

WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON 5th May 2026 AT 7.00pm

Present: Chairman Cllr Francis Pullman (FP), Cllr Michael Owen (MO), Cllr Ann Cooper (AC), Cllr Ben Jewell (BJ)

In attendance: Anne Oliver Parish Clerk, 3 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr Shirley May Saunders (SMS)

Minute reference 26/

097 Welcome and announcements (for information only)

The meeting started at 7.00pm Cllr FP, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Announcements included:

- The Council's annual internal audit had been completed during April. This will be reported to the next meeting of the Council. No issues arose

098 To elect the Chairman of the Parish Council:

- a. To receive nominations and to carry out a vote accordingly.
- b. To receive the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of the Chairman

Cllr Owen nominated Cllr Pullman to be chairman, seconded by Cllr AC. Cllr Francis Pullman was unanimously elected to the office of Chairman. Cllr FP made the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and signed the Acceptance of Office form.

Cllr BJ thanked Cllr FP for his many hours of hard work behind the scenes in support of the Parish Council and West Hill community. Cllrs MO and AC also gave their thanks.

099 To elect the Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council:

- a. to receive nominations and to carry out a vote accordingly.
- b. To receive the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of the Vice-Chairman

The meeting did not elect a Vice-Chairman. It was decided to defer this agenda item to the next meeting of the Council.

100 Apologies. To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence, if considered appropriate.

Cllr Saunders sent her apologies for non-attendance. Her apologies and reasons for absence were accepted by the Council.

101 Declarations of interest: In accordance with the Code of Conduct, members are required to disclose any personal or Disclosable Pecuniary Interests for items on the agenda. 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.

Cllrs FP, MO, BJ and AC each declared no interests.

102 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. (Contributions are limited to 3 minutes).

A member of the public raised a number of concerns regarding a planning application to be considered at the meeting, 26/0773/FUL. Comments included: overlooking, surface water flooding, and regulations.

Standing Orders were suspended

Agenda Items 26/125 Neighbourhood Plan and 26/122 (f) 26/0773/FUL Hunters Lodge Windmill Lane West Hill EX11 1JP were brought forward.

Minutes of the items are recorded below.

Standing Orders were resumed.

1 member of the public left the meeting 7.20pm

103 District and County Councillors' reports: To receive reports for information (items raised for decision will appear on the agenda for the next meeting)

DCC/EDDC Cllr Jess Bailey sent her apologies and provided a written report. Her comments included:

- a. **Broadband:** Cllr Bailey, Cllr Pullman FP, Clerk and DCC officers met to discuss the upgrading of broadband in West Hill. The upshot of the meeting was that West Hill largely falls within the Openreach Gigabit contract and therefore residents will not be eligible for the voucher scheme. With the current Fibre to Cabinet broadband, residents should already have download speeds of 30MBPS. Openreach were expected to complete delivery of the rollout of full fibre (speeds up to 1600MBS) by 31st March 2028. However, there is already some full fibre availability within West Hill and full roll out may well be sooner than 31st March 2028. Residents were asked to contact the Clerk if they did they did not have download speeds of 30MBPS.
- b. **Bus Route:** Further to a request for an additional bus stop for the 44/44A on West Hill Road, DCC officers confirmed that they are collecting data on the 44/44A corridor to review the service for September implementation. However, Cllr Bailey advised that these dates may slip, plus it is also possible (and quite often the case) that after review the current service timetable and pattern is deemed the most appropriate to continue
- c. **Libraries:** The DCC Corporate Infrastructure Scrutiny meeting was convened to discuss libraries. The committee recommended that the decision should be deferred to allow full pre-decision scrutiny and also that the statutory hours of libraries across Devon should not be reduced. The DCC cabinet is meeting on 20th May.
- d. **East Devon Local Plan:** The Government has extended the deadline for local authorities to the submit local plans under the transitional arrangements and still benefit from lower housing targets. The deadline is now 31st December 2026.

104 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.

Cllr FP proposed that an item of correspondence received after publication of the agenda would be considered in confidential session. Cllrs unanimously agreed.

