

Burlescombe Parish Council

DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of Burlescombe Parish Council
on Monday, 5 January 2026 at Westleigh URC

Present: Councillors Forward (Chair), Box, Downing, Elliss-Brookes, McDonald and Smith together with MDDC District Councillor Lock.

Councillor Forward opened the meeting at 7.00pm and welcomed the councillors present.

008/2526/1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillor Walker together with MDDC District Councillor Westcott, DCC County Councillor Clist and Mrs S McGeever, Clerk.

008/2526/2 Declarations of Interest/Dispensations

There were no Declarations of Interest or Dispensations.

008/2526/3 Minutes of Previous meetings

The draft minutes of the meeting on 25 November 2025 had been circulated to all councillors and published on the website and noticeboards. Given the Clerk was not present with a copy of the minutes to sign, the approval and signing of the minutes would take place at the February 2026 meeting.

008/2526/4 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

008/2526/5 Matters arising from the last minutes

Updates on matters arising from the last minutes will be raised under the appropriate agenda item.

008/2526/6 Emergency Planning

The draft emergency plan together with confirmation of muster points would be discussed at the February 2026 Parish Council meeting.

008/2526/7 Community Mapping

Community mapping would be discussed at the February 2026 Parish Council meeting.

008/2526/8 Training

The need for ongoing training had been discussed as part of the precept discussions and a budget allocated. No further discussion required at January meeting. Training requirement would be identified during the year.

008/2526/9 To receive a report from the Chair

Review Councillors role allocations.

Roles were reviewed and it was RESOLVED that Councillor Downing would step down from her Financial Approval role.

The Parish Council RESOLVED that as Councillor Elliss-Brookes was now live as a signatory no further action required.

All other roles were reconfirmed.

The point was raised about whether the Parish Council could consider increasing the number of councillors, particularly with the potential expanding of the Parish Council's remit in relation to Local Government Reorganisation.

Action: Clerk

008/25/26/10 To consider the Parish Council's response to the following planning applications and receive decision notices:

No planning applications had been received for Burlescombe, however, the Parish Council has noted applications in neighbouring parishes.

Decision Notices:

No decision notices had been received.

008/2526/11 Highways Matters/Footpaths

11.1 Roads

Scheduling meeting with Councillor Clist

Bring forward to the meeting in February 2026.

11.2 Speed Limits / Speeding

Reducing the speed limit in Burlescombe to 20mph required the approval of Devon District Council and there was a statutory process to be undertaken to achieve this. Whilst DCC had taken a decision to facilitate requests for 20mph, the actual costings to the parish had not been released. As and when information was made available, the Parish Council could approach DCC and speed reductions would be discussed as part of a road review.

It was noted that there were 20 is plenty signs available to residents.

Action: Communicate to residents

11.3 Potholes and other matters

The matters below have all been followed up again with DCC Highways and MDDC.

Brimstone Lane potholes

The Parish Council was not in a position to independently repair potholes that met the safety defect criteria. These have to be reported to Devon County Council online via the [Report a problem - Roads and transport](#) page.

Going forward, it was noted that a trained Road Warden was able to mend smaller potholes, and tarmac and equipment were available through the Road Warden scheme.

Water on the hill road, Burlescombe

No further issues had been raised by residents to Parish Councillors since last meeting and it was noted that the drains at the top of the hill had been cleared by DCC.

Grit Bins

The Parish Council discussed whether the grit bins were optimally sited in the Burlescombe area of the Parish.

Action: Councillor McDonald to review

Councillor Lock advised that Holcombe Rogus Parish Council has their own gritter that a farmer uses.

White lines / slow sign - Primary School, Burlescombe
This is with the white line team – no update received.

Water from the garages, Burlescombe
Ongoing investigations were underway and a further update was awaited from MDDC.

Blocked drain by Poacher's Pocket on A38
The drains had been cleared and jetted by DCC.

Overgrown hedges by railway bridge, Burlescombe
DCC had advised that hedges are landowners responsibility and that the Parish Council could write to the landowners.

Action: Councillor Downing to contact Hansons to see if they are able to assist.

Clerk to write to property owners

11.4 Footpaths

Report from Councillor Smith

PROW funding P3 forms need to be in on 1st working day of March so Councillor Smith would walk the footpaths in February.

11.5 Road Warden Scheme/Snow Warden Scheme

Councillor McDonald advised that all the grit bins he had reported, had been filled by DCC.

008/2526/12 Financial matters:

The Parish Council noted the following:

12.1 VAT

Following discussions with HMRC, the VAT refunds have been received to the sum of £2479.49 to cover the unclaimed period from for 22/23, 23/24 and 24/25.

The VAT claim for 25/26 will be submitted following the year end.

Action: Clerk to circulate paperwork to Parish Councillors

12.2 Financial Report 2025-26

The Parish Council noted the current financial information as follows:

Lloyds Bank

Current account balance at 31 October 2025 **£ 352.19**

Less payments

Receipts

Current account balance at 30 November 2025 **£ 352.19**

The account is being kept open whilst discussions on the complaint are ongoing.

Lloyds Bank

Current account balance at 30 November 2025 **£ 352.19**

Less payments

Service Charge **£ 4.25**

Service Charge **£ 4.25**

Receipts

Current account balance at 31 December 2025 **£ 343.69**

The account is being kept open whilst discussions on the complaint are ongoing.

Unity

Current account balance at 31 October 2025		£19111.93	
Less payments			
03-Nov-25	Countrywide	SJB016	-208.80
05-Nov-25	Transfer to 20531407		-5000.00
05-Nov-25	DALC	INV 6886 AGM	-60.00
05-Nov-25	DALC	INV 6849 Training	-36.00
05-Nov-25	Westleigh URC	SEP MEETING	-14.00
05-Nov-25	McCabe Fencing	INV 5938	-8745.60
19-Nov-25	HMRC	475PM01737213	-69.60
19-Nov-25	Clerk	OCT 25 WAGES	-278.48
30-Nov-25	Service Charge		-6.00
Actual expenditure £9418.48			
Plus receipts			
12-Nov-25	DEVON CC	2511102-30	500.00
			500.00

Current account balance at 30 November 2025 **£ 5193.45**

Current account balance at 30 November 2025 **£ 5193.45**

Less payments			
01-Dec-25	Countrywide	SJB016	-208.80
02-Dec-25	Nico Page	18.11.25	-450.00
02-Dec-25	Parish Online	18UD006-0005	-420.00
02-Dec-25	Westleigh URC	OCT MEETING	-14.00
02-Dec-25	Grahame Hawkins	10747	-490.00
02-Dec-25	Community First	BURLESCOMBE PC	-308.12
02-Dec-25	MDDC	INV 20041911	-1810.57
02-Dec-25	Clerk	EXPENSES - OCT	-33.10
08-Dec-25	HMRC	475PM01737213	-160.40
08-Dec-25	Clerk	NOV 25 WAGES	-509.63*
31-Dec-25	Service Charge		-6.00
			-4410.62
Plus receipts			
05-Dec-25	HMRC VTR	XWV126000107407	2479.49
			2479.49

This amount includes the agreed overtime.

Current account balance at 31 December 2025 **£ 3262.32**

Deposit account balance at 31 October 2025 **£15607.47**

Less Payments		
Plus Receipts		
Transfer		£ 5000.00
Deposit account balance at 30 November 2025		£20607.47

Deposit account balance at 30 November 2025 **£20607.47**

Less Payments		
Plus Receipts		
Interest		£ 102.78
Deposit account balance at 31 December 2025		£20710.25

The Clerk had circulated the cumulative bank reconciliations for November and December to the Parish Council and would bring them to the February 2026 meeting for signature by the Chair.

The budget monitoring information for the 8-month period and 9-month period had been provided to the Parish Council in advance of the meeting. These documents would be uploaded to the website.

The Parish Council RESOLVED to approve the following payments:

Clerk wages (December plus agreed overtime)	£509.63
HMRC (PAYE)	£160.40
Clerk expenses (November 33.10/December 25.00)	£ 58.10
Westleigh URC (meeting room)	£ 14.00
Burlescombe VH	£ 12.00
Countrywide (DD)	£208.80

12.3 Paperwork to add Councillor Elliss-Brookes as a signatory

Councillor Elliss-Brookes confirmed that she was now a signatory to the bank account.

