PLASTERDOWN GROUPED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting of **PLASTERDOWN PARISH COUNCIL** held in **Sampford Spiney Church**
On **THURSDAY 17th September 2026** at **7.30 pm**

Present: Cllr. W. Hall, Cllr. R Philips, Cllr. R. Pearson-Bunt, Cllr. J Sturmer, Cllr. S. Ware and Cllr. I. Walton

In Attendance: Caroline Metcalf (Clerk), Cllr. M. Fife Cook, Devon Council Councillor, and members of the public

60/26. Apologies for absence
Cllr. A. Davies and Cllr. E. Cole sent their apologies. Accepted by the Council.

61/26. Declaration of Interest
Cllr. Walton declared an interest in planning application 0241/26.

62/26. Public Question Time
A member of the public explained that they and their husband owned a significant proportion of land adjoining the leat and spoke in support of the Community Interest Company (CIC) and its proposed grant application. She stated that the CIC had the support of the relevant landowners and had invested considerable time in developing a proposed schedule of works in consultation with the landowners, the Environment Agency and Natural England.
They also raised concerns that unauthorised works had been carried out on parts of the leat during the summer, which they believed had further compromised its functionality, and expressed concern that some individuals were seeking to undermine the grant application. They emphasised the importance of protecting and maintaining the leat for the benefit of all interested parties.

Amendment – At a Council meeting held on 14th October 2026, Cllr. Walton requested an amendment to Minute 62/26, noting that a member of the public had also stated that "there would be no landowner permission for any works to be carried out on the Leat if the grant application did not proceed."
All members agreed that this should be included in the minutes of 17th September 2026.

63/26. Approval of minutes of the Council meeting held on 16th July 2026 and minutes of the Extraordinary held on 11th August 2026 and deal with any matters arising.
Matters arising from 16th July
Min 49/26
1621/26/FUL - Cllr. Philips noted that a sentence in the minutes, 'It was noted that should the above be resolved, the applicant would then be acceptable', was not recorded in the published comment on the West Devon Planning portal and wished to know why it is different. The Clerk to investigate the reason for the difference and report back.

Subject to the amendment, all agreed to approve and adopt the minutes.

Matters arising from 11th August Meeting
Min 62/26
Cllr. Sturmer clarified that the meeting had been made accessible by telephone to the wife of a member of the public.

Min 62/26
Cllr. Philips, who had been unable to attend the Extraordinary Meeting, questioned the decision to move part of the meeting into Part II. He noted that the minutes did not record a formal resolution or the reason for excluding the press and public and read an extract from the Council's Standing Orders relating to the exclusion of the press and public.

Cllr. Sturmer explained that the decision had been taken because of the confidential nature of the matters being discussed. Cllr. Philips requested that it be noted that, in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, any resolution to exclude the press and public should state the reason for the exclusion. It was agreed that this procedural point would be noted.

The applicant's Planning Consultant was present at the meeting and was attending the meeting to understand the comments made by the Council at the Meeting, as the relevant discussion had taken place under Part II. However, he advised that WDBC had notified the applicant that morning that the application to list the property as an Asset of Community Value had been unsuccessful and the Council's comment submitted had been included in their report.
He advised that the planning application is awaiting determination and acknowledged that, had the property been listed as an Asset of Community Value, this could have been a material consideration in the planning process.

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The minutes of the Meeting were then approved, subject to the agreed amendment concerning the recording of the resolution to exclude the press and public.

64/26. Presentation by Mr. Lindsay Rogers – Sortridge and Grimstone Leat

Mr. Rogers explained that a Community Interest Company (CIC) had been formed to manage the leat and the funding required for its maintenance. He advised that the leat had suffered from a lack of water during the summer and that significant works were required, including repairs at the weir head, the quarry area and other sections where leaks had developed. He said that the proposed works had to meet the requirements of the Environment Agency, landowners and other relevant bodies, which had increased the complexity and cost of the work.

He also explained that leat users would be subject to water abstraction licensing requirements. Those joining the CIC would be covered through the group arrangements, while users choosing not to join would retain their right to receive water but would need to obtain and pay for their own licence. He estimated that approximately 80% of users had joined the CIC.
The member of the public confirmed that the grant application was due to be submitted shortly and that the CIC intended to proceed with it. He said that considerable work had been undertaken to obtain landowner permissions and prepare a schedule of works that complied with the requirements of the relevant agencies. He acknowledged that there was opposition from some users but considered the proposed works necessary to maintain a functioning leat. Mr. Lindsay Rogers gave an update on the condition of the leat and the work being undertaken by the Community Interest Company (CIC) to secure its future. He explained that sections of the leat were currently without water and that significant repair works were required. The proposed works had been developed in consultation with landowners and relevant agencies and would need to meet the requirements of bodies including the Environment Agency and Natural England. A grant application was being prepared to assist with the cost of the works.

It was explained that leat users who joined the CIC would be covered by the collective water abstraction licensing arrangements, while those choosing not to participate would retain their right to receive water but would be responsible for obtaining their own licence. It was estimated that approximately 80% of users had joined the CIC.

Members discussed the proposed grant application and Cllr. Walton raised that some leat users have not yet have been made aware of the scheme.
Cllr. Philips proposed that the Council provide a letter to the CIC supporting the work being undertaken to maintain the leat and preserve the water supply for the local community. After discussion, an amendment was proposed that the letter should also say that not all members of the community supported the proposals and wish to join the scheme and that efforts should be made to ensure that any leat users who had not yet been made aware of the scheme were contacted before the grant application deadline. Second by Cllr. Pearson-Bunt. A vote was taken. Four were for, one against and one abstention. Motion carried.

65/26. Receive updates from the Borough and County Councillors

Cllr. Mark Renders, West Devon Borough Councillor not present at the meeting.

Cllr. Fife Cook provided an update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Significant work and expenditure had already been committed to the process and that Devon County Council (DCC) and was now considering what lessons could be taken from it. He highlighted concerns regarding communication between County, District and Parish Councils, particularly in relation to highways, road closures and the time taken to respond to enquiries. He advised that consideration was being given to improving engagement with local councils, including more direct meetings with Parish and District Councils to better understand local issues and identify practical improvements.

It was reported that LGR was currently described as being “paused” and that there remained uncertainty as to whether, or in what form, it might be progressed in the future. In the meantime, Council officers were having to redirect resources back to services and workstreams that had been affected by preparations for reorganisation.
He also discussed a proposal for a directly elected Mayor covering Devon and Somerset. Cllr. Fife Cook advised that the detail of the role, its powers and responsibilities was still developing, although areas such as transport and strategic economic development were expected to form part of the arrangements. Potential funding associated with the Mayoral Combined County Authority was also discussed.
It was confirmed that Parish Council elections were expected to proceed as planned.
Cllr. Fife Cook advised that he would continue to keep the Council informed as further information became available.

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66/26. Previous matters arising from the minutes not listed as separate items on this agenda:

- Boundary Stones/Ward Bridge

Walkhampton Parish Council will be considering the proposal to have a boundary marker on Ward Bridge at its next Full Council meeting and will notify the Council of their decision after the meeting

- Update on restoration of 1843 Whitchurch Parish Map

Cllr. Sturmer reported that restoration of the map was progressing. It was confirmed that a digital copy, previously circulated by Cllr. Philips would be printed out to display in Whitchurch Community Hall. The copy would be recirculated so Members could consider the appropriate size and printing arrangements.

- Update on Broadband coverage within the Parish

Cllr. Pearson-Bunt reported that the scheme remained under consideration. Discussions were continuing between representatives from DCC and the broadband provider. The Parish was one of the most remote areas being considered, resulting in comparatively high installation costs due to the distance between properties. Further work was being undertaken to explore whether costs could be reduced sufficiently to make the scheme viable for the provider. The project remained on the list of schemes being considered, although progress was currently slow.

67/26. Planning Applications to consider:

Dartmoor - 0272/26 - Erection of agricultural general storage building (13.7m x 9.1m) at The Buildings, Whitchurch, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 9LB.

Members considered the application for an agricultural storage building at Whitchurch and noted the previous planning history of the site. No objections were raised and it was agreed to support the application

Comment: The Council support the application.

Dartmoor 0241/26 - Operational development comprising the erection of a building and the material change of use to a single dwellinghouse at Land at Heckwood Farm, Sampford Spiney, Yelverton, PL20 6L.

Cllr. Walton left the meeting.

Members considered the application for a Certificate of Lawfulness relating to Yurt No. 2 at Heckwood Farm.

Cllr. Fife Cook provided and update from Dartmoor National Park Authority regarding the wider site and advised that further information and investigation were still being undertaken by Dartmoor. It was noted that the determination of the current application should be considered on the evidence relating specifically to the yurt and its claimed use.

Following discussion, Members agreed to object to the application. The Council's concerns were that the proposal represented unjustified development in the open countryside and that, based on the information available, the use of the yurt had not been consistent throughout the period claimed. The objection was agreed unanimously.

Comment: The Council objects to the planning application. Members consider the proposed development to be unsuitable within the open countryside. It is the Council's understanding that the use of the site has not been consistent.

Cllr. Walton rejoined the meeting.

68/26. Update on Local Government Reorganisation

This has already been discussed under Cllr. Fife Cook's update.

69/26. Approve Invoices for payment

- Clerk's September 2026 salary – £203.90
- HMRC ending 5 – (Direct Debit) - £44.40
- DALC Annual General Meeting attendance fee for Cllr. Sturmer - £60

All proposed to approve the payments.

70/26. Items raised by Councillors (for information/ brief updates only. No decisions can be made)

Remembrance Sunday

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Cllr. Sturmer discussed the arrangements for Remembrance Sunday. It was noted that the Council had previously provided remembrance wreaths for the war memorials at Whitchurch Church and Horrabridge Church, where residents of the Parishes are commemorated. It was agreed that the matter would be placed on the next agenda to confirm arrangements for this year, including who would represent the Council at each service.

Boundary Stone – Jordan Lane
Cllr. Sturmer asked the Clerk to provide an update from Devon Highways regarding the proposed boundary stone at Jordan Lane.

Whitchurch Noticeboard
The new noticeboard has now been installed outside the Whitchurch Post Office.

December Council Meeting
The Council meeting to be held on 9 December, will be the Council's customary Christmas social at the Whitchurch Inn following the meeting. Members were asked to consider whether they wished to attend, with numbers and menu choices to be confirmed nearer the time.

71/26. Correspondence
Members were reminded of forthcoming training opportunities, including a West Devon online session relating to LGR and a free councillor safety course. Details of both had previously been circulated to Members.

72/26. Agenda items for the HR Committee Meeting to be held at 7 pm and Council Meeting be held at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 14th October 2026 at Whitchurch Community Hall.
It was also confirmed that, prior to the next Full Council meeting, the HR Committee would meet at 7.00 pm. Members of the Committee had confirmed their availability.

There be no other business, the meeting closed at 21.03 pm.

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