

**WHIMPLE PARISH COUNCIL
DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 16 MARCH 2026, 7pm**

Present: Cllr Denise Dearden
Cllr Jo Yarwood
Cllr Todd Olive
Cllr Sarah Johnson
Cllr Lynda Patrick
Cllr Angela Trimblett
Cllr Becky Venton

Also present: Amy Tregellas (Parish Clerk)

There were no members of the public present.
Cllr Connor arrived at 7.20pm, provided an update and then left the meeting at 7.25pm.

193. Apologies for absence
There were no apologies

194. Declarations of Interest
In respect of the Parish Field Play Area Report, Cllr Olive declared a personal interest as the East Devon District Council (EDDC) Ward Councillor for Whimble due to signing off the S106 funding request.

195. Public Participation
There were no members of the public present.

196. Minutes of the previous meeting of Whimble Parish Council
The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Whimble Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 16 February 2026.
(proposed by Cllr Dearden; seconded by Cllr Johnson)

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

- Minute 188 (Cranbrook CGR) – The clerk confirmed that she had submitted the Council’s response to the second round of consultation for the Cranbrook Community Governance Review and that EDDC had been promoting it on the Whimble What’s On Facebook Page.
- Minute 189 (Whimble Annual Parish Meeting) – The Clerk advised that the date for the Annual Parish Meeting has been published on the Council website (on the news page and also under the Community section of the website). She also confirmed that the date had been sent to DCC Cllr Connor as well as a request for an annual report.
- Minute 190 (Forward Plan) – the Clerk confirmed that she had sent the current Emergency Plan to Cllr Venton and was looking to arrange a meeting with Cllr Venton to discuss.

District and County Councillor reports:

East Devon District Council (EDDC) Councillor report

Cllr Olive provided a verbal update to the meeting as follows:

- The YouTube video of the Planning Meeting that took place on 3 March 2026 had been removed due to libellous comments made by members of the public. Legal advice was to

edit the video to remove these comments in order to republish. The edited video is now available on the EDDC website.

- East Devon Rail Line Forum – Cllr Olive confirmed that South Western Railway (SWR) are working on a business case incorporating numerous projects and improvements including dualling the Waterloo Line track between Cranbrook and Honiton. However, this could take 10 years to come to fruition. In terms of some good news, SWR are going to carry out a full consultation on changing the timetable with there being a possibility that there will be an hourly train service for Whimple. The consultation is likely to take place in the Autumn and Cllr Olive advised that leaflets will go through the doors of all residents to ask them to complete the consultation and to ask for the hourly service.

Devon County Council (DCC) Councillor Report

Councillor Connor had sent a report and was provided a brief update.

- DCC have confirmed that an additional £15 million has been included in the budget for 2026/2027. As well as this they have given a commitment to maintain £10 million per year in additional funding over the following five years.
- Cllr Connor advised that guidance would be coming out to all Town and Parish Councils regarding roads and potholes, hopefully by the end of March 2026.
- Cllr Connor again asked the Council to promote fostering and to pop up a poster and to promote through the Parish Magazine and Parish Council website

Cllr Connor left the meeting after giving her report.

197. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Devon - covered later in the agenda

198. Environment & Community

i) Parish Field Play Area Report

Councillors considered the Report of the Working Group relating to the Parish Field Play Area.

The report contained:

- The background to the project
- That originally the Council had resolved to locate the play area at the Town Lane site with a budget of £20,000
- How the Council had gone about the process of contacting a list of suppliers and then short listed three preferred suppliers.
- The brief / specification given at the start of the project which included the feedback from consulting with local school children as to what they would like to see in a play area
- The play equipment in the Parish Field being in need of replacement and the decision being made (following public consultation) to locate the play area in the Parish Field and not Town Lane (100% of local residents were in favour with this proposal).
- The Council set up a Working Group with Cllrs Patrick and Trimblett working with the Clerk to consider the proposals from Play Area suppliers.
- WACY giving the Council £2,023 with the condition that it must be spent on a goal mouth for the Parish Field.
- East Devon District Council offering the Council the 4 pieces of Proludic play equipment that they couldn't locate in the Slewtton Crescent refurbishment due to land ownership issues. This is being gifted to the Parish Council and will be installed in the Parish Field along with the appropriate safety matting, at no cost to the Parish Council
- The fact that the specification for the project has changed several times during the project, to include the goal mouth and to ensure that play equipment for under 5's has been included in the proposals.

