

WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council

held in Church House, Widecombe on

Thursday 2 April 2025 at 7.30pm

Members present: Councillor Y Elliott (Chair), D Edwards, C Partridge and S Raynor

Also attending: District Cllr/Ashburton Postmaster Rogers, District Cllr Major, County Cllr Bullivant and Martin Smith (County Council Conservative candidate)

Members of the Public: Two

Clerk: Suzanna Hughes

5105 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Cllr Bibby
- District Cllr J Nutley
- Rob Steemson (DNPA)

5106 OPEN FORUM

A resident advised that he had written to Mel Stride MP regarding pothole repairs. He has been informed that if the Council records the potholes and their progress repairing them, it will receive more funds. County Cllr Bullivant advised that Devon County Council has been given £62.5m towards pothole repairs and there is a requirement to report back on progress. If the target is met, an extra £22.5m will be awarded. The potholes filled as part of the Community Road Ward Scheme do not count towards this target. He advised that the ten-year contract for highways repairs has recently been renegotiated; DCC has asked for more communication, a better approach to doing what is appropriate and focusing on specific areas. Cllr Raynor advised that she had reported potholes knowing they meet the criteria for repair but has been informed by DCC that they haven't. Cllr Bullivant suggested that when potholes are reported, the County Councillor is also informed so that the matter can be investigated further.

Martin Smith introduced himself as one of the County Council candidates for Bovey Rural and is attending the meeting to hear about the issues relevant to this parish.

Postmaster Stuart Rogers reminded members that the post van is delivering library books to Widecombe on Mondays. Newspapers and magazines are also available; the key is promoting the service in the parish.

5107 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

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.

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensation.

5108 RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

Members received the minutes Parish Council held on 6 March 2025 which were approved as a true and

correct record.

5109 REPORTS

(a) County Councillor

The budget for 2025/26 has been set. Council tax for the average Band D has increased by 5%. He advised that adult social care and children's services accounts for 80% of the total budget. The budget for Highways has increased.

Cllr Bullivant summarised the current position on the proposed structural changes to local government in England which were set out in the English devolution white paper published by the UK government on 16 December 2024. [This has been well documented in the press.] The new Council, to be elected on 1 May, will be focused on agreeing which structure to put forward by 28 November when full proposals need to be submitted to Government. It is intended that Parish and Town Councils will be able to input into this decision.

(b) District Councillors

Cllr Major advised that there was nothing to report from the District Council which was relevant to this parish.

Cllr Rogers advised that Ring and Ride is ready but they can't communicate anything about it during the election period.

The public consultation about the closure of toilets is due to be discussed at Full Council in July.

There is an appetite at the District Council to provide funds towards replacing equipment in the play area. However, this can't be progressed any further until after the elections. If funding can be found, it is unlikely that DNPA will require a planning application to be submitted as it will be replacing like for like. He is awaiting confirmation of this. The Chair asked that the Widecombe & District Sports Group is included in all future discussions about the play area. She thanked Cllr Rogers for his work on this; only this week the Parish Council has received a letter from a parent commenting on the condition of the equipment, so any support to replace the equipment in the park is very much welcomed. The clerk will respond to this letter informing them of the position.

Household support fund is available. Teignbridge is working out the detail of what this means for Teignbridge residents and he will let us have further information via the Cost of Living update.

District Cllr Rogers was informed that the bench in the car park is still dangerous. He will chase this up with TDC.

(c) DNPA Representative

Rob Steemson is putting in proposals for funding to undertake some more improvements (landowners request) on the Two Moors Way route at Ponsworthy and he has been informed that there are also two trees down.

(e) Police Report

In the period 1 – 31 March 2025, there was 1 report of criminal damage to a property (nothing stolen) recorded for this area. There were 5 non-crime incidents across the area which mainly included firearms licensing and road-related incidents.

(e) **Delegate Reports**

Cllr Partridge attended a meeting of Church House Committee. They have healthy accounts but heating etc is expensive. The two alarms (between shop and hall) have been separated. The pre-school raised some maintenance issues. The Craft Market have asked for signs to be put up on the fence outside and on the village green. The evacuation procedure was also discussed. The AGM will be on 23 June at 7pm.

