

**WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 3rd February 2026 AT 7.00pm**

Present:	Chairman Cllr Francis Pullman (FP), Cllr ShirleyMay Saunders (SMS), Cllr Ann Cooper (AC), Cllr Michael Owen (MO)
In attendance:	Anne Oliver Parish Clerk, 4 members of the public, DCC/EDDC Cllr Jess Bailey
Apologies:	Cllr Trevor Ingram (TI), Cllr Ben Jewell (BJ)

Item (a)	Discussion and decisions (b)
26/025	<p>Welcome and Chairman's announcements The meeting started at 7.00pm. The Chairman, Cllr FP, welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman reported on an upcoming temporary traffic restriction advised by Devon County Council: tree felling will take place on West Hill Road (between West Hill and Ottery St Mary, near the gateway) during the period Monday 16th Friday 20th February 2026.</p>
26/026	<p>Apologies. To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence, if considered appropriate. Cllr Ingram and Cllr Jewell sent their apologies for their non-attendance. The apologies and reasons for absence were accepted by the Council.</p>
26/027	<p>Public question time (3 minutes): To allow members of the public present to give their question/comments to the Parish Council on issues on this agenda or raise issues for further consideration at the discretion of the Chairman, before the start of the Parish Council meeting. Members of the public may not take part in the Parish Council meeting itself. (<i>Contributions are limited to 3 minutes</i>).</p> <p>West Hill Tree Warden Eileen Perkins gave comments on agenda item 26/032: two applications for works on TPO trees.</p> <p>The Chairman agreed to bring item 26/037 forward on the agenda.</p>
26/037	<p>West Hill Public Footpaths - Parish Paths Partnership scheme:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To receive the annual survey and to consider recommendations. To approve a grant application for 2026-2027 maintenance works. <p>Standing Orders were suspended.</p> <p>Footpath Warden, Eileen Perkins, reported on her annual survey of West Hill Public Footpaths.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five of the footpaths were rated as FAIL due to drainage problems or repairs required. All of the issues had been reported to DCC via the Report a Problem webpage. Bridleways 1 and 2 were rated as PASS. <p>Councillors were disappointed that erosion problems at the junction of Footpath 1 and 2 remained outstanding and the path surface had deteriorated further during 2025. The problem was escalated to the Ward Member.</p> <p>Standing Orders were resumed.</p> <p>It was resolved to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To accept the report and to thank the Footpath Warden for her survey. Approve a grant application to DCC Public Rights of Way for minor works including a 2nd summer/autumn maintenance cut.

26/028	<p>District and County Councillors' reports: To receive reports for information (items raised for decision will appear on the agenda for the next meeting).</p> <p>Ward Member Cllr JB gave a verbal report to the meeting. Comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCC public consultation on the future of Devon's Libraries was now open (deadline 22nd February). Details of the consultation are available on the DCC website or from Ottery St Mary Library. • Many local roads are in a poor condition following recent storms. A section of the road between Tipton St John – Bowd road has collapsed and will need replacement. The road is expected to be closed for several months. • Restrictions on parking on a section of Beech Park were agreed by DCC's HATOC committee following a site visit: double yellow lines and single yellow (time restricted) lines will be painted in the vicinity of the school. <p>A member of the public left at 7.16pm</p>
26/029	<p>To receive Declarations of interest for items on the agenda and receipt of requests for new Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) dispensations for items on the agenda.</p> <p>Members are also reminded that any change to their Declaration of Interests must be notified to the Monitoring Officer at East Devon District Council within 28 days of the change.</p> <p>Cllrs FP, AC, SMS, MO each declared no interests.</p>
26/030	<p>Confidential/exempt items. In consideration of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted): to agree any items to be dealt with after the public and press have been excluded. Proposed 26/050 Land for Sale.</p> <p>Noted and agreed.</p>
26/031	<p>Minutes: To receive the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 6th January 2026 (Minute 26/001 -26/024) and to approve the signing of the Minutes by the Chairman as a true record.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 6th January 2026 were confirmed as a true record, subject to an amendment to listed attendees, and were signed by the Chairman.</p>
26/032	<p>Planning Applications received: To decide a response to:</p> <p>26/0036/TRE Thrushes Anvil Windmill Lane West Hill EX11 1JP T1 Norway Spruce - dismantle to ground level. This tree is in significant decline / dead. T2 & T3 Cypress - dismantle to ground level. Previous hedge maintenance has left the trees with little foliar growth, poor form and weighted toward neighbouring properties. Replant with 3 x flowering Cherries in replacement.</p> <p>Councillors considered the trees were a significant feature of the woodland character of the village. In particular the tall trees made a contribution to the tree canopy and were visible for some distance across West Hill and across the landscape.</p> <p>Councillors noted that the application form was contradictory and no arboricultural report was available to justify the treeworks.</p> <p>The meeting supported the application subject to EDDC Tree Officers confirmation that the works were required and proportionate. If EDDC should approve the application the Parish Council asked that replacement trees are planted and the species planted be sufficient to contribute to the tall tree canopy (in due course). The Council considered that the proposed flowering cherries would not meet this criteria.</p> <p>26/0088/TRE 12 Moorlands West Hill EX11 1UL T1: Oak - part crown reduction of primary branches growing over and towards the property by removing approximately 2.5m from branch tips, pruning back to suitable growth points. Remove all deadwood from within the canopy area exceeding 20mm in diameter. Remove all epicormic</p>

