

Lapford Parish Council

Lapford Parish Council Meeting 16th December 2025

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

There was a meeting of Lapford Parish Council on Tuesday 16th December 2025 at 7.30pm held in the Orchard Centre, Lapford

Members Present: Cllrs Julie Down (Chairman); Sue Briant-Evans; Bill Graham; Peter Heal; Roy Andrews; Steven Fletcher.

Also Present: District & County Cllr. Steve Keable (From 8.15pm)

In attendance: Rob Martin (Clerk).

Others: Two members of the public.

MINUTES

2526-201 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence had been received from Cllr. Shapland due to attending a work appointment. This was accepted by the council.

2526-202 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY)

Cllr. Down declared a personal interest in planning application number 25/00828/FULL and would take no part in its consideration.

2526-203 COUNCILLOR COOPTION

Following a request by the chairman a councillor application form had been sent to an interested party but had not yet been received back.

It was agreed that another push for councillors would be discussed at the January meeting.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow public participation

2526-204 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION & UPDATES FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Alex Gater asked what correspondence there had been between the parish council and South West Water (SWW) regarding the sewage leaks he had experienced. He had complained to the Consumer Council for Water and received a response advising him to take them to court. Mel Stride MP had indicated that he would encourage SWW to reconsider but nothing further had been received.

The clerk reported that there was an ongoing exchange of emails with SWW asking for information on the sewage system and its maintenance within the parish which had so far been unsuccessful with SWW attempting to hide behind providing the minimum it is obliged to provide. This correspondence will continue.

2526-205 COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

a) Devon County Council



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b) Mid Devon District Council

District & County Cllr. Keable had circulated a summary of the position on the two outstanding planning enforcement matters at Prospect Cottage and Eastmere Farm which are both being assessed for possible further action following site visits.

On his arrival at the meeting, Cllr. Keable was given the opportunity to present the activities of the District and County Councils. He circulated hard copies of the December report and would ensure electronic copies were made available the next day.

He covered the various Devon Local Government Reorganisation proposals which had been submitted. The decision on which to adopt would be taken by government ministers sometime next year.

Cllr. Briant-Evans reported that a resident had experienced problems with an unruly dog had telephoned MDDC and been told there was no dog warden. Cllr. Keable was not aware that this was the case and the clerk confirmed there was a method for reporting such things on the MDDC website. Cllr. Briant-Evans would report this back.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting

2526-206 MINUTES

On a proposal by Cllr. Andrews, seconded by Cllr. Heal, it was **Resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11th November 2025.

2526-207 ACTION LIST, CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

To consider any outstanding matters on the attached Action List and decide how these are to be taken further. To receive the circulated report from the Clerk on action taken and correspondence received since the last meeting.

Correspondence

- The NDLRPG chairman had emailed the parish council outlining its aspirations for the future of the North Devon rail services. It was agreed that a group representative be invited to the February council meeting to highlight what input it can provide.
- District Cllr. Keable had emailed outlining how the increased housing requirement might impact the parishes on or near to the North Devon rail line, asking for input for the emerging Local Plan. This correspondence would be forwarded to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) for its consideration.
- An email from the NPSG Chairman indicated that he would be prepared to come to the January 2026 meeting to summarise progress to date. The NPSG Chairman would be invited to attend the next meeting.

Action List Items:

- **Update on Section 106 application**
The clerk had explained the current position regarding the youth play area and


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the relationship between the parish council and LYPFT requesting that the grant be sorted out as soon as possible. The S106 officer was thankful for this and was checking the legal aspects of the arrangements.

- **Phone Box Refurbishment**

This will be continued when the weather allows.

- **Enforcement Issues**

Dealt with under the District Cllr report above.

- **Tourism Signs**

Cllr. Graham would continue to pursue this.

- **Concrete Bin Disposal**

Cllr. Heal would continue to pursue this.

- **Weed Clearance**

To be dealt with in the new year.

- **SWW and sewage issues**

Dealt with in the Public Session above.

- **Land adjacent to the Orchard Centre**

Ongoing email correspondence with Steve Densham at MDDC had revealed that the Land Registry entries for the Orchard Centre (owned by LPC) and the Car Park (leased by LPC from MDDC) needed to be regularised. MDDC were also of the opinion that an exchange of letters would suffice to allow the parish council to use this land to do the necessary changes to the Orchard Centre without having to wait for legal documents to be in place. Waiting for the District Council legal team to get to this could delay matters a long time, particularly with Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon.

- **Orchard Centre Telephone**

The clerk would continue to pursue this.

- **Toddlers Play Area Lease**

The engrossed lease document had been received from the solicitors with detailed instructions on the signing process. Attached to the lease was a statement from the District Council that there was no right of renewal for the lease at the end of its 50-year period. A declaration by the parish council had to be made, before a Commissioner of Oaths, that it understood that this was the case. It was **agreed** that the parish clerk, as the council's adviser, would sign the declaration and arrange its endorsement. It was also **agreed** that, following the declaration, the lease would be signed by Cllrs Down and Briant-Evans and witnessed by the clerk.

2526-208 **FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES**

Cllr. Graham reported that the theme for next year's Revel would be 'Wild Lapford' to celebrate the village's wildlife.

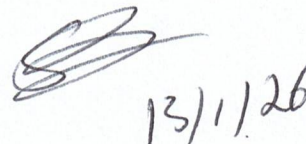
2526-209 **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- a) **Celebrations Committee**

No committee meetings had occurred since the last Parish Council.

- b) **Lapford Emergency Action Plan (LEAP) Committee.**

There had been no LEAP committee meeting since the last meeting and it was



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agreed that the activities of the group would regularly be reported in the Lookout.

2526-210 CHURCH GREEN TRUST FEEDBACK

There was no feedback affecting the parish council

2526-211 FOOTPATH REPAIRS

Work had been done to remove the old rotten gateposts and install two new gateposts at the entrance of the footpath at Park Meadow Close. In addition, DCC were going to pay a P3 grant of £160.00 for general maintenance.

2526-212 PLAY AREA INSPECTION REPORT

A ROSPA report had been received, commissioned by MDDC, which had covered both the Toddler site and the LYPFT site. Some work had been identified as being required on the older equipment which LYPFT were rectifying, but the parish council equipment had no risks identified within it.

Steve Densham of MDDC had arranged for some time for all of the equipment to be inspected regularly by MDDC, as part of the fulfilment of the role MDDC had in respect of the old equipment now removed and replaced by the parish council. The latest such inspection had revealed a potential problem with a bearing on one of the new items which the clerk would get rectified under the warranty with Kompan.

This left two matters to be resolved on the subject of inspections of both play areas.

- Firstly, the Annual ROSPA technical inspection and risk assessment process which was normally done during March each year had been arranged and paid for by MDDC, but this would now stop. The LYPFT had already notified ROSPA of its need to have the inspection and would make sure that it included both areas. The clerk would find out how much each element would cost either separately, or as one complete inspection and report back.
- Secondly, the clerk pointed out that for insurance risk avoidance purposes a visual check of the equipment and surrounding area should be undertaken regularly on a weekly or two-weekly basis. This was normally undertaken by a councillor (or clerk) with each visit and anything found recorded. This is what appears to be offered by MDDC showing a cost of £84 plus VAT (£50 for the second site) per visit. MDDC was asking whether they should continue these inspections and who was going to pay for them. The clerk would write to Steve Densham to clarify exactly what was on offer before arranging anything, as what had been supplied was not very clear.

2526-213 20 MPH SPEED LIMIT

There was a general belief that the tightness of village roads gave the impression that traffic was travelling faster than it was. A 20mph zone could be introduced in the village but there would be no enforcement available. Council discussed the installation of reactive speed signs in the village, but concern was expressed about how effective

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these would be particularly as they would cost £2,500 to £3,000 to install. This would be put to one side for the time being to consider other alternatives in the future.

2526-214 ORCHARD CENTRE PUBLIC TOILET VANDALISM

Continued vandalism had taken place again with a proposal by Cllr. Heal, seconded by Cllr. Fletcher it was **Resolved** to fit a padlock to the door to keep the vandals out during the night.

2526-215 HIGHWAYS MATTERS

The clerk confirmed that the list produced more than a year ago had been forwarded to County Cllr. Keable. Cllr. Graham believed that part of the planning permission granted for the houses at the bottom of the village included the provision of a pedestrian crossing over the A377. Cllr. Heal indicated that this was the case but would not have to be delivered until the site was sold and occupied.

A tree was hanging across the road into the village and was only held in place with a piece of webbing and looked dangerous. The clerk would inform the Community Highways Officer sending pictures supplied by Cllr. Briant-Evans.

2526-216 BUDGET & PRECEPT 2026/2027

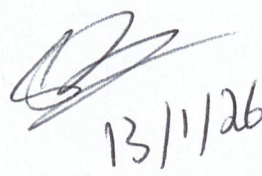
There was agreement that, following the parish council's decisions to install new play equipment, there was a need to replenish the General Reserve to at least 50% of the annual precept again, particularly because of the expected changes to its responsibilities arising from the Local Government Reorganisation as from 1st April 2027.

