

WASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 21st January 2026 in Washfield Memorial Hall at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr's W Wood (Chair), M Balment, J Boundy, J Mock and R Webber.

In attendance: County Cllr S Lodge, District Cllr M Stratton, two members of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

45/01/26. To receive apologies. Apologies received from District Cllr C Adcock.

46/01/26. Disclosure of interest in item on the agenda. Cllr Balment declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 54/01/26 e) as he is paid to cut the Churchyard grass. He declared a personal interest only in item 54/01/26 d) as there was no financial gain to him.

47/01/26. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2025 as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

48/01/26. Matters arising from the minutes (not already covered by the agenda). No matters arising.

49/01/26. Public questions. The Chair reminded the members of the public that the period of time designated for public participation was 3 minutes for each member of the public.
A member of the public asked for clarification about acceptable practise and guidelines and spoke about the transparency code for smaller authorities.
A member of the public said it wasn't personal and spoke about following process.

50/01/26. Footpaths:

a) Footpath Warden vacancy. There have been changes within the DCC Public Rights of Way team and new guidance has been received. This needs to be read, understood and clarified before working out what the role is.

b) Any footpaths matters. None.

51/01/26. Planning

a) To make a recommendation on any planning applications received before the meeting. No applications received.

b) To note any decisions on planning applications made by MDDC.

25/01070/House Erection of a garage/workshop. Location: Wildwood House, Stoodleigh. Decision: conditional approval.

25/01229/PNG Prior Notification for the erection of an agricultural storage building. Location: Land at NGR 292122 116904 Ennerleigh Farm, Washfield. Site Vicinity Grid Ref: 318270 / 117089. No objection – prior approval not required.

25/01363/LBC Listed Building Consent for the conversion of disused storage

buildings into 2 holiday lets. Location: Building at NGR 293620 114731 Cowlins, Washfield. Decision: conditional approval

c) To note the planning training session organised by MDDC on 26th March 2026. Councillors were reminded of the opportunity to attend this free training session which will take place between 18:00 and 20:30 either on Microsoft Teams or in person at Phoenix House.

d) Any other planning matters. No other planning matters.

52/01/26. Highways

a) To report on any highways work carried out in the parish and to note any highways work needed. Cllr Balment has reported potholes on DCC's website and these have been filled. There are still several that need to be filled.

On the road from Swinesbridge to Warren Cross there is a blocked gully. Cllr Boundy reported he had seen someone from Highways looking at drains.

The streetlight by the Old School is not working. Cllr Balment will report this on DCC's online map.

Cllr Boundy has checked whether salt/grit bins have been filled and he reported online the five that need filling.

b) To note any update on the issues of the condition of the pavement from opposite the Village Hall to the path to the Church by The Weeches. No update. The hedge growing out onto the footpath could be cut back.

c) To discuss traffic calming in Washfield. People do drive fast through the village but there is no speed limit at present even though a 30mph speed limit through the village has been discussed in the past. Cllr Lodge suggested the Parish Council could adopt the 'Twenty is Plenty' Scheme as a calming measure but it is not enforceable. Permission would need to be obtained from DCC Highways and the signs cannot look like official speed signs. The Clerk will find out more information about the scheme. A member of the public had asked for this item to be added to the agenda and they will be asked where they feel the traffic calming is needed.

d) Any other highways matter. Dominic Scotting is the new Neighbourhood Highways Officer (NHO) for Tiverton West and has a lot to learn. Cllr Lodge has asked him to look up what the local priorities for parishes are. The previous NHO had a series of meetings with Tiverton West parish and town councils last year and they advised on their priorities. Roads for resurfacing such as Lower Washfield are on a list of priorities. Cllr Lodge spoke about the reducing funding for highways from the government. At next week's DCC council meeting next week there will be a report on the trial where any pothole within fifty metres of a reported urgent defect will be filled. Councillors commented on the quality of pothole repairs as material used to fill them is coming out again. They commented that the dragon patcher leaves humps when it is used. There was a complaint that there is no checking on the quality of repairs. Cllr Lodge said all county councillors were getting a lot of complaints about potholes. Highways say it is difficult to repair potholes during poor weather conditions. It was felt that there were health and safety concerns where potholes didn't meet the criteria for an urgent repair but were dangerous, especially for cyclists and motor bikes: who set the criteria? It was noted that the Exe Valley Way, which goes through the parish, is an important footpath but is not included in Washfield's P3 agreement. If councillors have any particular concerns they should

send details, including a What3Words reference to Cllr Lodge and he can check whether it is on a scheme. A member of the public has volunteered to become a road warden for one road in the parish. The Clerk will find out when the next training is.

