

WEST DOWN PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES
West Down Parish Hall
Wednesday 2nd September 2026 at 7.00 p.m.

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

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

192/26 Apologies for absence: Cllr Tanton due to domestic responsibilities. (Apology accepted).

193/26 Declarations of Interest. None.

194/26 Public Participation. Chris Batstone presented a case on behalf of the Trustees of West Down Community Park who are reviewing how to secure the future of the Community Park for the long-term benefit of the residents of West Down. An arrangement is needed that will ensure that this important village asset remains under local control for future generations and that will ensure that decisions affecting the Park are made by the community it serves.

Councillors asked a number of questions briefly so that they could discuss in more detail under “Correspondence” later in the meeting.

Councillors thanked Chris for his very informative presentation and for bringing the issue to their attention.

195/26 Minutes :

The Minutes from 1st July 2026 meeting had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Cllr Lavender proposed that the Minutes of the meeting held on the 1st July 2026 be accepted as a true record which was seconded by Cllr Verney. There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 1st JULY 2026 BE APPROVED AND THEY WERE DULY SIGNED BY THE CHAIR AFTER THE MEETING.

196/26 Matters Arising: To discuss matters arising from the Parish Council meeting held on 1st July 2026 that aren’t already on this agenda.

None.

197/26 Report from County Councillor.

C Cllr Davis provided an update on a number of topics.

a) The Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process has changed the name of the new Unitary Council from “Devon Coast and Countryside Council” to “Devon Council”, subject to judicial review. Devon County Council raised this request.

b) There is no news on where the Headquarters of Devon Council will be located given that the current office is in Exeter which will become a separate Unitary Council. There is no obvious centre for Devon Council.

c) C Cllr Davis will continue in her current role supporting West Down Parish Council for at least a further 12 months from next May when local elections take place.

In May 2027 Elections are expected to be held for the new councils, which will initially operate in shadow form while preparations continue. There will probably be 3 Devon Councillors so there could be up to 5 Councillors attending the Parish Council meetings from June 2027.

1st April 2028 The new unitary councils take over responsibility for local government services and existing councils are replaced.

198/26 Report from District Councillor.

D Cllr Wilkinson confirmed that he too will continue in his current role for a further 12 months from April 2027 whilst the transition to a Unitary authority proceeds. D Cllr Wilkinson also noted :-

a) The North Devon Hospital Maternity Unit should be reopening at the end of September, and a final decision will be announced on 14th September.

b) Ilfracombe has been shortlisted for the UK Town of Culture 2028, a prestigious competition celebrating the cultural stories and achievements of towns across the UK. The bid was led by One Ilfracombe, working alongside Ilfracombe Town Council, and was developed through the One Ilfracombe Culture Club, a network of over 100 artists, performers, venues, museums, councils, and community organisations. Ilfracombe is just one of just 15 towns across the UK to progress to the next stage from almost 400 applications.

Shortlisting brings with it £60,000 in development funding to prepare a final bid. The overall winner will receive £3 million to deliver a transformational cultural programme, while two runners-up will each receive £250,000.

c) A North Yorkshire Cllr visited Devon to look at local Community Land Trust (CLT) projects in South Molton and Woolacombe so extolling the virtues of CLT to develop housing.

d) There is no further news on asset transfers due to the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) causing delay.

199/26 Reactive Speed Sign (RSS).

a) To receive an update on the Reactive Speed Sign statistics and to discuss any further action required for potential publication to the Community.

Cllr Kenshole had circulated the last month's data prior to the meeting. The statistics were similar to the previous data collection at this location (Reactive Speed Sign facing away from The Square; vehicles entering the village down Ilfracombe Road).

Cllr Kenshole noted that this location at the Parish Hall was showing the highest percentage of drivers exceeding the speed limit of any of the 3 locations utilised (the others being Stang Lane and Dean Lane).

The RSS is now facing the other way (towards the Square so reading speeds of vehicles leaving the village on Ilfracombe Road) to collect data for the next month.

Cllrs plan to consider a speed watch event after reviewing the data next month.

Cllr Lavender thanked Cllr Verney & Cllr Kenshole for all their efforts in moving the equipment and collecting the data.

Cllr Lavender expressed his disappointment at the Police response to being notified of our concern about the level of speeding drivers. The Police advised that driver behaviour was within national norms. (1.5% vs 43% nationally exceeding the 30mph speed limit) They recommended that we continue monitoring the data

and if the issue persists then to consider a Community speed watch event followed by targeted road safety interventions.

