



Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 8 April 2026 at 7pm

Present: Councillor J. Shepherd (Chair), Councillor P. Gwinnett (Vice Chair), Councillor R. Wood, Councillor P. Ballard, Councillor J. Wakefield, Councillor C. Nicholls, Cllr N. Moulton (SMDC) Mrs A Barker (Clerk).

No members of the public.

Apologies: Councillors E. Brindley, A. Dronzek, N. Conway, S Beardmore (SCC).

Cllr J. Shepherd (Chair) declared the meeting open at 7pm.

49/26. Declarations of Interest.

- i. None.

50/26. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13th March 2026.

- i. The minutes of the above meeting were declared a true record proposed by Cllr Shepherd and seconded by Cllr Nicholls, agreed by all and were signed by the Chair and the Clerk.

51/26. Action Updates.

- i. Cllr Shepherd reported that he spoken to the stonemason, Julian Jeffries, who will advise when he can commence work at the Roundhouse (minute 197/25 i).
- ii. Cllr Dronzek had previously advised that he had received three quotes for the tree work in St Peter's Churchyard (minute 36/26 iii), but as he was not present at the meeting, this matter was deferred until the next meeting.
- iii. Cllr Shepherd reported that he had met with Simon Heaton (Section 106 Group) and they agreed that they would clear the brambles near the play area. **Action: Cllr Shepherd.**
- iv. Cllr Moulton reported that he had asked the complainant alleging tipping of illegal waste, if he had evidence, but whilst the complainant had evidence of tipping, there was no evidence that it was illegal waste. Cllr Moulton (SMDC) advised the complainant to report the matter on the SCC portal. Cllr Moulton had brought this matter to the attention of SCC but was not aware of any action. **Action: Cllr Moulton to ask complainant whether he had reported the matter.**
- v. Cllr Shepherd reported that no meeting of the Section 106 Group had occurred as quotes for the work on the playing fields were awaited.
- vi. Cllr Wood reported that he had not taken action to make a bid for grant approval for Roundhouse work, as he considered that this should be left in abeyance until the Roundhouse work had been carried out. **Action: Cllr Wood to report further when Roundhouse work completed.**
- vii. Acquisition of a SIM for a new telephone number for the council, to be utilised by the clerk, had been completed. The new number is on the website and shown at the top of the agenda.

52/26. Alton Towers.

Cllr Shepherd had nothing to report. Cllr Ballard reported that there had been particularly high levels of traffic recently. On one day, traffic was a standstill, and there was a report, that as a result, someone was unable to get to a business appointment in the village. Cllr Moulton agreed to



send an email to Alton Towers to update them on the current situation. **Action: Cllr Moulton to contact Alton Towers.**

53/26. Footpaths.

- i. Cllr Nicholls reported that he had been out to inspect Footpath 29. There was evidence of debris – apparently broken porcelain. Cllr Shepherd confirmed his previous report (minute 31/26) that he had spoken to the landowner, who had agreed to carry out a clean-up of the area by June 2026. Cllr Shepherd suggested that the council wait until June 2026, to ascertain whether any clean-up action had been taken. This was agreed.

54/26. Village Hall.

- i. Cllr Ballard reported that responsibility for the fence and hedge running alongside the football pitch, and the verge at the front of the hall, are the responsibility of the council. The fence around the recycling area is becoming increasingly derelict. **Action: Cllr Shepherd to look at the extent required to repair and get three quotes for the work.**

55/26. Groundsman/Lengthsman.

