

**WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 6th January 2026 AT 7.00pm**

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

Item (a)	Discussion and decisions (b)
26/001	<p>Welcome and Chairman's announcements The meeting started at 7.00pm. The Chairman, Cllr FP, welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chairman's announcements included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devon County Council has launched a public consultation on the proposed changes to the library service. <p>Action: The Council to decide a response to the consultation at its next scheduled meeting. Action: The Clerk to publicise the consultation on the Council's website and noticeboards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHPC had received correspondence including questions to be raised during agenda item 26/003 Public Participation. He stated that, due to the factual inaccuracies and tone, the questions would not be included in the meeting as the Council would not tolerate harassment of its employee, the Parish Clerk. He trusted that residents would support his stance on this matter. He noted that the correspondence would be processed according to Council Policies.
26/002	<p>Apologies. To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence, if considered appropriate. N/A</p>
26/003	<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>Footpath Warden, Eileen Perkins, gave an update on West Hill public footpaths. Issues reported to DCC Public Rights of Way team in 2025 remained outstanding.</p> <p>A resident raised concerns about debris in a gutter on Bendarroch Road.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillors noted that many householders on Bendarroch Road cleared their roadside ditch on a regular basis, whilst others were less diligent. The Council had previously published information and reminded householders of their responsibilities. It was agreed to monitor the situation.
26/004	<p>District and County Councillors' reports: To receive reports for information (items raised for decision will appear on the agenda for the next meeting). N/A Ward Member Cllr JB was unable to attend the meeting and sent her apologies</p>
26/005	<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>Cllr MO declared an interest in item 26/008 application 25/2466/TRE and would not participate in discussion. Cllr TI declared an interest in item 26/008 application 25/2375/MRES and would not participate in discussion.</p>

	<p>Clrs FP, AC, SMS, BJ declared no interests.</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>
26/006	<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. It was agreed to consider agenda items 26/023 and 26/024 in Part B.</p>
26/007	<p>Minutes: To receive the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 2nd December 2025 (Minute 25/358 -25/385) and to approve the signing of the Minutes by the Chairman as a true record.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 2nd December 2025 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.</p>
26/008	<p>Planning Applications received: To decide a response to:</p> <p>25/2466/TRE 15 Warren Park West Hill Ottery St Mary EX11 1TN T1: Scots Pine - remove outermost limb on S.E. side. T2: Scots Pine - remove lower limb overhanging neighbours garden. T3 Oak: crown reduction of 1.5 m to nearest growth points</p> <p>The Council did not support the application for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The trees made a significant contribution to the treescape of the area. - No arboricultural report provided to justify the proposed works. - EDDC Tree Officers had previously considered T1 and T2 to be in normal health. - The proposed works to the T3 seemed unnecessary. <p>25/2375/MRES Land To The North Of Eastfield West Hill Page 2 of 4 Reserved matters application for layout, scale, appearance and landscaping for the construction of 26 dwellings with associated infrastructure and drainage and the discharge of conditions 3, 8, 9, 10, 15 and 17 pursuant to outline application 23/0727/MOUT</p> <p>The Council continued to object to the application and agreed further consultee comments regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Surface water drainage: The Council was concerned that the current proposal for the management of surface water was not adequate b. Waste water drainage: The Water Cycle Study commissioned by EDDC, highlighted the lack of capacity at Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) downstream from West Hill. c. Density: The proposed layout was considered to be cramped and contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan policy NP26. d. The Council asked for greater provision of photovoltaics and electric charging points. <p>25/0062/TPO Land at Cholmondley Cottage, Lower Broad Oak Road, West Hill It was resolved to support the TPO.</p> <p>Action: Cllr SMS to write (support) to EDDC on behalf of WHPC.</p>
26/009	<p>Planning decisions received for information (* denotes WHPC differed) : N/A</p>
26/010	<p>Other planning matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To decide a response to the 2nd Regulation 19 public consultation on the East Devon Emerging Local Plan (deadline for comments noon Monday 26th January 2026). <p>Action: Cllr FP/Clerk to respond on behalf of WHPC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. To receive a verbal report on the Water Cycle Study commissioned by East Devon District Council.