12.4 2026/27 Precept

The Parish Council noted that one resident had attended the December 'Drop in' session on 4th December and no specific comments had been raised. It was also noted that no correspondence regarding the proposed precept had been received from members of the public.

The Parish Council reviewed the budget line by line again prior to making their decision and considered the following:

- The insurance amount looked high but included the valuation for the replacing the playground equipment in event of it being damaged.
- Grass cutting included the updated costs received from MDDC and an increase in the contractor's fee due to recent Government decisions.
Action: Clerk to look at bulk contracting across the parishes she clerks for in future. It was noted Holcombe Rogus use MDDC for all grass cutting. Local Government Reorganisation would probably see this service terminated.
- Asset maintenance – The Parish Council RESOLVED not to increase the amount from £500 to the proposed £1000. Aim is for a Community Task Force to undertake minor maintenance for free.
- Defibrillators – The Parish Council RESOLVED to reduce the amount from the proposed of £500 to £200 and to use contingency for any additional spend.
- Footpaths – The Parish Council RESOLVED to keep the amount at £1000.
- ORL – The Parish Council RESOLVED to keep the amount proposed as there were the upcoming costs of the tree survey and given no maintenance had been carried out for over 3 years costs were likely.
- Grants – The Parish Council noted that grants had historically been given to the URC £300 and to St Marys Church £500 per year to assist with the maintenance of the churchyards. The Parish Council RESOLVED to remain this cost centre as Maintenance Contributions.
In order to keep costs down, the Parish Council RESOLVED to not have a grand allocation in the 2026/27 budget for other organisations. This decision would be reviewed in a year.
- Elections: There would be Parish Council elections in May 2027 where all councillors would stand down and, if wished, stand for re-election. The Parish Council RESOLVED to keep the earmarked reserve of £5,000 to cover any potential election costs.
- Office equipment – The Parish Council noted that efforts had been made to identify the location of laptops and printers shown on the asset register. The current computer needed to be replaced to run Windows 11 and this cost could be met through the contingency fund.

Following the above discussions, it was noted that the proposed precept figure had been reduced by £1600 to £42640.65 rounded to £42650 which represent a Band D increase from £101.27 to £124.99, a rise of £23.72 per year or 46p per week.

PROPOSAL: The precept for 2026/27 be set at £42650.

PROPOSER: Councillor Forward

SECONDER: Councillor Box

DECISION: All in favour

12.5 Review of Asset Register

Bring forward to the meeting in February 2026.

Review of insurance policy renewal

An increase in the budget for the insurance had been agreed to ensure that there was adequate cover of the assets and liabilities.

12.6 Computer

The Parish Council RESOLVED that a new laptop should be purchased.

Action: Clerk to work to a budget of circa £350 as per the quotes provided

008/2526/13 To receive a report on Parish Council Communications

- Communications report

The Parish Council noted the contents of the Communication Report.

- Volunteer Groups

The Parish Council RESOLVED to agree the Volunteer Group proposal. It was noted that the Parish Council had a Volunteer Policy and activity was covered under the insurance policy.

Action: Councillor Ellis-Brookes would double check from the employer's perspective whether there was anything additional to consider.

- Email newsletters and mail drop

The Parish Council noted that Zoho had the provision to run campaigns and there was a free version.

PROPOSAL: If the free version would not meet requirements, a spend of £30 per year be agreed.

PROPOSER: Councillor Smith

SECONDER: Councillor Forward

DECISION: All in favour

The Parish Council noted that quotes for a postcard drop ranged between £37 to £71 for 400 postcards.

Action: Clerk to advise on the rules and best practice around seeking sponsorship for this type of activity.

Councillor Smith to bring proposal with template design to next meeting.

008/2526/14 To receive a report on the Councillor Advocate Scheme/local crime

Councillor McDonald advised there was nothing further to report at this time.

008/2526/15 To receive a report on the Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee

Councillor Box advised that there was nothing to report from the Joint Advisory Committee.

It was noted that Ebear Bridge appeared to have been damaged again and this had been reported by Councillor Box.

008/2526/16 To receive a report on the Quarries

Items pertaining to the quarry would be discussed at the meeting in February 2026 when Councillor Downing would have been able to obtain information from the Westleigh Quarry Liaison Meeting on 19th January in relation to the queries raised by residents. A report and history as to quarry and asphalt would also be produced.

It was noted that the Parish Council has asked for the grit bins at Black Bridge to be topped up.

008/2526/17 To receive a report from the Amenities Working Group

17.1 ORL

Items pertaining to the ORL would be discussed at the meeting in February 2026 following the meeting with Holcim's Biodiversity & Restoration Advisor and the tree report.

17.2 Westleigh Play Park

Items pertaining to the Play Park would be discussed at the meeting in February 2026 following the meeting with the fencing contractor and receipt of the quote for repairs to the play park equipment.

008/2526/18 To receive a report from MDDC Councillors Westcott and Lock

Councillor Lock Jane referred to the report submitted by Councillor Westcott, a copy of which is included in these minutes.

MDDC had 3400 homes and a further 50 would be available in the spring.

Solar panels were being installed on the top of car park in Tiverton which would mean Phoenix House and the library would be self-sufficient.

Councillor Lock noted and was heartened by the progress the Parish Council was making.

008/2526/19 To receive a report from DCC Councillor Clist

In the absence of Councillor Clist, no report was given.

008/2526/20 Items for next meeting

- Historic website / emails
- Delivery of fast fibre
- VE Day Flag
- Report from Clerk on Neighbourhood Plan / Housing Needs Survey

Housing needs Survey information can be found at

[Mid Devon Local Housing Needs Assessment - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/mid-devon-local-housing-needs-assessment)

- Business Continuity Plan
- Registering assets of community value

The information can be found at [Assets of Community Value - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/assets-of-community-value)

- S106 Funding
- Possibility of recording Westleigh Play Park inspections on Burlescombe Parish Council website
- Noticeboards and their upkeep
- Items pertaining to the quarry

008/2526/21 Dates of the next Parish Council Meetings

Meeting dates are as follows:

The next Parish Council meeting will be on Tuesday, 17 February 2026 at Westleigh URC Hall starting at 7pm.

Future meetings:

17 March 2026

21 April 2026

The dates for the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council and the Annual Parish Meeting would be agreed at the next meeting.

Councillor Forward closed the meeting at 9pm.

Signed _____ **Date:** _____
Chair

Burlescombe Parish Council communications update January 2026

Communications since last meeting

1. Parish magazine - For the January issue of the Parish magazine, we shared an update that summarised key messages from the November meeting.

2. Facebook

On Facebook we have shared:

- Key messages from the November Parish Council meeting, and details of the drop in session in December.
- Notification of a road closure in Westleigh.
- Update about the quarry supplying grit bins for Black Bridge.
- Information about how to report common winter issues such as potholes and flooding.

3. Website

News stories have been published so people can catch up on what happened at the November meeting (including clear information about precept discussions) and are aware of this January meeting.

Plus a story about Winter road issues reporting.

4. Noticeboards

Notices, agendas and minutes continue to be posted in the Westleigh, Burlescombe, Appledore and Ayshford noticeboards, where space allows.

A large-print poster about December's drop-in session was also put up.

Topics for future communications

The precept for 2026/27, volunteering, Grants process, emergency planning, email newsletter, and any other matters arising.

Proposal to further develop our communications approach

In line with the communication plan developed in September 2024, the Council will continuously look to improve communication with the community.

Having focused on creating our new website and introducing a regular rhythm of updates through key channels, it is timely to consider further developments for 2026.

Currently our electronic communications have focused on our website and Facebook, however, there are a good deal of parishioners who are online but not on Facebook. It is not realistic to expect people to proactively visit our website without any prompts and as such, two developments are proposed.

1. We develop a newsletter that collates key updates and distributes them directly to people's email addresses. It could include summary information and links to the website for more detail.
2. We print a small card to deliver to homes across the parish, that includes key information, and how to sign up for the newsletter.

We can support these developments with communication through existing channels.

Recommendations:

- We sign up for Zoho Campaigns, a solution that integrates with our email platform, is secure and GDPR compliant, and costs £28.80 per year.

Background

Many parish councils have a group of volunteers who give time and skills to help with small tasks and activities in the community. This can have several benefits for the council and parish, including:

- reducing the amount of funding that needs to be raised through council tax.
- making use of the skills and enthusiasm of parishioners.
- increasing community understanding of and support for parish projects.
- improving community facilities.
- increasing community cohesion.

It also has benefits for volunteers, including:

- meeting new people.
- sharing and learning skills.
- enhancing mental and physical wellbeing.

Burlescombe Parish Council has a [Volunteer Policy](#) in place, which is published on our website.

As a part of the residents' survey at the end of 2025, participants were asked if they would consider being a part of a group of volunteers.

A welcome email was sent to the 17 people who responded positively to this question, with a commitment to be in touch in January about next steps.

Proposed high-level principles for how volunteering for BPC works

1. Any volunteering will be done in accordance with the Volunteer Policy.
2. There is no minimum commitment for volunteers, they are free to give as little or as much time as they would like.
3. Volunteers can request to be removed from the group at any time.
4. New volunteers can join the group at any time.
5. Volunteers will be given the opportunity to help shape how volunteering for BPC works, outside of the parameters set by the Volunteer Policy.

Proposal for process to manage one-off volunteering opportunities

1. A potential volunteer task is identified and agreed at a BPC meeting.
2. Most relevant councillor to send a brief description of the task, and any other relevant details, to Cllr Smith.
3. Cllr Smith to send a communication out to the volunteer group via the email newsletter platform to see if anyone is able to support the completion of the task, giving a deadline for responses.
4. If someone volunteers, Cllr Smith will connect the relevant councillor (and therefore the volunteer supervisor for this task) with the volunteer(s) to arrange completion of the volunteer form and to manage the rest of the process.
5. If no one volunteers, Cllr Smith will notify the relevant councillor and the Clerk so that alternative arrangements can be made.

A log will be kept each year to record volunteer tasks completed, hours given and estimated costs saved.

Potential volunteer session outline

If possible, getting volunteers together in person could be beneficial to creating a more informed and engaged group.

If there is an appetite for in-person collaboration, an interactive session could cover:

- A summary of the role of BPC
- Key findings of research into what residents care about most.
- Exploration of the motivations and barriers for volunteers (and potential volunteers).

- Examples of community volunteering in action.
- Establishing what kinds of tasks volunteers might undertake.
- Understanding what skills volunteers have that they would be willing to give.
- Ideas for making volunteering more fun and accessible for everyone (e.g. add music, refreshment, recognition, competition, kid-friendly, etc)
- Whether there is potential for regular ongoing volunteering activities, such as seasonal tasks (as opposed to just one-off requests).
- Any questions or ideas the volunteers may have.

Proposed next steps

Send an email to the volunteer list to share:

1. The volunteer policy and form.
2. A simple explanation of the proposed principles/process for managing one-off volunteering opportunities above.
3. A way to confirm that they would still like to be involved in light of information provided.
4. An offer of a session to get the volunteers together (as per outline above) and a method of gathering availability for those who would be interested.

2025 December Parish Report

Happy New Year

Tiverton Bus Shelter Vandalism and Repairs

You may be aware that during the early hours of Saturday, 6 December (around 2:30am) each pane of glass in the shelter in Phoenix Lane was damaged by vandals, resulting in thousands of pounds of damage. The Council aimed to repair the damaged bus shelters in Tiverton before Christmas, but due to supplier problems, the glazing will be replaced in early January 2026.

Cllr Jane Lock, Cabinet member for Housing, Assets and Property Services, said:

"It was a sad sight to see so much purposeful damage caused to the bus shelter. It is hard to fathom why anyone would do such a thing, but we would like to reassure our residents that work is underway to repair the shelters as soon as possible."

Christmas Tree Collections in January

The Garden waste Service will collect Christmas Trees put out for collection by all residents up to and including 31 January 2026. The tree trunk must be no wider than 4 inches (100mm) in diameter and under 6FT tall (cutting it in half before collection would be helpful). Please place the tree next to the blue food caddy or, if you have a brown garden bin, it can be placed inside or next to the bin.

Please recycle all you can this Christmas season by putting the wrapping paper, cardboard, plastic containers, bottles and food waste into the right containers. It will not only help our hard-working crews out but also help us maximise our recycling rate and reduce our carbon footprint. Not only is this our Climate Change strategy in action but it also gives all residents the opportunity to make their own household contribution.

Warm Homes Local Grant

Warm Homes grants are being delivered in partnership with Devon County Council and other local authorities in Devon. It's a government backed scheme to make homes across Devon warmer, greener and more affordable to heat. The scheme offers fully funded energy efficiency upgrades for eligible households, including measures such as cavity wall and loft insulation, double glazing, air source heat pumps, solar panels and insulated doors.

visit [Warm Homes: Local Grant DCC - Energy Saving Devon](#)

Cabinet Decisions

1. Car parking & Permit Proposals 26/27

Reintroduction of a day permit option for car park users available to all residents across the district.

Development of proposals around a new business permit for the Multi Storey Car Park.

A 5% rise for Car Parking charges to be introduced as part of the budget setting process for 2026/2027.

The granting of additional free parking days for Crediton and Cullompton Town Councils to designate as they see fit to support their town centre activity.

For permits visit middevon.tarantopermits.com.

2. Tax Base Calculation 2026/27

That the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for 2026/27 be approved in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Mid Devon District Council – Decisions taken by the Cabinet on Tuesday, 2 December 2025 Agenda Item No Topic Decision 6 Regulations 2012 **at 31,180.16 an increase of 447.25 Band D equivalent** properties from the previous financial year.

The current collection rate of 97.5% will remain the same

New Funding Formulae Published

The Government has set out how councils in England will be funded from 2026/2027, with new funding formulae based on 2025 indices of deprivation, population projections and service demand.

As part of the fair funding review 2.0. it has also pledged: £2.4 billion for children's social care reforms; £2.4 billion for a new ring-fenced and combined homelessness, rough sleeping and domestic abuse grant; and a £600 million recovery for areas with the greatest immediate needs and less ability to raise income locally.

There will be an all member briefing on the 2026/2027 budget 19 January which should hopefully provide an answer as to how all of these changes will relate to Mid Devon?

Business Rates Day 17/02/2026 (Phoenix House)

Dean Emery, Head of Revenues, Benefits, Corporate Recover, Corporate Fraud, welfare & Leisure has arranged a Business Rates Day. The purpose of this day is to help businesses understand the changes which are being made to Business Rates. People can come in and speak to someone, more dates will be agreed after the bills are issued.

Impact

Businesses will see their bills increase in many instances there are Government schemes in place to help smooth the extra costs, these may not take the full financial impact away. Link below for information on the changes.

[Important changes to Business Rates 2026 - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/important-changes-to-business-rates-2026)

Police and Crime Commissioners

Police and Crime Commissioners are to be abolished from 2028. However, the strong link between police and the local communities will be maintained particularly in areas that will see the introduction of new local authority-led policing boards. Local area authority policing boards are part of the new governance structure introduced by the government's devolution agenda in England.

Alison Hernandez issues a statement 13 November – in which she said.

"...I want to assure all members of the public that my office and I are still going to be here for the next two and a half years and we will continue to hold the police to account on your behalf. My team and I have a lot to be proud of. We have a record number of police officers – 3,610 - and are one of the areas with the most reopened police stations. We also believe Devon & Cornwall Police is the most financially stable force in England thanks to the good financial planning of my office.

"I am doubtful the change announced today will save the estimated £100 million that has been stated by the Home Office minister. The duties of my office must remain independent of policing and will continue to incur a cost to the public regardless of where the responsibility for delivering them rests. This includes providing services for victims, being the appeals body for complaints against the police and having responsibility for elements of the misconduct process for all police officers..."

National LGR analysis

State of local Government Reorganisation :

Averages can mask a lot, but this was the result of their national analysis:

Across all the proposals submitted to MHCLG, we find that the average reduction in councillor numbers is 55.2%, the average estimated transition costs is £54.8m, the average estimated recurrent annual savings is £42.0m, the average population size of a new unitary is 515,430. However, this varies significantly across the devolution areas and the proposals submitted.

So across the country (21 areas), it's a fair assumption that we're looking at a cost of over £1bn to do this, for a system that will reduce Cllrs by over half, and see new authorities created probably somewhere in line with the government's 500k 'ideal'.