

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

There was a meeting of Lapford Parish Council on Tuesday 8th September 2026 at 7.30pm held in the Orchard Centre, Lapford

Members Present: Cllrs. Julie Down; Sue Briant-Evans; Bill Graham; Graham Heal; Peter Heal; Alex Shapland; Steve Fletcher.

Also Present: County & District Cllr. Steve Keable.

In attendance: Rob Martin (Clerk).

Others: Three members of the public.

MINUTES

2627-113 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Cllr. Andrews. These apologies were accepted.

2627-114 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY)

No declarations of interest in items on the agenda were made.

2627-115 COUNCILLOR COOPTION

No further applications had been received to fill the remaining two councillor vacancies.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow public participation

2627-116 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION & UPDATES FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The possibility of devising a parish council logo was brought up which would be considered again at the next meeting.

The new college term had focused attention on the number of students requiring the Barnstaple train outnumbering the seats available with buses being brought in to cover the shortfall. The introduction of improved rolling stock was eagerly awaited.

2627-117 COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

To receive a verbal report for information.

a) Devon County Council

b) Mid Devon District Council

County/District Cllr. Keable circulated copies of his monthly report to the meeting. He remarked that the main thing to report was the decision of the government to pause the Local Government Reorganisation changes for Devon to undertake a review of its decision. The shadow authority elections had been replaced with the scheduled elections for Mid Devon based on the existing boundaries.

Devon County Council's performance on Adult Care had been rated as much improved this time around, which was good to hear.

The District Council was focusing on its Local Plan which it would sign seal and deliver.

Cllr. Keable asked for and was given the parish council's support in sorting out the matter of the vehicles parked in the layby opposite the Highfield road entrance.

On the subject of the abandoned vehicle Cllr. Keable had already reported it and had been given a case number of FS-Case 871226762 should it be needed in future correspondence.

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The clerk would look up the Land Registry record for the piece of land involved to determine ownership.

A further discussion took place on village maintenance, including highways. The result was agreement on the fact that people should be encouraged to deal with and report matters themselves rather than always expecting others to do it all. In particular, reporting potholes online remained the most effective way of getting them repaired. Identification of such faults was improved if the reporting included a picture, the What Three Words location and a few details.

The clerk would write to Steve Densham at MDDC to get some commitment on clearing the small area between the Toddlers' Play Area and the churchyard as already agreed.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting

2627-118 MINUTES

On a proposal by Cllr. Graham, seconded by Cllr. Briant-Evans, it was **Resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11th August 2026.

2627-119 ACTION LIST, CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The clerk updated the information already circulated on the Action list as follows:

- **Neighbourhood Plan** – Peter Totterdill had confirmed that he would work with the free version of Survey Monkey for the time being.
- **Fencing at Village Entrance** – Cloverdown had now completed the fencing up to the railway bridge.

In addition, the clerk reported as follows:

An **Interim Internal Audit** had been carried out and the resultant report received on 4 September 2026. No matters of concern had been identified in this audit and the report would be added to the agenda for October.

Registers of Interest (ROIs)

New guidance had been given on ROIs meaning that, unless councillors specifically wanted it to be, their home address would be redacted in the published version. MDDC had requested that new ROIs be sent with the question asked in each case. Blank forms had been circulated to all councillors, hard copies were made available at this meeting.

Data Audit

As part of the Assertion 10 requirements, parish councils were expected to undertake an audit of its data and to take appropriate action to ensure the data held was appropriate. This audit would take place in time for the next meeting.

Playing Field Ownership

The clerk had spoken to Rytis Mendelis at Ludlow's and Mike Taylor of Tozer's on land registration and charity changes for the playing field. He had also read the documents held on the subject in full with the following conclusions:

- The land had remained unregistered by Natwest bank.
- The Conveyance of 5 June 1961 clarified a number of things
 - Land owned by shopkeeper, Harry Kirkham
 - Mortgage existed on land and shop at time of dedication
 - £200 paid to National Provincial Bank to pay off some of mortgage
 - That is where Natwest came in as custodian trustees
 - The footpath was not part of field, the conveyance merely gave right of access over it to field users, backed by a Statutory

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Declaration by William Turner on the historic status of the footpath.

