

DRAFT MINUTES – STRETTON PARISH COUNCIL

Held at 7pm on Wednesday 25th June 2025, commencing at 7:00 pm

Cllr Hawkes (Chair) opened the meeting at 7pm.

The Chair made a statement acknowledging the death of Stretton Resident, Harrison (Harry) Carter, followed by a minutes' silence, in accordance with family wishes..

Public Forum: There were no questions from the public.

2025-28	All Parish Councillors were present at the meeting (Cllr Allan, Cllr Hawkes (Chair), Cllr Stokes). One member of the public attended the meeting.
2025-29	Ward Councillor Begy submitted an explanation to the clerk for his absence, due to work commitments.
2025-30	Cllr Hawkes requested a dispensation with respect to item 2025-33d. The Council RESOLVED to grant the dispensation for this meeting and for the consideration of item 2025-33d.
2025-31	Consideration of the draft minutes for the Annual Parish Council Meeting was deferred until the next meeting of the Council.
2025-32	The Council RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting.
2025-33	The Council noted the conclusion of the Internal Audit and expressed appreciation for the acting Clerk's efforts. The Council noted and Chair signed the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement 2024/25; the Council noted the Clerk would publish the announcement of the 'Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Governance and Accountability Return for the Accounts', year ending 31 March 2025, making these documents available for inspection, by appointment from 30 June until 31 July 2025; the Council noted that it does not meet the criteria for Powers of General Competence.
2025-34	<p>The Council considered, reviewed and adopted :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. 2025 Parish Council Asset Register;b. 2025 Code of Conduct Policy;c. 2025 Data Protection Policy;d. 2025 Complaints Procedure;e. 2025 Equality & Diversity Policy; <p>The Council proposed to further consider change proposals to the draft 2025 Safeguarding Policy at a future meeting.</p>

2025-35	<p>Kilnside Energy Park – A new Solar Farm Proposal, at Woolfox / Pickworth bordering Stretton / Clipsham / Exton.</p> <p>The Chair summarised salient points from a webinar he and Cllr Stokes attended outlining plans for the Kilnside Energy Park (South of Stretton). The timeline followed by the developer is as follows: Summer 2025 – Scoping Autumn 2025 – Stakeholder Engagement Early 2026 – Consultation Autumn 2026 – Application Submission Spring 2028 – Decision by the Secretary of State The Council RESOLVED that the Clerk should reach out to local affected parishes (Exton, Pickworth, Clipsham) to pool resources.</p>
2025-36	<p>The Council took note that RCC have approved the following planning applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 2025/0374/FUL – Erskine Barn (to note RCC approval); b. 2025/0450/FUL – The Granary (to note RCC approval); c. 2025/0445/LBA – The Granary (to note Listed Building Consent by RCC); <p>The Council recognised the dispensation for Cllr Hawkes to participate in the discussion regarding planning application 2025/0695/FUL – application for boundary fencing and gates – The Shires. The Council reviewed the application, noting the position of new gates; narrowness of the gates; likely restriction on two-way traffic flow, both in and out of The Shires as well as along Shires Lane; disruption for the land owner to access his fields, especially with larger agricultural equipment; safety for road users (residents and other commuters) when navigating potential delays on the 60mph carriageway. The Council RESOLVED to object to the planning application.</p>
2025-37	<p>The Council noted payment of the following invoices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Invoice 2024/226, £245.83, AJ Computing, for web registration, hosting and transfer to new domain; b. Invoice 610826, £47.88, KC&N Hawkes, for reimbursement of Elementor Plug-in to website; c. Invoice 019/2526, £20, Greetham Community Centre, for hire of facilities, 7th May 2025; d. Invoice 028/2526, £16, Greetham Community Centre, for hire of facilities, 21st May 2025; e. Invoice LCO02971, £476.67, Clear Councils, for 3rd Party/Employer's Liability Insurance, 17 June 2025.
2025-38	<p>The Council noted an update from the Clerk that confirmed former councillors Cassapi, Foster, Harker and Storrie have now been removed from the Stretton Parish Council Bank Mandate.</p>