53/01/26. Reports

a) County Cllr. A written report had been circulated by email prior to the meeting. Cllr Lodge reported that he had chaired a meeting held at Tiverton Town Hall to discuss the problems caused by pharmacies in the town closing. Since there have only been two pharmacies there have been long queues and people have had long waits. Sometimes they have found the medication they had been prescribed was out of stock. Since the meeting the pharmacy in Market Walk has reopened under new ownership. Superdrug have been asked about reopening a pharmacy in their shop in Fore Street and at Clare House. He encouraged as many people as possible to respond to the library consultation which ends on 22nd February. An emergency council meeting was held to discuss the cancellation of local elections in May. Exeter City Council has cancelled its elections. Cllr Philip Bialyk, leader of Exeter City Council, was in the room during the meeting.

b) District Cllr. A written report was circulated by email earlier in the month. Cllr Stratton noted the discounted leisure membership offer available until the end of January. He reminded councillors about MDDC's planning training session and gave a short update on Local Government Reorganisation.

54/01/26. Finance:

a) To approve any payments. It was resolved to make the following payments:

Washfield Memorial Hall	£120.00	Room hire	2526/11
Mrs J Larcombe	210.32	Clerk's salary Sept to January	2526/12
HM Revenue & Customs	£52.20	PAYE	2526/13

Bank fees of £6.00 were paid on 30/09/25, 31/10/25, 30/11/25 and 31/12/25. They are due again on 31/01/26.

b) To report any receipts and the bank balances. Since the last meeting bank interest of £21.34 was received on 30/09/25 and £19.94 on 31/12/25.

Unity Trust Bank Current Account balance is £903.80 (£130.47 of payments waiting for approval) Unity Trust Bank Instant Access balance - £3638.71

c) Bank reconciliation for 31.12.25. The bank reconciliation was checked and signed by Cllr Wood.

d) To receive quotes for the concrete pad for the picnic bench on the Village Green. Cllr Balment declared a personal interest and volunteered to carry out the labour at no charge to the Parish Council. Materials will be charged for. Cllr Balment was thanked and his offer accepted.

e) To discuss and agree the budget for 2026-27. A draft budget prepared by the Clerk & RFO was presented to councillors. Accompanying notes explained the reason for the budgeted amounts. The Clerk noted that due to recent unpleasantness during the democratic period at Parish Council meetings there was a risk that a new Clerk and RFO would need to be appointed. However, she had no

intentioned of being bullied out of the role. If a new Clerk and RFO had to be appointed they would need to be given a laptop with Microsoft 365 and virus protection. The position would need to be advertised with more hours than she was currently being paid for. A new Clerk and RFO should also be given a mobile phone for council business. There is a new assertion on the Annual Governance Statement for 2025-26 which requires the Council (Clerk) to have an email with a .gov.uk or .org.uk domain. Ordinary gmail is no longer acceptable. There will be a cost to this. The Council's website has to meet increased accessibility standards and this could involve increase costs. A new internal auditor will be required this year because of the additional knowledge required and that cost will increase because of the additional work involved.

Councillors discussed the Churchyard Grant for 2026-27. Cllr Balment declared a personal and pecuniary interest and left the room as he is paid for cutting the grass in the Churchyard. It was agreed to include £750 and make the payment earlier in the financial year. The budget was agreed.

Cllr Balment rejoined the meeting.

f) To agree the precept for 2026-27. It was agreed to request a precept of £3,425.

Cllr Lodge left the meeting.

55/01/26. To approve revised Financial Regulations and Standing Orders (amendments to NALC Model Regulations). Both documents were approved.

56/01/26. Co-option of a councillor. A notice has been placed on the notice board advertising the opportunity to be co-opted onto the Parish Council. There is also information on the website.

57/01/26 Election of Vice-chair. No nominations received.

58/01/26. Chair's Announcements and Correspondence. The Chair had no announcements and there was no further correspondence.

59/01/26. Date of the next meeting. 18th March 2026.

The meeting closed at 8.43pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date: