

CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on 2nd September 2026 at 7pm in Culmstock Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs. Mrs Lizzie Jones (Chairman), Dr Catherine Bass, Sarah Leppard, Charlie Kay, the Clerk and MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw. A representative of the Neighbourhood Planning Group was present to contribute to the report at agenda item 6.3.

98. Democratic Period: None.

99. Apologies: Cllrs. Mrs Rosemary Balchin, Tim Platel and Mrs Jude Zebedee. MDDC/DCC Cllr. Simon Clist. It unanimously agreed to accept apologies from Cllr. James Bartlett who had contacted the Clerk to explain that due to unavoidable circumstances he had been unable to attend a meeting for the last six months and had since written to the Clerk with apologies for the September meeting.

100. Declarations of Interest: None.

101. The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 29/07/2026 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.

102. Matters Arising: None.

103. Planning and Planning Correspondence/Information.

103.1 Applications considered:

-26/01153/CAT Notification of intention to remove one Goat Willow tree (T5) to ground level within a Conservation Area. Vennwoods, Millmoor, Culmstock, EX15 3HA. No objections.

Applications in respect of Spiceland, Uffculme - there were no objections to the following:

-26/01001/FULL & 26/01002/LBC Listed Building Consent for works to facilitate connection of ground mounted solar array and permission for installation with associated plant shed and cable run.

-26/01104/LBC & 26/01103/HOUSE Listed Building Consent and permission for the erection of extension following demolition of existing extension; installation of heat pump and associated works.

103.2 Results from Mid Devon District Council.

-26/00893/HOUSE Formation of hardstanding for the parking of vehicles. Boskycroft, Hemyock Road, Culmstock. EX15 3JA. Permitted with conditions to discharge.

-26/00821/FULL Variation of condition 2 of planning permission 24/00064/FULL (Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling) to allow substitute plans for the re-orientation of the approved dwelling. Waterslade, Nicholashayne. EX15 3HT. Permitted with conditions to discharge.

-26/00387/HOUSE Erection of single-storey rear extension, alterations vehicular access and existing boundary wall (Revised Scheme). Fair View, Culmstock, EX15 3HU. Approved.

103.3 Neighbourhood Plan: Report to the Parish Council following recent working group meeting - MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw and the Co-Chair reported that two meetings had taken place and a number of roles had been agreed. The Parish Council will need to approve a consultant and it was agreed to ask Polden Planning to attend a Neighbourhood Planning group meeting ASAP, if possible before the next Parish Council meeting. It was understood that Polden Planning will apply a charge to visit which the Clerk confirmed is expected to be in the region of £300-£400; this was agreed and will be taken from the budget allocated for the Plan. MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw has been liaising with the district council with various queries. It was resolved that the Plan will be known as "Culmstock Neighbourhood Plan".

103.4 Any other Planning Matters: The joint housing needs survey has closed; DCT is now analysing the responses and a report will follow.

104. Reports.

104.1 The Chairman/Vice-Chairman: None.

104.2 The Clerk. (i) A reminder to various councillors to complete new Register of Interest forms ASAP so that they can be taken in to MDDC. (ii) Notification of upcoming site tours at the MDDC Recycling and Waste Facility to see the new Depot Configuration and In Cab Technology - the Clerk hopes to attend.

104.3 P3/Footpaths, access and common land.

(i) Devon County Council - Footpath No.4, Culmstock - Public Path Diversion Order 2026: Details received and circulated regarding the Order which the Parish Council is supportive of.

(ii) Footpath report received from P3 Footpath Co-ordinator: FP 37-stake put in beside broken gate post to reinforce, replacement needed.

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Reports continued:

FP12-trimmed through Hunkin Wood & entrance. Trimmed some branches from overhanging tree to ease pressure on fence. FP22-cleared track of debris, adjusted gate and cleared to Somerset border. FP21-clearing ditch, culvert and road side gratings. Railtrack-trimmed track to Ironbridge.

- 104.4** Blackdown Hills Parish Network: Cllr. Dr Bass reported as the Acting Chair of the BHPN; some of the steering group recently met with the Planning Officer of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape to discuss the Design Guide - a guide stating how buildings and settlements contribute to the character of the Blackdown Hills landscape.
- 104.5** Culmstock Cemetery: None.
- 104.6** Highways. (i) A Road Warden agreement had been received from DCC which will be circulated to all for approval. (ii) Following communication from a parishioner regarding the possibility of double yellow lines in the Hunters Hill due to safety sometimes being an issue at school drop off times, the Neighbourhood Highways Officer will be asked to observe the situation and suggest solutions. In the meantime Cllr. Sarah Leppard will ask the school to communicate with parents to request that they park with consideration.
- 104.7** Any other reports including reports from DCC & MDDC Councillors.
- (i) Culm River against Pollution - the petition gained over 1000 signatures in ten days. Following this and a recent sewage issue which has been reported to the Environment Agency, MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw will make contact with South West Water to request a meeting to discuss the health of the river in the Upper Culm, over which there are increasing levels of public concern. Cllr. Dr Bass will endeavour to attend.
- (ii) MDDC - MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw reported: A monthly report will now be sent to all Parish and Town Councils for Clerks to circulate. Following the announcement in July regarding Local Government organisation confirming that Devon will be re-organised into four unitary authorities replacing the current two-tier system of district and county councils, the council had to assess new ward boundaries in a period of 20 working days - MDDC Cabinet wrote to The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to give feedback as did East Devon District Council.
- As part of the evidence gathering for the new Local Plan, MDDC is undertaking a review of Local Green Space designations. Parish and Town Councils will shortly be invited to nominate any additional spaces that they consider may meet the national requirements for designation as Local Green Space.
- There is a new Mid Devon Residents app which can be downloaded - users can access local information such as waste and recycling updates, information regarding planning together with latest news and updates.
- Works have started to the new Cullompton Relief Road which is expected to open in 2028.