2025-39	<p>The Council RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To approve the bank reconciliation for the period 1 April 2025 to 18 June 2025; b) To note the table of transactions per the precept forecast; c) To note the list of Unity Bank Transactions – current account d) To note the list of Unity Bank Transactions – savings account e) To note the Bank Statements – Unity Bank (Current & Savings) for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 May 2025
2025-40	<p>The Chair shared information received from Ward Cllr Begy giving an update on the provision of a cycle path between Stretton and Greetham. The Council noted there was not an immediate way forward, though some funding may be available from the portfolio holder.</p>
2025-41	<p>Cllr Allan informed the Council about the upcoming Community Speedwatch Awareness supported by RCC during the period 16-29 August 2025. Speedwatch locations on Rookery Lane, Clipsham Road, Stocken Hall Road were proposed; 15-20 volunteers were needed to cover the various locations in shifts; Cllr Allan informed there was already a growing list of volunteers, but some more, especially from the Stretton Woods / Stocken Hall area would be useful. More information would be disseminated to the village Notice Boards as it becomes available.</p>
2025-42	<p>The Council thanked Cllr Hawkes for the Streetlighting Report (attached at Annex A) and RESOLVED to approve that work continue of the suggested next steps, with the aim to reduce streetlight electricity costs for the Parish.</p>
2025-43	<p>The Council noted information received from RCC Planning Enforcement concerning work undertaken on the Church wall would need to be reversed and cement blocks removed, and instead the repair made on a strictly 'like-for-like' basis. RCC Conservation Officer also visited the site.</p> <p>The Churchwarden had informed by prior message that no planning permission was required for the Church wall repair and that all repairs have appropriate permissions as needed from the Church of England under Church Law, further confirming that all repairs are now complete.</p>
	<p>The Council RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) to allow a further 15 minutes of discussion.</p>
2025-44	<p>The Council noted Ward Cllr Begy's social media post regarding the Lilac Tree that had been removed from the corner of Church Lane and Manor Road, noting that RCC Forestry Officer will 'seek to replace the</p>

	tree later this year with another blossom species’.
2025-45	<p>The Council noted receipt of the following correspondence since the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Promotion of the VE/VJ Day events – 28/29th June. HM Lord Lieutenant; b. Leicestershire & Rutland Community Newsletter; c. RCC Planning - Call for Sites – period open from 30th May to 28th July; d. RCC Planning – Planning Enforcement St Nicholas Church Wall. e. RCC Waste & Recycling email – 29 April 2025
2025-46	Cllr Allan reported that she and another Stretton resident had attended a meeting of ‘Rutland High 5 – Connecting Communities Project’.
2025-47	The Council received an updated version of the Clerk Job Description. Following discussion, the Council RESOLVED to incorporate further changes to allow the Job Description to be reviewed and approved at the next meeting of the Council. The Council thanked Cllr Allan for her efforts to review and improve the Job Description.
2025-48	The Council noted that work to improve the new website user experience and content management was ongoing; that work to consider transition to a “.gov.uk” email framework would be considered if required by legislation; that RCC Waste & Recycling planned to make a presentation at the next SPC meeting.
	The Council RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) to allow a further 15 minutes of discussion.
2025-49	The clerk informed that no applications had been received from residents to be co-opted onto Stretton Parish Council.
2025-50	The chair closed the meeting at 9:18pm and confirmed the next scheduled meeting will take place on Monday, 15 th September 2025, 7pm, at Greetham Community Centre.

Cllr John Stokes,
Acting Clerk to the Council,
26 June 2025

Annex A

Stretton Parish Council – Proposal to Reduce Street Lighting Costs

Introduction

Findings from the Rutland County Council’s Street Lighting Policy, directly support a case for reviewing and potentially reducing the number of streetlights in Stretton Parish.