105 Minutes: To receive the Minutes of the Parish Council meetings of **3rd March 2026** (Minute 26/052-26/071) and meeting **7th April 2026** (Minute 26/072-26/096) to approve the signing of the Minutes by the Chairman as a true record.

The minutes of the Parish Council meetings of 3rd March 2026 and 7th April 2026 were agreed subject to minor amendments to items 26/067 and 26/082. The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

106 To receive an update on **Councillor vacancies.**

It was confirmed that the period for advertising the Casual Vacancy arising from a Councillor resignation had concluded and East Devon District Council had confirmed that the Parish Council could co-opt to fill the vacancy.

107 To consider the **WHPC Plan and Organisation Structure** for 2026/27:

a. to approve **Working/Task+Finish Groups**, their Councillor membership and Terms of Reference:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| - Finance | - Emergency Plan |
| - HR + Policy | - Annual Remembrance Service (Task+Finish) |
| - Neighbourhood Plan | - Road Safety |
| - Playpark | - Trees |

b. To decide the closure of the Village Hall Footpath Working Group.

c. To establish a West Hill Christmas Event 2026 Task+Finish Group.

The meeting noted that membership of the Playpark and Road Safety workings groups would be reduced following the recent Cllr resignation.

Cllr FP reported that Devon County Council had issued a certificate of completion for the works on West Hill Road. They had also confirmed they would adopt the works and refund the remaining 25% of the security deposit made by WHPC, £2,370.26.

It was resolved:

- a. that membership of the Council groups would be unchanged.
- b. to close the Village Hall Footpath Working Group.
- c. to establish a West Hill Christmas Event 2026 Task+Finish Group.

Action: Cllrs SMS/MO to present a draft Terms of Reference for the Trees Working Group for approval at the next meeting of the Council.

Membership of Council Groups @ 05052026

Finance Working Group: Cllrs FP, AC + Clerk

HR Working Group: Cllrs FP, SMS + Clerk

Neighbourhood Plan Working Group: Cllr AC, Clerk, members of the public.

Playpark Working Group: Cllrs AC, BJ

Emergency Plan Working Group: Cllrs FP, members of the public.

Annual Remembrance Service Task + Finish: Cllrs AC,FP

Road Safety Working Group: Cllrs MO, BJ

Trees Working Group: Cllrs SMS, MO

Christmas Event 2026 Task + Finish: Cllrs BJ, AC + Clerk

d. To consider **membership of outside bodies** and committees and arrangements for reporting back.

It was resolved that WHPC representatives would be unchanged:

- Airport Consultative Committee Cllr FP
- Ottery Health Forum Cllr AC
- East Devon Community Safety Group Cllr FP

108 To review and adopt (if appropriate):

a. WHPC Standing Orders

b. WHPC Financial Regulations

It was resolved:

- to adopt WHPC Standing Orders (no change).
- to approve amendments to section 15 and to adopt the revised WHPC Financial Regulations.

109 To review and adopt if considered appropriate, the **WHPC Code of Conduct**: Each Councillor must undertake to abide by the Councils Code of Conduct.

It was resolved to adopt and abide by the WHPC Code of Conduct (no change).

110 To consider and adopt, if appropriate, **amended/new policies** **None presented to the meeting.**

111 To consider the current policy for **Chairman's and Member Allowances** and whether it should be continued. If continued, to review and accept (if appropriate) **Members Allowances Policy** (if available). **Deferred to the next meeting, 2nd June 2026.**

112 To review and adopt, if appropriate, all other **Council's Policies and Protocols.**

It was resolved to adopt all other Council Policies (no amendments).

113 To review and approve, if appropriate, the Council's **Risk Assessment.**

No issues were raised and the meeting noted the amendment: Public Liability Cover increased to £12m.

It was resolved to approve the WHPC Risk Management Policy and Risk Assessment.

114 To review and confirm the **Council's bank mandate.**

It was reported that the amendments to the mandate for Cambridge Building Society decided Min26/092 were in progress.

It was resolved to approve the Council's bank mandate.

