

# Drewsteignton Parish Council.

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## **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting for Drewsteignton Parish will be held on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 at 7.30pm at Whiddon Down Village Hall.**

*The annual Parish meeting is open to the public and is authorised to discuss all Parish affairs. All members of the public present may express an opinion, make a statement or ask a question, however, only Local Government electors for the Parish will be entitled to vote on any issue raised at the Meeting. Voting on a question is done by a majority of electors present at the meeting and the decision of the person chairing the meeting as to the decision is final unless a poll is demanded LGA 1972 ss 18(2). No votes taken at this meeting are binding on the Parish Council although they may be considered at the next Parish Council meeting.*

**Cllrs present:** Peter Brennan (Chair), Anna Imrie, Andrew di Battista, Ian Rowe, John Redman, Paul Ridgers (WDBC Cllr) & James McInnes (Devon County Cllr)

**Also present:** Alice Turner (Parish Council Clerk) & 3 members of the public.

### **The business to be transacted at the Meeting will be as follows: -**

#### **1.22: Welcome.**

The Chair of the Parish Council opened the meeting thanks those in attendance and informed the meeting that an audio recording is now in progress to aid in the preparation of Minutes, the recording is deleted once draft minutes are prepared.

#### **2.22: Minutes of the Last Meeting**

To consider the approval of the [Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on the 25th March 2019](#). The room agreed to the Chair signing the minutes.

#### **3.22: Local Government Reports:**

##### **a) County Cllr James McInnes.**

[County Cllr McInnes had sent a written report which can be found here on Drewsteignton Parish Website](#) or in [Appendix A](#) below.

##### **b) Borough Cllr Paul Ridgers.**

Borough Cllr Ridgers gave the following verbal report as summarised below:

When Covid struck it was WDBC who had responsibility for dispensation of support grants of which £33million were given to businesses.

In last financial year they gave £4million in the Council tax reduction scheme.

Discretionary housing grant is available and a hardship fund is available.

There is a housing and rough sleeping crisis in Tavistock, WDBC are trying to alleviate this through various avenues.

Council tax has gone up by 2% for WDBC which is about £5 extra per band D property.

Recycling is 55.3% is the current rate of recycling, WDBC is in second place, jointly with Torridge District Council of the districts in Devon.

Leisure centres have been supported, during the pandemic.

Farm Shop application has been refused by WDBC. A member of the public asked if that was the end of the Farm shop applications, Cllr Ridgers reported that it could be taken to appeal, or a different application submitted, although personally he thought it unlikely.

##### **c) Chair of Drewsteignton Parish Council.**

Cllr Peter Brennan as Chair of the Parish Council gave his report as can be seen in [Appendix B](#).

**d) Statement of Parish Council Accounts by the Clerk.**

The Council opened the 2021-2022 Financial year on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April '21 with £17121.64 and throughout the course of the year received £15428.89 in income this is broken-down as follows:

- Precept £13410
- Vat reclaimed for the 20-21 year £1427.58 – mostly from the installation of the DAAT night landing light.
- Interest £2.28
- And Honesty Boxes at eth Car Park & Toilets £589.00

The Council also spent £11,037.72 of which £253.03 is VAT which will be reclaimed. As of the End of the Financial Year (31<sup>st</sup> March 2022) the closed balance was £21,512.81 of which £13667.94 is held as Reserves for a variety of projects & reasons. The AGAR was approved by the Council on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May and the Exercise of Public Rights will run from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June to the 14<sup>th</sup> of July during which electors are entitled to request to inspect the Accounts for the 2021-22 Financial Year.

As Cllr Brennan reported the precept for next year has been frozen at £13,410.00.

**4.22: Reports from local organisations:**

**a) Providence School Charity Trustees**

Jennifer Mullins and Roger Burrige are the nominees of the Parish Council to the provident School Charity Trustees. The Trust was established from the proceeds of the Providence School in 2016. The object of the Charity is the promotion of education including social and physical training for young people in Drewsteignton, Chagford, Gidleigh and Throwleigh.

The Trust Fund in excess of £1500 continues to be healthy and awards funds to local young people in the region of £250. The Trustees were able to continue their work within the constraints of Covid and awarded a number of grants. Four awards were made at the August 2021 Trustees meeting. Three of the successful applicants were from Drewsteignton.

Grants in 2020 and 2021 have included funding for laptop and printer, a language course, books and other study materials, materials for a professional beautician's course, tools for an architectural joinery course, and equipment to join a cricket coaching course.

The Trustees are grateful to the Drewsteignton Parish Council Website for promoting the Charity on Village News.

**b) Allotments**

A report for the Drewsteignton Allotment Gardens

There are a number of new allotment holders this year and they have already been busy clearing and planting. All the lots have been taken for this growing season. Thanks to Alice and Shelley for their help with advertising and notices.

**c) Drewsteignton Village Hall**

There has been speculation about the future of the village hall with the parochial church council (PCC) formally requesting that Drewsteignton Village Hall committee (DVHC) surrender the lease.

The DVHC does not believe that it is in the best interest of the village to surrender the existing lease and formally notified the PCC of its decision not to do so.

The existing lease has 20 years to run after which time the hall will automatically revert back to the church.

Following COVID lockdowns the hall has been cleared out and new curtains hung, and lime wash ready to spruce up the interior in the coming summer months.

Over the last six months hires include:

- Yoga sessions
- Wild running groups
- Gardeners plant sale

- Burns supper.
- Parish Council meetings
- Singers
- Shelley's upholstery

The Hall has recorded a profit for the last 10 years except in 2024 and 2025 when a lot of money was spent repairing the three entrance doors.

The DVHC has sufficient funds to continue for the foreseeable future this being helped by no longer having to pay rates and water rates for the public toilets.

For any substantial repairs to be carried out additional funds would have to be raised.

*Hamish Dubreck DVHC Chair.*

A question was asked as to as to the grade of the hall. Mr Dubreck answered that the hall is a 2\* grade building.

**d) National Trust: Castle Drogo and Teign Valley.**

The written report was read to the room by the Chair and can be found in [Appendix C](#).

A member of public raised the query regarding farms with working dogs which they believe it is unworkable request, which the Council agreed to forward on.

**e) Playing Field Committee (PFC)**

The Chair of the PFC gave a verbal report which contained the following points:

- Bonfire will be held on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November.
- The swings for older children have been removed on Health and Safety grounds.
- Report on fundraising issues during Covid.
- Upgrade of Footpath including safety rail for the steps and access by shed, has been done at no cost to the committee.
- They are look into play equipment for disabled children.

**f) Gardening Club**

Over 40 people currently meet at Whiddon Down Village Hall and the group is doing well, with outings arranged.

**g) Whiddon Down Village Hall.**

The Village Hall received many grants during covid and has used that to refurbish the hall, install new windows, redecoration etc...

Hall hire is doing well after covid.

A question was asked whether the Hall had considered installing Electric Charging points.

**h) Stone Lane Gardens.**

It was reported that the Music festival in June will be returning, with local musicians.

A touring play company in August to do a Shakespeare play.

**5.22: Open Forum**

To receive questions and comments from the public concerning matters over which the Parish Council has control or some influence. No items raised.

There being no further business the Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.30pm

**Appendix A: County Cllr McInnes report, Annual Report - Hatherleigh & Chagford Division - April 2022**

As I write this report, Covid 19 infection in Devon is very high. We are seeing unrepresented demand for Children's and Adult Services. This is putting tremendous pressure on services and staff are still in emergency response mode. Living with Covid is the way forward, it is not going away.

**Proud to Care**

Across Devon, Adult Social Care has over 2000 vacancies and we are working hard to

encourage carers to return and welcome new carers, through the Proud to Care Program. Proud to Care Devon is calling for people who are interested to complete a quick online form at [www.proudtocaredevon.org.uk/findyourcalling](http://www.proudtocaredevon.org.uk/findyourcalling). Applicants will get a call back and the offer of free one-to-one telephone support, providing careers advice and information about jobs and training in care and health.

Furthermore, thanks to the European Social Fund, there are free and flexible courses to support people to find the right role, or to take a step up, in health and social care. The courses are being offered by partners across Devon including Learn Devon, City College Plymouth, South Devon College, Exeter College and Petroc.

### Vaccination

The vaccination program has been very successful which has allowed us to live a more normal life.

How many of us work has changed for ever, with a combination of working from home and going to our place of employment.

We must also remember that over the last two years many residents have continued to work on the front line, in our Businesses, and Public Services as well as those in Social Care and the NHS.

### Budget

Putting together the County Council budget for 2022/23 has been the most difficult in living memory, more difficult than the period of austerity.

The DCC portion of the Council Tax will rise by 2.99%, including 1% additional funding for Adult Social Care. We have taken the unprecedented step of using £23 million from reserves to support the budget. That rainy day has arrived, and we need to support the most vulnerable children and adults as best we can with the resources available. The Budget for 2022/23 is

£629.362 million.

Below is a table with the high-level detail of DCC net budget:

	2021/22 Adjusted Budget *	Inflation & Pressures	Savings & additional Income	2022/23 Budget	Net change	
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	%
Adult Care & Health	283,294	47,875	(18,241)	312,928	29,634	10.5%
Children's Services	159,036	28,787	(11,675)	176,148	17,112	10.8%
Community Health, Environment & Prosperity	40,280	3,809	(2,846)	41,243	963	2.4%
Corporate Services	40,937	3,612	(2,830)	41,719	782	1.9%
Highways, Infrastructure Development & Waste	57,124	3,349	(3,149)	57,324	200	0.4%
	<b>580,671</b>	<b>87,432</b>	<b>(38,741)</b>	<b>629,362</b>	<b>48,691</b>	<b>8.4%</b>

\* Adjusted for permanent virements

This is a challenging budget with high savings targets to achieve. We are grateful to the NHS in Devon for the one year only funding of £10 million to support Adult Social Care.

### Devolution Deal

Working closely with Devon Districts, Plymouth and Torbay, the partnership has put proposals to Government for a Devolution Deal. This is not a change to Local government structures in Devon. We are asking for powers to be able to work closer together in the eight areas below, to speed up the recovery from the pandemic.

### What do we want?

Partner authorities, working closely with stakeholders have identified eight initial areas to focus on in negotiations with Government:

- **Housing**, more affordable housing for key workers and local families and drive economic growth.
- **Skills, Employment and Education**, better support for young people and adults

to learn and gain the skills that the economy needs.

- **Transport and Infrastructure**, tackling gaps in our public transport, and improving our broader transport, energy and digital infrastructure, supporting the area to thrive
- **Economic Development, Business Support and Innovation**, working with the business community to ensure that they have the support they need to drive economic growth.
- **Health and Care**, working together to better align national funding to support the health and care needs of Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay's residents.
- **Climate Change**, working together and aligning national funding and activity to accelerate our progress towards net zero
- **Regeneration and Place**, securing the funding and flexibilities we need to accelerate levelling up, and ensuring that every community can meet its potential.
- **Governance**, securing a governance approach for the Devolution Deal that builds on our existing strong approach to collaboration and partnership working.

### Devon Climate Emergency

All through the pandemic Devon County Council and partners have continued to work on the Devon Climate Emergency follow this link for the latest information:

<https://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/response-to-devon-climate-assembly/>

We have held a citizen's assembly and there is a consultation till the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2022, for you to take part in.

### Highways

We have had a mild winter/spring so far. The best way to report any highway issues is online at this link: [www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/](http://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/)

A new Neighbourhood Highways Officer has been appointed, Josh Scillitoe.

### Ukraine

The Council is stepping up its response, alongside key partners, to the **Homes for Ukraine** scheme. This went 'live' on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, enabling local *sponsors* to match with *guests* from Ukraine. This initial phase of the scheme is designed to supplement the **Ukraine Family Visa** for people in the UK to now support friends and colleagues. In addition, we have seen matches of guests and sponsors, often through third-party organisations supporting those fleeing the conflict. We are now seeing several hundred people in Devon being matched and, following permission to travel, we will start to see those families arrive in Devon.

At a later point, the government will extend the scheme in order for local charities, organisations and businesses to sponsor families directly, potentially in larger groups. This may be a further opportunity for local VCSE partners to engage and support.

The key initial role for Local Government, as outlined in Government guidance, is to develop processes to i) conduct a DBS check for all adults within the sponsor family; ii) assess the sponsor's accommodation; and iii) to assess any key safeguarding risks arising in each match. We are awaiting further guidance from Government around the specific nature of each assessment.

As you will appreciate this is a significant undertaking, across local councils in partnership, but we have already made good progress in devising routes to meet these requirements safely and at pace.

The situation is evolving rapidly, with updated guidance coming through from government daily. All Team Devon partners are working together to develop a rapid response.

In addition, we will have a range of other logistical challenges regarding the co-ordination of wellbeing and wrap-around support and funding for each guest (and sponsor) and are in active dialogue with local councils, VCSE partners, health, DWP and schools. We are also mindful of the significant risks and issues, including the potential future break up of

arrangements between guests/sponsors, and with it the need to find emergency accommodation solutions. We are working through related contingencies.

You will be well aware of a huge groundswell of positive local support and goodwill and we will want to ensure that this can be utilised by guests, sponsors and partners in a safe way and where appropriate to give guests consistent opportunities to settle and feel welcome. In the coming days we will work with partners to map out an approach in which sponsors, guests, communities and organisations can access responses particularly to sign post to key support and services.

The Council's website is being updated with the latest information and provides wider background and links. [Devon stands with Ukraine - Devon County Council](#)

### **Locality Budget**

I have supported many Locality Budget applications in the last year, not a lot of money, but it can make a difference having the support of the Local Member through the Locality Budget, when applying for other grants. Link:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/democracy/councillors-nav/locality-budgets/>

**James McInnes: Email: [james.mcinnnes@devon.gov.uk](mailto:james.mcinnnes@devon.gov.uk) Phone: 01566471296, Mobile: 07817123391**

### **Appendix B – Parish Council Chair's report.**

We were unable to hold last years APM due to the Covid-19 restrictions. As a result, we could not thank Ysanne James for her years of service to the Parish Council, both as a Parish Councillor as well as Chair. As a result of her resignation, I was elected by my fellow Parish Councillors to be Chair – a position that I will endeavour to fulfil in the best interests of the Parish and Parishioners.

As a Parish we are fortunate in having knowledgeable and supportive Parish Councillors and am confident that we have a good understanding of the needs of the Parish and will work together, to the best of our ability. I would remind you that a Parish Councillor is a voluntary position, there is no remuneration or financial benefits.

The Parish Council has operated without a full complement of Councillors for the year 2020/2021 and currently has 3 vacancies. We were delighted when Andy di Battista joined the PC last year bring his equestrian and entrepreneurial business knowledge.

We are exceptionally fortunate in having Alice Turner as our Parish Clerk. Alice is a "Super Clerk" who also works for 6 other Parish Councils and her knowledge and expertise in all issues relating to Council matters is vast. As still a relatively new Chairman I know that I can rely upon her for advice and support.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 and the stop start restrictions presented challenges which we addressed with Parish Council meetings having to be held remotely using Zoom. Whilst successful, returning to face-to-face meetings in June 2021 was warmly welcomed.

The Parish Council "2021 Parish Community Recognition Award" to recognise the hard work and dedication of residents within the Parish, was to be awarded to Mike Rowe. Due to Mike's health, it had not been possible to invite him to formally receive his award. Sadly, Mike passed away on the 25 April and his funeral was today at Exeter Crematorium.

I would like to pause for a minute's silence to honour Mikes life and contribution to the Parish and to remember all those we have lost in the last 2 years.

[One minutes silence was held by the room]

Thank you.

Speeding continues to be of concern to Parishioners. Our Mobile Vehicle Activated Speed Sign, which is shared with Sticklepath, can now be located at 5 Highways approved sites within the Parish. The data logger has been activated and in the last 90 days 66,859 vehicles were counted with the average speed recorded calculated at 37.3mph. 57% of all vehicles exceeded the 30mph speed limit with 8am to 9:30 and 3:30 to 5pm being the peak periods. This data will be passed to the Police to identify the most effective times to set up their

“speed camera”. The PC plan to purchase its own device to increase the time the unit spends in the Parish.

Devon County Council Highways Department have been very supportive in addressing incidents of potholes when reported to them. The restoration of the road to Fingle Bridge was most welcome. Budget constraints make completing the long of work challenging however, parishioners are encouraged to continue to report using the online tool.

Thank you to our Councillors who undertook a thorough inspection of all local Footpaths. As a result, the Rangers have been diligently fixing and replacing all the issues found. Well done to Pete Rich and the team.

The precept for 2022/23 was frozen which resulted in a small decrease for Parishioners over the previous year. The major expense for this year will be securing the formal lease of the toilet block in Drewsteignton and thereby avoid its closure. The PC will continue to monitor costs and provide value for public purse.

Finally, the PC would like to thank all the voluntary acts of kindness, help, expertise and support provided by so many parishioners during the last two years. Thank you for all you do. It is this spirit of generosity that often costs nothing but is essential to maintain the Parish. Enjoy the Jubilee festivities.

*Peter Brennan*

### **Appendix C: Update from National Trust: Castle Drogo and Teign Valley**

Looking back:

Since the lifting of the restrictions Castle Drogo has bounced back into life. We are finding that some visitors, like some of our teams, are still opting to wear face coverings while in the buildings. From May 22 all our screens on counters will be removed. Many of our volunteers have returned eager to get back to normal, which has been good to see after a difficult two years for many of them.

Our visitors have been very supportive and it has lifted the spirits of the whole team as we saw numbers returning like pre project years. This is all very encouraging with the feedback from our visitors that the castle inside and out looks amazing. Interestingly many people are discovering us for the first time but we have also seen lots of local people returning to see the Castle without scaffolding.

The wider Fingle estate has proved a lifeline for many when covid was at its height. It was our privilege to provide a space for much needed space and freedom. Thank you to all our local neighbours for sharing their love of this space with us.

We have spent much of last winter delivering work as part of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) bid that we successfully gained at the end of 2020. This has enabled us to do lots of uneconomical works including underplanting of conifer areas with broadleaved trees in Drewston woods opposite Drewsteignton, re-spacing areas of natural regeneration in Charles Wood (on the Fingle-Cranbrook byway), and uneconomic felling in Cod Wood near Clifford bridge, we have also done works at our newest site Ausewell, which lies just above Ashburton.

Looking forward:

Over the course of the summer you will see some changes on Piddledown common to fencing and other infrastructure to allow larger areas to be grazed by our 6 Dartmoor ponies. These often escape during the summer thanks to visitors leaving gates open, so we would be grateful if locals using the site could shut any gate they find open around the common, if we want a gate left open we generally remove the gate.

You will also have seen signs around the estate asking for dogs to be on leads from the beginning of March until the end of July, the National Trust is joining the Woodland Trust and Dartmoor National Park in asking all visitors to do this. The main reasons are nesting birds which can be disturbed by dogs either intentionally or unintentionally, deer with young fawns and of course livestock. Due to the makeup of most of our woods pretty much all bird species tend to nest low down, not just the woodland and heathland ground nesting specialists

you might expect. The vast majority of bird species are seeing a decline at the moment, and whilst disturbance of nest sites by dogs is only one part of the issue, as a conservation charity we feel we must do all we can. The dogs on leads ask applies to paths as well as farmland and woodland and to all dogs, we know that many of you have very well behaved dogs that are quite able to walk to heel, but other people do not and we want to treat everyone the same to avoid confusion or the “they haven’t done it so why should I”. The issue is not any one dog, but the many dogs using our paths one after the other over the course of the day. We are asking locals to “take the lead” on this issue and demonstrate best practice to our visitors from further afield, and we hope to be rewarded with more and more birds as the years go by. This coming winter we will be undertaking thinning of the Conifer stand just upstream from Fingle bridge on the south bank of the river, some thinning of young conifer in Rectory woods opposite the village and thinning of part of Bridford woods near Dunsford. You will also see yet more ash trees being removed as a result of Ash Dieback, we will survey trees in June and undertake removal works from September onwards. We are lucky here in that ash is only a very small proportion of the local tree cover, but its still sad when we have to remove nice trees in places we would otherwise leave them.

As always, please don’t hesitate to contact us if there is anything you would like to find out more about or if you would like to help us to care for Castle Drogo and the Teign Valley as a volunteer.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_