

Sheepwash Parish Council

Parish Council Meeting.
Wednesday 14th January 2026, 7pm
at Sheepwash Village Hall.

Minutes.

Present, Cllr Fairall, Cllr Ritson, Cllr Hutchings, Cllr Moys, Cllr Etherington, District Cllr Wheatley, County Cllr Rowsell, Selina Woollacott (Clerk), Seven Members of the Public.

The Chairperson for this meeting was Cllr Fairall.

1) Apologies for Absence: Cllr Crossley. Cllr Ansell.

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.

Cllr Ritson asked when will the next Parish Council Election be held, at the time the Clerk could not remember when the last Election was held. Since the meeting the Clerk has checked and the last Election was May 2023, the next one should be May 2027.

Cllr Ritson, I have put the salt away for the time being. If it is needed, I will get it out again, I have reported the South Street grit bin asking for it to be refilled.

4) Minutes – the Minutes of the meetings held on 12th November 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 Fairall signed the Minutes.

5) County & District Councillors' reports.

County Councillors report given by Cllr Rowsell.

Not a lot of information to pass on, County has been quiet lately. There are plans to reduce Library opening times. I am investigating this as Libraries are used for a number of classes and groups like baby groups. Where are these groups going to go if the library is not open.

Has anyone here had problems with the reporting site for reporting potholes? No one had. The Highways contract is up for renewal in 2027 and with the Unitary council uncertainty no one seems to know what will happen with the contract. I am trying to find out what is the plan for the contract.

Member of the public stated that Highways have been out filling potholes, and a conversation was had about potholes.

District Councillors report given by Cllr Wheatley.

I would like to start with wishing everybody in our ward a Happy New Year! The next Taw and Torridge River Champions (TTRC) meeting took place on Saturday 10th January from 10am at the Lib Dem office at Chigwell Street where we undertook our next dipping session at Kenwith Stream. Phosphates, Turbidity (measure of cloudiness in water), Temperature were taken and recorded on our database. Our plan is to make the water quality test results more readily available to the public.

Those people interested in taking part please contact us via our website on Facebook at (Taw and Torridge River Champions) or join us at our next meeting in February. We are now a formally constituted group working with the North Devon Biosphere to connect communities' streams and tributaries across the Taw and Torridge catchment area. I am also now appointed as part of the Scrutiny Committee. A growing number of people me included have been trained up to perform water quality tests. It's envisaged that Katy Lee from Biosphere Communities shall visit some of the Parishes in Shebbear and Langtree Ward to provide a presentation about our activities! Cllr Ritson asked if Phosphates were high in the water samples? Yes they were, there is a plan to workout why and where from.

Another issue which has been ongoing for a long time now is recycle vehicle spillages. This has continued to happen around some of the lanes particularly along hedge and roadsides in Petrockstowe, Merton and black bin waste in Shebbear. Councillors informed Cllr Wheatley Sheepwash has not had black bag waste collected. It should be noted however that the service provided by the recycle Team in Langtree is excellent! I am further pleased to announce with the advent of the new Operation Centre hopefully being delivered and completed by the end of this month which certainly will improve the working conditions for the Waste and Recycling Team. We are continuing to monitor the situation too see improvements and please report or contact me if there are future spillages to the TDC Recycling Team.

6) Clerk Report.

Bin bags, BT wires North Street, Sewage work smell, Bideford to Barnstaple Railway update.

Bin bags. I have reported to TDC several times that many black rubbish bags have been left at different locations in the Village more than the normal number of black bags for the properties in the area. TDC would like details of who is leaving the bags in the different locations so they can contact them. I have asked about having a surveillance camera and have had no reply to my request. Am I also right in thinking Sheepwash has had issues with the black bag rubbish not being collected? As this is also an issue my other parishes are having. Members of the public confirmed 6 /7 days until it was collected. Staff shortage was the reason given.

BT wires North Street. I had reported to me that the tree branches in North Street are touching the BT wires I have reported this to BT. Has anyone seen BT in the area looking at or working on the trees? I have a reference number. No sign of work or Inspection. Clerk to enquire.

Sewage work smell. At the last meeting we were informed that the sewage works is giving off a stronger smell than normal. I have reported this to South West Water and the area manager was going to send someone to check the sewage works. If anyone notice the smell getting worse or any other issues with the sewage works let me know and I can report it. Cllr Hutchings informed the meeting people have been at the site.

