

WHIMPLE PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 19 JANUARY 2026, 7pm

Present: Cllr Denise Dearden
Cllr Todd Olive
Cllr Lynda Patrick
Cllr Angela Trimblett

Also present: Amy Tregellas (Parish Clerk)

There was one member of the public present

156. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Yarwood, Johnson and Venton.

157. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

158. Public Participation

The Clerk read out an email from Ms Lucy Gould regarding the play areas in Whimple, as follows:

'It's fantastic money has been spent on the Slewton playpark, however, there is very limited equipment for pre school age children - less than before the refurbishment which is such a shame. The roundabout is far too high, slide apparatus is huge and the see-saw is very stiff making it an area for much older children. Keeping the children's swing and slide was a necessity.

Reading online I gather some of the items that didn't fit in the current park are being installed into the parish field, it's a good solution but getting from slewton to the field is impossible with a pram and toddler, I won't be alone in this situation.

I could park at the cricket club and that's quite a walk for little legs, we regularly come into the village to use the shop, school, pubs and park and it's such a shame this will reduce our trips. The park is such a great asset to the village but only if it's suitable for its audience. Please could you let me know any solutions/plans for a bridge/plans to update the park to make it more suitable for the children that'll use it the most!'

Councillors asked the Clerk to send a response to Ms Gould covering the following matters:

- To thank her for writing to the Council
- To explain the position regarding the play equipment
- To outline that the cost of a new bridge would be in the region of £40,000 and that the Council doesn't currently have the funding for this.
- The Council will keep the situation under review and look at ways to improve accessibility to the Parish Field and play area.

159. Minutes of the previous meeting of Whimple Parish Council

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Whimple Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 15 December 2025.

(proposed by Cllr Dearden; seconded by Cllr Olive)

Clerk provided the following updates (for those items not covered in the agenda):

- Minute 142 (Slewton Crescent) The clerk advised that she had emailed East Devon District Council (EDDC) with the concerns raised by Mr Hazell and that an officer from EDDC had been liaising with him.
- Minute 145ii (Parish Field Play Area Project) The Clerk advised that after the meeting she had contacted Liz Silk regarding the potential plans for the goal mouth and to make her aware that the BMX grass mounds may need to be flattened and removed to accommodate the expanded play area. A response was received by Ms Silk which stated *'On the few times I discussed the Goal Mouths with interested parties, it was suggested that they be placed within the boundary of the gravel track, one of the reasons being that potentially an area could be found that is fairly flat. The Goal Mouths wouldn't necessarily need netting, making it easier for mowing. After all the work that went into making the BMX Bumps, it would be such a shame to flatten them. However, I do appreciate that any project like this can be a nightmare to plan and wouldn't want to stand in the way of all your discussions and decisions. I would be happy to canvas the views of some of the children and parents if you feel that would be helpful and let you have any feedback?'*
- Minute 145v (other environmental and community issues) The Clerk advised that the pothole that had been repaired before Christmas on the junction of Church Lane and The Square was already cutting up. Photos have been taken to report it to Devon County Council (DCC) Highways.
- Minute 149x (Finance) the Clerk confirmed that the Council has now moved across to Rialtas web
- Minute 150 (Budget and Precept 2026/27) The Clerk confirmed that the Precept information had been submitted to EDDC on 30 December 2025 and they had confirmed receipt.
- Minute 154 (Correspondence) The Clerk confirmed that she had reported the issues of no dog signage and Anti-Social Behaviour at the Slewton Crescent Play Area to EDDC but had not yet received a response.
- Minute 154 (correspondence) The Clerk confirmed that the abandoned vehicle located in the Parish Car Park was reported to EDDC on 11 December 2025, but to date no response has been received from Street Scene. This has been followed up again with EDDC and also reported to the local Police. The Police had advised they will look into it. Cllr Dearden confirmed that she had received a call from an individual confirming that he owned the vehicle and it would be removed last weekend. However, the vehicle is still there and hasn't been moved.

