

AYLESBEARE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Aylesbeare Parish Council held in the Foxwell Room at Aylesbeare Village Hall on **Wednesday 3rd September 2025** at 7:15pm.

PRESENT

Cllr Anna Thompson (Chair)
Cllr Mark Branson (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Tracie Cooke
Cllr Debbie Banks

[called away as first responder at 7:10pm, returned at 7:57pm]

Cllr Nick Warren

ABSENT

Cllr Jacky Owen

IN ATTENDANCE: Nine members of the public

County & District Cllr Jess Bailey *[from 7:28pm]*

Jim Roberts (Clerk and RFO)

1 Chair's remarks

Cllr Thompson opened the meeting and gave the following report:

I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer.

It was good to see the fruits of everyone's labours at the annual flower and produce show last weekend, where the number of entries was up again with lots from people who hadn't entered previously.

We ended the day with a very nice meal in Villa Verde – good to see this seems to be thriving. Hopefully everyone will continue to support it, particularly as they listened to local people and are very happy for people to just visit for a drink, and have reinstated the quiz nights.

We've seen lots of roadworks and infrastructure repairs particularly to the B3184 and the high voltage power lines. As ever, there is more to do, some of which we have on our agenda.

You may have seen that the new town has been named Marcombe after a public vote. Its unfortunate that there was no such public vote on whether this was the right location for up to 8,000 new homes, given the issues with sewerage, flooding, NHS resources and transport.

You will also be aware that work has started on the Ford Oaks Solar Farm. Cllr Warren and I attended a meeting this week with Infinis – more on that later.

A meeting was scheduled this morning about the Exeter Council Unitary plans but was abandoned, frustratingly, due to technical issues. Again this is on our agenda.

Don't forget the event here at the village hall this Friday evening – tickets are still available.

Finally, a reminder of the public emergency alert test this Sunday at 3pm.

Mobile phones will vibrate and make a loude, siren-like sound. You can opt out of these alerts but you are advised not to.

2 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Owen could not attend as she is on holiday. Council **RESOLVED** to accept the reasons given.

3 Declarations of Interests in items on the agenda

None.

.....
Chair
Initials

4 Open Public Forum

The first speaker was the owner of Shutebridge (25/1087/PDQ) and advised the following points:

The buildings are redundant and unusable for modern agriculture. Access to the new development is not along Shutebridge Farm lane.

The access along the lane the not going on the Shutebridge Farm Lane

The stream passing behind the site and the Old Shutebridge Farmhouse does not flood and has never done so in living memory.

The site address has been corrected and Old Shutebridge Farmhouse is the nearest property.

The second & third speakers own land adjacent to the Shutebridge site and have no issues with the application and it currently looks horrendous and it would be much nicer with houses developed there.

Chair advised that the Council is concerned that no reference had been made in the application to the expected number of cars that the new properties would generate.

The fourth speaker commented on the overgrowth of vegetation throughout the village.

He keeps his own area clear and hoped that others would do the same. He advised of

DCC Highways Self-Help and Road Warden scheme and he offered take on the

voluntary role. He hopes to make the village look better. The Council welcomed the

offer and gave a round of applause. The clerk explained the process of Chapter 8

training etc (of which the volunteer was well aware) and the clerk will help with any

training, materials or tools needed.

The fifth speaker expressed concern about congestion on Marwood Road/Lane now

that the Ford Oaks Solar project had begun. The speaker noted there were 300 lorry

loads of gravel and the developers should have consulted the local residents. Neither

DCC nor EDDC nor the developer were interested and the road was blocked before

any action was taken, and this had to be initiated by residents.

The Chair advised that she had met Infinis (the developers) and raised issues A lorry

driver has been forbidden from site for ignoring the rules. The local drivers are the

worst as they know the local roads and consider they know the best route.

The second speaker did say it lorry movements were very organised.

[One member public left at 7:48pm]

The sixth speaker gave an account of the bus meeting these lorries and having to take avoiding action and being held up for a significant length of time.

The second and third speaker raised the issue of change of use of a 1970s barn in a neighbouring parish that has not been used for agricultural purposes for 40 years. It is

used for general clutter and the associated sign business. The speakers saw the

application as sheer hypocrisy given the response of the owner of the site to their

earlier applications (which included a judicial review). The speakers advised that as

part of the application trees will be felled and there is insufficient space to turn vehicles

in front of the sheds. Flood defences in the lane aren't correct as the lane still floods.

George CaThe farmer who owns the field opposite has been clearing the

pipes/culverts but it was filled with grass cuttings. The pipe was rodded to a 6' limit

and the farmer asked to go on the owner's land to try and clear it. This was

aggressively refused. The result of the applicant's actions is that water is stopped

from leaving the highway.

The second speaker raised the issue of the Church bells not being rung.

The costs of repairs to the Church have been scoped and they have

advised that the bells cannot be rung due to the weakening of the oak

frame and the ironwork in the walls supporting the frame is rusting.

There's nobody to fund the £250,000 needed but £18,000 has been

.....
Chair
Initials

raised. The third speaker said the bellringers are very disappointed that they can't continue.

[Cllr Banks returned at 7:57pm, 2 member sof the public left at 8:06pm]

5 Minutes

Council **RESOLVED** to approve minutes of 2nd July 2025 and the Chair duly signed them.

6 Report of the County and District Councillor

D & C Cllr Bailey reported the following:

Exeter City Council proposes a larger area around the city as a Unitary council under the Local Government Review (LGR). There is a live consultation in progress. D&C Bailey has many concerns about the taking over of 28 East Devon Parishes & Towns and encourages the public to let ECC know what they think.

EDDC Carbon Action Plan for Businesses and Community groups has grants available from September. The main beneficiary she knows of have received funding for solar panels, other examples of successful grants (and application details) are on the website.

D & C Cllr Bailey is concerned that Planning Inspectors are increasingly waving things through under pressure from the Government.

There is a Local Plan meeting this week and EDDC hopes to get the Plan in place under transitional arrangements. One site in Exmouth will provide 700 new homes, but if this site was removed it will mean 4000 new homes will be needed during the life of the Plan. There is a full DCC meeting tomorrow with many motions.

[1 member of the public left at 8:15pm]

7 Parish Matters

7.1 Water Leak/Pothole Scotchmead

Cllr Warren reported that there were two ponds that had been filled in that cause the issue. One had been repaired, but not the others. There are springs that fed the ponds, hence the leaking throughout the dry summer, and a drain would be needed. Council asked the clerk to contact the Neighbourhood Highways Officer for a site visit.

7.2 Parking in Scotchmead

The pavement is made unusable by the parking and vehicles regularly block the turning point, Footpath 14 and the post box. Council is concerned about Fire Brigade access. Cllr Bailey will check with the Highways Officer and seek an Enforcement Officer. Council discussed Scotchmead car park and its surface and lighting. Council will inspect and report back to D & C Cllr Bailey.

7.3 Telephone Kiosk

Council will seek a report from Cllr Owen at the next meeting.

[3 members of the public left at 8:26pm]

7.4 Community Infrastructure Levy Receipts

Council now has £5,137.45 in Community Infrastructure Levy and will consider where it can be best spent. Council will check the playpark first and see what needs doing.

7.5 Restoration of the River Otter

Council has received details of a campaign to restore the River Otter, particularly the lower reaches. SWW will not do anything before 2030. Council encourages everyone to support this project and details can be found on the Otter Valley Association's website (<https://www.ova.org.uk/>) or by searching social media for #ReviveTheRiverOtter.

Aylesbeare storm tank overflowed at the end of August. Clerk to ask SWW why it's discharging at the end of a dry 6 weeks.

..... Chair Initials

7.6 Parish Scheme of Allowances

This follows a report from EDDC that the allowances for Town and Parish Councillors match the EDDC rules. Cllrs emphasised that they did not want any payment for their public service no matter how long they have to spend on Parish matters.

7.7 Exeter Unitary Council Plans

Chair gave a summary of the Devolution White Paper and the Local Government Reorganisation. The District and County Councils will be removed across the country. Plymouth and Torbay are already unitary Councils. All parishes, towns and boroughs will be in a new council structure on 1 April 2028.

There are several proposals for Devon, one of which is Exeter City Council's proposal to include 28 Town and Parish council areas in an Exeter-based Unitary Council.

Plymouth has a larger proposal to expand, Torbay wants to expand. The 1 – 5 -4 proposals cover amalgamating existing District Councils up to North Devon.

Council has invited ECC to come and discuss their proposals to the local public.

All unitary proposals have to be in by November and the Government will consult in the Spring. The Chairs Report is attached at Appendix A.

8 Planning and Consultation

8.1 Decision

8.1.1 Appeal APP/3353886 (23/2422/FUL)

Land behind Great Halls New dwelling APPEAL ALLOWED

Council **NOTED** the appeal and the granting of Planning Permission. The conditions included tree protection, no burning, no trees shrubs or hedges to be felled, construction management plans to be submitted to the LPA, 0800-1800M-F, 0800-1300 Sats not Sundays BH, improvements to the roads.

