

# HOLNE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council  
held in Holne Village Hall on  
Tuesday 2 April 2024 at 7.30pm

Present

Cllrs B Owen (Chair), M Fairman, L Grun & C McLean

Also present

Suzanna Hughes (Clerk)

The meeting was opened by the Chair at 7.30pm.

<b>020424.01</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cllr Applegarth</li><li>• Cllr Crook</li><li>• County Cllr Thomas</li><li>• District Cllr Pannell</li><li>• District Cllr Hancock</li><li>• Rob Steemson</li><li>• Ross Gray</li></ul>
<b>020424.02</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation</b> <p>Members were reminded of their responsibility to continually update their Notice of Registerable Interests and invited to state whether they have any interest in the items to be discussed during this meeting in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Unforeseen requests for a Dispensation to be considered at this point only if there was no way a Councillor would have been aware of such before the meeting.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensation.</p>
<b>020424.03</b>	<b>Open Forum</b> <p>No comments.</p>
<b>020424.04</b>	<b>Ratification of Minutes</b> <p>Members received the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 5 March 2024. It was agreed unanimously that they be signed by the Chair as a true and correct record of the meeting.</p>
<b>020424.05</b>	<b>Reports</b> <p>5.1 County Council Cllr Thomas was unable to attend but sent the following written report:</p> <p>This year has seen dire warnings about local authorities "going bankrupt", slashing services and imposing double digit council tax increases. A new report by DCC Director of Finance, Angie Sinclair, predicts that the revenue budget of just under £700 million will effectively break even in April with a small overspend of £291,000 currently being forecast. Her report covers the current financial year to the end of January with two more months to go. She says:</p> <p>"Financial risks within adult social care and children and young people are still being experienced but the work underway across the authority to support these pressures continues to ensure the whole organisation is focused on achieving a break-even position for the end of the year.</p> <p>The position has improved significantly since Month 8, with the forecast overspend reducing from £4.5 million to nearly breakeven, and demonstrates strong financial management.</p>

	<p>The forecast break-even position is a huge achievement and the result of a continued focus on financial control and would not have been possible without the authority pulling together as One Devon and our work with our partners.</p> <p>This is mitigating and responding to in-year pressures, delivering planned savings and providing services within the budgets agreed.”</p> <p>Councillors heard the figures included the £10 million savings that were needed to create a Reserve to satisfy the Government on their offer of financial support for our spending deficit on special needs education or SEND.</p> <p>5.2 District Council Cllrs Pannell and Hancock sent a written report, a copy of which is attached.</p> <p>5.3 DNPA No report from Rob Steemson.</p>
020424.06	<p><b>Finance and Governance</b></p> <p>6.1 Payments for Approval The following payments were approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holne Playpark (reimbursement for sign) - £87.54</li> <li>• T Crook (reimbursement for Highways signs) - £172.94</li> <li>• EDF (DAAT) - £10.71</li> <li>• HMRC (PAYE) - £193</li> </ul>
020424.07	<p><b>Planning</b></p> <p>7.1 New applications/appeals None</p> <p>7.2 Decisions 7.2.1 0062/24 – Fairhaven, Holne Engineering works to form retaining walls, a terrace area at the rear of the bungalow and enlargement of the existing parking area</p> <p>Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional planning consent.</p>
020424.08	<p><b>Playpark</b></p> <p>The Chair advised that a meeting of playpark was held on 7 March. It was reported that the dog sign has arrived and will be put up soon. Thank you to Holne Books for funding the goalposts and for the Parish Council for facilitating this. There is £1000 in the playpark in account and the committee are looking for suggestions from parents on how it might be spent. There was no update on wildflowers but molehills are still a concern. The Easter egg hunt was very successful.</p> <p>Cllr Fairman reported that there was a large stone in the leat under the hedge from Little Bewden which he will attempt to move once the water level has dropped.</p>
020424.09	<p><b>Highways and Footpaths</b></p> <p><i>Residents are encouraged to report all potholes:</i> <a href="https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/report-a-pothole/">https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/report-a-pothole/</a></p> <p>The highways signs to help reduce the speed of traffic along the bypass have been made and are ready to be put up. It was agreed to see if these signs have a positive impact on slowing traffic before looking at further measures.</p> <p>The style at the O’Brook has been replaced.</p> <p>It was reported that the broken sign at Great Combe has now gone. Whilst the sign was directing walkers via an established short-cut rather than the designated route, no signage at all may lead to confusion about which route to take as the designated route is likely to become impassable once the bracken grows. It was agreed to follow this up with Rob Steemson.</p>

