Drewsteignton Parish Council.

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Minutes for meeting of Drewsteignton Parish Council that took place on Monday the 19th of October 2026, at 7.30pm in The Long Room, Drewsteignton.

Present: Peter Brennan, Andy Di Battista, Ian Rowe, John Redman, Laurence Bennie, Julie Macy, Anna Imrie, Lou Butler (Clerk). Plus 3 members of the public.

Business Transacted

1.10.26: Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2.10.26: Current Vacancies

The Chair reminded the Council that there remained one vacancy in the Crockernwell ward, which could be filled through co-option.
The Council acknowledged that it remained fortunate to have an almost full complement of councillors compared with some neighbouring parishes.

3.10.26: Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Sue Hember.

Resolved: The apologies were accepted. Cllr Bennie proposed and Cllr Macy seconded. All in favour. RR26/36

4.10.26: Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the September 2026 meeting were considered and approved as an accurate record. Proposed by Cllr Macy and seconded by Cllr Bennie.
It was noted that some councillors had experienced difficulties receiving minutes by email. WhatsApp had been used as an alternative method of distribution.
Outstanding actions from the previous meeting were discussed, including:

- Confirmation that Cllr Sue Davies had forwarded details of the Community Safety Grant Scheme.
- Confirmation still required as to whether Cllr Davies had raised concerns regarding the condition of Fingle Bridge Road.

Action: Clerk to seek an update from Cllr Davies regarding Fingle Bridge Road.

Resolved: The minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting. Cllr Macy proposed Cllr Bennie seconded. All in favour. RR26/37

Signed **Dated**

5.10.26 Declarations of Interest

An interest was declared by a councillor who lived close to the section of the A382 to be discussed during Public Speaking Time.

The proximity was noted by the Council. No further restriction on participation was recorded.

6.10.26 Public Speaking Time

Road Safety – A382, Venton/Sandy Park

Local residents attended to raise serious concerns regarding road safety on the A382, particularly the section involving bends, a narrow carriageway and a blind crest near Venton and Sandy Park.

Residents reported numerous accidents and near misses over several years, including two recent incidents requiring police attendance. Concerns included:

- Excessive vehicle speeds, particularly motorcycles.
- Poor visibility around bends and over the blind crest.
- Vehicles crossing the centre of the carriageway, including larger vehicles negotiating the narrow road.
- Damaged or inadequate warning signage.
- Previous road markings, including 'SLOW' markings, not having been reinstated following resurfacing.
- The potential for the improved road surface to encourage higher speeds.

Residents asked the Council to approach Devon County Council Highways to investigate road safety improvements.

Possible measures discussed included a reduction in the existing national speed limit, improved hazard signage, additional road markings, consideration of double white lines and vehicle-activated warning signs.

The Council acknowledged the seriousness of the concerns and agreed to seek further information and assistance.

Actions:

1. Contact Devon County Council Highways, including the new Highways Officer, Jade, to request an assessment of the road.
2. Seek recorded collision information from Devon and Cornwall Police to support the concerns raised.
3. Request replacement of the damaged road-narrows sign and consideration of reinstating 'SLOW' road markings.
4. Ask Highways to consider additional warning signs, road markings, speed management and vehicle-activated signs.
5. Encourage residents to provide further evidence of accidents and near misses.

The Chair thanked the residents for attending and presenting their concerns.

7.10.26 Reports from County, Borough and Parish Councillors

No formal reports were received from the County or Borough Councillors.

Parish Councillor updates were taken later in the meeting.

8.10.26 Planning

a) Update from Dartmoor National Park Authority

The Clerk provided an update received from Nick Salvin of Dartmoor National Park Authority regarding several matters previously raised by the Council and parishioners.

Signed **Dated**

The Authority confirmed that it was aware of the concerns and continued to monitor relevant activities at the following locations:

- The former water tank building near Drewsteignton.
- The quarry site in Drewsteignton.
- Martin's Farm, Whiddon Down, and associated activity.
- A property at the lower end of Drewsteignton.

The Council noted the update and that the relevant planning authorities remained aware of the matters raised.

b) Thompson's Land, Whiddon Down

The Clerk read correspondence received from James Gibbs regarding the future of Thompson's Land. Following an unfavourable pre-application response from Dartmoor National Park Authority, Heritage Homes had withdrawn from the proposed development process.

The landowner had subsequently decided to market the approximately 3.9-acre site as a freehold strategic development opportunity.

Councillors discussed the possibility of acquiring part of the land for community use, potentially as a playing field, together with the financial implications of acquisition, maintenance and insurance.

No decision was made to pursue acquisition.

Agreed: The Council would monitor developments and consider any future proposals brought forward for the land.

9.10.26 Highway Matters

a) Road Closures

The Clerk reported road closure notices, including:

- A closure near Hole Cross and Bowden Cross, Crockernwell, commencing 12 November 2026, with works expected to take approximately seven days.
- Overnight works between Toll House Cross and Stone Cross, Whiddon Down, scheduled for 7–11 December 2026, between 6.00pm and 7.00am.

The Council discussed the expected impact of the closures.

Action: Publicise relevant road closures through the Parish Post and other appropriate communication channels.

b) Road Improvements – Whiddon Down to Crockernwell

The Clerk reported that Devon County Council had announced approximately £3.5 million in funding across three highway projects, one of which included improvements to the former A30 between Whiddon Down and Crockernwell.

Councillors welcomed the proposed improvements, noting the deteriorating road condition and its importance as an alternative route from the A30.

10.10.26 Current and New Business

a) Whiddon Down Defibrillator

The Clerk confirmed that discussions had taken place with the Post Inn regarding the defibrillator installed on its building.

The owners were happy for the defibrillator to remain in its current location and for the Parish Council to assume responsibility.

The Clerk had contacted The Circuit to arrange the transfer of responsibility and registration under the Parish Council.

Signed **Dated**

The defibrillator pads remained within their expiry dates. The external cabinet casing showed signs of deterioration but remained functional.
Vegetation around the unit also required attention.
Action: Clerk to complete the handover and arrange for the defibrillator to be returned to operational status as soon as possible.

b) Playing Field Zip Wire

The Clerk reported that the newly installed zip wire was being used and had received positive feedback from families.
However, concerns remained about the low position of the seat and the take-off area.
Sovereign had confirmed that further works were scheduled for **2 November 2026** to address outstanding issues.
The contractor had requested a payment of 10% of the outstanding balance, which the Clerk had declined pending completion of the agreed works.
Agreed: Outstanding payment would not be released before satisfactory completion of the works.
Action: Clerk to continue liaising with Sovereign regarding the remedial work.

c) Drewsteignton Public Toilets

The proposed meeting with the National Trust regarding the future transfer of the public toilets had not yet taken place.
The Council reiterated that significant expenditure should not be committed before the position regarding ownership and responsibility had been clarified.
Action: Carry forward to the next meeting.

d) Allotment Land Acquisition

The Clerk reported that further correspondence had been sent to the solicitors regarding the proposed transfer of the allotment land to the Parish Council.
The family remained keen for the transfer to be completed by the end of March 2027, to avoid complications with existing tenancy arrangements.
Action: Clerk to continue pursuing progress with the solicitors and report back.

e) Road Safety – Venton/Sandy Park

This item was considered during Public Speaking Time under Item 6.10.26.
The Council's agreed actions are recorded under that item.

f) Mobile Vehicle-Activated Sign – Crockernwell

The Chair reported that the mobile vehicle-activated sign had been reinstated in Crockernwell.
The battery had required replacement after approximately two weeks of operation.
The Council noted the update.

11.10.26 Review of Council Policies and Procedures

The following policies were considered as part of the annual review:

- DPC 010 – Health and Safety Policy
- DPC 011 – Confidential Reporting Policy
- DPC 012 – Complaints and Grievances Policy

Councillors considered the policies to remain fit for purpose.
Resolved: To retain the existing policies without amendment for a further 12 months.

12.10.26 Finance and Consideration for Approval of Purchases

a) 2027/28 Budget and Precept – Initial Considerations

The Clerk requested suggestions from councillors for projects and financial priorities to inform preparation of the 2027/28 budget.

Signed **Dated**

Potential expenditure discussed included:

Bus Shelter – Whiddon Down

The possibility of installing a bus shelter for schoolchildren was discussed. An indicative cost of £2,500–£3,000 was suggested, excluding any additional site requirements.

The Council noted that neighbouring authorities were not currently proposing to contribute financially.

Vehicle-Activated Road Safety Sign

Councillors discussed whether a further vehicle-activated sign could be included within the budget, subject to advice from Highways, appropriate siting and possible external funding.

Benches and Public Spaces

Councillors identified several benches requiring repair, replacement or refurbishment, including benches in Drewsteignton car park and historic metal benches in the parish.

Maintenance of the memorial garden, including weeding and general upkeep, was also discussed.

The relocation of the centenary bench, currently stored at the former Post Office, was discussed. Its proposed location was within the churchyard, subject to final arrangements.

Agreed: Councillors were invited to forward further suggestions to the Clerk for consideration when preparing the draft budget.

No expenditure was authorised in respect of these suggested projects at this meeting.

b) National Pay Award – Parish Clerk

The Council considered implementation of the national pay award for the Parish Clerk, including applicable backdated pay.

Resolved: To approve implementation of the national pay award, including the appropriate backdated adjustment.

Cllr Redman was recorded as proposing the motion. Cllr Bennie seconded RR26/38

c) Financial Documents and Payments

The Council reviewed the financial documents presented at the meeting. No concerns were raised during the discussion.

The Clerk highlighted that an invoice for approximately £581 had been received for public toilet cleaning, covering a period since the previous invoice in December.

The Council acknowledged the work carried out to maintain the facilities.

Note: The exact payment schedule and formal approval of individual payments should be confirmed against the financial paperwork presented at the meeting.

13.10.26 Councillor Reports and Other Business

a) Drewsteignton Community Society / Drewe Arms

Councillors who attended the Society's AGM reported that the organisation had experienced financial challenges.

The appointment of a new chef and increased food sales had helped improve its position.

The continued importance of local support and volunteering was emphasised.

b) Whiddon Down Streetlight

A streetlight near the post box in Whiddon Down was reported to be operating continuously.

Action: Clerk to report the fault to the appropriate streetlighting authority.

c) Post Inn, Whiddon Down

Councillors reported that refurbishment work was taking place at the Post Inn ahead of a proposed reopening.

The update was welcomed.

d) Community Emergency Planning

Signed **Dated**

A councillor raised awareness of household emergency planning information available through Devon Communities Together.
It was suggested that residents should be encouraged to consider household preparedness in the event of power failures or other emergencies.
Action: Include information and a link to appropriate household emergency planning guidance in the Parish Post.

e) Community Safety Communications
Councillors discussed a recent report of a suspicious vehicle and the importance of timely communication through the local community WhatsApp group.
It was noted that the sharing of information could help identify and report concerns promptly.

f) Drewsteignton Church Heating
An update was received confirming that the new air-source heat pump system had been commissioned and was operational.
The solar panels were also operational.
The improvements were welcomed by the Council.

g) Community Projector and Screen
The Council was advised that a projector and electric screen were available for community use, including a proposed film showing at Drewsteignton Church in February 2027.

h) Drewsteignton Car Park
The Clerk confirmed that six parking permits had been issued in connection with works undertaken for the National Trust.
Concerns were raised regarding additional contractors' vehicles using the car park.
Action: Photographic evidence of unauthorised vehicles to be forwarded to the Clerk for discussion with the National Trust's site manager.

i) Parish Road Signs
The Chair reported that several village signs had been removed or exchanged between locations, including Crockernwell, Bow and Yeoford.
Devon County Council Highways had been informed.

j) Bonfire Night Grant
The Council noted that a grant of £500 had been paid through delegated authority towards the community bonfire and fireworks event scheduled for 7 November 2026.

k) Local Government Reorganisation
The Council discussed the continuing uncertainty regarding local government reorganisation in Devon.
No substantive update had been received from the County or Borough Councillors.
The Council noted the position.

l) Rural Telephone and Emergency Communications
Concerns were raised about the transition away from traditional copper telephone services and the potential impact on households with poor or no mobile reception during power cuts.
The importance of maintaining suitable emergency communications arrangements in rural areas was noted.

14.10.26 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Drewsteignton Parish Council was confirmed as:
Monday 16th November 2026 at 7.30pm
Whiddon Down Village Hall

Signed **Dated**