- Ludlow's applied for 'first registration' of land when it moved to them – still outstanding – they are going to chase this.
- Ludlow's more than happy, once first registration finalised, to transfer the custodian responsibility to community-based organisation.
- My suggestion is that LYPFT sets itself up as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registered with the Charity Commission. This offers protection for the trustees which they do not have at the moment and gives the charity a legal status.
- Then, formally, the custodian and management trustees are laid down within the charitable scheme.
- As part of that charitable setting up, a valid charitable scheme is written up alongside a constitution drawn up to give the clear picture of what the custodian trustee's role is, just the holder of the deeds, and that of the management trustees which is to run the whole thing, including the power to dispose of the land if that is in the best charitable interests.
- Ludlows agreed that the best outcome would be for the parish council to be the custodian trustee (as it, or its successors will exist in perpetuity) with LYPFT being the management trustee.
- As long as the set-up documentation is clear, the custodian trustees' only role is to hold the paperwork.
- The next move is for the LYPFT to consider its preferred status going forward and whether it wants the arrangement suggested by the clerk. If it does Tozers will be appointed to ensure that the ongoing arrangements are watertight.

On the basis of the mapping evidence used to investigate this matter the clerk expressed a wish to have formal access to the Parish Online system to avoid copyright issues. He had signed up to Parish Online mapping with a free 3 months of access. Following that, an annual charge of £110 would result and this action was approved.

2627-120

FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr. Briant-Evans reported on the last HOLD meeting saying that there were ongoing issues with the Victory Hall committee on governance issues. Work to construct the new doorway at the village hall was due to start in November and the AGM would be held in the Village Hall on Saturday 17th October at 10.00am.

2627-121

COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Celebrations Committee

No committee meetings have occurred since the last Parish Council.

b) Lapford Emergency Action Plan (LEAP) Committee.

The minutes of the LEAP committee meeting held on 2 September 2026 had been circulated and the action list on highway matters had been submitted to Steve Keable and Steve Fletcher.

In addition, the storage container containing some shovels, sand and sandbags had been broken into and damaged, so a replacement was required. Cllr. Briant-Evans circulated screen prints of potential replacement containers which were all plastic. Cllrs Peter and Graham Heal would inspect the existing container to assess for possible repair and the clerk would investigate whether an insurance claim could be submitted to replace the vandalized container. Road Wardens had undertaken some pothole work and further supplies of material had been requested. There was a need to ensure that the necessary records are being kept and procedures are being followed.

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2627-122 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Three new volunteers had joined the steering group and there was to be a further public consultation event in the Village Hall on Saturday 10th October at 10.00am.

2627-123 COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

The clerk had circulated the following report:

At the meeting on 11 August 2026, minute 2627-099 was passed, as follows:

On a proposal by Cllr. Graham, seconded by Cllr. Down, it was **Resolved** to agree the principle of setting up a CLT and sign up to the Community Land Trust Network (CLTN) at a cost of £90 per annum which would give access to more advice and resources to move forward.

Contact would also be made with Tristan Peat of MDDC and Mandy Goddard of DCT to help guide the parish council in registering and formulating a CLT correctly. A further report would be tabled at the next meeting.

The CLTN subscription has been paid for a part-year until 31st March 2027, in the sum of £53.89

Devon Communities Together (DCT)

Following the presentation by Mandy Goddard the clerk spoke with her on 13 August 2026 to ensure he got contact details for the potential partners in the project. She suggested that:

- He have a conversation with Alison Ward at Middlemarch to see what they could offer and would provide contact information with other Devon CLTs.
- He talk to John Hammond EDDC Planning
- He keep her in the loop so that she could offer support and advice as and when necessary
- She had contacts at Hastoe, Aster and Cornerstone Housing Associations all of which have worked in the past with Devon CLTs.
- LPC did not have to be a member of DCT for her services which were fully funded

Middlemarch

The clerk spoke with Allison Ward of Middlemarch on 18th August 2026 who explained the model they offer. Although a national company Alison is based at West Clyst so has lot of local knowledge.

Attached below is a briefing from Alison of the service that is offered by Middlemarch which is set up as a CIC to provide advice and support to Community Land Trusts. Middlemarch offers:

- Piecemeal help to go-it-alone CLTs as and when necessary, sometimes chargeable
- A complete service from inception to completion, based on the following criteria
 - The CLT is set up as a Community Benefit Society
 - The CLT owns the freehold of the properties in perpetuity
 - Middlemarch will identify potential partner Housing associations interested in the project.

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- The land purchase, planning, build and maintenance of the homes to be delegated to a Registered Provider (Housing Association)
- The CLT liaise on the type of build and affordable housing offering, based on the HNS and Neighbourhood Plan
- The CLT decides on the allocation criteria (for local people) and has a role in actual allocations

All capital financing is organised by the HA in terms of government grants, loans etc. There is no financial risk for the CLT.

Alison warned that this is not a quick task and that finding a suitable site can often take two years or more. There is potentially a suitable site available, dealt with below.

Mid Devon District Council

The clerk went to the MDDC offices in Tiverton and met with John Hammond (Development Management Manager) on 20th August 2026 who has now taken over responsibility for CLTs from Tristan Peat.

John confirmed that MDDC would support Lapford in the formation of a CLT with the first task being to identify a potential site. He had already sent details of the possible site which John confirmed would probably be as acceptable as the HELAA 02 site already considered for inclusion in the emerging Local Plan but had not been further by MDDC. He indicated that both the HELAA 02 site and the one now being considered were both going to be allocated for building within the emerging draft Lapford Neighbourhood Plan as far as he was aware. He also indicated the following:

- The potential site would enable around 30 homes to be built
- MDDC had some grant available to support the setting up of CLTs, he would forward the details.
- MDDC already work with various Housing Associations (HAs)
- Officers had been discussing the possible formation of 'Housing Rural' a potential in-house Housing Association for the new Devon Council
- This project might be seen as an ideal starting point for the new body, and he should talk to Simon Newcombe (EDDC Housing Manager) about this

(NB Affordable Rents = 80% Market Rents, whilst Social Rents = 50% Market Rents)

- HAs were finding the provision of Social Rent housing a challenge to achieve because of the land and financing costs involved.
- From the Lapford Housing Needs Survey 2024, just 7 people were identified as needing Social Rent homes with a few more being added each year. There would not be, on the basis of this, a demonstrable need for 30 such properties.
- There was a limit, unchanged for the last twenty years, of £10,000 per plot of land cost for Social Rent properties to be achieved, beyond which the numbers do not stack up.

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- It would be possible to build out a mixed development of social & affordable properties alongside full market housing involving cross-subsidy for the cheaper ones.
- MDDC would fully support Lapford in its endeavours to pull this project off and use it to show others what could be done.
- The new Devon Council is going to struggle to make its housing completion numbers, particularly in its first years. This will enable developers to come along and push for development in unsatisfactory areas, with Lapford particularly vulnerable due to its proximity to a railway station – now confirmed as a relevant criterion in the new NPPF, published on 17th August 2026.

John Hammond then sent a confirmation email as follows:

Hi Rob,

Further to our discussion yesterday regarding proposals to set up a Laford CLT, I attach a copy of the MDDC Community Housing Fund explanatory note and application form. You will note that there are 3 stages of grant that can be bid for and the process does allow a parish council to seek funding as part of the early stages prior to the establishment of a CLT.