- i. The draft contract for the groundman and the successful tender had been circulated to councillors. No feedback had been received. The contract had therefore been signed. It was not known when the moss brushing (minute 46/26 iii), or work under the contract would start. **Action: Cllr Gwinnett to contact successful bidder and enquire as to when work would commence.**
- ii. Three quotes had been received for the lengthsman contract. There was a discussion regarding the quotes submitted, and there was a proposal by Cllr Gwinnett to accept the lowest quote. This was seconded by Cllr Shepherd and carried. Cllr Gwinnett reported that, as a result of the new lengthsman and groundsman contracts, there would be a saving of £10 per month for the groundwork/lengthsman work, combined, for the next 12 months. **Action: Clerk to write to successful and unsuccessful bidders and finalise lengthsman contract.**
Cllr Shepherd thanked Cllr Gwinnett for her hard work in dealing with the tenders and meeting contractors.

56/26. Highways and Road Safety.

- i. Cllr Nicholls advised that whilst inspecting footpaths, he had observed significant levels of mud on the bend in the highway at Town Head. Given that this was significant and potentially more dangerous as it was on a bend, this was a Health and Safety issue and therefore should be reported to Highways. **Action: Clerk to liaise with Cllr Nicholls and report to Highways**
- ii. Cllr Wood had met the Community Liaison Representative from Highways at SCC, who had provided various reasons why potholes in the village had not been repaired. Cllr Wood has therefore written to Patrick Allen, Cabinet Support Member for Highways (Operations North) suggesting that a designated route through the key areas of the village via the village hall, church, surgery, pubs, school etc, would equate to a suburban estate, and therefore requesting top dressing treatment for the road surface. A response is awaited. In the meantime, potholes would continue to be reported.

57/26. Parish Cemetery and St. Peter's Church Yard.



- i. As above - defer consideration of three quotes for tree work until Cllr Dronzek is present.

58/26. Planning and Licensing Applications.

- i. SMD/2026/0103. Mr D Keates, 8 The Hawthorns, Tythe Barn, Alton. Proposed removal of existing conservatory and replacement sun-room extension.
The council had no objections to this application.
- ii. SMD/2026/0119. Ms Poppy Matthews, Ash Grove, Tythe Barn, Alton. Proposed changes to front elevation including new porch, windows and render finish.
The council had no objections to this application.
- iii. SMD/2026/0117. Mr John Miller, Garage Rear of 1A Town Head, Alton. Change of use of existing garage to form a 1 bedroom dwelling.
The council had no objections to this application.

59/26. Planning decisions.

- i. SMD/2025/0401. The Old Parlour, Castle Hill Road, Alton. Demolition of existing outbuilding and erection of replacement building for use as holiday accommodation. Planning permission approved.

60/26. Section 106 funds for playing field and play area update.

- i. There had been no meeting since the last council meeting. Simon Heaton is obtaining three quotes for the drainage and improvement work required for the football pitch. A meeting to be fixed once the three quotes have been obtained, with a request for Angela Dale (SMDC) to attend. In relation to the playing field work, a query was raised as to whether some of the land might be owned by a charitable trust, and should this be taken into consideration. Cllr Gwinnett acknowledged a need investigate the tenure of the Village Hall, and surrounding land and property, and its boundaries, and proposed this to be held over until after financial year end. This was seconded by Cllr Shepherd and carried.
Action: The Clerk to arrange a meeting of the Section 106 Group, when three quotes for football pitch work are available. The clerk to investigate tenure and boundaries of the Village Hall and surrounding land and property, after financial year end requirements have been concluded.

61/26. Parish Council Updates.

Professionalising the Council, Ensuring Local Government Identity, & Data Security

i. The clerk referred to recent action taken to professionalise the council image, create a separate government identity and improve data security, and gave updates on further action. The clerk now has a new gov.uk email address (clerk@altonstaffsparish.gov.uk), to replace the co.uk email address which was set up to align to the council website (instead of an org.uk address) but which had functionality issues (minute 197/25). The gov.uk email address had been obtained from Parish Online, free of charge. The clerk further reported that Parish Online provide an option to transfer the council website to its gov.uk domain. The cost for this would be £250 (ex VAT) in the first year and £350 (ex VAT) thereafter. This would also include the availability of gov.uk email addresses for councillors, included in this price. It was



agreed that this would be considered further, post year end, probably in June 2026. **Action: Clerk to circulate details of gov.uk website/email addresses provided by Parish Online.**

ii. The council laptop is functional and the website controller, has recommended that enhanced security e.g. McAfee Security is engaged to provide further data protection – see Finance (48/26 x).