	<p>The meeting received a report from a EDDC webinar, attended by Cllr FP and the Clerk, which provided information of the public consultation (Local Plan) and East Devon Water Cycle Study. The study, published on the EDDC website, identified many issues including the future supply of drinkable water, capacity for dealing with waste water, need for new infrastructure (upgrades and investment) and the need for infrastructure led phasing of development.</p> <p>Cllrs noted the findings of the Water Cycle Study.</p>
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WHPC Groups + Initiatives

26/011	<p>Finance Working Group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2026-27 WHPC Plan + Budget: (paper previously published) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To approve the budget for 2026-27 <p>Councillors were satisfied that the proposed budget would meet its needs.</p> <p>It was unanimously resolved to set the 2026-27 budget at £62,226.00.</p> b. To determine the Parish Council Precept Demand for 2026-27. <p>It was resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. to set the 2026-2027 Precept Demand at £56,875, unchanged from previous years. ii. to use existing reserves to fund any overspend against budget. <p>Action: Clerk to submit the signed Precept Demand to EDDC.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. To receive an update regarding the application for a Parish Council Charge Card and approve amendments to WHPC policies, if considered appropriate: <p>The Clerk advised that the Unity Bank had received the application and the application was in progress.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Financial Risk Management b. Internal Controls <p>The Chairman proposed changes to both policies to reflect the use of a Parish Council Payment Card. No concerns were raised.</p> <p>It was unanimously resolved to adopt to the revised Financial Risk Management Policy and Internal Controls Policy.</p> 3. To receive an update on financial matters. <p>The meeting noted the following report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Financial Services Compensation Scheme) protection limit applicable to the Parish Councils bank and building society accounts has increased to £120,000. - WHPC had received <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o a partial refund, £7,110.79 of the s278 cash deposit made to DCC for the works on West Hill Road. (see agenda item 26/012) o VAT Reclaim £2,775.74 o DCC Parish Paths Partnership Grant 2025-26, £110.00
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o WHPC had been notified of changes to the monthly subscription for Microsoft 3656 and Three UK (Clerks mobile phone).
26/012	<p>Village Hall Path Working Group: To note the receipt of Devon County Council Highways Completion Certificate for works on West Hill Road and partial refund of cash deposit.</p> <p>The Chairman reported that Devon County Council Highways had:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - confirmed the works on West Hill Road were satisfactorily inspected. - issued a certificate of completion - made a partial (75%) refund (£7,110.79) of the s278 cash deposit made by WHPC. - Reduced the maintenance period to three months - Advised that subject to a further inspection after three months remaining cash deposit £2,370.26 to be returned and adoption certificate issued. <p>Cllr SMS, supported by Cllrs, thanked the Chairman and Clerk for successfully delivering the project on behalf of the Parish Council.</p>
26/013	<p>Other Working Groups: To receive a progress update and decide actions/costs.</p> <p>a. Neighbourhood Plan WG</p> <p>Standing Orders were suspended:</p> <p>Margaret Hall, Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan WG, reported that due to illness, the Design Codes workshop had been re-scheduled for January 2026.</p> <p>Action: The Clerk to include item (Neighbourhood Plan WG) on the agenda for the next scheduled Council meeting.</p> <p>Standing Orders were resumed</p> <p>b. Emergency Plan WG</p> <p>The Chairman advised that the working group anticipated that a draft version of the West Hill Emergency Plan would be available for consideration at the next scheduled Council meeting.</p> <p>c. Road Safety Working Group</p> <p>Cllr BJ advised that the group had contacted the West Hill Community Speedwatch Group and hoped to have an update for the next Council meeting.</p>
26/014	<p>To approve terms of reference for WHPC 2026-27 working groups (if available).</p> <p>Carried forward to the next meeting.</p> <p>Action: Playpark WG, Road Safety WG and Trees WG to circulate their draft Terms of Reference for consideration at the next Council meeting.</p>