I will try to get out to Lapford next week to look at the site, however based upon our discussions about the scheme scale and the aspiration to deliver social rent units, given our recent experience elsewhere I suspect the following issues will be relevant:

- 1. An RP will be cautious about over delivering significant numbers of social rent dwellings in a smaller community. I will ask Devon Homes Choice for the current waiting list where a preference for Lapford is expressed to provide a snapshot of current demand. I note the 2024 HNS suggested an affordable / social rent need for 7 units at that time.*
- 2. I also note your suggestion that the suggested site, albeit having a number of constraints shared with the W/LA/02 site could take some 30 dwellings which would significantly exceed the social rent need but may allow for some other opportunities to look at intermediate market / starter housing as well as downsizing options.*
- 3. I suspect the scale of the site and likelihood of some blending of costs across the scheme to support delivery of otherwise high cost / subsidy social rent will deter RP's such as Hastoe who are looking for a simpler development scheme, i.e. all affordable therefore all grant based.*
- 4. I'm sure Middlemarch and others can advise on likely development partners, however it may be worth sounding out the following:*

Aster: Karl Hine karl.hine@aster.co.uk

Cornerstone: anne.seaborne@cornerstonehousing.net

Westward: Jon.Mutter@Westwardhousing.org.uk

Mid Devon Homes: snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

- 5. I suspect however that by reason of Lapford being at the very early stages of their journey and the likelihood that a timetable*

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for a planning application is some time off allowing for establishment of a CLT and public engagement, the degree of engagement from RP's at this stage will be naturally limited. I will get back to you once I have had a chance to look at the village and site.

Landowner

The site amounts to 1.46 Hectares on a significant slope with the river and trees at the bottom

The clerk met with the landowner at the Orchard Centre on 21st August 2026 where we discussed some of the site history and ownership details.

The current situation is that the landowner lives in a bungalow at the entrance to the site on Barris Road with the remainder being a smallholding. In order for the potential development to have proper access it will be necessary to demolish the bungalow, meaning that it will be necessary for the land sale to cover the value of a replacement property plus an appropriate amount for the agricultural element.

The landowner's aims were to offer the land for sale to the CLT to build social rented homes for people of the Lapford Community. It was made clear that for all 30 potential homes being Social Rented there would be a limit to the value of the land in these circumstances.

If the Middlemarch partnership option is decided on, all negotiations on land value and what could be built would be undertaken in the first instance by the Housing Association, as it will be raising the capital.

Community Land Trust Network (CLTN)

A conversation will take place with Abbie Haward at CLTN on 2nd September 2026 (she has been on leave) to clarify what benefits are gained by membership.

Apart from having a great deal of information and guidelines on its website the CLTN gives access to half-price trustee insurance and specialist legal advice at reduced cost.

There is some crossover between what is provided by Middlemarch and the CLTN, but the CLTN website is always available and has a massive amount of practical information on the detail of setting up and running a CLT.

Apart from anything else, it puts Lapford CLT on the national map.

Conclusions

Now that discussions have happened, it has become clear that if Lapford wants to attempt to provide truly affordable housing for its residents forming a Community Land Trust alongside the allocation of land within the Neighbourhood Plan is the best way of doing so.

The question then becomes how that would happen and what steps to take first.

The service offered by Middlemarch seems to take away all the difficult bits from the exercise with its offer to help with the initial legal and governance matters and the avoids any significant financial risk.

The suggestion is for councillors to attend the presentation by Alison of Middlemarch on 30 September 2026 with a view to their appointment as agents for the Lapford CLT.

The clerk was thanked for the extensive work done on this matter. He also pointed out that Housing Associations had a duty to ensure their properties are always occupied, potentially compromising the 'Local Connection' criteria, but this could be managed to

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some extent.

