

HOLNE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held in Holne Village Hall on Tuesday 4 March 2025 at 7.30pm

Present:

Cllrs B Owen (Chair), R Applegarth, M Fairman and L Grun

Also present:

Suzanna Hughes (Clerk), County Cllr Thomas, District Cllr Hancock, three members of Holne Playpark Committee and one member of the public

The meeting was opened by the Chair at 7.30pm.

040325.01	Apologies for Absence <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr T Crook• Cllr C McLean• District Cllr Pannell• Rob Steemson (DNPA)• Ross Gray (Tree Warden)
040325.02	Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation <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>
040325.03	Open Forum <p>A resident reported a pothole on the Gallant Le Bower road. County Cllr Thomas suggested that the Parish Council sends him the reference number for all potholes which have been reported but not filled so that he can follow them up.</p> <p>There was also a question relating to the new parking charges for visitors to South Hams. They were advised that everyone living in South Hams will be eligible for the discounted rates. All residents will receive a letter about the scheme soon.</p>
040325.04	Ratification of Minutes <p>Members received the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 4 February 2025. It was agreed that they should be signed by the Chair as a true and correct record of those meetings.</p>
040325.05	Reports <p>5.1 County Council Report Cllr Thomas advised that the County Council has agreed its budget for 2025/26 which includes the usual 2.99% rise in council tax plus the extra 2% for integrated care.</p> <p>Local Government Reorganisation latest: it appears that Plymouth City Council wants to take over the 13 parishes to the west of the South Hams (currently in Rebecca Smith MP's South West Devon constituency). The Districts have offered a 4:5:1 unitary solution. We wait to see what County will propose.</p>

	<p>The Chairman asked Cllr Thomas to follow up a couple of highways issues which have already been reported. The issues relate to the water at Littlecombe (reported in February) and the erosion of the leat up from Little Cross.</p> <p>5.2 District Council Report Cllrs Pannell and Hancock sent a written report (copy attached)</p> <p>5.3 DNPA Link Member Report Funding settlement: It is disappointing to report that English National Parks will receive a 9% overall cut in the Defra revenue grant for the 2025-26 financial year. A reduction of this scale puts at significant risk the National Park Authorities' ability to deliver their basic statutory functions. Whilst increased capital expenditure for 2025-26 is available, because this is not recurring and there are constraints on how this can be spent, it will not compensate for the reduced budget. Discussions with Defra are ongoing to see how a more stable and secure future for England's National Parks can be established, so that they can deliver the vital nature recovery work that will make our National Parks greener, wilder and more accessible.</p> <p>Backpack Camping: No word of when Supreme Court will announce its decision on the Darwalls' appeal.</p> <p>Princetown Visitor Centre: will close at the end of October. The lease expires in March 2026.</p> <p>5.4 DNPA Ranger Report With some dry weather, the erosion repair work on Holne continues, and an ongoing maintenance plan is being addressed.</p>
040325.06	<p>Finance and Governance</p> <p>6.1 Members approved the following payments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bryan Booty - New picket fencing in Playpark, removal of swingset and repairs to tunnel & slide etc - £5040 • EDF - DAAT electricity supply - £19.53
040325.07	<p>Planning</p> <p>7.1 New applications/appeals None</p> <p>7.2 Decisions:</p> <p>7.2.1 0024/25 & 0025/25 Glebe House, Holne Repairs, alteration and the erection of a single storey extension</p> <p>Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional consent.</p> <p>It was noted that a further planning application has now been submitted (0081/25) for internal and external repairs and alterations to existing ancillary outbuilding at Glebe House. Members agreed that they would not be commenting on this.</p>
040325.08	<p>Playpark</p> <p>8.1 Report and updates, including quotation for new swings Cllr Fairman presented a quotation for new swings from TFH (Worcestershire) Ltd. It was noted that this was at the affordable end of the certified range. It was agreed to accept the quotation of £394.50 + VAT for a double frame and two swings. It was noted that the grass matting would need to be replaced. It was also agreed to ask Bryan Booty to fix the frame into the ground once it had been put together. It was noted that Holne Books had generously donated £450 towards the cost of this.</p> <p>8.2 Playpark Charity – update Members of the Playpark Charity were thanked for attending the meeting in order to finalise the</p>

	<p>winding up of Playpark Charity and the dissolution of the Holne Playpark Committee. In doing so, the responsibility for Playpark's maintenance will transfer back to the Parish Council. The funds remaining in the Playpark's account will also be transferred to the Parish Council (£1419.28) and it is requested that these are ring-fenced specifically for enhancing Playpark, such as by adding a small bike track or a similar improvement, and not used for general maintenance. The Funds Transfer Agreement was signed by representatives of Holne Playpark and the Parish Council.</p> <p>The Chairman expressed her gratitude, on behalf of the Parish Council and community, for everything the current and past members of Holne Playpark Committee have done to enhance Playpark. It has been very much appreciated.</p> <p>An informal group (Holne Parent Group) will continue to organise events for the children of the parish.</p> <p>8.3 To receive a quotation for grass cutting in 2025 Geoff Partridge has quoted £125 per cut. One cut per month between March and October with two discretionary cuts to be used as needed. The cost has increased to allow for the inclusion of the former wildflower area.</p> <p>Members agreed to accept this quotation on the basis that there will be no additional mid-season price increases.</p>
040325.09	<p>Highways and Footpaths <i>Residents are encouraged to report all potholes:</i> https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/report-a-pothole/</p> <p>Two outstanding highways matters to be followed up (discussed at item 5.1).</p>
040325.10	<p>Climate and Biodiversity Emergency No report.</p>
040325.11	<p>Leats No current issues.</p>
040325.12	<p>Beating of the Bounds It was noted that Holne Commoners would like to beat the bounds this year. Dates have not yet been agreed.</p>
040325.13	<p>Correspondence None</p>
040325.14	<p>Chairman's urgent business for action by the clerk if covered by delegated powers or for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting None</p>
040325.15	<p>Date of Next Meeting It was confirmed that the next meeting is 1 April 2025</p>

