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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Leusdon Memorial Hall on Thursday 21 May 2026 at 7.30pm

Parish Councillors present: Councillor Elliott (Chair for this meeting), Bibby, Edwards, Jonas, Partridge, Raynor & Welby

Also present: County Cllr Morgan & District Cllr Nutley

Members of the Public: 21

Clerk: Suzanna Hughes

APM2026.1 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She informed everyone that she would give a summary of the Parish Council's activities over the last year before moving on to hearing from local groups and organisations.

Improvements to the local area this year

- The Road Warden Scheme, lead by Councillor Sue Raynor, has proven to be a great success and well over 100 potholes have been filled to date by a dedicated volunteer team across the parish. Materials are paid for by Devon County Council, but the work is undertaken locally and it means that holes are filled much more quickly and in areas where we really need it – including entire stretches of road, rather than individual holes here & there. New volunteers are always welcome, so do get in touch if this is something you would like to participate in.
- Nettles have been sprayed around the village centre along, with the cobbles around the Widecombe Fair monument on the village green.
- Meetings took place last summer with the primary school Headteacher and a small working party to try and alleviate the issue of parking outside the school at 3.30pm and the bus collection time. I understand parking permits have now been issued by Teignbridge Council for distribution amongst parents to encourage parking in the village and an application has been made for a designated bus bay outside the school gates to avoid blocking the road.

Information sharing

- Daf has designed a new logo for the Parish council, which you will see in use on our minutes and public notices from now on. This features the Saxon Well, which is a well-known feature in the village.
- Earlier this year we confirmed the appointment of a Town Crier for Widecombe and Nigel Kenneison is here to introduce himself this evening. We look forward to seeing (& hearing!) him at various local events in the future, not least Widecombe Fair.
- Suzanna has been busy working on a new website with a design company for the Parish Council – www.widcombeparishcouncil.gov.uk is now live and contains lots of useful information.

Public Toilets

- Following the notification and subsequent public consultation about the planned closure of public toilet facilities in the Parish (at Spitchwick and Widecombe) by April 2027, the Parish Council lodged its own objections. I spoke on 29th July last year to the full Teignbridge Council to raise our concerns.
- Widecombe Parish Council is not in a financial position to take on these facilities as the running costs far exceed our annual income and unfortunately, to date, we are not aware of any agreements reached for other parties to take them on. We await further information and will share this as soon as we know more.

Parish Council Precept (the element of council tax allocated to Widecombe PC)

- An increase of 5% was agreed, bringing the total precept for the parish to £7,707 for the year 2026-27.
- This equates to a total tax of under £25 per household over the year, which we can spend on your behalf.
- Our annual Budget covers the costs of such items as the general repair and maintenance of parish land and assets, including trees on the village green; maintenance of the Widecombe defibrillator; Election costs; Clerks salary; Training for Councillors and our annual Small Grants Scheme. We also manage any funds and purchasing to do with the Road Warden Scheme. The Parish Field (Jubilee Orchard) is managed separately, but the PC hold the bank account for this group.

Plans for a Beating of the Bounds

- Claire [Cllr Partridge] will be talking about our plans for an Autumn event shortly.

Grant Giving

- There was an opportunity for local community groups and organisation to apply for small grants this year.
- £1,500 distributed in total - £500 to Widecombe Pre-school towards the costs to convert to a CIO; £500 to Widecombe Community hall for ongoing landscaping hall works; £250 to Widecombe PCC towards new internal lighting; £250 to Spitchwick Cricket Club towards an electrical supply.

Councillors

- We have been delighted to welcome three new Councillors over the last 12 months – Angus, Jacqueline and Michael. They have all joined our sub-committees and taken on roles to keep the wheels turning. It's lovely to have you on board.
- Over the coming months, we will be saying farewell to Tom & Sue, who are both stepping down from their roles. Our thanks go to them both for all the work they have undertaken in their time on the Parish Council and we would welcome new faces to take on these vacancies. We meet 10 times a year on the first Thursday of the month, with the exception of August and December. Please do chat to any members of the Council to find out more about the roles and responsibilities.
- I will also be stepping down at the end of this year in May 2027 after 9 years on the Council and the role of Chair since 2023.
- I would also like to express our thanks to our three District Councillors and our Devon County Councillor – all of whom have been incredibly supportive over the last year with their advice, support and general engagement.

Thanks, as always, go to all of the dedicated Parish Councillors who meet regularly and work hard to look after the needs of the Parish and to Suzanna, our wonderful and ever-efficient Clerk, who ensures that everything runs smoothly!

I now look forward to introducing speakers from the many and varied groups in the parish, to celebrate all that Widecombe has to offer and be proud of.

