

Silverton Parish Council Chair's Report – May 2026

The past year from April 2025 to March 2026 has seen a number of initiatives progressed by the Council. As is often the case, we are hedged around with rules and procedures that can make progress irritatingly slow, but we try to move forward where we can. I'm now going to list a number of topics and initiatives we have worked on over the past year.

Village Phone Box

Despite objections from the Parish Council, the village phone box was decommissioned by BT this year. The Parish Council bought it for £1, and the Silverton Local History Society has agreed to take over the maintenance and put in it a display relating to the history of the Parish. We are getting the change of use approved to enable this to proceed.

Old Fire Engine House

The Parish Council, working with the Silverton Street Market is proceeding to get an electricity supply reinstated to the Old Fire Engine House in the Square, so that it can provide power to the Street Market and the Christmas Tree. This will also reduce the use of generators, thus improving the environment. Miles Snowdon has generously provided this power from his house over the past years, and we thank him for that.

Little Rec Improvements

The Little Rec is owned by the Richards Educational Charity (R.E.C.), and leased by the Parish Council. In 2025/26 the R.E.C. repaired the boundary wall, and the Parish Council added a bench. Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) holds some money, Section 106 money, to use on enhancements to the Little Rec, and we are looking into potential improvements to the Little Rec, including to the entrance pathway, extending the power supply from the Old Fire Engine House, adding water butts, more seating, etc, to take place over the next few years. We are in discussion with the R.E.C. to see which of these initiatives can be taken forward.

The Big Rec

Most of the Big Rec is owned by the Parish Council, but the north east corner is owned by MDDC. The Parish Council is exploring having this land transferred to us, to simplify management of the Rec.

This year, we had the Skate Park resurfaced, and repair work undertaken on the Children's Play Area. Together this cost approximately £22k, which was more than expected. Further work on the Big Rec, including repairs to the fencing, are planned for 2026/27.

We are very happy that the Silverton Youth Football Club continues to make good use of the Big Rec, and this year has, by agreement with the Council and Devon Air Ambulance Trust, been using the Air Ambulance floodlighting there to enable early evening training sessions in the winter. The lights are angled to minimise glare for nearby housing. Although some glare is unavoidable, we judged that the benefits to the parish of having a thriving and successful youth football club far outweigh this.

Double Yellow Lines and Parking

There are some places in the village where parking is causing issues and blockage. The Parish Council proposed 3 locations for short lengths of double yellow lines: the bottom of Coach Road where the scheduled bus service can be blocked by parking; a small stretch on Fore Street just prior to the turning into King Street which is preventing deliveries to The Lamb Inn, and on the western side of Wyndham Road between the Community Hall Car Park and MDDC Village Car Park where the bus service can be disrupted. A consultation via Facebook showed a significant majority in favour of these proposals, and so Devon County Council has been requested to implement this. This is in addition to the request to Devon

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Highways last year to mark out in the road the bus stop outside The Meads to enable buses to stop there without hindrance. We are in the hands of Devon County Council as to when these will be implemented.

The Parish Council has also approached MDDC with a view to taking on ownership of the Village Car Park. This car park is currently free to use, thanks to MDDC, but with Local Government reorganisation coming up, the abolition of MDDC may result in harmonisation of car parking charges across whatever new authority is created, resulting in parking charges being applied.

Bus Shelters

The leaking bus shelter in the square was repaired. A new timetable holder has been obtained and will be fitted to the shelter this summer.

The Parish Council hopes to erect a new bus shelter on the Exeter-bound side of the A396 at the bottom of Upexe Lane, thus improving safety and usability. We are currently in discussion with Devon County Council about this, and hope to get through the relevant approvals process to erect a shelter in the 2026/27 financial year.

Silverton Oak

The wood from the Silverton Oak is now seasoned. The Working Group looking at this has now dissolved, and the Parish Council will be looking at uses for the wood.

The Glebe

The Silverton Parish Neighbourhood Plan included a proposal for a small number of houses to be built on the privately owned Glebe Land to the south of the Berry, with the remainder of the Glebe Land to be passed to the Parish Council for the benefit of the people of Silverton. Some initial discussions have been held with representatives of the owners of the land, and we hope that this initiative will proceed in future years. Ideas for use of the land, which has archaeological merit, include use for a Community Orchard, and potentially for Dog Walking (there being no other open space in the village where dog walking is permitted).

Benches

In addition to the seat added to the Little Rec, the Parish Council replaced the cast iron seat on the Village Pond Site (on the junction between the High Street and Silverdale) which had become dangerous.

Trees

The normal tree inspections were carried out on the Little Rec, and the Berry, with remedial work to be carried out later in 2026 after Tree Preservation Order approvals. The Parish Council also intends to plant a couple of Rowan Trees on the Village Pond Site, where some trees have died over the past few years.

Improvements to Upexe Lane

The Parish Council attempted to get approval to install solar lights on Upexe Lane to improve safety. However, these lights did not meet the standards required by Devon County Council, and so we cannot proceed with these (lights that meet their standards would cost tens of thousands of pounds to install).

We are in discussion with Devon County Council to add more pedestrian warning signs on that road.

We have also advocated for the missing road signs on the A396 that directly face Upexe Lane to be replaced. We have been advised that Devon County Council has created these signs, but is working out how best to fit them.

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Village Youth Worker

The Parish Council continues to support the Silverton Evangelical Church's (SEC's) initiative to provide a youth worker for the parish, by funding approximately half the cost of this. We applaud the SEC for taking this initiative forward.

Grants to Parish Organisations

We continue to provide grants to maintain and wind the Village Clock, to the Silverton Street Market, and to cut the grass in the Churchyard, in addition to the Youth Worker Grant.

Routine Work

The routine work of clearing the Leat of blockages, cutting back brambles in specified locations, inspecting equipment, emptying bins and so on continues, and I'd like to thank Denis Marsden our village handyman for being so resourceful and flexible in his approach to this work.

Admin

Over the past year, the Parish Council has implemented online banking (not as straightforward as you might think), and obtained a debit card to ease purchases. On the advice of our auditor, we are looking into obtaining a new and more accessible website, and providing silvertonparishcouncil email addresses for councillors at reasonable cost.

The council has also initiated a programme of training for councillors, and the many policies we must have in place are regularly reviewed and updated.

The emergency plan for the Parish is being rewritten to be more comprehensive and easier to follow.

Potholes

Any potholes of over a foot in length should be reported to Devon County Council (Devon Highways) so that they can be repaired. This can be done via their website. However, Devon County Council will not repair smaller potholes. A group of robust volunteers in the village has recently come forward to volunteer to do this work. The Parish Council is in liaison with Devon County Council so that these people can be trained, insured and provided with equipment and materials to do this. Hopefully, by the end of the current year, these arrangements will be in place, and smaller potholes in the parish can start to be repaired.

Local Government Reorganisation

All existing District Councils in Devon will be abolished from April 2028 as will Devon County Council. In their place will be one or more unitary authorities, though the names and geographical coverage of these new council(s) is not yet known – the government hopes to announce this by the end of the summer. Parish Councils will remain as is, but may be expected to take on more responsibilities. Of greater concern is that while the Parish currently has two councillors on MDDC, it will lose those. We will instead be represented by one councillor from a ward that includes other areas as well as Silverton. Furthermore, the contacts we have within MDDC and Devon County Council will change, and so our requests for things like double yellow lines, bus stops, section 106 fund release, and planning approvals may get "lost".

On the plus side, we will now be dealing with only one, unitary council, so the confusion between the responsibilities of Mid Devon District Council and Devon County Council will go. Elections to a new shadow unitary authority will happen in May 2027, with that new unitary authority coming into full force on 1st April 2028.

Planning Applications

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The Parish Council reviews every planning application within the Parish. We support them where we feel it advisable, but we object where we think best and are legally able to do so. We are not always listened to by the planning authorities (primarily MDDC), but our recent objections to the Ruffwell Inn resulted to revised plans being put forward with more parking space, solar panels and car charging facilities. Objections can be raised by individuals, and we encourage people to object using the MDDC website on their own behalf if they dislike a proposal.

Finances

As a result of the higher than anticipated costs for the Big Rec work, the amount carried forward from 2025/26 to 2026/27 was £1k less than expected when the budget was set. Significant new expenditure for 2026/27 includes provision for the new Bus Shelter, and it is anticipated that expenditure on the Big Rec for 2026/27 will be higher than originally planned, impacting our aim of growing a reserve fund for the Big Rec for major maintenance work in future years.

Thanks

I'd like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their work over the past year. In Particular I'd like to thank Vicki Maylan who stood down from the Council this year after many years of service, and our Clerk of more than 40 years, Sheila Woodland, without who we'd all just be floundering around.

In addition, I'd like to thank our district councillors, Josh Wright for Silverton, Rhys Roberts for North Silverton, and our County Councillor, Steve Keable for Creedy, Taw & Mid Exe, who all have advocated for us with their respective councils.

I'd also like to thank all the voluntary organisations who do so much work in the parish, mostly uncompensated, to keep parish life thriving: the Churches, the Women's Group, the Flower Group, the Friends of Silverton School, the Street Market Committee, the Silverton Parochial Trust, the Richards Educational Trust, the Silverton Youth Football Club, the Silverleigh Magazine, the bellringers, the British Legion, the Silverton Local History Society, the Twinning Group, the Community Hall, Room 4U, the Friends of Wyndham House, the Pickleball Group, and other organisations, as well as the businesses in the Parish. Without the dozens of people running and supporting these groups, Silverton would be a much poorer and sadder place to live.

Simon Hedges

Chair

Silverton Parish Council