

MINUTES OF THE BICKLEIGH (MID DEVON) ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on Tuesday 12th May 2026 at 6pm in

Bickleigh Village Hall

Present: Cllr G Lock (Chair), Cllr A Somerwill, Cllr C Wolfenden, Cllr L Deprieelle and Cllr Rhys Roberts (MDDC), 10 members of the public and the Clerk

- APM 1/26** **Welcome and introductions by the Chair of the Parish Council.** Greg welcomed everyone to the meeting and the councillors introduced all the councillors. The Chair's report is in Appendix A below.
- APM 2/26** Apologies were received from – Cllr Steve Keable (DCC), Mr Ben White (Rec) and the school.
- APM 3/26** **To Approve the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 14th May 2025 (Appendix 1)**
- PROPOSED:** Cllr C Wolfenden **SECONDED:** Cllr A Somerwill. **RESOLVED.** The Minutes were duly signed as a true record by the Chair.
- APM 4/26** **Annual updates from local groups**
- **New community garden group.** Lauren and Johnanna, representing the Community Garden, described the amazing progress that has been made in it's first year, with volunteers working hard to establish and maintain the space provided in the far corner of the recreation ground. It is planned that, alongside growing fruit, vegetables and flowers, the garden will provide opportunities for people of all ages to meet, learn new skills and enjoy time outdoors including a gardening club for children. Plans for further planting and community activities in the coming months were also outlined. There is also an annual report on the Parish website.
 - **Church** – Matt Melksham, representing St Mary's Church, reported a successful and active year, despite not having a rector following the retirement of Rev Paul Kingdom in 2025. Regular services continued to be held, mainly thanks to Rev Thom Thompson, with seasonal celebrations, especially the Christmas Eve Carol Service which was particularly well attended with 150 in attendance. Finances remain sound and Matt emphasised that the church was primarily about supporting the village community and not all about fundraising.
 - **Village Hall** – Colleen Lea, on behalf of the Village Hall Committee, reported strong use throughout the year, with a wide range of school activities, clubs events and private functions taking place. Continuous improvements to the facilities have helped keep the hall at the centre of village activities and committee members thanked everyone who supports events and

maintenance initiatives. For bookings please contact either Richard Somerwill or David Wolfenden. Lots of bookings this year.

- **Bickleigh Benevolent Fund report 2026**

The charity gives financial help to any in the parish who are in need. It was originally instigated as a result of an act of title transference by John Lovell in the 1670s. Other legacies were given and people left land etc. Subsequently these were amalgamated as the Benevolent Fund.

The committee consists of 6 trustees made up as follows: The rector, who has traditionally acted as chair, the district councillor, 3 nominees of the parish council and 1 nominee from the charity itself. Currently, the position of rector is vacant whilst we await the installation of the replacement. The nominees from the parish council are, Clive Williams (treasurer), Polly Thompson, Caron Wolfenden. Sue Chamberlain (secretary) is the charity nominee, with Rhys Roberts as the District Councillor.

It is a small fund with income in the financial year to 31 March 2025 amounting to £1,649 and the fund continues to hold up well. £500 was distributed to those in need in the parish.

A financial report was submitted to the Charity Commission.

The 2025 -26 figures have not yet been agreed by the trustees but the provisional income for the year is £1598 with distributions of £750.

The charity notice has been continued to be posted on the village and church noticeboard; notices have been put in the Silverleigh magazine and Caron has emailed an updated version of the flyer to all on the parish council contact list.

The committee are keen to raise awareness of the potential assistance to be offered to any in need who fall within the criteria of the charity's rules, given the resources that are available. In the past the charity has given to people of all ages and in a range of difficult situations. There is a real endeavour to offer to those in need.

The committee have met twice in the past year with an AGM in June and a regular meeting shortly before Christmas.

APM 5/26 An update from Bickleigh Parish Councillors on the work of the Council during 2025-2026

- Chairmans report – Please see Appendix A

APM 6/26 Any other 'parish affairs' matters that people wish to raise

- Need to add more recent minutes to the notice board. This will be actioned
- Website – need to also update the documents on there. Looking into a new website for the Parish that will be compliant. Will get up to date documents published,
- Meadow gates for the community garden are locked when people tried to get in recently. Cllr Deprieelle will speak to someone about this.
- Water utilities – have dug up the verge. Can we speak to them about the mess they have left. Dare contractors that did the work. Clerk to contact Cllr Steve Keable (DCC)
- Double yellow lines have been extended in the road where works have been carried out by DARE and this was done in error. Can Parish council speak to Highways as it now exceeds the order. Clerk to contact Cllr Steve Keable (DCC)
- Ditches at the top of the village have been made too big. Come back and get it done properly. Clerk to contact Cllr Steve Keable (DCC) and copy to Cllr Rhys Roberts (MDDC).
- The Parish Council would like to encourage anyone who is interested to come forward as a Councillor. Please either email the clerk on clerk@bickleighparishcouncil.gov.uk or speak to one of the Parish Councillors.

APPENDIX A

BICKLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Parish Meeting

Chairman's Report – May 2025

The past twelve months have once again demonstrated the quiet dedication of Bickleigh Parish Council and the wider community. Behind the scenes, Councillors continue to give their time generously as volunteer community leaders, ensuring that the voice of Bickleigh is heard and that village life is protected and supported.

Bickleigh Village Allotment

One of the most positive developments this year has been the creation of the Bickleigh Village Allotment area on the village Recreation Ground. This is a wonderful addition to the parish and one that will benefit residents for many years to come.

This project is very much the result of the vision and considerable hard work of Lauren Deprieelle, to whom the Council and the whole community owe a great debt of thanks. Lauren's commitment to making this happen has been exceptional, and we are delighted to see this become a reality. We look forward to watching the allotment flourish.

Financial Pressures on the Parish

I must report, with regret, that the Council has had to make a difficult decision this year regarding our village linesman. Following a careful review of the parish finances, it has been necessary to discontinue this service. This was not a decision taken lightly, and I understand it may be felt by some residents.

The underlying issue is one that many parish councils across the country are facing: the administrative costs and statutory duties placed upon parishes continue to grow, whilst the precept funding we receive has not kept pace. The incoming precept monies we receive are increasingly outweighed by the admin costs now levied upon us, leaving less resource for direct community services. The Council will continue to monitor this situation closely and seek ways to manage our finances prudently.

Looking Ahead

Despite the financial challenges, the Council remains committed to serving Bickleigh and its residents as effectively as possible. We will continue to look for opportunities to support the community, preserve what makes our village special, and represent your views to the wider authorities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Councillors for their continued dedication and the many hours they give in service to this community. Their work is often unseen but always valued.

BICKLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL (MID DEVON)

Clerk: John Vanderwolfe FSLCC Chartered MCIPD

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Minutes of a Council Meeting held on Tuesday 13th May 2025 at the Bickleigh Village Hall, commencing at 6pm

Present: Cllr's G Lock (Chair), A Somerwill, C Wolfenden and L Deprielle

In Attendance: The Clerk and Councillor Roberts (Mid Devon District Council) and one member of the public.

138	Election of Chair Councillor G Lock was proposed by Cllr A Somerwill and seconded by Cllr C Wofenden. There were no other nominations. Councillor Lock was therefore elected, and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of office.
139	Election of Vice-Chair Councillor A Somerwill was elected as Vice-chair.
140	Apologies Cllr M Wright.
141	Declaration of Interest under the Code of Conduct No declarations under the Code of Conduct were made at this stage of the meeting
142	Minutes

	The Minutes of the meeting held on the 11 th February 2025, having previously been circulated, were adopted as a true record; and were signed by the chair.
143	<p>Mattes Arising</p> <p>The vacancy for clerk to the council would be advertised in the Silverleigh magazine</p>
144	<p>Public Period</p> <p>No issues</p>
145	<p>Outside Bodies</p> <p>Bickleigh Charities: Cllr Wolfenden</p> <p>Village Hall: Cllr L Deprieelle</p> <p>Recreation Ground: Cllr A Somerwill</p>
146	<p>County and District Reports</p> <p>Cllr Roberts, our District Councillor informed the meeting that the Liberal Democrats had received majority seats at the recent County Council elections. Cllr Stephen Keeble would be the county council representative for Bickleigh. Cllr Roberts thanked members who had attended a meeting to meet the new district council liaison councillor. Cllr Roberts expressed his concerns that MDDC had appointed the chair of scrutiny from the leading party (Liberal Democrats) even though that was against the constitution. The chairman of MDDC, Cllr Frank Letch had recently died. Cllr Roberts stated that Frank had been a very respected councillor, and for many years had been the Mayor of Crediton.</p> <p>A Community Land Trust had now been adopted in Thorverton. This will see a minimum of 12, and a maximum of 24 new homes being built in the parish</p>
147	<p>Accounts for Payment and Payment Process</p> <p>The Village Hall were owed for two invoices, £56.00 and £12.00. No invoice had been received from the parish lengthsman. The clerk informed the meeting that due to the block placed on payments from the account he had not been paid since February. There would be a number of other invoices coming forward for payment.</p>
148	<p>Annual Governance Statement 2024/25</p> <p>The Annual Governance Statement for the year ending 31st March 2025 was adopted.</p>
149	<p>Annual Accounting Statement 2024/25</p> <p>The Annual Accounting Statement was approved.</p>

150	<p>Internal Auditor's Report</p> <p>Mr Knowles had undertaken the audit and was satisfied with the accounts. The clerk would forward his report.</p>
151	<p>Certificate of Exemption from Full Audit 2024/25</p> <p>As both income and expenditure were below the ceiling limit of £25k the council was able to apply for an exemption from the need to have an External audit. All agreed that an Exemption Certificate be issued.</p>
152	<p>Joan's Orchard</p> <p>Work on this was now in progress with the matter of transferring the land to the parish council being dealt with by a solicitor. It was agreed that the council would pay both parties legal fees. It was understood that the solicitors' fees would be in the region of £700 plus the cost of registering the land with the Land Register.</p>
153	<p>Update on Repairs/renewals/Lengthsman/Highways and Section 106</p> <p>Mr White joined the meeting and explained that the works requested at the recreation grounds would cost £500. This is to fix the gate and other associated works. Agreed for this work to go ahead.</p> <p>Cllr Deprieelie was keen to progress the provision of a group allotment. She wondered if Section 106 money could be used for this. The clerk would ask David Parker for a contact.</p> <p>Cllr Wright has the sign that was in the Crediton Road. The contact would be Steve Tucker.</p>
154	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>Correspondence is emailed out as appropriate</p>
155	<p>Next Meeting: Tuesday 8th July 2025 at 6pm</p>

Chair -----

Date -----