

WEST DOWN PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES
West Down Parish Hall
Wednesday 3rd September 2025 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs M Reeves (Chair), S Ayre (Vice Chair), R Kenshole, H Knight, S Tanton, I Lavender and S Whitby

Also present: C Cllr Davis, D Cllr Wilkinson, John Barnett (Clerk) and 1 member of the public.

Apologies for absence: Cllr Tony Verney due to work commitments. (Apology accepted).

195/25 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Hannah Knight – Jon Knight's spouse reference Agenda Item 18.

196/25 Public Participation

Amy Batstone spoke to the councillors about Garden Lane. Specifically requesting clarification about who owns it with regards to the surface not being suitable for anyone with a mobility impairment, and also recent reports of broken glass and pottery being dumped on the path which could cause damage or injury to passers by.

She also mentioned that the Community Park Trust is looking into whether planning permission is required to install play equipment from Watermouth castle in the park and whether it will meet current safety requirements. She invited ideas and advice on this project.

Chair Councillor Reeves confirmed that Devon County Council owns Garden Lane not West Down Parish Council. However he confirmed that the Parish Council supported the idea that any improvement in the surface would be welcome, and any new playground equipment and furniture suitable to aid people with disability would be good to have in the Community Field.

197/25 Approve & Sign Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 2nd July 2025.

The Minutes had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr Ayre proposed that the Minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd July 2025 be accepted as a true record which was seconded by Cllr Whitby. There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 2nd July 2025 BE APPROVED AND THEY WERE DULY SIGNED.

198/25 Matters Arising

Cllr Reeves referred to previous matters under Minute 135/25 West Down sign at top of Ilfracombe Road being very overgrown and Cllr Kenshole offered to tidy this up shortly.

Cllr Ayre raised the issue of the previous Clerk failing to return the backup drive to the Laptop computer. Cllr Kenshole reported that he had reviewed the laptop and noted that it had been used for other Parish Council's business and that the mislaid hard disk had been replaced with a substitute. Cllr Kenshole plans to contact Dan Bleasdale to verify that no other files or computer storage relating to West Parish Council business is still in his possession. Cllr Ayre commented that it wasn't good enough that he lost a backup drive, especially as someone in a paid position.

Cllr Reeves summarised the new Clerk recruitment process which included interviewing 4 potential candidates on 9th July, the interview panel meeting to review their notes on 11th July, consulting all the other councillors (when all replies received were positive) and making an offer of employment on 16th July which was accepted the same day.

199/25 Police Report

Monthly Crime Figures.

The crime figures for June 2025 for Morteohoe, Woolacombe, & West Down (including Mullacott & Bittadon) were:-

Violence and sexual offences	9
Shoplifting	2
Anti-Social behaviour	1
Other crime	1

Of these 13 crimes only one (Violence and/or sexual offence) was in West Down (Thorne Park).

200/25 Report from County Councillor.

C Cllr Davis provided a verbal report covering a number of topics :-

a) Road Safety Office Meeting - there is a new scheme underway utilising AI cameras to monitor driver use of mobile phones and seat belts, and average speed cameras are coming too. Plan is to coordinate all together.

C Cllr Davis said that there are more complaints about speeding at this time of the year (probably due to kids being back to school) so ideal to press on with the installation of our Reactive Speed Sign. (Incidentally, Marwood Parish Council had been offered a similar speed sign to put up in Muddiford.)

Cllr Ayre commented that a Safer Road scheme for the A361 should gain the highest priority because people were not only speeding but also being quite aggressive. Cllr Ayre also emphasised the need for a Police presence to encourage drivers to adhere to the new speed limits of 50 mph on the A361 between Knowle and Mullacott.

b) C Cllr Davis will be attending Ian Roome's (MP) Teams meeting on 26th September to discuss the status of the Tarka Trail Missing Links. (A West Down Parish Councillor will also attend on Teams.) C Cllr Davis hopes that this meeting might eventually lead to some more funding becoming available. This work has been ongoing for more than 30 years and it was fantastic that so many landowners had agreed to support the Tarka Trail plan.

c) Devon County Council continued to work diligently on the local government reorganisation process which is in Stage 1 – Inviting Unitary Proposals to be submitted by the end of November so there was a lot of activity to get this completed by the deadline.

