

Lapford Parish Council

Lapford Parish Council Meeting 11th March 2025

Email: clerk@lapfordparishcouncil.org.uk Phone: 07768 829511 Website: www.lapfordparishcouncil.org.uk

There was a meeting of Lapford Parish Council on Tuesday 11th March 2025 at 7.30pm held in the Orchard Centre, Lapford

Members Present: Cllrs Julie Down; Sue Briant-Evans; Bill Graham; Steve Fletcher; Ian Wilkie; Roy Andrews; Peter Heal.

Also Present: District Cllr. Steve Keable; County Cllr. Margaret Squires (from 8.30pm)

In attendance: Rob Martin (Clerk).

Others: Two members of the public.

MINUTES

2425-264 APOLOGIES

No parish council apologies had been received.

2425-265 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY)

There were no declarations of interest made.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow public participation

2425-266 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION & UPDATES FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

There were no questions from the public.

2425-267 COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

To receive a verbal report for information.

a) Devon County Council

County Cllr. Squires reported that the County Council was concentrating on the Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation White Paper one effect of which work would be handed down parish councils.

Cllr. Squires would not be standing for election to Devon County Council in May 2025 and she was thanked by the parish council for all her work for the community over many years of service.

b) Mid Devon District Council

District Cllr. Keable circulated a written report, as follows:

1. **Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance** - are working for investment on the North Devon (Tarka) Line to transform both the passenger experience and benefit communities and businesses along the line. Last week the PC representative Steve Munday and I attended the Annual Convention in Barnstaple. I am proud that Lapford Parish Council chose to join this group, and received accolades in the Annual Report. Together, Councils along the line are providing support and momentum for investment in the line.

Later in 2025 Class 175s will be brought into use on the line. This is much needed

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as passenger journeys approach 1m p.a. Two trains in the hour are needed as the platforms can not accommodate longer trains. This requires two additional passing places, new signalling and improved access.

Lapford's Neighbourhood Plan should consider the importance of the Station, the need for improved safe access and essential car parking. Digital investment is needed for 'tap ticketing', wifi and Station information boards. As the Mid Devon's Cabinet Member responsible for Planning & Economic Regeneration, this is the top of my agenda, and I thank you for your support.

2. **Mid Devon balance the budget for 2nd year** - without reducing services, redundancies or using reserves. MDDC will increase Council Tax by 3%, Devon County Council by 5%.
3. **Mid Devon District Council wants to hear from local businesses about the opportunities and challenges they currently face and to better understand their needs.** The survey findings will inform future plans for the district and guide discussions with infrastructure providers and business delivery partners. Follow these links. <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/survey-open-for-mid-devon-businesses/> and <https://letstalk.middevon.gov.uk/mid-devon-business>
4. **Willand Neighbourhood Plan approved at Referendum** – follow link for more information as this is relevant to the Lapford Neighbourhood Plan.
5. Mid Devon District Council has been shortlisted in **recognition of its work to increase recycling rates and reduce fly-tipping and littering.**
6. **North & Mid Devon Building Control** achieve top quality achievement with ISO 9000 accreditation.
7. **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation - Joint Statement** by all Devon District Councils. Likely cost to each new Unitary Council will be in the region of £16m and as in Somerset there will be no real savings. Mid Devon is backing the 1-4-5 proposal to split Devon into three larger councils (1) an expanded Plymouth, (4) the District Councils to the south of the Exe Estuary and West Devon, (5) District Councils in the northern half of the county including Exeter.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting

2425-268

MINUTES

Cllr. Heal requested that the Interest he had declared at the last meeting be altered to show a pecuniary, rather than a personal interest, as the application in question was for his next-door neighbour. The minutes were altered manually for this.

On a proposal by Cllr. Andrews, seconded by Cllr. Wilkie it was **Resolved** to receive and adopt the adjusted minutes of the last Parish Council meeting held on 18th February



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2025.

2425-269 ACTION LIST, CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The clerk had circulated a report, as follows:

1. Community Website

Some time ago it was decided to continue paying the monthly fees for the Lapford Community Website on the basis that the L2K group would use it for the archive and other of its activities. Nothing further has been done.

Councillors believed that this was a facility that could be used for a stand-alone Neighbourhood Plan team so it should continue to be maintained and discussed by the next meeting of the Steering Group. The clerk would write to the Chair of the NP Steering Group to focus on what they think would be the best way forward.

2. Road Warden Equipment – Storage

At the time of writing, nothing further has been received from MDDC. A chasing email has been sent.

Cllr. Andrews had discussed the current storage with David Drew who was happy to continue with it for the foreseeable future.

3. Section 106 Finance for Play Equipment

Although now agreed by Cllr. Keable, the Section 106 officer still wanted further information, which has been supplied. The payment date is apparently going to be 2-3 weeks from when it is 'signed off'.

Confirmation of the grant had been received and the money would be released once a 'Funding Agreement' had been signed. The clerk was on the case.

4. Play Area Refurbishment

The contract has been officially ordered. Further information is awaited regarding the target date for installation.

In response to a query from Cllr. Andrews, the clerk confirmed that the Section 106 finance for Youth Equipment remained with MDDC and would be claimed when an affordable scheme could be put together with the LYPFT about which he had agreed to meet Grace Hill.

5. Play Area Lease

Chasing emails have been sent with little progress to date.

There was still some debate about the 25/50 length of the lease, but this would be resolved shortly. The clerk would ensure the two solicitors brought this to a conclusion as soon as possible.

6. Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

An email from MDDC has been circulated trying to explain what the current position is. My suggestion is to read it and be aware of the potential implications of its content as we might have a greater role to play once the whole thing is

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completed.

County Cllr. Squires had already confirmed above that there was an expectation that parish councils would have to undertake more localised activities and have to raise funding to do so. The clerk raised the question of parishes joining together to form bigger units to be more effective in this new scenario.

7. Groundwork Grant Report

I have received an email from Groundwork (Locality's Agent) on the subject of making an end-of-grant report for the Neighbourhood Plan Grant we have received as we need to copy invoices them before the end of March 2025, otherwise the 'unspent' amount will have to be paid back. I have liaised DCT and have received a final invoice for the work which will be used for this report. It will only be paid once the DCT contract has been fulfilled.

Cllrs agreed with this action and the end-of-grant submission will be submitted before 31 March 2025.

8. Dog Fouling

Email received from Dave Guyan at MDDC on publicity for the subject, alongside a commitment to making more visits to Lapford. The important thing is to report it every time it occurs.

In addition, the clerk had investigated a matter on the Action List which had come to a head at the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting the day before, as follows:

9. Orchard Centre Broadband

The broadband connection for the Orchard Centre had been poor for some time and was unable to support the current needs of a group all needing internet connection at the same time.

The first task was to determine whether the Orchard Centre had been connected to Ultrafast broadband yet, and it had been confirmed that this had occurred. The task was then to identify which suppliers gave the best deal for the parish council. After presenting a number of options from Sky, Vodafone and EE, on a proposal by Cllr. Andrews, seconded by Cllr. Fletcher, it was **Resolved** to connect to the EE/BT network on the Essential 900 + Digital Line tariff, with a guaranteed 700mb/s download speed.

The need to ensure that the emergency line is available when the power is down would be provided by the BT Local Business Unit on 01752 777880 once the installation has been done.

10. Display Screen for Orchard Centre

Following on from the Broadband update, Cllr. Graham stated that it would be a good idea to have a display screen in the Orchard Centre to show things such as the Planning Documents when considering applications. This would also help if the expected ability to hold hybrid meetings was introduced, allowing participants to join meetings from home.

District Cllr. Keable would make contact with officers at MDDC for advice on what

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would be necessary and plausible. The clerk and other Cllrs. would undertake some research on the matter and this would be discussed at the next meeting.

11. Action List

Cleaning Signs – Cllr. Briant-Evans was concerned that permission should be obtained before road signs were cleaned. The clerk would contact the Community Highways Officer for confirmation of this.

Openreach Ultrafast Broadband – Cllr. Fletcher had experienced some difficulties in getting the service into his properties and had been informed that for the time being the project had been halted, to be completed sometime later.

Parish Council Historic Records – Cllrs. Down and Briant-Evans had been working on this and would have it completed shortly.