The clerk outlined the main points within the report and stressed the importance of councillors understanding the implications of forming a CLT group. He also stated that MDDC had funds available to cover the set-up costs of the CLT which would mean zero costs to be found from council tax.

2627-124 YOUTH PLAY EQUIPMENT

The installation had been ordered and the deposit paid and the expected start date was 4th November 2026.

2627-125 DEFIBRILLATOR BOX

To consider the proposal by Cllr. Graham to replace the box holding the defibrillator at the Orchard Centre. The research done on the potential cost of a replacement box would be of the order of £450 and it was decided that the original supplier of the defibrillator be contacted to see whether there was potential for a subsidised replacement.

2627-126 EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2025/2026

The external audit has been concluded by PKF Littlejohn with a comment on the certificate regarding an incorrect entry on the return for the previous year. The publication of closure of audit notification in line with the legislation was **agreed**.

2627-127 NJC PAY AWARD - APRIL 2026

On a proposal by Cllr. Graham, seconded by Cllr. Briant-Evans the nationally agreed pay award of 3.3% applicable from 1st April 2026 was **adopted** and the increase in payments to the clerk and cleaner were **agreed**.

2627-128 CHURCH GREEN TRUST FEEDBACK

The matters of note from the Church Green Trustee meeting held on 26th August 2026 were the construction of a new gate and cleaning of the War Memorial. The Zurich insurance policy was also considered.

2627-129 PLANNING MATTERS

a) APPLICATIONS NOTIFIED

The following Planning Application was **noted**.

Reference	Location	Proposal
26/01154/PNAG	Lower Nymet Farm Lapford Crediton	Prior Approval for erection of an agricultural building For information only

b) APPLICATIONS AFTER THE AGENDA WAS ISSUED

No applications had been notified after the agenda had been set.

c) MDDC DECISIONS

The following decisions were **noted**.

Reference	Location	Proposal	MDDC Decision
26/00954/PNAG	Lower Filleigh Farm Lapford Devon	Prior Approval for the erection of roof over existing silage clamp	Prior Approval is not required
26/00916/HOUSE	The Hollies Lapford Crediton Devon	Erection of detached domestic garage	Permission Granted

2627-130 BANK RECONCILIATION

The bank reconciliation as at 31st August 2026 was **noted**.

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2627-131 RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS COMPARED WITH BUDGET – AUGUST 2026

The statements of Receipts & Payments compared with budget for the period from 1st April 2026 to 31st August 2026 were **noted**.

An extension to these reports indicating the likely outturn for the current year would be presented at the next meeting to help with the consideration of the budget and precept for 2027/2028.

2627-132 RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS SCHEDULE

On a proposal by Cllr. Graham, seconded by Graham Heal, it was **Resolved** to approve the payment of the invoices on the schedule below for the period since the last meeting:

PAYMENTS

Payment to	Services	Month/Ref	Amount £	Payment No.
2026/2027				
Everflow	OC Sewage & Water	September 26	40.66	DD
BT Group Ltd	OC Broadband	September 26	60.43	DD
Adobe	Acrobat Professional	September 26	19.99	DD
Lloyds Bank	Service Charge	September 26	4.25	DD
Valda Energy	Orchard Centre Electricity	September 26	38.90	DD
Sovereign Play Designs Ltd	Deposit for new equipment	30% of Total	5,152.62	2627-16
T&G Maintenance	Grass Cutting	Interim 2026	836.00	2627-16
S Hemsworth	Salary	September 26	81.37	2627-17
RJ Martin	Salary	September 26	680.65	2627-17
HMRC	Tax Deductions	September 26	190.40	2627-17
HMRC	National Insurance	September 26	65.08	2627-17
Amazon	Stationery	Printer Toner	37.80	Card
Mulberry LAS	Interim Internal Audit	2026/27	264.00	2627-18

RECEIPTS

Receipt from	Services	Amount £	Method
2026/2027			
Devon County Council	Contribution to play equipment	1,000.00	BC
Sport England	Contribution to play equipment	9,300.00	BC

2627-133 MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR

The chairman raised the matter of the arrangements for the Litter Pick Day on 3rd October 2026. She and Cllr. Briant-Evans would produce a list of matters that could be addressed on the day.

