

WEST DOWN PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of ANNUAL PARISH MEETING of West Down Parish Council

held on Wednesday 6^h May 2026 at 6.45 pm at the Parish Hall, West Down.

Present: Cllrs M Reeves (Chair), S Ayre (Vice-Chair), R Kenshole, T Verney, I Lavender and S Whitby.

Also present: C Cllr Davis, D Cllr M Wilkinson, John Barnett (Clerk) and 2 members of the public.

99/26 Apologies for absence: Cllr S Tanton due to family holiday, and Cllr H Knight on authorised leave. (Apologies accepted).

100/26 Approve and sign the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th May 2025.

The Minutes had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. They had been approved previously in June 2025 when acceptance was proposed by Cllr Kenshole and seconded by Cllr Verney, and approval was unanimous. Traditionally, they are not due for signing until this meeting.

There was some confusion on the correct procedure so for good measure Cllr Reeves proposed that the Minutes of the meeting held on the 14th May 2025 be accepted as a true record which was seconded by Cllr Ayre. There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THE 14th May 2025 BE APPROVED AND THEY WERE DULY SIGNED BY THE CHAIR.

101/26 Questions/Statements from the Public including a report from the Chairman of the Parish Council.

Cllr Reeves welcomed the members of the public and asked if they had any questions or statements:

David Ayre, on behalf of the Parish Hall Management Committee, thanked D Cllr Wilkinson and the Parish Council for all their support, both moral support and financial support, especially during the COVID years. This was vital to keeping the Parish Hall as a facility for the community.

102/26 Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council.

Cllr Reeves gave a huge Thank You to everyone for their support and contributions during the last year, with special thanks to C Cllr Davis & D Cllr Wilkinson for their regular attendance and information on what's going on in the wider Devon Community. He also thanked Cllr Ayre for her ongoing support as Vice Chair.

Cllr Reeves reported that the Council had maintained its full quota of 8 Cllrs during the year and that they had been a great team and have a diverse set of skills and experience. The Council had held 11 regular monthly meetings (August being a summer recess) and the average meeting attendance was 5 Cllrs, although 2 meetings had only just been quorate (3 Cllrs in attendance), 2 meetings had 7 Councillors in attendance. (No meeting achieved the full 8 Cllrs.)

He reported that it had been a year of both Opportunity and Challenges:

- Cllr Reeves took on his new role at the May 2025 AGM.
- By the end of his first meeting as Chair, the previous Clerk handed in his notice of resignation.
- By the end of the second meeting in June the Grass cutting contractor resigned.
- By the 3rd meeting in July the Ex works contractor resigned after doing only half the work required.

Consequently, during the summer, the Council embarked on the Clerk replacement process. There was a good response to the advertisement with 5 credible candidates. Four interviews were conducted and Councillors were pleased to appoint John Barnett on 1st August. He has done an incredible job since starting. Cllr Reeves thanked the new Clerk for his efforts to date.

Cllr Reeves also remarked that in July the Council was fortunate to be able to appoint Jon Knight as the new grass cutting and bus shelter cleaning contractor.

Cllr Reeves commented that the Council has been running very smoothly and efficiently with all Policies updated regularly and that previous audit items identified by the Internal Auditor had been addressed.

Cllr Reeves noted that the number of planning applications on which the Parish Council were Consultees has steadily fallen over the last 3 years at 30, 21 and 14 respectively. (Typically, down 30% year on year.)

During the year the Parish Council joined the DCC Road Warden Scheme and in July appointed Cllr Verney as our Road Warden. Cllrs Verney, Kenshole, Whitby and Chair Cllr Reeves also completed the DCC online Highway Safety Awareness Course and the Road Warden is shortly to discuss with the local Highways Officer what work programme to adopt.

During the year the Parish Council supported four local organisations with a total of £3,870 in Small Grants. For the Parish Hall, St Calixtus Church and the Community Park the funds contributed to a variety of costs including grass cutting, insurance, and general maintenance amongst others. The PTFA utilised the grant to acquire storage units for pupil Arts & Crafts materials.

Cllr Reeves commented that probably the greatest achievement of the last 12 months was the completion of the Reactive Speed Sign project comprising 3 sites (4 monitoring and data collection points). He expressed very special thanks to C Cllr Davis for sourcing the funding, and to Cllrs Kenshole and Verney for their practical and technical help in getting everything installed and running smoothly.

Cllr Reeves noted his biggest disappointment of the year was the Council's failure to illicit any real response from DCC regarding P3 Grant bids submitted in the previous year, despite constant chasing of the DCC PROW Team. Eventually the Basic Grant of £220 did materialise but he felt that this is currently not really a "Parish Paths Partnership Scheme" as had worked successfully prior to the last couple of years.

Looking ahead, the Parish Council awaits news about the Local Government Reorganisation to set up Unitary Authorities (for Devon, will it be the 4,5, 1 proposal? where 5 = Exeter, East Devon, Mid

Devon, North Devon & Torrington). There will probably be some interesting challenges ahead for the Parish Council team.

Finally, Cllr Reeves commented that Communications to residents regarding what the Parish Council is doing for the community and providing information via Social Media and the Village & Parish Council websites was very important.

The meeting closed at 19:01 pm.