

INWARDLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL.

Clerk to the council: inwardleighpc@gmail.com

Minutes from the meeting of Inwardleigh Parish Council held on Wednesday 21st May 2025 at Folly Gate Parish Hall.

In attendance: Cllr. Dennis (Chair) Cllr. King (Vice-chair)
Cllr. Piddington Cllr. Timms
WDBC Leach WDBC Dexter
Clerk: Mrs. Clarke

Minutes.

01/05/25 Welcome and Apologies - The meeting opened with a welcome, notably recognising George Dexter for a recent media feature. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Henderson, Cllr Hooper, Cllr Ions, and the new DCC Davis

02/05/25 There were no declaration of Interest on the agenda

03/05/25 Minutes of the last meeting held on 19th March 2025 and the minutes of the extra ordinary meeting on the 30th April 2025 were agreed and signed.

04/05/25 Reports from West Devon Councillors :-
George Dexter: March 2025 Report

English Devolution White Paper

You will be aware that proposal by Devon County Council that it become a unitary authority along with the cancellation of the 2025 county council elections was rejected by the Government. The local government re-organisation part of this white paper has absorbed a huge amount of the time of the leaders and chief executives of the Borough and other District Councils in Devon. This is because the government has required local authorities to come forward with outline proposals for reorganisation by the 21st March. The current idea of the Devon District councils is for 3 unitary councils to be formed from:

- Plymouth (but with boundaries extended) with about 300,000 people;
- West Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge and Torbay (Southern Devon & Torbay); and
- The 5 remaining Districts (Exeter and Northern Devon).

This proposal is based on constraint imposed by government that new unitary authorities should have populations of 500,000 and comprise existing Districts. (Thus, WDBC cannot be split with Okehampton looking to Exeter.) The table below gives a comparison of the interim proposal which will be put forward by the Districts in comparison to existing Unitary Authorities.

	Southern Devon & Torbay	Exeter and Northern Devon	Median of existing Unitary Authorities
Population	430,000	542,000	146,995
% over 65 years old	28%	25%	19%
Area (km²)	2,748	3,832	230
Council Tax base	160,354	253,310	93,950

West Devon Borough Council has delegated its Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council Leader and the other Members of its Hub Committee, authority to respond to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution's letter dated 5 February, by the deadline of 21st March 2025, including doing anything appropriate which, in the Chief Executive's opinion, is in the best interests of the Council and its residents. After this, the deadline for submission of a full proposal is 28th November 2025. It is unclear what exactly will happen between these two dates.

In addition to the plans supported by the 7 District Councils:

- Plymouth has publicly announced its intention to expand their boundary
- Exeter City Council plans to submit a 'greater Exeter Plan'

- Devon County Council plans to submit a range of options which includes: a single unitary for all Devon (except Plymouth); a 'greater Exeter plan'; options for a large 2 Unitary model; and the 1:4:5 plan set out above
- Torbay, which supports the 1:4:5 plan, is also considering other options based on their existing boundary and one which is aligned with NHS boundary.

The government will ultimately decide on which option to implement.

The necessity of an increased role for Town and Parish Councils has been recognised. However, there is great uncertainty about how the reorganisation will work, so it has not been possible to have a meaningful engagement with DALC or NALC.

2024/5 Accounts

WDBC is projecting to have a £589,000 underspend due mostly to higher than anticipated interest rates. It was agreed that £400,000 of this will be transferred to the Recovery Plan and Corporate Strategy Earmarked Reserve, for reinvestment back into the delivery of the Council Plan. The balance of £189,000 will be added to the Council's Unearmarked Reserves. At the end of the financial year the Council's reserves are forecast to stand at £1,907,000 of Unearmarked Reserves and £9,648,000 of earmarked Reserves.

Budget 2025/26

A balanced budget was set by the full council for 2025/26. However, a shortfall of about £1.6m is currently projected for 2026/27 because of the uncertainty over government grants in the future. A rate increase for WDBC was agreed at 2.99%, with the following discounts will be applied from 1st April 2025

- The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties is 100% for a maximum period of one month;
- The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties after one month to one year is zero;
- The discount for properties which require major repair work to render them habitable is 50% for a maximum period of 12 months; and
- The discount for unoccupied furnished properties (second homes) is zero.

The following premiums will be applied from 1st April 2025.

- An empty homes premium of an additional 100% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for between one and five years;
- An empty homes premium of an additional 200% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for between five and ten years;
- An empty homes premium of an additional 300% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over ten years; and
- A second homes premium of 100% is levied on unoccupied furnished properties.

West Devon Village Hall Cluster Meeting

I attended this meeting in last week. There were three subjects: Introduction to Tamar Energy Consortium, Feedback on Community Halls Grant Scheme development, and Village Halls as Health Hubs – Cancer Outreach project. I felt that all these items would be of relevance to Folly Gate. The meetings will be held quarterly with the next one in Meldon by offer of Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council.

In addition to these a fourth priority area—**rural crime**—has been added by West Devon, with a dedicated officer assigned. Discussion noted "priority." Update from West Devon AGM - A Councillor has left the Conservative Party and is now an independent. New police inspector, Gavin Jones, is in post and aims to strengthen community engagement. Contact details will be circulated for liaison. Devon County Council Update Liberal Democrats and Greens now hold a majority. Gillian Brazil has become Leader of Devon County Council. It was agreed to proactively engage with the new administration once portfolio holders (e.g., highways) are announced.

Devon Devolution/Local Government Reforms: The Chief Executive has reviewed the latest government response. The current feedback remains general and high-level, focusing on Devon County's proposal rather than submissions from West Devon or other districts. A collective meeting of all Devon Chief Executives is planned to formulate a coordinated follow-up response.

Government response is viewed more as a framework for business plan preparation rather than an evaluation of specific proposals. One government contact has been designated for Devon communications: Food Bank Statistics (Trussell Trust): In March 2025, the Trussell Trust issued approximately 2.9 million emergency food parcels, indicating a continued strain from the cost-of-living crisis.

Report from West Devon Councillor Leech:-

It will be the West Devon AGM / Mayor Choosing day on the 20th. This is where we have a change of Mayors as well as a sort of shift round of members' responsibilities. I am not expecting much to change, but from previous years, you just can't tell.

New Planning regulations: We are still awaiting a response from central government.

National Devolution: Still no decision as to how this will go, and with the recent elections, the future could be even more uncertain.

New Police Inspector: Inspector Daniel Jones is now in post, and we have had some one-to-one Teams meetings, and he would like to do this more often. I would suggest that a representative from your Parish Council contacts him to make sure your Parish is included, as he is very open to being contacted at any time.

Speed watch:

Following the serious road accident in Follygate, this may well be the time to push DCC for some speeding signs, along with a Speed watch group.

Fire risks:

There has been a warning about the very high risk of fires on the Moor as well as the general countryside. It may be a good idea to press this point through any of your local parish or any other magazines that you may know of.

Following on from my last report, the following covers one element of the Environmental Health Team. Meet your Principal Environmental Health Officer Meet Sam Bartram

What are you responsible for in your job? I am responsible for leading a team of Environmental Health Officers and Business Support Officers to deliver the Food Safety Hygiene Program. This includes inspecting premises that produce food from a home caterer to the largest and most complex businesses like Ambrosia and Arla. I am also required to ensure we can respond to complaints, enquiries and to undertake a sampling program.

My team sign export certificates, almost every day, confirming that food produced or harvested in our districts is safe to be sent abroad. For the previous financial year that equated to over 15 million pounds worth of food. In addition to food safety, I also lead the team to investigate external health and safety incidents, accidents and fatalities.

Me and my team are just at the end of the year for the food inspection program. There are always interesting premises and people in our districts and while we couldn't be happier leaving a premises that has improved hugely, we also enjoy using our knowledge to work on and advise those more technical businesses.

We have recently completed a project that was required directly from government to visit funeral homes. This project was the result of problems found in the north east with a particular funeral home. It was comforting to establish that we found no issues in South Hams or West Devon, hopefully reassuring the public that the funeral homes sector is well regulated.

Every year we are required to monitor the shellfish beds around the South Hams. We are kindly helped by Localities to collect the samples and then my team monitor the results which determines the grading of the beds and directly affects the businesses. During the summer months when algal blooms are more prevalent, we are required to take extra samples. That season has just started!

I may sound a bit corny, but genuinely, the job is so varied. You literally couldn't dream up some of the things we deal with!

I guess a 'normal' day could be some food inspections or planned sampling but you have to be prepared as urgent reactive work could, and does, come in at any time. Usually the Friday before bank holiday!! An outbreak, a declared major emergency, such as flooding or an unexploded war time bomb in Plymouth. A shellfish bed needs to be closed due to results, or a serious complaint has been received about a food business. A health and safety incident that needs to be investigated urgently to preserve the evidence. A notification from the Food Standards Agency of a food recall, or an alleged food crime in our area. The list really could go on and on. And yes, we do get called out for rats in kitchens. We have even been sent a video of one attacking a chef!!!

Of course, our job isn't all about dashing around the district, dealing with problems, we do also help and advise businesses. We also currently have three Primary Authority partnerships where we are their main point of contact for advice and help them to complete documentation or undertake inspections to help them prepare for becoming accredited or simply a critical friend.

Oh, and the thing you couldn't dream up... was some fox urine that was illegally imported!

05/05/25 Parish Matters - 5.1 Review of the Insurance Policy The parish council's insurance premium has increased, approaching **£1,300**, and renewal is due by 1st June. The current policy does not adequately cover hall users, trustees, or third-party event volunteers. It was clarified that separate insurance is needed for the **Parish Hall Committee**. The **Village Hall**: A separate meeting is planned to clarify the management structure and insurance responsibilities. Suggestions included: Obtaining independent cover tailored for village halls, possibly taking over formal management via a lease, in the interim the clerk will ensure cover is in place for the immediate insurance renewal. The cover is currently appropriate for the parish council but not for the village hall committee. Proposed by Cllr Piddington and seconded by Cllr. King

5.2 Allotments - Email received with details from WDBC was read out, a discussion took place about the costs of a potential acquisition. The consensus is not to proceed at this moment.

06/05/25 Reviews: Moved to the reviews in the AGM

07/05/25 West Devon Planning Matters.

7.1 Planning Applications: No direct applications to the council, however, one was raised by Cllr Leech, that came in late this afternoon, land adjacent to Lower Northwood, Agricultural building. The cut off date for agricultural use was discussed. The council remains neutral on this application.

7.2 Planning Decisions: None

7.3 Planning appeals/Enforcements: None

08/05/25 Road and Footpaths

8.1 Outstanding Road and Footpath issues, Update:

Since the accident along the road through Folly Gate, therefore a suggestion should be raised to drop the speed limit to 30mph, by the clerk to Highways and/or the new inspector Jones at Okehampton.

Milland Cross (Northleigh Road past Brook Farm): Works have reportedly been completed, including a large patch repair done in March. East End Cross: A patch has been laid; the surface was previously uneven but not deeply damaged. Tungland: The surface remains in poor condition with deep potholes spanning across the road, causing vehicles to swerve. The issue is ongoing and may warrant further attention. Traffic Calming Measures: Comments were made likening the road conditions to "dead policemen", suggesting the poor state may inadvertently slow traffic.

8.2 New/Ongoing issues identified:

Goulburn Cross to Crossways route: Numerous potholes and unsatisfactory repairs noted. Two potholes have been filled following an email sent on 12 April to Highways and Cllr McGuinness, but the overall condition remains poor. Matter remains under monitoring and may be escalated if progress stalls.

09/05/25 Finance

Expenditures: Devon County Council: £192 Clerk: £481, plus £91 in PAYE

09.1 Bank Balances: End of March: £7,803.70, End of April: £10,649.45 (includes half-year precept payment from West Devon), Bank charges: £4.25 applied

09.2 AUDIT 2025 – 2025

The council approved and signed the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) documents, including certificates of exemption and the summary of receipts and payments. Fixed Asset Register: Currently valued at £579,000, which includes the village hall replacement cost. Risk Assessment: Remains unchanged from the previous year.

09.2.1 Certificate of Exemption from limited assurance review was reviewed and signed

09.2.2 The Summary of Receipts and Payments for year ended 31st March 2025, was reviewed and signed

09.2.3 The Fixed Asset Register for the year ended 31st March 2025, was reviewed and signed

09.2.4 To agree and approve the Fixed Asset Risk Assessment for the year ended 31st March 2025, was reviewed and signed

09.2.5 To note the Annual Return Explanation of Variance.

10/05/25 Inwardleigh Councillor's Matters

Broadband Infrastructure: Fibre broadband upgrades are ongoing and appear to have reached full extent locally. No immediate improvement in performance noticed by members.

11/05/25 Clerk's Report - Parish Council

Website Domain Transition (.gov.uk): Councils are now expected to migrate to a .gov.uk domain. The domain name chosen, inwardleighpc.gov.uk. Costs were detailed. Initial setup: Only the clerk is currently required to use a .gov.uk email address. Additional councillor addresses can be set up temporarily to comply, then redirected. VAT was discussed and the ICO Payment being mandatory annual charge.

14/05/25 Minor Matters and Items for Future Agenda

15/05/25 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 16th July 2025 in the Village Hall at 8pm

16/05/25 Meeting closed at: 20:25 hours

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In attendance: Cllr. Dennis (Chair) Cllr. King (Vice-chair)
Cllr. Piddington Cllr. Timms
WDBC Leach WDBC Dexter
Clerk: Mrs. Clarke

Minutes.

17/05/25 Apologies - were received from Cllr Henderson, Cllr Hooper, Cllr Ions, and the new DCC Cllr Davis

18/05/25 There were no declaration of Interest on the agenda

19.05.25 Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman:

19.1 Chairman:

Cllr King was elected as Chair with full support from the council. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly signed.

19.2 Vice Chair:

No appointment was made. General consensus was to defer the appointment due to absences and a desire not to nominate whilst absent. Position will be revisited at a future meeting.

19.3 Outgoing Chair gave a brief speech, commending the community's progress and welcoming Cllr King.

20.05.25 Register of interests - Councillors to notify the clerk of any changes.

21.05.25 Review dates for the following policies:-

21.1 Policy Review and Standing Orders Discussion

Members were previously assigned sections of the standing orders to review -most had read their assigned sections. reading requirements will be timed closer to meetings. AI Summaries were suggested due to complex or lengthy policy documents. This was met with informal agreement and may be trialled in future.

Content Observations:

The current standing orders are seen as comprehensive and largely fit for purpose, with recognition that the council is generally compliant with expected standards.

Brexit Implications: A brief discussion noted that some sections reference pre-Brexit regulatory frameworks. Given evolving UK–EU legislative alignment, uncertainty remains about whether those clauses should be revised or reinstated.

21.2 Discuss bank signatories - Clerk remains sole signatory on parish bank account – a position considered risky for continuity. Machines for banking access have been issued to Cllr Hooper and Cllr Timms, but cards were never received. Clerk to re-initiate request for cards to enable more authorised users and safeguard operations.

Date for the next AGM: Wednesday 20th May 2026

Meeting Closed at: 20:42 hours.