

**WHIMPLE PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 17 MARCH 2025, 7pm**

Present: Cllr Denise Dearden (chair)
Cllr Jo Yarwood
Cllr Richard Lawrence

Also present: Amy Tregellas (Parish Clerk)

There were three members of the public present.

Devon County Councillor Cllr Iain Chubb was also present at the start of the meeting.

136. Remembering Cllr Alan McArthur

Councillors shared memories of Cllr Alan McArthur who passed away recently. Cllr McArthur had been a Parish Councillor, serving his community for 25 years. This included being the Vice-Chair of the Council from 2013 and becoming Chair of the Council from May 2023.

Cllr Dearden said that Alan had asked her to join the Council. He was also her neighbour. He asked Cllr Dearden if she wanted to see an owl chick that had been abandoned by its parents. Cllr McArthur had set up a home for the chick in his home. Cllr Dearden said that summed Alan up as he was always doing things for other people. He had dedicated his life to public service, firstly in the Police and then as a parish councillor.

Cllr Yarwood said that Alan was so kind and a really nice man. When she was experiencing unkind comments from people, he told her to take no notice of the unkind remarks and to persist in carrying on. Cllr Yarwood thanked him for that. She also said that she did some shanty singing with Alan. He was a good man who had a great view about how the councillors should work together for the greater good.

Cllr Lawrence said that he and Alan had a great love of football, he as a Chelsea fan and Alan as a Fulham fan. They shared lots of laughs about football, especially when Chelsea played Fulham. Cllr Lawrence sad that Alan was good fun, very reassuring and a great bloke.

All Councillors agreed that Alan would be greatly missed.

A minute's silence was held as a mark of respect for Cllr McArthur.

137. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Olive.

138. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

139. Public Participation

None of the members of the public present wished to speak.

140. Minutes of the previous meeting of Whimple Parish Council

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Whimble Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 17 February 2025.

(proposed by Cllr Dearden; seconded by Cllr Lawrence)

141. District and County Councillor reports:

East Devon District Councillor report

Cllr Olive was not in attendance and had not sent a report.

Devon County Councillor Report

Cllr Iain Chubb was in attendance and had also sent a report which had been circulated to councillors with the agenda papers.

Cllr Chubb updated that the Devon County Council (DCC) budget had been approved and that there was an increase of 4.99% for the 2025/26 financial year. Unlike a number of other councils, DCC have set a good balanced budget. There is increased funding for roads but not enough to cover everything that needs to be done. Cllr Chubb confirmed that members of the public need to report potholes via the DCC website in order for them to be logged on the system and repaired.

Cllr Chubb also confirmed that originally the DCC budget was not going to have the Councillors Locality Budget for 2025/26. However, this has been added back into the budget and each Councillor has a pot of £8,000 to spend in their local area.

Cllr Chubb also confirmed that there will be no report in April 2025 due to being in the pre-election period for the 1 May 2025 DCC elections.

Cllr Chubb left the meeting at 7.13pm in order to visit other Parish Council meetings.

142. Co-option of Councillors

Councillors considered applications for co-option to Whimble Parish Council from Ms Sarah Johnson, Ms Lynda Patrick and Ms Angela Trimblett.

The Clerk confirmed that all three applicants were qualified to become a councillor.

The Clerk explained that if co-opted, the applicants would officially become councillors at the next Whimble Parish Council meeting, which would either be the Planning meeting scheduled on Monday 7 April (subject to planning applications coming forward from EDDC) or the Council meeting on Tuesday 22 April 2025. Each co-opted councillor would be asked to read out and sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Officer statement at the start of the meeting.

The Council **RESOLVED** to co-opt Sarah Johnson to Whimble Parish Council.
(moved Cllr Lawrence; seconded Cllr Yarwood)

The Council **RESOLVED** to co-opt Lynda Patrick to Whimble Parish Council.
(moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Lawrence)

The Council **RESOLVED** to co-opt Angela Trimblett to Whimble Parish Council.
(moved Cllr Yarwood; seconded Cllr Dearden)

Sarah Johnson left the meeting following this item of business.

143. EDDC Emerging Local Plan Consultation Response

Councillors considered the EDDC Emerging Local Plan Consultation responses that the Clerk had drafted for sites:

Whim_11 Land at Station Road – 33 new homes

Whim_08a Land west of Bramley Gardens – 50 homes and a community orchard

Whim 08a

The Clerk confirmed that the officer wording within the EDDC Site Selection Report for Whimble had formed the basis of the response.

The Council is challenging the soundness of this allocation in the Local Plan, especially given that the Strategic Planning Committee had gone against the advice of the professional Planning Officers, allocating part of the site. Planning Officers had recommended not allocating all or part of this site). They also advised that further work would need to be carried out on the constraints before any allocation should be considered. This work has not been carried out and therefore the Parish Council is of the view that allocation is unsound.

The Clerk advised that she had also taken into account the comments made by members of the public that attended and spoke at the Whimble Parish Council Planning meeting on 3 March 2025.

The response focused on the following areas:

- The soundness of the process followed by EDDC Strategic Planning Committee
- Scale of development being incompatible with the spatial strategy
- The site lacking a safe and convenient pedestrian access to services and facilities in the village
- The site forms part of the 'Green Wedge' between Whimble and Cranbrook
- The potential impact on unconfirmed wildlife site
- The risk of flooding
- Asking why EDDC Strategic Planning Committee had focused specifically on this site and not alternative sites in Whimble, Cranbrook or other sites in the District.

Discussion took place around:

- The fact that the Cobden Expansion of Cranbrook includes land which is in the Whimble Parish Area and that the number of houses would cover the allocation for Whimble
- The Whimble Housing Needs Assessment carried out as part of the Neighbourhood Plan work stated that there was a need for 4 affordable homes in the next 5 years, so how can EDDC justify a need to 83 homes in Whimble Village
- The Police have stated that Church Road is classed as an unsafe road with no pavements

Whim 11

The Clerk confirmed that the statement from Whimble Parish Council to the EDDC Strategic Planning Committee on 1 October 2024 formed the basis of the response.

Again, the Parish Council is challenging the soundness of the allocation of the site.

The response focused on the following areas:

- The site had been put forward for development several times before but was rejected on several legitimate planning grounds and the site was not allocated. The Parish Council is challenging what has changed following previous rejections.
- Tree and wildlife habitats
- Flooding

- Access to the site and infrastructure
- The site being land of local importance
- The Spatial Strategy and amount of proposed development in Whimble being significantly more than is needed

Discussion took place around:

- The fact that the Officer Site Selection Report for Whimble does not make reference to the mature tree in the middle of the site which has a Tree Preservation Order
- There is no reference to the fact that previously planners at EDDC have classed this site as “Land of Local Importance” stating that ‘the intention of the designation is that the land should not be built upon’ and ‘the designation means that the land can only be used for activities which retain its open nature. Any applications to develop the land would be resisted.’

Councillors discussed the fact that they had expressed a preference for development to be to the east of the Village centre, rather than exacerbating the already busy and unsafe route of Church Road. This has never been viewed positively by EDDC and DCC.

Councillors asked the Clerk to promote the responses to local residents to encourage them to respond to the consultation. The information is to be put on the Council website and Facebook page, as well as the Whimble What’s on Facebook page.

Councillors also felt that submitting two responses would be the most appropriate course of action, despite the fact that there is duplication in the responses.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the response to the EDDC Emerging Local Plan Consultation for site Whim_08a Land west of Bramley Gardens.
(*Moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Lawrence*)

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the response to the EDDC Emerging Local Plan Consultation for site Whim_11 Land at Station Road.
(*moved Cllr Yarwood; seconded Cllr Dearden*)

144. Environment & Community

i) Community Speed Watch initiative

Cllr Lawrence updated that he has completed the co-ordinator training and six volunteers have completed and passed the operator training, meaning that seven volunteers can now carry out speed checks. Training on using the equipment will take place on Thursday afternoon and speed checks could start as early as next week.

The Police have confirmed the sites where the volunteers will carry out the speed checks. They are:

- School Hill – both directions
- Church Lane – both directions
- Old A30 London Road – both directions
- Broadclyst Road – one direction

Councillors raised the issue of speed limits and whether it should be 30mph from the Hand and Pen and 20mph in the village centre. Cllr Yarwood said that Ottery St Mary have better roads than Whimble and their town centre has been changed to 20mph. Councillors asked the Clerk

to contact Ottery St Mary Town Council to find out how they got the speed limit changed and also to liaise with DCC Highways.

Councillors decided to take agenda items 9ii and 9iii together as they both related to play equipment.

ii) To receive an update on S106 Town Lane play equipment and iii) To receive an update on the Play Equipment in the Parish Field

Councillors considered the reports relating to the Town Lane play area project and the play equipment in the Parish Field.

The Clerk's report on the Town Lane Play Area set out that there are a number of tasks that need to be carried out in the Town Lane area before any new play equipment can be installed. This includes:

- Removal of the wooden equipment located in the area to the left hand side of the path
- Removal of rotten wooden bench located along the top border of the site
- Removal of the picnic table with concrete base and rotten wooden top located along the bottom border of the site
- Dismantling and removal of the wooden shelter located along the bottom border of the site
- Cutting back of a number of trees overhanging the site

The Clerk confirmed that she had met with a number of play equipment suppliers at the site and they were working up a number of options as to the types of equipment that could be installed at the Town Lane site within the Council's budget. The Clerk's report recommended setting up a small working group to work with her on reviewing the options coming forward from the play equipment suppliers.

Due to the expenditure exceeding £25,000 the Council would need to follow the Public Contract Regulations 2015, meaning that the contract would have to be advertised on the Government's "Contract Finder" website.

The Clerk's report on the play equipment at the Parish Field covered the costs of replacing the rotten wooden post on one of the pieces of play equipment to make it operational:

- The supplier that installed the equipment quoted a price of £816.51 plus VAT to provide the replacement equipment but the Council would then have to pay an additional cost to someone to install the equipment.
- For the supplier to provide and install the replacement equipment it would cost £1124.51 plus VAT.
- The play equipment supplier also provide an operational assessment of all of the play equipment for a sum of £180 plus VAT

Discussion took place around:

- The fact that the budget could be used up very quickly with flooring so all suppliers were recommending grass matting being used around individual items of equipment
- Accessibility to the site is problematic and it is unlikely that suppliers would be able to get a vehicle bigger than a transit van along the access road and under the railway bridge
- Whether the Town Lane site is the best location for a play area for young children
- Whether, if the play equipment is installed in Town Lane, it would be kept in a good condition or prone to being vandalised.

- The play equipment in the Parish Field is likely to be condemned and need to be removed or replaced
- The fact that the Council only has a limited budget which would only deliver one decent play area, not two.
- Whether it would be better to focus on replacing the play equipment in the Parish Field next to the Pump Track rather than install equipment at the Town Lane site
- The fact that EDDC are upgrading the play area at Slewton Crescent which will be for younger children
- Whether equipment in the Parish Field should focus on older children
- Whether it would be a good use of taxpayer's money to have an operational inspection of the equipment in the Parish Field, or just to go ahead and get quotes for its removal and installation of a new play area.
- The Town Lane site should be utilised and the need to consider options
- Whether the Town Lane site could be made into a mindfulness space or community garden
- The need to consult members of the public on the options available to the Council

Councillors asked the Clerk to:

