

Sheepwash Parish Council

Parish Council Meeting.

Wednesday 12th November 2025, 7pm
at Sheepwash Village Hall.

Minutes.

Present: Cllr Ansell (Chairperson), Cllr Moys, Cllr Fairall, Cllr Etherington, Cllr Hutchings, Cllr Crossley, Cllr Ritson. District Cllr Wheatley, Selina Woollacott (Clerk), 10 members of the public.

1) **Apologies for Absence:** County Cllr Rowsell, 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.

No members of the public wished to speak at this time.

A reminder that members of the public can speak when invited to when council is in committee.

4) **Minutes – the Minutes of the meetings held on 10th September 2025 have been circulated by email. Minutes to be approved for accuracy and signed by the Chairperson.** All Councillors agreed the Minutes are an accurate record of the meeting. Cllr Ansell signed the Minutes.

5) **County & District Councillors' reports.**

County Councillors report read out by the Clerk.

LGA. One of the ideas put forward was to split the unitary into three areas, for Holsworthy Rural it managed from Exeter and distributed as they think necessary, and I fear they won't reflect what our area really needs. There are of course several other options but as this period of time for suggestions is not up until 28th November then there are still many ways this could go. We must also be aware that should the government not agree with what is put forward or even if the government is voted out then this could all change again. In short none of this is set in stone and we do not have any input it is all decided by government.

Bideford railway. Bideford railway is now underway, it has now been agreed that with all the new building work going on and the infrastructure causing chaos due to the population of the town growing as the building work progresses, that people will need alternative ways to get to Barnstable and surrounding areas. So, the railway is going ahead, and I will keep you updated as I hear updates.

Solar farm. An open meeting was held on 31st October regarding the solar farm at Holsworthy Rural, which is the biggest so far announced at 2,750 acres encompassing 17 farms. This is an ongoing situation which CPRE is involved with to try to stop this going ahead. The meeting was very well attended and 300 people turned up. The resounding opinion was that this cannot be allowed to go ahead. There is a petition online at devoncpres.org.uk if people would like to sign it. This movement is gaining momentum, and we need all the help we can get.

In addition to this - **Forestry and more wind farms** This govt has announced a recent decision to cut down as many trees as required and replace them with solar panels and wind turbines, they refuse to acknowledge that by reducing the CO2 our green areas will suffer severely restricted oxygenation and will start to die. They also refuse to admit this is destroying farmland and our ability to provide food for

the nation as Devon has always done, and they further refuse to acknowledge that far from helping the environment, it is killing the environment faster than anything has ever done to date.

It must be stopped now before it destroys plant, animal and human existence for the sake of an imagined global warming, that has already been proven to be misinformation. There is further information on Facebook the page is called "stop beacon solar" and that has more details on how things are going with regular updates and you can find Sir Geoffrey Cox's speech regarding this on this site.

Farmers Meeting I have also been attending a newly formed farmers meeting which is bringing forward some very interesting options on how we can best support the farming community whilst at the same time protecting the consumer. The net zero proposals and wind and solar farms are decimating our land and cutting down good quality food choices for the consumer. It has raised questions about Bovear in the dairy industry and other issues like this and promises to do all it can to improve the dairy and farming industry against the odds. I am attending regular meetings and will share information with you as I can. Member of the Public asked a question about the Local Government reorganisation. Clerk and District Cllr Wheatley answered the question. More information in Cllr Wheatley report below.

District Councillor report given by Cllr Wheatley.

It has been an eventful yet enthralling time this month in the Ward and Council with being involved in various Committees and meetings. Pleased to announce last month the **Taw and Torridge River Champions** was established operating out of Chigwell Street in Bideford. Having joined this group, we are working together with the Biosphere Community Project and West Country Rivers Trust. For those people attending at Chigwell Street undertook a successful first meeting recently for participants to become a new group of citizen scientists. The newly formed group learnt about how to spot pollution, learn about the water environment, take action to improve our rivers and be part of the wider catchment community. Within our ward of Shebbear and Langtree three potential areas for river monitoring along the Torridge in particular Dipper Mill/Shebbear, Sheepwash and Taddiport. Next meeting is on Saturday 10am 6th December at 13 Chingswell Street in Bideford. Having undertaken e-coli testing myself two years ago in Taddiport there is a need for further testing to be carried out on a regular basis. All are welcome to attend!

Roads. I have been out and about pothole patrolling particularly around Langtree. The responses I've been receiving suggest that's its improving though some way to go yet!

Another recurring problem which has been ongoing for a long time now is recycle vehicle spillages. This has been happening around some of the lanes particularly along hedge and roadsides in Petrockstowe, Newton St Petroc and Merton. I have reported this to Joel Baker, our Waste and Recycling Manager at TDC, who is checking the CCTV footage and ensuring the recycle vehicle procedures are followed. Of course, wind at times can be a factor and spillages happen more when the recycle vehicles are fully loaded or near full towards the end of their collection.

