

WEST DOWN PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
West Down Parish Hall
Wednesday 4th June 2025 at 7.00 p.m.

Present Cllrs: M Reeves (Chair), S Ayre (Vice Chair), R Kenshole, T Verney, H Knight
Also present: , Daniel Bleasdale (Clerk) and 3 members of the public.

Apologies: Cllrs, S Whitby, I Lavender, S Tanton (all 3 apologies accepted), D Cllr Wilkinson, C Cllr Davis.

PART A

132/25 Declarations of Interest: Cllr Verney regarding item 13a (Footpaths).

133/25 Public Participation: John Hookway spoke regarding his support for action against dog fouling and his support for last month's public speaker Amy Batstone. Mr Hookway went on to say that he would like the Parish Council to look at options like S106 to fund the footpath to make it more accessible.

134/25 Minutes: Approve & Sign Minutes of the West Down Parish AGM Council Meeting held on the 14th May and the Parish meeting of the 14th 2025. Approval of the 14th May AGM Meeting was proposed by Cllr Ayre, seconded by Cllr Kenshole, approval unanimous. Approval of the 14th May Parish Meeting was proposed by Cllr Kenshole, seconded by Cllr Verney, approval unanimous.

135/25 Matters Arising

Cllr Ayre asked if the Council could order child AED pads for the defibrillator, this was proposed by Cllr T Verney, seconded by Cllr Kenshole decision unanimous.

Cllr Verney reported that the West Down sign at the top of Ilfracombe Road was not visible and the verges need cutting back.

Cllr Reeves noted that the minutes should have mentioned that Cllr Ayre left the room regarding her declaration of interest at the last meeting.

Cllr Reeves has been in contact with NDC payroll and clarified that the Clerks pay is correct. However, the Chair will have further discussions with NDC Payroll on how this is calculated vs the NALC recommended practice.

Cllr Reeves wanted to know if a Councillor wanted to complete a scarecrow for the scarecrow festival on behalf of the Parish Council and to let councillors know that some of the Chairmans allowance could be made -available for this.

136/25 Police Report.

The Clerk had not received a Police report and the Police website had not updated since the previous month.

137/25 Report from County Councillor

C Cllr Davis. Full report on Website: The Exmoor Coaster bus service has returned for £3 and runs from Ilfracombe to Minehead.

138/25 Election of Parish Council Roles

Internal auditor: Tony Verney will keep the role temporarily until a full Council meeting is held, proposed by Cllr Kenshole, Seconded by Cllr Knight.

2nd Parish Council representative on the Parish Hall Management Committee; It was proposed that this item is carried forward until there is a full Council meeting proposed by Cllr Verney, Seconded by Cllr Kenshole.

139/25 Reactive Speed Sign: The Clerk advised poles are ordered the delivery date is the 20th June. The Clerk will get a written quote from Chris Wallis for pole installation.

140/25 Planning Decisions:
Approved

79834 Demolition of barn and erection of a single 3 bed dwelling & self-contained 2 bed annexe together with associated works (fallback to planning permission 75554) at West Stowford Farm West Down Devon.

141/25 Planning Applications to consider:

To comment on the following planning applications:

80192 Demolition of barn and erection of a single storey dwelling and associated works (utilising the fallback approval 74312 and 76927) at The Barn Woodlane Farm West Down Ilfracombe Devon EX34 8NH. Approval proposed by Councillor Kenshole Seconded by Councillor Verney, decision unanimous.

142/25 Planning applications received after the Agenda was published:

None

143/25 Footpaths:

Cllr Verney left the meeting.

Pete Starbuck has resigned as the contractor for the footpaths.

Cllr Reeves read out a letter from Cllr Verney regarding taking over the footpath work himself. Also, the 'extra' work given to A-D's tree and garden has not been completed, the Clerk will let them know that the work needs to be done by the end of the month or the contract will go elsewhere.

While the Parish Council has confidence in Cllr Verney and it was a very generous offer, it was accepted that this could be considered a conflict of interest.

Cllr Knight has offered her husband's grass cutting services as he already does contract work. NDC and DALC will be contacted for advice on this. Pete Starbuck will be contacted to get his first (and last) invoice.

P3 update. Neither the P3 co-ordinator or Clerk have been able to get a proper update. The Clerk will send the invoices for last year's footpath maintenance to the Parish Council to try and claim back the P3 funding. Proposed by Cllr Ayre, seconded by Cllr Kenshole.

Fly tipping. Both the Clerk and Cllr Verney have reported the fly tipping on footpath 15 and have not had a response.

Other footpaths have had some fly tipping of tyres etc that has been reported.

144/25 Road Warden Scheme:

The Chairman received the Road Warden Scheme agreement. Proposed by Cllr Ayre, Seconded by Cllr Kenshole, approval unanimous.

145/25 To Review the Standing Orders:

Point 17 will be changed to the 30th September and 30th March, which reflects what actually happens. Cllr Kenshole will make these changes.

146/25 To Review the Statement of Internal Control and Financial Risk:

Proposed to keep the same by Cllr Reeves, Seconded by Cllr Ayre, approval unanimous.

147/25 To Review the Financial Regulations and Check Signatories:

To include electronic payments in the wording.

9.0 Tenders changed to read Quotations and Tenders and insert "as the per the Parish Council Policy".

17.0 The council shall review financial regulations in June rather than April.

148/25 Foxhunters Wooden Bus Shelter:

It was proposed that the work go ahead by Cllr Ayre, seconded by Cllr Kenshole decision unanimous depending on a more detailed quote and final agreement with C Cllr Davis.

149/25 Car park Lease:

A request to get the weeds cut was put in with North Devon Council. This will be done again by email.

It was agreed to set up the business rates by direct debit. Cllr Kenshole seconded by Cllr Verney decision unanimous.

Lease rental payments. It was agreed to set up a standing order to pay North Devon Council £1 a year.

150/25 Quarterly Audit

Cllr Verney will conduct the audit.

151/25 Parish Council Diary Review: The Parish Council Diary will be updated. Emergency Plan review: The CERT co-ordinator will be reminded in August that it is due in September, this has been added to the PC diary.

152/25 Insurance

Confirmation of the renewal has been received and the Clerk will get things added.

153/25 Finances

a) Balances at 31/03/2025: Treasures Account: £21,858.17

Business Bank Account £4930.66

154/25 The Parish Council has received the NDC Climate grant payment of £2,730

b) Received invoices for payment:

Payments for authorisation June 2025

North Devon Council Clerks Salary

£399.62

Admin Charge

£7.72

£407.34

Mrs K J Snooks:

£250.0

Defib Pads

£144.00

Total

£801.34

Proposal for payments Cllr Kenshole seconded by Cllr Reeves, decision unanimous.

155/25 Internal Auditor report.

Cllr Reeves read out an email and brief summary of the report, previously sent to all councillors

Cllr Reeves had a telephone conversation and exchange of emails with Julie Snooks, the Internal Auditor, on 19th May.

Julie Snooks was very helpful and emailed copies of most of the documents to him that had already been collected back by the Clerk on the 9th May, plus her main report which was only available on the 19th May. We only get a main (more detailed) report because our expenditure/income is over £25,000. However, the handwritten (checklist) and slightly less detailed report could have been circulated before our 14th May meeting, had we known about it.

Julie's report seems fair and contains some helpful advice, although some items were raised that should have been attended to prior to audit, as per instructions to our Clerk.

Cllr Reeves then gave a brief summary of the report.

It is recommended that the council clearly identify earmarked reserves (e.g., for car park and Air Ambulance Light) and that the minutes reflect in more detail the budget and precept setting process.

The P3 grant income and expenditure should be identified separately with any balances that arrive being ringfenced. It was noted we made no claim in 2024/25.

We should consider utilising our balances more to improve bank interest received.

Current Insurance Fidelity Guarantee (FG) at £25,000 is lower than the recommended indicative level (in our case approx. £38,000). We may wish to review the adequacy of cover.

The asset register values are identified as "Recommended Insurance Value" rather than "Valuation based on Net Cost" (We were picked up on this last year and the Clerk had been repeatedly asked to change this). There was also a comment on the need to keep the total up to date on the front pages. In addition, it was noted that:

That 2025/26 budget was not on the website.

