FRETHERNE WITH SAUL PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly of Fretherne with Saul held at Saul Memorial Hall at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, 13th May 2026.

Present: Cllrs A Brown (Chairman), A Lever (Vice Chairman), C Bierer, C Butler, L Jeffries, J Bearman and Clerk K Brown

In attendance: Cty Cllr S Davies, Dist Cllr M Shannon

Members of the Public: one member of the public present

Anyone attending should be aware that the meeting may be recorded.

• **To receive apologies –** No apologies have been received, it is noted that one Councillor is absent from the meeting.

• **To approve the minutes of the meeting 15th May 2025 -** The minutes were resolved as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed, seconded, three in favour with one abstention

• **Fretherne with Saul Parish Council report – Chairman**
Good evening everyone,
Thank you all for coming along tonight. It really is appreciated, and it's always nice to see familiar faces showing an interest in Parish matters. It's been a busy year. We've made some practical improvements around the parish, we hope you have noticed.

The noticeboard at Upper Framilode Pound has been replaced. We've also installed a new information board along the canal towpath, near The Ship. The board adds a bit of local interest for both residents and visitors alike.

Speaking of Upper Framilode Pound, the fencing has recently been replaced to help keep the area safe and looking tidy. And we're very grateful to Highfield Garden World for donating a new bench—somewhere to sit, pause, and enjoy the surroundings. At Saul Pound, there's been quite a transformation. Across three visits, the trees have been carefully reduced back to the boundaries, opening up the central space and giving those remaining trees —including a fine oak—the room they need to thrive for years to come.
We've also achieved some important improvements to our footpaths and roads. The old broken fencing along the public footpath from Moor Street towards Saul Junction has been replaced. The Parish Council were instrumental in getting the fencing along Moor Street, repaired and getting the awful red fencing removed. Fencing at the end of the disused section of canal has also been repaired and the barriers removed from there. Meanwhile, we are actively chasing the repainting of the yellow lines along Church Lane, near Sandfield Bridge, to help alleviate the parking issues.

The Parish Council has also purchased a new defibrillator, located in the phone box on the High Street opposite Passage Road. Importantly, the defibrillator can be used not only for adults, but for children too. In the unfortunate event that it is ever needed, the equipment provides clear spoken instructions on what to do. However, the Parish Council is looking into arranging a local training session so that residents can feel more confident about how to use it should the need ever arise.

We are also pleased that the Parish Council was able to support tonight's venue, the Memorial Hall, with a donation in the form of a grant to help with redecorating — helping to ensure this hall continues to be a welcoming place for community events for years to come.

The Parish Council would also like to highlight the Parish Newsletter, which continues to go from strength to strength. Issue 4 was recently delivered and included some very interesting articles covering local footpaths, conservation, and even some nostalgic school memories—proving there is something of interest for everyone in the parish. Work is now underway on Issue 5, and we are always keen to hear suggestions, so please do let us know if there is anything you would like to see included in future editions.

Of course, not everything we do is about maintenance and improvements. Community events are just as important—and despite the rather uncooperative weather, Christmas on the Pound was once again a great success. We had the countdown to the lights switch-on, followed by a move to the Memorial Hall for festive refreshments, carol singing, and the chance to catch up with neighbours. I think it's fair to say that Father Christmas may have been the most popular attendee of the evening—particularly with our younger residents!

One of the more significant issues this year has been the proposed solar farm on land between Saul and Epney. The Parish Council would like to sincerely thank everyone who played a part—large or small—in responding to that application. It's a great example of how our community comes together when it matters. As you will all know, PACE have appealed the decision made by Stroud District Council's Development Control Committee. Please be assured that the Parish Council is actively putting together a response to this appeal, with the deadline for submissions being 20th May. It is important that we all respond to the Appeal to show that the strength of feeling has not diminished. If anyone is unsure about how to respond to the appeal please contact the Clerk, Kay is happy to advise.

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Looking ahead, there are also further projects planned for the coming year. The War Memorial at Fretherne is due to be professionally cleaned, helping to preserve this important part of the parish's history and ensure it remains a fitting place of Remembrance. The Parish Council is also entering into an agreement for the memorial to be regularly inspected in future, so that it continues to be properly maintained in the years ahead. The Queens Jubilee bench at the Memorial Hall Playing Field is to be restored and the plaque will be replaced.

