

Annual Parish Council Meeting - 20th May 2026 at Alstonefield Village Hall

Present: Vice Chair: G Campbell (GC), Charlotte Jordan (CJ), C McIlroy (CM), M Newman (MN), A Hayes (AH), R Longdon (RH), Edwin Wain (EW). Clerk, Sally Dartnell (SD). There were 3 members of the public present.

Meeting started at 7pm.

Cllr Campbell was unanimously appointed by the Parish Councillors to be Acting Chair in his role as Vice Chair until a new longer-term Chair is appointed.

Acceptance of Acting Chair role: 

The clerk was asked to note that none of the Councillors felt it appropriate to take on the longer-term role until the forthcoming election process for a new Councillor is completed, at which time the full Council can collectively take that decision together. They felt this would promote continued future collaborative working of the full council of 7 Councillors together rather than take the longer-term decision before the new Councillor is elected.

Annual Report (presented by Acting Chair, Cllr Gordon Campbell)

I'd like to welcome residents and guests. One of the other purposes of this annual meeting is to tell you what has happened over the last year. To start, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the prominent members of the community who have died during the year, namely:

Sir David Knox, who was an MP from 1970 to 1997, and the last 14 years of that period, MP for Staffs Moorlands.

Peter Leason, died aged 89, not long after his wife Hilda. Peter was a stalwart attendee in the public gallery at Parish Council meetings and always had something useful and interesting to say.

Frank Mottram, well known and liked, lived in Alstonefield all his life.

Next I will cover the Council Composition and Governance. The current Parish Councillors are Charlie McIlroy, Charlotte Jordan, Becky Longdon, Mike Newman, Alan Hayes and Gordon Campbell. Our clerk is Sally Dartnell. During the year we have had 2 councillor resignations, Sarah Jeffrey and Rupert Hignett. We thank both for their service and in particular, Rupert a Councillor for over 10 years and Chair for 3. PC meetings are held approximately every 6 weeks at 7pm on Wednesdays here at the Village Hall. I would like to thank the members of the public who have attended over the last year.

As a financial overview, our precept for 2026 is £12,450. Given the tax base of 202 properties, that equates to £61.63 per band D, an increase of 5.2% over 2025. Total expenditure in the year was £14,311.90 and our total income was 15,213.30. The three main areas of expenditure were the Clerk's salary (£2800), cutting of the playing field (£2650) and the lengthsman's charges (£2100). The Leaden Boot organisation granted the council £1000 to fund work on the Play Area. This is being carried out.

In relation to Planning and Development, the PC is what is called a Statutory Consultee, so the National Park Authority Planning Dept legally have to inform us of all planning applications. This means that we have the right to comment and submit our response. This allows us to use local knowledge that the planning officer may not be aware of to inform the process. We don't have the ability to either approve or reject an application. Our view is simply taken into account as would any representation from a member of the public. The vast majority of the applications notified to us during the year have not required any negative comment.

The PC undertake some village maintenance. Our Lengthsman cuts the greens and some verges. Some villagers have also leant a hand with gutter cleaning etc. The playing field remains a useful area for recreation and of course hosts the village cricket matches and car boot sales. The top section has also been used for overspill parking by the Lost in the Hills Festival who pay the agreed fee.

There have been a number of events: The Wakes celebration as always, was well attended with the Warslow Silver Band knocking out some well known hits. The Leaden Boot Challenge has in the last 14 years now raised over £60,000 for local good causes. The 2026 challenge was of course last weekend and apparently was again a success. The Village Hall has remained the hub of entertainment and social events, with acts such as Cara Dillon and the Unthanks having appeared in the last few months. It also hosts the Friendship Group, the Playgroup, the Car Boot Cafe and of course the Parish Council meetings.

The Alstonefield website is about to enter a transition. It has gone through a doldrums period where most elements have not been updated, some for several years. The Parish Council has now set up a new separate website and so the legal requirement for alstonefield.org has now been removed. Options are either to revitalise the existing website or to use pages on the new Parish Council website if a simpler solution is required. Please do contact the clerk with any thoughts and ideas for this.

Looking Ahead, challenges and goals include addressing ongoing concerns regarding over-night parking on the Playing Fields car park. Pot holes and blocked drains are a challenge with the website for Staffordshire County Council Highways as the means of reporting the issues.

Finally I would like to share some thanks. Firstly to our local volunteers, the "unsung heroes"—those who mow, plant, litter-pick, and run the various village committees and organisations.

Also to Councillor Wain, our District Councillor, attends as many Parish Council meetings as he can and we thank him for that. A specific thank you to the Parish Clerk for her support, sometimes from afar, over the last year.

I would like to invite parish residents to ask questions or raise concerns whilst being aware that Councillors can answer questions if they wish but any formal decisions require a future council meeting agenda item.