

## CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at 7pm in Culmstock Village Hall

**Present:** Cllrs. Mrs Jude Zebedee (Acting Chairman), Sarah Leppard, Dr Catherine Bass, Tim Platel, the Clerk and MDDC/DCC Cllr. Simon Clist. Two members of the Neighbourhood Policing Team had been invited to attend for the democratic period.

*Due to apologies received from the Chairman Cllr. Miss Lizzie Jones, the Vice-Chairman took the meeting.*

- 13. Democratic Period:** A local Police Constable and a Community Support Officer were present to give details about local crime rates. Culmstock appears to have very low reports of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). The Police ask that all incidents - regardless of how minor or isolated they may be - are reported ASAP after the incident via the online reporting facility:  
<https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/ro/report/>  
This will enable the Police to collate all incidents and create a record for reference. Incidents to report include any damage/ASB that occurs at Culmstock Play Area and Pavilion - it was noted that this appears to be an ongoing problem and the Clerk has raised concern with the Police Constable on a few occasions. Other incidents that have taken place recently include damage outside of Culmstock Village Hall and damage to some kissing gates on a footpath. The issue of what appears to be an abandoned vehicle outside of the play area was raised; enquiries have been made with the DVLA to see if action can be taken using DVLA powers - it is understood that DVLA may be unable to assist as the vehicle is technically on private land and not on the public highway so it may be considered a civil issue.
- 14. Apologies:** Cllrs. Miss Lizzie Jones, Mrs Rosemary Balchin, Charlie Kay and MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw.
- 15. Declarations of Interest:** Cllr. Mrs Zebedee (DPI as personal payment) payment number 8.
- 16.** The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14/01/2026 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman of the meeting.
- 17. Matters Arising:** None.
- 18. Planning and Planning Correspondence/Information.**
- 18.1** Applications considered: None received.
- 18.2** Results from Mid Devon District Council:  
[-24/00848/FULL Appeal Ref No. APP/Y1138/W/25/3365163](#) - Change of use of agricultural land to allow the siting of 1 mobile home and associated works for the use of gypsy and traveller family (Revised Scheme). South Fork, Culmstock, EX15 3HW. APPEAL ALLOWED
- 18.3** Any other Planning Matters: (i) A reminder of an invitation to planning training online or in person at MDDC on 26/03/26; any councillors interested should inform the Clerk. Enquiries will be made to see if a slide presentation will be available following the event. (ii) For future reference, the Clerk reported on a separate offer of training offered via a Planning Consultant.
- 19. Reports.**
- 19.1** The Chairman/Vice-Chairman: None.
- 19.2** The Clerk: Due to technical issues the Clerk could not join the recent online session offered by MDDC "Training for Clerks" - slides have been circulated to Clerks following the session.
- 19.3** P3/Footpaths, access and common land: A report had been received from the P3 Footpath Co-ordinator. BW34-a falling tree has been removed from the track above Blackdown Gate, FP11-the gate hasp to a farm gate has been changed a return spring fitted to the small gate at Old Hall. FP6-culvert cleaned in the enclosed path below Scotts Chute. FP1-cleaned drainage channels in lane, Pitt Lane to Scotts Chute. FP 12-repaired fence around storm overflow, in beach area (flood damage). Repaired fence beside 2 kissing gates beside rail track, (damage caused deliberately by youths on an electric bike to gain access). Kissing gates to remain in place for the foreseeable future to discourage bikes using the footpath illegally and the field being treated as an extension to the beach. FP12A-drainage in lane. FP21-cleaning road drains at bottom of lane and the Craddock Road. The replacement of a section of the boardwalk has been delayed by fence repairs and continuing drain and ditch clearance.
- 19.4** Highways. (i) A meeting will be arranged in March/April with the DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer and the lengthsman to look at the possibility of future works; Cllr. Dr Bass and the Clerk will attend and any other councillors that are available.

- 19.5** Blackdown Hills Parish Network: Cllr. Dr Bass reported that subscriptions are now due and details have been sent out to all Parishes (payment to be approved at this meeting) - as a reminder, last year the BHPN Steering Group reviewed its membership policy, to include all Parish Councils and Parish Meetings with a full or partial footprint in the National Landscape as BHPN members. However, it is requested that Parish Councils consider giving a minimum annual contribution of £25 to the functioning of the website and online communications and to help support the cost of hire of local venues for physical meetings.
- 19.6** Culmstock Cemetery. (i) Cemetery wall - quotations will be sourced for replacement of some of the coping following damage.
- 19.7** Culmstock Primary School, 150 year celebration - 2026: Cllr. Sarah Leppard reported on school and village celebrations which will take place in early July and include a village day which will be organised with the help of Culmstock Beacon of Lights.
- 19.8** Any other reports including reports from DCC & MDDC Councillors: DCC - DCC Cllr. Clist reported that a balanced budget has been produced. Consultations currently running include proposed changes to the library service and Local Government Reorganisation. The Highways Department has received a vast amount of reports of potholes as a result of ongoing wet weather since the start of the New Year.
- 20. Culmstock Play Area and Pavilion.**
- 20.1** Anti-social behaviour (ASB): Information on how to report ASB and crime will be included in the next issue of The Culmstock News. Cllr. Platel will draft a letter for distribution within the immediate vicinity regarding help with locating the owner of a vehicle left long term outside of the site on Parish Council owned land; the local Police Constable will be asked to approve the letter prior to distribution.
- 20.2** Any other matters: A secure cupboard has been constructed inside the Thunderbox to store basic supplies.
- 21.** Audit 2025-26: The Clerk will appoint S Aldworth as having been previously instructed by the Parish Council to carry out an internal examination prior to the external audit. The Clerk is to attend a session regarding Assertion 10 of the annual return form - the session will provide the requirements in respect of digital and data compliance ahead of the audit; the Clerk will report back at the next meeting.
- 22. Finance.**
- 22.1** A report was given and the Finance schedule was signed. The bank balance was noted as at 31/01/26 as £43,755.68. Direct Debits taken: Lloyds Bank service charge 19/01 - £4.40.
- 22.2** Payments were resolved:
1. £ 24.14 SMA Services. Payroll provider.
  2. £ 194.05 Parish warden - salary & expenses.
  3. £ 1005.04 Clerk - salary & expenses.
  4. £ 932.42 Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd. Grounds Maintenance Contract.
  5. £ 168.66 Computerlink (Leicester) Ltd. Printer cartridges.
  6. £ 35.00 D Richmond Computer Services. IT support.
  7. £ 150.00 Blackdown Hills Parish Network. Annual subscription renewal.
  8. £ 14.00 Mrs J Zebedee. Payment to Land Registry ref village green. *See declarations.*
- 22.3** Any other financial matters: Precept - due to an increase of more than £20 in the Band D charge an explanation had been requested by MDDC for completion on the government return. A response was given to explain that the figure represents an overall increase of £5500 and reflects planned projects and works the Parish Council intends to undertake in the forthcoming year.
- 23. Correspondence & Any Consultations.** Generic emails as circulated and/or reported.
- Consultations:
- Local Government Review consultation - carried forward to the next meeting, Cllr. Dr. Bass will review the details and make suggestions at the next meeting, with a view to submitting a response by the deadline of 26/03/26.
- Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan engagement survey - noted.

- 24. Proposed Community Orchard - update:** Cllr. Mrs Zebedee reported on completion of an application to HM Land Registry regarding a search in respect of the status of the village green - long term it is hoped that the Parish Council can take over responsibility of the area which will enable the Parish Council to proceed with a community orchard including placing a bench on site.
- 24.1** Cheque number 002042 for £8 was raised to The Land Registry for an official search of the index map.
- 25. Annual Parish Meeting:** A date of 20<sup>th</sup> May was agreed with the same format as in 2024- local groups and organisations will be invited to attend and provide information for attendees. It is expected that the Parish Council will provide information on the process for Neighbourhood Planning at the meeting. Light refreshments will be offered as in 2024.
- 26. Items for information, future agenda items, and future meeting dates:** Next meeting - 11/03/26. LGR consultation response.