

CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on 11th June 2025 at 7pm in Culmstock Village Hall

Present: Cllrs. Mrs L Jones (Chairman), Mrs J Zebedee, C Kay, Sarah Leppard, J Bartlett, MDDC & DCC Cllr. Simon Clist, MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw and the Clerk. Two members of the public were present - the P3 Footpath Co-ordinator and the Volunteer Footpath Warden.

81. Democratic Period: None.

82. Apologies: Cllrs. Mrs R Balchin, T Platel and Dr C Bass.

83. Declarations of Interest: Cllr. Sarah Leppard ref personal payment of £96 agenda item 9.2.

84. The Minutes of the annual parish meeting and the annual Parish Council meeting held on 14/05/2025 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.

85. Matters Arising: None.

86 Planning and Planning Correspondence/Information.

86.1 Applications considered:

-25/00718/FULL Erection of 6 dwellings and associated works. Land at NGR 310020 113953 Linhay Close, Culmstock. No objections but a few concerns were raised:

Parking - reassurance that the proposal will not alter parking accessibility for existing Linhay Close residents.

Pedestrian access & safety - a pedestrian route to the centre of the village to take pedestrians away from the B3391. Foul drainage management - the current system is inadequate and must be addressed. It has been demonstrated several times in the last 12-15 years, and with increasing regularity that the combined sewer (CS) system of Culmstock is inadequate for the current housing stock, let alone any further development.

Monitored overflow incidences have increased as well, which has contributed to a marked decline in the River Culm water quality. A complete review of the CS system is required.

-More detail is required regarding arrangements for water run-off.

-An upgraded report from Highways and South West Water and a meeting with both authorities will be requested.

-There are no affordable homes in the proposal and reference will be made to Policy CL1 Linhay Close which states: *A site of 0.23 hectares at Linhay Close, Culmstock is allocated for residential development subject to the following: a) 6 dwellings with 30% affordable housing which may be in the form of a financial contribution to provide the affordable dwellings in another location; and b) Design and layout to respect the character of the Conservation Area.*

-25/00636/FULL Change of use of agricultural land to domestic garden and erection of garage and workshop building for ancillary use. Land at NGR 309504 114341 Prescott Barn Uffculme. *Cllr. Bartlett arrived.*

No objection to the proposal but comments will be submitted regarding the size and height of the proposed building due the proximity of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape. Screening may be an option and a site visit will be arranged.

-To note an updated description in respect of the following 2 applications: 25/00449/LBC & 25/00447/HOUSE - Listed Building Consent and permission for proposed re-render and replacement roof lights to house and installation of photovoltaic panels to outbuilding. Thornbank Farm, Fore Street, Culmstock. EX15 3JD. Grid Ref: 310151:113489. No objections.

86.2 Notification of appeals submitted in respect of South Fork, Culmstock, EX15 3HW: It was agreed that the previous comments as submitted by the Parish Council are still applicable and this point will be reiterated.

-Notification of an appeal submitted regarding the service of an Enforcement Notice. Application Reference 23/00248/OPDEV. Appeal Reference: APP/Y1138/C/25/3365184, 3365185, South Fork, Land at NGR 310236 115114, Culmstock, Devon.

-Notification of Appeal to the Secretary of State re: application 24/00848/FULL - Change of use of agricultural land to allow the siting of 1 mobile home and associated works for the use of gypsy & traveller family (Revised Scheme)|South Fork, Culmstock, EX15 3HW. Appeal Reference PP/Y1138/W/25/3365163.

86.3 Results from Mid Devon District Council:

-24/01631/LB Listed Building Consent for the rethatching of roof with water reed. Barton Lands, Culmstock, EX15 3JX. Permission granted.

25/00501/PNCOU Prior Notification for the change of use from Commercial, Business and Service (Use Class E) to a dwelling under Class MA. Pegga Holdings Limited, The Workshop, Culmstock. EX15 3HU. Permitted.

Planning continued:

- 86.4** Report from Parish Councillors that may have attended the MDDC Planning Committee meeting of 11/06 re: - 25/00346/PIP - Permission in Principle for a phased development of between 3 and 9 Custom and Self Build dwellings. Land at NGR 310051 113426 North of Uffculme Road, Culmstock. Cllr. Miss Jones reported that the application had been refused. *The proposed location and land use is considered unacceptable by reason of the narrow highway and lack of refuge for pedestrians due to the associated stone walls and hedge, resulting in unacceptable highway safety contrary to DM1 of the MDDC Local Plan (2013-2033) and Paragraphs 115, 116 and 117 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).*
The raised topography and open and elevated nature of the site at the edge of the village in combination with the distant views of the site and its relationship with the Culmstock Conservation Area and Blackdown Hills National Landscape means the site is clearly seen as a coherent part of the wider countryside setting and therefore makes the location undesirable for residential development contrary to Policies S1, DM1, DM25 and DM27 of the Mid Devon Local Plan and Paragraphs 135, 189, 190 and 210 of the NPPF.
- 86.5** Any other Planning Matters. (i) CPRE Planning Workshop - 20/05: Cllr. Kay and the Clerk reported on the recent CPRE Planning workshop and slides have been made available which were circulated to all. Neighbourhood Priority Statements were discussed at the meeting as an option to Neighbourhood Plans. (ii) Notification of the date of 28/07/25 for MDDC Planning Training & Updates. The session is available online or in person by attending at Phoenix House; any councillors wishing to attend should inform the Clerk. (iii) Devon Communities Together - Rural Housing Enabling and Housing Needs Surveys: Details of government funding for support via DCT to help bring forward new affordable homes for local people. DCT is offering to arrange a housing needs survey (HNS), a consultation event, visits to other view other schemes and to help to find potential sites and/or bring forward allocated sites. Details noted - it is recommended that surveys are carried out about every five years. The last HNS was carried out in 2022
(iv) A representative from Polden Planning will be invited to attend a future meeting to give details of Neighbourhood Planning. The Clerk and Chairmen of both Hemyock and Clayhidon Parish Councils will be invited to attend the presentation.
- 87. Reports.**
- 87.1** The Chairman/Vice-Chairman: None.
- 87.2** The Clerk. (i) Cllr. Kay and the Clerk reported on the DCT Emergency Planning Workshop. No further action at this point but the current plan could be reviewed when time permits.
- 87.3** P3/Footpaths and/or Access: A report had been circulated to all. FP1-drainage and strimming to Scotts Shute. FP1A-strimmed to beacon. FP6-strimming and drainage in lane. FP13- stile repaired. FP23-strimmed around the kissing gate. FP37-strimmed at The Cleeve end. FP25-strimmed between the double stiles. FP's 3&3A-strimmed the two paths up to Hackpen and Owleycombe Common.
The Clerk will enquire with the contractor when works are due to be carried out at Buddles Bridge.
- 87.4** Highways: None.
- 87.5** Blackdown Hills Parishes Network AGM 03/07/25 - details circulated to all of the upcoming AGM due to be held at Yarcombe. The Clerk and Cllr. Kay will endeavour to attend along with Cllr. Dr Bass.
- 87.6** Hillmoor Common: The orchard is in need of being cut; the Clerk will liaise with the contractor regarding an additional cut in July. Larger stakes are required to indicate the location of the seven fruit trees and to avoid them being damaged or cut down - Cllr. Sarah Leppard and the P3 team to arrange. The P3 team reported on 5 trees that may be in need of attention as in fallen or falling. The Clerk will discuss one fallen tree in the orchard with the maintenance contractor. It was agreed for the P3 team to arrange for clearance of necessary/hazardous remaining trees which may pose risks and/or difficulties for people visiting the site.
- 87.7** Culmstock Cemetery: The Clerk will remind the grounds maintenance contractor to make contact regarding hedge cutting.
- 87.8** Parish Bins - communication has been received from a parishioner regarding the possible relocation of the bin at the Cleeve due to ongoing problems with dog waste bags being disposed of inappropriately and the nearby wall being in need of repair. MDDC will be asked to attend a site visit to discuss.
- 87.9** Any other reports including reports from DCC & MDDC Councillors: DCC/MDDC Cllr. S Clist gave a report before leaving the meeting. MDDC - more reports are now online. There is a new tranche of green energy grants. People are encouraged to sign up to the e-business pages. Details of the opening of more modular homes was given. DCC - Inductions have been taking place and details were given of the administration and recent cabinet meeting. Cllr. Clist has accepted a cabinet position. *The volunteer footpath warden left the meeting.*

88. Culmstock Play Area and Pavilion.

- 88.1** Update on construction of Petanque pistes: Cllr. Mrs Zebedee reported that works were underway and due to be complete shortly. An open evening will be planned.
- 88.2** Thunderbox all access toilet - update on order for toilet and quotation for levelling site: Cllr. Mrs Zebedee and the Clerk reported that the toilet should be delivered 6-8 weeks from order and that preparation of the site must be complete. R&R Services are currently on site and have been invited to quote which was agreed under Finance.
- 88.3** Any other matters: The Clerk has made enquiries regarding the possible renovation of the wooden picnic tables. R&R as the contractor currently on site have levelled out the area which has been dug without permission for bike riding - "digging" in this manner is not permitted and a notice to this effect has been publicised in the recent issue of the Culmstock News magazine. The annual Fire Risk Assessment has been undertaken and a report will follow.

89. Finance.

- 89.1** A report was given and the balance were noted as at 30/05/25 as £66,498.40.
Credits received: Stewardship Grant re: beacon 02/05 - £2000, cemetery fees - 13/05 £200 & 16/05 £350.
Direct Debits taken: Nest 02/05 107.14 & 31/05 £111.71, Lloyds Bank service charge 19/05 - £5.73.
- 89.2** Payments were resolved:
1. £ 867.41 Clerk - salary & expenses.
 2. £ 186.07 Parish warden - salary & expenses.
 3. £ 24.14 SMA Services. Payroll provider.
 4. £ 932.42 Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd. Grounds Maintenance Contract.
 5. £ 18.00 Culmstock Village Hall. Room hire.
 6. £ 184.80 Eagle Plant. Portable toilet hire.
 7. £ 168.00 Microshade Business Consultants. DPO services - annual renewal fee.
 8. £ 161.26 Vision ICT Ltd. Annual fee for website hosting and support.
 9. £ 96.00 Sarah Leppard. Trees for Hillmoor Common. *See declarations.*
- 89.3** Agreed - quotation from R&R Services (Devon) Ltd for £1108 for preparation of the site for the compost toilet.
- 89.4** Invoice from Uffculme Allotment Association - rent subsidy for Culmstock residents holding plots in Uffculme Allotment Association: Six parishioners currently have plots and it was agreed to make payment for 50% of the cost based on one plot per parishioner.
- 89.5 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) & Audit 2024/25.**
Details had been circulated to all in advance.
- 89.5.1** Internal audit – the internal audit report was noted. *No matters of concern.*
- 89.5.2** Section 1 – The Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 was signed
- 89.5.3** Section 2 - The Accounting Statements for 2024/25. (i) The Accounting Statements were considered. (ii) The Accounting Statements were approved. (iii) The Accounting Statements were signed by the Chairman of the meeting.
- 89.6** Any other financial matters: It was agreed for payment of £120 to be made to S Aldworth in respect of the internal examination (89.5.1) as an expected payment.

- 90. Defibrillator:** Formal gifting of defibrillator and cabinet following ending of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with South Western Ambulance Service - letter for signature and return: Details circulated to all in advance - agreed for the Clerk to sign and return.

- 91. Correspondence & Any Consultations:** Correspondence - various generic emails (circulated to all).
Mowing of potential wild life havens - communication received from a parishioner regarding the schedule for the strimming of green areas and these areas being a habitat for wildlife; MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw has made contact with the district council and the Clerk will request an update.

- 92. Review of staff salaries:** The council went into part 2 to discuss salaries.

- 93. Items for information, future agenda items, and future meeting dates.** Next meeting: 09/07/25.
MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw will be asked for ideas regarding assistance with the eradication of the Himalayan Balsam in The Culm Valley following a report from Cllr. Kay.