	<p>Members were pleased to have seen various other new footpath signs installed around the parish.</p> <p>Members appreciated the numbered footpaths map which Rob Steemson had supplied and thought that it would be good to display a copy in the village hall. It was agreed to ask Rob Steemson if he could supply a printed and laminated A3 copy for this purpose.</p>
<b>020424.10</b>	<p><b>Climate and Biodiversity Emergency</b></p> <p>10.1 Update on Energy Efficiency Event and Gardening for Wildlife publication</p> <p><u>Gardening for Wildlife</u></p> <p>Cllr Grun circulated information about the production of this publication for all homes in Holne. The Habitat Group (part of Sustainable South Hams) have offered the files of the booklet for printing as a free resource and will offer a free 'customisation' of the title and some of the content. It was thought that Moor Meadows and Moor Trees may be able to supply something for this purpose. The cost of producing 1000 copies would be £750. It was agreed to explore two options: to find out the costs for a reduced print run as 1000 was considerably more than was required in Holne and/or ask Buckfastleigh West/Scorton if they would like to be involved in the project and share the cost. Cllrs Grun and McLean will follow up on this.</p> <p><u>Energy Efficiency Workshop</u></p> <p>South Dartmoor Community Energy have proposed a workshop on Tuesday 30 April. Advice will be given about heating, reducing energy bills, grants etc. It was agreed to accept this date (subject to the hall being available). They will supply a poster to advertise the event to the community and details can be circulated on the Holybrook Exchange.</p> <p>10.2 As part of its commitment to addressing climate change and biodiversity, the Parish Council agreed to take into account the implications of climate change and biodiversity in all future actions and decisions.</p> <p>10.3 A cheque for £405.55 (closing balance) was received by the Parish Council from SEARCH. This will be earmarked for costs relating to environmental matters.</p>
<b>020424.11</b>	<p><b>Leats</b></p> <p>Cllr Applegarth was unable to attend the meeting but reported that the leats are getting blocked and unblocked every three or four days due to the weather. Generally, however, there are no issues.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the 'leat team' for their marvellous efforts in keeping the leats flowing this winter. They are all very much appreciated.</p>
<b>020424.12</b>	<p><b>Correspondence</b></p> <p>None</p>
<b>020424.13</b>	<p><b>Chairman's urgent business for action by the clerk if covered by delegated powers or for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting</b></p> <p>Cllr Fairman advised that the gate to the field next to Little Bewden has been locked to deter people from entering it as there is evidence of human defecation. It was noted that toilet facilities are available in the shop and tearoom.</p>
<b>020424.14</b>	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>14.1 The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Thursday 4 April at 7pm at which free CPR &amp; Defibrillator training by Devon Air Ambulance crew will be offered.</p> <p>14.2 The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on 7 May 2024 at 7.30pm in Holne Village Hall.</p>

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Cllr Owen (Chair)

## District Councillors' Report – April

### Peer Review

South Hams and West Devon Councils were visited by a team of Officers and Members from other local authorities in England in March to carry out a Corporate Peer Challenge - or Peer Review.

The feedback from the peer team has been extremely positive about how we work together as a single organisation to support both councils to deliver for our communities. The team were extremely impressed with the speed with which the new political administrations have formed; the collaborative way in which members work with each other and the very constructive member and officer relations; our overall financial management and resources; the way in which we have developed our new Council Plans; performance management and governance arrangements; and most important of all the quality of the services we are delivering to our residents. The team also identified areas where they think we can build on our strong base to go further, including, to further embed our plans for community development; build upon our already strong place-leadership role to ensure we are fit for the future and can influence the Devon-wide partnerships including being clear about our strategic objectives for the economy; enhance our engagement and influence on health partners; and importantly to tell our story better to our communities.

The full feedback from the peer team can be viewed here <https://youtu.be/HRKp76tubSs?si=oEIS2nEL8W-HubDU>  
The next step will be to receive the full report back from the LGA, which will be reported to the Executive/ Hub Committee in due course.

### Devolution

At our March meeting the Council voted to express concerns over the proposed Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal (creating a new Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority). These include:

- The proposal risks making local government more complex by adding a layer of bureaucracy
- The proposed £16m capital funding was only for the next two years
- The fact that spending plans must be signed-off by central government disqualifies the plan from being true devolution of powers
- The proposed combined authority's remoteness and lack of democratic accountability, including the lack of voting rights for District Councils, further disqualifies it from being described as "devolution"
- The government's document indicates that this is the first step in the reorganisation of local government in Devon and Torbay. We are concerned that the intention as stated threatens the existence of district councils, the loss of effective local governance and may establish rule by a body that is remote and out of touch.
- The cost and additional layer of local government will in itself hamper any improvement in the local services it is intended to improve and may result in their decline.

**The Council called for the process to be postponed pending the outcome of the forthcoming General Election and 2025 County Council elections.**

If and when the devolution deal proceeds the council proposes that an element of the Small Sites Green Investment programme be allocated to support community-led housing developments to improve energy efficiency, reduce embedded carbon and improve biodiversity.

### Hunting

At the same meeting Council voted to not allow meetings of hunts on land it owns. Among the reasons were concern over public safety from gatherings of horses and hounds.