APM2026.2 COMMUNITY REPORTS

Community reports were invited. A summary can be found below.

Nigel Kenneison - Widecombe Town Crier

Introduced himself as the newly appointed Town Crier for Widecombe and looks forward to serving the parish any way he can. He will represent the parish at various events including Widecombe Fair, and will help publicise events in the parish on social media. He is looking for a couple of people to judge the Town Criers competition on Widecombe Fair day. Anyone interested, should get in touch with him. He also introduced his mascot, and it was agreed that he will be named 'Saxon Sam'. He will help Nigel engage with younger members of the community.

Iain Russell - Widecombe Community Hall

There has been significant progress in the last year and there is now a water-tight building in place which you can walk into and stand inside. The shell came last autumn with a £75,000 grant from TDC/DEFRA with a condition that a water-tight shell had to be completed by 16 March 2026. Contractors started in November and, despite a difficult winter, hit every deadline. They are now fitting a standing steam roof and rooflights. This has only been possible because the fund-raising team, spearheaded by Yvette Elliott, kept delivering alongside the construction. Major grants plus hugely generous local donations and loans have extended the construction contract beyond the original scope. They have now raised a total of £500k. This building was designed using everyone's feedback from the original feasibility study prioritising accessibility, comfort, environmental credentials, easy maintenance, a flexible space for pre-school, weddings, indoor sports, music, meetings, fitness classes and new youth club. To be able to open the doors, they need to raise a further £250k. A midsummer dinner, dance and charity auction has been arranged for Friday 26 June at the Lavender House Hotel in Ashburton. It is £36 for a 3-course dinner and tickets are available on their website. As soon as it is safe to do so, they will invite everyone to site to see what's been achieved.

Rose Underhill - Widecombe Pre-School

Rose wasn't able to attend the meeting but sent a short report. She thanked the Parish Council for the funding from the Parish Council which they will use to convert the current charity to a CIO which will make it easier to manage the pre-school and lift some of the current restrictions. Pupil numbers are good at the moment.

Claire Partridge - Sports Group

Has been operating since the mid-1980s. They manage the site on behalf of the Parish Council. District Cllr Rogers is actively seeking ways to secure funding to improve the equipment. The sports group is also exploring ways to fund the resurfacing of the tennis court. It is a facility with floodlights which is open to the community until 10pm in the evenings. Membership details can be found on www.widecombe-in-the-moor.com and is excellent value. Sadly, the current Chair, Judy Southcombe, will be standing down at the AGM in June and therefore they will be looking for a new Chair.

Tonia Warne & Cathy Smith - Leusdon Memorial Hall

The past 12 months have been very busy. They have continued to invest in the building including the creation of disabled parking and installation of new windows. They are now exploring options to update the heating system. They have received generous grants from Widecombe Fair Committee and District Councillors for which they are extremely grateful. Hall usage has grown significantly over the last 12 months thanks to the enthusiasm and professionalism of the bookings secretary, supported by the wider community. 90 new chairs have been purchased and have been very well received. The old chairs are now stored and are available to other community groups for outdoor events. Monthly coffee mornings and whist drives continue to be a cornerstone for life, alongside raising much needed funds. They provided vital social connection and help reduce loneliness and isolation in the parish. They have also organised two major events this year: French bistrot evening and the afternoon tea and both were hugely successful. Similar events are being planned for the coming year included the Italian Job evening at the end of May and another afternoon tea in August. Regular activities at the hall continue to thrive including the regular keep-fit class and a monthly religious service with meditation. From September to December, they welcome the Moorland Merrymakers as they rehearse for their Christmas panto. They are also pleased that the Parish Council continues to hold meetings in the hall and this year they were able to host joint defibrillator and CPR training with the Council. Many local groups and families

continue to use the hall for meetings and celebrations and its location helps ensure minimal noise and disturbance to neighbours. The AGM will take place on 6 July and they warmly welcome anyone who wishes to join the committee or volunteer as a helper. Flash Southcombe will be standing down as Chair due to relocating out of the parish. Social media presence continues to grow with followers now exceeding 450. This platform is open to all community groups and charities and has become an invaluable way to publicise events and activities. Hall charges have been held and all bookings remain inclusive of electricity and heating. Finally, thank you to every member of the committee for their continued enthusiasm, hard work and support; it is their commitment which enables the hall to thrive and we look forward to serving the parish for many years to come.