Members discussed the request for signs to be placed on the green on the day of the Craft Markets. There were no objections to this. Cllr Partridge will feed this back to the Craft Market.

5110 PROJECTS & ESTATES

(Cllrs Raynor & Partridge)

- **Public toilets**

As reported at 5109 (b), the public consultation about the closure of toilets (which includes those in Widecombe and at Newbridge) is due to be discussed at TDC's Full Council meeting in July.

It was noted that the toilets at Dartmeet have now closed. These were leased by DNPA but this has now expired and DNPA has agreed not to renew it.

Members were unhappy with a comment made by one DNPA member who thought that Parish Councils could step up. They are quoted as saying: "Some are sitting on a lot of money and not really spending in their areas." This was published in the Western Morning News and on the BBC website. As the Dartmeet toilets are in Widecombe, there is an implication that Widecombe Parish Council should be funding them despite the estimated cost being around £18k and the Parish Council receiving an annual precept of around £6.8k. Members considered the comment inappropriate and ill-conceived. It was agreed that the Council should write to the member to express its upset and her comment was misleading.

(b) **Parish Field**

(i) It was noted that Widecombe Fair Committee has donated £200 towards repairs to the fence in the Parish Field.

(ii) No interest has yet been expressed for grazing the Parish Field. It was agreed that a local farmer is approached so that at least the field is grazed.

- **Teignbridge District Council-owned bench in the car park**

Cllr Partridge advised that a piece of block granite stone needs replacing. It will also need two new straps to mount the timber seat on. The straps will need to be fixed with resin and bolts. The timber will be tanalised, smooth, sawn planks. Geoff Partridge has quoted £225 to complete the work. This was agreed.

- **Horse chestnut sapling**

The gentleman growing the horse chestnut sapling is very happy to bring the sapling to Widecombe in the autumn and would like to be involved in its planting. It was agreed to contact Friends of Widecombe Parish Field to agree a date.

5111 PLANNING/LOCAL LIAISON

(Cllrs Bibby, Guest & Edwards)

- **New planning applications/appeals:**
- 0210/24 – Challamoor Field, Buckland-in-the-Moor

Consultee Notification of Amendments: Installation of 20m lattice telecommunications tower supporting 9 no. antennas, 2 no 600mm dishes, together with 1no. foul weather enclosure, 1 no. generator and 1 no. meter cabinet plus a 1.2m satellite dish and compound fencing for the EAS and Shared Rural Network projects

Members agreed that no further comment would be made.

- **Planning Decisions/Withdrawals**
- 0053/25 – Lower Dunstone Farm, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Installation of package treatment plant to replace a septic tank

Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional consent.

5112 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

(Cllrs Bibby, Guest & Edwards)

(a) Payments

Members approved the following payments:

- Clerk's salary & disbursements – £287.37
- HMRC (PAYE Q4) – £196.40
- Church House (hire of hall 2024/25 – 8 meetings @ £12 per meeting) – £96
- **Annual Parish Meeting – 22 May**

Cllr Partridge advised that she had approached the Head Ranger to see if he would be interested in

speaking at the meeting. Confirmation is awaited.

Invitations will also be sent to all local groups asking for a representative to speak for a couple of minutes.

5113 HIGHWAYS

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

- Road Warden Scheme – Cllr Raynor was pleased to report that volunteers had carried out their first pothole repair session on 14 March and 10 potholes were filled. There was another session the next day and a further 16 potholes were filled. There was a third session on 28 March and further 14 potholes were filled. It was noted that DCC do not fund sealing spray as they consider not to be needed.

5114 CORRESPONDENCE

The Chair received a letter from a resident asking whether a ‘Road closed due to ice’ sign could be purchased and used when necessary. This was in relation to the road between Venton and Shilstone Rocks. It was agreed that an individual should not be putting up signage. It was suggested that members of the Road Warden Scheme who are Chapter 8 trained may be able to put up a warning sign but would not be able to close the road.

There may be an opportunity to request funding from the newly elected County Councillor for a new grit bin (c.£385).

5115 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

None

5116 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on 1 May 2025 in Church House Inn, Widecombe (upstairs).

Signed Dated