

CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on 29th July 2026 at 7pm in Culmstock Village Hall

Present: Cllrs. Mrs Lizzie Jones (Chairman), Dr Catherine Bass, Mrs Jude Zebedee, Sarah Leppard, Tim Platel, Charlie Kay and the Clerk. The P3 Footpath Co-ordinator and Volunteer Footpath Warden were present for part of the meeting. One member of the public was present for the democratic period only.

- 82. Democratic Period:** A trustee from The Fuel Allotment Charity was present to ask the Parish Council for financial assistance towards the cost of professional fees in renewing an agreement. This was agreed in principle and the matter will be considered at a future meeting as an agenda item when more information relating to costs is available.
- The trustee also raised a query on behalf of a landowner who is asking for permission to bring a power cable across a field. This was agreed in principle and the Clerk will liaise with the landowner and National Grid and report at the next meeting.
- 83. Apologies:** Cllrs. Mrs Rosemary Balchin, James Bartlett and MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw.
- 84. Declarations of Interest:** None.
- 85.** The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 08/07/2026 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.
- 86. Matters Arising:** The Clerk reported that ref minute number 39/2026 – the Data Protection Policy had been reviewed with other documents as listed.
- 87. Planning and Planning Correspondence/Information.**
- 87.1** Applications considered by the Parish Council:
- 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. No objections - note that solar panels are advised and will soon become mandatory.
- 26/00877/HOUSE Erection of single storey rear extension, garden office/sauna and log store and formation of new window openings on the West elevation at first floor level. Victoria House, Millmoor, Culmstock. EX15 3HA. No objections.
- 26/00893/HOUSE Formation of hardstanding for the parking of vehicles. Boskycroft, Hemyock Road, Culmstock. EX15 3JA. It was agreed to object - the application seeks to create a vehicle hard standing in front of the property which is within the Conservation Area. Boskycroft is an Edwardian cottage over 100 years old which has formed a significant element of Culmstock's Architectural and Cultural heritage.
- It was considered that creating a hard standing area and subsequently parking a vehicle in front of the cottage would have a detrimental visual impact on the property and surrounding street scene which will be significantly altered and diminished. With reference to road safety, it was considered that there are no particular risk factors associated with this stretch of the Hemyock Road which will justify the effect on the Conservation Area.
- 26/00979/LBC Listed Building Consent for repair and maintenance of the Linhay/Cartshed to include installation of temporary propping; removal of thatch and eastern softwood post; prepare bearings; installation of new oak beams and reinstate thatched roof covering to match existing. Spiceland, Uffculme, EX15 3AZ. No objections.
- 87.2** Results from Mid Devon District Council.
- 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. Permission granted.
- 87.3** Neighbourhood Plan: A report was given following the first informal meeting which had been arranged for anyone that had expressed an interest in being involved - 14 people had attended and it was agreed to hold a further meeting over the summer to discuss the various tasks required and the appointment of various roles.
- 87.4** Any other Planning Matters: (i) It was noted that there had been a revision regarding application reference 26/00354/FULL Erection of self-build dwelling following demolition of agricultural building utilising the Class Q fallback. Land & Building at NGR 309811 113174 (Uffculme Road), Culmstock and that a decision is awaited.

Any other Planning Matters continued:

(ii) Joint Housing Needs Survey - Devon Communities Together has received 32 responses across the three parishes. Due to a delay by Devon Home Choice (DHC) in providing the Housing Register information for the parishes it had been agreed to extend the survey by a few weeks to give those on the DHC register an opportunity to respond to the survey.

88. Reports.

88.1 The Chairman/Vice-Chairman: None.

88.2 The Clerk. (i) DALC Conference & AGM - agreed for the Clerk to attend. (ii) Notification from MDDC of upcoming site tours open to all Parish & Town Councils at the Waste and Recycling Depot at Hitchcocks Business Park – this is to view the new Depot Configuration and In Cab Technology; it was agreed for the Clerk to attend a session if possible/available.

88.3 P3/Footpaths, access and common land. (i) Buddles (permissive) path maintenance - the current agreement with the maintenance contractor requests works are carried out once a year; it is now considered that this does not suffice as it does not keep the path clear enough. It was discussed for the footpath team to take over the surface strimming and for the Parish Council to grant the cost of the reduction to a local charity such as the Fuel Allotment Charity. This was agreed in principle and the Clerk will liaise with the contractor and a figure to grant to the charity will be agreed at a future meeting.
(ii) P3 report - Strimming has been carried out on a number of footpaths 13, 23, 29, 40, 9, 3, 3a, 4, 36, 1, 1a. 37. FP3-an unsafe stile has been removed, the gate beside the fence is serviceable and ok to use, FP3a. FP10-a loose/broken gate post has been reinforced with an extra stake so that the gate can be shut securely. This is a temporary fix as the landowner is considering a wider entrance and gate. Buddles Bridge-path strimmed and culvert cleaned out.

The applicant will be submitting the application for a diversion on Footpath No.4 shortly.

Another volunteer has stepped up to help with works on the Parish paths which has been much appreciated.

88.4 Blackdown Hills Parish Network. (i) Cllr. Dr Bass reported that around 14 Parishes were represented at the recent AGM where a Public Emergency briefing was shown.

88.5 Culmstock Cemetery: R&R Services will be asked for advice regarding maintenance of the hedge planted earlier in the year. Whilst space is not required for quite some time, confirmation of the number of available plots will be reviewed with a view to how long it may be before additional land is required.

88.6 Culm River Against Pollution: Cllr. Sarah Leppard reported that the petition had received just over a thousand signatures to date. Cllr. Dr Bass will make contact with South West Water. The Clerk will share details in Kentisbeare Parish.