115 To consider and accept, if appropriate, the WHPC Review of **Internal Financial Controls.**

The meeting considered the review and no issues were raised. It was resolved to accept the review

116 To consider and review the inventory of **WHPC assets and equipment (Asset register).**

The Asset Register was confirmed as up to date, subject to an amendment regarding the Emergency Plan Radios.

It was resolved to accept the Asset Register and to publish it on the Council's website.

117

- a. To review and adopt (if appropriate) **WHPC Training Policy**
- b. To consider the Council's Training Record and review **Councillor's training** requirements.

It was resolved

- a. to adopt the WHPC Training Policy and to confirm the training record was up to date.
- b. To approve training courses for Cllrs BJ and MO, total cost £72.00.

Action: Cllrs were asked to propose their training requirements at the next meeting.

118 To review subscriptions/memberships to other bodies:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. DALC/NALC | 5. Parish Online |
| 2. SLCC | 6. Scribe Accounts Software |
| 3. Devon Communities Together | 7. SMART Pensions |
| 4. Information Commissioners Office | 8. Project Cosmic (website hosting) |

It was resolved to approve annual subscriptions to the bodies 1-8 listed above for 2026-2027.

119 To confirm arrangements for telephone contracts (landline/Clerk's mobile phone).

It was resolved to:

- a. continue the contracts for the Council's landline (Voicehost) and Clerk's mobile (Three UK), both paid monthly by Direct Debit.
- b. continue the Pay As You Go contract for the VAS data download phone.

120 To consent to receive **Agenda & Summons by email.**

Each Councillor confirmed their continued consent.

Action: The Clerk to seek Cllr SMS' consent to receive the Agenda & Summons by email.

121 To determine the **time and place of ordinary meetings** of the full council up to and including the next Annual Meeting of full council.

It was resolved:

- to continue to meet on the 1st Tuesday each month with the exception of the 4th August 2025 meeting. An Extraordinary Meeting would be held if required.
- the venue for the meetings would continue to be the Village Hall (Acorn Room). Should an Extraordinary meeting be held in August 2026, the meeting may be held in any available room in the Village Hall due to planned maintenance work.

122 To decide a response to **planning applications received:**

- 26/0639/S106A** Land North Of Eastfield West Hill
Application to modify Schedule 1 (Affordable Housing) of Section 106 Planning Obligation Agreement dated 20/11/2024 - Planning Permission 23/0727/MOUT
The meeting did not support the application. Concerns raised included: the reduction in the number of Affordable Homes provided, clustering the affordable homes in one location.
- 26/0706/S106A** Land South Of Windmill Lane West Hill
Application to modify Schedule 1 (Affordable Housing) of Section 106 Planning Obligation Agreement dated 20/11/2025 - Planning Permission 23/1143/MFUL
The meeting did not support the application. Cllrs considered the proposed change to the tenure of the affordable housing to be a disbenefit to potential residents
- 26/0721/TRE** 10 Warren Park West Hill EX11 1TN
Birch: fell and replace with a Hawthorn. Beech: removal of two limbs from West Hill Road side. Maple: removal of one limb. Very minor trimming of the very ends of the branches nearest the house, maximum diameter of cuts 5mm (as shown in the annotated photographs)
The meeting supported the proposed works on the Birch and Maple trees, and agreed to defer to the judgement of the EDDC Tree Officer concerning the Beech tree.
- 26/0740/TRE** Timbercroft Lower Broad Oak Road West Hill EX11 1XQ
Prune the limbs that overhang the driveway at approximately 8m from the trunk creating 5m clearance above ground level.
The meeting supported the application.
- 26/0770/TRE** Oasis Toadpit Lane West Hill Ottery St Mary EX11 1TR
T621, T622, T623: Larch - reduce eastern crown spread by approximately 50%, currently at 7m. Maximum diameter of cuts 100mm. T606: Cypress - reduce crown height of previously snapped leader and re-shape (see annotated photograph 3). T590, T592: Oak - removal of deadwood and broken branches.
The meeting supported the proposed works on the Cypress and Oak trees, and agreed to defer to the judgement of the EDDC Tree Officer concerning the Larch trees.
- 26/0773/FUL** Hunters Lodge Windmill Lane West Hill EX11 1JP
Retrospective planning application for decking and steps to existing dwelling (C3 use)

This item was considered earlier on the agenda, following item 26/102.