8.2 Application

8.2.1 [25/1545/FUL](#) **Beautiport Farm, Marwood Rd** Livestock building extension Council **RESOLVED** to make no comment on this application.

8.3 Appeal

8.3.1 [APP/3371346](#)

Land And Buildings At Barton Farm Village Way Two dwellings (25/0456/FUL)

Council **RESOLVED** to add no further comments to their support.

8.3.2 [25/1528/PDR](#) **Linhayes, Farringdon EX5 2JE** Change of use to storage Further to the urgent concerns expressed in the Public Forum above Council **RESOLVED** to make the following comments on this application that affects many Parish residents:

Aylesbeare Parish Council has been advised that there has been no agricultural activity at this property for 40 years.

The Council is concerned about vehicle movements because of the constraints both within the site and access to and from. There has been no highway survey for the visibility splay width. Aylesbeare Parish Council is concerned about the increased traffic movements with change of use as the lane is narrow with sharp bends and difficult access onto the B3184 with restricted visibility.

There are well-documented flooding issues in that length of the lane in part caused by lack of maintenance by the landowner.

There is no SUDS strategy or water attenuation to cope with the run-off from the new hardstanding proposed and widened access will necessarily reduce the biodiversity with the loss of trees and hedging.

[Cllr Banks left at 9:15 to hand over her First Responder kit]

8.4 Consultation

8.4.1 Devon Communities Resilience Forum

Unfortunately no Councillors can attend this event on 22nd September due to other commitments.

.....
Chair
Initials

9 Ford Oaks Solar Park

9.1 Meeting with FOSP

The Chair & Cllr Warren attended a meeting with Infinis who are overseeing the contractor (Ethical Power). The Chair read her report of the meeting which is attached at appendix B

9.2 Marker Stone

Council is urgently seeking photos and other evidence of the marker stone's existence in its original location as it seems to have disappeared.

10 Finance

10.1 Current balances

Council **NOTED** the current balance of £ 19,233.59.

10.2 Quarterly Budget Review

Council postponed this item to the next meeting.

10.3 Payments Council **RESOLVED** to make the following payments:

10.3.1 Vision ICT Website and email invs 20478 & 20670	£ 230.80
10.3.2 PKF Littlejohn LLP Ext Auditor Professional Fees	£ 474.00
10.3.3 J P Roberts - clerk pay, (July & August)	£ 581.67
Reimbursements: Pension payment for (July & Aug)	£ 191.92
VH Internet Cuckoo Fibre (July & August)	£ 35.00
10.3.4 HMRC Clerk's PAYE Income Tax for July & August	£ 808.57
	£ 142.40

11 Next Meeting - Wednesday 1st October 2025

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:50pm thanking everyone for their attendance and hard work.

Signed
Cllr A Thompson, Chair

Date

Appendix A Chair's Report on Local Government Reorganisation

Report on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation proposals

Key points:

The Government wants to transfer more power and spending from Whitehall to communities and, on December 16, 2024, published its [English Devolution White Paper](#) which described how it intended to do this.

It plans to develop strategic authorities across England, with councils working together under these, to deliver improvements to things like transport networks, skills and employment support, housing and the environment. The white paper is seeking to devolve more powers to local areas (devolution) and simplify the local government structure (Local Government Reorganisation).

Devolution and Reorganisation are 2 separate issues.

LGR is the process in which the structure and responsibilities of local authorities are reconfigured. The Government plans to move away from the current two-tier system of district and county councils which are in place in some parts of Devon.

Two-tier councils would be combined to become unitary councils which deliver all council public services in those areas, and those unitary councils would work together under strategic authorities, led by elected Mayors. For most areas this will mean creating councils with a population of 500,000 or more. The Government will make final decisions on reorganisation on a case-by-case basis. **This will happen. There are no exceptions.**

Current structure:

1. Parish and town councils
2. District/city and borough councils -Devon has eight second-tier authorities. These are Exeter City Council, Mid Devon District Council, East Devon District Council, North Devon District Council, Torridge District Council, Teignbridge District Council, West Devon Borough Council and South Hams District Council.
3. County councils
4. Unitary authorities -Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council

All current councils will be dissolved and the new set-up will be in place by 1st April 2028

All councils have been asked to put forward proposals in a White Paper issued in Dec 2024. There is now a data hub for Devon so they are now all sharing data and information. Business cases are now being written up and they are all in the engagement period. This is different from the consultation period, which is Government -led and will happen next spring. Govt will decide which proposals meet the criteria. Options are expanded unitaries, like Exeter and Plymouth, the NE/SW model, the SW/NE model or the 1,4,5 model
East Devon District Council is championing the creation of a powerful South West Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). The proposed MSA would replace the existing Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority.



