

# Sheepwash Parish Council

## Parish Council Meeting

held in the Village Hall

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 7.00pm

### Minutes

**Present:** Cllr Ansell (Chairperson), Cllr Moys, Cllr Fairall, Cllr Hutching, Cllr Etherington, Cllr Ritson  
District Cllr Wheatley, Selina Woollacott (Clerk), 16 members of the public.

- 1) **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Crossley, District Cllr Cottle-Hunkin.
- 2) **Declarations of Interest:**  
In accordance with the Code of Conduct, members are required to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have, in items to be considered at this meeting. Members are also reminded that any change to their Declaration of Interests must be notified to the Monitoring Officer at Torridge District Council within 28 days of the change. **None.**
- 3) **Public Discussion**, to allow any questions, reports by members of the public on any matters relating to the agenda of this meeting, or any matters the public would like the Council to consider on a future agenda. The period of time designated for public participation shall not exceed 15 minutes.  
  
A reminder that members of the public can speak when invited to when council is in committee.  
  
A member of the public (MOP), The Sheepwash bridge has been hit again. Part of the stonework is hanging out. Clerk to report and ask about having a bollard installed on the end of the bridge to protect the bridge.
- 4) **Minutes – the Minutes of the meetings held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024 have been circulated by email minutes to be approved for accuracy and signed by the Chairperson.** All Councillors agree the minutes are an accurate record of the meeting. Cllr Ansell signed the minutes.
- 5) **County & District Councillors' reports.** No County Councillor's report.  
District Councillors report given by Cllr Wheatley.  
**Extraordinary Full Council re Local Government Reorganisation.**  
Devon and Torbay Combined Authority (CCA) is already on the way through previous government (devolution).  
The new government's ambition is for unitary councils to cover England. Currently, there are 21 County Council areas (shire districts). Ambition on a collaborative basis. We prefer to avoid boundary changes and want to move at pace. 10th January was the deadline for councils to express they'd like to move at the fastest pace and postpone May elections.  
Devon District Council leaders signed a joint statement not supporting a single unitary for Devon as it's too big an area. They recognise the government ambitions but believe it needs proper consideration and shouldn't be rushed through. They also agreed that Devon County elections should not be postponed and should go ahead in May 25.  
Torridge District Council voted by majority to send a letter to the Minister for housing, communities, and local government Jim McMahon, Reiterating the points made in the joint statement Torridge Council voted 19 For, 1 against, three abstentions.  
**JOINT STATEMENT: Devon District Councils - update on devolution and local government reform**  
*This joint statement is made following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper*  
"The Devon districts are fully supportive of genuine devolution of powers from Whitehall to local government. However, following the publication of the Devolution White Paper, and subsequent

statements by the leader of Devon County Council, we would like to make it clear that we do not support the creation of one unitary council for Devon.

"Our county, including Torbay, is diverse and made up of nearly 1 million residents across urban, coastal, and rural areas. Any reform of local government in Devon should follow a period of proper consultation with residents, businesses, elected representatives, and stakeholders. Looking at the evidence, we should decide collectively what is best for our area. A single unitary council for the county risks diminishing local representation, with decision-making that is remote from the communities we serve.

"We do not support postponing the county council elections scheduled for May 2025. The government has indicated that this will only happen in priority areas who have clear and agreed plans. This is not the case in Devon, so we cannot be in the first phase of these reforms.

"We recognise that the government's white paper sets a clear direction of travel. As Devon's city, district, and borough council leaders, we want to work collaboratively with others with our neighbouring unitary councils to agree how we respond to this. Any changes must be carefully considered, transparent, and inclusive, ensuring that residents and businesses are fully engaged in shaping the future governance of Devon.

"Our objective must be to get this right for our residents and businesses. That cannot be achieved if we make rushed decisions that have not been given the serious consideration that they deserve."

**Statement agreed by the following leaders:**

Cllr Paul Arnott, East Devon, Cllr Phil Bialyk, Exeter, Cllr Julian Brazil, South Hams, Cllr David Clayton, North Devon, Cllr Mandy Ewings, West Devon, Cllr Ken James, Torridge, Cllr Richard Keeling, Teignbridge, Cllr Luke Taylor, Mid Devon.

**External Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

We heard from Andy Bell (UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve co-ordinator) from North Devon Biosphere.