Finally, the Parish Council has begun discussions about work to be carried out on the disused section of the Stroudwater Canal. We are working with experienced and knowledgeable organisations, including the Cotswold Canals Trust, Stroud Valleys Project, and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. This is a complex piece of work, and it's important that anything we do is handled carefully and responsibly. The aim is to ensure that any clearance or regeneration is carried out in a way that is sensitive to wildlife conservation, and fully in line with ecological and biodiversity guidelines. Initial conversations have also taken place with specialist contractors experienced in reed clearance, such as that found along this stretch of historic canal. As you might imagine, this is not a quick fix. It is an ongoing project that will require time, careful planning, and, of course, funding. We are looking to secure grants and other financial support to help move things forward. The Parish Council is also keen to involve local groups and volunteers wherever possible, both in the initial work and in the longer-term maintenance of the area. Like many parts of our parish, this is a special and historic corner of Gloucestershire—one that deserves to be protected, enhanced, and appreciated for many years to come.

Before I finish, I'd like to thank my fellow councillors for their time, effort, and commitment over the past year, and also our Clerk for keeping everything running smoothly behind the scenes.

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge Barry Findlater, who has retired from the Parish Council this year after over 10 years of dedicated service. His knowledge of the area and steady guidance were very much appreciated by the other Councillors over the years, and we are grateful that he has said that he is always available to chat about the Parish—something I am sure we will take him up on!

I would also like to thank County Councillor Stephen Davies for his continued help and guidance over the past year, and for his support in securing both Build Back Better and Grass Roots funding for the parish.

A special thank you is also due to District Councillor Robert Brown, for his help and guidance in relation to matters concerning the solar planning application, for his speech at the Development Control Committee meeting, and for his continued support through the appeal process, even though he has now moved on to represent other parishes.

And on that note, I would also like to extend a warm welcome to District Councillor Moya Shannon, who will be with us for the coming year, we are looking forward to working with you.

Finally, thank you again to all of you for being here this evening, and for your continued interest and involvement in parish life. I'll now hand over to our next speaker County Councillor Stephen Davies.

• County Council report – County Councillor S Davies

In the last year we have seen the new Liberal Democrat Administration take shape. In reality most activity at the County Council doesn't change with a change in Administration. Adult Social Care and Children's Services don't change much. Although within a month of the Election there was an Ofsted inspection of our Children's Services which was ranked as "Good." This has been a long journey from being previously ranked "Inadequate."

There is a tendency for new administrations to re-launch existing activity but with a different name. Where there was previously a "Build Back Better Fund" where your Councillor has money they can invest in Local Good Causes, this has now been re-launched as the "Neighbourhood Grassroots Fund." If you know a local cause that requires support please let me know. To set your expectation, this is a fund of £20k spread over 12 Parishes.

Gloucestershire County Council remains solvent, although the settlement from the Government was less than received in previous years due to changes in the Formula. However there are no cuts in spending, and the budget had gone up to £690m. The Administration has centralised the Highways Local Budget where your Councillor could choose where to spend the Highways budget on local areas of need. They have centralised the budget and borrowed £15m over 3 years to invest in improved roads. This is useful but nowhere near enough and certainly not enough to "fix the roads" as they promised during last year's election. They now talk about "managing" public expectations.

The other Policy that the Liberal Democrats have made a lot of noise about is the introduction of 20 mph speed limits. The good news is that they have not gone for the blanket introduction that we have seen in Oxfordshire, but asked Local Communities to make the decision. The bad news is that they have asked Parish Council and Local Communities to express an interest, and this has resulted in nearly 400 expressions of interest. With only £2.8m allocated to this and a backlog in the Traffic Regulation Order process, they risk a "deluge of disappointment." Only Hardwicke and Slimbridge are in the first three phases which take us to at least 2028.

The progression to creating a Unitary Council continues with the 7 Councils in Gloucestershire working effectively together, they are looking at both options, 1 or 2 Council. The Government will decide in the Summer whether which will have. All the financial business cases, the Governments own criteria and common sense say we should have a single Unitary but recent announcements in Essex and Hampshire raise the possibility that we will have 2, East and West Gloucestershire. This would be illogical and motivated by Political pressure to create a Unitary where Labour might one day win. This would be a disaster. Either way, this should lead to Unitary Elections in May 2027.

On Sandfield Bridge it appears that there wasn't agreement on what structural work (the responsibility of Canals and River Trust) and resurfacing work (responsibility of GCC Highways.) Due to the nesting season the work can not be completed until September and we hope to have this disagreement sorted out before then. I am sorry not to have more positive news and am annoyed and disappointed that we have reached this point.

Although Planning is largely a District Council issue and Councillor Rob Brown has done an excellent job in fighting the Solar Farm planning application, and continues to fight the appeal. I have done my bit in working with Highways Planning to strengthen the case.

• District Council report – District Councillor Moya Shannon

Stroud District Council's 2026/27 budget increases the council tax by 2.99% (£7.27pa) to £250.35 at Band D, an increase of under 14p per week for the services provided by the Council, reflecting new statutory burdens on the Council and inflationary increases in its costs. This year's budget was proposed in the context of last-minute changes to the financial settlement, which will significantly reduce Government funding to district councils like Stroud from April 2027 onwards, along with reductions in funding from business rates, which are also decided nationally.

Alongside the budget, the council approved the updated Council Plan, a revised blueprint for council priorities and objectives. The plan outlines the Council's commitment to supporting communities, addressing inequalities, protecting and enhancing the environment, strengthening the local economy, and improving affordable and social housing provision. The Council Plan and budget priorities also emphasise the importance of strong local partnerships and the need to prepare for forthcoming local government reorganisation.

The Council's council house building programme continues to go from strength to strength. Last week the keys were handed over to the first six of sixteen new affordable homes in Kingswood, marking a significant milestone in the council's work to increase the supply of high quality, energy efficient homes for local people. Several other developments will have completed in 2026, including those in Dursley, Cam, Wotton-under-Edge and Cashes Green. This is alongside a huge project to upgrade the existing housing stock of around 5500 homes, including a £1.8 million refurbishment of Nouncell's Cross in Stroud. The council has secured £5.2 million from Government to deliver warmer, healthier and more energy efficient homes.

Progress towards reinstating the "Missing Mile" of the Stroudwater Canal took a significant step forwards in March - the National Lottery Heritage Fund Board of Trustees joined the Council and its partners to turn on the pump to fill Oldbury Pound at Eastington. This is the first section of the Missing Mile reconstructed from scratch since part of it was filled in by M5 construction from the late 1960s. This important milestone follows a major funding award of £6.46million by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in November. The investment will deliver major benefits to the region by reconnecting communities across the Stroud Valleys, Stonehouse, Gloucester and the Severn Vale and will boost tourism and unlock economic opportunities. Led by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, the Environment Programme has already transformed the canal's natural landscape, creating a wildlife corridor with new wetlands, restoring a traditional orchard and planting new hedgerows.

The Council supported the Government's recent consultation on local government reorganisation, which is due to take place for Gloucestershire in 2027-2028. Reorganisation will involve replacing Gloucestershire's existing county council and six borough and district councils with one or two new councils. It will not involve reorganising town or parish councils. Three proposals were put forward by Gloucestershire's councils in November. SDC backed the one unitary proposal, for a single unitary council for Gloucestershire – this meets the government's own criteria, matches existing footprints for the police, NHS and other partners, and is the most financially sustainable option. The letter sent to the Minister by Cllr Chloe Turner, Leader of the Council, on behalf of SDC sent to Government can be read here: https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/yvil4kxv/letter-from-sdc-rt-hon-steve-reed-obe mp-281125.pdf The Minister is expected to decide on his preferred option this summer.

Stroud Funding, SDC's community crowd-funding platform, has now supported 33 successful initiatives, raising a combined £494,744 for improvements across the district. Recent projects, including a climbing wall and a community garden in Brimscombe and History Trail and Youth Club funding in Minchinhampton, can be viewed here: https://www.spacehive.com/movement/stroud/projects The next funding window is open until 6th May.

SDC has introduced the following improvements to its recycling programme this year:

- Every household in the Stroud district can now use the council's expanded garden waste collection service, thanks to a fleet expansion that provides full district-wide coverage, including remote and rural areas that were previously unreachable.
- Residents can now recycle toothpaste tubes and non-black plastic plant pots in their green recycling bins or bags
- Batteries and vapes can now be collected from your doorstep - place up to ten small household batteries and up to five disposable vapes or vape pods in separate clear plastic bags, such as empty food wrappers or sandwich bags on top of your food waste caddy on collection day.
- A new recycling video explains how we recycle the district's waste
- a new reduced bulky waste collection charge to support residents who receive Council Tax Support or Housing Benefit. Eligible households can now book a collection for up to three bulky items for just £5. The standard charge is £25.
- To align with upcoming national requirements, the council is also preparing to introduce kerbside collections of plastic film and wrapping by 31 March 2027.

