

PLASTERDOWN GROUPED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting of **PLASTERDOWN PARISH COUNCIL** held in **Whitchurch Community Hall**
On **Wednesday 11th February 2026** at **7.30 pm**

Present: Cllr. J. Sturmer, Chair of the Council, Cllr. E. Cole, Cllr. Pearson-Bunt, Cllr. S Ware and Cllr. I. Walton.

In Attendance: Cllr. M. Fife Cook and two members of the public.

121/26. Apologies for absence

Cllr. Philips and Cllr. Davies sent their apologies. Accepted.

122/25. Declaration of Interest

Cllr. I. Walton declared an interest in previous matters arising from the minutes relating to Tiny Wilds.

123/26. Public Question Time

A member of the public highlighted that the Parish Council had previously been successful in requesting that the Primrose Rally not use the Parish for its night-time events. However, it was noted that another motor rally had recently taken place in the area, resulting in road damage, disturbance, and injury to animals. The member of the public therefore requested that the Parish Council write again to Motor Sports UK asking that all motor rally events be prevented from using roads within the Parish. All members agreed that a letter should be sent accordingly.

At the previous meeting, the Clerk had been asked to arrange for salt to be delivered to a local resident for distribution to other residents. The Clerk confirmed that she had placed the order with Devon County Council and would follow up to confirm the delivery date.

124/26. Receive updates from the Borough and County Councillors

Cllr. M. Renders had sent his apologies.

Cllr. Fife Cook:

1. Is awaiting information from Devon and Somerset regarding broadband grant funding. He has received no response from the Cabinet Members for Rural Affairs to date, so he will contact them directly to ensure the information is circulated, particularly as there is a deadline for the grants in August.
2. Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) has agreed to host Open Days for Parish Councillors to attend, where they will be able to ask questions and learn more about the National Park. These will be scheduled in the next couple of months.
3. Advised that his response regarding Tiny Wilds would be discussed later in the meeting
4. Is in the process of arranging a meeting with a couple of Parishes and Devon Highways. If successful, he will organise further meetings with Highways and additional Parishes.

125/26. Approval of minutes of the Council meeting held on the 14th January 2026

Matters Arising

109/26 Regarding the Walkham Valley Landscape Recovery bid to Defra, Cllr. Fife Cook said he had been unable to attend a meeting lately but will try and attend the next meeting and pass on any relevant information.

116/26

The Clerk has followed up on the broken stile reported on a footpath. DNPA has responded, stating they will liaise with the Sector Ranger to have it repaired as soon as possible.

118/26

Some Councillors are still experiencing issues logging in to and using their gov.uk email addresses. The Clerk will follow up with the email provider to resolve these problems.

All approved the minutes of the meeting.

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126/26. Previous matters arising from the minutes not listed as separate items on this agenda:

- Boundary Stones/Ward Bridge

The three additional stones are currently being engraved. Cllr. Sturmer suggested setting a date in the spring for all Councillors to go out and lay the stones. Once they are in position, the Council will revisit the engraving of Ward Bridge.

- Tiny Wilds School

Update from Cllr. Fife Cook:

As this matter is covered by GDPR, the only information that can be stated is as follows:

Please note that with all enforcement cases, and particularly those where enforcement action is being considered, we must comply with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). We are able to advise complainants, members of the public and Parish/Town Councils when a case has been closed or when formal legal action has been taken, but we cannot provide details of our investigations or of our findings, for obvious reasons.

DNPA are happy for us to report to the Parish Council that our investigations are progressing, that Officers have recently visited and written to the landowner in connection with the alleged change of use of land at Heckwood Farm, that we are awaiting a reply from the landowner by the 20 February, and that his response will influence the Authority's next course of action. On a separate matter, the Parish Council may also mention Hecklake House in Sampford Spiney, where we have received complaints about unauthorised caravans and access track. The track that was reported has been in existence since at least 2015 and accordingly, this case was closed in March 2025.

- Restoration of 1843 Whitchurch Parish Map

Cllr. Sturmer noted that to make a copy, DartPrint in Tavistock would need to fold the map, which is not recommended. Additionally, the Box Museum in Plymouth does not have anyone available to restore the map. The Clerk has reached out to someone from the South West Heritage organisation and is currently waiting for their response.

- Update on Snow Warden scheme/location of salt

Cllr. Walton and Cllr. Davies have checked all five grit bins within the Parish and reported those that require refilling. The grit bin by Moretown Farm is half full and appears to have been damaged by a vehicle; the Clerk will report this. Two of the grit bins are not shown on the Devon County Council online map. Cllr. Walton will obtain their reference numbers and pass them to the Clerk so she can request that they be added to the map. It was agreed to defer preparing a snow plan until September.