Two proposals for an increase in precept from the current £29,000 to £32,000 and £32,500 were not seconded. On a proposal by Cllr. Fletcher, seconded by Cllr. Graham, it was **Resolved** to set the precept for 2026/2027 at £33,000. The table below shows that although this results in an increase of 11.42% for a band D property, this amounts to just £8.23 for the whole year or £0.69 per month

Council Tax Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Fraction	3/9	5/9	7/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
LPC Precept	Household Precepts								
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	Increase
£33,000	26.77	44.62	62.46	80.31	98.16	116.00	133.85	160.62	11.42%
Annual Inc.	2.74	4.57	6.40	8.23	10.06	11.89	13.72	16.46	

2526-217 LAPFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The next Neighbourhood Plan Steering group meeting would be Saturday 10th January


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2026 and representatives would attend the next parish council meeting on 13th January 2026 to update the council.

2526-218 PLANNING MATTERS

a) APPLICATIONS NOTIFIED

The following applications were considered

Reference	Location	Proposal
25/01581/FULL	Rensley Lane Lapford	Erection of roof to provide cover to slurry store Decision: Support
25/01598/MFUL	Ellicombe Limited Solar Farm at NGR 274160 105292 Morchard Road	Variation of condition 1 of planning permission 15/01612/FULL (Variation of condition (1) of planning permission 12/01306/MFUL the solar pv facility shall cease to generate electricity on or before 28th March 2043) to allow for an extension to the cessation in the production of renewable energy for an indefinite period Decision: No Comment

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
25/01509/PNAG	Lower Eastington Farm Lapford Devon	Prior Approval for the construction of a slurry tank	Prior Approval Not Required
25/00828/FULL	Filleigh Barton Lapford	Conversion of redundant building to dwelling	Full Planning Permission

2526-219 BANK RECONCILIATION AND RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS COMPARED WITH BUDGET

On a proposal by Cllr. Graham, seconded by Cllr. Fletcher, it was **Resolved** to adopt the bank reconciliation and budget comparison document for the period ended 30th November 2025.


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2526-220 RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS SCHEDULE

On a proposal by Cllr. Graham, seconded by Cllr. Andrew, 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.
2025/2026				
S Hemsworth	Salary	Dec 25	65.82	2526-27
RJ Martin	Salary	Dec 25	550.50	2526-27
HMRC	Tax Deductions	Dec 25	154.00	2526-27
HMRC	National Insurance	Dec 25	40.66	2526-27
Everflow	OC Sewage & Water	Oct/Nov 2025	0.00	DD
BT Group Ltd	OC Broadband	Dec 25	55.63	DD
IONOS	Village Website Hosting	Dec 25	44.59	DD
Adobe	Acrobat Professional	Dec 25	19.97	DD
Lloyds Bank	Service Charge	Dec 25	4.25	DD
Valda Energy	Orchard Centre Electricity	Nov 2025	57.61	DD
Valda Energy	Orchard Centre Electricity	Dec 2025	78.59	DD
John Cockram Christmas Trees	Tree for Village Green	29/11/2025	80.00	2626-28
RJ Martin	Dropbox Annual Fee	02/12/2025	95.88	2526-28
Starboard Systems Limited	Scribe Annual Fee	01/01/2026	489.60	2526-29
S Leach Property Maintenance	Install Gateposts	PROW	310.00	2526-29
Roy Andrew	Christmas Lights	Homeleigh GC	59.97	2526-29

RECEIPTS

Receipt from	Services	Amount £	Method
2025/2026			
Devon County Council	PROW P3 Grant	160.00	BC

2526-221 MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR



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The chairman raised the question of the SWW antenna attached to the Orchard Centre and when income could be expected from that. The clerk said that it was something organised without much input from him and Cllr. Fletcher believed that Stacey Lumsdon may have organised this and the clerk would contact her to find out what the situation was.

The chairman also attended the school nativity performances which were very good.

2526-222 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

Cllr. Briant-Evans reported that people continued to experience difficulty with the van parked at the top of Highfield. The clerk indicated that this was potentially a matter of highway obstruction and the best advice is for those affected to contact the police non-emergency number (101) and report their concerns.

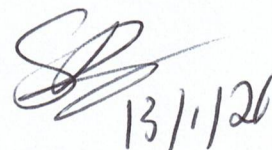
Cllr. Fletcher reported on the bus route changes caused by a road closure. Cllr. Keable clarified that this was a timetabling change within the Stagecoach contract which meant that both Chawleigh and Lapford were affected and that contact needed to be made with the transport team at DCC to get a variation to the contract made.

2526-223 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Parish Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 7.30pm in the Orchard Centre.