- The budget has increased since the start of the project due to additional S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy being received, money being put into the Council's Ear Marked Reserves, money being received from WACY and Whimple Fest Committee.
- The need to obtain independent procurement advice due to the budget changing several times and whether the Council had to start the whole process from the start, due to the addition of VAT potentially taking the total cost over the £60,000 procurement threshold in the Financial Regulations
- The report also contained sections on consultation, the budget and procurement, how to draw down the S106 funding from EDDC, the location of the play area and details of the Proludic equipment.
- Due to commercial sensitivity, the proposals from the suppliers were not included in the report but instead were in a confidential appendix, which analysed each proposal and quotation against the specification criteria.

Councillors thanked the Working Group for their hard work and the comprehensive report.

Discussion took place around:

- The layout maps of the three proposals plus pictures of the play equipment proposed (minus any reference to the supplier name) had been published on the Council website so that the public could see it.
- Two posts were also added to the Whimple What's On Facebook Page but no comments had been made regarding the proposals
- Cllrs Trimblett and Patrick and the Clerk were at the Victory Hall at 6.30pm to meet any members of the public that wanted to come along and see the plans and ask any questions. No members of the public came along.

After considering the Public Interest test and commercial sensitivity, the Council **RESOLVED** under Standing Order 10a ix (motion without notice) to exclude the press and public and move into confidential session to consider the proposals from the three suppliers.
(*moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Venton*)

After consideration of the confidential appendix the Council agreed to go back into public session.

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Select Supplier 3 (Creative Play) as the play equipment supplier for the Parish Field Play Area.
2. Gives the Clerk authorisation to place the order for the play equipment with supplier 3 (Creative Play)
3. Will enter into a grant agreement with East Devon District Council (EDDC) for the S106 funds which will be signed by the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) as the Proper Officer as set out in the Standing Orders
4. Gives the Parish Clerk and RFO permission to liaise with EDDC in order to fulfil recommendation 3 and draw down the S106 funding of £17,944.

(*moved Cllr Patrick; seconded Cllr Trimblett*)

ii) Parish Lengthsman

Following the 16 February 2026 Council meeting, the Clerk had found job descriptions from other parish councils regarding the Parish Lengthsman role.

The Council **RESOLVED** that a basic job description containing key tasks be prepared and brought to the April Council meeting.
(*moved Cllr Johnson; seconded Cllr Dearden*)

iii) Village Maintenance

Cllr Johnson advised that the young person that had been putting stones in the river in The Square appeared to have stopped doing this as the problem had not got any worse. Cllrs Yarwood and Venton confirmed that they would remove the stones from the river.

Cllr Yarwood confirmed that she had sent photos of the drain under the railway bridge that needed to be cleared to the Clerk so that it could be reported to DCC Highways.

Cllrs Yarwood and Venton confirmed that they would replace the footpath map in the noticeboard in The Square.

iv) Other Environment and Community issues

Councillors again raised concerns about the member of the public selling cars on the grass area near the pedestrian entrance to the Parish Field. The Clerk advised that she is liaising again with EDDC regarding this matter and would copy Cllr Olive into the email as the Ward Councillor so that he could follow it up with the appropriate EDDC officer(s).

199. Allotments

Following on from the February meeting update, the Clerk advised that a further 6 allotment holders had paid their invoices.

The Clerk advised that one allotment holder had not paid despite chasing so they had now surrendered their allotment and it would be allocated to someone on the waiting list.

There are two plots available and two people remaining on the waiting list – so by the end of March it is likely that all plots will be allocated.

The Clerk confirmed that she had carried out a reconciliation between the allotments spreadsheet and the cash book in the finance system to ensure that all income had been accounted for. As a result of this there was a £55 difference which was due to one of the allotment receipts being incorrect coded on the finance system. The Clerk advised that a journal had been completed to amend this error and it was signed by councillors at the meeting.

The Clerk also advised that a couple of tenants had been in touch regarding rubbish and debris that had been left behind at the allotment sites by the former allotment holder. The new allotment holders had asked if the Council could take away the rubbish. Councillors suggested that Billy Broomfield be asked to see if he could take away the rubbish as the first port of call.

The Council **RESOLVED** that the Clerk contact all allotment holders to see if they have any rubbish to dispose of, and to hire a person with a van to collect it from the allotment sites and dispose of it.

(*moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Johnson*)

200. Neighbourhood Plan - There was no update on the Neighbourhood Plan

201. Planning - No planning applications had been received from EDDC.

202. Finance

i) Summary receipts and payments for 2025/26 to 28 February 2026

The Clerk advised that the summary included receipts of £437.85 allotment fees and that the expenditure was as listed on the payment schedule for February 2026.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the summary of receipts and payments to 28 February 2026

(Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood)

ii) Unity Bank current account reconciliation as at the end February 2026

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Unity Bank current account reconciliation to end February 2026, with the amount in the Current Account totalling to £702.57.

(Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood)

iii) Unity Bank savings account 1 reconciliation as at the end February 2026

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Unity Bank savings account 1 (earmarked reserves) reconciliation to end February 2026, with the amount in the Savings Account totalling to £60,487.04.

(Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood)

iv) Unity Bank savings account 2 reconciliation as at the end February 2026

In February a total of £755.87 had been transferred from the savings account into the current account (as approved at the February meeting) to cover the payment schedule for February 2026.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Unity Bank savings account 2 reconciliation to end February 2026, with the amount in the Savings Account totalling to £18,861.77.

(Proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood)

v) To approve the schedule of payments for March 2026 totalling £1,154.74 which included payments for:

Whimpey Victory Hall hire February 2026 = £12.50

Clerk salary March 2026 plus correction of 20p underpayment in February = £834.05

HMRC PAYE and Employers NIC; March 2026 = £302.19

Unity Trust Bank service charge 01/02/26 to 28/02/26 = £7.00

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

(proposed Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood)

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

The transfer schedule for March 2026 totals £846.15. This is based on leaving £500 in the Current Account at the end of March 2026 (balance at 10 March 2026 was £809.59 less £500 = £309.59; March schedule of payments = £1,155.74 - £309.59 = £846.15)

The Council **RESOLVED** to transfer £846.15 from savings account 2 to the current account to cover the payment schedule for March 2026.

(moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood)

vii) Budget Monitoring Report 2025/26 as at end February 2026

Income: The Clerk confirmed that income from allotment rents (following correction of the coding error) stood at £636. Another £107 had been received at the start of March meaning that allotment income now stands at £743 (against the budget of £750). The only remaining income to come in before the end of March is bank interest on the EMR account.

In terms of overall position, to the end of February 2026 income received is £33,382 compared to the budget of £29,293, i.e. better than budgeted by £4,089.

Expenditure: No expenditure other than the February 2026 payment schedule.

The total expenditure figure for the year to date (taking into account any expenditure taken from Ear Marked Reserves) is £26,816. Compared to the budget of £29,793 this gives a small underspend of £2,977. However, the Clerk advised that the March payments still have to be made so the underspend figure will reduce.

The Council **RESOLVED** to note the budget monitoring report as at end February 2026
(*Moved by Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood*)

viii) Clerk Salary Increase from 1 April 2026

As per the resolution made at the November 2025 Council meeting, the Council **RESOLVED** to move the Clerk to SCP 22 from 1 April 2026, making the hourly rate £17.47.

(*Moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood*)

203. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26

Councillors considered the Clerks paper which set out the changes to the AGAR paperwork due to the new assertion relating to having effective arrangements in place for effective IT and data management. The only criteria that the Council was not meeting at the moment related to the website accessibility statement which needs to be updated from WCAG2.1AA to WCAG2.2AA. The Council's website provider can carry out an MOT for a price of £145 plus VAT.

The report also set out the timetable for the completion of the year end closedown process, internal audit process, the date the Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements and Internal Audit Report would be approved by the Council, notice of the exercise of public rights, submitting the information to the external auditor and publishing the appropriate paperwork on the Council website.

The Council **RESOLVED** that the period for the Notice for the Exercising of Public Rights be Wednesday 3 June to Tuesday 14 July 2026 (subject to the Internal Audit being completed in order to go to the May Council meeting).

(*Moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood*)

The Council **RESOLVED** to proceed with the MOT on the website accessibility at a cost of £145 plus VAT.

(*Moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Yarwood*)

204. Asset Register Final Review for 2025/26

Councillors discussed the revised Asset Register following the last update in January 2026. The Clerk advised that she had removed a number of items from the safety equipment and clothing section due to the items due to be collected by DCC Highways prior to the end of the financial year. Discussion took place around:

- The items removed from the Town Lane Site have now been removed from the Asset Register
- That the safety equipment disposal should be deferred until the Council has made a decision as to whether to employ a Parish Lengthsman.

The Council **RESOLVED** that the safety equipment and clothing section remain as it was at the date of the last update in January 2026, meaning that the Asset Register total to go into the Accounting Statements in the AGAR is £118,351.

