

**Draft**  
**Minutes of the meeting of Shirwell Parish Council**  
**held on the**  
**12<sup>th</sup> February 2026 in the Village Hall, Shirwell**

**Present**

Cllr J Friend (Chairman)  
Cllr J Watts (Dep Chairman)  
Cllr E Abretti  
Cllr Mrs C Parkhouse  
Cllr R Pelling  
Cll Mrs S Pine  
Cllr S Shortridge

Prior to the commencement of the meeting all paid their condolences to Sally Pine following the death of her husband Mark who had been a Councillor and Chairman of the Council for many years.

**Also in attendance**

**County Councillor Mrs A Davis.** There was one member of the public present

**Feb 26/1 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies

**Feb 26/2 Public Question Time**

The member of the public raised the condition of the road opposite the church hedge and the Village Hall, the County Councillor will raise this with DCC.

**Feb 26/3 Minutes the meeting of the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes as previously circulated be approved

**Feb 26/4 Matters arising from the minutes**

There were none that were not on the agenda

**Feb 26/5 Inspection of Defibrillator**

The defibrillator had been inspected prior to the meeting.

## **Feb 26/6 Report of the County Councillor**

Councillor Mrs Davis spoke briefly to her report a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

She briefly highlighted the library consultation process (closing date 22<sup>nd</sup> February) and details of Devons response to the Local Gov Reorg proposals both of which are dealt with later on the agenda.

She also highlighted Exmoor National Parks housing needs survey and it's impact on families living close to the park boundary.

## **Feb 26/7 Questions to the County Councillor**

There were none

## **Feb 26/8 Report of the District Councillor**

There was no report

## **Feb 26/9 Questions to the District Councillor**

There were none

## **Feb 26/10 Correspondence**

- Dalc membership info
- Flood recovery leaflet
- Post storm survey
- Visit of Police and Crime commissioner (details)
- Nddh latest news
- NDC weekly information sheet
- Working together (cluster working)

## **Feb 26/11 Planning Applications**

There were none

## **Feb 26/12 Cheques for Payment**

Cheques to G Dwyer for clerks salary (£200.00) and C&R Grounds maintenance (£335.00) were signed at the meeting.

## **Feb 26/13 Community Governance Review/Local Government Reorganisation**

Members discussed the letter from the Chief Executive of North Devon and it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Friend and Abretti bring a report to the March meeting of the Council

## **Feb 26/14 Reports from Councillors**

- The situation with the redundant pylons was nearly resolved as most had now been removed, pressure for the removal of the remainder would continue

- The Clerk asked that the Council reconsider the decision to discontinue DALC membership. **RESOLVED** the Clerk to investigate the implications for rejoining.
- Library Reduction in Hours. Councillors considered the draft response prepared by the Clerk and it was **RESOLVED** that this be forwarded with the addition of a note on the consequences on reducing the late opening hours frequency

### Feb 26/15 Clerks Report

The Clerk had nothing to report that was not on the agenda

Feb 26/16 Public Questions regarding business on this agenda

There were none

### Feb 26/17 Urgent Business

There was none

The meeting closed at 8.10

Chairman:

Dated:.....

## Shirwell Parish Council County Councillors report February 2026

### Library Consultation- reminder

**A public consultation asking people to help shape the future of Devon's 50 libraries was recently launched, this is to seek views about the future of the library service in Devon.**

It will run for 12 weeks and focus on a number of options, including opening hours, the use of technology, and the potential for community-managed libraries. **Closing date 22<sup>nd</sup> February.**

The consultation is available online via a Devon County Council engagement platform at <https://devon.cc/devon-libraries-pm>

Visitors will be able to:

- Fill in one of two surveys (one is specifically for young people aged 13 to 17 years)
- View a detailed overview proposal
- View an opening hours document and other information

Printed copies of the survey are also available in libraries and Devon County Council reception areas (County Hall in Exeter, Tav View in Barnstaple)

### **Exmoor National Park Housing need survey**



Housing survey  
poster.pdf

## **I want to raise awareness of this survey as I'm trying to reach people who have a connection with the National Park.**

A letter with information about an online housing need questionnaire, has been sent to households in Exmoor National Park. The letter includes a link and QR code to the survey which is designed to be simple and easy to complete. The information provided through the survey will be dealt with in strict confidence. It will be vital to those considering housing need and provision and will help inform the future Exmoor Local Plan review. The survey is aimed at those who might be finding accommodation in the local area unaffordable, whose home no longer meets their needs, or who wish to own their own home through a self/custom build project.

**The letter to Exmoor residents also asks that the survey be shared with people who have moved away and want to return, local workers who live away and travel into the National Park to work or who live on Exmoor with family or others because of the cost of local housing.** Anybody wishing to set up their own home, e.g. young people approaching adulthood, is encouraged to complete their own survey separately.

Parish surveys have been the starting point for almost 120 homes with a local need occupancy tie, achieved in Exmoor's communities through conversions and new build and as self-build.

## **Highways Update following the recent storms Background**

- Through January and into February, Devon has been impacted by 3 named storms
- These storms alongside the previously reported freeze/thaw weather pattern is incredibly damaging for the carriageways and has led to severe structural damage and a significant increase in pothole numbers.

### **Response**

Whilst DCC have recovered access to all communities, it is becoming more aware of the significant impact of the 3 named storms on the minor network. This is becoming more evident as flood water recedes and the team continue to widen their inspections of the network and we receive more information and feedback from the public and local communities. There are currently 2,900 safety defect potholes outstanding with a further 1,600 reports received this week which we are endeavouring to inspect and repair at the earliest opportunity.

We are currently assessing more than 600 reports a day.

The impact of the most recent storm on the A379 Slapton Line has been particularly significant with a loss of sea defence and road structure. We are currently working with South Hams DC, the EA and Natural England to understand and assess the impact and consider short term and longer term recovery options. To ensure we can react as swiftly and effectively as possible we have paused programmed works.

This has made available 5 jettors and 6 gully emptiers across the county which will be working into the weekend and through the next week to address reported

drainage issues.

We have 50 gangs committed to the support of the recovery operation who have been working around the clock, not only to clear the impact of the storm but to also undertake winter service treatments to ensure the safety of road users when temperatures have dropped significantly. Many of these teams continue to work additional hours on Saturdays and Sundays to keep the network as safe as possible.

## **Local Government Reorganisation**

### **Summary**

The Ministry of Housing, Local Government and Communities (MHCLG) has launched a formal consultation to restructure Devon's local government. The current "two-tier" system (County and District councils) is proposed to be replaced by a Unitary model—a single-tier authority designed to be more efficient and sustainable.

As your representative, my sole priority is ensuring that any change protects the Combe Martin Rural Division. Our remote area relies on a delicate balance of agriculture, hospitality, and transport connectivity, and our voice must not be lost in this transition.

### **A Single Devon Unitary, DCC's submission.**

The business case, developed by Devon County Council, proposes a single authority for the entire county (excluding Plymouth and Torbay).

- **Financial Impact:** Projected annual savings of £28.4 million with a two-year payback period.
- **Local Representation:** To prevent rural isolation, the model includes 16 Neighbourhood Area Committees to give communities a direct say in local service delivery.
- **Service Stability:** This model aims to protect vulnerable services, particularly Children's Services and Social Care, by maintaining the current scale of operations.

### **Comparison of Alternative Models**

While the single "Devon Unitary" is the lead proposal, four other models are under consideration. The choice impacts how our "Rural North" identity is managed:

The 5 proposals in this consultation were made by the following councils on 28 November 2025:

#### **1. Devon County Council proposed 3 unitary councils These would comprise the current areas of:**

- **Devon Unitary Council:** East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge, Torridge and West Devon
- **Plymouth** to remain unchanged
- **Torbay** to remain unchanged

#### **2. South Hams District Council, Teignbridge Borough Council, West Devon Borough Council proposed 3 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:**

- **Exeter and Northern Devon Unitary:** East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon and Torridge
- **Plymouth** to remain unchanged
- **Torbay and Southern Devon Unitary:** South Hams, Teignbridge, Torbay and West Devon

#### **3. East Devon Borough Council, Mid Devon District Council, North Devon Council, Torridge District Council proposed 3 unitary councils. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the**

**proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:**

- **Exeter and Northern Devon Unitary:** East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon, and Torridge
- **Plymouth Expanded:** parts of the parishes of Bickleigh, Brixton, Shaugh Prior and Sparkwell from the neighbouring district of South Hams
- **Torbay and Southern Devon Unitary:** South Hams, Teignbridge, Torbay and West Devon

**4. Exeter City Council and Plymouth City Council proposed 4 unitary councils.** This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **Devon Coast and Countryside:** The rest of Devon
- **Exeter:** plus 15 parishes from within Teignbridge District Council, 28 parishes from within East Devon District Council and 6 parishes from within Mid-Devon District Council.
- **Plymouth:** plus 13 parishes from South Hams
- **Torbay:** plus 22 parishes from within Teignbridge District Council and South Hams District Council.

**5. Torbay Council proposed 4 unitary councils. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:**

- **Exeter Council:** plus 15 parishes from within Teignbridge District Council, 28 parishes from within East Devon District Council and 6 parishes from within Mid Devon District Council
- **Plymouth Council:** plus 13 parishes from South Hams
- **Rural Devon Coast and Countryside Council:** The rest of Devon
- **Torbay Council** to remain unchanged

You can find all five proposals listed above at: [www.devonlgr.co.uk](http://www.devonlgr.co.uk).

### **Why Your Feedback is Vital- my take on this!**

Living in a remote, rural area, we face unique challenges that urban planners often overlook. We must ask:

1. Will our voice be heard? Will a single large council respond to a blocked lane in Combe Martin as quickly as it would to a city street? That in reality is no different to how the current system operates. ***I will always ensure our voice is heard!***

2. Will our economy be supported? How will these models protect our seasonal hospitality and farming sectors?

3. Are the savings real? Will the £28m in savings be reinvested into rural infrastructure and transport?

How to Participate

The consultation closes at 11:59 pm on Thursday, 26 March 2026.

- Online: Submit your views via the [MHCLG Consultation Portal](#).
- Review the Cases: Detailed business cases are available at Combe Martin Library (after 13th Feb) or online at [www.devonlgr.co.uk](http://www.devonlgr.co.uk).

### **Please continue to report defects on the highway.**

With the winter now very much upon us, it is more likely there will be defects in the highway network, this includes streetlights and signs.

[Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

The DCC website is very useful for reporting problems and the reports go straight to the contractor. 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

Please do get in touch if you think I can help with anything;  
[Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk)

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