2526-224 CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed at 9.45pm


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Ref	Issue/Action	Responsibility	Update
	Orchard Centre Adjacent Land	Clerk/MDDC	MDDC Lease to be drawn up. Continue correspondence with MDDC until conclusion reached
	Toddlers Play Area Lease Still with MDDC legal team to get sorted out.	Clerk/MDDC	MDDC Lease and declaration to be signed and sent to solicitors
	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	MDDC have conducted site visits and conclusions are awaited.
	Ash Dieback To encourage DCC to consider notifying residents of the danger to the highway	Clerk/DCC	DCC Highways List with SK
	Highways	Clerk/DCC	DCC Highways List with SK
	Neighbourhood Plan	Parish Council	Community Data research has been completed. Feedback from 10 January 2025 meeting to be available.
	Telephone Box Make safe for use as book swap area.	Cllrs. Heal, Andrews	This had been washed clean and repaired ready to be rubbed down before being painted
	Co-option of new councillors	Council	There are still three vacancies Another push for candidates at January meeting
	Youth Play Equipment Section 106 application The clerk had applied for the Section 106 funding available for the Youth Equipment and had received a response requesting more information. He would undertake to get what he could returned to MDDC as quickly as possible.	Clerk, District Chairman, Cllr. Keable, Cllr. Andrews and others	Once application for Section 106 is actioned, order play equipment. Section 106 staff awaiting response from the legal team.


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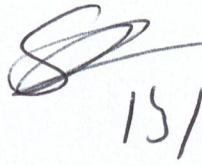
Ref	Issue/Action	Responsibility	Update
	Youth Play Equipment Additional requests	Clerk	<i>Liaise with LYPFT on whether and how the request could be fulfilled.</i>
	Orchard Centre a) <u>Painting of toilet door</u> b) <u>Toilet handrail to be refurbished</u> c) <u>Cleanup of the outside of the Orchard centre and complete the exterior painting</u> d) <u>Entrance into the Orchard Centre by the door can be slippery.</u> 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>	Councillors	<i>All tasks are pending for the time being</i>
	Road Wardens	Clerk & Cllr. Heal	<i>Further Training be arranged</i>
	Footpaths Overgrown Footpaths	Chair & Clerk Cllr. Shapland	<i>Some work done & Cllr. Shapland to be liaised with</i>
	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>
	Tourism Signs To consider the possibility and cost of providing such signs for local businesses	Cllr. Graham	<i>Cllr. Graham would look at these as soon as he could.</i>
	Concrete Bin Disposal To remove the unsightly concrete bin next to the A377	Cllr. Heal	<i>Cllr. Heal would be looking at this.</i>
	Village Maintenance Cleaning of signs To be arranged.	Cllrs Heal & Down	<i>Deferred until Spring</i>
	Village Maintenance Weed Clearance	Cllr. Graham	<i>Cllr. Graham undertook to look at potential contractors to use acceptable sprays</i>
	SWW and sewage issues	Clerk	<i>Respond again to SWW</i>


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Ref	Issue/Action	Responsibility	Update
	Orchard Centre Telephone	Clerk	<i>The telephone had been purchased and was installed but was still not working. The clerk would contact BT once again to sort this out</i>
	20 mph Speed Limit To investigate the potential and resultant cost of providing 20mph signs in the village	Cllr. Down	<i>Now dropped</i>
	Tarka Line To confirm that Steve Munday continues to be the parish council representative on the two organisations	Clerk	<i>Clerk has written, no response to date</i>
	Local Government Reorganisation To consider the potential effect on the parish of the implementation of the proposals to introduce a Unitary Authority to replace DCC and MDCC	Clerk	<i>To be actioned</i>
	Christmas Tree To arrange a tree for placement on the Village Green	Cllr. Andrew	<i>Christmas Tree ordered and delivered.</i>
	Budget & Precept 2026/2027 To consider what might be necessary for the period ending 31 st March 2027 and setting a budget and precept appropriately, whilst ensuring that there are sufficient reserves to cover unexpected eventualities.	Clerk	<i>Precept for 2026/27 set at £33,000</i>
New	Play Area Inspections To sort out what regime of inspections is necessary both for the annual ROSPA Risk Assessment and week to week visual checks.	Clerk/LYPFT	<i>To find out from Steve Densham is meaning and put something in place for the future.</i>
New	Dangerous Tree The tree identified is considered to be a danger to motorists as it is hanging over the highway and only secured by webbing.	Clerk	<i>DCC Highways This to be added to the list and sent to DCC and SK</i>
New	South West Water Antenna The antenna has been installed on the Orchard Centre since May 2024 but no income has been received for it	Clerk	<i>To contact Stacey in the first instance for any paperwork and sort out the potential income flow.</i>


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