

WASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 19th March 2025 in Washfield Memorial Hall at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr's Mrs A Taylor-Ross (Chair), M Balment, J Boundy, J Mock, R Webber and W Wood.

In attendance: District Cllr C Adcock. Mr & Mrs Roberts (Footpath Wardens), three members of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe

As Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross had been delayed Cllr Balment took the Chair.

74/03/25. To receive apologies. Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mrs A Wych.

75/03/25. Disclosure of interest in item on the agenda. No declarations at this point.

Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross joined the meeting at this point and took the Chair.

76/03/25. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2025 as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chair.

77/03/25. Matters arising from the minutes (not already covered by the agenda). None.

78/03/25. Public questions. A member of the public reported a lack of signage on part of Footpath 4. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross said DCC had a responsibility to signpost paths. Cllr Wood did not feel there was any need for the section through Brook farmyard to be signed. There was also a query regarding the diversion of Footpath 2 and should it be signposted. A path between Brook Farm and The Cottage at Little Hill is overgrown. This footpath is not on the footpath map and is not thought to be owned by anyone. Cllr Taylor-Ross will make inquiries.

79/03/25. Footpaths:

a) P3 Report. A written report from Mr & Mrs Roberts was circulated prior to the meeting.

FP1 (Haydon to Charterhouse). The fallen tree has been cleared. There is a boggy patch on the path by the field at Haydon where the water draining from the field cannot get to the ditch. This has been reported this to Stuart Howell.

FP2 (Mousebeare to Long Lane via New Park and Pitt). The gatepost at the top of the field above New Park has been replaced. The track beside the official path has been cleared to bypass the uneven ground on the official path in the field and is easily walkable.

FP3 (New Park to Ennerleigh). We have mended the fingerpost at New Park where one of the fingers had fallen off.

FP4 (Brook Lane to Long Lane). A stretch of the path below the stile beside the stream which is narrow and was sloping sideways towards the stream, has been dug

out and levelled. We had help from another parishioner for this. Feels much safer now.

FP5 (Bullfinches to Courtenay via Stanterton). There are very deep boggy patches in the lane up beside the field at the Bullfinches end. Reported to the landowner who has agreed to put some hardcore there.

FP6 (Slade to Bridleway 7 below Smiths). We understand that the improvements suggested where the path goes across from Slade land into the field below Smiths have been approved.

They haven't recently walked the other paths or the Bridleway but have not heard of any problems.

b) Update on issues raised for Footpath 2, Mousebeare Lane. It has been reported that a notice saying 'Private Land No Public Right of Way' has been placed at the entrance to the second part of Mousebeare Lane (the section that has been subject to discussions at recent Parish Council meetings). Cllr Wood declared an interest and referred to an email conversation with Stuart Howell, DCC Public Rights of Way Warden, from which he believed this part of the lane was private property. This was disputed. Cllr Wood read the email to the meeting Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross has emailed Stuart Howell and Tania Weeks asking for clarification to resolve the ongoing dispute. Mr and Mrs Roberts have been advised not to carry out any work on this section of path.

c) Any other footpaths matters. Jon Boyd, DCC Public Rights of Way Officer, has finally replied to the Clerk's emails about the non-payment of the 2024-25 grant. As requested the Clerk has supplied the Council's bank details for payment.

80/03/25. Planning

a) To make a recommendation on any planning applications received before the meeting.

25//00078/FULL Erection of a rear extension, garage and change of use of agricultural land to garden. Location: Nibbs Farm Cottages, Washfield.

Comment: no objections.

b) To note any comments made for planning applications received since the last meeting.

24/01645/FULL Construction of earth bank slurry lagoon (3936.75 sq.m). Location: Land at NGR 293522 116927 Hatherland Farm, Washfield. Comment: no objections.

c) To note any decisions on planning applications made by MDDC.

24/01617/FULL Erection of replacement dwelling following demolition of an agricultural building utilising the Class Q fallback position 23/01940/PNCOU.

Location: Land and Building at NGR 293995 118318 (West of Stoodleigh Drive & West Emmerford Cross), Tiverton. This application has been withdrawn.

24/01633/Full Erection of 2 'self build' dwellings and associated works following demolition agricultural buildings utilising the Class Q fallback position 23/01759/PNCOU. Location: Slade Farm, Washfield. Decision: conditional approval granted.

24/01729/HOUSE Erection of single storey extension to South West elevation, conversion of workshop to guest accommodation and alterations to landscape to improve parking and ventilation of dwelling. Location: Beeches, Washfield.

Decision: conditional approval granted.

