

CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on 10th June 2026 at 7pm in Culmstock Village Hall

Present: Cllrs. Mrs Lizzie Jones (Chairman), Dr Catherine Bass, Mrs Jude Zebedee, Mrs Rosemary Balchin, Sarah Leppard, Tim Platel, MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw, MDDC/DCC Cllr. Simon Clist and the Clerk.
The P3 Footpath Co-ordinator and Volunteer Footpath Warden.

13 members of the public were present for the democratic period with reference to planning application 26/00656/OUT - various members of the public left at various times throughout the meeting.

- 70. Democratic Period:** A few members spoke to raise concerns in respect of planning application 26/00656/OUT; concerns in the main include access, traffic and flooding.
The Chairman reported that the site had been deemed acceptable for some form of development as a result of approval of application reference 25/01491/PIP and that if the current application for outline permission is approved, a further application will follow which will include the technical details.
The Chairman encouraged anyone with concerns to submit them direct to the district council as the planning authority, which is where the final decision lies.
- 71. Apologies:** Cllr. Charlie Kay.
- 72. Declarations of Interest:** Cllr. Mrs Zebedee (DPI as personal payment) payment 6.
- 73.** The Minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 13/05/2026 and the Annual Parish Meeting held on 20/05/26 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.
- 74. Matters Arising:** None.
- 75. Planning and Planning Correspondence/Information.**
- 75.1** Applications considered:
-26/00691/HOUSE Removal of existing pitched roof dormer and replace with larger flat roof dormer to north east elevation to facilitate extra rooms. 6 Great Close, Culmstock. EX15 3HQ. No objections.
-26/00656/OUT Outline application with all matters reserved, other than the point of access for the erection of up to 3 self-build dwellings. Land at NGR 309930 113455 Applegarth, Silver Street, Culmstock. It was agreed to object to the application as the proposed location of the entrance is unacceptable, being at the narrowest part of Silver Street with limited visibility and causing damage to the well-established Devon hedgebank.
- 75.2** Results from Mid Devon District Council.
-26/00423/HOUSE Installation of a free-standing electric vehicle charger (EV). Colletts, The Cleeve, Culmstock. EX15 3JR. Approved.
- 75.3** Notification that the following application has been withdrawn:
-26/00522/CLP Certificate of lawfulness for the proposed use of land for small scale weddings. Woodhayne Barton, Silver Street, Culmstock. EX15 3JG.
- 75.4** Plan Mid Devon – Launch of New Local Plan and Consultation: Noted, open until 10/07/26 - see 75.5 (iii).
Comments are invited on the scoping consultation - The scoping consultation will enable residents, businesses and stakeholders to contribute to the development of the local plan; what the local plan should cover, the key issues it should address, and how people would like to be kept informed. The Parish Council will inform MDDC of its intention to prepare and complete a Neighbourhood Plan, completing and submitting it for adoption by MDDC during the development of this Local Plan.
- 75.5** Neighbourhood Planning - to discuss whether to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan and next steps:
All councillors agreed that over the last year or so the Parish had received sufficient information that a Neighbourhood Plan was being considered; details have been included in the Parish Magazine and more recently posters had been displayed inviting anyone interested to join a social media group and encouraging attendance at the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) for more detail - information had been given at the APM by The Chairman and MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw with help from the Rural Housing Enabler from Devon Communities Together (DCT). It was reported that the Chairman had asked those present at the APM if they were supportive of a Neighbourhood Plan and the vast majority of attendees had raised a hand in support.

Following a discussion on the benefits and the possible costs that would be incurred, which are understood to be in the region of £20,000+, the Parish Council then took a vote at the monthly meeting. With the exception of Cllr. Mrs Zebedee who voted against proceeding, all other councillors present agreed to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan.

..... cont/

Neighbourhood Planning - continued:

The next steps were discussed as follows: (i) To set up a steering group - an initial informal meeting will be arranged to invite anyone that has expressed an interest in being involved; this will be co-ordinated via the social media group. Cllrs. Sarah Leppard, Dr Bass and Mrs Balchin were appointed as representatives and will report at the next meeting. (ii) To appoint a consultant - councillors have received one presentation which took place in the autumn of 2025 and two councillors and the Clerk attended a workshop in October 2025. (iii) MDDC will be informed (ref 75.4) that Culmstock has agreed to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan.

75.6 Any other Planning Matters: The DCT joint Housing Needs Survey is now live, details have been publicised and information was given at the APM.

76. Reports.

76.1 The Chairman/Vice-Chairman: None.

76.2 The Clerk: None.

76.3 P3/Footpaths, access and common land: The P3 Footpath Co-ordinator provided a report which was circulated to all in advance of the meeting. FP37: Strimmed around gate and part of path. Cleaned the steps down to join FP1 (Cleeve to river). FP12: Strimmed entrance to Hunkin Wood and start of FP11 and completed cleaning of the large footbridge crossing the river to Uffculme. FP11: New gate installed by the landowner to close a gap for animal control. At first glance the gate appears to be padlocked but this is only the main gate, the pedestrian gate which is within the main gate is not, as is common practice as the gate cannot be accidentally left open. Some other gates on the path have been propped open to allow the sheep to access two fields - to be left as found. FP1A: A new gate post has been installed at the entrance to the path and the boardwalk to the beacon, and a start to renew the fence beside the gate (damaged by falling tree branches). It is hoped that a decision on the application for a diversion at FP4 will be received in the coming weeks.