127/26. Review and adoption of IT Policy

The policy had been sent to all members prior to the meeting. All agreed to adopt.

128/26. Review and re-adoption of Standing Orders

The policy had been sent to all members prior to the meeting. All agreed to re-adopt.

129/26. Confirm appointment of Internal Auditor

All agreed to re-appoint Mrs Penny Clapham as the Auditor for the 2025-26 audit.

130/26. Review Internal Control Statement

It was agreed to remove all references to the Finance Committee, as the Committee is no longer required. All decisions previously made by the Committee will now be made by the Full Council.

It was also agreed to change the reference of the Staffing Committee to the HR Committee. Cllr. Bunt-Pearson agreed to continue as Chair of the HR Committee.

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131/26. Report on the Connectivity Forum held on 30th January 2026

Cllr. Pearson Bunt attended the event and reported that it had been very well attended by members of Sir Geoffrey Cox's constituency, with all the main broadband stakeholders present. The meeting primarily focused on broadband issues and poor mobile phone coverage will be addressed at a later date. A subsidiary issue discussed was the removal of the copper wire and the inability of some residents to afford comprehensive broadband systems. This was particularly problematic during floods, when affected residents could not get a phone signal to report emergencies.

One potential solution is a "battery system," which allows a broadband or telephone supplier to take over a landline number and provide a small battery-powered unit with its own phone. Where copper wire is still connected and a supported telephone account is still in place, when a power cut is experienced, the power generated from the exchange would be sufficient for phone use, if the exchange can maintain its own power which is usually the case. The advice for individuals without a connection is to contact their broadband or telephone supplier, as they should be able to provide this service. Funding support may be available, and other suppliers at the event indicated a willingness to assist vulnerable residents, including a local farmer, who runs a small broadband company, who said they would be willing to install such a facility, allowing residents to subscribe if they wish.

Cllr. Pearson Bunt stated that she is working on a pilot scheme, which is currently in the scoping phase. It is still at an early stage, and she will provide further updates as more information becomes available.

132/26. Planning application to consider

None.

133/26. Approve accounts for payment

- Clerk's February 2026 salary – £203.90
- HMRC ending 5 March 2026 – £44.40
- Hire of Whitchurch Community Hall February 2026 - £32

All approved payments.

134/26. Consider donation requests from Citizen Advice and Crimestoppers South West

As in previous years, it was agreed to donate £50 to Citizens Advice.

After discussion, it was agreed not to donate to Crimestoppers at this time, with a preference to allocate the Parish's limited donation budget to organisations closely connected to the local community.

135/26. Items raised by Councillors (for information/brief updates only. No Decision can be made)

Cllr. Pearson-Bunt brought up that the government has launched a public consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Devon. The consultation will run for seven weeks, closing on 26th March. DALC are requesting that all Councils submit a response and DALC are preparing a simple comparison of all the proposals. The matter will be included on the agenda for the March meeting for discussion and to agree a response.

Cllr. Sturmer has received a request from the Plymouth Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team for permission to train team members in the use of drones on Plasterdown, with the training taking place on one day per year. She has forwarded the request to Cllr. Renders and Cllr. Fife Cook, who, as members of DNPA, submitted the request on behalf of Plasterdown Grouped Parish Council. Cllr. Renders has agreed to this.

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136/26. Correspondence

Email received from a resident highlighting numerous inconsiderate practices currently impacting the Hamlet of Middlemoor, going on since July 2025. 'This normally quiet but active, hamlet has been subject to a significant change due to the house renovations ... These works have involved multiple trades and services, all of which require parking space. This we understand. However, we are now asking the Parish Council if there is anything they could do/advise to address three major concerns we have relating to the

- 1) abuse of the place,
- 2) inconsiderate parking obstructing a through road
- 3) access for services attending Beechwood.'

After discussion, all members sympathised with the situation. However, the Parish Council does not have the authority to implement parking restrictions. It was suggested that the resident speak with their neighbour again to alleviate the issue. Should this not resolve the matter, and the resident wishes to pursue parking restrictions or road markings, the Parish Council suggest the resident contact Devon Highways.

137/26. Agenda items for the next meeting to be held on Wednesday 11th March 2026 at 7.30 pm at

Whitchurch Community Hall

1. Tiny Wilds School
2. Noticeboards
3. Signposts

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.