now be improved and stop erosion of footpath.</p>

PLEASE LOOK OUT FOR ANY BRAMBLES/FENCING ETC THAT BELONG TO YOU AS RESIDENTS – THEY MUST BE CLEARED AND SAFE.

b) Flood Action Group –

Flood alerts both 8th and 27th Jan. They have asked for the Essex Flood Partnership to review starting work on Sturmer Railway Bridge which is blocked and causes flooding. They understand that it is on a reserve list only now.

c) Play Area – Cllr G Morley

Some minor remedial work required to park. S106 monies are cleared by BDC for resurfacing. Other items to be completed by Cllrs where possible. We have spotted a rusty clip (only recently replaced) which we have asked for a replacement.

d) Parish Maintenance – Cllr D Porth

Volunteer Alan Carter and Cllr Porth have been clearing the Amenity Walk back and have used some of the leftovers from the tree cutting to create some habitats.

e) War Memorial – Cllr D Porth

Volunteer Alan Carter regularly clears the War Memorial.

f) Village Hall & Defib – Cllr T Jones

The Defib was recently deployed for use, but was not required. It is now back and reset to work.

g) Highways – Clerk has overall report

As before, despite rereporting due to depth change, a number of our reports have still come back as needing no further action – this was particularly relevant to holes and damage around cats' eyes. One of which was thrown up by a passing vehicle. Patching up has not been successful with much debris being thrown upon vehicles and even residents and their property.

The council submitted an open letter to the Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Highways, Cllr M Platt and to our divisional Council Cllr P Schwier.

The reply stated:

“I can confirm that we are aware of the condition of A1017, Sturmer, and presently it is in our forward programme of works to be treated as a Machine Surfacing scheme, however it is not currently included within the coming years programme.

Schemes such as these are prioritised for investment depending on the needs of the asset across the whole County and at present, we are not in a position to advise of a date for completion of the surfacing.

	<p>The road will continue to be monitored, with any localised defects being programmed for repair in accordance with the Maintenance Strategy.”</p> <p>The Parish Council found this to be an unsatisfactory response given the severity of the road condition through the village, the constant reporting of defects an inaction, along with the consequential safety concerns.</p> <p>Cllr Platt can be reached by email cldr.mark.platt@essex.gov.uk should any residents wish to share their concerns and experiences directly with him,</p> <p>Engineers came out yesterday to examine and mark holes for repair. They told a number of residents they were to be marked as a red alert. They seemed unaware of the volume of traffic on this road.</p> <p>The Parish Council will respond to Cllr Platt to express residents’ views on the deteriorating condition of the road and the need for a more effective and robust repair from the County.</p> <p>PLEASE PLEASE IF YOU REPORT A POTHOLE OR ANY DAMAGE TO ESSEX HIGHWAYS CAN YOU SEND A COPY OF THE CONFIRMATION EMAIL THEY SEND YOU SO WE CAN LOG IT ON OUR SYSTEM.</p>
25/115	Policies/forward planning
	<p>The discussion regarding getting the roads back to where they should be – How are things progressing with speed watch, What are the reasonings behind only completing half the road last year, Why aren’t they repairs up to standard. E.g. the drains in Hill Lane have been more or less ignored since reporting and now water floods down the hill causing more damage to the main road.</p>
25/116	FINANCE
	<p>Signed Precept for 2026/27. Council had agreed new budget last meeting with 4% rise.</p> <p>- RECEIVE FINANCIAL STATEMENT - AGREE PAYMENTS Invoices signed by 2 councillors.</p> <p>– APPROVE CLERK TO MAKE PAYMENTS Agreed and seconded.</p>
25/117	CLERKS REPORT
	Budget to date

	<p>We have had to go into our reserves to ensure Health and Safety of Trees on Amenity Walk.</p> <p>Vat claim has been made for last 6 months.</p> <p>Website package progress Now up and running, almost, some tweaking with handover but at least we are secure.</p> <p>Street Clean. It was proposed and seconded to stay part of this scheme. The relevant forms were signed.</p> <p>S106 monies – now approved and clerk to chase for start date for partial resurfacing of playground.</p>
25/118	DATE OF NEXT MEETING TUESDAY 24th March 2026 7.30PM

KAREN SIMMONS Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer Dated 18th February 2026.