201/25 Report from District Councillor.

a) D Cllr Wilkinson provided additional information about the timelines for the Local Government reorganisation :-

Final submissions must be received by the end of November

Final Decision August 2026

Elections May 2027

Unitary (Vesting Day) May 2028

There was a lot of work going on and the costs of the review were of concern to all involved.

b) D Cllr Wilkinson was keen to correct reports in the local Press regarding the cost of works to local Quays to make them conform to regulations being around £500,000. No such number has been discussed. There has not been any decision about how to proceed, but Rolle Quay and Castle Quay are both used a lot and closing them would not be good/helpful to the local community. He commented that Barnstaple used to be the largest local port after Bristol in years gone by and it was important to keep these slipways open.

c) D Cllr Wilkinson reminded everyone that community grant applications are now open, and must be received before January. As an example Appledore Bookfest received £100 to contribute to books to take home from the festival.

Other grants included the Winter Flourishing Cultural Grant £250 to be used on events in Nov/Dec/Jan. (See NDC website.)

d) D Cllr Wilkinson mentioned that Premier Inn continue work on a plan for a new hotel in Ilfracombe. Recently a new design received a good response and there will be a Premier Inn Board Meeting to review the plan in next couple of months.

202/25 Election of outstanding Parish Council roles: 2nd Parish Council Representative on the Parish Hall Management Committee sought. No volunteer as yet but will continue search for someone who could also be a Trustee.

203/25 Reactive Speed Signs

This item had already been discussed briefly under the C Cllr's report. Cllr Reeves continues chasing full responses from utilities providers, especially in relation to the location outside Dean View on Ilfracombe Road. Cllr Reeves will contact Chris Wallace (chosen poles installer) and advise we are looking to go ahead with at least 2 of the sites in October.

Cllr Reeves recommended the Parish Council commence discussion with locals, including the school, regarding the positioning of the Reactive Speed Signs. He also mentioned that there was a need to test out the kit i.e. charge the batteries and test the Speed Sign.

It was agreed that Cllr Reeves and Cllr Ayre would create a list of neighbours and addresses that need to be contacted to discuss the plan and the positioning of support poles. (Dean Lane, School area, and Ilfracombe Road.)

204/25 Planning Decisions

Approved

80303 Barn in field west of Trimstone Manor

Approval of details in respect of discharge of condition 6 (hedge planting) attached to planning permission 75490 (Conversion of redundant stone agricultural barn to dwelling)

80398 8 Thorne Park West Down Ilfracombe Devon EX34 8NG

Demolition of dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling

80260 Corbiere 12 Thorne Park West Down Ilfracombe Devon EX34 8NG

Application for a non-material amendment to planning permission 73876 (extension to dwelling and conversion of detached garage to independent living annex) in respect of amendments to window and door openings to the annex

80473 The Annexe Higher Willingcott Farm Woolacombe Devon EX34 7HN

Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of new farm managers accommodation

205/25 Planning Applications

a) To comment on the following planning applications.

Planning application 80555 for an equestrian sand school at Land Adj B3343 Ilfracombe Devon EX34 8NY

Cllr Reeves explained that this is for a Sand School and Septic tank which are both hidden from general public view. Cllr Kenshole proposed approval, Cllr Knight seconded, decision unanimous.

Planning application 80606 for retrospective retention of a livestock shelter at Land known as Part Beef Park Buttercombe Lane Ilfracombe EX34 8NU

Cllr Kenshole proposed approval, Cllr Knight seconded, decision unanimous.

b) To comment on any planning applications received after the Agenda was published.

Planning application 80721 to Increase the height of detached garage at front of house from 2.5m 4m to install secure garage door and increase storage space at 4 Thorne Park West Down Ilfracombe Devon EX34 8NG

Councillors agreed that they had had enough time to review the application and that there was no obvious issue with the objective of increasing storage space with the addition of a garage door for security purposes.

Cllr Tanton proposed recommendation for approval, Cllr Kenshole seconded, decision unanimous.

