

**WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 7th October 2025 AT 7.00pm**

Present:	Chairman Cllr Francis Pullman (FP), Cllr ShirleyMay Saunders (SMS), Cllr Trevor Ingram (TI)
In attendance:	Anne Oliver Parish Clerk, 11 members of the public, DCC/EDDC Cllr Jess Bailey
Apologies	Cllr Ann Cooper (AC)

Item (a)	Discussion and decisions (b)
25/306	Welcome and Chairman's announcements The meeting started at 7.00pm. The Chairman, Cllr FP, welcomed everyone to the meeting.
25/307	Apologies. To receive apologies and approve reasons for absence, if considered appropriate. Cllrs received apologies from Cllr AC and accepted and her reasons for non-attendance.
25/308	Public question time (3 minutes): To allow members of the public present to give their question/comments to the Parish Council on issues on this agenda or raise issues for further consideration at the discretion of the Chairman, before the start of the Parish Council meeting. Members of the public may not take part in the Parish Council meeting itself. (<i>Contributions are limited to 3 minutes</i>). Two items submitted before the meeting were read out: - The Village Hall Trustees expressed their gratitude to West Hill Parish Council for the dedication, time and effort they put in to finally bring about construction of the Village Hall footpath. They asked for the guardrail alongside West Hill Road to be extended westwards for safety purposes. - Re agenda item 25/314: The applicants of planning application 25/1832/FUL gave their reasons for the application. Several members of the public spoke at the meeting: - West Hill Footpath Warden, Eileen Perkins, reported that the Japanese Knotweed previously present on Footpath 6 was now gone. Also, the 2nd cut of the footpaths had taken place. Action: The next meeting to consider a report on the noticeboard situated on the grass triangle situated near the Morrisons Store. - Several individuals raised concerns about planning application 25/1832/FUL. - A member of the public congratulated the Council for the successful delivery of the new pedestrian path to the Village Hall and asked if dogs on lead were allowed on the Village Hall site. The Chairman understood that the Village Hall Trustees intended to replace the current signage to permit dogs on lead access to the site.
25/309	District and County Councillors' reports: To receive reports for information (items raised for decision will appear on the agenda for the next meeting). Ward Member Cllr Bailey's report included:

	- Devon County Council have decided their preferred proposal for Local Government Reform (LGR) in Devon: The 9-1-1 proposal refers to 9 district and county councils, Plymouth and Torbay. All proposals for LGR in Devon must be submitted to the decision maker, the Government, in November 2025. - Cllr Bailey was able to make grants funded from her Locality Budget to support projects or activities that benefit the community. The Clerk asked for an update on the Ward Members request to DCC Highways for line markings at the junction of Oak Road/Higher Broad Oak Road to be re-painted. DCC Cllr Bailey understood that a Highways Officer had been asked to assess the lines for inclusion in the line marking program for the forthcoming year. 2 Members of the public left the meeting 7.24pm
25/310	To receive an update on Councillor vacancies and to consider applications for co-option, if available. The meeting considered an application for one of the three Councillor vacancies. The applicant was invited to introduce himself and answer Councillor questions. By a show of hands, it was unanimously resolved to co-opt Ben Jewell (BJ) as a member of the Parish Council. Cllr BJ made/signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and signed a Consent to Electronic Service of Summons Cllrs resolved to: - add Cllr BJ to the Council's banking mandate. - to order a name badge, approved costs up to £20.00+vat. - make arrangements for training available via DALC, approved cost £90 +vat.
25/311	To receive Declarations of interest for items on the agenda and receipt of requests for new Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) dispensations for items on the agenda. Cllr FP declared an Affects NRI as he was a member of West Hill RBL and would take part in discussion and voting for agenda item 25/321 (grant application). Cllr BJ declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in item 25/314 and would leave the meeting for consideration of planning application 25/1832/FUL. Cllrs SMS and TI declared no interests. Members are also reminded that any change to their Declaration of Interests must be notified to the Monitoring Officer at East Devon District Council within 28 days of the change.
25/312	Confidential/exempt items. In consideration of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted): to agree any items to be dealt with after the public and press have been excluded None
25/313	Minutes: To receive the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 1st July 2025 (Minute 25/250 - 25/274) and to approve the signing of the Minutes by the Chairman as a true record. The minutes of the meeting of 2nd September 2025 (Min 25/275 – 25/305) were confirmed as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.
25/314	Planning Applications received: To consider a consultee response to: 25/1832/FUL 6 Potters Close West Hill Devon EX11 1YE Proposed two storey infill extension between the existing house and the detached garage. Proposed first floor extension above the garage. Single storey extension on the Northwest

	elevation. Revised window and roof window arrangements to accord with revised internal layout. (revised scheme to planning application ref. 25/0671/FUL) Cllr BJ left the room It was reported that prior to the meeting: • Cllrs FP and SMS had accepted an invitation to meet the applicant. • Cllrs AC, SMS and FP had visited a neighbouring property to assess the impact of the proposed extension The meeting noted the scale of the first floor extension had been reduced but considered their previous comments still applied. The meeting did not support the application. Cllr BJ re-joined the meeting. 25/1850/FUL Tifundle, Toadpit Lane West Hill Ottery St Mary EX11 1TR Single storey extension on West elevation and replacement of existing flat roofs with new raised pitched roof. Introduction of cladding, enlargement of raised terrace, alteration to fenestration, addition of PV Panels and roof lights. The Council supported the application. 25/1867/CPE School House School Lane West Hill Ottery St Mary EX11 1UP Certificate of Proposed Existing Use for the ancillary C3 use of a detached garage/outbuilding. The Council supported the application. <u>To note consultee comments submitted under Delegated Powers:</u> 25/1651/FUL Samguri Bendarroch Road West Hill Devon EX11 1TS Proposed single storey extension on the South West Elevation. 25/1845/TRE 25 Eastfield West Hill Devon EX11 1XN Various tree works: T1 – T4 Oaks reduce/crown lift. Remove deadwood. All confirmed	WHPC <u>Decision</u> Object Object
25/315	Planning decisions received for information (*denotes WHPC differed) 25/1610/FUL Pinehayes Lower Broad Oak Road West Hill Devon EX11 1XH Ground and First Floor extensions 25/1582/TRE Green Hayes West Hill Devon EX11 1UY G1, Oaks : reduce aspects of tree crowns, growing to south, by approximately 2-2.5m. 25/1519/TRE Needles Hawkins Lane West Hill Devon EX11 1XG Various tree works: T1-T6 Monterey pines 25/1437/TRE Springfield House West Hill Road West Hill Devon EX11 1UZ Various tree works – crown reduction: T1 – T3. 25/1220/VAR 2 Warren Close West Hill Devon EX11 1XB Variation of condition 3 (matching materials) of planning permission 23/0658/FUL to add timber wall cladding 25/0023/DEM The Colonels West Hill Road West Hill Ottery St Mary EX11 1UZ Demolition of single storey timber frame bungalow and timber frame garage. 25/1271/FUL 15 Perrys Gardens West Hill Devon EX11 1XA Proposed side, rear extension (and porch rebuild) including part garage conversion Noted. three members of the public left the meeting.	<u>EDDC Decision</u> Refuse* Withdrawn Approved Refused Approved Approved Approved

