

INWARDLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL.

Clerk to the council: Inwardleighpc@gmail.com

Minutes from the meeting of Inwardleigh Parish Council held on Wednesday 15th January 2025 at Folly Gate Parish Hall.

In attendance: Cllr. Dennis (Chair) Cllr. King (Vice-chair)
Cllr. Henderson Cllr. Ions
Devon County Cllr. McInnes WDBC Leach WDBC Dexter
Clerk: Mrs. Clarke

Minutes.

- 01/1/25 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Timms, Cllr Hooper, Cllr. Piddington.
- 02/1/25 There were no declarations of interest for items on the agenda:
- 03/1/25 There was no Public participation period, however, an unnamed parishioner burst into the middle of meeting to complain about the parking outside, threatening to contact the police. The clerk politely requested his name to follow this matter up, however this was refused and he left. There was a general discussion over the problem of parking at the village hall and how to solve it.
- 04/1/25 Reports from Councillors:

Devon County Cllr McInnes.

The total budget is about 785 million (net) gross is about 1.5 billion pounds, a draft budget which will go to council in February and it's gone up by 5.9%. 50% of that money goes to adult services, 30% on children services, 20%, has to go to everything else, including highways, coroner's service etc. The budget has been challenging, within six weeks of putting the budget together, a large grant (rural services) that we normally get from government was coming to an end approx. £10 million. We were told at the last minute, so adjustments have had to be made.

There will be redundancies at the county council. Quite a lot of extra money for highways for the next year is due, We put in an extra £12 million this year from our own budget, and we will put some in next year's budget ourselves. But to have an impact highways need a large amount of capital.

The budget will be scrutinised next week. Three scrutiny committees, adults, children, and highways et al. Then it will go to Cabinet the beginning of February and before the full council on 20th February for a debate.

On the 16th of December the government's published its white paper on devolution and local government reform. It sweeps away county councils and district councils and brings in unitary authorities right across England. We're supposed to put our preferred options in front of government by the end of March. Then there is a date by the end of May and then in September.

The county council has asked for the county elections to be postponed this year. It will be a government decision to do that. The reason is because the amount of work that is going to have to be done to actually put together proposals to the government in the timetable they've set out will be very difficult. Exeter who trying to put together a plan for a unitary Exeter and Plymouth aiming to take parts of South Devon to make Plymouth bigger and while that's all going on we would be campaigning in a county election. The government minister of the cabinet will decide. If there was an election, the chances are the county council would only be in place for another two years and then there would be elections for a unitary council.

I think it's going to be very challenging. From my perspective as a county councillor and leader of the county council, I'm very concerned that the likes of Plymouth and Exeter are going to cream off all the bits they would like and they as in North Devon, Mid Devon, Torridge, this part of West Devon, the poor areas are going to be left with not much. So we're busy at the moment at the County Council looking at the various options. We have to put evidence in front of government. Exeter, would have to split into a town council or a number of parishes within the city of Exeter to give the residents in Exeter a strong voice because obviously the district council won't be there anymore. Local neighbourhood plans will be in place for a while until whatever the new shape of the new councils is set. They won't disappear straight away because you have to have some continuity.

Cllr Leech.

S 106 affordable housing changes: Due to changes in the funding of Rent Plus, WD has had to work with another housing provider to take over and run the new houses. To make sure that these properties are kept as affordable for the future, there is little choice in agreeing to what is being proposed.

Changes in planning (NPPF) It is certain that due to the changes in how our housing numbers are calculated, parts of our existing JLP are now out of date, and the five-year land supply has overnight turned into a 2.5 year land supply, which will put us at risk of unplanned development.

National Devolution: The Devon Districts along with WD have put together a strong response to the government. There are a number of choices but it would appear that DCC want to go for a Devon wide Unitary, but Plymouth and Exeter want to individually to go it alone, which would leave little left for a financially viable Devon Unitary Authority. The larger strategic option to have a mayor, which would cover Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay. All of the Devon Districts plus WD are against delaying the County Council elections this year.

Following the publication of the Devolution White Paper, and statements by the Leader of Devon County Council, West Devon Borough Council does not support the creation of one Unitary Council for Devon, including Torbay. Devon and Torbay are diverse and made up of over 970,000 residents across urban, suburban, and rural areas. Any reform of local government in Devon and Torbay should follow a period of proper consultation with residents, businesses, elected representatives and stakeholders. Looking at the evidence, all councils should decide collectively what is best for Devon and Torbay. A single Unitary Council for Devon and Torbay risks diminishing local representation with decision-making that is remote from the communities it serves.

West Devon Borough Council recognises that the Government's White Paper sets a clear proposal that all Devon and Torbay councils work collaboratively to agree how best to respond. Any changes must be carefully considered, transparent, and inclusive, SLT ensuring that residents and businesses are fully engaged in shaping the future governance of Devon and Torbay.

The objective must be to get this right for our residents, businesses and staff. The Council notes that the Government's proposals about Social Care are not taking effect until 2028. This Council strongly opposes the Government's current proposals, which would result in the abolition or merger of WDBC without full consultation and support by residents. There is little evidence that merging rural councils will result in financial savings as many unitary councils are in debt or suffering financial difficulties. Devon CC has a budget of £1.837bn in 2024-25, an increase of £127m compared to a year earlier. The total budget of WDBC is minor in comparison. Any merger that abolishes WDBC will reduce democratic representation and move decision making away from local people.

Therefore, while we welcome the stated Government objectives of devolving power to regions and local communities, the plan for a unitary council will divert resources and funds to restructuring at a time when services are already stretched. Leading to a reduction in the quality of services, such as leisure centres, public toilets, waste collection, sustainable communities, planning and local housing, environmental protection, parks and open spaces, fewer public representatives and less support for local people who need it.

Therefore the Leader will write to the Government on its behalf outlining our concerns, including the required pace for change, supports the joint statement issued by the leaders of the eight district councils throughout Devon that includes opposing: (a) a Single Unitary Council Solution for Devon; and (b) the postponement of the County Council elections in May 2025 and will widely consult with its residents, businesses, community organisations, neighbouring district councils and town and parish councils to help shape an appropriate plan for re-organisation.

Cllr Dexter:- Summary of Key Points

Funding Reduction: The Local Government Finance Settlement indicates WDBC will receive approximately £200,000 less funding than previously planned, largely due to a reduced New Homes Bonus allocation (from £400,000 to £200,000). A new "Floor system" provides £611,136, offsetting the loss of the £600,000 Rural Services Delivery Grant. WDBC will receive £63,214 from this grant, slightly better than the expected nil allocation. Core Spending Power: Remains static, with any increase reliant on assumed council tax hikes. No confirmation on grant amounts for increased national insurance costs; Town and Parish Councils are excluded.

English Devolution White Paper - Proposal: Advocates for mayors and Unitary Authorities across England, each serving a minimum population of 500,000. Impact on WDBC: Likely to cease existence in the medium term, with Devon County Council proposing to absorb district councils as a single Unitary Authority. Debate: WDBC supports devolution but requests a more thoughtful approach. The Minister's response is awaited. Local Burden: Abolishing districts will shift more responsibility to Parish and Town Councils.

Changes to Planning -Housing Need Assessment: New method increases the national annual target to 370,000 homes. Focus on affordability and existing housing stock levels. Land Allocation: Sequential use of brownfield, grey belt, and higher-performing land. Commitment to 50% social housing, with flexibility (35%-50%). Negotiations on viability restricted until updated national planning guidance is issued. Local Plans: Universal coverage required, with transitional plans meeting at least 80% of housing need. Quality and Affordability: Emphasis on high-quality development without compromising quantity. Community Infrastructure: Enhanced support for public infrastructure to foster sustainable communities. Modernisation of Planning Committees: Proposals include a national delegation scheme, strategic committees, and mandatory training.

Impact on West Devon Housing Target: Increased to 446 homes annually—a threefold rise. Support: Government to provide funding and training to address planning system pressures.

05/1/25 Minutes of the last meeting of Wednesday 18th November 2024 were approved and signed.

06/1/25 Matters arising:-

6.1 - Roads -Open Reach Pole at Toads Island, the chair indicated what has happened here, which is unusual as a tree fell over and pulled up part of the road and West Devon can not mend the road until this issue is sorted out by BT (repair the pole).

6.2 - S106 Cllr Leech, part of his report has dealt with the matter and a discussion between Cllr Ions and himself about how to move forward with the village hall funding took place.

6.3 - Policy Reviews, three policies will be reviewed and then put forward for council approval at the next meeting.

07/1/25 Updates on matters from the last meeting.

7.1 - Highways reports, updates were provided on other roads and pot holes including Prism Lane. Allotments - A query was raised by South Hams and will be answered in due course.

08/1/25 Planning -

8.1 - 4101/24/VPO Application for modification of Section 106 Agreement on 3963/19/OPA

8.2 Updates were provided (viewing online) previous planning applications.

09/1/25 Finance

9.1 - Payments for authorisation, included the clerks salary and the invoice for rental of the village hall for parish council meetings.

9.2 - Current Balances and a bank reconciliation was provided along with the current spending on the budget.

9.3 - An Administrative update was provided by the clerk, particularly with cyber security and the clerk will make this available to everyone in due course. One of the original minute books which goes back to 1895, the clerk copied and sorted with a view to making a digital version over the next month.

10/1/25 Matters brought forward by the Chairman:

11/1/25 Matters brought forward by Councillors: Cllr Timms has mentioned Stocken Bridge. The road is broken away before the bridge there are concerns about people ending up in the river. The clerk will report this.

12/1/25 Correspondence received/clerks report: Clerk to organise a meeting with S106 in mind for the interested parties.

13/1/25 Date of next meeting: 19th March 2025

14/1/25 The Meeting closed at 21:14

Signed:

Date: