

Draft

**Minutes of the Meeting of Shirwell Parish Council
held on the
13th March 2025 in the Village Hall, Shirwell**

Present

Cllr J Friend (Chairman)
Cllr J Watts
Cllr E Abretti
Cllr R Pelling
Cllr Mrs S Pine
Cllr S Shortridge

Also in attendance County Councillor A Davis and 4 members of the public

Councillors expressed their sympathy to the widow of Mr Reg Kingdon who had recently died. He had been a member of the Parish Council for many years including several as Chairman.

Officer

G Dwyer

Mar 25/1 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Mrs Pollard

Mar25/2 Public Question Time

A National Trust Officer updated the Council on the latest details of the proposal for **Planning Application 79703 North Woolley at Arlington Court** Creation of an outdoor hub. It was noted that the Parish Council had already responded to the original application.

Mar25/3 Minutes of the Meeting held on the 13th February 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes as previously circulated be approved

Mar25/4 Matters arising from the minutes

Deferred to agenda item 12. (Speed Awareness monitor)

Mar25/5 Inspection of Defibrillator

The defibrillator has been inspected and cleaned.

Mar25/6 Report of the County Councillor

The County Councillor had forwarded her report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. She reported that the County Council had increased their precept by 4.99% and that no details were as yet available on the Governments proposals for the reorganisation of local Government.

Mar25/7 Questions to the County Councillor

There were no questions although mention was made of some surface defects. Councillors undertook to report those on the DCC website and pass the incident number to Cllr Davis

Mar25/8 Report of the District Councillor

A copy of her report as lead member for waste and recycling at North Devon District Council is attached to these minutes for information.

Mar25/9 Questions to the District Councillor

There were no questions

Mar25/10 Correspondence

The following correspondence had been distributed in advance of the meeting.

- Dalc bulletin
- District Councillor's report
- Smaller Councils meeting info
- Housing strategy online meeting date

Mar25/11 Planning Applications

- **Planning Application 79607 2 Blatchford Cottages Barnstaple Devon EX31 4EU** Demolition of tool shed, erection of triple garage with ancillary accommodation above, change of use of agricultural land to domestic land to allow for positioning of garage and improvements to existing car parking area. **RESOLVED** to recommend **REFUSAL** as this seemed an inappropriate overdevelopment from the details supplied

- **Planning Application 79419 Coxleigh Barton Shirwell Barnstaple Devon.** Retrospective erection of 3 free standing water containment tanks for Devon Fire Service use at Coxleigh Barton Shirwell Barnstaple Devon EX31 4JL. RESOLVED to recommend APPROVAL although members expressed concern at the amount of development on this site when such basic safety provisions were lacking

Mar25/12 Cheques for Payment

A cheque to G Dwyer for salary £150.00 and stationary £6.99 (£156.99) and Village Hall Hire (£105.00) were drawn at the meeting. The speed awareness monitor cheque to Westcotec £4328.40 to be posted

Mar25/13 Speed Camera Stand

County Councillor Davis had sourced poles for the speed camera.

Mar25/14 Reports from Councillors

All matters dealt with earlier on the agenda

Mar25/15 Clerks Report

The Clerk had nothing to report

Mar25/16 Public Questions regarding business on this agenda

There were none

Mar25/17 Urgent Business

There was none

The meeting closed 7.50 pm

Chairman: Dated:.....

Shirwell Parish Council County Councillors report March 2025

Local Government Reorganisation

The update is that Devon County will have a full council meeting on 21st March where we will vote on the County Submission, while the report has not been published yet, it is anticipated that because there is an election and councillors will change the likelihood is that we will submit several options so that the new council after May 1st can work on what is the best option for the whole of Devon.

Background below;

The English Devolution White Paper was published just before Christmas.

Extract from the ministers letter probably gives some explanation as to where we are heading as residents in a two tier area;

Local government reorganisation My intention is to formally invite unitary proposals in January 2025 from all councils in two-tier areas, and small neighbouring unitary councils. In this invitation, I will set out further detail on the criteria I will consider when taking decisions on the proposals that are submitted to Government. I intend to ask for interim plans by March 2025. As set out in the White Paper, new unitary councils must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks. For most areas, this will mean creating councils with a population of 500,000 or more. However, there may be exceptions to ensure new structures make sense for an area, including on devolution. Final decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. We will ask you to work with other councils in your area to develop unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area, rather than developing competing proposals.

Statement from Andrea

Following publication of the Governments Devolution White paper it is clear that considerable change is going to happen in Local Government in Devon.

We have two options;

1. Do nothing and the government will impose changes
2. Engage with government to get the best result for the residents of Devon.

I believe that engagement with the government is the best option.

While I may not agree with all the government's proposals, I need to do everything I can to ensure that the changes will make local government sustainable for the long term and able to withstand shocks like the pandemic and the world financial crisis. At the heart of all this must be a stronger voice to inform the government of the issues my residents in Combe Martin Rural and the residents in the wider area of Devon face.

Update 05.02.25- The Government has turned down Devon County Council's request to postpone its elections in May.

This afternoon Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Angela Rayner announced that the council's request was among those which have been rejected, meaning that the council's May elections will proceed as planned.

The announcement coincides with confirmation that the Government has signed the necessary legislation to bring the Devon and Torbay's Combined County Authority (CCA) into being.

The Devon and Torbay CCA is the governance needed for devolved decision-making powers and funding to flow from Whitehall to local decision-makers in Devon and Torbay. Through the Devon and Torbay CCA, it means that decisions that were previously made in Whitehall will now be made locally on priority issues including housing, jobs and skills, transport and economy.

Letter received from minister Wednesday 5th February

We ask for an interim plan to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025, in line with the guidance set out in the attached Annex. My officials will provide feedback on your plan to help support you to develop final proposals. I will expect any full proposal to be submitted by 28 November. If I decide to implement any proposal, and the necessary legislation is agreed by Parliament, we will work with you to move to elections to new 'shadow' unitary councils as soon as possible as is the usual arrangement in the process of local government reorganisation. Following submission, I will consider any and all proposals carefully before taking decisions on how to proceed.

DCC Budget 2025-2026

There will be a 4.99 percent increase in council tax in Devon for the coming financial year: 2.99 percent for general services with an extra two percent for adult social care.

The annual council tax for an average Band D home will rise by £85.59 – or £1.64 a week – to £1,801.26.

There will be increases in spending of

- 8.2 percent on adult services and
- 5.5 percent for children's services.
- Reductions in other departmental spending and increased income will mean an overall rise of 5.9 percent in the budget with a total spend of over £784.1 million.
- An extra £4 million to boost highways and repair potholes since the target budget was set last month.
- Additional £5 million for children's social care to provide a range of services to allow vulnerable children to be cared for closer to their families and communities.
- An extra £500,000 to support the work of district councils and homeless organisations which brings Devon County Council's homelessness budget up to £1 million.

The extra cash has come from the new additional council tax being levied on second homes.

- Council leader James McInnes sharply criticised the Government's decision to end the Rural Services Delivery Grant which helps councils with the extra cost of providing services in rural areas. This had cost Devon over £10

million, he said, with funding switched to more urban areas.

In addition Devon had received the lowest financial settlement of all 21 county councils.

A399 Bray Valley

Many of you will know I've been campaigning for the road to be repaired for many months, it is not in the area I represent but it is a vital road for many of us accessing the A361 North Devon Link Road.

The road will be repaired under a full closure, subject to weather and any extenuating circumstances overnight 25th march-29th March 7pm-06.00am

The DCC website is very useful for reporting highway problems and the reports go straight to the contractor. [Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

Alternatively, the highway contact number is 0345 155 1004

If it's a river flooding the environment agency can be contacted on 0345 988 1188

Winter road updates; <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/safe-travel/winter-travel/>

Travel Devon website; [home - Travel Devon](#)

*Andrea Davis
County Councillor
Combe Martin Rural Division
Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk*

District Councillor Julie Hunt's February report on waste and recycling

Budget 2025/6 - **Devon County Council** is meeting later this week to set the budget for the coming year. The financial position of the council remains extremely difficult. All councils are required to produce a balanced budget each year.

This is being achieved in Devon by taking funds from reserves and relying on the extra funds allocated by the Department of Education as part of the Safety Valve Agreement (SVA). The SVA is based on DCC cutting costs on the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) budget and achieving improvements in the service. Currently the required savings have not been made, and the overspend is expected to increase. There is a risk that if DCC is unable to agree a revision to the SVA and funds are reclaimed by government, the financial position of the council will not be sustainable. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution – DCC failed in its attempt to put off May's elections for a year or to be part of the Priority Devolution Programme. Government has asked for an in-principal submission on the future shape of local government in Devon by 21 March 2025, and final detailed plans in the autumn.

Options are being discussed, and data gathered, to support DCC decisions on a future unitary council model. It is expected that DCC's preferred model will

be a Super Devon Council, covering most of the current county plus Torbay. District Councils in Devon are also working up plans. Locality Grant – Eden Park School applied through their local County Councillor to get a grant for equipment that will support children's learning and development through outside activities. This follows previous grants that the County Councillor has been able to give the school, which serves some of the most deprived families in Barnstaple. This year a grant was also provided to Newport School for their New to Newport project – which brings children and families from overseas together with local families at the school's firepit to share knowledge and understanding of different cultures while developing personal relationships.

The **Devon District Council** leaders have been meeting to consider proposals for local government organisation and have settled on a potential option of:

- Plymouth and part of southern Devon
- South Devon and Torbay
- Northern and West Devon including Exeter

North Devon Council is about to set its budget for 2025-26, This year this has been achieved without cuts to services or any reductions in staffing. Currently, the forecast for 2026-27 is looking more challenging. The District Council is currently consulting on its housing strategy led by Councillor Graham Bell. The consultation can be found on the District Council website and runs until 31st March 2025.

The **District and Town Councils** receive a significant number of complaints about the number of empty shops in the town Centre. In comparison to many other similar towns, Barnstaple is doing very well with a much lower vacancy rate.

Currently there are only two vacant shops being actively marketed in the Town Centre; North Devon Council are trying to identify and approach landlords to better understand why they are leaving their properties empty. In addition, the Green Lanes Shopping Centre has achieved a £1 million surplus for the district council since it was purchased, this has helped the District Council with discretionary funds and to achieve the balanced budget.

The new hub for council services will be opening soon in Green Lanes. The evaluation of the public art project, funded through the Arts Council is currently taking place and the public are invited to give their feedback on the applications through the Barnstaple.co.uk website.

Councillor J Coates responded, saying:

I recently took part in a town centre walkabout with district and town council officers to look at the number of vacant properties within the town centre and improve improvements that can be made within the town centre.

The Town Council has also been part of the evaluation for the Public Art project.

North Devon Council is inviting people to have their say on a new draft Housing Strategy, which sets out a high-level vision and objectives as to how the council plans to try and meet the housing needs and hopes of our communities.

The Housing Strategy will guide the Council's activities in delivering and discharging its housing functions and responsibilities, whilst ensuring that resources and efforts are best directed to tackle the housing challenges that

the area faces. It was compiled following the publication of the Devon Housing Commission Report in July 2024, championed by Lord Best.

The draft Strategy has been prepared in full consultation with a working group of elected Members, who have been involved through a dedicated workshop and feedback sessions. It is built on a foundation of three themes:

Prevent Homelessness: Preventing homelessness by supporting citizens to stay in their current home if they have one, but if this isn't possible/or they are already homeless seek to help them find alternative solutions.

Provide New Housing Supply: Supply new housing to meet social demand, delivering affordable & sustainable healthy homes wherever possible.

Make Homes Healthy: Improving the quality of existing homes making them safe and healthy, in turn making their occupants healthy too.

The Council recognises the value of gaining different perspectives and insights and therefore inviting you to submit your views. The draft strategy is available for wider consultation for a period of seven weeks from **Monday 10 February 2025 to Monday 31 March 2025**.

You can view the draft strategy and find out more by visiting the Council's website at [Let's Talk North Devon](#)

End of Report

Cllr Julie Hunt
Lead Member for Waste & Recycling