WHPC Groups + Initiatives

25/316	Village Hall Path Working Group: a. To receive a progress update and decide further actions and costs, if applicable. The meeting received a short report which included: - The Chairman and Clerk were present on site for the start of the first day of the new school term. Feedback from people using the new entrance was very positive. - The path was formally opened on 19th September 2025. Representatives of the Village Hall Trustees, staff and children from the Primary School and Pre-School joined Councillors to cut a ribbon to celebrate the opening of the entrance/path. Members of the children's School Council gave short speeches and thanked the Council for providing a new safer walking route to school. - The Sidmouth Herald website/newspaper covered the opening event. - Fencing was installed at the pedestrian/vehicle gate and chicane barrier as decided by Council Min 25/287 - A problem with the sensors on the lighting bollards has been reported to the electrician for action. The meeting resolved to approve the following payments: <table style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>1. Devon TarMasters Works on Village Hall Site</td><td>£15,733.96+vat</td></tr> <tr> <td>2. Devon TarMasters Works on West Hill Road</td><td>awaited</td></tr> <tr> <td>3. Fencing Min 25/287</td><td>£670.00+vat</td></tr> </table> It was resolved to commission: - the Lengthsman to install paving slabs at the pedestrian gate and approved costs up to £150+vat. - a further section of fencing to the west of the chicane plus an additional post at the pedestrian gate to help prevent the gate being left open. Approved costs up to £300.00+vat. b. To receive the findings of a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit and to decide actions and costs as considered appropriate. The Stage 3 Road Safety was carried out by the Road Safety Forum on 25th September 2025. Two auditors, a DCC Highways Road Safety Officer, WHPC Chairman and Clerk met on site as the audit was conducted. The meeting considered the Stage 3 Audit report received on 29th September 2025. The report raised two matters: - School Warning Wig Wag light on West Hill Road: Findings: the adjacent hedge may overgrow and restrict the effectiveness of the device. The meeting considered various options. As the location was agreed in consultation with the Highways Officer re-locating the sign was not considered to be an effective use of public money The meeting agreed a proposed response to be agreed with DCC Highways: The Parish Council will undertake to contract the Lengthsman to trim the hedge regularly for the duration of the s278 agreement to avoid restricting visibility of the sign. - The Existing Footpath leading to the Village Hall Findings: The auditors were concerned that the narrow nature of the existing path alongside the Village Hall could result in pedestrians stepping off the path onto the car park. The meeting noted that this matter has been raised in the Stage 2 report. The Village Hall Trustees had been made aware of the findings as the relevant organisation.	1. Devon TarMasters Works on Village Hall Site	£15,733.96+vat	2. Devon TarMasters Works on West Hill Road	awaited	3. Fencing Min 25/287	£670.00+vat
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	The meeting agreed a proposed response to be agreed with DCC Highways: The path and car park area is private land and the Council has no control over the footpath in that area. The meeting considered correspondence which raised a safety concern and asked for the guardrail alongside West Hill Road to be extended westwards for safety purposes. Councillors acknowledged the concern and considered options to address the matter. Comments included: - the guardrail had been installed as per the approved plans which had been agreed with DCC Highways via a s278 agreement. - the Road Safety Auditors had not raised any concerns regarding the guardrail - the width of the pavement narrows further eastwards. The meeting considered re-aligning the chicane barriers such that pedestrians leaving the Village Hall site would emerge facing eastwards. However, Councillors raised concerns about the cost and future maintenance and repair costs. Standing Orders were suspended. A member of the public noted that the roadside path was narrow and was concerned that people with buggies would struggle to pass. Standing Orders were resumed. The meeting resolved that there was no justification to extend the guardrail. Action: Cllr FP to reply to the Village Hall Trustees. c. To approve payments and note payments made under delegated powers, if applicable. None Ward Member JB left the meeting 8.03pm d. To decide amendments, if applicable, to the Council's risk assessment for the path. The meeting resolved to approve an update Risk Assessment for leased land at the Village Hall. Action: The Clerk to present details and costs for a grit bin for consideration at a future meeting.
25/317	Finance Working Group: 1. To receive the External Auditor's findings for the year ended 31 March 2025: a. For Councillors to note this report and agree actions, as appropriate. The meeting noted the receipt of the External Auditor's report and certificate and considered the findings. As previously reported (Min 25/288) the Auditor had received challenge correspondence from an elector and had identified two objections regarding the Council 's Annual Return for 2024-2025. Each was considered as eligible as they related to matters of Governance however the two objections were not accepted: Objection 1: expenditure during the year on the reimbursement of expenses to the Clerk. - The auditor found no evidence that any of the payments were for unlawful items. Objection 2: the failure to follow Financial Regulations (use of personal credit card). - The auditor noted WHPC had recognised and addressed the issue since it had amended its Financial Regulations to reflect modern banking practices in February 2025. The Auditor also noted that some of the payments made could not be paid other than by credit card. The Auditor's report acknowledged that the parish council had already taken the appropriate action and the Parish Council was not required to undertake any further actions. The Chairman noted that the Parish Council Financial Regulations allowed for the use of personal credit cards but asked for the Finance Working Group to explore options for a Council charge card to eliminate risk to the Parish Clerk.

	Action: The Finance WG to present its findings (options for a charge card) to a future meeting. 1 member of the public left the meeting 8.14pm. b. To note and approve payment of the External Auditor's fee of £315 plus VAT, Noted c. To inform Councillors of the additional audit fee incurred due to a challenge to the Council's Annual Return for 2024-25 under Section 27 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and to approve payment of the fee, £1,065+VAT. Noted. d. To note the charge for any person requiring a copy of the AGAR £20.00 and decide the time limit for the period for right of inspection. The meeting agreed the charge, £20.00, to be made for a copy of the AGAR and set a period of 14 days (26th September – 10th October 2025) for the Notice of Conclusion of Audit 2024-2025 and AGAR to be published. The AGAR is published on the website. 2. To receive the updated CIL Statement and Asset Register. Deferred to the next meeting. 3. To approve a revised schedule of 2025-2026 Regular Payments. The meeting resolved to approve an updated schedule of Regular Payments.
25/318	Neighbourhood Plan Working Group: a. To receive an update on the publication of the analysis of responses to the community survey. Standing Orders were suspended Margaret Hall, Chairman of the Working Group provided an update on the Neighbourhood Plan Community Survey including preparations for a drop-in session on Friday 17th October 3.30-6.30pm at the Village Hall to display analysis of the results and emerging themes. A full report on the survey responses was published on the Council's website. The responses survey demonstrated a strong desire to protect the character of the village. The Working Group proposed to develop Design Codes for West Hill to set guidelines for future development as a means to maintain the character of the village. The Group wished to commission external consultancy to support this stage of the project. Standing Orders were resumed. It was reported that the Clerk had arranged to borrow display boards for the drop-in session but would continue to explore options for the purchase of new display boards (ref Min 25/289). b. To decide future actions and costs relating to the development of Design Codes for West Hill. The meeting approved a budget of up to £5000+vat for the appointment of Design Code consultancy support. c. To decide actions relating to survey responses outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan. It was resolved to hold an Informal Meeting to discuss the survey responses and to review the WHPC action plan. Action: The Clerk to make arrangements for an informal meeting 9.30am Friday 24th October 4 members of the public left the meeting 8.26pm
25/319	Playpark Working Group: To receive the findings of the RoSPA playpark inspection report 2025 and to decide actions and costs.

	The meeting considered the 2025 RoSPA Inspection report circulated prior to the meeting and a summary report prepared by Cllr AC: • The inspection was conducted on 27th August 2025. All items of equipment and ground surfaces were inspected. • No matters of serious concern were identified. All items were reported to be a LOW/VERY LOW risk. The meeting agreed the following actions: a. The Playpark Working Group to monitor wear and tear on the triple swing. b. To commission the Lengthsman to repair/replace the timber path edging and approved costs up to £100+vat.
25/320	Emergency Plan Working Group: To receive a verbal update. Cllr FP gave a progress report and gave details of an induction/training session for the working group and volunteers arranged for 1st November.

Other Matters

25/321	To consider a grant application: West Hill RBL requested a contribution of £500 towards the purchase of two chiller units for the RBL club. The meeting considered the application and resolved not to make a grant award.
25/322	To consider the renewal of the scheme to provide two Community Public Access Defibrillators for a further 4 years at a cost of £2,800.00+vat. The meeting considered a short report on the Community Public Access Defibrillators provided by the Parish Council via a scheme offered by the South West Ambulance Service Trust: • The defibrillators are located at 11 Eastfield and RBL Clubhouse, School Lane • It was understood that, in response to a 999 call, the Ambulance Services had allocated one of the devices on three separate occasions. • Under the scheme SWAST replaced out of date items, carried out an annual service check and offered an annual community familiarisation session. • The current scheme ends in March 2026. • It was no longer possible to provide additional devices via the scheme. • The guardian for each of the defibrillators were willing to continue in their role and continue their monthly checks. The meeting resolved to renew the provision of two Community Public Access Defibrillators for a further four years at a cost of £1,800+vat for the 1st device and £1,000+vat for the second device.
25/323	To consider the re-appointment of a Solicitor on an annual retained basis and to approve costs if considered appropriate. The meeting resolved to renew the annual subscription to Tozer's Council Legal Advice Service at a cost of £500+vat.
25/324	Local Government Reform in Devon: a. To receive an update on proposals for Local Government Reform in Devon. The meeting noted the Devon County Council announcement on their preferred proposal for Local Government Reform (LGR) in Devon: The 9-1-1 proposal refers to 9 district and county councils, Plymouth and Torbay. b. To note correspondence received from Exeter City Council and to decide a response. It was reported that the Chairman and Clerk of the Parish Council had attended a Exeter City Council briefing on their proposal for Local Government Reform in Devon.