Bideford to Barnstaple Railway update. I received an email from a Director for Infrastructure and Networks at Railfuture National Board. As his attention was drawn to the County Councillors report at the November meeting. The email contained an update on the current position of the Bideford to Barnstaple railway. I sent the email to all the Parish Councillors at the time. Here is a summary of the email and I have included the full details at the end of the Minute. Two pieces of early business case development are completed, these were being reported to TDC on the 7th January. The probable next step will be the commissioning of a comprehensive strategic outline business case which will be fully compliant with central government guidance. Further details can be found on the website. Cllr Wheatley explained the 7th January meeting did not go ahead it will be rearranged.

7) Chair's Report. No Report.

8) Community Hall, Section 106. Report from Cllr Fairall.

Our Solicitor informed us yesterday that TDC have said they will send the documents over to her by close of play. This was yesterday and we have not heard anything since. Once we have completed the transfer of the land the entrance needs to be built to secure the ownership of the land by the Parish Councils and to abide by the planning.

9) Benches in the Square.

At the last meeting it was agreed that, when the benches are looked at, if the cost of refurbishing them exceeds £200, the Parish Council will consider purchasing two new benches instead. Benches not yet looked at. Cllr Fairall will arrange for them to be looked at. Councillors agreed the Clerk should get cost for benches for the next meeting.

10) River side information board.

Cllr Ritson has the following quote for an information board. A plastic board would be about £175+ vat. Aluminium £97+ vat. Fitting £100 +vat. Design £40+ vat. Would prefer plastic. Total £315 +vat. The Art group could be asked to help with the design. A conversation took place between members of the public and Councillors about: no camping sign, private land sign, contributing to maintenance on private land in the form of grass cutting. Do we want to promote the area and walks as it is private land and river. If there is too much information people won't read it. A discussion was had about replacing the board at a cost of £300-00 + and was it right to spend taxpayers' money on a sign erected on land not owned by the council. Also discussed the very limited parking down by the river and who we were trying to attract, also the no parking sign in the passing place. Also discussed the disturbance to fishermen during the season who pay for a permit to fish. Most locals know about the river walks and use them frequently as do visitors staying in the village.

It was agreed that the sign should be removed and not replaced.

Cllr Ritson voted to replace the sign"

The decision was made to remove the old information sign. Clerk to ask Highways if they will provide a no parking or passing place only sign. All Councillors agreed. A sign saying no camping on private land will be discussed in the future.

11) Tree Circle.

At the last meeting the Clerk was asked to find out how the tree will be identified as being part of the giant circle. The reply to my question was,

We are still in the process of confirming a way to identify each tree as part of the Giant Tree Circle, we are hoping to provide metal tags that have our logo on but I will keep you posted on this.

Does the Parish Council want to continue with this? Councillors agreed no do not want to continue with this.

12) .Gov email address.

This year Parish Councils need to have a .gov email address and are advised to have a .gov website address I have been in contact with Vision ICT who are the website and email company the Parish Council use and once I have a clearer understanding of the process I will inform the Parish Council.

13) Footpaths and P3 funds.

The Parish Paths Partnerships Scheme (P3). This is a grant from DCC to pay for items and work on Footpaths, like repairing or replacing old gates, signs, stiles, bridges, steps. I know there is an ongoing issue every year with maize on the footpaths which I report to the DCC footpath Warden and have asked the farmers to cut paths. With this I am looking for items that need to be repaired or replaced. If anyone knows of any gates, signs, stiles, bridges, steps that need replacing or repaired please let myself or Cllr Ritson know. The Grant form will be submitted to DCC in March. The sooner I know of anything that needs looking at the sooner I can get a cost for it.

Member of the public asked, is there meant to be a footpath thought the back of Luke's Farm? Cllr Hutchings answered, no it was not allowed to happen as it had to cross private land.

14) PLANNING:

14a) Planning Applications.

1/0988/2025/FUL Construction of 1no. dwelling, Land Rear of Lime Court, South Street, Sheepwash.
Comments by 15th January 2026. Councillors were sent details of the Planning prior to the meeting. The Clerk had the Planning on her laptop to be able to answer questions. A member of the public commented that it is a piece of infill. Councillors discussed the planning and that none of the neighbours have submitted comments. Councillors agreed that the Parish Council will comment No Objection. Clerk to submit the comment.