The Biosphere was designated in 1976 and extended in 2002 to cover a much wider area. It covers 4 District Authorities, over 5000 farms 2 National Parks and 1 AONB. The Biosphere comprises of 35 organisations working in partnership. Funding: £70k from DCC, £31k combined from TDC and NDC They have secured £12M project funding over the next 5 years (primarily from Environment Agency and DEFRA.

Whole ethos of Biosphere "creating a positive future by connecting people and nature". Looking at the benefits from the environment and ecosystem services.

Key areas of work: tourism, farming, forestry, fishing, technology, climate change adaptation.

They're in the very early stages of a project relating to regenerative farming and carbon payments.

Looking at farms possibly becoming accredited for regenerative farming, allowing them to sell at a higher price and creating more local farms shops/food hubs. "Farm to fork"

They have a Biosphere explorer app. 80% of visitors here come for environmental factors.

The green economy group working with Uni Plymouth and Exeter, and MET office, working on natural flood management.

They are doing a lot of work with farmers to reduce pollution risks. Also working with Farmers on access to nature- engaging with landowners- for example looking at community Woodlands.

The importance of salt marshes and mud flats. Sheep can also still graze salt marshes (and apparently taste better too...?!)

Marine work- offshore renewables, X-Links cables, aquaculture- seaweed. Impact of storms, is it sustainable? All needs careful consideration and looking at wider benefits in the area. 'Marine net-gain' coming forward in the future? Lundy "no-take" zone a success and fishermen wanting more of it because they can see the benefits- more fish spilling out into the other areas.

Working with cultural partners e.g. Beaford Arts, connecting with people in different ways- theatre, art, photography etc

Engaging young people- teacher training across 12 schools locally, about climate change and the local environment.

Working with Southwest water- looking at natural solutions to pollution of rivers

**Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee:** TDC has previously put out a request to parish councils re listed buildings but not heard anything back, so now considering looking at compiling a targeted list of buildings at risk.

**Asset management plan-** heard from Harvey Gardner new estates manager.

Torr ridge holds 141 assets 84,000ft

Income stream commercial and non-commercial equals approximately £1M

The void is currently 2.8% don't want it to go above 5%

**Climate change response-** we now have 2 electric commercial vehicles with third proposed for Burrows team. Decarbonisation program 2025: 10 higher energy-using properties assessed looking at potential for solar PV, air source heat pumps, LED lighting etc. EV charging: nine additional at Riverbank house coming forward in the next few months.

**Car parking-** 2024/25 revenue projection £2.1M 10% up on 23/24. Looking at investment in new machines for National Parking Platform- cashless payments as well as cash and debit cards.

Chris Fuller- economic development officer:

**Economic strategy brief update:**

The strategy for 2024-29 was agreed by full council last year. Wider action plans are now progressing from this. Business workshops are being held at Caddsdow. Clean maritime and green energy cluster, 40 businesses met at Appledore. Lego robotics workshops, sponsoring schools for national competition. North Devon plus and Biosphere doing lots of work with businesses and grants being given through Rural England Prosperity Fund. Cultural awards coming up- deadline is 3rd Feb, please nominate any individuals or groups who you think should be recognised for their input into our colourful culture here in Torr ridge and North Devon, there are lots of different categories, from film to heritage to sports, and many more.

## 6) **Clerk's Report.**

**Play Inspection, Enforcement officer update on Clinton House, West Road Street Light. Parked Car.**

**Play Inspection.** I will contact the company and book in an inspection to be completed in the next few months.

**Enforcement officer update on Clinton House,** update from TDC, the Council issued Enforcement Notice on the Land last October and the notice was appealed with the Planning Inspectorate in November 2024.

The Planning Inspectorate have validated the appeal, and it is waiting for an Inspector to be appointed to hear the appeal. Once an Inspector has been appointed and the appeal is started it can be anywhere between about three months and one year for the appeal to be decided. If the Inspector upholds the enforcement notice, then any time for compliance with the notice will start from the date of the Inspector's decision.

**West Road Street Light.** The lights are still the responsibility of Stevens Homes until the development is completed. The reply from Stevens Homes: we have informed the lighting company, and they are scheduled to carry out the repair. MOP confirmed the light is still not working.

**Parked Car.** Highways replied: unfortunately if there are no parking restrictions in this location, Devon County Council cannot take any enforcement action. It appears that the bus stop isn't marked on the ground in this location. If it were, it would depend on the type of restriction associated with the bus stop. We are not currently able to take any enforcement action against pavement parking.

Cases like these we would usually suggest contacting the Police to see if they would investigate as an obstructive parking matter, however if the Police do not consider it to be sufficiently obstructive or a high enough priority then unfortunately there isn't really any action we can take in these cases.

Police reply: there are no road markings and there is plenty of room for pedestrians.

We certainly wouldn't give this a ticket for obstruction, the car is taxed, insured and has an MOT. If the council knew who the owner was, I think a polite word to explain how people are feeling would be appreciated and they would probably park it elsewhere.

Cllr Hutchings has been approached by the owner of the car. Cllr Hutchings informed the meeting of the reasons that the owner gave for parking there. Councillors and members of the public discussed this

parking issue and other parking issues in the village. From the discussion the Council agreed that the Post Office van driver needs to be offered another place to park. The Clerk needs to contact the Police and explain the car is obstructing vision from the junction for drivers and that the car is causing an issue for the school children when leaving the school bus. There is not room for a pushchair on the pavement to pass the car.

7) **Chair's Report.** No Report.

8) **Community Hall, Section 106.**

Cllr Ansell gave the following report: early this week our solicitors sent a draft land transfer document to TDC to present to the landowners. Our solicitor drafted this document as we did not trust TDC to draw up a watertight transfer. The document gets agreed by the landowner then it comes back to us to agree. Once this has happened the land will be transferred to TDC then to the Parish Council. MOP asked if the landowners have access through Lukes Farm? Yes, they do.

9) **P3 and Footpaths.**

P3 stands for Parish Paths Partnerships Scheme. Clerk has P3 forms to complete by 28<sup>th</sup> March one of the forms is a grant request form for funds to complete work on the footpaths in the Parish. Cllr Riston has done a good job of checking footpaths in the past and completing maintenance. I am asking that if anyone walks the footpaths and see any issues to report it to myself or to Cllr Ritson. MOP raised issues with the Wooda footpath. The question was asked what is the recommended area that should be kept clear for a footpath. 1.5 metres for a field edge footpath, 3 metres for a field edge bridleway. Cross-field footpath or bridleway at least the minimum width of 1 metre for a footpath or 2 metres for a bridleway. Cllr Ritson will speak to the Wooda landowners. Clerk has a reminder set to speak to the Upcott footpath landowner about cutting the maize off in July. MOP, the North Road Farm footpath when you drop down to Upcott there is a stile which is hard to use, can it be changed to a gate. Cllr Riston will have a look to see if the stile can be modified to be easier to use. MOP asked if Windsor Lane is not owned by anyone could the County Council adopt it and make it a footpath as it joins 2 existing footpaths. Cllr Hutchings replied, one of the landowners who has fields down the lane will own it and the rest will have access rights.

10) **Bike Racks.**

Cllr Fairall has asked a few cyclists, the ones I have asked so far said that they have money, keys, paperwork, clothing, drinks etc with them and so want to have their bikes close to where they are sitting, not at the end of the square. There is not enough need for this to go any further at this time.

11) **Bench in the Square.**

Cllr Ansell sent to all Councillors a photo and information on a 6ft teak park bench, plus brass plaque information. The bench is £420 the brass plaque is £35.

Lymath and Moys have agreed to contribute £100.

Pete and Jan Hayward have agreed to contribute £50.

The Bridgeland Trust have agreed to fund the difference: £420 +35 – 150 = £305.

All Councillors agreed to the bench and plaque and thank you to Lymath and Moys, Pete and Jan Hayward and the Bridgeland Trust for funding the difference.

12) **Bench on the River Bank.**

Cllr Ritson explained where the benches are near the river. A MOP feels that one of the benches is falling apart and that the measuring stick was also washed away in the last flood. Cllr Ritson will check the bench. If the bench is past repair, it will be removed.

13) **Meeting Dates.**

Cllr Ritson, addressed the meeting with how Parish Council meetings have moved on from what they use to be and members of the public are able to speak at the meetings now. This means members of the public like to know when the meetings will be. For Councillors it will be easier to arrange other commitments if we had a list of meeting dates. In the past the meetings were before the Chronicle deadline meaning information could be added to the Chronicle. It was agreed that the Clerk would have the Chronicle deadlines and will work out meeting dates for the year.

**14) Village clean up.**

Cllr Ritson would like to arrange a Spring clean up day. Painting, teak oil benches, tidying and cleaning. He is thinking April. Clerk asked for an idea of cost for the paint, teak oil and other items for the March meeting.