88.7 Any other reports including reports from DCC & MDDC Councillors: It was reported that the celebrations in respect of the 150 years of Culmstock Primary School were a success.

89. Culmstock Play Area and Pavilion.

89.1 Update on minor repairs undertaken - various repairs had been completed including minor repairs to the Thunderbox following anti-social behaviour.

89.2 Cleaning of Thunderbox: It was resolved to increase the professional cleaning to twice weekly out of term time during the spring and summer and possibly the October half term.

89.3 Annual Fire Risk Assessment - a date of 06/08/26 has been arranged for the assessor to visit the site.

89.4 Any other matters: A notice has been placed in The Culmstock News stating that in general fires and unshielded barbecues are not a good idea anywhere due to the extremely dry conditions this year. Fires are not permitted at the play area and pavilion.

90. Finance.

90.1 A report was given, the finance schedule was signed. The bank balance was noted as at 30/06/26 as £67,590.85.

Direct Debits taken: Lloyds Bank service charge 16/06 - £4.25.

Credits received: Cemetery fees 09/06 - £56, 29/06 - £200, Nest refund on 19/06 - £25.09.

Finance continued:

90.2 Payments were resolved:

1. £ 27.62 SMA Services. Payroll provider.
2. £ 240.22 Parish warden - salary & expenses.
3. £ 938.19 Clerk - salary & expenses.
4. £ 966.47 Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd. Grounds Maintenance Contract.
5. £ 136.00 Bubbles Exterior Cleaning. Thunderbox cleaning (July).
6. £ 156.00 MDDC. Bin emptying 6 months - bridge.
7. £ 363.59 M Delamain. Repairs carried out at the play area & minor works at the cemetery.
8. £ 174.00 Vision ICT Ltd. Website MOT.

Payment 9 - It was agreed for a payment of £72 to Culmstock Village Hall for hall hire as an expected payment.

90.3 To note that the following payments were made under delegation due to the meeting of 08/07/26 being postponed:

1. £ 27.62 SMA Services. Payroll provider.
2. £ 217.02 Parish warden - salary & expenses.
3. £ 1058.24 Clerk - salary & expenses.
4. £ 966.47 Countrywide Grounds Maintenance Ltd. Grounds Maintenance Contract.
5. £ 170.00 Bubbles Exterior Cleaning. Thunderbox cleaning (June).
6. £ 1147.62 HMRC. Quarterly PAYE.
7. £ 133.20 S Aldworth. Fee for internal review prior to external audit re: AGAR.

90.4 The dates set regarding the Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) were noted as 29/06/26 to 07/08/26.

90.5 As agreed at the precept meeting a grant of £500 was confirmed following a letter from the manager of the Blackdown Support Group with an update and request for financial support - payment to be placed on a future agenda.

90.6 Culmstock Parish Council Insurance Renewal - the insurance expires on 31/08/26; details will be circulated once received and reviewed and payment will be made over the summer recess.

90.7 Any other financial matters: None.

91. Highways.

91.1 Report on meeting with DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer (NHO) and next steps: Cllrs. Dr Bass, Mrs Balchin and the Clerk recently met with the NHO and the lengthsman that carries out work periodically, to discuss future possible works and ideas. It was agreed for lengthsman to be the Road Warden for the Parish and the Clerk will request an agreement from DCC Highways for review and signature. Training will be required and the Parish Council may have to contribute to the cost; assistance may be available from DCC.

91.2 Possible items for Highways to take forward (i) Road markings outside of All Saints Church, Fore Street - Cllr. Dr Bass has written to the NHO via the Clerk regarding "Keep Clear" signage on the road to alleviate ongoing problems in the area, which have been discussed with the NHO previously. (ii) An application for a 20mph speed limit through the village was submitted previously. It was reported that due to the volume of requests submitted, this should be considered by Highways in November 2027.

92. Register of Interest Forms (ROI): Notification from MDDC re: important legislative change affecting the publication of Members' personal information. As at 29/06/26 local authorities are no longer required to publish an elected or co-opted member's home address in the public Register of Interests. This change is introduced through section 32A of the Localism Act 2011, as inserted by section 65 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026.

Councillors are required to complete new ROI forms which should be submitted to the Clerk for checking. The Clerk will take all forms into MDDC, Phoenix House for submission to the Monitoring Officer when complete. Despite the publication changes, Members are still required to provide their full home address for the Clerk/local records and for the Monitoring Officer. Members have the option to request that their home address is published if they wish.

93. Summer Recess and Scheme of Delegation. The scheme of delegation will be in place throughout the summer recess to cover standard planning applications and routine expenditure.

- 94. Village Hall Hire in Extreme Weather.** Cllr. Sarah Leppard addressed the council to suggest that via the hall committee, the Parish Council make the hall available in extreme weather conditions for the benefit of the community. This follows a period of very hot weather where a number of heatwaves have been experienced over the last few months. The Parish Council to fund any charges incurred such as hire. Agreed.
- 95. Local Government Reorganisation Decision.**
- 95.1** MDDC - Shared Questions and Answers document for town and parish councils: Following the announcement by the government on 16/07/26 confirming that Devon will be re-organised into four unitary authorities replacing the current two-tier system of district and county councils, MDDC has suggested the creation of a Parish and Town Council Q&A document so that questions can be gathered from across the district in order to create a practical resource that reflects the issues that matter most to communities and provides information for all.
The Clerk suggested that any questions be submitted via the Clerk as one document from Culmstock Parish.
- 96. Correspondence & Any Consultations:** CPRE Devon Voice Newsletter June 2026
- 97. Items for information, future agenda items, and future meeting dates.** Next meeting - 02/09/2026.