Parish Councillor Recruitment – it was hoped that one, or two of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members might be interested in becoming councillors.

Orchard Centre Toilet Lock – Cllr. Heal had fitted a lock to the toilet door.

Highways Outstanding Tasks – the clerk would resend the list to County Cllr. Squires. The list should include a large hole in the hedgerow where National Grid had removed it to put in a new pole.

2425-270 FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

There had been no meetings for any feedback.

2425-271 COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Celebrations Committee

The next meeting of the Celebrations Committee would take place during the next week.

b) Lapford Emergency Action Plan (LEAP) Committee.

Cllr. Briant-Evans reported that the main current issue was that the required Road Warden training, beyond that of Chapter Eight, was impossible to organise. Devon Communities Together were trying to pull a list of training providers together in order to help keep the Road Warden scheme going. Cllrs. Wilkie and Briant-Evans would write to Cllr. Squires copying the clerk in, about this and she would attempt to get some movement from DCC.

2425-272 CHURCH GREEN TRUST FEEDBACK

The removal of the Chestnut tree needed a bat survey before work could begin and this was being sorted out by Cllr. Graham.

2425-273 GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT 2025

The parish council had received only one bid for the grass cutting contract for 2025, before the advertised closing date of 1st March 2025.

On a proposal by Cllr. Heal, seconded by Cllr. Graham it was **Resolved** to accept the bid from T&G Garden Maintenance for this contract at a total price of £445 for the year.

The bid also included a separate figure for the Church Green Trust which it will consider in

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due course.

2425-274 ORCHARD CENTRE CCTV

Cllr. Graham suggested that, if this is to be undertaken to prevent or provide evidence for graffiti, a camera should be placed, with a light above the door to the Orchard Centre along with signage. The chairman would talk with the PCSO about the potential use of any images for prosecution and report back.

2425-275 FOOTPATHS (PROW)

Cllr. Shapland was not present to update the council on the current position relating to PROW Maintenance. The clerk would liaise with Cllr. Shapland to put together a P3 grant claim for 2025/26.

2425-276 VILLAGE MAINTENANCE & WEED CLEARANCE

- a) Village maintenance was an ongoing problem, particularly where it was assumed that volunteers would undertake the work. This would leave the option of employing a contractor to undertake the work, but this would require a schedule of what was going to be undertaken in order to specify the work. The chairman and Cllr. Andrews would walk/drive around the village with a camera and focus on the problem areas.
- b) The **Annual Village Clearance Day** would take place on Saturday 12th April 2025, starting at 9.30am.

2425-277 LAPFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- a) The notes of the Steering Group meeting on 22nd February 2025, were received and noted.
- b) The previous night there had been an information gathering Teams meeting with two planning officers from MDDC. This was full of background information on planning and would prove to be very useful. The next Steering Group Meeting would take place on Saturday 26th April 2025.

2425-278 PLANNING MATTERS

a) APPLICATIONS NOTIFIED

To consider the following Planning Applications and to agree comments:

Reference	Location	Proposal
25/00170/FULL	West Ridge Veterinary Practice The Surgery Popes Lane, Lapford	Demolition of former veterinary surgery and erection of a dwelling with associated garage and parking Decision: Support (Proposed Cllr. Heal, Seconded Cllr. Graham)



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b) APPLICATIONS AFTER THE AGENDA WAS ISSUED

None

c) MDDC DECISIONS

Reference	Location	Proposal	MDDC Decision
None			

2425-279 BANK RECONCILIATION & BUDGET MONITOR STATEMENT

It was **Resolved** to receive and note the Bank Reconciliation and Receipts and Payments statement, as at 28th February 2025.

2425-280 RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS SCHEDULE

On a proposal by Cllr. Andrews, seconded by Cllr. Briant-Evans 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.
2024/2025				
S Hemsworth	Salary	Mar 2025	65.82	2425-37
RJ Martin	Salary	Mar 2025	550.50	2425-37
HMRC	Tax Deductions	Mar 2025	154.00	2425-37
Everflow	Orchard Centre Sewage & Water	Mar 2025	59.20	DD
BT Group Ltd	Orchard Centre Broadband	Mar 2025	55.70	DD
IONOS	Village Website Hosting	Mar 2025	21.88	DD
Adobe	Acrobat Professional	Mar 2025	19.99	DD
Envelope Supplies	Neighbourhood Plan Survey		306.00	2425-35
T&G Garden Maintenance	Grass Cutting 2024	Half-Year	215.00	2425-36
Devon Communities Together	Neighbourhood Plan Consultations	Inv 5350	3,449.46	2425-38
Bill Graham	Postage		3.60	2425-39

RECEIPTS

Receipt from	Services	Amount	Method
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		£	
2024/2025			
None			

2425-281 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The 2025 Annual Parish Meeting would be held on Saturday 10th May 2025 in the Victory Hall at 10.00am.

Although local organisations would be invited to give a short update on the work done in the previous year, the main theme would be that of the **Lapford Neighbourhood Plan**.

Devon Communities Together would make a presentation of the work done to date and outline the results of the community consultation survey currently underway.

2425-282 MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR

The chair had no further matters to raise.

2425-283 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

Cllr. Wilkie questioned the need for a councillor representative to be present at the village markets, as very few people came forward. This would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting

Cllr. Graham put a query from the Twinning Group regarding the French Post Box placed in the wall near to the Mill. There was a danger that renovation work being carried out there might result in the box being damaged or destroyed. The suggestion was to relocate the box to outside of the Orchard Centre which was agreed by all councillors.

Cllr. Heal raised the damaged Perspex of the Bus Shelter at the bottom of the village, asking whether this would be better being replaced with cross-wire glass, avoiding fire damage whilst being safe. He would look at the cost of the two options and report back.

2425-284 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next Parish Council meeting is changed Tuesday 15th April 2025 at 7.30pm in the Orchard Centre.

2425-285 CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9.55pm

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Latest Minute ref	Issue/Action	Responsibility	Update
2324 235	Ownership of the adjacent land to be determined.	Clerk	LEASE TO BE DRAWN UP
2324 069	Ash Dieback. Ownership of affected trees to be researched and addresses passed to the Clerk.		Highways List
2324 235 2425 043	Cleaning of signs to be arranged.	Cllrs Heal & Down	Deferred until Spring
2324 242	Neighbourhood Plan.	Parish Council	Survey produced and distributed & advertised.
2324 235 6 2425 046	Telephone Box – Make safe for use as book swap area.	Cllrs. Wilkie, Heal	Pending
2324 137 3	Clerk's Hours Worked – to solve the disparity between the hours paid for, 35 hours per month, and the hours worked.	Clerk	With the chairman.
2324 231 2425 047	Openreach Fibre Connection	Clerk	Some installation taken place but work on hold currently. BT full fibre order for OC placed.
2324 235 3	PC Historic Records	Clerk Cllrs Briant-Evans and Down	Work been done, report back when complete.
2425 005	Co-option of new councillors	Council	Cllrs. Down and Briant-Evans to work up advertisement
2324 250 2425 053	Lapford Play Facilities - To put together a plan of what is to be done with both the Playing Field, liaising on this with LYPFT, and play equipment	Clerk, District Chairman, Cllr. Keable, Cllr. Andrews and others	Order is sent & grant agreed, awaiting grant agreement from MDDC
2324 309	Orchard Centre work to be done a) Painting of toilet door b) Toilet handrail to be refurbished c) Cleanup of the outside of the Orchard centre and complete the		Youth equipment, liaise with LYPFT All tasks are pending for the time being

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Latest Minute ref	Issue/Action	Responsibility	Update
	<u>exterior painting</u> d) <u>Entrance into the Orchard Centre by the door can be slippery.</u> 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>		
2425 037	Highways – Road Wardens	Clerk & Cllr. Heal	<i>Equipment delivered & in storage Further Training be arranged with reference to Margaret Squires and DCT.</i>
2425 039	Footpaths	Chair & Clerk Cllr. Shapland	<i>Cllr. Shapland to be liaised with</i>
2425 040	Highways Additional outstanding jobs requiring completion	DCC	<i>Additional list sent to Margaret Squires, awaiting response.</i>
2425 175	Select List of Contractors – to draw up a list of people that can be contacted first when work needs to be done.	Clerk	<i>List to be drawn up from the Lookout and other local sources with request for hourly rates being made.</i>