

Sheepwash Parish Council

Wednesday 9th September 2026 at 7pm

Sheepwash Village Hall.

Minutes

Present, Cllr Ansell (Chair) Cllr Moys, Cllr Hutchings, Cllr Etherington, Cllr Fairall, District Cllr Wheatley.
Selina Woollacott (Clerk) Eleven Members of the public.

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

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.

Member of the public (MOP) I am disappointed about the Post Office van service and not knowing when it will be coming and not coming. Clerk will ask them to communicate better with the villagers and put a notice up with planned dates they will not be in the village.

MOP2 The finger sign in the Square has been hit again. Cllr Moys and Cllr Hutchings will have a look after the meeting.

4) **Minutes – the Minutes of the meetings held on the 8th July 2026 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.** No County Councillors report.

The following report was given by Cllr Wheatley.

I am pleased to announce that the Taw and Torridge River Champions have a sellout for our upcoming event at Arlington Court from 10am to 3pm this coming Saturday 12th September 2026 at the Education Barn. There will be several speakers one of which Jimmie is to give a river health presentation including what we are doing to restore water on our lands and Rachel to do a walk and talk down to the dam explaining why Arlington Lake is being returned to a river and explain why this is a good thing! The biosphere will be well represented. Hopefully, people will want to sign up and undergo training to do water quality testing or just volunteer TTRC (Taw and Torridge River Champions). Monitoring the health of your Helping new volunteers providing useful knowledge regarding Rivers and streams without a Test kit and what to look out for? I have provided a River Torridge Sheepwash River Torridge Visual Health Check List. No Water Test kits required. Cllr Fairall and Cllr Etherington feel it would be good to have an article in the chronical about the health check list.

Royal Devon University Health Care NHS Foundation Trust as of 11th August 2026 who run North Devon District Hospital (NDDH) had temporary closed the maternity unit at North Devon Hospital stating it is due to staff shortages, departures, maternity leave, sickness, absence, and difficulties securing locum doctors. The good news is that the Trust has recruited some staff and with the outstanding efforts of Ian Roome MP, Devon County Council and others working together that the Maternity Unit now has a provisional reopening date of 29th September 2026. So far more than 56 babies who would normally been born in Barnstaple have been delivered in Exeter. The Trust has stated the reopening remains dependent on meeting staffing and safety requirements are met. Ed Davey MP raised this serious issue with Andy Burnham at last Wednesdays Prime Ministers Questions on

Wednesday 2nd September as to whether the Government would reopen the Barnstaple Maternity Unit in days not weeks! MPS are demanding a transparent Review, and safeguards are needed should be in place, so this awful situation does not happen again!

Helping our Farmers We shall be submitting a Notice of Motion - Supporting our farmers for the next Full Council Meeting affected by the Blue Tongue outbreak causing death in sheep and fever, reduced milk yields which can cause is causing some sores on muzzle and teats and reproductive issues. This is causing an emotional burden for Torridge Farmers including our Ward of Shebbear and Langtree affecting Breeding programmes, farm incomes and the rural economy. Farmers have been facing livestock losses, increased vet bills, and bio security. We will be calling upon DEFRA (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to urgently provide financial and practical support for farmers affected by Bluetongue. We will be looking at the possibilities of emergency funding from Council as well.

Local Government Reorganisation - The government has put LGR in Devon on pause for Review! The government has already withdrawn some Councils from going Unitary including Essex, Hampshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk. Angela Rayner will announce the review in Parliament. The government confirmed that Local elections will go ahead in May 2027 in existing council boundaries. Eleven Devon councils working to together have launched a new website called Future Devon which provides the latest status and information about Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Infrastructures will change though the provision of information will be provided and explain what changes are happening and what residents can expect over many years. Local Government Reorganisation in Devon- Future Devon.

Xlinks AI Data centre and Bess Battery Storage Torrington. Please can you support our campaign and sign the petition to get AI Data centre developments debated in Westminster! <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/776949>.

This is a huge issue and there is large public objection to Xlinks from many quarters and many questions that remain unanswered in areas of water consumption, noise, pollution, and huge amounts of energy consumption let alone fire risks and security. Xlinks have stated that their planning proposals for an 850-acre site for a data centre and Bess Battery storage situated North of Torrington be submitted to Torridge District Council in January 2027.

6) Clerk Report. Declaration of Interest forms, litter bin, Basket swing.

Declaration of Interest forms. I have all the forms and have sent them to TDC.

Litter Bin. It was agreed at the last meeting to get a new litter bin for Jubilee Park; I sent a few options to the Councillors being mindful of the cost. A bin was picked and now it needs to be put up in its place, and the old one removed and disposed of. Any ideas on who to ask to put the new bin in place? Cllr Moys and Cllr Hutchings said they will remove the old bin and put up the new one.

Basket Swing. I contacted the company who installed the basket swing about the cost of replacing all corroded fixings. I sent them the Inspectors report. The reply was, as it is low risk and only a half hour job, if you can wait for a month or so for us to complete the repair, we will do it free of charge as a goodwill gesture. I agreed to this on behalf of the Parish Council.

Data Centre and BESS site Torrington. This was talked about at my Summer Clerks event. As well as the new Unitary Council. The main message is if signing a petition make sure it is the national one which will be seen by the government. Cllr Cottle- Hunkin is sharing it on Facebook. When the public consultation opens people put their thoughts and views on to the consultation.

I will be attending the DALC local conference at Exeter Racecourse on the 7th October as in the afternoon there is a section on local government reorganisation. With Donna Mason Chief Executive of DCC and Stephen Walford Chief Executive of Mid Devon District Council.

Cllr Ansell ask the Clerk to send and share the information on the Free Seminar Understanding the GRID & Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) that the Devon CPRE are holding on the 24th September. Clerk will put the information onto the Facebook page.

7) Chair's Report.

Cllr Ritson has resigned as a Parish Councillor he resigned on the 7th September. Our Clerk has started the process to co-op a new Councillor. Cllr Ansell read out the email from Cllr Ritson as he has asked that the email is printed in the Chronical.

Good morning folks.

I have for several months been swithering about this.

I do think that some members of our parish council deserve praise and really serve a useful role. A lot of work is done administering relations with TDC for example.

However, I am increasingly feeling that the pc is undervalued by the village and that my role is becoming relatively worthless; particularly since there is a number of newer residents who deserve to be given an opportunity to serve the community.

I have always believed that the council should make greater efforts in attracting parishioners to meetings; remember how very few Sheepwash residents even bothered to attend the Annual Parish meeting.

We have councillors who are not resident in the village and who cannot contribute to the parish nearly enough and this underlines my view that councillors are not considered valuable.

Some councillors are given precious little recognition for the useful work in which they are involved.

In addition, my interests outside the village are growing. I am finding it more and more irksome to be absent from crucial Hatherleigh orchestra practices.

So, with some regret, I am therefore resigning from the parish council from now.

Sincerely.

Mike R

Cllr Ansell asked Councillors to provide her with any thoughts/feelings/their take and side of the story to be added to the Chronical. Cllr Ansell feels the line; we have councillors who are not resident in the village and who cannot contribute to the parish nearly enough and this underlines my view that councillors are not considered valuable. Is directed at Cllr Crossley who has stayed on the Parish Council and was with in her right to do so as her term does not end until May 2027, she stayed to get the Community Hall site into the ownership of the Parish Council she has put a number of hours and effort alongside myself and Cllr Fairall to secure the site for the Parish. I know we have more members of public attending our Parish Council meetings than other Parishes get. This has been confirmed by District Councillor and Clerk. MOP suggested adding to the article in the chronical what a Parish Councillor does.

8) Community Hall site.

Cllr Ansell updated the Parish Council that TDC have not yet approved the Material start. The decision deadline date for the application is 16th September 2026.

9) Generator. This will be discussed at the November meeting.

10) AI Policy.

Clerk sent the AI Policy to all Councillors prior to the meeting. All Councillors agreed to adopt the AI Policy.

11) Asset checking report. Report from the Clerk.

