

WASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 21st May 2025 in Washfield Memorial Hall at 7.30pm.

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

In attendance: County Cllr S Lodge, District Cllr's C Adcock & M Stratton, two members of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

01/05/25. Election of Officers:

a) Chair. Cllr Wood proposed himself for Chair but there was no seconder. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross was proposed by Cllr Balment, seconded by Cllr Boundy and elected as Chair. She signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office Form.

b) Vice-chair. Cllr Wood was elected as Vice-chair. Proposed by Cllr Balment and seconded by Cllr Mrs Wych.

02/05/25. To receive apologies. No apologies, everyone present.

03/05/25. Disclosure of interest in item on the agenda. Cllr Balment declared a personal and pecuniary interest in item 11/05/25 e) as he is paid to cut the Churchyard. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross declared a personal interest in item 11/05/25 e) as she is a member of the PCC.

04/05/25. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 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.

05/05/25. Matters arising from the minutes (not already covered by the agenda). No matters arising.

06/05/25. Public questions. A member of the public raised a query regarding signage on Footpath 4 (Signposted from one side but not the other).

07/05/25. Footpaths:

a) P3 Report. Mr and Mrs Roberts are stepping down as Footpath Wardens due to ill health and have provided a hand over report.

b) To minute thanks to the retiring footpath wardens and discuss recruitment of new footpath warden/s. A huge thanks was recorded to Mr and Mrs Roberts for bringing the footpaths up to the present level. They have put in a huge amount of work and have built great relationships with the landowners and Stuart Howell, DCC Rights of Way Warden. It is unlikely that someone will take over as the Footpath and an Adopt a Footpath Scheme was suggested. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross will put together something to go on Facebook to explain how this will work and how to report footpath faults on the DCC website. A QR code will be put on the signs. Cllr Wood agreed to become a co-ordinator and write a P3 Report for meetings using

the existing template. The Clerk will advise Jon Boyd, DCC Public Rights of Way Officer that Cllr Wood will replace Mr and Mrs Roberts as the contact for the P3 Scheme

c) Update on issues raised for Footpath 2, Mousebeare Lane. The following response has been received from Richard Walton, DCC Public Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager: To summarise the situation (based on his initial research):

- Part of Mousebeare Lane (to the east) is a public footpath (Washfield Footpath 2). The section being queried is where the public footpath runs parallel through fields just north of the lane – as shown in the map extracts inserted below
- The original parish survey form from 1951 indicates that the current alignment shown on the definitive map is correct i.e. the public footpath in this location is parallel to but not along Mousebeare Lane
- To date, public access rights have not been identified or recorded along this section of Mousebeare Lane - and so the assumption is that access at present will be private / by permission. I think (as summarised by John Burton) this section of the lane has been / is heavily scrubbed and so hasn't been walked, ridden or driven for many years
- In the absence of known / registered landowners, the presumption is that the landowners either side will have legal interest to the mid-point of the lane
- In the absence of recorded public rights – if the landowners decide to erect notices or gates along this section of the lane, DCC does not have powers to restrict this.

If there is evidence to suggest that public access rights should be recorded, the suggestion would be to apply for a definitive map modification order (as per the process set out under schedule 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This path was not raised during the Washfield Definitive Map Review. Mr Burton and Mr Walton will be applying for a Definitive Map Review. To make a successful application requires a lot of work but Mr Burton and Mr Walton believe they are almost there.

It was noted that the designated footpath is working.

d) Any other footpaths matters. Stuart Howell is working on the Cuckoo's Nest route, which is very boggy. The gate is being fixed at Nibbs.

Landowners are reminded to keep footpaths open when sowing crops.

08/05/25. Planning

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

25/00571/FULL Change of use of land to tourism to include glamping accommodation comprising of 2 temporary cabins and temporary use of an existing yurt with **associated parking. Location: Land at NGR 294771 114599 (Worth House),** Washfield. Comment: no objections.

25/00583/HOUSE Erection of a indoor swimming pool with gym, sauna, steam room, plant room, changing facilities and outdoor kitchen area. Location: Worth House, Washfield. Comment: no objections.

25/00646/FULL Erection of extension to an existing agricultural livestock building. Location: Land and Building at NGR 294444 118992 Emmerford Farm, Stoodleigh.

Cllr Mock declared a personal and prejudicial; interest as the applicant and left the room while the application was discussed.

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

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

24/01645/FULL: Construction of earth bank slurry lagoon (3936.75 sq.m). Location: Land at NGR 293522 116927 Hatherland Farm, Washfield. Decision: conditional approval granted.

25/00435/PNAG Prior notification for the erection of an agricultural storage building. Location: Land at NGR 116134 291743 Buttermore Farm, Loxbeare. Decision: prior approval not required.