The meeting did not support the application for the following reasons:
 - Councillors were familiar with surface water flooding problems experienced in the vicinity over many years and were concerned that the decking had possibly exacerbated the problem affecting neighbouring properties.
 - Loss of amenity of neighbouring properties due to overlooking

All remaining members of the public left the meeting.

123 EDDC Planning decisions received for information (*denotes WHPC differed)

- a. **26/0452/TRE** Wrenswood Lower Broad Oak Road West Hill EX11 1UF: G1, Beech + T2, Beech: reduce height
Status: Approved*
- b. **26/0241/VAR** The Croft Bendarroch Road West Hill EX11 1UW: Variation of Condition Numbers 2 (approved plans) and 9 (fenestration restrictions) Revisions to fenestration, removal of dormer and juliet balcony
Status: Approved*
- c. **26/0062/TPO** Land at Cholmondley Cottage, Lower Broad Oak Road: Status Confirmed
- d. **26/0393/TRE** The Vicarage Bendarroch Road West Hill EX11 1UW
03 : Oak - removal of dead wood. **G26** : Beech - removal as risk limbs will fall onto the highway. Beech badly bark stripped.
Status: Approved with conditions

All of the decisions were noted.

WHPC Groups + Initiatives

124 Finance Working Group: To decide arrangements for 2026-2027 insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.

The Chairman reported the Finance Working group had invited three companies to submit quotes for insurance cover. The group had assessed the quote and policy documents received for 2026-2027 cover. The meeting considered the working group's recommendations.

It was resolved to:

- a. Accept the quote provided by Zurich Insurance, £1,082.75 incl tax/fees, for the Local Council's Policy, under a three-year Long-Term Agreement, as it was considered to provide adequate and in some areas better cover for the Council's needs.
- b. To note the Council's duty of fair representation and to make the Statement of Fact.
- c. Approve payment of the 2026-2027 premium: £1,082.75 incl tax/fees.

125 Neighbourhood Plan Working Group:

- a. To receive an annual report (2025-26)
- b. To receive a financial report and approve payments.

This item was considered earlier on the agenda, following item 26/102.

Margaret Hall (MH), leader of the working group, gave a report to the meeting. Her comments included:

- Since the start of the project, 15 months ago, the group had made steady progress.
- Currently the group is focused on the development of Design Codes for West Hill to replace the Village Design Statement. Over recent months the group had gathered evidence in support of the draft codes. This work was ongoing.
- External consultants, Place Studios, had been engaged to support the development of Design Codes.
- The group had continued to engage with residents with regular items in the Parish Council newsletter, community survey and drop-in sessions.

Cllr FP asked how the Governments extended deadline for submission of Local Plans under transitional arrangement (31st December 2026) would impact the groups work. MH advised that the group would be seeking guidance from East Devon District Council on that matter.

It was resolved to approve payment of a Place Studios invoice for consultancy work, £2,478.00

126 To receive reports from other **Working Groups**, if available

a. Road Safety Working Group

The meeting considered a paper presented by Cllr MO on behalf of the Road Safety Working Group. Issues discussed included:

- Devon County Council's SCARF process and collision data.
- 2019 Traffic Study commissioned by the Council.
- Feedback from a meeting with DCC Highways Neighbourhood Officer, including the possibility of self-funded schemes.
- Liaison with local schools.

Councillors discussed the need for community engagement and feedback to determine priorities, actions and expenditure.

Action: The Road Safety WG to present a proposal for consideration at the next meeting, including:

- a. Potential self-funded actions and their potential costs.
- b. community engagement, including a draft questionnaire.

Other Matters

127 To review arrangements of the Annual Parish Meeting 14th April 2026.

Councillors expressed their disappointment about the low attendance compared to the 2025 event but noted that those attending found the session to be informative.

