

Lapford Parish Council meeting 9th September 2025

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**There was a meeting of Lapford Parish Council on Tuesday 9th September 2025
at 7.30 p.m. held in the Orchard Centre, Lapford.**

Members Present: Cllrs. Julie Down, Sue Briant-Evans, Roy Andrews, Bill Graham, Steven Fletcher,
District & County Cllr. Steve Keable.

Others: Five members of the public.

MINUTES

2526- APOLOGIES

122 Cllr. Peter Heal, Rob Martin (Clerk). No apologies were received from Cllr. Shapland.

2526- DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY)

123 There were no declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow public participation.

2526- PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

124

- Alex Gater enquired whether there was an update regarding the Council's letter to South West Water re the sewerage incident at Lapford Mill. Clerk has started looking at questions to present to SWW. Mel Stride MP visited and it was thought to be a worthwhile meeting. SWW believes itself not to be accountable and pressure is needed to get some customer service from them. Chair assured Alex that the Clerk will be on the case. **Action – Clerk.**
- A member of the public reported that he is chasing the insurance company over a claim for damage to his car by a Parish Councillor engaged on Parish Council work. This would come under the Church Green Trustees rather than Lapford Parish Council.
- The ownership of Lowerfield House has changed and therefore the Council will need to liaise with the new owners regarding the refurbishment of the yellow post box. Cllr. Graham will write to the new owners. **Action – Cllr. Graham.**
- The Council agreed some months ago to pay a £15 membership fee to the North Devon Line Rail Promotion Group but this has not been paid. Clerk to check and pay asap please. **Action – Clerk.**
- The bin in the Orchard Centre has been broken. Cllr. Fletcher suggested a replacement bin which can be attached to the wall at a cost of up to £50. Proposed Cllr. Briant-Evans, Seconded Cllr. Graham, All in favour. **Action – Cllr. Fletcher.**

2526- COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

125

A full report had been received from District and County Councillor Steve Keable and is attached to these minutes, along with a supplementary report from Cllr. Dechesne, Cabinet Member for Parish & Community Engagement.

Cllr. Keable explained that there were five Parish Council meetings that evening and he can only get to three, which is why he's not always able to attend but he re-iterated that the Council has good direct access if necessary.

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Devon County Council will support communities wishing to reduce speed limits down to 20mph and this may lead to the opportunity for match funding in the next financial year. Please could this item be added to a future agenda for consideration. **Action – Clerk.**

Cllr. Keable explained that there was a need for £160m to be pledged for Junction 28 of the M5 to allow the proposed development of 5,000 houses. The new increased housing targets cannot be achieved without this funding which will lead to more pressure locally. He further explained that the government is requiring a total of 1.5m new homes to be built nationwide. To bring a local perspective, MDDC had granted planning permission for over 2,000 homes by March 2024 but, of these, over 1,500 have not yet been started. He also reported that MDDC's Leisure Centres have been transformed and attendance has gone up exponentially.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting in line with Standing Orders.

2526- MINUTES 126

It was resolved to adopt the draft minutes of the last Parish Council meeting held on 12th August 2025. Proposed Cllr Briant-Evans, Seconded Cllr Fletcher, All in favour.

2526- ACTION LIST, CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE 127

- (a) Telephone kiosk – Cllr. Heal has the door. Cllr. Andrews will clean up this week and liaise with Cllr. Heal. **Action – Cllrs. Andrews & Heal.**
- (b) Footpaths – No update had been received. Please carry this item forward to next meeting. **Action – Clerk.**
- (c) Orchard Centre telephone. The Clerk does have this and will bring it to Lapford. **Action - Clerk.**
- (d) Planning Enforcement – Cllr. Keable reported that there was a breach of condition 2 of the planning permission for Eastmere Farm in that it was not built in accordance with the approved plans. This is down for a site visit which he will press. He enquired whether the Clerk or Parish Council had liaised with the Enforcement Officer and was told that no, the only approach had been via himself. Cllr. Keable explained that there is a rolling programme of approx. 350 breaches which are triaged as to the most serious. Neither Eastmere Farm nor Prospect Cottage is causing a danger. **Action – Cllr. Keable.**
- (e) Tourism signs – Cllr. Graham to explore this further. **Action – Cllr. Graham.**
- (f) Yellow post box – See 2526-124 above. Cllr. Graham to write to the new owners of Lowerfield House. **Action – Cllr. Graham.**
- (g) Concrete bin – Cllr. Heal and his son are dealing with this. **Action – Cllr. Heal.**
- (h) Removal of memorial bench from Lower Town Place to the small playing field – this has been done and is being used.
- (i) Overnight lorry parking in Orchard Way – Chair has spoken to a connection to the driver. It is only parked here when there is an early start close to Lapford, not on a regular basis. Driver has been requested to park on the other side of the road.

2526- FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES 128

- (a) HOLD. There will be an AGM in October which will be publicised in the Lapford Lookout. The issue of planning on the containers has gone through both HOLD and the Victory Hall Committee. The MDDC Planning Department has asked Cllr. Keable to pick this up with both organisations as permission has technically expired. These containers are used by lots of village organisations and by the Victory Hall for

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furniture storage. Both organisations agreed to seek renewal of the planning permission and advice is to be sought re appropriate screening. The Conservation Officer is hostile because of the impact on the view of the church but it has been pointed out that planning permission was previously given for eight houses and that the community has changed the derelict farmyard to bring back the vistas currently being enjoyed. If this facility were lost, it would have a massive impact on the Victory Hall which has not recovered since Covid and, if they were to be removed, the oil tank behind them would be a new visual eyesore. There are governance issues to be resolved before the Victory Hall can commit to various planned improvements but the first issue is to tackle planning permission for the containers.