I have completed the asset checking. The Play Equipment and the Square are checked monthly by Councillors, and the Play Equipment is checked annually by an external company. The Gazebo I will talk about later. The benches in the Square and the benches in the park all need to be cleaned and treated. Cllr Moys has recommended a treatment to use on them. The cleaning of them should not be with a pressure washer as it will damage the wood. A few suggestions were made to who I can contact to get quotes to complete the work. It may need to be completed in the Spring as the benches will need time to dry before being treated. The bin in the park is in hand and will be replaced soon. The basket swing will have the bolts changed soon.

12) Gazebo.

The gazebo needs work doing to it. What use is it? Used a few times a year for events. Would the marquee not be used for those events? It needs a concrete base, and either work completing on it or a new gazebo, which we know will cost over £10,000. We need to know the cost to repair. Would removing it be the best option. MOP asked if the gazebo was put up for a reason. There is no plaque on it. If members of the public want to keep it, would they fund raise to help towards the cost of repairs or a new one. It was agreed by the Councillors to make the public aware that it will be discussed at the November meeting as a plan needs to be agreed on.

MOP asked about Winsor Lane and if it has public access? it does not. This has been raised before and it is a lengthy and likely unsuccessful process to try and make lanes etc public footpaths. It was raised that new footpath signs would help show where the footpath is. The Parish Council has got funds to use on the footpaths. Clerk to investigate this.

13) PLANNING:**13a) Planning Applications.**

1/0665/2026/FUL Demolition of existing barn and erection of 1no. dwelling and detached garage in lieu of planning approval 1/0369/2019/FUL Barn At Grid Reference 247680 107572, Sheepwash.

Comments by 25th September 2026. Clerk sent the planning to all Councillors prior to the meeting.

Councillors agreed this is a better option than the previous planning. Councillors agreed to comment No Objections to this planning application.

13b) Planning Decisions. None.**14) FINANCE:****14a) as at the 2nd September 2026:**

Main Account £9,174.52

Saving Account £21,451.34

Expenditure:

Date	£	Detail	Transfer
21.07.2026	2,205.00	Transfer to reserves (saving account)	Transfer
22.07.2026	474.00	GW Architects Ltd	Bacs
22.07.2026	500.00	Grant to Village Hall	Bacs
22.07.2026	396.00	TDC Planning	Bacs
23.07.2026	9.20	HMRC	DD
27.07.2026	47.00	Information Commissioners Office (ICO)	DD
31.07.2026	7.00	Bank Account Service Charge	DD
05.08.2026	89.20	Glasdon. Litter bin	Bacs
31.08.2026	7.00	Bank Account Service Charge	DD
Total	1,529.40	Not including the transfer.	

Income:

Date	£	Detail
01.09.2026	313.61	VAT reclaim from HMRC
Total	313.61	

14b) Parish Council Accounts update.

Saving account. Has a balance of £21,451.34
£17,000. For the Square resurfacing.

£4,451.34 in reserves which is 6 months of the Parish Precept.

The Current account has a balance of £9,174.52
£3,874.48 which is the amount left set aside for the Community Hall Site.
£606.42 of P3 funds to be used on the Footpaths.

This leaves a useable balance of £4,693.62

- 15) Items for Information. Items emailed out to Councillors.** All items on this Agenda.
- **Free Seminar | 24 Sept | Understanding the GRID & Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)**
 - **Warding Arrangement for Devon Council for the Torridge area**
 - **Road Closures on East Street & South Street for works that is required to provide fibre to the premise on this street. 16th – 18th September 2026.**
 - **Government announces four new unitary councils for Devon**
 - **Road Closure South Street and East Street, 30th September – 2nd October 2026. Cabling work.**
- 16) Items to be included in the agenda for the next meeting. The next meeting will be 11th November 2026. Meeting dates for 2027. Half Year Accounts. Generator.**

Member of the public (MOP) explained that Councillors need to speak up in the meetings.

Another MOP raised the issue of the ongoing water leak in South Street which has been reported by the Clerk and members of the public. Clerk to follow up on this.

MOP the check break sign on South Street has fallen over. Cllr Ansell yes, and it has been reported to Highways. Black Torrington junction one of the fingers is still missing from the sign. Also been reported to Highways and finger signs are not a priority to Highways. Clerk will report again and see if they will replace it.

Cllr Ansell voiced that an article in the Chronical explaining what the Parish Council does and the role of a Parish Councillor would be a good idea.

Meeting Closed 8.13pm

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