128 To consider Parish Council involvement at the West Hill Summer Fete and to decide actions/costs as considered appropriate.

It was resolved:

- a. To approve a budget up to £400.00 for 2 feather flags showing the Parish Council Logo. The flags would be used at the monthly meetings and public events including the Summer Fete.
- b. To approve a budget of up to £300.00 for materials for the summer fete including, but not exclusively, children's medals and printing.

129 To receive an update on arrangements for a West Hill Christmas event.

Cllr BJ gave a verbal update. Comments included:

- The village Christmas event would take place on Saturday 5th December 2026.
- Village groups and organisations had been invited to a meeting to share ideas for the event. Findings of the meeting would be reported to the next Council meeting.

130 To consider **correspondence** received (if any):

- a. River Otter + water quality (Otter Valley Association)

Action: The Clerk to invite a representative of the Otter Valley Association to speak at a future monthly Council meeting.

- b. Village Hall User groups, including the Parish Council were invited to attend the Village Hall Trustees AGM.

Action: Cllr FP and Clerk to represent the Parish Council at the Village Hall AGM.

131 To receive the **monthly crime statistics** for West Hill (for information). **Noted.**

132 Clerk Matters:

- a. To receive a report from the Parish Clerk and to agree actions as appropriate
- b. To note decisions made under delegated powers (if applicable)
- c. Urgent matters (if applicable).

The Clerk's report included:

- The Internal Audit was completed in April and would be reported to the next meeting. No issues or concerns arose.

- An update on NALC publications.
- A proposal for the Council to cut the roadside verge adjacent to the new pedestrian entrance to the Village Hall site on a regular basis to improve visibility of oncoming traffic.

It resolved to update the Lengthsman schedule and approved costs (up to £300 pa) for verge cutting at the pedestrian entrance to the Village Hall site.

133 WHPC Action Tracker: To receive updates on actions and matters arising from the last meeting and to agree actions/costs as considered appropriate.

The meeting reviewed the action tracker. No new actions arose.

Cllr FP gave an update on the Parish Council's report to East Devon District Council (EDDC) regarding the problem of waste bins which were regularly overloaded with dog-waste bags. The Chairman and Clerk had met with an EDDC Officer to discuss the problem and explore possible actions. It was confirmed that EDDC provide the bins at the bus-stop, School Lane junction and outside Morrisons. They also arrange the regular collections. The meeting discussed various courses of action, however in the first instance EDDC will place posters to deter individual members of the public from putting high volumes of bags in the litter bins. Cllr FP noted that the Parish Council will continue to monitor the situation.

134 Financial matters:

- a. To consider and approve, if appropriate, the Schedule of Payments and internal bank transfers.
The meeting considered the Schedule of Payments and invoices circulated before the meeting. No questions or issues were raised.
It was resolved to approve the payments and sign the invoices.
- b. To consider and approve, if appropriate, any additional payments presented to the meeting.
It was resolved to approve additional payments presented to the meeting:

Pro-Lawn Garden Services Grass Cutting	120.00	Min 25/357
West Hill Village Hall Room Hire (April)	61.50	Min25/317
Penny Clapham (Internal Audit)	104.80	Min25/370
Pro-Lawn Garden Services VAS Transfers	120.00	Min 25/357

- c. To receive, if available, monthly Bank Reconciliations and finance trackers.
The Bank Reconciliation (March 2026) and reports were accepted. No issues or questions were raised regarding the papers circulated prior to the meeting.

135 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. Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision making.

Cllr BJ asked for an update on the School Lane entrance to the footpath to Potters Close.

Action: The Clerk to request a meeting with DCC Highways

136 Next meeting: To confirm arrangements for the upcoming WHPC meeting on **Tuesday 2nd June 2026** 7.00pm at the Village Hall

All members of the public had left the meeting.

Part A ended 9.15pm
Part B started 9.15pm

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.

137 Correspondence received:

The meeting considered an item of correspondence received on 30th April 2026 and agreed its response.

Meeting ended 9.25pm

Signed

Date

Signed: *Anne Oliver*, Clerk to the Council, 8th May 2026