76.4 Highways. (i) A date was noted for the upcoming meeting with the DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer- Cllrs. Mrs Balchin, Dr Bass and the Clerk will attend. The lengthsman has also been invited. The Clerk reported on various issues for discussion at the meeting (iii) It was agreed that the most suitable time for DCC to programme patching works on the road between Culmstock and Hemyock will be out of term time, after the schools close in July.

76.5 Blackdown Hills Parish Network: Cllr. Dr Bass reported on the upcoming AGM on 22/07 where there will be a People's Emergency Briefing on Climate Change.

The steering group recently met with the MP's to discuss planning and the new arrangements following Local Government Reorganisation (LGR details still tbc).

76.6 Culmstock Cemetery: None.

76.7 Culmstock Primary School, 150 year celebration - 2026: Cllr. Sarah Leppard reported on plans afoot regarding the village day on 11/07.

76.8 Any other reports including reports from DCC & MDDC Councillors: MDDC - MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw reported on grants that had recently opened. The Blackdown Hills National Landscape may consider supporting "voluntary rangers" at the Beacon at busy times to raise awareness and understanding of the need to keep dogs on leads during the nesting season.

A showing of the film "Jo in the Water" will take place in Culmstock Village Hall shortly as part of the "Culm River Against Pollution" initiative.

DCC - DCC Cllr reported that news is awaited on Local Government Reorganisation. Extra funding has been allocated for Highways.

77. Culmstock Play Area and Pavilion.

77.1 Anti-social behaviour - revised quotation for cleaning of Thunderbox (see 78.6): The Clerk reported that the the cost of cleaning has been increased to £34 per clean as a result of ongoing ASB. The Clerk has recently discussed ASB and damage relating to the Thunderbox with the police and has subsequently reported it online.

77.2 Any other matters: Cllr. Miss Jones will make enquiries regarding the possibility of replacement timber tables as previously supplied.

78. Finance.

78.1 A report was given, the finance schedule was signed. The bank balance was noted as at 31/05/26 - £70,663.55. Direct Debits taken: Pennon Water Svs 08/05 - £31.52, Lloyds Bank service charge 18/05 - £4.67, Nest 05/05 £125.10 and 29/05 - £160.22. Credits received: Cemetery fees 29/05 - £50, 20/05 - £57.

78.2 Payments were resolved:

1. £ 27.62 SMA Services. Payroll provider.
2. £ 255.37 Parish warden - salary & expenses.
3. £ 1081.86 Clerk - salary & expenses.
4. £ 966.47 Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd. Grounds Maintenance Contract.
5. £ 75.26 M Barrow (re: Brookridge Timber). P3 expenses.
6. £ 202.50 Mrs J Zebedee. Refreshments for APM and cemetery bin renewal. *See declarations.*
7. £ 652.08 MDDC. Bin emptying.
8. £ 92.00 Bubbles Exterior Cleaning. Thunderbox cleaning (May).

78.3 Invoice received from Uffculme Allotment Association - as discussed last year, it was agreed to fund half of one plot per parishioner and payment of £144 was agreed.

78.4 Following notification that Microshade VSM is no longer providing Data Protection Officer and GDPR support a quotation of £165 from Parish & Town Audit Services was agreed.

78.5 A quotation of £261 from Freeline Graphics for 3 additional signs to match existing for Culmstock Beacon was agreed.

78.6 Thunderbox: Revised quotation from Bubbles for weekly cleaning - £34 per clean. Agreed as discussed at 77.1.

78.7 A quotation from the website provider, Vision ICT for review of website in respect of WCAG 2.2 AA guidelines of £145 was agreed.

78.8 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) & Audit 2025/26.

78.8.1 Internal audit – the internal audit report was noted. *No matters of concern.*

78.8.2 Section 1 – The Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 was approved and signed.

78.8.3 Section 2 - The Accounting Statements for 2025/26. (i) The Accounting Statements were considered. (ii) The Accounting Statements were approved. (iii) The Accounting Statements were signed by the Chairman of the meeting.

78.9 Expenses - Government support package re: claims for mileage: It was noted that the government had announced tax relief on £0.55 per mile up to 10,000 miles backdated to 01/04/26. The Clerk will confirm in an expenses policy that the internal mileage rate claim for those incurring mileage will be £0.55 per mile, backdated to 01/04 where applicable.

79 Any other financial matters: If necessary the Parish Council agreed to cover the hall hire for the showing of the film “Jo in the Water” as part of the Culm River against Pollution initiative.

80. Correspondence & Any Consultations: Open Spaces Society (OSS) summer 2026 edition and notification of the OSS AGM. Generic emails.

Blackdown Healthy Living & Activity Centre - Support for local communities: Questionnaire and the Blackdown Healthy Living & Activity Centre activity report from April 2025 – March 2026. Cllr. Mrs Balchin to complete the questionnaire.

81. Items for information, future agenda items, and future meeting dates. Next meeting - scheduled for 08/07/26.