As previously agreed, the last month's data will be published on the West Down Parish Council website with a link placed on Facebook.

200/26 Planning Decisions.

Approved/Refused/Withdrawn :

82097 The Oaks, Woodlane Farm, West Down, Ilfracombe, Devon, EX34 8NH - Prior notification for the erection of an agricultural building – Grid Ref 251743, 141100. Withdrawn

81815 Land at West Down Ilfracombe Road Devon EX34 8ND Retrospective application for re-positioning of agricultural access and associated works for highway safety. Approved 10/7/2026

201/26 Planning Applications.

a) Received before Agenda was published :

81800 Stowford Plantation Lynton Cross West Down Ilfracombe EX34 8PH

Demolition of barn and erection of a single dwelling with attached garage (utilising fallback position of Class Q approval 79026) (amended proposal/plans)

Cllr Verney proposed no further comment for this application since the Council had already commented on two previous occasions (access fine but no comment on building since not in the Parish of West Down), seconded by Cllr Ayre, decision unanimous.

82111 The Barn Woodlane Farm West Down Ilfracombe Devon EX34 8NH

Variation of Condition 2 (approved plans) attached to planning permission 80192 (Demolition of barn and erection of a single storey dwelling and associated works (utilising the fallback approval to 74312 and 76927)) to allow for repositioning and design changes Grid Ref: 251638; 141327

The proposed dwelling does not appear to retain the footprint and position of the existing agricultural building. The submitted plans indicate that the footprint of the proposed building has been moved or altered. If the proposed development results in the replacement building being positioned outside the footprint of the original agricultural building this may go beyond what is permitted.

Therefore, Councillors query whether this application demonstrates a proven 'betterment' situation as much of the proposed building sits outside the original barn footprint and appears somewhat larger in profile than the previous fallback approval (from the original 2 Class Q approvals). Councillors do not have any view on the design of the building.

Cllr Verney proposed comment above which was seconded by Cllr Ayre, decision unanimous.

b) To comment on any planning applications received after the agenda was published :

82125 Siting of 4x non-illuminated signs in centre of roundabout at Mullacott Roundabout A361/A3123/B3343 Mullacott Cross Devon Grid Ref: 251133; 144402

West Down Parish Council object to this application and recommend refusal; mainly on driver distraction safety grounds.

Councillors expressed their disappointment not to have been previously notified about the DCC roundabout sponsorship scheme which has already been running for 10 years elsewhere in the county. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that advance communication was not received on this scheme so that the Parish Council could have considered it in more detail in advance of this application. In addition, on first inspection we found the presentation material mock-up was misleading as it implied it was a DCC application when it is actually an application from a third party advertising company Outdo Media.

Cllr Reeves proposed that the council object to this application, which was seconded by Cllr Whitby, decision unanimous.

202/26 Footpaths.

a) Update on outstanding P3 grant claim.

The Clerk reported that he had followed up by email, on 22nd June & 24th August, to the P3 Team for a response to the Parish Council application for the Seasonal Strimming (£1140) bid and purchase order for the Basic Grant, as well as the on-site meeting at FP15, with no response on either occasion.

The Clerk will continue to progress chase.

b) Any other footpath matters, including outstanding extra work required.

Cllr Verney expressed his concern over the safety of FP15, given the broken stone steps, and suggested that unless we can arrange the on-site review meeting with a member of the P3 Team then we should consider requesting a closure of FP15. The Clerk is to investigate who carries the liability in the event that someone injures themselves on FP15.

Cllr Reeves proposed that we resend the request to the P3 Team for an on-site meeting, stressing the urgency, and Cllr Kenshole seconded this with the decision unanimous.

Clerk contacted Jon Knight to request a quotation to repair Pulland bridge and Jon advised that the cost would be £450 to include additional stone. Cllr Ayre proposed acceptance of the quotation, seconded Cllr Verney, decision unanimous.

Due to the extremely hot summer weather, the Clerk was tasked with asking Jon Knight for a work schedule that he has been able to complete for July/August and his plan for September and October.

203/26 Road Warden Scheme: Update by Road Warden Cllr Verney on further training and future plans.

On 23rd June Cllr Verney met with the Highways Local Neighbourhood Officer Alex Bird and discussed the following topics :

- 1) The need for Parish Wardens to complete Chapter 8 Training which is a 2-day practical training course rather than on-line study and test.
- 2) There is a fund which we can apply to for possible equipment, contractor hire highway maintenance community enhancement fund.
- 3) Parish Councillors & volunteers are not covered for personal injuries under DCC policy.
- 4) Cllr Verney explained that we only want to do jobs that tidy areas around the village e.g. sign cleaning, gully clearing, verge cutting, and he asked how we would dispose of the debris once collected? Alex

Bird investigated and reported back - Vegetation should be placed on the nearest verge per Highways, but if stones or other material then to call Highways and they would bring road sweepers to the site.