25/00243/NMA Non-Material Amendment for 22/01631/FULL to allow minor adjustments to fenestration and rooflights, inclusion of solar panels on southern roof plane, addition of pedestrian gate, inclusion of heat-pump and increase in length of generator/battery storage shed. Location: Land and Buildings at NGR 292593 116970 (Pilemoor Lane), Washfield. Decision: permission granted.

d) Any other planning matters. None.

81/03/25. Highways

a) To report on any highways work carried out in the parish and to note any highways work needed. There has been some resurfacing of the road at Parkhouse Water. It was reported that there is a piece of concrete in the road near Emmerford that caused an ambulance to have to find another route to where it was heading.

b) To report on the meeting with Cllr Chesterton and Melanie Mckenna, DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer and decide on priorities for schemes. Cllr Boundy, Cllr Balment, Cllr Webber and the Clerk met with Melanie Mckenna, DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer and County Cllr Richard Chesterton on March 5th to discuss highways issues in the parish. Prior to the meeting she had driven all the roads in the parish and agreed that all needed work. She gave councillors a copy of a map of the parish on which the roads had been marked to show schemes she had applied for funding for and their priority. Recent work was shown in pink. Long Lane and New Bridge Cross to Hazels Cross are the top two priorities she has raised with her manager as Parkhouse Water has had some resurfacing this year. This road is still on the system it has a three part approach, one year to get the worst section resurfaced, in another year the remaining patches to be completed and then surface dressing.

Drainage on Long Lane – a scheme is in the system awaiting design and funding. During any rain fall a low spot in the road collects rainwater and forms a long stretch of standing water. The field to the north has been banked up over the years so the channel (450256878) no longer copes. A 6 inch piped easement is to be created to the south to head across DCC land to the A361 link road's French drains via a concrete lined channel.

Gullies get sucked out but are not checked to see whether this has worked.

Information from a NFU leaflet is that ditches that take water from the highway are the responsibility of the landlord.

Mud on a carriageway can be reported online on the DCC website. DCC only attend to put signage in place to handle the safety issues for the driver. A copy of a leaflet was provided and can be shared with farmers should the Parish Council wish to reach out within the parish. The Environment Agency get involved if there is suspected pollution incident or land run off. To clarify, if you discover dangerous mud on the carriageway, you should call the police who will then call DCC to place signs. They will follow up with the farmer and they can enforce. The farmer should clear, DCC do not.

Inspection regime – road class and category can be seen on the interactive map on the DCC website. Upon receiving reports from the public for a pothole, DCC has 3 working days to triage the report on the 3-6 carriageway network, and 7 calendar days for everything else. They are then risk assessed as per their matrix.

The Road Warden Scheme was discussed. DCC can set up as many people as the Parish Council wants on the free online Highway Safety Awareness course, and once completed, up to three volunteers can be funded for the Signing, Lighting and Guarding course (Chapter 8). These trained people can then supervise up to two other untrained volunteers. DCC has risk assessment templates

Permanent Pothole repair material (PPR) – parishes are not capped on the quantity that DCC provide, but it is supplied in pallets and Councils have to apply for each pallet. In between councils have to provide photos and maps of the locations where they have used it. The fund is approximately £20,000 a year which does get decreased annually, and from that, the whole county bids for their projects, and the PPR comes from this budget. Each time a council applies for a pallet, it comes to Melanie McKenna for approval as councils should be working with her where they are wanting to work. A parish does not have to agree to repair all of its roads. It was suggested that it can be useful to upkeep a road after it has been resurfaced. Morebath Parish Council has joined the Road Warden Scheme and one of their councillors has been encouraging Bampton Town Council to join. It was suggested that he could be invited to speak to Washfield Parish Council. Funding for equipment, PPE or PPR can be applied for.

Packer Road – the change of the give way priority was as per the planning permission and won't be amended. Washfield's request for double yellow lines can't be considered by DCC as the estate is not yet adopted. On the next level 3 risk assessment, it has been requested by DCC's development control, for the parking next to this junction to be checked and lines to be requested if flagged for action. It was queried why the Parish Council doesn't receive P3 funding for the part of the Exe Valley Way footpath that runs through the parish. Mel will inquire.

c) Update on issues raised regarding pots on the triangle of grass beside the Church and the addition of no parking signs. The pots have been moved and are no longer causing an issue. The 'No Parking' signs suggested at the last meeting have not been put up but the matter seems settled so this will be left for now.

d) Any other highways matters. There have been a number of water leaks around the parish. A parishioner who works for South West Water understands the problems that road closures cause in Washfield and is aware of the need to give warning of the closure and to keep it as short as possible.

82/03/25. Reports

a) County Cllr. No report. The election period will be starting shortly and Cllr Chesterton will not be standing for the Tiverton West Division.

b) District Cllr. A written report from Cllr Adcock was circulated by email prior to the meeting. Rachel Gilmour MP has resigned as a District Cllr.