I have also been dealing with two abandoned vehicles in Shebbear liaising with DVLA and TDC recycling. I am a member of the licensing sub-Committee making decisions on Taxi License holders. We were presented with a report from the Lead Licensing Officer regarding council licensing policy for Taxis and Private Hire Licences. After discussions it was agreed by the Committee that out of three options that the level of fare would increase as follows: a flag fare, first 3/4 of a mile increase to £4.50 and then £3.30 per mile thereafter and to amend the nighttime rate to commence at 10pm instead of 11pm. As of 1st November 2025 these Taxi Fare Rates are now in operation.

After attending our recent full council meeting a motion regarding TTVS (Taw and Torridge Voluntary Service) was raised by Cllr Thomas regarding financial support. It was agreed that a report from TDC regarding full options would be provided for financial support in the immediate term and beyond into 2026 at our next Full Council Meeting. This was supported by Council. Pleased along with many councillors to keep TTVS afloat in relation to the excellent work they do for the needy both young and old alike and they have received many councillors' donations.

Beacon Solar Project proposed around the vicinity of Holsworthy developed by Galileo Empower (GE) covering 2,700 acres presented by Head of Planning Helen Smith. Already there is much local objection to this proposal with the sheer size and impact on local/farming land, communities, and wildlife.

We also received the following reports:

External Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report 2024/2025 from Cllr Thomas
Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report 2024/2025 from Cllr Hodgson
Annual Report from Chief Executive Steve Hearse

A brief update on LGR (Local Government Reorganisation). So far, the favoured proposals are Devon Districts 4:5:1 and Devon County Council 9:1:1. DCC have a Full Council livestream Meeting this Friday 14th November, and the final decision will be made by DCC Cabinet on Tuesday 18th November. It is expected that Devon Districts will put forward 4:5:1 and Devon County 9:1:1 and be submitted by 28th November.

During the District Councillor's report there were questions and comments from members of the public. The main one for the Clerk to follow up on is the smell from the Sheepwash sewage works and if the sewage works is dealing with the amount of sewage.

6) Clerk Report. Sheepwash Bridge, West Road Hedge.

Sheepwash Bridge. The bridge has been fixed, and mounts/boulders have been constructed to help protect the bridge.

West Road Hedge. I have spoken to the Park Farm site owner, and he is aware that only half a job was completed when the hedge was cut. He was expecting them to return and finish the job. He is working on getting the hedge cutting finished. As for the site work this will start again in February/March time with the building of an entrances and road in.

7) Chair's Report. No Report.

8) Community Hall, Section 106

Cllr Ansell gave the following report. Since the last Parish Council meeting Cllr Fairall and I have signed the Transfer forms on behalf of the Parish Council. This was witnessed by the Clerk. The current hold up in the process is that our solicitor is waiting for TDC to provide a land value amount for the land to be registered with Land Registry. The Clerk and I have been in contact with DALC and local parishes to find out what their Community Hall land was valued at when registered with the Land Registry. Once the Land is registered the entrance can be built and gates installed.

9) Benches in the Square.

The benches in the Square either need maintenance or replacing. The Parish Council has got a person in mind who can do maintenance to the benches. The Bridgeland Trust have said they can grant £100 towards the maintenance. The Parish Council have agreed to put £100 as well towards the maintenance. If when the benches are looked at the cost to complete maintenance is going to be more than £200 the Parish Council will check the financials and investigate purchasing two new benches. These would cost about £500 each.

10) Signpost in the Square.

Cllr Ritson has noticed that the Finger signpost in the Square has been hit again. He would like to purchase a steel strap to repair the signpost base. Councillors agreed a budget of £50 for the steel.

11) Jubilee Park grass and Shed roof.

In the Spring Cllr Ritson would like to level off several uneven areas in the Jubilee Park grass area with topsoil and plant grass seed. He would be looking for volunteers to help rake the topsoil. The Parish Council to purchase a cubic metre of topsoil. This will be added to the January meeting as can not be completed until March time. The shed roof needs new felt and timer treatment. Member of the public has felt that he is willing to donate to the Parish Council. Councillors agreed to Cllr Ritson felting the shed roof and other maintenance needed on the shed.

12) River side information board.

Cllr Ritson would like the Parish Council to replace the information board which is located on land near the river. The Parish Council have agreed to Cllr Ritson getting quotes for the cost of a new board and Cllr Ritson to talk to the landowner about replacing the existing board. If the landowner is agreeable, Clerk wants written agreement that the landowner is happy to have a new board on the land. Council will discuss again once Cllr Ritson has quotes.

13) Tree Circle.

