

St Michael Parish Council

Minutes of the **Annual Meeting of St Michael Parish Council**
held on Tuesday 19 May 2026 at 7:00pm
at the School Room, rear of St Mary's Church, Childwick Green, St Albans

Present: Councillor D Meachin
Councillor G Smedley
Councillor J Peet
Councillor C Curtis
Councillor D Gaskin
S Rushton-Cato- Parish Clerk

In attendance: Representatives of Exagen (Sam Warne and colleague)
PS James Keene (Neighbourhood Policing Team)
Members of the public

1/2026 TO ELECT BOTH A CHAIRMAN AND A VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 APRIL 2027, AND TO ARRANGE TO RECEIVE THEIR DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Councillor Meachin called for nominations for the office of Chair. Councillor D Meachin was nominated and, there being no further nominations, it was RESOLVED that Councillor Meachin be elected Chair for the municipal year 2026/27. Councillor Meachin signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Councillor Meachin called for nominations for the office of Vice Chair. Councillor G Smedley was nominated and, there being no further nominations, it was RESOLVED that Councillor Smedley be elected Vice Chair for the municipal year 2026/27. Councillor Smedley signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2/2026 TO CONSIDER ANY APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM MEMBERS

No apologies for absence were received. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

3/2026 TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The following interests were declared:

- Councillor Gaskin – Community Hub Action (New Greens Estate) (not yet formally constituted)
- Councillor Gee – involvement in SAVE North Albans Green Belt, and CHANGE
- Councillor Meachin – planning references TP 2026/013 (tree application) and solar farm matters

4/2026 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2026

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 10 March 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5/2026 APPOINTMENT AND WELCOME OF THE NEW PARISH CLERK, MS SHAMINA RUSHTON-CATO

Members formally noted the appointment of Ms Shamina Rushton-Cato as Parish Clerk and welcomed her to the role. Members noted that action would be taken to notify St Albans District Council of the appointment of the new Clerk.

6/2026 CASUAL VACANCY AT THE PARISH COUNCIL

It was noted that the vacancies arising from the resignation of Councillors Hawking and Hooper may be filled by co-option. No applications had been received to date.

7/2026 PUBLIC SESSION

Solar Farm – Beechtree Junction (Exagen presentation)

The Chair invited representatives of Exagen to provide an update on revised documents submitted in support of the proposed solar farm development.

A detailed presentation was given outlining:

- amendments to access arrangements, including relocation of the bellmouth
- updated landscape strategy and mitigation planting
- ecological and flood risk assessments
- aviation, glint and glare and technical assessments
- design changes including revised fencing specification

Representatives advised that:

- updated documents had been submitted to the planning authority
- a further round of consultation would take place
- minor amendments had been made in response to consultee feedback

Questions from Councillors and residents

Members and residents raised a wide range of concerns, including:

- adequacy of consultation with local residents and stakeholders
- lack of engagement with Plaistow airfield
- impact on the Green Belt and wider landscape setting
- accuracy and methodology of soil classification and land quality data
- scale of construction traffic and suitability of local roads
- safety implications relating to nearby aviation activity
- long-term arrangements for decommissioning the site

The applicant responded to questions and confirmed that further technical detail is available within the submitted planning documents.

It was agreed that:

- the Parish Council would request an extension to the consultation period
- further representations would be prepared by the Council

Police Update – PS James Keene

PS Keene and his colleague provided an update on neighbourhood policing matters covering:

- current intelligence-led approach to drug-related activity
- reporting mechanisms available to residents
- enforcement and partnership working on fly-tipping
- road safety, speeding and traffic enforcement

Residents raised issues including:

- drug use and anti-social behaviour
- illegal e-bike use
- fly-tipping and obstruction of rural lanes
- speeding and overtaking concerns, particularly on the A1081

PS Keene encouraged continued reporting and outlined partnership working with the District Council and highways authorities.

8/2026 TO APPOINT, IF ANY, REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES (E.G. SADALC)

It was agreed that representation to outside bodies (including HAPTC/SADALC) would be undertaken on an ad hoc voluntary basis.

9/2026 TO CONSIDER THE PAYMENT OF ANY SUBSCRIPTIONS FALLING TO BE PAID (AS IN 2026/27 BUDGET)

Members considered the subscription payments due for 2026/27. It was RESOLVED to approve payment of subscriptions, including ICO and HAPTC.