- Put together the options for the Parish Field and Town Lane site to share with members of the public.
 - Obtain quotes for the following works in Town Lane:
 - Removal of the old equipment on the left hand side of the site
 - Removal of the old bench along the top border of the site
 - Removal of the old picnic bench along the bottom border of the site
 - Dismantle and remove the shelter along the bottom border of the site
 - Pruning and cutting back of the overgrown trees
 - Post on Facebook to see if any local suppliers are interested in quoting for the above listed works
 - Contact the play area suppliers to ask them to quote for the removal of the equipment in the Parish Field and installation of a new Play Area there focused on older children
 - Set up a working group to consider the information coming forward from the suppliers.
- Newly co-opted councillors Angela Trimblett and Lynda Patrick put themselves forward to work with the Clerk on the project.

iv) Report on the Lomas Seat

Councillors considered the Clerk's report on the Lomas Seat. At a previous meeting the Council had resolved to consider the options of repairing the existing Lomas Seat or replacing it with a new memorial bench.

Costs for each option had now been obtained and were as follows:

Option 1: Repair the existing Lomas Seat

As an anonymous person has carried out works to the Lomas Seat to concrete in the front posts, councillors considered that the brackets previously quoted for were no longer needed. Therefore, the quote of £400 was from Mr Delves was considered which included works to repair the roof, the removal and replacement of the battens and felt, fixing the original tiles to the front of the roof and supplying and fitting new tiles on the back of the roof. Mr Delves also quoted an additional £100 to carry out remedial works to the wooden structure and to apply a wood treatment.

Option 2: Replace the Lomas Seat with a new memorial bench

A new (6 ft, 4 seater) teak memorial bench would cost in the range of £605 to £915.

In addition to this, the existing Lomas Seat would have to be dismantled and removed, at an extra cost.

Discussion took place around:

- The fact that the budget would come from the Ear-marked reserve allocated from the Lomas Seat
- The fact that the Parish Council does not own the Lomas Seat so once these repairs have been completed the Parish Council will not be carrying out any further works

The Council **RESOLVED** to go ahead with Option 1: repairing the existing Lomas Seat, using Mr Delves to carry out the repairs listed in the report to a maximum of £500. If the costs rise above £500 Mr Delves would need to seek permission from the Council before continuing with the works.

(moved Cllr Lawrence; seconded Cllr Yarwood)

Cllr Lawrence confirmed that he would liaise with Mr Delves to ask him to commence the works.

v) Village Maintenance Schedule

Councillors considered the Clerk's report on village maintenance.

The report considered the areas of The Square, the Parish car park, the Town Lane Play Area and the Parish Field.

The Square

Cllr Lawrence proposed that he wants the Council to cut back the seven trees in The Square due to the fact that one is dead, six of the trees need to have dead wood and structurally flawed branches removed and two of the trees are growing around telephone and power cables. He also believes that the trees are a health and safety hazard and to that end had obtained three quotes for works to the trees.

Discussion took place around:

- Whether the Council should just go ahead with the works
- There being no legal powers and duties that the Council can use to carry out the works as they are not the landowner or don't have the landowners permission.
- The fact that the Council cannot do things that are illegal
- The need to go back to the Land Registry to see if they can assist and whether the land has been adopted by any organisation(s)
- The need to check with EDDC Land Charges service to see if they hold any information
- The need to check with Exeter Diocese to see if they are the landowner
- Cllr Yarwood offered to check the archives in the History Society to see if there is a map outlining the landowner(s)
- The need to go back to DCC Highways as the Parish Council believes they are the landowners due to one side of the site being on the highway and the other side being a public footpath (both of which are DCC responsibility). Copy in Cllr Chubb to any correspondence
- The need to contact the Environment Agency to see if they hold any information regarding landownership
- If the land is unadopted whether it would be prudent for the Parish Council to adopt it, subject to further investigation and discussion

Councillors asked the Clerk to contact the agencies listed above and to report back on progress to the next meeting.