160. District and County Councillor reports:

East Devon District Council (EDDC) Councillor report

Cllr Olive gave a verbal update to the meeting:

- A number of complaints have been received regarding the South Western Railway (SWR) 8.03am train service to Exeter either being cancelled or not stopping at Whimple. Cllr Olive confirmed that SWR have brought three more trains back into service so this should stop the problem.
- A Neighbourhood Health Hub (including a doctors surgery) is planned to be located alongside the proposed Leisure Centre in Cranbrook. The NHS have obtained funding for then project and EDDC are looking to find funding to appoint a project officer to drive the project through to delivery.
- Before Christmas the Government set out their plans for changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and are consulting local authorities on the proposals. This includes a policy which has the presumption in favour of development within the distance of railway stations, which would potentially impact on Whimple. Cllr Olive is working with the Planning Strategic Lead to submit a robust response to the Government consultation

Devon County Council (DCC) Councillor Report

Councillor Connor was not in attendance but had sent a report which had been circulated to councillors. There was no discussion on the report.

161. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Devon

There was no update on LGR, other than the Government consultation is likely to launch in early February 2026.

162. Environment & Community

i) Slewtton Crescent Play Area Report

The Clerk confirmed that she had written to EDDC to confirm that the Parish Council had resolved to take the four pieces of play equipment. However, no response had been received from EDDC. The Clerk confirmed she would chase the officers at EDDC, copying in Cllr Olive.

ii) Parish Field Play Area Project Report

At the December 2025 meeting the Councillors agreed that the Clerk would seek procurement advice, given that the project had evolved since it started, including the total budget available. In September 2024, the Council noted that it had a budget of £20,000 to spend on the play area but over time Community Infrastructure Levy funding was added to that, making the total budget circa £35,000. With VAT added the total budget at the time when the Council started liaising with suppliers was circa £42,000. However, S106 monies and two donations from local organisations have now increased the budget to circa £50,000 plus VAT.

Advice was sought from Parkinsons via the Devon Association of Local Councils and was, as follows: *“If the council originally estimated that this would exceed £50,000, excluding VAT, they should have followed their own rules and carried out a formal tender process rather than just seeking proposals. If they assumed it would be no more than £50,000 plus VAT (due to budget constraints), then obtaining quotes was appropriate. It sounds like the latter applies. Having obtained prices and further negotiated with three firms, there is really no point in trying to start it all again. Increasing the project budget slightly after quotes have been received is unlikely to change the potential outcome. It would have been different if it had been a major change from a £50,000 project to a £120,000 project (for example), where larger firms might have taken more interest. The council doesn’t need to post anything on Find-Tender at this stage, but it will need to post a contract details notice within 90 days of a contract being agreed”.*

The Clerk confirmed that the quotations from the three preferred suppliers would be coming forward to the February 2026 meeting so that a decision can be made on which supplier to select. This is to ensure that the lead in time allows for the play area to be installed before the summer holidays.

iii) Village Maintenance

The Clerk advised that she had contacted Hi-Line who had left a letter with Whimble Stores regarding cutting back trees in The Square on behalf of the National Grid and would be meeting the officer on site in the morning to discuss the works.

v) Other Environment and Community issues

Councillors confirmed that the street lamp in the Parish Car Park was still not working and asked the Parish Clerk to liaise further with Devon County Council to find out if they will replace the bulb.

Councillors discussed the need to remove items from the former Chairman's barn. The Clerk advised that she had been liaising with the organisers of Whimble Fest to locate road cones and signage in the shed in the Parish Field.

Some of the other items in the barn would be classed as chargeable waste at the recycling centre. Items can be taken to the normal recycling centre but there will be a charge of £3.85 per rubble bag. Councillors asked the Clerk to liaise with the DCC Neighbourhood Highways Officer to see if anything can be done with the old pothole kits (given that the Council doesn't have any councillors training to repair potholes) and protective clothing. If it is not feasible to return the kit the Council will investigate whether there is a local person with a van that can assist with taking the items to the recycling centre.

163. Allotments

The Clerk advised that she had almost finished preparing the invoices for the 2025/26 allotment tenants and these, along with a letter advising of the price increases for 2026/27 would be sent to tenants by the end of the week. Once the current tenants have confirmed payment are notified the Council that they no longer wish to have the allotment, any vacant plots will be allotted to people on the waiting list. Also continuing to promote the waiting list. Expecting to have a clearer picture as to where we are with the allotments at the February meeting.

164. Neighbourhood Plan

The councillors considered the report and draft sections 1 to 4 of the Whimble Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) which included:

- Section 1 – Introduction
 - The Neighbourhood Area
 - Welcome to Whimble: Parish Profile and Plan Context
 - Structure of the Plan
- Section 2 – Contextualising the Plan
 - Hierarchy of Planning Policy
 - Sustainable Development and National Planning Policy Framework
 - Local Policy Context
 - Requirements and purpose of the Whimble Neighbourhood Plan
- Section 3 – Our Plan Vision, Aims and Objectives
- Section 4 – Landscape and Natural Environment
 - Context
 - Landscape Conservation
 - Ecological Conservation and Enhancement
 - Whimble Orchards

Cllr Olive set out the next steps in terms of reviewing the draft WNP which are:

- Sections 6 (Community Amenities) and 7 (Employment and Business) will be considered at the February 2026 Council meeting.
- Section 5 (Built and Historic Environment) will be considered at the March 2026 Council meeting
- The remaining sections proposed to be considered at the April 2026 Council meeting
- To carry out further work on Chapter 5 relating to a 100% affordable housing allocation.
- Production of masterplans for sites allocated in the emerging EDDC Local Plan
- Assuming no delays to these pieces of work, the evidence base would be reviewed at the June 2026 Council meeting.

Discussions are ongoing with the Neighbourhood Planning Officer at EDDC regarding whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is needed. Assuming that the Plan is scoped *in* for SEA, but that it identifies no significant issues with the Plan, the remainder of the process would then be:

- Formal first stage consultation, known as Reg 14 – consultation with the community and statutory consultees, analogous to the Local Plan’s Reg 18 consultation, a broad stage at which general feedback on the plan and its policies is sought – est Q4 2026
- Collation of responses and revision of the Plan – January/February 2027, depending on Reg 14 timeline
- Formal submission of the plan to East Devon District Council
- Formal second stage consultation, known as Reg 16 – analogous to the Local Plan’s Reg 19 consultation, a narrower consultation that looks at compliance with plan-making conditions – all evidence documents and others required by statute, e.g. the Basic Conditions Statement and Consultation Statement, must be submitted at this stage – est Q1 2027
- Examination of the plan by an inspector appointed by East Devon District Council – est Q2 2027
- Completion of any required modifications to the Plan – July/August 2027
- Community referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan – Q3 2027
- Assuming the public vote is in favour of adopting the Plan, proceed to an East Devon Cabinet decision to adopt the Plan – end Q3 2027

The Council **RESOLVED** that the Parish Council:

1. Consider and advise of any suggested revisions, refinements, or additions to Sections 1 through 4 of the draft Plan (subject to it coming back to the February Council meeting).
2. Agree the suggested approach to further sections and work being considered.
3. Delegates authority to the Parish Clerk in consultation with the Chair and the Neighbourhood Plan Lead to write to landowners of longlisted sites to determine their willingness to consider an allocation for 100% affordable housing.
4. Requests that EDDC undertake a SEA scoping assessment of the working draft of the Neighbourhood Plan at the earliest opportunity.
5. Delegates authority to the Parish Clerk in consultation with the Neighbourhood Plan Lead to agree a specification for masterplanning work and seek quotes for the same, to be considered by the Parish Council at a later date
6. Express its continuing thanks to the EDDC Neighbourhood Planning Officer for their ongoing support and assistance.

(Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Patrick)

165. Planning

The Council considered the following Planning Applications:

i) 25/1692/MRES – Land at Cobdens North of London Road, Cranbrook

Approval of reserved matters pursuant to outline planning permission ref. 22/0406/MOUT, comprising appearance, layout, scale, landscaping and additional accesses (in accordance with Condition 35) for 368 dwellings; layout and access for 57 self-build plots; a local centre; the Parsonage; two locally equipped areas of play (LEAP); suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG); the main local route (MLR); and associated infrastructure together with the discharge of conditions on the outline of condition 8 (LBDS), and the partial discharge of conditions 9 (Design Code), 10 (Wildlife Hazard Management), 11 (LEMP), 12 (Floor levels), 13 (Surface Water Drainage), 14 (Wildlife Corridor), 15 (LBDS), 16 (Tree Protection), 18 (Railway Fencing), 19 (Transfer Plans), 20 (Tree Rooting Volumes), 21 (Junction design), 22 (Junction Materials), 25 (Advance planting), and 28 (Site Investigation).

Discussion took place around:

- The Clerk advised that the Council is being consulted on this application as a neighbouring Parish Council but it falls under the area of Cranbrook Town Council.
- Since the application had been considered previously, documents had been submitted to EDDC relating to landscaping, planting, hedges and tree rooting. Also a Bird Hazard Management Plan has been submitted
- There are no public comments on the application
- There are a significant number of comments from statutory consultees, some of which are objecting subject to additional information to coming forward from the applicant. This includes objections or the need for further information from DCC Planning, DCC Flood Risk Management Team, Police Architectural Liaison Officer, the Environment Agency and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service
- The Council's previously submitted comments still stand

The Council **RESOLVED** that it would write to East Devon District Council to express the following concerns (as a neighbouring Parish Council):

- Concerns relating to access up and down Cobden Lane and whether it would be closed whilst construction works are taking place
- Concerns about the size of vehicles (large articulated vehicles) accessing narrow Cobden Lane, given that it is already regularly used by large agricultural vehicles and large horse transporters
- Concerns raised by local residents relating to the mains water which comes across the field and old A30 to Higher Cobden Farm, and whether the development would impact on their access to the water supply
- Concerns regarding some of the comments from other statutory consultees including DCC Planning, DCC Flood Risk Management Team, Police Architectural Liaison Officer, the Environment Agency and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

(Moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Trimblett)

ii) **25/2376/LBC – 3 Rectory Cottages, The Square, Whimble, Devon, EX5 2ST**

Renew covering and insulate flat roof of extension and include solar light tube

Discussion took place around:

- There are no public comments on this application
- There are no comments from statutory consultees
- This being a straightforward application not appearing to have any material planning considerations

The Council **RESOLVED** that it has no objection to the application.

(moved Cllr Patrick; seconded Cllr Trimblett)

The Clerk asked councillors to consider the insurance quotations before the Finance agenda item, due to the payment being added to the payment schedule. This was agreed.

166. Insurance Quotations

Following discussions at the December 2025 Council meeting and Planning meeting on 5 January 2026, the Clerk advised that she had updated the Asset Register and list of contents/assets on the Insurance schedule.

The Councils long term (3 year) deal with the current supplier is due to end on 1 February 2026.

Therefore quotations were sought from a number of suppliers sourced through the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) Supplier Directory.

Financial Regulation 5.9 states that where the value is between £500 and £3,000 excluding VAT, the Parish Clerk & RFO shall try to obtain 3 estimates which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers.

The Clerk contacted two suppliers in addition to the existing supplier who had provided a quotation (updated based on the changes listed above). One supplier provided a quotation and the other supplier did not contact the Council. So best endeavours were used to obtain three quotations but only two were received.

Quotations were considered as follows:

Supplier 1 – two options: 1 year policy £1,705.46 or 3 year policy £1,567.21 (per year)

Supplier 2 – 3 year policy £930.67 (per year)

The Council **RESOLVED** to award the Council's insurance to James Hallam Insurance Brokers (insurance with Ansva) for a three-year period of 1 February 2026 to 31 January 2029 at the price of £930.67 per year (subject to changes being made once the Parish Field Play Area project has been delivered)

(Moved Cllr Trimblett; seconded Cllr Patrick)

167. Finance

i) Summary receipts and payments for 2025/26 to 31 December 2025

The Clerk advised that three sources of income had been received in December which were VAT reclaim for the 2022/23 financial year, grass cutting reimbursement and bank interest on one savings account. Expenditure was as listed on the payment schedules for December 2025. The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the summary of receipts and payments to 31 December 2025

(Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Olive)

ii) Unity Bank current account reconciliation as at the end December 2025

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Unity Bank current account reconciliation to end December 2025, with the amount in the Current Account totalling to £1,129.30.

(Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Olive)

iii) Unity Bank savings account 1 reconciliation as at the end December 2025

The Clerk advised that bank interest totalling £331.51 had been received for the period of 1 October to 31 December 2025.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Unity Bank savings account 1 (earmarked reserves) reconciliation to end December 2025, with the amount in the Savings Account totalling to £60,487.04.

(Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Olive)

iv) Unity Bank savings account 2 reconciliation as at the end December 2025

The Clerk advised that no bank interest had been received at the end of December 2025. She had followed this up with Unity Trust Bank who had confirmed that interest is paid on this account quarterly at the end of January, April, July and October.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Unity Bank savings account 2 reconciliation to end December 2025, with the amount in the Savings Account totalling to £21,609.58.

(Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Olive)

v) To approve the schedule of payments for January 2026 totalling £2,736.73 which included payments for:

Whimble Victory Hall hire December 2025 = £20.00

Pro Lawn maintenance session = £103.20

Savills Allotment Rent Charge = £390.00

James Hallam Insurance Brokers = £930.67

Rialtas web = £61.50

Source for Business Water bill for Grove Road Allotments = £64.67

Source for Business Water bill for the Parish Field = £24.65

Clerk salary January 2026 = £833.65

HMRC PAYE and Employers NIC; January 2026 = £302.39

Unity Trust Bank service charge 01/12/25 to 31/12/25 = £6.00

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments for January 2026.

(proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Olive)

vi) Transfer of funds from Savings Account 2 to the Current Account

The Clerk advised that she had not made the transfer from Savings Account 2 to the Current Account following the December meeting due to the fact that monies had arrived in the Current Account from HMRC and DCC, which more than covered the payment schedule. It was felt to be more beneficial to keep the £1,701.19 in the savings account and earning interest.

The transfer schedule for January 2026 totals £2,107.43. This is based on leaving £500 in the Current Account at the end of January 2026 (balance at 31 December 2025 was £1,129.30 less £500 = £629.30; January schedule of payments = 2,736.73 - £629.30 = £2,107.43)

The Council **RESOLVED** to transfer £2,107.43 from savings account 2 to the current account to cover the payment schedule for January 2026.

(moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Olive)

vii) Budget Monitoring Report 2025/26 as at end December 2025

Income: The Clerk confirmed that three sources of income had been received in December 2025 relating to VAT Reclaim for 2022/23 (£1,992.94), DCC Grass cutting reimbursement (£337) and Bank Interest (£331.51).

Expenditure: No expenditure other than the December payment schedule.

The Clerk confirmed that the Council is likely to have an underspend at the end of the financial year, subject to no unexpected costs coming forward in January to end March 2026.

The Council **RESOLVED** to note the budget monitoring report as at end December 2025

(Moved by Cllr Dearden)

viii) Earmarked Reserves (EMR) Update

The Clerk confirmed that £331.51 bank interest has been credited to the Savings Account holding the EMR and that the Council has the options of:

- Adding the £331.51 to an existing EMR account
- Setting up a new EMR and transferring the £331.51 into it
- Move the £331.51 into General Reserves

The Council **RESOLVED** to defer consideration the EMR's to the end of the financial year when there is a clear picture of the level of General Reserves.

(Moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Olive)

168. Internal Control Checklist – Quarter 3 Review

The Clerk confirmed that Cllr Trimblett had been sent the relevant information in order to complete the review of the Internal Checklist for the period of 1 October to 31 December 2025. Cllr Trimblett confirmed that she was happy with the checklist and evidence and that everything was in order. She advised that she had signed off the checklist.

The Council **RESOLVED** to note the Internal Control checklist for quarter 3 of the 2025/26 financial year.

(moved Cllr Trimblett; seconded Cllr Dearden)

169. Risk Assessment – Quarter 3 Review

The Clerk confirmed that she had added a risk relating to the Bring Your Own Device Policy being considered later in the agenda. She also advised that Cllr Venton had sent some suggestions for minor changes (receiving the email after the meeting had started) and would consider them outside of the meeting and add to the Risk Assessment if appropriate.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the risk assessment subject to minor changes being made following the review of Cllr Venton's comments.

(moved Cllr Olive; seconded Cllr Patrick)

170. Asset Register

The Clerk tabled the updated Asset Register that had been updated following the discussions at the December 2025 Council meeting and 5 January 2026 Planning meeting. The Clerk advised that she had highlighted items that are to be removed from the Asset Register. The layout of the document has also been updated to make it clearer. An insurance valuation column has also been added and notes added relating to various items on the Asset Register.

Discussion took place around:

- The fact that the Asset Register must show items at their purchase price (where possible) and that assets are not depreciated. However, the insurance value is likely to be different to the purchase price (especially if the asset has been held for a long time).
- Queries relating to the safety equipment and clothing need to be resolved before March 2026, so that items can be removed or left on the Asset Register.
- The Asset Register will come before the Council again in March 2026 to confirm the value to go into the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2025/26.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Asset Register

(moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Trimblett)

171. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy

Councillors considered the BYOD Policy.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Bring Your Own Device Policy

(moved Cllr Olive; seconded Cllr Trimblett)

172. IT Policy

Councillors considered the IT Policy that has been drafted using the National Association of Local Council's model template (removing the items that were not relevant to the Council). The Clerk advised that councils are expected to have an IT Policy under assertion 10 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26 onwards.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the IT Policy.
(*moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Patrick*)

173. Cloud Based document storage solution

Councillors considered the options available to the Council in terms of data and information security. The Clerk advised that external suppliers can assist the Council with migrating to cloud based Microsoft Sharepoint for a charge of anything between £100 to £300 plus a monthly contract charge. The Clerk advised that she had set up a personal Microsoft Business Subscription for circa £10 a month.

Council files could be transferred across to this subscription setting it up so that councillors could access information if the Clerk was indisposed. The files would also be backed up to the Council's external hard drive. Key documents of the Council are also available through the Council website.

The Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the approach of storing data and information on the Clerk's Microsoft Business Subscription (subject to councillors being able to access if the Clerk is indisposed) and backing up files regularly to an external hard drive.
(*moved Cllr Olive; seconded Cllr Dearden*)

174. Forward Plan

The Council noted the Forward Plan, which had been updated until the end of the Municipal Year (end of April 2026). Key items to note for February 2026 are

- Finance Reports
- Planning Applications (if appropriate)
- Draft Neighbourhood Plan sections 1 to 4 and 6 and 7

175. Correspondence

The Council considered the following correspondence:

i) Email from EDDC regarding a Town and Parish Group taking place on Thursday 22 January 2026 between 6-7pm regarding project updates for Marlcombe and other items.

ii) Email from Whimple News that the deadline for articles is today. The Clerk advised that she had included information relating to the 2026/27 Budget and Precept, Slewton Crescent Play Area, Allotments waiting list, how to report items to DCC and councillor vacancies. Councillors asked the Clerk to include information regarding the cutting back of the trees in The Square so that local residents are aware that the works would be taking place in the near future.

176. Chair's Business

There were no items of Chair's business.

The meeting closed at 8.36pm

The next Planning Meetings will be held on Monday 2 February 2026 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)*. The next Parish Council meeting will take place on Monday 16 February 2026 at 7pm.