Devon is not included in Phase 1 of the devolution process and elections for DCC will proceed as planned on Thursday 1st May. All Devon local authorities above Town and Parish level have been instructed via a letter from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution (James McMahon) to work together to create an interim plan and submit it to Government by 21st March 2025. Government will provide feedback and a full proposal is requested by 25th November 2025.

Dependent on the Minister's decision and passing of the necessary legislation, elections to new 'shadow' Unitary Councils will then proceed as soon as

possible. Timescales are still to be determined, but elections may happen in 2027 with the new Unitary Authorities being fully in place in 2028. The MDDC elections that would normally have taken place in 2027 are likely to be cancelled, with MDDC and DCC ceasing to exist with the inception of the Unitary Councils. The current task is to create an Interim Plan, which is very challenging given the size and diversity of the County. The District Councils have agreed a preferred option of two Unitary Councils:

- A Unitary combining the South Hams, Teignbridge and West Devon areas with Torbay
- A Unitary including East, Mid and North Devon alongside Torridge District and the City of Exeter (Washfield would fall within this Unitary Council covering a very large area).

Alongside that, Plymouth City will be looking to change their boundaries, which is a matter for government to decide on. Exeter City has aspirations to form a standalone Unitary Council that would need to include a large area of surrounding towns and villages. Devon, Plymouth and Torbay are working on plans for a Mayoral Strategic Authority, with or without Cornwall. The form of the Interim Proposal is uncertain. An Extra-ordinary meeting of the Full Council of MDDC is scheduled for Wednesday 12th March ahead of the deadline for the Interim Plan, with a single agenda item 'Local Government Reorganisation in Devon'.

Some dates were suggested for a meeting to discuss options for improving broadband but there were clashes with other meetings. Another attempt will be made to find a suitable date. It was noted there is poor mobile phone signal at Emmerford and some other areas in the parish.

83/03/25. Finance:

a) To approve any payments. It was resolved to make the following payments:
Mrs J Larcombe - £124.92 Clerk's salary plus annual admin expenses (Payment ref: 2425/15).

HM Revenue & Customs - £23.80 PAYE (Payment ref: 2425/16)

Bank fees of £6.00 were paid on 31/01/25 and 28/02/25. They are due again on 31/03/25.

b) To report any receipts and the bank balances.

No receipts since the last meeting.

Unity Trust Bank Current Account balance is £494.00, Unity Trust Bank Instant Access balance - £1,823.28, NatWest Current Account - £0.00 and Savings account - £295.09.

c) Bank reconciliations. Noted.

d) To discuss a request for an increase in the Churchyard Grant. Cllr Balment declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as the PCC pays him to cut the Churchyard. He took no part in discussion on this item. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross declared a personal interest in this item as a member of the PCC.

The PCC has asked the Parish Council if the grant paid to the PCC for the upkeep of the Churchyard could be increased. The PCC has put in a new programme of maintenance which is now of a very high standard. Costs have increased from £550 to £1,600. Collection income has dropped dramatically and the PCC has been asked to contribute more to the Church of England. Expenditure for 2024 was more than income and this is before the costs for grass cutting were increased. The Clerk

noted that this request was received after the budget for 2025-26 was set and the precept requested. The precept cannot be increased until 2026-27 so any increase would need to be funded from reserves. No decision was reached and this item will be discussed further at the May meeting after the annual accounts for 2024-25 are presented.

e) Appointment of internal auditor for 2024-25 accounts. It was agreed to appoint Karen Ward.

f) To agree to adopt the new NALC Model Financial Regulations personalised for Washfield Parish Council. It was agreed to adopt the new Financial Regulations.

g) To review the Business Risk Management Document. The document was reviewed. It was agreed to increase the likelihood of Loss of Clerk due to illness or accident from low to medium. The Council's online records to be shared via cloud storage.

h) To review the Policy Statement of Internal Control and Annual Review of Effectiveness of Internal Control 2024-25. The document was reviewed and agreed.

84/03/25. Arrangements for broadband connectivity meeting with Connecting Devon & Somerset. Date still to be arranged.

85/03/25. Report on the Parish Meeting held on 25th February 25th. The NFU were thanked for sending 3 people to the meeting. 22 people attended and there was a good discussion afterwards.

86/03/25. Chair's Announcements and Correspondence: It has been reported to Cllr Taylor-Ross that there is a bit of movement to the wooden left hand post/pillar on the War Memorial shelter on the Village Green. Cllr Balment and Cllr Wodd will have a look. Cllr Balment could grout around the bottom of the post. No further correspondence.

87/03/25. Date of the next meeting. The next meeting will be held on 21st May 2025. This will be the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date: