

CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on 14th January 2026 at 7pm in Culmstock Village Hall

Present: Cllrs. Miss Lizzie Jones (Chairman), Mrs Jude Zebedee, Sarah Leppard, Dr Catherine Bass, Charlie Kay, Mrs Rosemary Balchin, Tim Platel and the Clerk. One member of the public was present for the democratic period.

1. **Democratic Period:** A landowner was present regarding his intention to make an application to DCC to make a permissive path into a public right of way and therefore bypassing part of his land.
2. **Apologies:** MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw.
3. **Declarations of Interest:** None.
4. The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11/12/2025 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.
5. **Matters Arising:** None.

6. **Planning and Planning Correspondence/Information.**
 - 6.1 Applications considered: None received.
 - 6.3 Results from Mid Devon District Council: None received.
 - 6.4 Any other Planning Matters: None.

7. **Reports.**
 - 7.1 The Chairman/Vice-Chairman: None
 - 7.2 The Clerk: It was agreed for the Clerk to attend upcoming training for Clerks as provided by MDDC.
 - 7.3 P3/Footpaths. Access and common land (i) Beacon run - notification had been received from the organiser of an upcoming fun run which will cross the common land on Culmstock Beacon, using marked paths. The organiser had been informed to approach the Blackdown Hills National Landscape team for permission and advice and also to make contact with any other landowners that could be affected. The organiser had confirmed that appropriate insurance was in place.
(ii) A report had been received from the P3 Footpath Co-ordinator: FP4-cleaned the stile tread plates and staples inserted to aid grip, the top rail on one has been lowered. FP36-refitted rail and cleaned around kissing gate. Cattle damage. FP21-cleaned debris from culvert in lane and drains on the Craddock Road. FP3 & 25-vegetation cut back around gates and stiles. FP10-vegetation cut around gates, the entrance at Old Beat end is wet although hard core has been put in the gateway; the source of the water needs investigating. FP1-cleared drain under gateway near cottage. FP11-cleaned drain channel in lane and changed gate hasp on gate into field. The new surface and drainage is working well.
 - 7.4 Highways. (i) To discuss the possibility of instructing the lengthsman on a regular basis - it was considered that this will be beneficial and the Clerk will liaise with the DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer and the local lengthsman and report back. It is hoped this will enable the lengthsman to repair potholes on minor roads.
(ii) The Environment Agency will be contacted following recent frost damage to roadside of The Strand wall.
 - 7.5 Blackdown Hills Parish Network: A meeting with the MP's will take place shortly.
 - 7.6 Culmstock Cemetery: A date for inspection of the headstones is awaited.
 - 7.7 Culmstock Primary School, 150 year celebration - 2026: Cllr. Sarah Leppard reported that celebrations will take place on site; a date is yet to be confirmed.
 - 7.8 Any other reports including reports from DCC & MDDC Councillors: None.

8. **Culmstock Play Area and Pavilion.** The Clerk will make enquires with MDDC regarding the parked vehicle on site which was previously reported to MDDC. It is hoped that works to the Thunderbox cupboard and repairs to the tables etc., will take place shortly.

9. **Finance.**
 - 9.1 A report was given and the Finance schedule was signed. The bank balance as at 31/12/25 was noted as £52,702.16. Credits received: In respect of cemetery fees - £57 on 19/12. Direct Debits taken: Nest 19/12 - £119.95, & £111.14 (£6.11 credit 12/12 and £117.25 debit on 04/12), Lloyds Bank service charge 16/12 - £4.25.

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Finance continued:

9.2 Payments were resolved:

1. £ 24.14 SMA Services. Payroll provider.
2. £ 214.00 Parish warden - salary & expenses.
3. £ 970.37 Clerk - salary & expenses.
4. £ 932.42 Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd. Grounds Maintenance Contract.
5. £ 156.00 MDDC. Bin emptying. Bridge, July-December.
6. £ 3396.00 R&R Services (Devon) Ltd. Cemetery hedge works.
7. £ 126.50 Society of Local Council Clerks. Membership renewal for the Clerk.
8. £ 994.81 HMRC. Quarterly PAYE.
9. £ 225.00 Culmstock Village Hall. Hall hire and cleaning of compost toilet.
10. £ 72.00 Uffculme Allotment Association. Allotment rental contribution.

9.3 Scribe accounts: A quotation for £224 as a set-up fee and ongoing fees of £37 per month were agreed following a session as attended by the Clerk early in 2025. The Clerk will attend a refresher session shortly and hopes to proceed with the system in time for the start of the new financial year.

9.4 To consider grants and subscriptions to the various groups and organisations for inclusion within the precept figure - It was agreed to continue as in previous years regarding subscriptions and grants for the various groups and organisations, with either a similar of the same amount. As within the previous financial year it was agreed for a grant of £1500 for The Culmstock News and grant of £500 for The Blackdown Support Group.

9.5 Precept 2026/2027: To agree a figure for the Parish precept. Following an informal meeting with the Clerk, the Chairman and Cllr. Dr Bass and circulation of suggested figures to cover financial needs for the coming year, a report was given. After a full discussion it was resolved to set the precept at £67,000 which equates to £5500 extra for the Parish which is a 15% increase on last year's figure. The increase on the Band D equivalent is £21.86pa.

The precept figure includes annual grants for Culmstock Village Hall and Culmstock Beacon of Lights (Christmas lights) and as 9.4, donations and subscriptions as in previous years. It was agreed to start reserving a fund towards a possible Neighbourhood Plan and to include funds for minor highway maintenance.

Councillors were unanimous in their decision to set the precept at £67,000. As in previous years, MDDC will deduct the subscription for DALC.

9.6 Any other financial matters: None.

10. Correspondence & Any Consultations:

Consultations:

MDDC Caravan site and mobile homes policy consultation - noted, survey closes on 08/04/26.

11. Review of salaries and expenses: The Parish Council went into Part 2 for a review of salaries and expenses.

12. Items for information, future agenda items, and future meeting dates. Next meeting - 11/02/2026.