Emily Tyack-Moore - Shallowford Farm

Emily introduced herself as the Volunteer and Partnerships Officer and has been in post for around 6 months. So far this year, 1000 young people have visited Shallowford or the other two farms on Dartmoor with whom they work in partnership. A regular newsletter is now being published and you can sign up to receive those each time they come out. They hold regular coffee mornings and everyone is welcome. The farm turns 50 years old this year and a number of events have been arranged to celebrate. 50 stories for 50 years are being told by one of the trustees and can be read on their website/social media every Thursday. They are also having a birthday party on 18th July. Entry is free; tickets can be booked on their website.

Serena Walcot - Duntone Methodist Chapel Lunches

Lunches take place on the second Wednesday of the month at 12 noon. There is no cost, but donations are invited and the money raised goes to local charities and groups. They would love to see more people coming - no booking is required.

Daf Edwards - Widecombe Singers

Meet on Tuesdays at 7.30pm in Church House. It only costs £4 each session. There are no auditions and no soloists, but lots of fun!

Daf Edwards - Defibrillator

The defibrillator is stored in an unlocked case in the bus shelter in the Widecombe coach park. A training session was recently held in Leusdon Memorial Hall for CPR and how to use the defibrillator, although the moment you turn the device on, clear, step-by-step instructions are given. Other defibrillators in the parish are located at the rear of Leusdon Memorial Hall and at the entrance to Shallowford Farm.

Daf Edwards - Parish Link

The finances are looking quite good thanks to advertisers and generous donations from local organisations and individuals. Print costs have increased, but they don't envisage having to raise the cost of advertising. The Link is a resource for everyone and is delivered free to all households with a typical print run of 760-770. It can also be downloaded from www.widecombe-in-the-moor.com.

Daf Edwards - Social Group

The Social Group meets on the second Thursday of the month between March and November. They invite a different speaker each month. It costs £3 and includes a cup of tea a biscuit or two and a raffle ticket.

Terry French - Widecombe History Group

The History Group meets on the first Wednesday of the month and a different speaker is invited each month. The group also goes on outings during the spring and summer and Terry also leads a number of guided walks around Widecombe on the last Friday of the month starting at the Café on the Green at 10.30am. Details of this year's schedule of events, outings and walks can be found on <https://widecombe.substack.com/p/widecombe-history-groups-programme>

Jane Bibby - Jubilee Orchard

This year, they have allowed the blossom to grow. Of the 45 trees planted, only 1 has died and this has been replaced. Maintenance and pruning work has been carried out. Hopefully, there will be a mix of cooking, eating and cider apples next year. They are hoping to compile a Widecombe apple cookbook. If anyone has any interesting apple recipes, please submit them to the Jubilee Orchard Committee.

Miles Fursdon - Snow Warden Scheme

The scheme was introduced 15 years ago by DCC. It is a self-help group whereby volunteers clear snow and salt the roads during the winter months. Miles leads a large group of volunteers: 17 tractor drivers have been allocated about a mile or so of road for which they are responsible and 60 volunteers spread salt with buckets. There are 30 or so grit bins and steep hills and sharp corners are prioritised. Highways only cover Bovey to Widecombe and Ashburton to Princetown – everywhere else is untouched by DCC and therefore is the responsibility of the parish. He has moved an unused grit bin from Bonehill to Lower Blackaton where there was a bigger need.

Luke Fursdon - Friends of Widecombe School

There are a number of new volunteers to the group; Luke also thanked those who have recently left for their support. A new newsletter has been created which highlights the activities of the group some of which are summarised below:

The school garden has been renovated and now includes a sand pit, obstacle course, sand kitchen, raised veg bed and herb planters. The Webburn classroom (Year 1 &2) has been redone. New resources have been installed including a new carpet and new storage systems. It has also been fully repainted. The swimming pool has had some work done including cladding and boarding, repainting the metalwork, new pool cover and mechanism and a new shed for storage. They arrange 'Love your school' days where volunteers will help with general maintenance including sweeping, tidying, and DIY jobs. Friends is so important to the primary school nowadays. There is now only one caretaker across the whole federation (23 schools). Fundraising events which have been arranged by Friends include a pumpkin party in October, an Easter egg design and hop and seek event. They are also looking to arrange a social event for parents/carers. Funds raised by Friends help to support school trips and classroom supplies. Future plans include the renovation of the hall, mobile library shelving system, renovation of years 3-6 classroom and drainage for the playground. They have set up some new ways to fund raise including setting up direct debit, QR code for one-off donations, the lottery system is still running and 'Easy' fundraising (donations from retailers). They are always looking for additional help particularly with the 'Love your school' days, volunteers for summer fete and anyone able to run workshops or give talks.

They also have a wish list of items so if you are looking to dispose of anything, check the wish list first to see if the school would find it useful (e.g. tyres for use in Forest School).

Martin Cherrett - Rolling Along

Rolling Along is an emailed illustrated newsletter about the people of Widecombe which goes out to 400 subscribers (an increase of 100 since last year). It is a free and effective way of communicating with everyone in Widecombe. If you have a story to tell about Widecombe life, please contact Rolling Along.

Claire Partridge - Beating of the Bounds

Plans are in place to beat the bounds of the parish which hasn't happened for around 25 years. Formal announcements and further information including dates and how to book will be coming soon. The route will be split over 3 days on consecutive weekends after Widecombe Fair. They are also looking at a celebratory event in Widecombe at the end of the event. A commemorative medal will be produced and issued to those who take part. It is hoped that a film of the event will be made for posterity.

Cllr Sally Morgan - Devon County Council

Thanked everyone for all the work they are doing in the parish. She reminded everyone that she has a councillors' community fund. If you have a project you are working on which needs additional funding, let her know.

Cllr John Nutley - Teignbridge District Council

John advised that he was one of three District Councillors representing this ward. He first became a District Councillor in 2007 and is also on the DNPA. He is also serves as the appointed Council governor on the Council of Governors for the Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, he is on the Exe Estuary Management Partnership and is also a member of Ashburton Town Council. All district councillors have a small locality budget to support local projects.

Peter Blood - St Pancras PCC - was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report:

In the past year there have been further changes to the clergy team. Sadly, Ross Hathway our Team Vicar left in February to move closer to his family. The process of recruiting a replacement is underway. Jenny Weigel, the Team Curate, who has been leading some of the services at Widecombe will also be leaving the team to take up a new post in Plymstock. Jenny's last service is on 14 June in Ashburton.

We continue to hold a 10.30 am service on most Sundays. With the shortage of clergy, members of the congregation have been leading a non-communion service once a month. Details of all services for the month are listed in the Parish Link and on the church notice board.

In addition to the regular Sunday services, we have been able to hold all our seasonal services throughout the year. These include a celebration of events through the agricultural year with a plough service, rogation and the harvest festival. In July we hold an animal service, in November we have Remembrance and the Christmas services include Christingle for families and Carols. As usual, the Christmas Tree Festival held in December proved popular with collections from the Festival and Christmas services donated to a local charity.

At the recent Annual Meeting, Mike Pascoe and Philly Gimlette were re-elected as our Church Wardens.

We are fortunate to have Michael Brown as our organist. He not only provides the music for services but arranges interesting and varied fund-raising concerts in the church.

The church is open for visitors every day and we have a steady income from items for sale and donations. Our card payment machine has made a significant difference as visitors carry less cash.

Two projects are on-going for which we are fund raising:

To make assisted access easier for mobility impaired visitors a prototype platform and ramp has been installed at the south door. It is not the finished article but is intended to give visitors an idea of how the structure will impact the church and identify any areas where it can be improved. If you have not yet seen it please do visit to take a look. We currently have a temporary licence from the church but we will need to apply for a faculty (church planning permission) to make it permanent. For this, the support of the community will be vital so please leave a comment in the book at the back of the church.

Our medieval rood screen is badly in need of conservation work both to clean the paintings and to secure it as some of the panels are unstable. As a first step we have commissioned a condition survey to identify what must be done to conserve the screen.

A church and community lunch is being planned for Sunday 21 June at 12.00pm in Church House. All are welcome.

If anyone wishes to get involved in church activities, please get in touch. These activities include a team of welcomers who greet visitors during the summer months, flower arrangers, helping with post service refreshments.

Di Cameron - Church House Committee - was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report:

We are sorry that no one from the Church House Committee is able to be present.

This is a short update:

We were at one point very concerned that the preschool might not be able to carry on. This would have been very sad for both the life of the village and also for the Church House.

We have been able to give them a rent free period and charge them a discounted rent when it is being paid .The income, however small, is important to the viability of paying the annual rent to the National Trust.

We also feel that frequent and regular use is important to the fabric of the building. It helps to keep the cold and damp at bay. We remain hopeful that the preschool will be able to carry on.

We have had a number of maintenance issues most of which we hope have been resolved. The most serious of these is that during the periods of very heavy rain that we had, a leak was found in the roof coming from around the chimney stack at the Church yard end of the building. The water was coming down the walls above the staircase and forming large puddles on the floor around the fireplace. The National Trust are aware of this. Hopefully it will be rectified in the not too distant future.

Other than that the Church House continues to be well used by lots of community groups. The heaters downstairs have made it a much more useable space for groups which include people with mobility issues.