206/25 Footpaths

Cllr Reeves confirmed that he had written to the previous 'extra works' contractor Lee Rulton to advise that the Council decided to change contractors to complete the 2 outstanding jobs (177/25).

a) Update and discussion on current grass cutting contractor position. (177/25)

The new contractor Jon Knight has been very busy catching up with the grass cutting and has submitted his first invoices covering July and August.

b) Update on both new and outstanding P3 grant claims.

A claim for the outstanding P3 sum of £220 was submitted on 12th August through the new NDC electronic payments system and an automatic receipt was received. No timescale for payment was indicated – Clerk to progress chase.

Still No response from Jon Boyd regarding application for P3 funds for this year. Clerk to follow up with Cllr Verney's assistance.

c) Any other footpath matters. (Including National Grid/Hi-Line Tree work in Garden Lane.)

In the absence of Cllr Verney the following 3 items from 177/25 c) remain open until the next meeting :-

1) Cllr Ayre suggested Mr Knight give the Parish Council a figure for the outstanding work (repair Pulland bridge stonework and clear entrance to f/p 12 at Aylescott Lane), with other quotations not being required if the cost is under £500. Cllr Verney will speak to Mr Knight about this on this coming Saturday

2) Cllr Verney referred to hedges overhanging Footpath 12 in Garden Lane. Cllr Ayre has the letter sent to landowners in the past. Cllr Verney will provide addresses in this respect and an appropriate letter will be sent to them reminding them of their responsibilities.

3) Cllr Reeves referred to a website enquiry regarding Heddon Mills which is totally overgrown. In addition the crop being grown has got very tall and no footpath has been cut. Cllr Verney understands that the landowner is meant to keep a footpath maintained up to the hedge-line. Cllr Ayre suggested this be passed on to the P3 Team. Stocklands (f/p 3) work was in dispute previously as the landowner told her another contractor was involved and that DCC always paid him to do the strimming. Cllr Reeves will write to DCC to request clarification as to whether Dave Trickett is contracted by DCC to maintain this footpath – if so then WDPC can stand down.

Hi-Line, contractor for National Grid, have been in touch with the Clerk to arrange the pollarding of some trees in Garden Lane. National Grid will advise Hi-Line the date when they plan to disconnect the power supply to the overhead cables running through the trees. Devon County Council Highways have authorised this work.

Cllr Ayre referred to a continuing issue with fly-tipping at Stocklands crossroads which she has been reporting to NDC via their website. NDC has kindly removed various items.

207/25 Road Warden Scheme: To discuss the next steps, including Road Warden Training. E-training to be booked for the Highway Safety Awareness course. This will be important since Cllr Verney will be changing the batteries in the Reactive Speed Signs.

Cllr Lavender raised a question regarding final resolution to the road flooding issue earlier in the year. Cllr Reeves confirmed that the drains were cleared by Highways in May and that the property owners are not expecting any further actions at this time.

208/25 Small Grant Fund Form update (updated August and to be publicised).

Cllr Reeves noted that there was a need to figure out what is required in the precept and Cllr Ayre commented that the Grant program was not a legal obligation but an idea promoted by WDPC. Consequently if there was no money available via the precept then the Grants would not go-ahead. Cllr Ayre Proposed that WDPC proceed with the Grant program and Cllr Kenshole seconded, decision unanimous.

209/25 S106 Expression of Interest update.

Cllr Reeves will update Cllr Ayre's previous list of potential S106 funded projects; specifically to remove the project of installation of playground equipment at the school because the school has gifted the equipment to the Community Park. The Community Park is now working on an outline cost for installation and maintenance. Cllr Reeves noted that Richard Slaney (NDC) was looking for ideas in case S106 funding becomes available so it was a good idea to keep the list up-to-date in readiness.

210/25 Bus shelter: Foxhunters Replacement update on wooden shelter & Paint the interior of the other 3 bus shelters.

Cllr Ayre advised that Jack Dabney (Devonshire makers of fencing and garden building services) is going to send a revised quotation due to a recent increase in the cost of materials.

Cllr Verney previously offered to paint the other bus shelters so await his update next meeting.

211/25 Car Park Lease: To receive an update on the Village Car Park, post lease agreement.

a) completion of shrubbery trimming and weed control by NDC.

Cllr Reeves reported that NDC tried to complete this work last month but there was an abandoned car obstructing access to some of the shrubbery. However, NDC returned this week and this work has now been completed.

Cllr Verney plans to discuss maintenance of this shrubbery with Jon Knight with a view to adding this task to the schedule of work for next year.

Cllr Verney to update on plans for weed control at the next meeting.

Per the WDPC Diary the contract and schedule will be reviewed in October.

212/25 To Review and Update the Parish Council Diary.

Cllr Reeves sent out the revised Diary for Councillors to review – no additions so will add to the Council website. Cllr Whitby proposed acceptance of revised Diary and Cllr Lavender seconded, decision unanimous.

213/25 Internal Quarterly Audit arrangements.

Scheduled for October.

214/25 External Audit arrangements – update.

Awaiting final outcome from Auditors.

215/25 Insurance: To receive an update on the Insurance.

a) Update on notifying insurers of additional items for cover, particularly the car park.

Cllr Reeves confirmed that he had updated the fidelity guarantee policy cover to £50K and paid the additional £28 premium. He had also requested inclusion of cover for the car park as required by the Lease Agreement.

On confirmation to NDC they requested a copy of the schedule and value on car park which will be further discussed with our insurers before responding in more detail.

216/25 DALC Clerks Essentials Training Course (3 x 1 hour Webinars) £36 each.

Cllr Whitby proposed that the Clerk should attend the Clerks Essentials Training Course and Cllr Kenshole seconded, unanimous agreement to this plan. £30 +VAT per session.

217/25 Purchase of Poppy Wreath & order Salt supplies.

It was agreed that the Clerk would order the Salt supplies after liaising with Gary Seldon at Mullacott to determine the total weight required.

The Clerk advised that the usual medium Poppy Wreath cost would be £19.99 plus £4.50 delivery. Cllr Ayre proposed that the Clerk purchase the Poppy Wreath, seconded by Cllr Tanton, decision unanimous.

RESOLVED – THAT THE CLERK WILL PURCHASE A MEDIUM POPPY WREATH FROM RBL.

218/25 Finances:

a) To receive the balance in the bank accounts.

Balances at 31/07/2025Treasuries Account

Opening	£20,644.24
Received	£ 0.00
Outgoings	<u>£ 552.68</u>
Closing	£20,091.56

Balances at 31/08/2025Treasuries Account

Opening	£20,091.56
Received	£ 0.00
Outgoings	<u>£ 119.25</u>
Closing	£19,972.31

Business Bank Account

Opening	£4,933.94
Received	£ 2.84
Outgoings	<u>£ 0.00</u>
Closing	£4,936.78

Business Bank Account

Opening	£4,936.78
Received	£ 3.12
Outgoings	<u>£ 0.00</u>
Closing	£4,939.90

Councillors discussed adjusting the balance between the accounts so that more interest could be earned via the Business Account. The Internal Auditors suggested this rebalance in their 2025 report.

Cllr Reeves proposed that the sum of £10,000 be transferred from the Treasurers Account to the Business Account and Cllr Ayre seconded, decision unanimous.

b) To receive and agree the invoices received for payment.

<u>Creditor</u>	<u>Invoice number</u>	<u>Amount</u>
North Devon Council (Non-Domestic Rates - Car Park)	93625504	£ 115.00
DALC Annual Membership Renewal	6659	£ 280.59
Parish Hall - Hire 9th July 2025 Full Day	37	£ 40.00
less credit for August Parish Council Meeting cancellation		minus £ 20.00
NDC - Bin Services	11621202	£ 169.10
Lloyds Bank - Account Charges	463536887	£ 4.25
North Devon Council Clerks Salary (Daniel Bleasdale)	11618542	£ 399.62
NDC Admin Charge		£ 7.72
North Devon Council Clerks Final Salary (Daniel Bleasdale)	11624330	£ 193.36
NDC Admin Charge		£ 7.72
J Barnett - Expenses - Ink Cartridge		£ 24.98
J P Knight (Footpath & Bus Shelter works July 2025)	0121	£ 323.33
J P Knight (Footpath & Bus Shelter works August 2025)	0122	£ 323.33
North Devon Council Clerks Salary (John Barnett)	11627535	£ 385.52
NDC Admin Charge		£ 7.72
WesternWeb - Renewal web space/email/domain use	25092	£ 212.40
Total Payment		£2,474.64

Cllr Whitby proposed that these invoices should be paid which was seconded by Cllr Lavender, decision unanimous.