105. Culmstock Play Area and Pavilion.

- 105.1** Annual Fire Risk Assessment - the annual assessment has been completed.
- 105.2** Wooden Picnic Bench: Following reports of further deterioration the contractor responsible for minor works will be asked to remove the bench as soon as it becomes necessary - it is expected that this will be later on in the year.
- A chain and combination lock will be obtained for the large entrance gate to avoid it being left open.
- 105.3** Any other matters: Professional cleaning of the toilet will revert to once a week when term starts. The Clerk will make enquiries regarding the basketball net and sign for the backboard.

106. Finance.

- 106.1** A report was given, the finance schedule was signed.
- The bank balance was noted as at 31/08/26 as £58,181.39.
- Direct Debits taken: Lloyds Bank service charge 20/07 - £5.17 & 18/08 - £4.25, Pennon Water Services 10/08 - £21.69, Nest 03/07 - £131.20, & 27/07 £130.51. Credits received: Cemetery fees 11/08 - £130.
- 106.2** **Payments were resolved:**
1. £ 27.62 SMA Services. Payroll provider.
 2. £ 253.12 Parish warden - salary & expenses.
 3. £ 1063.87 Clerk - salary & expenses.
 4. £ 966.47 Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd. Grounds Maintenance Contract.
 5. £ 306.00 Bubbles Exterior Cleaning. Thunderbox cleaning.
 6. £ 135.37 M Delamain. Repairs carried out at the play area.
 7. £ 77.76 A J Hulbert. Neighbourhood Plan Expenses incurred by working group.

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Payments continued:

8. £ 48.00 Vision ICT Ltd. Email Hosting.
 9. £ 201.60 MDDC. Play Area Inspections.
 10. £ 42.40 M Barrow. P3/footpath expenses.
 11. £ 72.00 Shiny Happy People Services Ltd. Annual Fire Risk Assessment at pavilion.
- 106.3** Culmstock Parish Council Insurance Renewal 3 Year LTA - Delegated Payment £2316.11: Noted, expiry 31/08/26 - paid over the summer recess. The 3 year Long Term Agreement had been agreed by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Clerk and details had been circulated to all. It was noted that there was no real increase.
- 106.4** Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2026/27 - notification from the National and the Devon Association of Local Councils of standard increase in the salary scales from 01/04/26 which councils are encouraged to apply as soon as possible: Applied.
- 106.5** Order for Aqua Sacs: It was agreed to order 100 aqua sacs at £3.86 per sac plus £12 delivery per 50 sacs. Cllr. Sarah Leppard to receive delivery.
- 106.6** Any other financial matters: None.
- 107. S106 Funds:** Report following meeting between the Clerk and the MDDC Planning Obligations Monitoring Officer: The Clerk gave details following a meeting in which the Parish Council's desire to explore an alternative use for the contribution from what is currently identified in the Section 106 Agreement relating to access to Collier's Meadow was discussed. This is following a resolution by the Parish Council to abandon the Collier's bridge project and look to direct the funds towards the playing field and if possible a pump track. MDDC is willing to consider positively any alternative proposal that may achieve the objectives of the contribution and deliver benefits to the local community - there is however no guarantee that a variation would be supported by all relevant parties. The Clerk will circulate information as received regarding details required before the district council can consider the proposal further and determine whether there may be a basis for supporting this approach in principle. It was further reported that there will be legal costs which the Parish Council will need to cover and that these costs may be incurred without the variation proceeding, should all parties not agree to an amendment.
The Clerk asked that everyone read the detail fully so that the matter can be discussed again at a future meeting.
- 108. Parish Bins:** Bins situated at Culmstock Bridge - the two bins appear inadequate at times over the summer sometimes creating problems with smell and waste being left in bags on the ground. Following communication from MDDC, confirmation has been received that due to operational restraints and availability the bins can only be emptied once a week, the Clerk will enquire if there is (a) the possibility of a larger bin with a flap to help reduce the smell (b) the possibility of engaging an additional contractor to help for the 6 week holiday period.
- 109. National Grid Wayleave Agreement:** Re: New underground cable on Parish Council land, Uffculme ref 6520756: Following the last meeting and detail at minute 62 - permission requested from a landowner to bring a power cable across a field - an agreement had been received which was approved for signature by the Clerk. National Grid will be asked to contact the client who should confirm that they will be responsible for any disturbance costs.
- 110. MDDC – Community Emergency Hubs:** The Resilience Officer will be asked for information in the form of a power point or slides following an invitation for MDDC to attend a meeting to give details about workshops regarding Community Emergency Hubs in respect of Whole Society Resilience. It was noted that Cllr. Kay and the Clerk had previously attended a workshop provided by Devon Communities Together.
- 111. Correspondence & Any Consultations:** Generic emails.
- 112. Items for information, future agenda items, and future meeting dates.** Next meeting - 14/10/26.
Future agenda item - Culm River against Pollution.