Clerk forwarded the following email to all Councillors about a giant tree circle:

‘A growing circle of individually planted trees stretching across the UK and Ireland, with its centre on Anglesey in North Wales. This exciting project has been in the works for many years, and we are now at the opportune stage of planting trees in each quadrant of the circle -and your area lies close to one of these key locations. We’d love to gift you a single tree to be planted on/near the line of the circle. Here’s what’s involved: The tree will be native to your area and chosen to support local biodiversity without disrupting your land. We’ll provide the tree and arrange the planting at no cost or effort to you, unless you wish to be involved - you are more than welcome and we’d love to have you on board. All we ask is for your permission to place the tree on your land. Our team has already planted four trees on the cardinal points of the circle, with a huge positive response from local communities and media. The Giant Tree Circle is not political, commercial, or religious. It’s a real, collaborative project from a group of people with diverse backgrounds but a united passion to create something rooted in the land, a quiet gesture of unity and care between people and places across these islands.’ <https://www.gianttreecircle.org/>

Cllr Ritson already has a couple of trees ready to plant out and it was suggested that all the trees are planted near the river, Cllr Ritson to look into where exactly the trees can be planted.

Clerk to find out how is the tree identified as being part of the giant circle.

14) PLANNING:

14a) Planning Applications. None.

14b) Planning Decisions. None.

14c) Planning Appeal.

TDC Ref E/20/0096/UND. Appeal Reference APP/W1145/C/24/3356368, Clinton House.

In progress, no decision yet. No update.

15) FINANCE:

15a) as at the 5th November 2025:

Main Account £21,620.54

Saving Account £18,950.50

Expenditure:

Date	£	Detail	Transfer
03.09.2025	170.00	R Stockwin. Jubilee Park Hedge Cutting	Bacs
16.09.2025	25.00	Dotation to the Poppy Appeal	Bacs
16.09.2025	50.00	Shebbear Parish Council Dipper Flood Watch System	Bacs
22.09.2025	404.40	Clerk's Salary Jun - Sept	Bacs
30.09.2025	6.00	Account Service Charge	DD
03.10.2025	108.00	Devon Garden Solutions. Weed Killing	Bacs
23.10.2025	120.00	R Stockwin. Tree in the Square pruning.	Bacs
31.10.2025	6.00	Account Service Charge	DD
Total	889.40		

Income:

Date	£	Detail
04.09.2025	374.11	HMRC VAT Reclaim
29.09.2025	4,359.00	2 nd Parish Precept Payment
Total	4,733.11	

Clerk read out the above.

15b) Half Year Accounts.

Clerk sent the half year accounts to all Councillors prior to the meeting. Paper copies were available at the meeting. Income, Expenditure and Budget. Up until 30th September 2025 the Parish Council has received £10,003.56, of this £8,718 is the Parish Precept, £305 towards the bench and £390 towards the Marquee. £374.11 VAT reclaimed from the 2024/25 financial year. £216.45 Interest. Expenditure is £4,476.40. Insurance, Salary, Grants, Bench and Marquee are the main areas of spending so far this year. There is currently £269.65 VAT to be reclaimed in the next financial year. All Invoices linked to the Community Hall site have been paid up to date there will be a solicitor's invoice once completed. VAT for all past invoices has been reclaimed. Looking at the budget and the known expenditure for the next 6 months I would predict that there will be £1,000 available for benches if the Parish Council wish to buy new benches if the current benches cannot be repaired. No questions from the Parish Councillors. Clerk asked if a Direct Debit could be set up to pay HMRC as it is small amounts and would cut back on having to set the payment up and asking Councillors to authorise the payments. Councillors agreed to setting up a Direct Debit, form signed.

16) Meeting Dates for 2026.

The Councillors would like to continue with holding meetings on the second Wednesday of the month. Bi-monthly. 14th January, 11th March, 13th May, 8th July, 9th September, 11th November.

17) Items for Information. Items emailed out to Councillors.

Five Year Housing Land Supply.

Invite to meeting - Mega solar site planned in Devon.

Torridge District Council invites businesses and residents to view plans for a new business park at Hatchmoor, Great Torrington.

Clerk read out the above, question from a member of the public on the Five Year Housing Land Supply and what that means for Sheepwash. Answered by the Clerk and District Cllr Wheatley. Link to the statement. <https://consult.torridge.gov.uk/file/6442353>

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

The next meeting will be 14th January 2026. Parish Precept, Budget, P3 and Footpaths. Riverside information board. Jubilee Park grass. Tree Circle.

Cllr Ansell would like to thank all involved with the Poppies on the Memorial in the Square. It is impressive and respectful. There has been a Poppy Wreath made which has been funded using the Chairperson Allowance. The Parish is pleased with the effort put in to mark Remembrance.

Member of the public has concerns over all the black bin bags in Lime Court. Clerk to ask TDC about this matter.

Meeting Closed 7.59pm

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