RESOLVED – THAT THE INVOICES TOTALLING £2,474.64 SHOULD BE PAID.

Cllr Reeves expressed his concern that the VAT reclaim that the previous Clerk had posted might have been lost as the sum claimed of £694.61 had not been received. Cllr Ayre proposed that the Clerk submit the VAT claim on-line and Cllr Lavender seconded. Unanimous agreement.

219/25 The Asset Register: To make sure it is up to date.

Completed – Clerk to upload to website.

220/25 Correspondence: To receive items of correspondence received since the last meeting.

Ian Roome, MP, has arranged a Teams Meeting to discuss the TARKA Trail Missing Links - 26th September 10.30-11.30 a.m. Cllr Reeves proposed Cllr Ayre to attend, Cllr Kenshole seconded and there was unanimous agreement.

Kate Johnston, Corporate and Community Services Officer NDC, advised that there is a Parish Forum on 1st October. Cllr Reeves will let her know that we are unable to attend because it is the first Weds of the month and we have a meeting of West Down Parish Council. However these events are usually recorded so we shall be able to review at a later date.

Cllr Reeves noted that the email invitation from DCC to attend a public information event in Ilfracombe about the Government Re-organisation to be held at 9.30 am on 18th July arrived at 4.00 pm the same day so it was not possible to attend. Cllr Reeves expressed his disappointment.

Cllr Whitby mentioned that there is an opportunity to Meet Your Army: The Army Engagement Team with Colonel Matt Palmer, Commander of the Army in our region on Thursday 2nd October at 9:00am – 12.00 noon at The Barnstaple Hotel for an engaging and informative event. You will get the chance to meet the dedicated men and women who serve our country and hear their personal stories of courage and commitment.

221/25 Unresolved Questions:

None

222/25 Items to be added to the next meeting Agenda.

The next meeting will be Wednesday 1st October. Items for the Agenda so far include :-

- a) Update on receipt of any Small Grant Fund applications
- b) Reactive Speed Sign
- c) Footpaths, including P3 Funding & Walking of Footpaths (October to December)
- d) Road Warden Scheme - Training
- e) Bus shelters

- f) Insurance – car park
- g) Pay-out grants following second Precept and Grant receipt of the financial year
- h) VAT Claim progress
- i) West Down Postal delivery service.
- j) Review the grass cutting and bus shelter cleaning contract items and schedule.

223/25 Any Other Business:

There will be a Presentation on Cyber Crime by D & C Police Mick Harrison on Monday 22nd September at 7.00 pm in the Parish Hall.

DALC training Oct 15th – Writing Grant applications - £35 + VAT. Cllr Kenshole proposed that Cllr Reeves attend this training which was seconded by Cllr Ayre and agreed unanimously. Clerk to book place on the course for Cllr Reeves.

Cllr Lavender raised the subject of Postal delivery services in West Down and after some discussion it was agreed that Councillors will monitor deliveries over the next month.

Part B: Confidential Matters:

224/25 Any Matters deemed too confidential for part A:

a) Clerks Contract & salary update following LGA Agreement

Cllr Reeves reported that following the interview process (4 candidates) John Barnett was selected to be the new Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer and an offer was made and accepted on 16th July with a start date of 1st August.

The Payscale agreed was SCP14. Cllr Reeves had since received notification from NALC that a new national pay agreement has been reached for Local Government Association Employees of an increase in pay which amounts to 3.2%. i.e. a new hourly rate for our Clerk of £15.31 per hour and Cllr Reeves agreed to inform NDC's payroll department. This will be backdated to his start date of 1st August.

Cllr Reeves reported that the 3 references received for the new Clerk were all fine.

Cllr Tanton proposed that a Contract of Employment be offered to the Clerk (a draft of which had been circulated to the Clerk and councillors in advance) and Cllr Ayre seconded with unanimous agreement. The contract was duly signed by the Clerk and Cllr Reeves (as Chair).

The meeting closed at 10.10 pm