	<p>growth from the main stem. Lowest primary branch on the property side of the canopy prune hard back to the main stem.</p> <p>Councillors considered the tree was a significant feature of the woodland character of Moorlands and the wider village.</p> <p>The meeting supported the application subject to EDDC Tree Officers confirmation that the works were required and proportionate.</p> <p>To note consultee comments made under delegated powers:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">25/1651/FUL Samguri, Bendarroch Road West Hill EX11 1TS: (Support) Proposed single storey extension on the South West Elevation. Noted</p>
26/033	<p>Planning decisions received for information (*denotes WHPC differed):</p> <p>25/2466/TRE 15 Warren Park West Hill EX11 1TN Approved* T1 Scots pine, T2 Scots pine, T3 Oak: Various works</p> <p>25/2428/TRE Oakdene Hawkins Lane West Hill Ottery EX11 1XG Approved* T1, Oak Tree: height and canopy spread reduction</p> <p>25/0033/TPO Land at Mill House and Silver Birches, Bendarroch Road Made Noted</p>

WHPC Groups + Initiatives

26/034	<p>To approve Terms of Reference for WHPC 2026-27 working groups (if available): Road Safety, Playpark, Trees</p> <p>Terms of reference for the Playpark WG and Road Safety WG were agreed subject to minor amendments.</p> <p>Action: Members of the Trees WG and Council Chairman to meet with the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan WG to review and amend (if appropriate) the draft Terms of Reference.</p>
26/035	<p>Neighbourhood Plan WG: To receive a progress update and decide actions/costs including:</p> <p>Standing Orders were suspended:</p> <p>a. To receive a report on the Design Code workshop held in January. Margaret Hall (MH), the Chairman of the working group gave a report on the Design Code workshop facilitated by external consultants Place Studios. The workshop was considered to be very useful and the agreed actions and evidence gathering tasks important for the development of a Design Code for West Hill. During the day the consultants were accompanied on a driven and walking tour of the village to experience the character of the village.</p> <p>b. To receive a financial report and approve payments. Noted and accepted. Payment of the consultant's Place Studios invoice £2,181.70 +vat (stage 1) was approved and signed.</p> <p>c. To note the Neighbourhood Plan WG guidance for engaging with Landowners and Developers. The meeting considered the guidelines and discussed a number of queries raised by Cllr FP. MH explained that there was a statutory requirement for early engagement with landowners and developers. The working group had prepared the guidelines as they sought to make meetings as transparent as possible. MH clarified that proposals were guidelines rather than a protocol.</p> <p>Standing Orders were resumed</p> <p>The meeting agreed the proposed guidelines subject to agreed amendments.</p>