We have recently included a feature on the Widecombe website describing the CH as an appealing venue for private, charity and other functions. We have already had bookings as result of this.

Because of its unique character and atmosphere the CH remains a much loved feature of community life. We hope that will continue into the future.

Roger Claxton - Widecombe Website - was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report:

The website has had another successful year, with our advertisers continuing to support us, and new ones joining. As you will have heard, the Parish Council now has their own website, so we say goodbye to them after over twenty years of publishing the minutes etc. We continue to provide the online version of the Parish Link, with a growing archive of back copies.

As always the site is there to publicise any events that you are organising in the parish and we encourage you to let us know about them to help site visitors.

We are also pleased to announce that Angus Fitzpatrick is taking over the website from Roger Claxton, who has run the site since its inception in 1999. We hope this will see the website developing in new directions and evolving as Widecombe evolves. Thanks to everyone for their support.

A police representative was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report:

The Parish of Widecombe is served by the Neighbourhood Police team working out of Ashburton Police station and Chudleigh Police office.

The team has been being led for the past year by Inspector Sean Roper; however, he has now moved to another role within the Police. A suitable replacement is currently being identified and should be in post in the not-too-distant future, as soon as a new sector inspector is in post we will update our councils.

Sgt Ryan Cook is the Neighbourhood Team Leader and PC Claire Hurrell is the Neighbourhood Beat Manager.

At this time there is no Police Community Support Officer specifically assigned to the Ashburton Neighbourhood team that covers Widecombe, so PCSO Paul Wilson and PCSO Tina Jordan are supporting the area when necessary.

The Parish area includes the village of Widecombe, the parts of Dartmoor surrounding it including Poundsgate, Ponsworthy and leusdon as well as the associated road network.

The Parish has the Beat code of JA2I.

Although every effort has been made to produce accurately the following figures, there may be a discrepancy in the totals shown (the totals do not include any traffic offences).

In the period 1 st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 there have been approximately 24 recorded criminal offences in the JA21 beat code.

Burglary; 1 Criminal damage; 2 Dog offences; 6 Fraud; 1 Harassment; 3 Public order; 4 Sexual offences (non-assault); 3 Theft; 4

Police responded to approximately 49 non-offence incidents in the same period.

Non offence incidents are those reported to the Police that do not meet the threshold to record a crime. They include road traffic incidents, missing persons, anti-social behaviour, and concerns for welfare.

District Cllr Rogers was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report:

The UK Government are working Devon County Council , who then issue funds to Teignbridge District Council.

The fund is now launched the crisis resilience fund .(link attached)
<https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/financial-help/crisis-and-resilience/>

The UK Government have issued
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/simpler-recycling-household-recycling-in-england>.

Asking Teignbridge residents to support curb side collections is so important .
<https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/recycling-and-waste/>

Report a problem with your landlord or Agent

From 1 May 2026, the Renters' Rights Act is now law , changes on how most private rented homes are let in England.

The Government has produced Guidance for tenants [Renters' Rights Act overview for tenants - GOV.UK](#) detailing the changes.

If landlord/tenant disputes can be resolved by. In some cases, Teignbridge District Council can investigate and take enforcement action, including issuing civil penalties. In other cases, we can provide advice and help you access the correct support or legal route.

If a resident has been told they must their home within the next 56 days, residents may be at risk of homelessness and should contact Housing Options. Please visit [Homelessness and prevention](#)

If a resident wishes to report disrepair or property condition issues, please visit [Report a problem with your private rented property](#)

<https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/housing/renting-from-a-private-landlord/report-a-problem-with-your-landlord-or-agent/>

Teignbridge Council work within the Devon Home Choice scheme and understanding the housing needs is crucial .

<https://www.devonhomechoice.com/>

Not all residents are digitally connected. Teignbridge is committed to assisting digitally the excluded .

Residents can all call 01626 361101 option 5 to seek advice .

The energy new price will be announced for the next quarter of 2026/27 before the end of May 2026

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/news/changes-energy-price-cap-between-1-april-and-30-june-2026>

This will add to household financial pressure and budgets .
Residents can seek guidance from
<https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>

APM2026.3 CLOSE

Before the meeting closed, Terry French informed the meeting, with deep regret, of the death of Margaret Phipps, a long-standing and devoted member of the parish. Margaret had made an outstanding contribution to parish life through her dedication and commitment to the community, including Widecombe Fair Committee, Widecombe Parish Council, Leusdon Memorial Hall, WI and Mothers Union. Her funeral is being held on Monday 1 June at 10.30am at St Pancras Church.

The Chair thanked everyone for their involvement this evening and for their reports.

Signed:.....

Dated.....