2526- COMMITTEE REPORTS

- 129 (a) Celebrations Committee. This committee is no longer meeting.
(b) Lapford Emergency Action Plan Committee (LEAP). This Committee had not met since the last Parish Council meeting.

2526- CHURCH GREEN TRUST

- 130 Minutes of the meeting held on 12th August have been circulated and are attached to these minutes. The tree has now been removed and there has been confirmation that this was absolutely necessary. The trunk has been taken to the school where it is hoped that it will be enjoyed. Thanks were offered to Sam Down for his assistance.

2526- YOUTH PLAY FACILITIES

- 131 The Clerk had submitted the application for S.106 funds and a lot of additional information has been provided. This is now moving forward quite quickly.

2526- WEED CLEARANCE, ETC

- 132 No update received re the trial use of Jennychem.

2526- ORCHARD CENTRE REFURBISHMENT

- 133 The Chair had received a complaint about the state of the toilet which had been investigated and cleaned up very quickly. Cllr. Heal is to purchase a lockable commercial toilet roll holder. Cllr. Graham proposed we pay the cost of up to £300 delegated to Cllr. Heal, seconded Cllr. Down, All in favour. **Action – Cllr. Heal.**
There is currently no hot water due to vandalism and no way of drying hands. The Council has previously considered locking the toilet but it is very well used so they would prefer not to do this. Cllrs. Fletcher and Andrews to check the current situation after tonight's meeting. **Action – Cllrs. Fletcher and Andrews.**
The changes previously considered have been held in abeyance until there is confirmation of the ownership of the land outside the Orchard Centre, currently with the Clerk. The simplest way to progress this is with a lease or licence from MDDC which Cllr. Keable is happy to support. He will check the situation with Steve Densham. **Action – Cllr. Keable.**

2526- HIGHWAYS MATTERS

- 134 Cllr. Keable reported that there had been a flooding issue at the bottom of Orchard Way with water bursting through into Pope's Well House and Pope's Lane. There is documentary evidence that this has happened three times in three months. The drain is working but cannot take the volume. Cllr. Keable is to take this up with DCC. **Action – Cllr. Keable.**

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Cllr. Down reported that there had also been flooding issues at the bottom of Highfield.
Cllr. Graham reported that he now has a complete copy of SWW drawings for the village.
No further updates received re correspondence with Highways.

Cllr. Keable left the meeting.

2526- TIDY UP DAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER 2025

135 Various offers of cake were forthcoming. Insurance is in place and the Clerk has provided a risk assessment. Cllr. Down will provide tea and coffee and Cllr. Briant-Evans will supply milk and bin bags. Possible tasks include; sort and label the files in the Parish Council cupboard (Cllr. Briant-Evans), weed the car park, Orchard Centre toilet (Cllr. Heal), clean bus shelter on Industrial Estate (Cllr. Andrews will do prior as he is unable to attend), weeding (perhaps starting with Prospect Way), cleaning of signs, etc. **Action – All.**
The willow trees in Orchard Way need attention but these are not on Parish Council land. Responsibility is unknown. The left tree is potentially becoming unsafe. Cllr. Andrews to take pictures. Cllr. Down to write to MDDC Tree Officer and also check re cutting of the grass which MDDC used to do. Cllr. Down to include query re bungalows in Prospect Way with pictures and re Moorland View. She will also include notification of the bent sign in Church Close. **Action – Cllr. Down.**

2526- LAPFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

136 (a) The matter of the Conservation Area was originally raised by the NP group but is now with LPC as it is a management issue. The Council would like to know how the Conservation Area is managed and controlled. Clerk to request a meeting and walkabout with the Conservation Officer. **Action – Clerk.**
(b) We now have all drainage details for reference in case of further developments in the village.

2526- PLANNING MATTERS

137 (a) Rudge Rew. All in favour of supporting this application. Cllr. Down to write to MDDC in support. **Action – Cllr. Down.**
(b) No applications were received after the agenda was issued.
(c) Both decisions were noted.

2526- BANK RECONCILIATION AND RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS COMPARED WITH BUDGET

138 Clerk had provided a detailed reconciliation which is attached to these minutes. Cllr. Graham has carefully checked this and all appears to be in order.

2526- RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS SCHEDULE

139 The two payments to S. Hemsworth and RJ Martin were approved. Proposed Cllr. Graham, Seconded Cllr. Andrews, All in favour.

2526- CLERKING ISSUES

140 The Clerk is making good progress and is now doing paperwork but not yet up to attending meetings. He hopes to be well enough to attend the October meeting.

2526- MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR

141 None.

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2526- COUNCILLORS' REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

142

- (a) Cllr. Graham brought the clay tile which was a gift from France. It was agreed to hang this in the Orchard Centre and Cllr. Andrews will make a suitable bracket.

Action – Cllr. Andrews.

- (b) Cllr. Fletcher has researched a metal bin to be attached to the wall of the public toilet. Cllr. Down proposed a budget of £50, Seconded Cllr. Fletcher, All in favour. There is a need to liaise with Cllr. Heal regarding placement of bin and toilet holder. **Action – Cllr. Fletcher.**

- (c) There has been a request from Steve Munday for an agenda item next month to enable him to update Council on where we are with the railways. **Action – Clerk.**

2526- DATE OF NEXT MEETING

143

14th October 2025, Orchard Centre, 7.30pm. Cllr. Down gave her apologies.

2526- CLOSE OF MEETING

144

The meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.