Currently, our street lighting is concentrated in a relatively small area of the parish, yet it represents a significant and ongoing cost to the Community. Many of us have questioned whether all these lights are necessary, and whether our money could be better spent. After reviewing the County’s own policy and recent information about land ownership, I believe we now have a clear and compelling case to act.

1. No Legal Requirement to Keep Current Lighting Levels

The policy clearly states that there is no legal duty to provide street lighting. This means we are under no statutory obligation to maintain the number of lights we currently have. We have discretion.

2. Parish Councils Have the Right to Request Removal

Sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the policy confirm that we can formally request the removal or reduction of street lighting in specific areas. These requests are permitted and considered valid if they come from a Parish Council, particularly when the lights are no longer needed or are at the end of their useful life.

Moreover, the policy states that such requests will also be considered if they are made for financial or environmental reasons—two very relevant concerns for us in Stretton.

3. Cost Savings for the Parish

Under section 2.9 of the policy, it is clearly outlined that Parish Councils are responsible for 100% of the energy costs for the community-owned lighting. Since we are paying for all of this ourselves, reducing the number of lights is not only reasonable, it’s financially responsible.

4. Environmental Benefits and Energy Efficiency

The county council’s policy aims to reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency across the board. Section 10.5 even states that energy-saving upgrades should aim for a minimum 40% reduction. Reducing unnecessary lights aligns well with these goals—and we can position ourselves as supporting the county’s environmental ambitions.

5. Our Lighting Is Likely ‘Community Lighting’

The policy draws a clear distinction between ‘Highway Lighting’, which applies to busy roads and commercial centres, and ‘Community Lighting’, which is what we most likely have in Stretton. This distinction gives parishes like ours more flexibility in managing local lighting.

6. Additional Consideration – Prison Service Land Ownership

It has recently come to light that a large section of the road where many of the parish’s street lights are located is in fact owned by the Prison Service. This raises serious questions about the appropriateness of the parish bearing the ongoing energy and maintenance costs for lighting situated on land that is not publicly owned or maintained.

If the lights in question are not serving parish infrastructure or residents directly—but rather lighting a road belonging to a national institution—then we may be inappropriately subsidising another body’s responsibilities. This strengthens our financial argument and suggests we should be seeking clarification from the County Council and the Prison Service regarding:

- Ownership of the lights
- Responsibility for ongoing costs
- Whether these lights should be removed or transferred to the appropriate party

What This Means for Us

In simple terms, we are allowed—and indeed encouraged—to request the reduction or removal of street lights if it suits our local needs. We are not breaking any rules. In fact, we would be working within county policy and contributing to its stated goals.

We know that light pollution, rising costs, and unnecessary energy use are ongoing concerns. Reducing our street lighting could make a meaningful difference—both for the parish budget and the environment.

Suggested Next Steps

1. Nominate Specific Lights or Areas for Review:

Identify which lights are least used or most redundant, especially those on Prison Service land, and propose these for removal or invoicing to the prison service.

2. Formally Submit a Request to Rutland County Council:

Cite sections 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6 of the policy, requesting that certain lights be removed or switched off.

3. Seek Clarification from the County Council and Prison Service:

Confirm ownership of the road and lighting infrastructure and challenge the appropriateness of current parish expenditure.

4. Prepare for Assessment and Consultation:

The county may carry out a formal consultation or assessment. We should be ready to participate.

5. Check If Lights Are Nearing End of Life:

If any lights are old or nearing their useful lifespan, the county is more likely to approve their removal.

Conclusion

Rutland County Council's Street Lighting Policy, along with new information about road ownership, gives us the authority, the opportunity, and the responsibility to make sensible decisions about our village lighting. If we act now, we can reduce our costs, support environmental goals, and tailor our lighting to the actual needs of our community.