26/036	<p>Working Groups: To receive a progress update and decide actions/costs:</p> <p>a. Emergency Plan WG: To receive comments on the Draft Community Emergency Plan for West Hill. No matters were raised. Action: All Cllrs were asked to provide their comments on the draft plan to Cllr FP</p> <p>b. Road Safety WG: To receive a progress report Cllr Owen reported the group had prepared an article to be included in the next WHPC newsletter. Also, the WG planned to meet with the Community Speedwatch. Action: Cllr MO to circulate the draft article and Cllrs to provide their comments. The Clerk reported the faulty solar powered speed sign on West Hill Road had been reported to the manufacturer. Action: The Road Safety WG to prepare a report to the next meeting for the Council regarding the possible transfer of the Speed Sign to the Parish Council.</p> <p>A member of the public joined the meeting.</p> <p>c. Playpark WG: To receive a report from recent RPII training course and to decide actions. Cllr AC gave a report on the training course attended on 15th January 2026. Cllr AC considered the training to be very valuable and proposed that the learning points should be shared with all members of the Council. The instructors feedback on the weekly inspection checklist used by WHPC was very positive. Action: Cllr AC to arrange and lead a playpark training session for all Councillors. Action: Cllr AC to update WHPC playpark inspection procedures and notes following her training.</p>
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Other Matters

26/037	<p>West Hill Public Footpaths - Parish Paths Partnership scheme:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To receive the annual survey and to consider recommendations. To approve a grant application for 2026-2027 maintenance works. <p>Item taken earlier on the agenda.</p>
26/038	<p>To consider arrangements for the construction of a hard surface path to the playpark and to approve a risk assessment for the duration of the works (Ref Min 26/023)</p> <p>The meeting noted that the construction works were scheduled for the week of 16th February 2026 to minimise disruption in the adjacent car park. Councillors were asked if they were satisfied with the proposed actions/safety measures. No matters were raised.</p> <p>It was resolved to approve the Risk Assessment for the construction of a hard surface path to the playpark.</p>
26/039	<p>To agree a lease agreement and policy for the storage of Parish Council materials and to approve associated costs.</p> <p>Further to WHPC decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to lease a storage unit located at the RBL Clubhouse on an annual rental basis at a cost of £600.00 (ref Min 25/327) - to purchase a fireproof safe and approved costs of £200.00 (Min 25/380)

	<p>It was resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. to accept and sign a rental agreement with the RBL Club (West Hill) b. to adopt a WHPC Storage Unit Policy c. to approve a budget of £300.00 for removals, shelving and stationery.
26/040	<p>To approve, if considered appropriate, new/amended WHPC policies and protocols:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Protocol for pre-application meetings with landowners, developers or their agents. It was resolved to adopt the amended policy. b. Data Protection Policies It was resolved to adopt the policies. <p>Ward Member left the meeting 8.10pm</p>
26/041	<p>To consider arrangements for the next edition of the WHPC newsletter and to approve costs.</p> <p>It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To publish the next edition of the WHPC newsletter in March 2026. • To approve costs up to £600.00. <p>A member of the public left the meeting.</p>
26/042	<p>To decide the WHPC response to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCC public consultation: “Shaping the future of Devon’s library service”. Deadline 23rd February 2026. The meeting did not support the proposed changes and expressed concerns. Comments included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - restricted opening hours will impact users of all ages - queried the classification as a category C facility - a popular busy community hub offering more than library services - assumes users are able to travel to other libraries <p>Action: Cllr FP to submit a response on behalf of the Parish Council</p> • Draft EDDC Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy The meeting noted the inclusion of a facility in West Hill: a football pitch at the Primary School. Councillors asked for this to be amended due to the restrictions on access. Action: Cllr FP to submit a response on behalf of the Parish Council. <p>A member of the public left the meeting 8.23pm</p>
26/043	<p>To receive and approve, if considered appropriate, a Memorandum of Understanding for the South West Ambulance Service Trust Community Public Access Defibrillator Support Package. (Ref Min 25/322 WHPC Provision of Defibrillators in West Hill).</p> <p>The meeting discussed the terms of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (circulated prior to the meeting) and were satisfied that the Council could meet its responsibilities. The meeting thanked the Defibrillator Guardians for their ongoing support.</p> <p>It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to accept and sign the Memorandum of Understanding for each of the West Hill Community Public Access Defibrillators. • to approve payment of the South West Ambulance Service Trust (SWAST) invoice £2,800+vat.