- 5) Cllr Verney expressed -that we will not be looking at pothole filling as it is a large heavy job and his preference is to report them through the Highways portal.
- 6) Any work plan we have must be sent to Alex Bird for prior approval using the correct paperwork before we can commence work. Cllr Verney also offered the Parish Council's assistance to fix any issues that he may have noted.
- 7) Alex Bird and Cllr Verney agreed that we should not be planning any work on the main roads as it just too dangerous to have volunteers out there so any issues we can report directly to him.
- 8) Cllr Verney and Alex Bird decided to keep in contact through their work contracts to save time with central emails.
- 9) Cllr Verney & Alex walked down Dean Lane to look at drains from junction with Ilfracombe Road, some photos were taken and Alex is going to check when the drains were last cleared. Cllr Verney expressed that we would like them done before rain starts again - as some were full.

Cllr Verney also had a meeting with Chris Rook, Traffic Management Team Manager DCC, and raised the subject of the Reactive Speed Sign movements and he is of the opinion that anyone that is moving this equipment around on the highway should have Chapter 8 training.

Subsequently Cllr Verney briefly discussed this requirement with Alex Bird again and he will seek clarification and report back.

Cllr Reeves commented that If, at a minimum, the Road Warden held the Chapter 8 qualification, and 3 other Parish Councillors have the Highway Safety Awareness certificate PLUS our established (and published) RSS changing Risk Assessment, then that should be sufficient to operate safely.

Cllr Reeves also noted that the DCC Road Warden Scheme guidelines for working on the live carriageway (open to traffic) states that those carrying out works must have undertaken their Chapter 8 training at a ratio of 1:2 (one qualified worker to 2 unqualified), This would appear to be slightly at odds with the opinion of Mr Rook.

Cllr Verney has been advised by his employer that whilst he holds the Chapter 8 qualification as a requirement to perform his job, it cannot be used for non-work-related activities. So he would need to take the Chapter 8 course again.

Cllr Reeves proposed that the Clerk check insurance requirements for work on a highway (by Parish Councillors and/or volunteers) and that the Parish Council then review whether to withdraw from Road Warden scheme. This was seconded by Cllr Verney, decision unanimous.

204/26 To confirm date for annual review of Community Emergency Plan by the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

The meeting is scheduled for 14th September in the IRON Room.

205/26 Poppy Wreath : Order.

Cllr Verney proposed ordering a Poppy Wreath and Cllr Kenshole seconded, decision unanimous.

206/26 Reminder for Councillors to review, and update as necessary, their Councillors details and Registrable Interests.

Noted.

207/26 Finances:

a) To receive the balance in the bank accounts at 31st August 2026:

Balances at 31/07/2026

Community Account

Opening	£7,613.37
Received	£ 0.00
Outgoings	<u>£ 754.16</u>
Closing	£6,859.21

Treasuries Account

Opening	£5,008.81
Received	£ 2.06
Outgoings	<u>£ 0.00</u>
Closing	£5,010.87

Notice Account

Opening	£20,204.69
Received	£ 0.00
Interest	£ 45.23
Outgoings	<u>£ 0.00</u>
Closing	£20,249.92

Grand Total £32,120.00

Balances at 31/08/2026

Community Account

Opening	£6,859.21
Received	£ 0.00
Outgoings	<u>£ 95.25</u>
Closing	£6,763.96

Treasuries Account

Opening	£5,010.87
Received	£ 2.20
Outgoings	<u>£ 0.00</u>
Closing	£5,013.07

Notice Account

Opening	£20,249.92
Received	£ 0.00
Interest	£ 42.34
Outgoings	<u>£ 0.00</u>
Closing	£20,292.26

Grand Total £32,069.29

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

Creditor	Invoice number	Amount
North Devon Council (Non-Domestic Rates - Car Park)	93625504	£ 91.00(via DD)
NDC (Bins April-June 2026)	11683634	£ 177.84
North Devon Council Clerks Salary & NDC Admin charge	SD11686756	£ 464.34
Jon Knight (Grass cutting/FP & Bus Shelter maint - Aug)	0169	£ 208.33
J Barnett Exps (12 months Microsoft 365 Licence)	n/a	£ 84.99
Lloyds Bank - Account Charges	493314610	£ 4.25(via DD)
North Devon Council Clerks Salary & NDC Admin charge	SD11691148	£ 405.58
Parish Hall (Rental July-Dec)	14	£ 100.00
Jon Knight (Grass cutting/FP & Bus Shelter maint - Sep)	0176	£ 208.33
PKF Littlejohn	SB20261269	<u>£ 252.00</u>
Total Payment September 2026		£1,996.66