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Cllr Owen (Chair)

District Councillors' Report 4 March 2025

SHDC Budget

At its February meeting the Council agreed to a rise of 2.99% in its share of the Council Tax. That's the maximum allowed by the Government without a referendum, and also the increase the Government expects SHDC to agree when it calculates Council spending. The increase, roughly £200,00 will be totally swallowed up by the increase in Employers' National Insurance contributions, for which the Government has only provided partial support. Our Rural Services Grant, worth £500,000 and which compensates rural councils for the extra cost of delivering services in a sparsely populated area, has been abolished. No members voted against the budget. The average increase in Parish and Town precepts across the District is 21%, reflecting the additional burden being shouldered by these because of the tight grip on spending by bigger authorities.

Local Authority Reform

The Devon District Councils – minus Exeter – have issued the following statement on their preferred option for Local Government Reform:

“National government signalled in December 2024 its intent to end the current system of District and County Councils and smaller unitary Councils. Instead, these are to be replaced by unitary Councils covering much larger areas, with a guideline minimum population of 500,000 people. We are proud of our track record in delivering high quality and cost-effective public services. Each of our Councils is well established and has, over many years, built a connection with local communities such that we understand how best to tailor the delivery of these services to meet the needs of local residents. We are also very concerned that the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) as stipulated by government including the timetable runs the real risk of financial unsustainability from inception. The most significant funding challenges facing the people of Devon concern Adult and Children Social Care, SEND, and NHS funding. Government proposals address none of these, but rather risks uprooting the very organisations holding the line today.

However, it is our duty to respond to answer national government's demand for structural change through LGR.

We are united in our belief that the interests of the nearly 1 million people of Devon and Torbay will not best be served by a single 'mega' Council covering the entirety of this area. As districts, we have therefore reached initial agreement to work towards the formation of two new Councils that combine our existing areas as follows;

- A Unitary combining the South Hams, Teignbridge and West Devon areas with Torbay
- A Unitary including East, Mid and North Devon alongside Torrington District and the City of Exeter

There is considerable further work to do to develop these proposals. We want to maintain local distinctiveness whilst seeking to secure ongoing service improvements. We are having to move at pace to meet the initial deadline set by national government for Interim Plans to be submitted by the 21st March. Final decisions on the content of the Interim Plans will continue to be made by individual Councils and we will engage with all our Devon council colleagues on an ongoing basis. We are mindful that the LGR process is fast-changing still and until submission date further options may need to be considered in addition to the currently preferred option.

We are in active dialogue with Torbay Council concerning the potential for a new unitary council covering a wider geography encompassing the 4 areas described above. We also recognise that Plymouth City will be looking to change their boundaries, which is a matter for government to decide on.

We are resolute in our shared commitment to engaging with our residents, partners and stakeholders to help shape these proposals going forward. This includes in the period through to November and the submission of final proposals. We will provide ongoing updates as we reach key milestones.”

Go ahead for residents' discount parking scheme

The Executive has agreed to go ahead with a two-tier parking fee scheme. Prices will rise for visitors to the area, with discounted fees for local residents. Prices haven't risen for four years, and the Council is seeking extra revenue to meet the increased cost of local services. The new fees will bring South Hams into line with neighbouring authorities. Prices will go up from October, rising yearly after that in line with inflation. Households will be entitled to apply for residents' permits, which will operate via a mobile phone app. Residents who don't have a smartphone can apply for a card which would allow them extra parking time. After consultation with the public and towns the fees for residents will increase slightly more, and those for visitors slightly less. Watch out for publicity on how to apply for a permit.

County Council Election 'purdah'

Between Tuesday 25 March 2025 and Thursday 1 May 2025 we will be in the pre-election period ahead of Devon County Council's local elections. During this time, the Council must comply with restrictions outlined in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 and recommendations in the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. What this means: In general, it is business as usual, and the Council can carry on with its ordinary functions. However, it must not issue any publicity which seeks to influence voters.

We must not:

- Publish any material or hold any promotional events which could directly, or be perceived to, influence public support for a political party or candidate. This includes press releases, consultations, leaflets, adverts, newsletters as well as social media and website content.
- Use council facilities or resources which could directly, or be perceived to, influence public support for a political party or candidate.

However, we can:

- Continue to promote and carry out normal council business which isn't related to the Devon County Council elections or candidates.
- Provide information relating to the poll e.g. how to register to vote, reminders to vote and opening times at polling stations etc.
- Publish factual information to counteract misleading, controversial or extreme coverage.

During this heightened period of sensitivity elected members are still able to publicly express their personal opinions and views relating to the election, but they must not be attributed as official council statements.