Locally, East Devon seems to be favouring the 1,4,5 model. Aylesbeare would fall under the '5'. Exeter have backed a different option
<https://committees.exeter.gov.uk/documents/s98437/APPENDIX%20A%20-%20Exeter%20City%20Council%20Interim%20Submission%20FINAL.pdf>

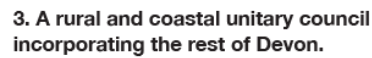
.....
Chair
Initials

(ACT attended a webinar on 3/9/25 which was abandoned for technical reason and is being reconvened tba. An individual session was held with Lorraine Betts from Exeter City Council.)

Our proposal for local government reorganisation in Devon recommends the creation of new unitary councils to improve services, strengthen identity and boost economic growth throughout the county.

1. An urban unitary council, based on the city of Exeter and surrounding area.

2. An urban unitary council, based on the city of Plymouth and adjacent Parishes.



A new unitary council for Exeter and the surrounding area would reflect Exeter's position as a major urban hub with strengths in housing growth, knowledge economy, innovation, education, climate science and transport connectivity.

A data-driven approach has been used to develop the proposal which has a key focus on community identity and cohesiveness.



**Find out more
and have your say**



Scan here to take part
and make sure your voice
is heard or visit
Exeter.gov.uk/LGR

Page | 7

Appendix B Chair's meeting with Infinis about Ford Oaks Solar Park

On Monday 1st September 2025 Cllr Bailey, Cllr Warren and Cllr Thompson met with Colette Flynn (Community Relations Manager) and Adam (?) from Infinis, the company building the new solar farm. The principal contractor is Ethical Power. The contact will take place over 52 weeks.

They confirmed that the start was delayed by the large number of planning conditions which had to be fully complied with prior to commencement.

Evidently a road condition survey was completed (witnessed by Den County Highways) some time ago, although they were unable to provide further information. Due to the time elapsed, a further condition survey will be carried out imminently.

Items discussed:

1. The alleged removal of a historic marker stone adjacent to entrance 31. Anyone with further information on the description, location and relevant dates or images is asked to contact Infinis.
2. The attitude and behaviour of some of the lorry drivers. It was confirmed that the convoy system is not yet in place, but this will run on an ad-hoc basis rather than at set times. The convoys will be escorted and should follow the agreed one -way system. They have been told to avoid peak traffic times of 8-9am and 5-6pm. They were advised that this does not cover the peak traffic times and is not realistic. It does not cover school run times or commuting patterns.
3. They were also advised of the road use by horses and cyclists.
4. Infinis had noted a spike in complaints over the first couple of weeks but said these had reduced and that driver behaviour had improved. Some had had to be reminded of the approved routes. One has been red-carded and will no longer be allowed to make deliveries. Most haulage companies being used, e.g. for aggregate deliveries, are local. They agreed to speak to all suppliers and convoy vehicles re. speed, courtesy and passing other vehicles.
5. The provision of extra signage. A suggestion was made that the contact phone number could be added to the signage. Additional signage was requested at all of the junctions onto the B3180 advising no solar farm traffic, apart from the approved route to the site.

Community funds:

A survey was previously carried out by Devon Together. Infinis has now appointed Grant Scape to manage the allocation and distribution of community funds. A sub-committee will be set up by Aylesbeare PC, comprising interested parties. Currently, it is likely that these will include the church, the parish council for enhancements to the play park, and the village hall. Grant Scape will contact Aylesbeare PC in due course. Total funding will be in the region of £93,000.

Other groups/projects may be considered for capital and revenue projects, but there are strict criteria for eligibility. The available funding will be split between Marsh Green/Rockbeare and Aylesbeare and will reflect the impact on these communities.

Infinis is also involved with Megawatt, who deliver STEM activities to schools, etc. They have approached West Hill School and Rockbeare School. It was suggested that they also approach the Kings School.

It was agreed that a pinned post will be added to the Aylesbeare Buzz Facebook page with contact details for any complaints. (AT to contact Will)

It was agreed that an update should be sent for inclusion in Topics each month until the completion of the project. (Colette to be sent Helen's email address).

Colette has been invited to the September and October Parish Council meetings but is unfortunately unable to attend.

She can be contacted via email Colette.flynn@infinis.com

Or email communityengagement@infinis.com or call 07767341264

Further information about the project can be found here

<https://fordoakssolarpark.co.uk/>

[Read the traffic management plan here](#)

.....
Chair
Initials