

WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held in Church House, Widecombe on Thursday 5 February 2026 at 7.30pm

Members present: Councillor Elliott (Chair), D Edwards, A Fitzpatrick, M Jonas, T Guest, C Partridge, S Raynor & J Welby

Also attending: District Councillor Rogers, District Cllr Nutley & District Cllr Major

Members of the Public: Three

Clerk: Suzanna Hughes

5208 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Cllr Bibby
- Rob Steemson (DNPA)
- County Cllr Morgan

5209 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Members were reminded of their responsibility to continually update their Notice of Registerable Interests and invited to state whether they have any interest in the items to be discussed during this meeting in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct.

Unforeseen requests for a Dispensation to be considered at this point only if there was no way a Councillor would have been aware of such before the meeting.

Cllr Elliott declared an interest in item 5215(c).

5210 OPEN FORUM

Nigel Kenneison put forward a proposal to the Parish Council to support his request to become the Town Crier for Widecombe. He would attend local events and represent the parish in competitions. There is no cost to the parish (he will personally fund the livery), but he needs the support of the Parish Council to become a member of The Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers. They would provide public liability insurance. Members agreed to support the proposal.

A resident made a general observation about the standard of tarmac which is eroding very easily. This was noted, but with the recent heavy rain it was acknowledged that this is a problem across the county and DCC is having to prioritise workload.

5211 RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 8 January 2026 which were approved as a true and correct record.

5212 REPORTS

(a) County Councillor

In Cllr Morgan's absence, Cllr Rogers reported on behalf of the County Council. Finances are being stretched. The priority is vulnerable people. 79% of the budget is allocated to adult/children social care, 11% highways and 10% everything else. Storm damage in Torcross, Dawlish and Teignmouth will have a huge impact on the highways budget. No additional funding is available from the government.

(b) District Councillors

Cllr Rogers report that within the District Council's 2026/27 budget, money has been set aside for match-funding. They are also going to set aside £1m for playparks over the next two years. He is impressed by the progress being made building the new community hall. The Household Support Fund is being replaced by a different scheme, more details to follow. The proposals for Local Government Reorganisation will be going out for consultation. Deadline for comments is 26 March.

Cllr Nutley circulated some information about the context and overall position of Citizens Advice, Teignbridge and the Devon & Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner Police Crime Panel on National Policing Reform & Governance.

Also, as the TDC representative on the Council of Governors on the Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, he also circulated some information on Healthy Futures. District Councillors are aware that meetings are going ahead about TDC assets (ref item 5213 (b)).

Cllr Major reiterated that TDC's focus is getting the 2026/27 budget and capital works programme approved. Cllr Edwards thanked Cllr Major with his help in resolving electrical issues with the defibrillator.

(c) **DNPA Representative**

Rob Steemson advised that they have installed a new ladder style at Great Dunstone.

(d) **Police Report**

No crime report received.

The clerk advised that she has written to PC Hurrell to find out who has replaced PCSO Campbell - Mosely and awaits a reply.

(e) **Delegate Reports**

National Park Forum updates have been circulated by Cllr Partridge. Key takeaways were;

There had been 88 applications for the Chief Executive post which had been narrowed down to a shortlist of 5 candidates for interview. Just as a follow up to this you may be aware that Tom Surrey has been appointed and you can find out a bit more here [DNPA Appoints Tom Surrey as New Chief Executive](#). Tom starts on 18th March 2026.

The Land use Management Group has been set up an outcome of the [Fursdon review Dartmoor Land Use Management group](#)

The NP did not receive its grant notification until April which was a 9% cut with the added costs of the NI rise and staff pay award. All NP's have received capital money (£1.4 million) which has to be spent by the end of the financial year and can only be used to fund certain things.

A landscape recovery project '[Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes](#)' has started (Widecombe is included in this Project area)

The [Curlew Headstart project](#) has seen its best returns of Curlew in 2025

The NP deployed marshals again over the summer months [Dartmoor Marshals on patrol across National Park](#)

The courts decided that Backpack Camping was legal on the commons of Dartmoor (defined areas as per the camping map) [Backpack/wild camping - Supreme Court](#)

Sadly, we have seen the closure of Princetown Visitor Centre at the end of October.

Local Government reorganisation is a concern for the Authority.

There was an update on the Partnership Plan review [Partnership Plan | Dartmoor](#)

A short talk about the Cut Hill discovery [Dartmoor dig uncovers 'stunning' prehistoric burial cist](#). More details about this will be released this year but in the meantime a lot of investigative work is going on and this take time and money.

Community Hall – the Chair advised that funds were in hand to erect a watertight structure by the end March. Everything is currently running to time and budget – all wall are up to full height and roofing materials will be arriving next week. There has been huge community support for which they are extremely grateful.

5213 PROJECTS AND ESTATES

(Cllrs Raynor, Edwards and Fitzpatrick)

(a) **Parish Field**

The horse chestnut sapling is going to be planted in the Orchard on 28 February at 11.30am. Photos and publicity will be organised by the Jubilee Committee. Parish Councillors are invited to attend.

(b) **TDC Assets Review**

An invitation has been received to meet with TDC officers again about the possible acquisition of TDC assets (Widecombe car park and toilets and Newbridge toilets). Given that the Parish Council is not in a position to take on these assets and the fact that TDC has not presented any new information, members struggled to see the purpose of a further meeting. After discussion, it was agreed that the District Councillors (Cllrs John Nutley, Stuart Rogers and Jack Major) would represent the views of the Parish Council at the proposed assets meeting. The Parish Council has already expressed, and our District Councillors are very aware, that the public toilets in the parish (Widecombe and Newbridge) are an essential convenience and should not be closed. The Parish Council, however, is not in a position to take these on.

It is understood that there have been discussions with DNPA and the landowner at Newbridge, and the Parish Council very much hopes that between TDC, DNPA and the landowner, a solution can be achieved to save both toilets. The Parish Council would welcome further information if this can be shared.

(c) **Defibrillator**

Electrical problem - TDC has now supplied the Parish Council with a key to enable it to access the trip switch should the problem occur again.

Leusdon Memorial Hall has applied for funding for training; Cllr Rogers will speak to the relevant officer as he believes it didn't meet the eligibility criteria.

(d) **North Hall Manor/Glebe Farm – location of archaeological artefacts**

Members received correspondence from parishioners requesting the Parish Council's support to try and locate the archaeological artefacts removed following the DNPA-led and DNPA-funded archaeology dig. It was agreed that the Parish Council will write to DNPA to establish their whereabouts. Informally, Cllr Partridge has been informed that the artefacts are being safely stored.

5214 PLANNING/LOCAL LIAISON

(Cllrs Bibby, Partridge, Guest & Welby)

(a) **New planning applications/appeals**

None

(b) **Planning Decisions/Withdrawals**

None

(c) **Beating of the Bounds**

Update from Working Group (Cllrs Guest & Partridge)

Rob Steemson has agreed to lead this and Geoff Partridge would like to assist. The total distance is 37km and it was agreed that this would be best covered over three days over three weekends (possible end of September). Some of it will be over private land and the necessary permissions will be required. Priority will be given to parishioners. It might be eligible for FiPL funding if, for example, it was filmed and used to promote the tradition. Cllrs Guest and Partridge together with Rob Steemson and Geoff Partridge would continue to work on the details and provide a further update next month.

5215 FINANCE & GOVERNANCE

(Cllrs Bibby, Partridge, Guest & Welby)

(a) **Cash Book & Parish Field**

Members noted the income and expenditure to date.

(b) **Payments**

Members approved the following payments:

- Clerk's salary & disbursements (Jan) - £295.77 (Feb)
- Y Elliott - heating - £2
- C Partridge - heating - £1
- Leusdon Memorial Hall - hire (5 meetings in 2026) - £67.50

(c) **Small Grants Scheme**

Members considered five applications for a small grant. After discussion, it was agreed to:

- Grant £500 to Widecombe Community Hall towards external windows and doors.
- Request additional information from Spitchwick Cricket Club towards providing an electrical supply to their equipment store

- Request additional information from Widecombe PCC about the proposed internal uplighters
- Reject an application from Leusdon Memorial Hall towards items which were considered to be maintenance and therefore excluded from the scheme
- Reject an application from the Jubilee Orchard as it already has over £1000 ringfenced in the Parish Council's account

(d) **Digital and Data Compliance – Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return**

- (i) To adopt an IT policy which incorporates a 'Bring Your Own Device' policy.
- (ii) To adopt a Data Protection Policy which incorporates a Data Retention Schedule.
- (iii) To note the data audit

It was agreed to defer these items until next month until all members had familiarised themselves with the policies.

- (iv) Update on new website - members were happy with the proposed design of the new website. Focus over the coming weeks would now be on the content.

In the meantime, the clerk will ask the website designer to provide Parish Council email addresses for each member for immediate use.

5216 HIGHWAYS

- (a) Road Warden Scheme:
Cllr Raynor advised that there have been no sessions since Christmas because of the poor weather.
- (b) Cleaning of road edges within the village centre – a resident has observed that this has not extended beyond the village centre. It was agreed to write to TDC to request that, as a minimum, the road should be swept to the extent of the yellow lines.
- (c) The Snow Warden reported at the last meeting that he had requested a delivery of salt. This arrived and all the grit bins have now been refilled.

Potholes and other highways maintenance issues can be reported direct to DCC:

Online: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>
 Telephone: 0345 155 1004
 Email: customer@devon.gov.uk

5217 CORRESPONDENCE

- (a) Local Leaders' Event - 26 February at 6pm (*Microsoft Teams*)
The Chair advised that she intended to attend this event and would report back at the next meeting.

5218 MEMBERS' ITEMS FOR INFORMATION OR GENERAL DISCUSSION, FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS AND/OR ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION

Members are reminded that they have not received the statutory notice of this business to be transacted and should therefore recognise that any decision made may be taken to be unlawful if challenged in the future

An approach has been made by a resident requesting that the Parish Council looks again at implementing a 20mph speed limit in the centre of Widecombe. Members did not consider that speeding was a particular issue and, having discussed it before, it was not something members wished to pursue at this time.

For information, Cllr Jonas informed members that people have expressed an interest in forming an Events Group. They might therefore see some posters around the parish inviting people to join.

5219 NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next Parish Council meeting will be held on 5 March 2026 in Church House, Widecombe.

Signed Dated