	<p>Action: The Chairman to send a letter of thanks to each of the Defibrillator Guardians.</p> <p>The meeting discussed an offer to site a defibrillator on Higher Broad Oak Road.</p> <p>Action: Cllrs AC/MO to investigate the suitability of the proposed site.</p> <p>Action: The Clerk to investigate the possible provision of a third device.</p>
26/044	<p>To consider correspondence received (if any):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Land for Sale in West Hill The meeting noted correspondence regarding land for sale in West Hill. It was agreed to consider the request during agenda item 26/051. b. Freedom of Information Requests and Subject Access Requests The Chairman reported that all Freedom of Information Requests and Subject Access Requests received in January 2026 were processed and completed within the statutory timescales. Requests received since 1st February 2026 would be processed according to council policies and relevant legislation.
26/045	<p>WHPC Action Tracker: To receive updates on actions and matters arising from the last meeting and to agree actions/costs as considered appropriate.</p> <p>Updates included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cllr FP gave a report from the Centre for Ageing webinar for Town/Parish Councils - Cllr BJ would continue to monitor litter at the junction of West Hill Road/Eastfileld. Initial findings showed no major problems. <p>Action: Cllr AC to arrange a date for the WHPC inspection of the playpark.</p>
26/046	<p>To receive the monthly crime statistics for West Hill (for information). Noted. No matters raised.</p> <p>Cllr FP reported that the local Police Team had been invited to attend a future monthly Council meeting.</p>
26/047	<p>Clerk Matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To receive a report from the Parish Clerk and to agree actions as appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirmed the bank mandate had been updated to include Cllr MO - Increased monthly bank charges - Cllrs were reminded to attend their GDPR training / complete their training assessments. - New DALC courses were available <p>It was resolved to incur costs for Cllr MO's GDPR training course £35.00.</p> <p>Action: Cllr FP to attend the BT Stakeholders Update (Landline Switch off) 10th February</p> <p>Action: Clerk to arrange a training workshop (IT Policy)</p> 2. To note decisions made under delegated powers (if applicable). Confirmed: Decision to cut back roadside hedge at new entrance to Village Hall site at a cost of £100. 3. Urgent matters (if applicable) N/A <p>A member of the public left the meeting.</p>
26/048	<p>Financial matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To consider and approve, if appropriate, the Schedule of Payments. The meeting considered the Schedule of Payments, internal transfers and invoices circulated before the meeting. No questions were raised. It was resolved to approve the payments and sign the invoices.

	<p>b. To consider and approve, if appropriate, any additional payments presented to the meeting. <i>Additional payments were presented to the meeting. It was resolved to approve the payments and sign the invoice for:</i></p> <table style="margin-left: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding-right: 10px;">NPWG - RBL (West Hill) Room Hire: (Design Code Workshop)</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-right: 10px;">£30.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding-right: 10px;">West Hill Village Hall Room Hire January 2026</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-right: 10px;">£35.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding-right: 10px;">SLCC membership - Annual Renewal</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding-right: 10px;">£253.00</td> </tr> </table> <p>c. To receive, if available, monthly Bank Reconciliations and finance trackers. <i>No issues or questions were raised regarding the papers circulated prior to the meeting.</i></p>	NPWG - RBL (West Hill) Room Hire: (Design Code Workshop)	£30.00	West Hill Village Hall Room Hire January 2026	£35.25	SLCC membership - Annual Renewal	£253.00
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26/049	<p>Councillor questions, reports and items for future agenda Each Councillor is requested to use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas. <i>Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision making.</i></p> <p><i>Cllr FP gave a short report on a meeting with representatives of Gittisham PC who had sought advice on a possible highways/footpath improvement scheme.</i></p>						
26/050	<p>Next meeting: To confirm arrangements for the upcoming WHPC meeting on Tuesday 3rd March 2026 7.00pm at the Village Hall</p>						

*All members of the public had previously left the meeting.
Part A ended 9.10pm
Part B began 9.10pm*

26/051	<p>To consider land for sale in West Hill and actions/costs as considered appropriate. <i>With regret, it was unanimously agreed that the Council did not have the resources to pursue the opportunity at this time.</i></p>
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Part B - Confidential/exempt items. In consideration of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted): to agree any items to be dealt with after the public and press have been excluded.

*Part B closed 9.27pm
Meeting ended 9.30pm*

Signed

Date