Stroud District Council has been exploring creativity in economic development and in the rollout of our Culture Strategy: partnering with a local artist on bus art and GWR station posters to promote sustainable travel to and around our area, wonderful exhibitions at the Museum in the Park including Robert Race's automata and Alan Evans, Earth, Fire, Iron, which attracted international interest.

SDC also purchased the historic Grade II* Listed Brunel Goods Shed from Network Rail in March 2025 and as planned has now sold the building to Stroud Valleys Artspace (SVA), securing its future as a vibrant cultural venue at the heart of Stroud. A programme of local Culture Grants is open now (next deadline 1st June)

We have also boosted our work on supporting the farming economy in our area, including partnering with Hartpury College to support farmers across the district to strengthen their businesses and protect the environment.

Stroud District Council completed the allocation of £620,261 of Rural Prosperity Funding this year, supporting capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure. Grants of up to £20,000 were available to businesses and community groups in eligible rural areas to support capital projects such as building work, large tools, and equipment. The full list of funded projects is here: https:// www.stroud.gov.uk/business/support-for-business/rural-england-prosperity-fund Similarly, the Council has successfully distributed its award of £1,398,985 of UK Shared Prosperity funding (4% of which was for administrative costs) since 2022, with the final payments to local organisations made this year. The full list of funded projects for building pride in place, supporting high quality skills training, supporting pay, employment and productivity growth and increasing life chances is here: https:// www.stroud.gov.uk/business/support-for-business/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/

The Council's commitment to animal welfare was reflected in recent award success: the Animal Welfare service retained its Platinum Stray Dog Services award and upgraded its Silver Animal Licensing award to Gold this year – a testament to its high standards in caring for stray dogs and ensuring compliance in licensable activities. The council's Housing Service also celebrated success, achieving a Gold award for the second year running for its pet-friendly housing policies and support for responsible pet ownership among tenants.

SDC has launched its new Climate & Nature Strategy, with increased focus on nature recovery and adaptation to climate change. Funding for local climate and nature activity will shortly be available through a grant programme, following the previous rounds which have been very popular.

SDC's Local Plan is still under examination – the Inspector has recently opened a new, targeted consultation for the Council itself, National Highways, Gloucestershire County Council and South Gloucestershire Council, with a response date of 5th May. In the meantime, work on the new Local Plan is underway, and SDC will be among the first in the country to start under the new regime. Councillors are expected to be asked to agree the formal commencement of the new Plan at the upcoming council meeting this month. SDC is moving forward with plans to redevelop Brimscombe Port. Following positive feedback from developers during a recent market testing exercise, the council will shortly begin procurement for a development partner who shares our vision for a vibrant, sustainable neighbourhood. A refreshed Project Board will include local representatives to help guide the next phase. In the meantime, we're exploring temporary uses for the site so it can benefit the community while longer term plans take shape. For more information, please visit www.stroud.gov.uk/ brimscombeport

Sign up for regular email updates from Stroud District Council here: https:// www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/communications/email-alerts/

• Memorial Hall Committee report

Fretherne, Saul & Framilode Memorial Hall and Playing Field - Annual Update, FY2025/26 Charity No. 301535

1. Committee Members
The committee comprises of six active volunteer members: Duncan Carter (Chair), Emma Greenwood (Treasurer), Ruth Bartlett and Jess Slate (Bookings/Fundraising), Andy Colley, and Marie Newman (Montessori pre-school representative).
In early 2025 we had a new volunteer join the committee, Andy Colley. Andy lives in the village and is a welcome member of the team.
We are always interested in welcoming new members to the committee, should others wish to support and contribute.

2. Memorial Hall Bookings
The Saul Montessori Preschool continues to be run by Maria Newman, along with a new partner, Jennifer Von Burg. The preschool currently has 26 children on the register and is growing in popularity within the local community. They offer a nurturing, child-led environment where children are encouraged to explore, learn, and grow following the Montessori approach. The preschool operates term time only, Mon-Thur 09.00-15.00.
In 2025 the hall generated a 40% increase in ad-hoc private hires from the previous year.
We feel the increase in hires has been driven by:

- More awareness of the facility through local advertising and online PR
- The improved internal decoration and cleanliness
- More publicity through fundraising events, bring people to the venue Unfortunately we have still been unable to secure any regular evening club bookings.

3. Finances & Grants
The average annual overhead cost of running the Memorial Hall and maintaining the playing field remains around £8,000. The two largest outlays are the annual mowing contract for fortnightly grass cutting of the park, and the energy overhead per year. Both are just under £2,000 each. For 2026 we have changed our mowing supplier. Brian from the Parish Council kindly gave us two contacts - when we contacted them, one did not take on playing field contracts, but we did have success with the other, Dan Price, Garden Maintenance. The cost is very similar to Glebe, who have mowed the park over previous years, but Dan is local and it is nice to give the work to a local company. We will review the service over a few months, to check we are happy with the new company.

Other overhead costs include (but not limited to): Waste collection, Water, Wifi, Spring/Summer mobile toilet hire, Cleaning, Insurance, Fire/Safety testing, PAT testing, bank charges. May 2026
During Autumn 2025 we were successful in securing a grant for £1,200, from the County Council under their Build Back Better fund. This funding is being put towards maintenance of the hall.
In November 2025 we received a kind donation from Stonehouse Rotary Club for the value of £230.

4. Fundraising & Events
We have held three fundraising events since the last annual report.

1. In early July 2025 the park hosted a large Inflatable event, run by an outside company. The Saul hall charity received £100 for hire of the playing field and made over £200 profit from selling cakes, sweets, icepops and drinks. It was an incredibly well attended event, with over 100 cars parked on the playing field - beautifully stewarded by Duncan and Andy! And a great showcase for the Parish and the local facilities.
2. Later in July 2025, we had a stall at the Sheep Racing event in Frampton. We had the idea to sell watermelon slices, along with the usual sweet cones. The watermelon's were an enormous success, with long queues as word got around the site! We took over £700, making £500 profit for the hall and park.
3. In March 2026 we ran our third annual Easter Hunt fundraiser event. We were lucky with the weather again, having a sunny and warm Spring day. We put on pony rides, biscuit decorating, a raffle, a tombola and an Easter themed hunt throughout the park. We took around £850 on the day and made a profit of around £600 to reinvest into the facilities. It was great to see the park buzzing with happy families having a lovely day in the sunshine.

We have been really pleased with the fundraising activities and seeing families enjoying the activities and promoting the visibility of the park and hall facilities.

5. Maintenance & Improvements
During the year we have done the following improvements:

- Electrical repairs inside the hall
- Repaired the Sandpit and re-filled with sand a couple of times during summer 2025 and spring 2026.
- Installation of a new baby swing;
- Restored the two willow tunnels and dead trees removed from the park play area.

Things on the list for this year: ● Shed demolish & get rid of contents

- Replace with new external storage
- Clear & plant flower beds
- Repairs to the mud kitchen & sandpit May 2026
- Replace all blinds in the hall
- Have signs made to promote hall hire, for use at events & to put on the fencing by the hall

We have had increasing complaints about dogs fouling in the playing field, and recent concerns about dogs being off the lead in a children's playing area. The committee has agreed to ask dog owners to keep their dogs on leads in the park - we are currently buying signs for the park and will put up a notice on our Facebook site. It is a shame we are having to do this, but with the growing number of fowling incidents and concerns over seeing large dogs on the loose without what appears close supervision, we feel it is necessary to ensure the safety and peace of mind for those coming to enjoy the park facilities.
We would like to thank a number of people who have supported the hall and park over the past 12 months, giving their time freely to move sand, prune trees, mend swings or bake delicious cakes for sale. We continue to be very grateful for their support - we have listed a few names below, but this list is not exhaustive.

Andy Colley
Dan Morgan
Mitch Workman
James Price
Keathly Price
Mel Glover
Sandra Dale
Shaun Byard

6. Public Notices
Dogs to be kept on leads at all times - signs to be displayed in the coming weeks.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their speeches.

The meeting closed at 19:28.

Signed:

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in exercising any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability), Crime and Disorder, Health & Safety and Human Rights.

Signed / Date