

LANGTREE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

12th December 2024

Present	Councillors: Mark Glover John Davies Pat Mitchell Geoff Bond David Ley Cheryl Cottle Hunkin, (TDC)
In attendance	Linda Davies Parish Clerk and 1 member of the public.
737	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies were received from. Melissa Baker (PCSO) Chris Whateley (TDC) Anna Moseby Jenny Coles Colin Edworthy Penny Stowell Andrew Saywell (DCC)
738	MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING
738.1	Matters Arising <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code of conduct policy has been updated on the website.• Potholes in road past Homeleigh Farm and Southcote Bridge were reported to DCC, the response was that the road may have too many potholes. However this has been further followed up by Councillor Saywell who states that this road will be added to the dragon patching list.• Emergency policy and contact lists have been added to the notice boards.• DCC were contacted about place name threshold board cleaning and details of a local funding scheme and training were shared.• Zurich were contacted regarding a visit to our meeting and have declined.
738.2	Minutes of meeting held on 14 th November 2024 to be confirmed and signed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These were agreed - proposed by John Davies and seconded by David Ley – duly signed.
739	<p>DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no declaration of interests.
740	<p>REPORTS</p>
740.1	<p><u>Police Community Support Officer:</u></p> <p>Report received -</p> <p>Crime – 3 violence – domestic related</p> <p>Logs – 1 road related offence, 1 violence domestic related, 2 concern for welfare.</p>
740.2	<p><u>County Councillor:</u></p> <p><u>DCC Report for Langtree Parish Council December 2024</u></p> <p>Budget Funding Settlements – Unfortunately we have had a major curveball from the Government as we prepare next year’s budget. I sent this out last week as an update to the Parish Council so apologies you are reading this again but for those who have not yet seen or heard about this it is important that you know.</p> <p>On 28 November 2024, the Government issued a Local Government Finance Policy Statement, providing an update on local government funding following the Chancellor’s Autumn Budget in October.</p> <p>The main headlines for the Authority from last week’s Policy Statement are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG) and Services Grant are to be removed and repurposed. In 2024/25 the Authority received £10.1 million in RSDG and £717,000 in Services Grant, both of which will cease in 2025/26. • A new one-year £600 million Recovery Grant “...will be distributed to places with greater need and demand for services and less ability to raise income locally”. The grant is intended to be highly targeted, meaning that not all authorities will receive an allocation. Government will use deprivation as a proxy for greater need and demand for services. It is feasible the Authority will not receive any of this new funding. • A new Children’s Social Care Prevention Grant worth £250 million will be “distributed using a new children’s needs-based formula, which will allocate funding according to estimated need for children’s social care

services". The Policy Statement says this funding will lay the groundwork for children's social care reform, enabling investment in additional prevention activity through Family Help. It also states that the grant conditions will be set out alongside the final Settlement.

- Social Care Grant – In 2025/26, £5.7 billion will be provided through the Social Care Grant, supporting both adult and children's social care – whilst equalising for the adult social care precept. This is an increase of £680 million compared to 2024/25. It is not clear at this point how much of this increase will be received by DCC and what exactly equalising for the adult social care precept means or what impact it will have.
- The New Homes Bonus (NHB) Grant scheme continues for one more year, with the funding methodology unchanged. The Authority received £1.1 million in 2024/25, and initial estimates indicate this grant will be approximately £1.3 million in 2025/26. Government has advised local authorities to prepare for this to be the final year of NHB with plans to consult on proposals for reforming the funding beyond 2025/26 in due course.
- Council Tax Precept Referendum Thresholds – these remain unchanged for most, with increases for standalone Fire and Rescue Authorities and Police. For social care authorities, like Devon, this is limited to less than 3% general tax rate increase plus 2% for Adult Social Care.

Impact on the Authority's 2025/26 Budget Setting – The actual impact on DCC's funding will not be known until the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement is announced, anticipated to be in week commencing 16 December. However, based on our best interpretation of the information currently available, coupled with uncertainty around council tax income projections, the Council have prudently revised down our funding assumptions by approximately **£13 million**. Consequently, and pending the provisional settlement, further work is underway across the authority to ensure a balanced budget can be set in February. Due to the significant risk to our funding at such a late stage in our budget setting process, the decision has been taken to not set draft targets in December as planned, but to instead take them to the January Cabinet following the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. To enable more time to act the Children's Scrutiny Committee will be moved from 23rd January to 28th January in line with the other Scrutiny Committees.

In terms of what this will then look like for next year's budget, I do not yet know. I *think* at this stage it is more likely that planned investment and

funding increases into Highways will have to be moved to cover other budgets, and there will be an acceleration of staffing restructures and redundant property disposal. I am confident we will be able to set a balanced budget, but this last-minute changing of funding settlements is unprecedented and bluntly, not helpful.

Devolution – As reported at the last meeting work continues setting up the Combined County Authority and Devolution Settlement. Currently this is on track for a January start.

However... as I also reported at the last meeting, the Government have seemingly reopened the thorny issue of Local Government Reorganisation, linked to future Devolution Deals. At a meeting with Southwest Council Leaders the Local Government Minister expressed a preference for a Devon and Cornwall Combined Authority Devolution Deal with a Directly Elected Mayor, and Unitary Authorities underneath...

We await the Government's proposed Devolution White Paper... we may or may not be forced into reorganisation. It would be 'brave', or 'courageous' even to use Sir Humphrey Appleby speak for the Government to try and impose a unitary settlement on Devon given that the existing set up with Team Devon works well, and the political impact this would have on the Governing Party in Exeter and Plymouth.

However, the cynic in me also notes the abrupt funding settlement changes above... and wonders whether there will be more of an attempt to starve Districts and Counties out of existence and move to unitarization through coercion.

Storm Darragh and other Weather Disruption, Highways – As you can imagine, there was significant disruption to the highway over the weekend due to Storm Darragh.

During the period covered by the Met Office's weather warnings, Devon's Network Operations Control Centre received more than 680 calls, with more than 300 of those relating to tree issues. The highest wind gust recorded over the weekend was 78mph at Taw Bridge.

As a safety precaution, the A361 Taw Bridge and A39 Torridge Bridges were both closed at midnight on Friday night as planned and were re-opened on Sunday morning. Devon's Household Waste Recycling Centres were also closed on Saturday. Although wind speeds dropped by Sunday afternoon, calls to the control centre continued as road users came across

issues. A large share of the calls were from people reporting roads that were blocked or partially blocked by trees or debris from buildings.

If there are any outstanding tree or debris issues, please report them to Highways on **0345 155 1004** or **0345 155 1008** (out of hours). You can report non-urgent issues online via the usual way – type in devon.cc/report-it on your web browser and it will take you directly to the Report a Problem webpage.

We have had a lot of extreme weather events over November. Following some commentary, I saw on social media elsewhere about roads not being gritted by DCC, I would like to point out that DCC **will pre-wet it's salt with a brine solution as it is ejected from the gritters to help it work in to a solution more quickly and to keep the salt from bouncing off the road. Once in a solution it is less obvious to see where we've treated, especially if the roads are already wet at the point of treatment.** Unfortunately, this sometimes looks as though a road has not been treated but this isn't the case, they will have been! But if the road temperatures are below freezing and there is heavy snow, even repeated salting treatments will only go so far in keeping the road clear... I would also remind everyone that the Gritters are GPS tracked so the Council will know where and when they have gone when out salt spreading.

Holiday Activity & Food Programme Winter delivery – As previously reported, the County Council will be running this programme again and there is a full range of activities all including a hot nutritious meal for our Benefit Related Free School Meal children. Some schemes are also giving out hampers and family activities, if any parents are struggling please do share the HAF link with them. <https://www.devon.gov.uk/education-and-families/haf-providers-map/>

Local Highways Matters – I am pleased to report, following the last meeting, that the Neighbourhood Highways Officer has put forward the from Langtree to Southcott, Frithelstock for Dragon Patching in the next financial year. He will also be inspecting Putshole Lane as well for further patching repairs and surface dressing.

Locality Budget – A reminder that I do still have some funds available as we approach the end of this current financial year so if you do have a project on in your area please do get in touch as your organisation may be eligible for a grant.

740.3	<p>District Councillor: Full Council 2nd Dec</p> <p>There was a revised gambling Act statement of principles. It is currently ongoing review nationally so could change again, but we had to still undergo our own review as it doesn't align with our timings of every 3 years.</p> <p>The mid-year review of treasury management showed a return of just over £1M 23/24 and is showing a projected return of £800k for 24/25 for our short-term investments.</p> <p>We were asked by internal o&s committee to consider a formal reserves policy. We already have a general reserve available of £1.1M available for emergencies. The advice from council officers and the council leader was not to have a formal reserve as it could affect our flexibility and could weaken our case when different opportunities arise for grant funding etc. Majority of councillors voted on officer advice.</p> <p>We gave approval of £1.08M for slipway improvements at Appledore Maritime Innovation Centre Slipway Scheme. This is 100% funded by Devon and Torbay CCA. It will be for vehicles, vessels and pedestrians and will give improved access to the river. 31st March 25 deadline so we had to act quickly, and this project was ready to go.</p> <p>X-links Morocco project- there have been ongoing briefings over past 3 years. This is a nationally significant infrastructure project. There is a member working group to consider any community benefits from the project. We expressed the need for increased transparency of these meetings- for councillors to be made aware of when they're being held and for notes/minutes to be circulated.</p> <p>We agreed a draft housing strategy which is going out for consultation, and we are urging all residents and parish councils to give us their feedback for us to consider. It is 34 pages long but focuses on three main aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A home for everyone 2. Sustainable and inclusive housing 3. Thriving and healthy communities <p>Cllr Annie Brenton raised a motion re the urgent need for high quality CCTV for Bideford Park's play area. This has recently suffered vandalism and has highlighted the lack of clarity of CCTV in the area, particularly at night time! The council agreed so we hope this will soon be in place. It will also be discussed at our member budget workshop 19th Dec.</p>

	<p>Cllr Teresa Tinsley raised a very important NOM (Notice of Motion) regarding the Bideford Post Office closure after hearing reports it is one of 115 under threat of closure as part of a radical shake up of the business. Cllr Tinsley highlighted the importance of the post office for Bideford, how it is always busy and importantly the need for it to remain as is, and not to be franchised as this can so often fail and not offer the same range of services. Council approved this motion unanimously and will write to Post Office Ltd and our MP and to the relevant government Minister to explain the importance of services provided for our community.</p>
741	PARISH MATTERS
741.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on Langtree Park. - The team commented on the cutting back of the willow trees. Councillors Ley and Bond are hoping to chip the cut branches.
741.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other Matters impacting the parish – Councillor Anna Moseby has resigned from Parish Council.
741.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council agreed to purchase two salt/grit bins for the Parish.
741.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A member of the public attended the meeting to discuss damaged fencing along the emergency access drive adjacent to the Parish Hall. Council agreed this will need to be mended, by replacing some of the posts. This work will be undertaken by a local contractor as soon as possible.
742	PLANNING
742.1	Any updates on potential planning application for land at The Crescent, Langtree – Holding item - None
742.2	Applications for discussion – none received.
742.3	<p>To consider any other planning applications received between issuing of agenda and meeting. -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None received.
743	CLERK’S REPORT AND FINANCE
743.1	<p>To receive update on financial position at the end November 2024</p> <p>The position at the end of November was:</p>

	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Lloyd's account</td> <td>£6426.04</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reserve account</td> <td>£1570.16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>£7996.20</td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments made. £ 1335.00 to M Baker for grass cutting in 2024. • In addition, there is £2230.48 in the Langtree Park account. £675.99 having been received from Little Acorns. 	Lloyd's account	£6426.04	Reserve account	£1570.16	Total	£7996.20
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743.2	<p>To request approval of BACS Payments and cheques.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two salt / grit bins to be purchased at £120.00 each plus VAT. 						
743.3	<p>To review correspondence received.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cybercrime and scams – offer of talk by Devon and Cornwall Police. • North Devon and TDC published five-year housing land supply statement. Assess whether the supply of land for new homes is sufficient. Link to web pages had been circulated prior to the meeting. • Devon Community Resilience Forum = Resilience training survey. – survey to monitor if there are any gaps in the consistency of training across Devon. (Flood, Snow or road warden) • Documentation for Budget setting and Precept received for discussion at January meeting. 						
743.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies Review: Financial regulations policy agreed to be updated on website. Health and safety policy will be discussed again at a later date. 						
744	<p>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public participation. – covered under Parish Matters. 						
745	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANY OTHER ITEMS AT CHAIRMAN'S DISCRETION • None <p>The meeting closed at 8.30pm.</p>						
746	<p>Date of next meeting – Thursday 9th January 2025</p>						