

Draft
Minutes of the meeting of Shirwell Parish Council
held on the 12th March 2026
In the Village hall Shirwell

Present

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

Also in attendance

County Councillor Mrs A Davis.

Mar 26/1 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Mrs C Parkhouse

Mar 26/2 Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present

Mar 26/3 Minutes the meeting of the 12 February 2026

RESOLVED that the minutes as previously circulated be approved

Mar 26/4 Matters arising from the minutes

There were none that were not on the agenda

Mar 26/5 Inspection of Defibrillator

The defibrillator had been inspected prior to the meeting.

Mar 26/6 Report of the County Councillor

Councillor Mrs Davis spoke briefly and highlighted the following –

- Devon County Rates would increase by 4.9%
- 79% of the DCC budget is spent on adult and children services which are statutory services

A copy of her report is attached to these minutes

Mar 26/7 Questions to the County Councillor

Councillors commented on the dirty signs in Barnstaple as well as those on the link road. Although dirty signs were not a Parish Council issue it was stressed that Devon is heavily reliant on tourism income and poor presentation affects the user experience

RESOLVED Cllr Abretti to raise with Police liaison group the danger to drivers that dirty signs on the link road present.

Mar 26/8 Report of the District Councillor

A copy of the District Councillors report is attached to these minutes

Mar 26/9 Questions to the District Councillor

There were none

Mar 26/10 Correspondence

- District Councillors report
- NDC weekly information sheet
- Working together (cluster working)
- Climate and emergency grant for 2026
- Community and emergency hubs

Mar 26/11 Planning Applications

There were none

Mar 26/12 Cheques for Payment

A cheque to G Dwyer for clerks salary (£200.00) and part purchase of a document shredder (£17.50) was signed at the meeting.

Mar 26/13 Community Governance Review/Local Government Reorganisation

Members discussed the information circulated on Local Government Reorganisation with Cllrs Friend and Abretti making a brief summary of the details of the report. Councillors stressed that the response should be from the perspective of the parish Council and its relative isolation. It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk respond to the Governments circular showing the Councils preference for options 2 and 3 (the differences between the options were not considered to be relevant to the Parish Council)

Mar 26/14 Reports from Councillors

RESOLVED the instigate the website be adapted to include links to report Potholes and other minor reportable issues.

Councillors discussed the implications of cluster working and it was

RESOLVED that no action should be taken to support this as the Parish

Forum which gave equal access to all Parish councils already provided an access point

Mar 26/15 Clerks Report

The Clerk was authorised to start the process of rejoining DALC.

Mar 26/16 Public Questions regarding business on this agenda

There were none

Mar 26/17 Urgent Business

There was none

The meeting closed at 8.25

Chairman:

Dated:.....

Shirwell Parish Council County Councillors report March 2026

On Tuesday 24th February the budget meeting of Devon County Council approved spending plans for 2026/27 and agreed a 4.99 per cent increase on the County Councils council tax share.

This amounts to £89.91 a year (£1.73 a week) for a Band D property for the county council's share (precept).

This would result in a council tax requirement for the authority of just over £610 million for 26/27.

To balance the position, the authority has to deliver £38.98 million of savings, alternative funding or additional income.

The budget explains how the council will continue to support local services at a time when costs are rising and demand for help is increasing.

The council will spend £839.2 million on day-to-day services next year. This is £33.2 million more (4.1 per cent) than in 2025/26.

Councillors also agreed a £770.6 million capital investment programme covering the five years from 2026/27 to 2030/31.

This money will be used for major projects such as road repairs, new school places, support for children with special educational needs, and improvements to council buildings across Devon.

The two biggest spend areas which account for 79% of DCC's expenditure;

1. Children and families

The Children and families budget will see the largest increase in funding across the council.

Spending will rise to £268 million in 2026/27, an increase of £19.1 million. This reflects growing pressure on children's social care, early help for families, and support for children who cannot live at home.

Children and families – capital investment

A total of £76.5 million will be invested over five years in children's homes, school expansions and specialist education provision.

Over the next five years, £25.8 million will be spent on new and expanded specialist schools to create more places for children who need extra support.

2. Adult social care

Adult social care continues to be the council's biggest area of spending.

The budget for adult social care will rise to £395.9 million in 2026/27, an increase of £9.9 million, or 2.6 per cent. This helps cover rising costs, including higher wages for care staff.

Roads and transport

Spending on highways maintenance will rise to £32.4 million in 2026/27, an increase of £2 million.

Full Council also agreed an additional £4 million investment for highways maintenance over the next financial year.

Public health, communities and libraries

The council will receive £37.7 million to support public health services, including help with drug and alcohol misuse and stop-smoking services.

Spending on community services and libraries will total £14.4 million in 2026/27.

Full council also agreed additional funding of £225,000 to restore the book fund to £500,000 and an extra £425,000 to support general library delivery during transition.

Together, these total £650,000, and reverses the proposed efficiency saving within the original libraries budget resulting in a libraries budget of more than £7 million.

In addition, a £1 million reserve for Libraries and Rural Hubs will be established to support genuine transformation and community led improvement.

Additional funding

The council also approved targeted funding which reflects priorities that have arisen through meetings of the council's scrutiny committees, community feedback and consultations with businesses and voluntary organisations.

These include an additional £600,000 to improve the speed in which Education Health Care Plans are delivered; £300,000 additional foster care support; £106,000 to strengthen domestic abuse provision; increase of each councillor's locality budget to £10,000.

There is also an additional £500,000 for post-16 and foster care transport.

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.

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.

Why Your Feedback is Vital- my take on this!

Living in a remote, rural area, we face unique challenges. 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.

Government is interested in whether each model:

- ? Is based on sensible geographies and economic areas**
- ? Will deliver the outcomes described in the proposals**
- ? Is the right size to be efficient, improve capacity, and withstand financial shocks**
- ? Will enable stronger community engagement and support devolution**
- ? Will deliver high-quality, sustainable public services that meet local needs**

There is a free text box under each option where you can talk about anything that matters to you. They have told us that AI will be used to analyse the results, so hopefully any strong themes will be visible to Government when they look at the output of the consultation.

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 1

Please do get in touch if you think I can help with anything;

Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk

Andrea

County Councillor

Combe Martin Rural Division

Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk

District Councillors report Cllr Julie Hunt

Apply for emergency funding if your community has been affected by recent storm events.

Devon Community Resilience Forum are waiving the requirement to have an Emergency Plan in place in order to apply for up to £1500 funding if you have been affected by recent storms Chandra and Goretti.

This funding is intended as a “fast track” grant to provide:

- Rapid purchase of simple flood equipment (PPE, signs, sand bags etc.);
- For those communities that have recently experienced flooding, works to assist community recovery and getting things back to normal will be included.

You can apply for one of two grants available if your community has been affected by recent events, or if you want to prepare and plan in case of emergencies:

Up to £250 if you want to start engaging your community for emergency planning

Up to £1500 to purchase items like wellies, torches, blankets, radios, PPE etc that can be used in an emergency.

More information can be found here <https://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum>

North Devon Council backs Great British Spring Clean once again



North Devon Council is pleased to be supporting [Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean \(GBSC\)](#) for another year, joining councils, community groups, businesses and residents across the UK in the country's largest coordinated environmental action.

Celebrating its eleventh anniversary in 2026, the Great British Spring Clean will take place from 13 March to 29 March, encouraging people to come together to remove litter from streets, parks and beaches and help care for their local environment.

The council is inviting residents to get involved by taking part in an organised clean-up event or by carrying out their own litter-picking activities. To help support volunteers, the council's waste and recycling team will be able to

provide litter-picking equipment, subject to availability, and arrange for collected litter to be removed where requests are made in advance. Councillor Ricky Knight, Lead Member for Climate and Biodiversity at North Devon Council, said: “The Great British Spring Clean is a brilliant opportunity for people to take pride in their local area while making a positive impact on the environment. Whether you’re joining a group or heading out on your own, every effort helps create a cleaner, greener North Devon.”

Councillor Julie Hunt, Lead Member for Waste and Recycling, added: “Even small actions can make a big difference. By supporting residents with equipment and litter collection, we hope to make it as easy as possible for people to get involved. Working together, we can protect our environment and contribute to a national movement that benefits everyone.”

The campaign also supports the council’s Clear Messages initiative, which tackles environmental offences including littering, fly-tipping and dog fouling. Alongside this, the council will soon be running a targeted campaign to address dog fouling, highlighting the importance of reporting incidents. Dog fouling is unhygienic, and reports from the public help officers identify hotspots, target enforcement and take action against offenders. Residents are encouraged to help by being the eyes and ears of their communities and [reporting environmental issues](#) when they see them.

North Devon Council is working in partnership with [Clean Devon](#), a multi-agency initiative focused on reducing litter and fly-tipping across the county. As part of the Great British Spring Clean, Clean Devon will be amplifying Keep Britain Tidy’s social media messages and sharing additional local content through [Recycle Devon](#), which will also be shared via the council’s own channels.

Residents or community groups who would like to borrow litter-picking equipment or arrange collection of bagged litter can contact the council by emailing pete.sheppard@northdevon.gov.uk or calling 01271 374776.

Fly-tipping and other environmental offences can be reported via the [council’s website](#) or by calling 01271 388870. Further guidance on organising a clean-up can be found on [Keep Britain Tidy’s website](#).

Local Government Reorganisation

The government’s public consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Devon has now commenced

The Consultation can be found on the government website: [Local government reorganisation in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay - GOV.UK](#)

In response to the invitation from government last year to submit ideas for LGR, a number of proposals were submitted from authorities in Devon.

In total 4 proposals were submitted by Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council/ Exeter City Council, Torbay Council and a collaboration of 7 District Councils.

The proposal that has been submitted by the seven District Councils, which was commonly referred to as the 4-5-1 plan, includes a main case that would see the creation of two new authorities named Exeter and North Devon and Torbay and South Devon alongside Plymouth remaining on existing

boundaries. It also contained a modified option, supported by most of the seven authorities, to modestly expand the boundaries of Plymouth into 4 parishes currently in the South Hams area. This has commonly been referred to as the 4-5-1+ plan.

The overarching proposal is branded as “Reimagining Devon” and was drafted as a single proposal. However, you will note that the “Reimagining Devon” branding does not appear on the government website referred to above and that in fact government has split the proposal into two separate proposals. This could cause some confusion - hence this additional explanation:

On the government website, the “main case” Reimagining Devon proposal is the one described as:-

“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”

The modified version of Reimagining Devon with the option to expand the boundaries of Plymouth is the one described as:-

“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, Briston, Shaugh Prior and Sparkwell from the neighbouring district of South Hams
- ***Torbay and Southern Devon Unitary:*** South Hams, Teignbridge, Torbay and West Devon”

The government website contains a link through to all of the proposals and this will take you to a joint webpage, the link is [Devon LGR](#).

You will see that this site has the main proposal and modified proposal listed separately. All of the seven District Councils support the main case; it is just that the way in which the government has decided to consult does not make this clear.

You can access all of the full proposal documents from [Devon LGR](#) but the full Reimagining Devon document is available online at [Home | Reimagining Devon](#)

Once you have had chance to look at the various proposals, the consultation asks you to respond to a series of questions on each proposal and again describes the Reimagining Devon proposal using the wording as above.

In drawing up proposals, all councils were given guidelines to comply with by government,. One of these was that each of the new authorities should serve a minimum of 500,000 population, although government did say that it would consider proposals that contained less than this if there was justification. Like you, the councillors at North Devon Council were very concerned that with that push for bigger authorities, LGR might result in local decision making being lost. It was for that reason that the Reimagining Proposal was drafted with the belief that this provides a balance between scale and local democracy.

Reimagining Devon proposal: [Home | Reimagining Devon](#)
Please complete the survey: [Local government reorganisation in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay - GOV.UK](#)

The consultation will run from 5 Feb 2026 to 26 March 2026

The results will be collated by the **Local Government Oversight and Improvement Directorate of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**