14b) Planning Decisions. None.

14c) Planning Appeal.

TDC Ref E/20/0096/UND. Appeal Reference APP/W1145/C/24/3356368, Clinton House. In progress.
 Still no decision when checked on the 12th January 2026

15) FINANCE:

15a) as at the 6th January 2026:

Main Account £21,162.91

Saving Account £19,054.94

Expenditure:

Date	£	Detail	Transfer
30.11.2025	6.00	Bank Service Charges	DD
17.12.2025	30.00	Chairperson Allowance, items for poppy wreath	Bacs
17.12.2025	0.60	HMRC	Bacs
17.12.2025	10.63	M Ritson. Gazebo Repairs	Bacs
22.12.2025	404.40	Clerk Salary Oct- Dec	Bacs
31.12.2025	6.00	Bank Service Charges	DD
Total	457.63		

Income:

Date	£	Detail
Total	0.00	

The above was read out at the meeting.

15b) Set Budget and Parish Precept.

The Clerk drew up a draft Budget prior to the Meeting and sent to all the Councillors. At the meeting the Clerk explained that the Budget was drawn up using the same Precept amount as 2025/26 which is £8,718. To draft the Budget the Clerk used information on what payments have been made in the current year and previous years as well as any new information for the upcoming year. Councillors discussed the Budget. All Councillors agreed that the Parish Precept is to continue at £8,718 and all Councillors agreed to the Budget. Clerk to complete the Precept form.

15c) Citizen Advice grant request.

Clerk read out information on Citizen Advice and the number of people they helped in 2024/2025. Member of the public has worked for them and voiced how much the services is needed. Councillors agreed to grant £200 which is the same amount as last year.

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

All items on this Agenda.

17) Items to be included in the agenda for the next meeting. The next meeting will be 11th March 2026. Jubilee Park grass. P3 Funding.

Meeting Closed 7.58pm

Clerk: Selina Woollacott, Furze House, Shebbear, EX21 5RL
Tel: 01409 281280 email: clerk@sheepwashparishcouncil.co.uk

Barnstaple to Bideford Railway.

The current position is that, for what we refer to in brief as the North Devon Line Barnstaple-Bideford extension - to distinguish it from a parallel workstream summarised as the North Devon Line Barnstaple-Exeter modernisation - we have two related pieces of early business case development completed; they are a Preliminary Strategic Business Case [P-SBC] and an economic appraisal with initial engineering feasibility assessment which contribute to one of the five dimensions within the P-SBC. I shall be reporting on them to Torridge District Council's External Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 7th January, and agenda papers for that early-New Year meeting are expected to be available on the Council's website this side of Christmas.

That meeting presentation will fulfil an obligation to report back to one of the five funders of one of those pieces of early work, which was first shared in an early-September workshop in Bideford for invited representatives of those organisations. Torridge was represented by County Councillor Mark Barry [Bideford East] and District Councillors Doug Bushby, Claire Hodson, Teresa Tinsley, and Peter Hames, plus Torridge District Council's Economic Development Manager Chris Fuller who had organised their one-third share of the cost using some of their UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation for feasibility studies. County and District Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin was unable to attend the workshop and instead had an extensive in-person briefing at the end of September.

The probable next step will be the commissioning of a comprehensive Strategic Outline Business Case [SOBC], fully compliant with central government guidance, and in that context we are aware that the Devon & Torbay Combined County Authority will with some devolved powers and funding become the new transport authority from next April.

Further details can be seen in our dedicated website [Railfuture | Bideford and Barnstaple to Exeter](#) and at the foot of that page there's a link to a comprehensive diary of activities since they began in early-2021.

I shall of course do my best to address any comments or queries which you may have.

our websites:

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Welcome+to+Railfuture>

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Devon+and+Cornwall+Branch>

<http://www.railwatch.org.uk/>

follow us on X (formerly Twitter): @Railfuture @RailfutureDC @RailfutureNetws @Railwatch

and on

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Railfuture/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/950297745918116> a

iso LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/railfuture-in-great-britain-b5922a30/>

Join Online at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/join/>