The AGAR figures were being audited prior to council approval.

The payment book entries were in pencil which is unacceptable, and Julie had to ink over them.

The previous cash book should have also been taken to Julie, but she managed without seeing this.

There was a loss of Vat to claim (on the Walkie Talkie Radios purchased for the CERT team) as the invoice was not in the PC's name. The Chair will advise Julie that there was in fact no loss of Vat as this was included in the grant award from DCT, but it should have been minuted better as such.

Although we would be expected to approve the accounts and AGAR documents before giving to Julie, we only need to sign the AGAR forms after being returned to us with her signature on.

The Asset Register should only include items after we have paid for them. Julie agreed the Clerk's AGAR figure of £31,108 although it was explained that there were still items that should have been added that were paid for before 31st March, which the Clerk had failed to update. She did not think this would be an issue with the External Auditor but just advised to bring everything up to date asap.

Overall, the Chair thought it has been a good audit. There were many satisfactory items, as per reference to Julie's checklist report, and all the above points can be addressed with some further discussion and targeted action.

156/25 AGAR (Annual Governance Accountability Return)

To complete and sign the Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025.

This was agreed and Cllr Reeves will take over this process. Proposed by Cllr Verney, seconded by Cllr Ayre decision unanimous.

157/25 The updated Asset register: The asset register will be changed to Excel format to make the amount self-adding.

158/25 Dog waste bins in West Down

As the waste is now combined with litter, Cllr Reeves is now requesting that some bins become dual bins. Cllr Reeves is following it up with Mark Kentell (Head of Environmental Enhancement at NDC).

159/25 Correspondence.

David Ayre has thanked the Parish Council for the grant funding.

Clair Chandler (Paralegal at NDC) regarding the weeds in the car park.

Community park correspondence regarding accessibility on Garden Lane, they have some grant applications in the works.

Planning Enforcement is going on in Willingcott Valley, Cllr Reeves has corresponded with Stacey Salter regarding the enforcements in our Parish.

160/25 Unresolved Questions.

Cllr Reeves answered John Hookway's question in public speaking; He thought the Parish Council gave Amy Batstone a fair hearing, including further council discussion during Unresolved Questions, adding that an increased level of communication with the community park committee is happening, offering further support in the future wherever possible.

161/25 Items to be added to the next meeting Agenda.

- a) Update on Clerk recruitment.
- b) Quarterly Auditor.
- c) Parish Hall Committee members.
- d) Review of GDPR.
- c) Review of General Privacy Notice.
- d) Review the Role of the Data Protection Officer.

162/25 Any Other Business.

Cllr Ayre: Road markings around Rose Cottage at the Square junction are worn out. Some lights around the village have been reported that remain on all the time.
Cllr Reeves: Reported that some website policies need front pages updating on the website.

The Contractor has not yet cleared out around Pulland Bridge and fixed the Bridge. The Clerk will chase this and inform the contractor to get it done before the next meeting or the Parish Council will get someone else.

Arrangements for repainting the inside of the 3 stone bus shelters on the A361 will be deferred for discussion at the next meeting

PART B – THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE EXCLUDED FROM THIS PART OF THE MEETING.

163/25 a) Confirm leaving date and other arrangements with Clerk following resignation notice given to the Council at the last meeting.

Discussion on timeline for recruiting new Clerk.

The Clerk received an email from Cllr Reeves that proposes the Clerk take his 20 working days holiday working back from the 15th July, This would make the last working day as 17th June, The Clerk agreed to this and thanked the Parish Council. The Clerk will use this time to tidy up loose ends.

164/25 b) Discussion on timeline for recruiting a new Clerk.

The advert, Job Description, Person Specification and timeline for recruiting a new Clerk were agreed. The advertising campaign will start this week on multiple platforms. The advert will run until 27th June, Applications will be discussed at the July council meeting to decide on invitations to interview. Target start date for a new Clerk will be 1st August (some flexibility possible).

The meeting closed at 10.12 p.m.