iii. In line with the recent changes to improve the brand/government identity of the council and enhance transferability away from individual clerks, it was suggested that the council mail address be re-located to Alton Village Hall, and in order to facilitate this move, a mailbox would be affixed to the Village Hall building for the receipt of council mail, along with appropriate signage. Max cost for box and sign £50. This was proposed by Cllr Shepherd, seconded by Cllr Wood and carried. **Action: Clerk to arrange for acquisition of mailbox and signage. Cllr Shepherd to affix.**

62/26. Correspondence:

Requiring response:

- i. Email request from Staffs Moorlands for list of councillors to ensure website up to date.
- ii. Email request regarding a proposed re-inscription of a headstone which was approved.
- iii. Email enquiry regarding damaged street sign.

For information only:

- i. Various email exchanges regarding notification of the outcome of the tender for Grounds Maintenance; dealing with follow up communications, and signing of contract with successful applicant (having previously circulated draft to all councillors, with no feedback); and tender for lengthsman contract.
- ii. Email regarding Forvis Mazars Presentation re: AGAR and annual accounts (circulated).
- iii. Email re: Staffordshire Day – requesting contributions to publicise council success stories (circulated).
- iv. Email from SMDC providing details of various available grants (circulated).
- v. Neighbourhood Governance Pack (circulated)
- vi. Further Details of Alton Towers meeting held on 28 February 2026, provided by Cllr Moulton (circulated)
- vii. In-Touch Newsletter (Spring Edition) (circulated)
- viii. Email re: online planning for non-planners course (circulated)
- ix. SPCA response to local government reorganisation (circulated)
- x. Details of Further Free Health & Wellbeing Seminar (circulated)
- xi. Email from SPCA regarding new free planning service, along with subsequent further details (circulated)
- xii. SPCA March 2026 Bulletin (circulated)

63/26. Finance:

Payments Made:

- i. Clerk salary £467.48 (paid)- final salary payment for retiring clerk



- ii. Buxus Green invoice March 2026 - £724.27 (paid).
- iii. Village Hall Hire Invoice for Financial Year April 2025 - March 2026 - £240 (paid)
- iv. Mobile phone bill for clerk expenses £18.12 (full month and part month) (paid)

Income:

- v. Bank Interest - March £42.47

Proposals/Payments Due:

- vi. The re-appointment of Keith Ford as internal auditor was proposed by Cllr Shepherd, seconded by Cllr Wood and carried.
- vii. Agreement to the increase in hourly hire charges for Alton Village Hall, to £14 per hour, was proposed by Cllr Shepherd, seconded by Cllr Nicholls, and carried.
- viii. Agreement for the proposed charge of £20 per month for maintenance of the council website, by Net Factory, from April 2026, was proposed by Cllr Shepherd, seconded by Cllr Wood and carried. Maintenance/provision of the council website to be reviewed in June 2026.
- ix. Payment of the invoice for the coming financial year 2026-2027 from the SPCA for annual membership of SPCA - £375 and NALC £91.25 – combined total of £466.25, was proposed by Cllr Shepherd, seconded by Cllr Gwinnett and carried. It was agreed that two free courses offered by the SPCA, would be taken up by the clerk.
- x. Payment to be made for McAfee Security, for additional security for the council laptop, was proposed by Cllr Shepherd, seconded by Cllr Gwinnett and carried.

The finances were read out by the Clerk.

There being no other business the meeting was closed by Councillor Shepherd at 8.15 pm

Signed..... Chairman Wednesday 13 May 2026

Signed..... Clerk