(*moved Cllr Johnson; seconded Cllr Dearden*)

205. Community Grants

The Clerk conformed that no grant applications had been received by the deadline of 28 February 2026, but that one had already come in for consideration at the July Council Meeting.

206. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Consultation

The Clerk confirmed that she had reviewed the proposals put forward by Devon County Council, the District Councils, Exeter City Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council relating to the what the structure of local government would look like going forward and was drafting the Council's response to the Government's consultation.

The Council **RESOLVED** that the Clerk complete the response and circulate to councillors for comment before submitting by 26 March 2026.

(Moved Cllr Dearden; seconded Cllr Venton)

207. Forward Plan

The Council noted the Forward Plan, which had been updated until the end of the Municipal Year (end of April 2027). Key items to note for April 2026 are

- Finance Reports
- Planning Applications (if appropriate)
- Draft Neighbourhood Plan report
- Risk Assessment Review – Quarter 4
- Internal Control checklist – Quarter 4
- VAT Return for 2025/26
- Update on closure of the 2025/26 Accounts
- Parish Lengthsman Report

208. Correspondence

The Council considered the following correspondence:

Whimble News article deadline was 16 March 2026 (i.e. today). The Clerk confirmed that, following councillor comments on the draft, she had added information provided by Cllr Cathy Connor on the potholes situation and additional 2026/27 that has been allocated by DCC. This was sent to the Whimble News team prior to the meeting.

Email from EDDC regarding the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) relating to Land East of Gribble Lane, Whimble.

Email from Jenny Fells regarding Whimble Fest and whether the Council wished to have a presence at this year's event. Councillors didn't think that it was as it had not been beneficial on previous occasion.

Email from DCC Highways regarding grass cutting for 2026/27. They are offering the Parish Council £347 for cutting the visibility splays. The Clerk advised that she had asked for details as to the location of the required works, which had been provided. She then forwarded it to the Grounds Maintenance contractor to ensure that it is in the schedule.

Email from David Reed MP advising that he offering local residents the opportunity to meet with him at the New Fountain Inn on Monday 30 March 2026 between 7pm and 8.30pm. Booking is required if members of the public wish to attend the event. The Clerk confirmed she would add the details to the news page of the Council website.

Email from Mr Chris Olive asking if the Parish Council has any paperwork stating that the Parish Council is a custodian trustee of the Village Hall. Cllrs Yarwood and Johnson confirmed that they would see if there was any information on this held in the Heritage Centre. Cllr Dearden confirmed she would search through previous Council records to see if she held any information. The Clerk advised that she would search through the old records.

Email from a local resident thanking the Council for liaising with EDDC to get the 'no dogs' signage installed at the Slewton Crescent Play Area.

Email update from Chloe Hood regarding the Horton Solar Farm Construction Works Update, as follows: *'Aura Power is preparing to commence construction works for Horton Solar Farm, located between Whimble and Talaton. Construction activities will gradually increase over the spring and summer months. Works will commence in May on the solar site entrances to facilitate construction vehicle access on the road from Whimble to Talaton. Full construction is expected to begin in early June 2026. We are committed to minimising disruption during this period and will work collaboratively with the local community to achieve this. A Construction Management Plan has been confirmed with Devon Highways. Construction traffic will not route through Whimble. We will be hosting a pre-construction, public meeting to talk through our construction programme, introduce our project team and answer any questions. We will notify local residents by letter and will of course confirm details with the Parish Council once the date is confirmed. Once operational, Horton Solar Farm will generate enough clean electricity to power thousands of homes. Projects like this are an important part of strengthening the UK's energy security, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and supporting the transition to a more affordable and renewable energy system. We are also offering a community benefit fund of £20,000 per year, index-linked for the solar farm's 40-year lifetime, to support local educational, social, and environmental initiatives. We have partnered with Grantscape to help administer the fund, but how the funds are spent will be decided by local people via a Local Advisory Panel through a series of grants. We will be looking for volunteers interested in joining the panel and will share more information at our upcoming pre-construction public meeting.'*

209. Chair's Business - There were no items of Chair's business

The meeting closed at 9.10pm

The next Planning Meeting will be held on Tuesday 7 April 2026 at 7pm * *A planning meeting will be cancelled if no new planning applications are received by the date that the agenda is published (due to the Easter Bank Holiday weekend the agenda will be published in Monday 30 March 2026).* The next Parish Council meeting will take place on Monday 20 April 2026 at 7pm.

Signed by Chair:

20/04/2026