2627-134 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

There were no further councillor reports

2627-135 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Parish Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 13th October 2026 in the Orchard Centre.

2627-136 CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Action List
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Ref	Issue/Action	Responsibility	Update
	Orchard Centre Adjacent Land	Clerk/MDDC	<i>Awaiting response from MDDC on CAT request</i>
	Planning Enforcement Issues MDDC was currently overwhelmed by enforcement cases with just one officer to do them. The concentration was on those matters that were dangerous, which none of those in Lapford were.	Clerk/MDDC	<i>SK will notify when action complete</i>
	Ash Dieback To encourage DCC to consider notifying residents of the danger to the highway	Clerk/DCC	<i>Highways list submitted</i>
	Highways	Clerk/DCC	<i>Highways list submitted</i>
	Neighbourhood Plan	Parish Council	<i>Survey Monkey Access set up. Peter Totterdill to work with free version initially</i>
	Telephone Box Make safe for use as book swap area.	Cllrs. Heal, Andrews	<i>Still to be done by Cllr. Andrews</i>
	Co-option of new councillors	Council	<i>There are now two vacancies following appointment of Graham Heal</i>
	Youth Play Equipment	Clerk	<i>Installation Ordered to take place in 4th November 2026</i>
	Youth Play Equipment Additional requests	Clerk/LYPFT	<i>Put into abeyance until the Youth Equipment is ordered</i>
	Orchard Centre a) <u>Painting of toilet door</u> b) <u>Toilet handrail to be refurbished</u> c) <u>Cleanup of the outside of the Orchard centre and complete the exterior painting</u> d) <u>Entrance into the Orchard Centre by the door can be slippery.</u>	Councillors	<i>All tasks are pending for the time being.</i>

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Ref	Issue/Action	Responsibility	Update
	e) <u>Hole in archive cupboard as a result of the fuse board being moved</u> f) <u>Repainting of interior and fitting of new notice boards</u>		
	Road Wardens	Clerk & Cllr. Heal	Contact to be made with John Chappell to sort out reporting
	Concrete Bin Disposal To remove the unsightly concrete bin next to the A377	Cllr. Heal	Bin cleared of rubbish, awaiting disposal
	Village Maintenance Cleaning of signs To be arranged.	Cllrs Heal & Down	Put on hold.
	Village Maintenance Weed Clearance	Cllrs.	Weed maintenance survey to be carried out and results fed back.
	SWW and sewage issues	Clerk	SWW still being unhelpful
NEW	Crediton Cluster To become involved in the cluster meetings in the light of potential changes caused by Local Government Reorganisation for Devon.	Clerk	Next meeting
	Temporary Fencing at Village Entrance The temporary barriers next to the bridge need to be replaced by a permanent fence. The landowners need to be identified and a request made for this to happen.	Clerk	Most fencing installed. Remainder to be installed later
	Village Maintenance To appoint someone to undertake general maintenance tasks around the parish either as a contractor or an employee	Cllr. Andrew/Clerk	Next tidy-up to be 3rd October 2026
NEW	Community Land Trust Investigate the setting up of a Lapford Community Land Trust	Clerk	Briefing note circulated to councillors and meeting with Alison from Middlemarch coming to discuss on 30 September 2026
	Bus Shelter Repair/Replacement Potentially obtain grant to repair or replace bus shelter on the main road	Clerk	Shelter to be inspected by DCC. Nothing further yet
	MDDC Asset Transfers To identify any MDDC owned assets in Lapford and consider transfer to the parish council	Clerk	Only land around Orchard Centre applied for

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Ref	Issue/Action	Responsibility	Update
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