Cllr Verney proposed that these invoices should be paid which was seconded by Cllr Lavender, decision unanimous. RESOLVED – THAT THE INVOICES TOTALLING £1,966.66 BE PAID.

c) To receive the balance of ring fenced funds

The Clerk had circulated the balances prior to the meeting.

P3 Balance Brought Forward	£1,463.43	(1)
Car Park Maintenance b/f	£ 500	

Increment April 2026 50% Budget amount	£ 500	(2)
Current balance	£1,000	
Air Ambulance Landing Site Maintenance b/f	£400	
Increment April 2026 50% Budget amount	£ 50	(2)
Current balance	£450	
Total Ring Fenced 30.6.26	£2,913	

Notes

1. No expenditure or receipts in Apr/May/June/July/August
2. Increments April & September per Minute 150/26 a) June 2026 PC Meeting

208/26 AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return): To receive any update from the External Auditor for the Annual Governance and Accounting Return submission.

In July the external auditor PKF Littlejohn requested clarification regarding how the Asset Register value was calculated, and pointed out that the Section 2 Form question was answered incorrectly (whether Trust Income had been included in the Accounting Statement).

In August PKF Littlejohn asked for the Bank Reconciliation figures to be entered into their spreadsheet rather than in the format we had submitted.

Subsequently PKF Littlejohn have completed the External Audit and issued their Notice of Conclusion of Audit for 2025-2026.

Cllr Reeves thanked the Clerk for his efforts in addressing all auditor queries.

209/26 Update on NDC Climate & Environment Grant application.

The Clerk reported that all 3 applications (Community Park, Parish Hall, and Parish Council) have been submitted and met the eligibility requirements. We should hear more before the next Parish Council meeting.

210/26 Update on Co-option to fill vacant Parish Councillor position.

No enquiries to report.

211/26 Update on War Memorial Restoration Project.

Andy Odell, on behalf of St Calixtus PCC, advised the Parish Council that they are proceeding with cleaning the village War Memorial (which may not have been done since it was erected in 1919/20). In addition, following research undertaken in 2014 they are looking to add four more names to the WW1 section of the memorial (they are just carrying out due diligence to confirm this is the right thing to do for the four concerned). Both the cleaning and restoring the original names is a professional process which it is estimated will cost in excess of £2000.

They plan to seek grants to cover the cost along with fund raising and will be communicating via social media as they try and engage with relatives.

The Memorial was dedicated in September 1920 with an outdoor service for the community. This was repeated in 2020 and they plan to have a re-dedication service once the cleaning has taken place and the new names are added.

They are aware of the Parish Council Small Grant Scheme, and we will be making an application.

212/26 Small Grant Fund : Publicise and invite any local groups and organisations to formally apply for financial support from the Parish Council Small Grant Fund for the following financial year – to confirm this has been actioned.

Noted the Scheme has been advertised via the PC & Village websites and Village Facebook page – applications must be received by the Parish Council by 20th October 2026.

213/26 Correspondence: To receive items of correspondence received since the last meeting:

The Clerk had circulated a full list of correspondence received since 1st July, 44 items, so that Councillors could raise any issues or comment on specific items rather than losing a lot of time during the meeting for each one to be read out and discussed.

If a member of the public wishes to view the full list, then please contact the Clerk.

These are the items of correspondence reviewed during the meeting :

12/7/26 John Pearce reference state of Foxhunters Bus Shelter (Jon Knight confirmed he would tidy up growth of Ivy.)

13/7/26 Devon Cultural Assets Commission- request for Town & Parish Information via on-line survey. This was completed and details about the Parish Hall facilities/services and the Community Park were emphasised.

16/7/26 Andy Frisby PCSO responded to the Clerk's email providing Reactive Speed Sign data, specifically requesting guidance regarding options to modify driver behaviour. He confirmed that Dale Kingdon is now our PCSO and traffic speed breaches are within national norms. However, he encouraged the Parish Council to continue to review data and in the event that there was a need for Police assistance to update him and they would review possible action available.