	Councillors were concerned about the potential cost-effectiveness of the new unitary body as the proposal falls significantly below the 500,000 population guideline set by the Government. The meeting agreed a response to Exeter City Council. c. Asset map The meeting received a short report on the County and East Devon District Council assets in West Hill. The online non-housing asset listings demonstrated the following: • Devon County Council - no assets listed in West Hill • East Devon District Council (EDDC) - 1 asset listed – a storm drain. Councillors queried the accuracy of the EDDC listing as the Bendarroch Road bus shelter was not included although EDDC had previously confirmed ownership.
25/325	To consider arrangements for appointing a Village Lengthsman for 2026, if considered appropriate. It was resolved to agree the advert and contract specification to be advertised until mid-day 27th October and to consider responses at the next scheduled Council meeting.
25/326	West Hill Remembrance Service 2025: To receive an update on arrangements for the Remembrance Service on Sunday 9th November 2025 and to decide actions/costs if appropriate. No matters were raised.
25/327	WHPC Equipment and Storage: a. To consider the replacement of WHPC mobile phone handsets due to network (3G/5G) changes and decide actions/costs as appropriate. It was resolved to set a budget of £600+vat for replacement mobile phones. b. To consider a recommendation for storage of WHPC equipment and documents. The meeting received an update on options and costs for storage of WHPC materials. Locations outside the village were considered to be impractical and expensive. It was resolved to approve arrangements for storage within West Hill at a cost of £50 per month. c. To consider the purchase of a fire-proof filing cabinet and to decide actions/costs. It was agreed to defer consideration of this item to a future meeting.
25/328	To consider correspondence received: worn out road markings at the junction of Oak Road and Higher Broad Oak Road. The meeting considered correspondence received regarding worn out road markings. Councillors acknowledged that many of the road marking across the village were worn out. This matter had previously been discussed with a Highways Officer. He had explained that the wear and tear had to exceed a specified threshold before DCC Highways would consider re-painting the lines. Recently, in response to a question submitted by Ward Member Jess Bailey, DCC Highways had agreed to assess the road markings at the junction of Oak Road/Higher Broad oak Road for inclusion in the 2026-27 programme. (ref Min 25/309).
25/329	Clerk Matters: 1. To receive a report from the Parish Clerk and to agree actions as appropriate • Councillors were reminded ○ to complete their training assessment and check the autumn training schedule available via DALC. ○ The BT roadshow will visit West Hill on 16th October to provide information on the switch to digital landlines and provide one-to-one support. • Another Parish Council was seeking a Playground Inspection RoSPA training course. It was hoped that other Council's would be interested as this would reduce the shared cost of the training, approximately £750.00+vat in total.

	It was resolved, to register a Councillor to attend Playground Inspection RoSPA training course at a cost up to £360.00+vat. Ownership of the solar powered speed sign on West Hill Road (near the junction with Warren Park) has been established to be Ottery St Mary Council. They have offered to transfer the device to West Hill Parish Council. Action: The Clerk to investigate costs to repair the device and present the findings to the next meeting. 2. To note decisions made under delegated powers (if applicable). None 3. Urgent matters (if applicable) None				
25/330	To review WHPC's Action Tracker and agree actions as considered appropriate. No new issues arising.				
25/331	Financial matters: a. To consider and approve, if appropriate, the Schedule of Payments. The meeting considered the Schedule of Payments and invoices circulated and published before the meeting. No questions were raised. Payments made under delegated powers were confirmed. It was resolved to approve the payments and sign the invoices. It was resolved to make an internal bank transfer of £20,000. b. To consider and approve, if appropriate, any additional payments presented to the meeting. Additional payments were presented to the meeting. It was resolved to approve the payments: <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding-bottom: 5px;">Inv 3558 Pro-Lawn Garden Services - VAS Transfers</td><td style="text-align: right; padding-bottom: 5px;">£96.00</td></tr> <tr> <td style="padding-bottom: 5px;">Inv 2314 West Hill Village Hall - Room Hire - Top up fee</td><td style="text-align: right; padding-bottom: 5px;">£ 1.88</td></tr> </table> c. To receive, if available, monthly Bank Reconciliations and finance trackers. No issues were raised.	Inv 3558 Pro-Lawn Garden Services - VAS Transfers	£96.00	Inv 2314 West Hill Village Hall - Room Hire - Top up fee	£ 1.88
Inv 3558 Pro-Lawn Garden Services - VAS Transfers	£96.00				
Inv 2314 West Hill Village Hall - Room Hire - Top up fee	£ 1.88				
25/332	Councillor questions, reports and items for future agenda Each Councillor is requested to use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas. <i>Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision making.</i> Cllr FP reported: Tar Barrels: The organising committee has confirmed that West Hill Road and Lower Broad Oak Road will be designated a Clearway (up to Elsdon Lane) for unrestricted access for emergency vehicles. Following consultations with West Hill organisations the car parks in West Hill will be advertised for use for the event: St Michael's Bendarroch Road, RBL Clubhouse School Lane and the car park at Morrisons. Exeter Airport Consultative Committee: Cllr FP chaired the meeting held on 11th September. The airport had received more noise complaints mostly associated with TUI flights. KLM are considering adding a 2nd aircraft to their schedule to provide improved timings for onward connections. - Cllr FP represented the Parish Council at a recent Police Advocate Meeting. The new inspector and other new members of the local police team were present to meet members of local Parish and Town Councils. It was anticipated that the meetings would continue on a quarterly basis.				
25/333	Next meeting: To confirm arrangements for the upcoming WHPC meeting on Tuesday 4th November 2025 7.00pm at the Village Hall				

All remaining members of the public left the meeting.
Meeting closed at 9.30pm

Signed

Date