

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting**  
**Held at Parish Hall, Clayhidon, at 7.00pm on Monday, 20 May 2026**

**Present:** Councillors Saunders (Chair) (arrived late), Bendle, Kidner, King (arrived late) and Weekes together with Councillor Clist (arrived late), the parish's MDDC Councillor and DCC Councillor, Mrs S McGeever (Parish Clerk) and residents.

Councillor Kidner welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Councillors Blackmore and Drew.

**Chairman's Report 2025/2026**

I am pleased to present the Annual Parish Council Report for 2025/2026, which summarises the activities and key developments undertaken throughout the year.

**Financial Overview**

The Parish Council (PC) account is awaiting sign off at our June meeting. However, like many organisations, the Council continues to experience increasing costs across a range of services, alongside a growing number of requests for financial assistance from community groups and external organisations.

The Parish Council continues to receive support from Devon County Council (DCC), particularly through the provision of tarmac for road maintenance works. Despite this assistance, financial pressures remain significant and careful budget management continues to be essential.

**Roads and Highways**

As in previous years, the condition of roads within the Parish remains one of the most pressing concerns raised by residents. Due to the Parish roads not being classified as major transport routes, they appear to receive limited funding for preventative maintenance works. Furthermore, there appears to be little visibility regarding Devon County Council's maintenance and resurfacing schedule for roads within the Parish.

The Parish Council will continue to work with our Devon County representative to seek greater clarity and updated information regarding planned maintenance activities.

Potholes remain a major source of frustration for both parishioners and the Parish Council. During the year, requests were made for residents interested in becoming more involved in local highways matters and reporting concerns.

As Devon County Council is responsible for road maintenance and repairs, residents are encouraged to continue reporting potholes and other highway issues directly through the Devon County Council website or by telephone.

The Parish Council is also seeking volunteers willing to act as Snow Wardens during periods of severe weather. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact the Parish Council directly.

**Footpaths**

The Parish Council would like to extend its sincere thanks to Phil West for his continued support and commitment to the management of the Parish footpaths. Throughout the year, several issues arose

which were successfully addressed through the collaborative efforts of the Footpath Coordinator and Devon County Council.

Ongoing maintenance activities have continued under Phil's management, with additional support from Chris in carrying out maintenance work. The Parish Council receives a grant from Devon County Council to assist with ensuring that Parish footpaths remain accessible and well maintained for public use.

The Council would like to formally recognise and thank Phil for his hard work and dedication throughout the year.

### **Financial Pressures and Precept**

The Parish Council's year-end financial statements have been independently audited and approved. However, increasing costs continue to affect all operational areas.

In particular, labour costs associated with pothole repairs have risen significantly. In addition, funding support for the Parish's defibrillators ceased during 2025, meaning that the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of this equipment must now be funded directly by the Parish Council. The Council has also seen an increasing number of requests for charitable donations and financial support from local organisations. Given the limited available budget, the Council will need to carefully assess future requests to determine what support can realistically be provided.

Following careful consideration, the difficult decision was made to increase the Parish precept in order to ensure that the Council remains in a stable financial position and able to meet its ongoing commitments and responsibilities.

### **Charities and Community Projects**

Progress has been made in streamlining the administration of the charities' existing bank accounts, particularly in relation to the Clayhidon Charity. This work is nearing completion and will allow decisions to be made regarding future actions and governance arrangements.

The JG continues to support projects within the Parish. During the year, a defibrillator was successfully installed within the Bolham area, and defibrillator training sessions have also taken place. Early discussions are additionally underway regarding potential collaboration with another local group in Clayhidon to explore the development of a community playground.

### **General Matters**

Parish Council representatives have attended workshops relating to Emergency Planning and the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. Progress on this work is currently awaiting the outcome of the Housing Needs Survey, which will help inform the future vision for Clayhidon. Input from parishioners will be essential as this work progresses.

With Parish Council elections scheduled for May 2027, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their commitment and hard work throughout the year. I would also like to express my appreciation to Sue for her continued support and dedication.

The Clerk ran through the accounts, a copy of which is published alongside these minutes highlighting both the expenditure in 2025/26 and the increase in precept for 2026/27 to cover good financial practice, elections in 2027 and the possibly consequences of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

In response to questions, the Clerk advised that the decision on which proposal would be chosen by the Government was supposed to be announced in July 2026 with shadow elections taking place in May 2027. DCC had been tasked with funding LGR from reserves and all legal documents needed to be in place by the shadow elections. Councillor Clist commented that, with the current political climate, there was a possibility LGR would take place during this parliament.

A number of additional reports were presented or circulated during the meeting and are included as attachments to these minutes.

Following the reports, Councillor Saunders thanked those present for attending and expressed the hope that attendance at future Annual Parish Meetings will continue to increase.

Councillor Saunders closed the meeting at 7.45pm.

### **Report from the Road Working Group.**

Councillor Weekes read the following report from Mr Malcolm Carter who was spearheading the group and also gave his apologies for not attending the meeting.

Following information provided by Devon County Council Highways:

All volunteers need to complete is the online Highway Safety Awareness course. This is an e-learning course which aims to raise safety awareness and provide information to anybody who has an interest in or wishes to undertake works on or near the highway.

The list of names and email addresses was almost complete.

Two volunteers, who had completed this course, would then be funded to undertake the Chapter 8 (Signing, Lighting and Guarding) course.

Tarmac had been ordered through the Parish Clerk.

A number of DCC Highways teams had been working in the area mending potholes and clearing ditches and it was hoped that surface dressing work would take place in the area and a list of priority roads was requested.

There would be a meeting of the group in the near future which would be attended by Councillors Drew and Weekes.

The village lengthsman would continue to undertake work on behalf of the Parish Council in his position as Road Warden.

Concern was expressed about the standard of pothole repairs by DCC Highways.

### **Report from the Village Hall**

Mrs S Clarke, Treasurer, gave the apologies of the chair, Mrs K West.

The Village Hall continued to be an important space for the community as home to a number of clubs as well as providing cafes, regular events and, more recently, yoga.

It was asked that all organisations make use of the online booking system.

It was clear that the income from bookings and events was not sufficient to meet the costs of running the Village Hall and an increase in revenue was required.

Grants were being pursued to cover three planned projects:

Phase 1 – insulation (approx. £20,000)

Grants were being applied for, and a letter of support had been requested from the Parish Council.

Phase 2 – new toilet extension and additional meeting room at the rear.

Phase 3 – new entrance and storage to the side of the building.

It was estimated Phase 2 and 3 would cost in the region of £150,000.

**Report from the John Griss Charity**

Councillor Kidner gave a brief update following on from the Open Meeting on 29 April 2026, the minutes and presentation from that meeting would be available on the Parish Council's website.

The Fishery would provide an income to the parish going forward as well as protecting an amazing part of the parish.

Defibrillator training was being organised. The next Open Day would take place at Hartsmoor on Sunday, 13 September.

**Blackdown Hills Parish Network**

Councillor Weekes gave a brief update on the work of the network.

**Devon County Council and Mid Devon District Council**

Councillor Simon Clist represented the Parish at both County and District level and confirmed the information on LGR provided by the Clerk. He felt that LGR worked in urban areas but was not particularly beneficial to rural areas.

Eighty-five percent of DCC's budget was spent on Adult/Children's Social Care and SEND (Special Educational Needs) with 15% covering the rest of the services provided including Highways.