25/00670/PNAG Prior notification for the erection of an agricultural storage building. Location: Land at NGR 294360 115010, Cotleigh. Decision: prior approval not required.

c) Any other planning matters. None.

09/05/25. Highways

a) To report on any highways work carried out in the parish and to note any highways work needed. Some potholes have been filled near Middlehill.

Cllr Mock reported that the piece of concrete in the road near Emmerford reported at the last meeting is still there. Cllr Balment will log this on the DCC website.

The condition of the road from Badcott is in a very poor condition. Cllr Balment questioned whether the Health & Safety Executive could be involved as it is so bad. Long Lane is still very bad when it rains and something needs to be done before the winter.

Cllr Lodge, new County Councillor, is meeting Melanie Mckenna, Neighbourhood Highways Officer, next week. Councillors offered to give Cllr Lodge a tour of the parish so that he could see the condition of the roads. There is no handover from the previous County Councillor and he is not allowed to query what they have brought up with officers. Cllr Taylor-Ross will put together some notes on highways issues in the parish.

DCC are changing the way councillors report things online and he explained the 10 day timeframe.

It is hoped to get a member of Morebath Parish Council, who is part of their Road Warden team, to attend a meeting to talk about the Road Warden Scheme. No one on the Parish Council is willing to be a road warden but other parishioners might be interested. It does involve undertaking Chapter 8 Highways training.

b) Any other highways matters. The issue of poor visibility at the junction of Washfield Lane and Packer Road, an unadopted road, was explained to Cllr Lodge. There is now a safety issue with children coming through the hedge onto the road.

10/05/25. Reports

a) County Cllr. Cllr Lodge will officially be the County Councillor from tomorrow.

b) District Cllr. A written report from Cllr Adcock was circulated by email prior to the meeting. An entrance has been created without permission at Wildwood House and

this has been reported to Planning Enforcement.

11/05/25. Finance:

a) To approve any payments. It was resolved to make the following payments:
Devon Association of Local Councils - £155.25 Annual Affiliation Fee (Payment ref: 2526/01)

Mrs J Larcombe - £95.12 Clerk's salary (Payment ref: 2526/02)

Bank fees of £6.00 were paid on 31/03/25 and 30/04/25. They are due again on 31/05/25.

It was agreed to add Cllr Mrs Wych as a bank signatory.

b) To report any receipts and the bank balances. Since the last meeting there have been the following receipts: MDDC - £2,300.00 precept, HMRC - £872.06 VAT refund.

Unity Trust Bank Current Account balance is £4,052.34

Unity Trust Bank Instant Access balance - £1,470.12

NatWest Current Account - £0.00 closed

Savings account - £0.00. The balance has finally been transferred and the account closed.

c) To approve the annual insurance cover for 2025-26. The Clerk reported that Zurich has just informed her that they have discontinued the policy that the Council has used previously and the quote for a new type of policy is £196.00, an increase of £30.00. The Clerk will check whether there are any cheaper alternatives before accepting the new policy. If there is no other alternative the premium of £196.00 will be paid.

d) Bank reconciliations. Noted.

e) To discuss a request for an increase in the Churchyard Grant. Cllr Balment declared a personal and pecuniary interest as he is paid to cut the Churchyard and he left the room. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross declared a personal interest in item 11/05/25 e) as a member of the PCC. The PCC has asked Councillors to consider increasing the grant because they have a big bill coming in. It was agreed to increase to £700 for 2025-26 and reconsider when the budget for 2026-27 is discussed.

f) To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2024-25. It was resolved to agree yes to boxes 1 – 8 and not applicable to box 9.

g) To approve the Accounting Statement for 2024-25. It was resolved to approve.

h) To agree the signing of the Certificate of Exemption for 2024-25. It was agreed to sign the Certificate of Exemption.

12/05/25. Arrangements for broadband connectivity meeting with Connecting Devon & Somerset. Cllr Lodge will take this item forward. Broadband connectivity is poor in Washfield and this will be a real issue when the analogue phone system is withdrawn, particularly in the event of an emergency. There is a real risk some people will be left unable to communicate by phone.

13/05/25. Chair's Announcements and Correspondence. Cllr Balment has secured the wooden left hand post/pillar on the War Memorial shelter on the Village Green. A Village Green Working Party was arranged for the 3rd June, 6.30pm onward. Permission was given for an event to be held on the Village Green on 24th June.

It was agreed not to signpost Footpath 4.

Cllr Webber was thanked for moving the benches around on the village green. It was agreed that one of the benches could be moved to the Church to replace an old one there.

Concerns have been raised with Cllr Taylor-Ross about large class sizes at Tiverton High School and cutbacks to the library. The Clerk, who is also Clerk to the Governing Board at the school, was surprised to hear this and said she would find out more information.

14/05/25. Date of the next meeting. The next meeting will be held on 16th July 2025.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date: