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ALTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 13 May 2026 at 7:05pm

Present: Councillor J. Shepherd (Chair), Councillor R. Wood, Councillor P. Ballard, Councillor J. Wakefield, Councillor C. Nicholls, Councillor E Brindley, Councillor A Dronzek, Councillor S Beardmore (Staffordshire County Council (“SCC”))
Mrs A Barker (Clerk).
One member of the public.

Apologies: Councillors P Gwinnett, N. Conway, N Moulton (Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (“SMDC”)).

Cllr J. Shepherd (Chair) declared the meeting open at 7:05pm.

64/26. Appointment of Chair & Vice Chair & Allocation of Councillor Responsibilities

- i. Cllr Shepherd asked for nominations for the position of Chair of the Council. Cllr Brindley proposed and Cllr Dronzek seconded Cllr Shepherd as the Chair. The proposition was carried unanimously, and Cllr Shepherd was declared the Chair for 2026/27.
- ii. Cllr Shepherd asked for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Council. Cllr Wakefield proposed and Cllr Shepherd seconded Cllr Gwinnett as the Vice-Chair. The proposition was carried unanimously, and Cllr Gwinnett was declared the Vice-Chair for 2026/27.
- iii. Cllr Shepherd proposed and Cllr Wood seconded, that the councillors keep the same responsibilities as those allocated and in place, at the end of the previous year, as follows:

Vice Chairman and Website Monitor – Cllr Gwinnett
Cemetery- Cllr Dronzek.
Highways and Road Safety-Cllr Wood.
Village Hall- Cllr Ballard.
Alton Towers Liaison- Cllr Shepherd.
Parish Assembly- Cllr Wood.
Footpaths- Cllr Nicholls
Round House Maintenance – Cllr Shepherd.

65/26 Declarations of Interest.

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- i. Cllr Brindley declared an interest in agenda item 13(i) - Planning application at 5 The Hurstones, Hurstons Lane, Alton.

66/26. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8th April 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.

67/26. Matters Arising/Action Updates.

- i. Cllr Shepherd reported that he and Simon Heaton intend to clear the brambles in the play area. (minute 51/26 iii). **Action: Cllr Shepherd**
- ii. Cllr Moulton had advised the Clerk prior to the meeting that he had asked the complainant regarding illegal waste, whether he had reported the matter to SCC, but he had not had any response. (minute 51.26 iv) Cllr Moulton further reported that he considered this matter had now been superseded by the meeting with the landowner at Town Head, referred to, at minute 72/26 i.
- iii. Cllr Shepherd reported that work at the Roundhouse had not been completed (minute 51.26 vi). There was, therefore, no further action regarding a possible grant application. No timescale was provided for completion of the Roundhouse work.
- iv. Cllr Moulton was not present to provide a further report regarding traffic management issues discussed with Alton Towers (minute 52/26), but he had provided an email update since the last meeting which had been circulated to all councillors. The principal suggested improvement, was for a “no left turn” sign to be installed at the end of Malthouse Road.
- v. Cllr Shepherd reported that he had met with lengthsman to consider what work was required regarding the hedge and fence on the perimeter of the village hall adjacent to Uttoxeter Road (minute 54/26). The lengthsman advised that the hedge did not require laying. It simply needed cutting and managing. If this work was carried out, the fencing would not be required. Cllr Shepherd had obtained a quote for this work from the lengthsman and had approached another contractor for an additional quote for the same work, but this had not yet been received. Cllr Shepherd proposed and Cllr Dronzek seconded that this was the way forward to improve the perimeter security, which was carried. **Action: Cllr Shepherd to bring quotes for hedge work to next meeting.**
- vi. The Clerk had spoken to Cllr Gwinnett prior to the meeting (minute 55/26 i) and confirmed that both the new Grounds Maintenance and Lengthsman contracts had been signed in April 2026. The Clerk had written to all successful and unsuccessful bidders and given feedback, as requested (minute 55/26 ii). Both contractors had completed their first work. There was positive feedback from villagers and councillors regarding the lengthsman’s work, visible around the village.
- vii. The Clerk confirmed that she had liaised with Cllrs Nicholls and Moulton, following the meeting referred to at minute 72/26 i and reported the mud on the road at Town Head to SCC Highways,

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via the portal (minute 56/26 i) and had also updated Cllr Beardmore (SCC) following the meeting with the landowner, regarding his proposals for improvement work, to ascertain if she could liaise with Highways, as to suggested actions.

68/26. Alton Towers.

Cllr Nicholls raised concerns that traffic issues were getting worse, and there was significant queuing at the end of Malthouse Road. Cllr Shepherd stated that he considered that the proposed "no left turn" sign at the end of Malthouse Road, would make a difference, as this would result in satellite navigation systems avoiding directing traffic down Malthouse Road, which should reduce the problem. Cllr Beardmore reported that she had been working with Simon Birge at Alton Towers, who is also working the Staffordshire Highways, to arrange new signage. It was considered that this issue was likely to take a couple of months to resolve, but Alton Towers were engaged with the process and were also proposing funding to support it. The matter had been delayed by changes in staff at Alton Towers. The sign at the end of Malthouse Road was a proposed action, and thereafter, Highways would assess whether any further improvements were required.

69/26. Footpaths.

- i. Cllr Nicholls reported that he had been out to inspect Footpath 29, along with Cllr Moulton, and they had met with the landowner who was very co-operative. A pile of broken porcelain was observed, but the landowner advised that this was to be utilised to assist drainage. The footpath was clear and no vehicles were blocking it. Part of the footpath was flooded, but the landowner had made a bund, and walkers were being encouraged to utilise this.

70/26. Village Hall.

- i. Various concerns were raised regarding the forthcoming Beer Festival in June, but as this is not a council matter, such issues should be raised with the organiser – Rob Goodley. A further comment was that there was positivity amongst the Village Hall Committee given the grants which had recently been received to improve the hall, and bookings were increasing, notably for weddings.

71/26. Groundsman/Lengthsman.

No further update – see minute 67/26 above.

72/26. Highways and Road Safety.

- i. Cllr Nicholls gave a further update regarding the meeting with Cllr Moulton and the landowner at Town Head (and Back Lane and Hurstons Lane). As regards the issue of mud on the highway, the landowner had cemented over his side of the road, in recent weeks. He had also offered to pay

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50% towards repairs to the carriageway. The landowner could carry out the work with the agreement of Highways. There was a discussion regarding the landowner's offer to fill the "pull ins" along Hurstons Lane. These issues had been drawn to the attention of Cllr Beardmore (minute 67/26 vii) and she was due to have a meeting with Highways on Tuesday 19 May 2026. It was agreed that a meeting on site would be helpful. **Action: Cllr Nicholls to liaise with Cllr Beardmore and Highways.**

- ii. Cllr Wood reported that he had spoken to Cllr Beardmore regarding the junction at the Blacksmiths Arms. Cllr Beardmore reported that there had been a meeting with Highways at the end of April, and the council (SCC) was looking at various options. Highways will revert to Cllr Beardmore with plans to improve the junction. There appears to be a few ideas, and SCC has allocated a financial contribution to considering this matter. **Action: Cllrs Beardmore/Wood to report when further update available.**
- iii. Cllr Wood reported that Cllr Moulton had previously complained regarding the state of the road at the end of Bradley Lane. It was confirmed that the work is soon to be carried out – probably at the end of July 2026, as the road is then due to closed.
- iv. Cllr Wood reported that he had been in further communication with Patrick Allen, Cabinet Support Member for Highways (Operations North), but he had not had a substantive response to his enquiry regarding improvements to the main thoroughfare through the community areas of the village. Cllr Wood had asked for details of the strategy being employed, but had not received a response. Cllr Beardmore reported that previously the County Council had been restricted by decisions of the previous council members, but there was now an opportunity to change the processes for addressing, in particular, pot-holes. Cllr Beardmore advised that a new Clerk of Works was to be in post by Monday 18 May, and there would be more checking of repair work carried out to the carriageways. From 1 May 2026, the county council has been operating a new policy of work to catch up with repairs, and additional funding has been provided. **Action: Cllr Wood to reissue email to Cllr Beardmore which recorded potholes around the village, and Cllrs Beardmore and Wood, to liaise.**

73/26. Parish Cemetery and St. Peter's Church Yard.

- i. Cllr Dronzek reported that it had previously been agreed that 15 trees in St Peter's Churchyard required attention. Cllr Dronzek had received three quotes for the work. Cllr Dronzek proposed that the cheapest quote from J K Arboriculture (from Brailsford – which business has previously carried out work for the council in the cemetery behind the war memorial), be accepted. Cllr Shepherd seconded the proposal, and this was carried. **Action; Cllr Dronzek to instruct J K Arboriculture to carry out the tree work in St Peter's churchyard.**

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74/26. Planning and Licensing Applications.

- i. SMD 2026/0214 Mrs Susan Matthews, 5 The Hurstones, Hurstons Lane, Alton. Replace existing conservatory with a single-storey modern rear extension, along with the removal of the front porch, and the construction of a minor side extension to the garage.
The council had no objections to this application. Cllr Brindley abstained from the discussion and vote.
- ii. SMD 2026/0211 Mr D Taylor Merlin Magic Making, Alton Towers, Farley Lane, Farley. Proposed walk through attraction building.
The council had no objections to this application.

75/26. Planning decisions.

- i. SMD/2025/0426. 1, High Street, Alton. Listed building consent to inspect and repair the professionally observed chimney and roofing faults, to expose and re-instate two original fireplaces as part of improvements to enhance the original features of the listed property, to re-instate an original stone staircase as part of improvements and to remove a redundant vent pipe from the rear of the property. Listed Building Permission – Approved.
- ii. SMD/2026/010. 8 The Hawthorns, Tythe Barn, Alton, Proposed removal of existing conservatory and replacement sun-room extension. Permission approved.

76/26. Section 106 funds for playing field and play area update.

- i. The previously agreed work for the playground area had commenced. The next meeting of the Section 106 Group will take place on Tuesday 19 May 2026. Quotes have been obtained to improve the drainage to the playing field which will be presented to that meeting. **Action: Report from the next Section 106 Meeting to be provided at next month's council meeting.**

77/26. Parish Council Updates.

Approval of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

- i. The previous Standing Orders were reviewed and approved with one amendment, in relation to declarations of interest by councillors. Previously councillors were instructed to leave the room when having an interest in an agenda item, Cllr Shepherd proposed that this be amended so that the Chairman has discretion, as to this course of action. This was seconded by Cllr Ballard and carried. **Action: Clerk to amend Standing Orders and upload to Council**

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Website.

ii. The council did not previously have approved Financial Regulations. The Clerk had started to draft updated NALC guidelines for the council, but this had not been completed. **Action: Clerk to finalise draft Financial Guidelines and circulate to councillors**

Staffordshire Playing Fields Association

iii. Cllr Shepherd proposed, and Cllr Wood seconded, that membership of this organisation should not be approved, and matters pertaining to the playing field should be left to the Village Hall committee. This proposal was carried.

Locality meeting – Government Reorganisation.

iii. The Clerk had attended a locality meeting, and circulated a handout to councillors, which showed the suggestions for re-organisation of parish councils into various clusters. Notices of engagement meetings to develop Locality Action Plans had also been circulated. Key points to note were that decisions as to the re-organisation structure would take place in July 2026 and come into force in April 2028. Cllr Ian Plant is the Locality Champion for Alton's area and he would be prepared to attend a parish meeting if councillors have concerns.

Parish Assembly Representative

iv. Cllr Wood agreed to continue as Parish Assembly representative. **Action: Clerk to notify SMDC**

78/26 Correspondence/Communications:

Requiring response:

- i. Enquiry from resident re: dangerous junction at top of New Road, Alton
- ii. Various communications re: placement of vase/re-inscription charge at cemetery
- iii. Request for new Ashes Interment
- iv. Engagement with Lengthsman and Grounds Maintenance Contractors
- v. Engagement with Section 106 Group – fixing next meeting and commencing understanding of current position of work/funding and future requirements
- vi. Exchanges re: Town Head Highways issues
- vii. Letter requesting inventory of gritting bins

For information only:

viii. Licensing List Applications - showing High Steet Road Closure for Beer Festival

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- ix. Opportunity to enrol for Data Protection Support
- x. Funding Opportunities Information Details from High Peak/SMDC
- xi. Notice of Dementia Awareness Session – 22 April 2026
- xii. Information re: local film screenings regarding threats to nature and climate
- xiii. Details of New clerk monthly salary and projected PAYE amounts due
- xiv. Details of “Staffy” – new local mascot for tourism – providing details of opportunities for advertising local events.
- xv. Invitations to Engagement Events for Locality Plans for Local Government Reorganisation

The Clerk gave details of the correspondence.

79/26 Finance:

- i. Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26 was proposed to be approved by Cllr Shepherd and seconded by Cllr Wood and carried.
- ii. Annual accounting statements for 2025/26 were proposed to be approved by Cllr Shepherd and seconded by Cllr Brindley and carried.
- iii. It was noted that as the income for 2025/26 was above £25,000 the council would be required to have its financial statements externally audited. There would be a fee for this.
- iv. Clerk Hours for Section 106 work – Given that the clerk’s hours were already being utilised to carry out regular duties, Cllr Shepherd proposed and Cllr Wood seconded that the Clerk be paid for additional hours carried out completing work for the Section 106 project. **Action: Clerk to provide a report of work carried out in relation to Section 106 Group/Funds.**

Payments:

- v. HMRC (quarter ended 05 April 2026) - £1,314.84
- vi. Clerk Salary £639.12 (23 February 2026 – 31 March 2026)
- vii. SPCA £466.25 – Annual subscription for SPCA and NALC.
- viii. Village Hall £28 – April Hire
- ix. McAfee Security – Council Laptop - £39.99 for two-year subscription (£33.32 + VAT £6.67)
- x. Microsoft Package for Council Laptop – annual subscription £138.24 (£115.20 + VAT £23.04)
- xi. Clerk Expenses – Printer Ink £18.40 (£15.33 + VAT £3.07); Mail Box £21.99 (£18.32 + VAT £3.67); Mail Box Sign £12.48 (£10.40 + VAT £2.08)

Income:

- xii. Income - Uttoxeter Funeral Care £47.00

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xiii. Interest income £37.93

Future Payments:

xiv. Insurance – renewal quote from Zurich – due 01 June 2026 - £885.88. The Clerk reported that she had tried to obtain two additional quotes to test the reasonableness of the current year quote, although the council had, last year, agreed to be tied into payments to Zurich for a three-year period. However, the level of information required was impractical for this to be completed before the renewal date, and may not be useful, given the long-term agreement previously made. **Action: Clerk to pay Zurich renewal in line with last year’s agreement to remain with Zurich for a 3 year term.**

Final:

- xv. Authorised payments were signed off by the Council.
- xvi. Current bank balances were signed off by the Council.

The finances were read out by the Clerk.

Cllr Wakefield concluded by thanking Anthea Barker, the new Clerk for her hard work in ensuring a smooth transition in her new role, which was agreed by other councillors. Mrs Barker thanked councillors for their support.

There being no other business the meeting was closed by Councillor Shepherd at 8.25pm

Signed..... Chairman Wednesday 10th June 2026

Signed..... Clerk