Councillors also raised concerns that the pedestrian brick footbridge going across the river in the same location was falling down. Again Councillors asked the Clerk to raise this issue with DCC (copying in Cllr Chubb)

Parish Car Park

The Clerk confirmed that she had tried to contact Whimble and Broadclyst Young Farmers several times to see if they would be interested in cutting back brambles and tidying up the Parish Car Park for a donation. To date no response has been received.

Councillors asked the Clerk to get quotes from grounds maintenance operatives, also advertising on the Whimble What's On page to see if any local suppliers are interested in quoting for the works.

The areas of Town Lane Play Area and the Parish Field had been covered in minute 144 ii and iii.

vi) Goal mouth/posts for the Parish Field

The Clerk confirmed that she had not heard anything further from WACY regarding liaising with the football club.

Mr Starkey had provided the Clerk with contact details for the Whimble Recreation Trust (WRT).

Due to the complications relating to the land ownership, leases and sub-leases, the councillors felt that they could do no more in relation to this issue and it was now up to the various parties to move this forward together.

Councillors asked the Clerk to send Ms Silk from WACY the contact details for the Cricket Club, Football Club and WRT.

vii) Any other arising environment and community issues

No other environment and community issues were raised.

145. Allotments

The Clerk updated that the majority of the allotment rent payments had been received and non-payments are now being chased.

The Clerk confirmed that an inspection of the allotments would be completed before the April Council meeting and the people on the waiting list contacted to offer them plots.

Vacant plots would be advertise on the Council website and Whimble What's On Facebook page before being advertised more widely in neighbouring areas.

146. Neighbourhood Plan

There is no update at this time following the applications for Government funding being submitted.

147. Planning

i) To consider Planning Applications

No planning applications had come forward from EDDC for consideration at this meeting.

148. Finance

i) Summary receipts and payments for 2024/25 to 28 February 2025

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the summary of receipts and payments to 28 February 2025

(Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood)

ii) Unity Bank current account reconciliation as at the end February 2025
The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Unity Bank current account reconciliation to end February 2025
(*Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood*)

iii) Unity Bank savings account reconciliation as at the end February 2025
The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Unity Bank savings account reconciliation to end February 2025
(*Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood*)

iv) To approve the scheduled of payments for March 2025 totalling £1232.91, which included payments for:

Whimble Victory Hall hire February 2025 = £20.00

Clerk salary; March 2025 = £781.53

HMRC PAYE and Employers NIC; March 2025 = £225.38

Donation to Retina UK in memory of Cllr Alan McArthur = £200.00

Unity Trust Bank service charge 01/02/25 to 28/02/25 = £6.00

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments for March 2025.
(*proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood*)

v) Budget Monitoring Report 2024/25 as at end February 2025
The Council **RESOLVED** to note the budget monitoring report as at end February 2025
(*Proposed by Cllr Dearden; seconded by Cllr Yarwood*)

149. Communications and Media Policy

Councillors considered the Communications and Media Policy.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Communications and Media Policy.
(*moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood*)

150. Social Media Policy

Councillors considered the Social Media Policy.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Social Media Policy.
(*moved Cllr Yarwood; seconded Cllr Dearden*)

151. Website – proposal for improving the website

Councillors considered the Clerk's report outlining proposals for improving the Council website.

Discussion took place around:

- Whether the preference was for the picture icons on the home page of the website or the drop down menus at the top of the website. Councillors preferred the picture icons.
- The need to include more financial information as set out in the Local Government Transparency Code for Smaller Councils.
- The need to make use of the planning page, as currently the link doesn't work
- The fact that the Neighbourhood Plan page has not been updated since March 2020
- Removing the page called Elections, as this information is publicly available on the EDDC website and it hasn't been updated since April 2021
- The Community links and guides being out of date and covering information relating to the Coronavirus

- Providing information on Council facilities including Allotments, the Parish Car Park, Parish Field and Town Lane.
- Adding a map of the Whimble parish area
- Give more information about the history of Whimble and the Parish Council
- Incorporating a list of the responsibilities of Whimble Parish Council, East Devon District Council and Devon County Council
- Improve the public participation section to include any questions coming forward through public participation, using the Crediton Town Council layout of meeting and date, question, response and latest update and date
- Include a list of useful contacts listing the service, description of what they do, telephone number and website address

The options put forward were:

Option 1 – remove ribbon and use 9 picture menus:

- Council – basic information; role of council, councillors and clerk; powers and duties; map of the parish area; history of Whimble
- News – latest news; news archive;
- Councillors – details on parish councillors; link to EDDC Register of Interests page; EDDC Councillor information; DCC Councillor information; MP information
- Meetings – meetings; agendas and minutes; public participation information; list of public participation questions and answers
- Neighbourhood Planning/Planning – Neighbourhood Plan documents and evidence; details of planning applications considered by the Council (link to the update on applications that goes before the Planning meeting); explanation of how the planning process works
- Finance – AGAR documents; bank reconciliations; monthly schedule of payments; budget monitoring reports
- Council Policies – hyperlinks to all policies and procedures
- Council facilities – allotments, car park, Parish Field, Town Lane Play Area
- Useful information – list of areas covered by WPC, EDDC and DCC; list of useful contacts; signposting to other organisations

Have the contact us information at the bottom of the home page but not as a menu item

Option 2 – remove the picture menus and use the ribbon menu at the top of the screen

Use drop down menus at the top of the screen rather than the picture menus. The topics for each drop down menu could match the same as the items listed under Option 1.

The Council **RESOLVED**:

1. To select and approve option 1 for the layout of the website
2. That the Clerk liaise with Vision ICT to discuss what is possible in terms of making the layout changes to the website
3. To approve the proposals for improvements to the website set out in this report, and that the Clerk proceeds to make the changes to the website.

(Moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Lawrence)

152. Forward Plan

The Council noted the Forward Plan, and noted the items coming forward in April, which are:

- The Asset Register
- Reserves Policy
- A report on reserves and ear-marked reserves
- Bank reconciliation to end March 2025

- Schedule of payments for April 2025
- Planning applications (if appropriate)
- Items arising from the Smaller Authorities Guidance for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26
- AGAR timetable for the 2024/25 return
- Volunteer Policy
- Civility and Respect Policy
- Staff Handbook

In addition to these items councillors also asked for the following items to be added:

- An update from Cllr Olive on the Whimble Neighbourhood Plan
- Planning the Annual Parish Meeting

153. Correspondence

The Council considered the following correspondence:

1. An email from George Paddon EDDC, confirming that £886.08 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be paid to the Council on 28/04/25.
2. A call from South Western Ambulance Trust (SWAST) regarding the defibrillator at Whimble Victory Hall. The Clerk now has to obtain the serial number and date of expiry of the pads before registering the device on The Circuit.
3. Email from EDDC regarding an online session for Parish Councils regarding Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The session takes place on 18/03/25 and the Clerk has confirmed attendance.
4. Email from the Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) confirming a session for parish councils on Devolution and LGR. This takes place on 8 April 2025 at 10.30am. The Clerk has confirmed she will attend and provide an update to councillors.
5. Email Source for Business who have confirmed that they have replaced the faulty/damaged water meter outside the Parish Field.

154. Chair's Business

Cllr Dearden advised that she thinks she is now having her emails impersonated and advised people to check her email address before sending or opening any emails.

Cllr Dearden also advised councillors that the Pre-election period for the Devon County Council elections starts on Tuesday 25 March 2025 and will continue until the elections on Thursday 1 May 2025.

The meeting closed at 9.34pm

The next Planning Meetings will be held on Monday 7 April 2025 at 7pm * *A planning meeting will be cancelled if no new planning applications are received by the date that the agenda is published (the Tuesday before the meeting).* As it is a Bank Holiday on the third Monday in April, the next Parish Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 22 April 2025 at 7pm.

Signed by Chair:

22/04/2025