24/7/26 Tanya Ayres, Combe Martin Parish Council requested information about Walkie Talkies, setting up Emergency Plan – Cllr Reeves provided technical details of our equipment and our CERT Co-ordinator, Andy Odell, plans to provide a demonstration of the Walkie Talkies.

29/7/26 Abandoned Caravan at Ragged Field Lane – reported to Alex Bird, DCC Neighbourhood Officer.

30/7/26 Cllr Verney reported overgrown FP15. The Clerk contacted the landowner's son and the path has been cleared.

4/8/26 The National Allotment Society Survey invitation to complete by 31st August. The Clerk expressed his thanks to Keith Oades for completing the survey on the Council's behalf.

5/8/26 Council launches consultation on renewal of Dogs Public Spaces Protection Order – closes 30th September

6/8/26 & 16/8/26 Adrian Bryant - change to the Tarka Trail plans between Spreacombe Junction and Heddon Mill crossroads Noted his comments – no further action required.

11/8/26 Frank Biederman on behalf of Ian Roome, MP, West Down Outreach Postal Service (Case Ref: IR17942) – no change – progress to test the equipment in West Down at The Crown Inn

11/8/26 DAA Community Landing Sites - Lighting systems - "CLS lighting runs on a GSM system relying on 2G & 3G signal in the local area to activate the lights for crews to use when landing.

However, the 3G signal has been turned off across most of Devon so DAA Community Landing Sites sent a short questionnaire to verify whether our system would be affected :

1. The Name of your Landing Site
2. Do you have Wi-Fi installed and operational at your site?
3. If so, would DAA be able to access it to enable light activation?"

Clerk to respond – no Wi-Fi, answer questions, copy Keith Oades & Chris Batstone.

12/8/26 Care Home Guide request for PC to place a link on the PC website - Free NHS funding guide for North Devon residents – Cllr Reeves proposed we add a link, seconded Cllr Verney, decision unanimous.

18/8/26 Invitation to attend: Town Council Networking - Cluster Working Event for Clerks and Chairs: 30th September 2026 Cllr Reeves and Clerk plan to attend.

1/9/26 NDC Invitation to all councillors to attend Parish Forum (via Teams optional) 1st October 2026 6.00 pm-8.00 pm – Cllr Reeves and Clerk plan to attend via TEAMS.

214/26 Unresolved Questions:

- a) Chris Batstone presentation – Long term future security of Community Park.

Immediate conclusion is to gather key information and place topic on Agenda for October meeting. Circulate information (Land Registry documents, Trust Deed, recent communications with Fields in Trust, current list of Trustees, and any other information available) prior to next meeting. Clerk to copy Keith Oades & Chris Batstone to keep them up-to-date.

215/26 Items to be added to the next meeting Agenda.

Items for the Agenda so far include:

1. Out-turn/Mid-term Accounts at 30th September.
2. Pay out grants following second Precept and Grant receipt of the financial year.
3. P3- Walking of Footpaths (October to December).
4. Review Quotation & Tender Policy.
5. Order Salt bags.
6. Update Ring Fenced figures after receipt of 2nd Precept.
7. Community Park
8. Councillor co-option
9. Climate & Environment Grant update
10. War Memorial update

216/26 Any Other Business:

- a) Cllr Ayre noted that the “Car Park” direction sign had been removed from the wall opposite Thorne Park and was sitting on the ground. Clerk to contact Richard Watts and request it be re-installed please.

- b) Cllr Lavender asked about the source of funding for the recently re-surfaced road from the top of West Down Hill through to Little Comfort farm. How was this achieved when other works such as potholes and road markings are not actioned ? (Plan to ask C Cllr Davis for enlightenment at the next meeting)

c) Cllr Lavender suggested that the War Graves Commission might be a source of funds for war memorial repair. Clerk to pass on to Andy Odell.

d) Cllr Verney noted some overgrown hedges along parts of Bradwell Road towards Willingcott. The PC is aware that the normal hedge cutting period by landowners (Sept – Feb) has only just begun and we will advise accordingly if any serious highway issues prevail.

Part B: Confidential Matters:

217/26 Any Matters deemed too confidential for part A:

1. Clerk's Annual Appraisal.

Councillors were very complimentary about the Clerk's efforts and responsiveness during his first 12 months in the role and granted an increase in pay scale from SCP 14 to SCP 16, backdated to 1st August 2026.

It was noted that there had been a National Pay Award of 3.3% backdated to 1st April.

The Clerk thanked all the Councillors for their help and patience during the 12 months, in particular Cllr Reeves and Cllr Kenshole in relation to processes and IT respectively.

The meeting closed at 21.59 pm