**16) CPRE Membership.**

Cllr Crossley emailed the suggested that the Parish Council join the CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England). The cost will be £5-£7 a month. Councillors asked what do the CPRE do. Clerk is sure they provided the Parish Council with information on Article 4 for the Strip fields. Cllr Ansell will email Parish Councillors information so that a decision can be made.

**17) PLANNING:**

**17a) Planning Applications.** None.

**17b) Planning Decisions.**

**1/1026/2024/REM Reserved matters application for access, appearance landscaping, layout, scale pursuant to application 1/1071/2017/OUTM - Erection of up to ten dwellings (Variation of condition 1 of planning approval 1/1024/2021/REM) Land At Park Farm, West Road, Sheepwash. The application was granted permission.** The Parish Council submitted comments which can be read on the TDC planning portal.

**18) FINANCE:**

**18a) as at the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025:**

**Main Account £16,881.90**

**Saving Account £18,616.84**

**Expenditure:**

Date	£	Detail	Transfer
29.11.2024	832.90	Ashfords Solicitors. Community Hall	Bacs
29.11.2024	21.90	Mr Ritson material for sign post repair	Bacs
29.11.2024	449.87	Laptop	Bacs
29.11.2024	18.00	DALC Councillor Training	Bacs
29.11.2024	142.08	50% of printer. To Shebbear Parish Council	Bacs
29.11.2024	160.00	R Stockwin. Hedge cutting Jubilee Park	Bacs
30.11.2024	6.00	Bank Account Charge	Bacs
23.12.2024	402.40	Clerk Salary Oct - Dec	Bacs
23.12.2024	18.00	DALC Councillor Training	Bacs
31.12.2024	6.00	Bank Account Charge	Bacs
16.01.2025	18.00	DALC Councillor Training	Bacs
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,075.15</b>		

**Income:** No payments into the Account in the last two months.

**18b) Budget and Parish Precept.**

Clerk provided Councillors with a draft budget for 2025/2026 the total amount on the budget comes to £8,750. The Parish Council so far has a VAT reclaim of £157 for the next financial year. The Parish Precept is currently £8,113 a year. The Precept will automatically increase to £8,718 with no increase to residents' Council Tax bills due to more properties in the parish paying Council Tax. The Parish Council can ask for a higher amount of Precept and would need to explain why the Parish Council is increasing the Precept. Councillors do not see a need to increase the Precept this year. Councillors agreed to accept the amount of £8,718.

**18c) Lawn Mower Service.**

Cllr Ritson will be taking the Lawn Mower into Hatherleigh for its annual service at some point in the next month.

**19) Items for Information. Items emailed out to Councillors.**

Council seeks views on draft housing strategy email.

Cllr Ansell has been asked if the Parish Council would be able to help fund a First Aid course. The last one was in financial year 2021/2022. Cllr Ritson has a friend who runs First Aid Training Courses with defibrillator training. All Councillors agreed First Aid Training would be a good idea as been a few years since the last training course. Cllr Ritson to communicate with his friend and the Village Hall Committee.

MOP has raised about the parking of a trailer in East Street. As it is blocking the line of sight when going up the road. Cllr Ritson will have a word with the owner. Clerk can ask Police/PCSO about parking rules for the trailer when asking about the parked car.

Cllr Hutchings informed the meeting that the Bridgeland Trust is running the Winter Voucher Scheme for the OAP. Information will be on the noticeboard and in the Chronicle. Anyone over 66 years old and lived in the Parish for more than 3 years can get 5 £5 vouchers total of £25. Which can be used at local business.

MOP asked for more information on what the Bridgeland Trust is and what it does. Cllr Hutching replied there are 7 Trustees. The Charity owns land which is rented out. The funds are used in the Parish for the Winter Voucher Scheme, benches, First Aid Courses. Was originally set up to raise funds to build a bridge. Open to suggestions on what funds can be used for. A suggestion put forward was that in the past Children from the Parish were taken to see a Panto with more children in the Parish again now this could be done again.

MOP asked when the West Road Sheepwash sign will be put up. The sign is being put up when the 30mph signs are put up. Clerk to chase Highways for an idea of when.

MOP. Black Torrington now have their 20mph signs. Good to see that they are changing villages to 20mph.

**19) Items to be included in the agenda for the next meeting.**

**The next meeting will be held in March 2025 unless a meeting is needed before.**

CPRE Membership, Spring Clean day date, Footpaths, 30mph and Sheepwash Sign. Clerk Appraisal.

Meeting closed 8.27pm

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