Other Matters

26/015	<p>To review the Christmas Tree and Switch on event and agree learning points for future events.</p> <p>Cllrs discussed the initiative and considered it to be successful, noting that the Council had received very positive feedback and suggestions for future Christmas events. Cllrs were keen to liaise with residents and plan ahead for a 2026 event</p> <p>Action: Cllr BJ to contact interested parties and prepare a “2026 Christmas Tree” proposal for consideration at a future meeting.</p>
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	<p>Cllrs thanked Cllr BJ for volunteering to lead on this initiative.</p> <p>A member of the public left the meeting 7.41pm</p>
26/016	<p>To receive the monthly crime statistics for West Hill (for information).</p> <p>Cllrs noted that whilst the number of crimes reported each month were very low, there was a recurring pattern. Cllrs asked to receive an update from the local Police Team.</p> <p>Action: Cllr FP to invite a member of the local Police Team to attend a future meeting.</p>
26/017	<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>Councillors received an update on outstanding actions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cllr AC registered for a RPIC (Playpark Inspection) accreditation course in January 2026. - WHPC awaited a response from the Primary School regarding arrangements for gritting at the new entrance to Village Hall site. - Cllr SMS reported that the Village Hall Trustees had accepted the offer of a free Landmark Tree offered by Devon Wildlife Trust. The tree will be planted on the Village Hall site. - Public notices had been erected at the new entrance to the village hall site (dogs on a lead) and also the entrance to the playpark (no dogs).
26/018	<p>To consider correspondence received (if any).</p> <p>a. Request for a litter bin at the junction of Eastfield/West Hill Road</p> <p>It was agreed to monitor the area to assess the extent of the problem and consider the request at a future meeting.</p> <p>A member of the public left the meeting 8.05pm</p>
26/019	<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 2. To note decisions made under delegated powers (if applicable). 3. Urgent matters (if applicable) <p>The Clerk raised several matters and the following actions were agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To defer the annual WHPC Inspection of the playpark to February b. Cllr AC to inspect the picnic benches in Broadoak Plantation provided by WHPC c. Cllr SMS to inspect the Covid Memorial Tree and bench situated in St Michael's Churchyard d. Cllr FP to attend the 'Centre for Ageing' webinar: "Age-Friendly Town and Parish Guide". e. Cllr SMS to write to village groups to invite them to attend the Parish Meeting. <p>It was resolved that two Cllrs will attend the upcoming DALC Neighbourhood Planning Course" and to approved costs £90.00+vat.</p> <p>It was resolved that the next edition of the WHPC newsletter will be published during March 2026.</p> <p>2 members of the public left the meeting. 8.20pm</p>
26/020	<p>Financial matters:</p> <p>a. To consider and approve, if appropriate, the Schedule of Payments.</p> <p>The meeting considered the Schedule of Payments, internal transfers and invoices circulated before the meeting. No questions were raised.</p> <p>It was resolved to approve the payments and sign the invoices.</p>

	<p>b. To consider and approve, if appropriate, any additional payments presented to the meeting.</p> <p style="color: red;">Additional payments were presented to the meeting. It was resolved to approve the payments and sign the invoice for:</p> <table style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>Inv7076 DALC Training Cllr Owen</td><td style="text-align: right;">£42.00</td></tr> <tr> <td>West Hill Village Hall Room Hire Dec-25</td><td style="text-align: right;">£40.75</td></tr> <tr> <td>St Michael's Room Hire 7th November (Neighbourhood Plan)</td><td style="text-align: right;">£15.00</td></tr> <tr> <td>Three UK - Clerks Mobile</td><td style="text-align: right;">£11.98</td></tr> <tr> <td>Microsoft 365 monthly subscription</td><td style="text-align: right;">£52.16</td></tr> <tr> <td>Voicehost - landline</td><td style="text-align: right;">£ 2.00</td></tr> </table> <p>c. To receive, if available, monthly Bank Reconciliations and finance trackers.</p> <p style="color: red;">No issues or questions were raised regarding the papers circulated prior to the meeting.</p>	Inv7076 DALC Training Cllr Owen	£42.00	West Hill Village Hall Room Hire Dec-25	£40.75	St Michael's Room Hire 7th November (Neighbourhood Plan)	£15.00	Three UK - Clerks Mobile	£11.98	Microsoft 365 monthly subscription	£52.16	Voicehost - landline	£ 2.00
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26/021	<p>Councillor questions, reports and items for future agenda</p> <p>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>												
26/022	<p>Next meeting: To confirm arrangements for the upcoming WHPC meeting on Tuesday 3rd February 2026 7.00pm at the Village Hall</p>												

All members of the public had previously left the meeting.

Part A ended 8.23pm

Part B began 8.23pm

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.

26/023	<p>To decide arrangements for pedestrian and vehicle access to the playpark and to approve costs if considered appropriate.</p> <p style="color: red;">The meeting considered three quotes for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - constructing a hard surface pedestrian path to the playpark - the purchase and installation of replacement pedestrian and vehicle gates. <p style="color: red;">It was resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - award the contract for the construction of a pedestrian path to Devon Tarmasters; - approve the purchase of replacement gates and associated hardware; - request the Lengthsman to transfer the bark chippings currently lining the path to the playpark itself; - to approve a project budget of £6,000.00+vat - to fund the project using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies. <p style="color: red;">Action: The Clerk to write to each of the bidders to inform them of the Council's decision.</p>
26/024	<p>To consider correspondence received and to decide actions and costs as considered appropriate.</p> <p style="color: red;">It was resolved to process the correspondence according to Council Policies.</p>

Part B closed 8.54pm

Meeting ended 8.54pm

Signed

Date