10/2026 TO AUTHORISE AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNCIL'S BANKING MANDATE AND ONLINE BANKING ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

It was RESOLVED to authorise amendments to the Council's banking mandate and online banking arrangements. The Clerk will liaise with the bank and St Albans City District Council regarding arrangements for receipt of the precept.

11/2026 TO INSPECT ANY DEEDS AND TRUST INVESTMENTS IN THE CUSTODY OF THE COUNCIL (NONE)

It was noted that the Council holds no deeds or trust investments.

12/2026 TO REVIEW INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND CONFIRM ADEQUACY OF COVER FOR 2026/27

Members reviewed the Council's insurance arrangements. It was RESOLVED to confirm that the current cover is adequate for 2026/27.

13/2026 THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2025/26

To receive the Internal Auditor's report and approve the accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2026.

The Internal Auditor's report for 2025/26 was received and noted. Members considered the findings of the review and confirmed that they were satisfied with the assurances provided regarding the Council's internal control arrangements.

It was therefore RESOLVED to receive and note the Internal Auditor's report for the financial year ending 31 March 2026.

To approve the Annual Governance Statement, the Annual Accounting Statements and a Certificate of Exemption from a limited assurance review, all for the same year.

Members reviewed the assertions set out in the Annual Governance Statement and confirmed that appropriate governance arrangements, internal controls and legal responsibilities had been maintained throughout the financial year.

It was RESOLVED to approve the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) for the year ending 31 March 2026 and to authorise the Chair and Clerk to sign the document. The Chair and Clerk duly signed Section 1 of the AGAR.

Members considered the Accounting Statements for the year ending 31 March 2026. The Clerk/RFO confirmed that:

- the statements had been prepared in accordance with proper practices
- the figures agreed with the Council's accounting records and bank reconciliation
- the Council remained below the statutory threshold for a limited assurance review

The following figures were noted:

- Opening balance: £7,154
- Total receipts: £6,204 (including precept of £6,049)
- Total payments: £4,951
- Closing balance: £8,626

It was RESOLVED to approve the Accounting Statements (Section 2) for the year ending 31 March 2026 and to authorise the Chair to sign the document. The Chair signed Section 2 of the AGAR.

Members considered the Certificate of Exemption, noting that the Council met the qualifying criteria as its higher of gross income or gross expenditure did not exceed £25,000. It was RESOLVED to approve the Certificate of Exemption for 2025/26 and to authorise the appropriate signatures.

To agree that the period of public rights to inspect the AGAR documents and supporting accounts will run from Monday 15th June to Friday 24nd July 2026 inclusive.

Members considered the proposed dates for the exercise of public rights. It was RESOLVED to approve the period from Monday 15 June 2026 to Friday 24 July 2026 inclusive. The Clerk confirmed that the AGAR documents would be published and submitted in accordance with statutory requirements.

14/2026 POLICY DOCUMENTS REVIEW

Members reviewed the Standing Orders. It was noted that no amendments were required. The Standing Orders were confirmed.

15/2026 PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES

Members considered payments due. It was RESOLVED to authorise payments in accordance with Financial Regulations. It was noted that revised procedures and a scheme of delegation to the Clerk would be developed.

16/2026 TO CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS DEALT WITH BY SADC SINCE THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Members noted planning updates including:

- approval of a change of use at Shefford
- revised application at Bees Knees Lane – no objection to be submitted

Regarding Woollam Park, Members raised concerns relating to:

- highway safety
- lack of clarity within supporting technical documentation
- delivery of cycling infrastructure

It was agreed that:

- Councillor Smedley would prepare a draft response on highways
- Councillor Peet would prepare a response regarding the solar farm

17/2026 COUNCILLORS' DISCUSSION TIME

Matters raised included:

- Lack of a northbound bus stop serving Townsend School – Cllr Meachin to write to appropriate authority

- Community Hub Action group (New Greens Estate) – Cllr interests to be formally recorded
- Ongoing community engagement to be reviewed at a future meeting

18/2026 TO AGREE THE DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING, AT THE SAME VENUE:

The council resolved that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday 22 September 2026 at 6:30pm.

Meeting closed: 9:47pm

Chairman Date