

Merton Parish Council

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Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8th September 2025 at 7.30pm at The Clinton Hall.

Cllrs. Present: Cllr. Littleales (chair) Cllr. McLaughlan (V. Chair), Cllr. Papworth, Cllr. Kops. Cllr. Tagg

Also present: District Cllr. Wheatley, Clare James, Clinton Devon Estates, Member of the public, Kerry Littleales (clerk)

Business Transacted

1. Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and informed everyone that a recording was taking place to assist in the preparation of the minutes which would be deleted once the minutes had been drafted.

2. Apologies for Absence

Cllr. Nancekivell – short notice due to unexpected issues at work.

County Cllr. Cottle-Hunkin

Notice of resignation of Cllr. Dilley noted by Cllrs.

3. Minutes of the last meeting – available on the website (chair)

Cllr. Papworth proposed that the minutes of the last meeting dated 15th July 2025 be signed as a true and accurate record. Seconded Cllr. McLaughlan

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Signed as a correct record 

4. Declarations of Interests

No declarations made.

5. Public speaking time

MOP raised issue with the Recycling lorries from Torridge District Council That the litter is being spread around the lanes as the doors are not being closed as the lorry moves around. Issue raised to District Cllr. Wheatley who stated that this matter was recognised as an issue and that it had been raised with the manager. Cllr. Wheatley to carry this matter forward.

Clare James, Clinton Devon Estates gave a presentation on the estate, what it is involved with, ongoing and upcoming projects, housing, and community.

6. County/District Councillors

a) County Cllr. Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin – not able to attend but sent in a report – attached.

b) District Cllr. Chris Wheatley – had previously sent in a written report – read by all Cllrs. No questions.

7. Current and New Business

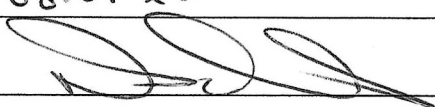
a) White bags in square – sent over to the next meeting

b) Extra benches – not on asset register though a note in an old one noting that a bench had been placed at Clinton Gardens. Discussion around the 3 unregistered benches – at Path besides Coldstream Gardens, the corner of Back Lane and the Verge in Bounsells Lane. Cllr Littleales proposed that all 3 be added to the Asset Register for monitoring as 2 of them had been donated (noted in previous minutes) but that they should not in the future be replaced. Seconded Cllr. McLaughlan. Cllr. Papworth offered to tell Mr and Mrs Weeks about the decision.

Noted that the benches in the Square had been removed due to them having deteriorated beyond repair. Motion Cllr. Littleales to not replace. All Cllrs. agreed.

c) Ownership of Clinton Hall notice board – not on any old asset register or in any purchase spreadsheet. Clinton Hall contacted, and they have no

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record of the council purchasing or paying towards the notice board. Agreement made with the Hall for the council to use it for Parish notices.

d) Drainage in the Square – Cllr. Kops reported that he has now fixed fine drain/strainer to the hole to stop the needles from trees going through. Cllr. Papworth raised again the issue of the door in the wall that is causing a problem. Cllr. Kops asked that if the entire wall is being rebuilt, that we could look again at the drain. Cllr. Littleales offered to raise with the Vicar Martin Warren this issue.

e) Lord Clinton memorial – take over to next meeting but just waiting for a picture to be sent by the estate.

f) S106 monies - now being managed by Cllr. Littleales and clerk. Quotes for a Shelter applied for. To be updated at next meeting. Cllr. Tagg volunteered to help with connecting with the younger people of the village for their opinions once the quotes have been received and we are ready to proceed.

g) EMR- review of current funds – Cllr. discussed the EMR and wanting notes alongside the items to indicate costs or replacements and how to budget this each year. TAP fund and Hall hire to go into General Fund. Precept contingency to go into the General Reserve as does the staff costs and training and Administration. Asset fund is for replacing laptop, printers etc Cllr. Littleales proposed changes, Seconded Cllr. Tagg – motion followed.

h) Xmas tree festival – want to do this again. Christmas trees and boards need purchasing again alongside batteries. Cllrs. agreed in principle to going ahead. Quotes for next meeting please.

i) Grass cutting contract/grass cutting at playground – Dave has quoted £30.00 for cutting the grass and strimming etc per cut on a weekly basis or as needed. The village grass is being cut in the village by Steve Jennings. To approach Steve and ask for quotes to do the playground as well – Cllr. Littleales.

j) Policies update –

MPC 09 anti-fraud - Motion to renew as it is Cllr. Littleales, Seconded Cllr. McLaughlan. Carried

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MPC10 Conf Report - Motion to renew Cllr. Littleales, seconded Cllr. Papworth. Carried

MPC 17 Cllr. Email and own devices – change as Data Protection Act has been superseded by newer legislation and it prohibits Cloud Storage which needs removing. Also noted that Cllrs. should not be using their personnel emails for council business. Proposed changes Cllr. Littleales, seconded Cllr. McLaughlan. Carried.

MPC 18 Removable media – just say removeable media, remove floppy discs etc. Proposed Cllr. Littleales, seconded Cllr. Kops. Carried.

MPC24 – Grant Policy - Cllr. McLaughlan had researched other areas policies and agreed that as a Council we need to know the financial status of the organisation asking for a grant. It was noted that our current form does not ask if certain funds are reserved for preplanned matters and therefore not available to spend by the organisation. Also noted that these matters can go into Part 2 if sensitive. Cllr. Littleales proposed document stands with amendment for allocation of specific funds query. Seconded Cllr. Papworth motion carried with abstention by Cllr. McLaughlan.

MPC25 Staff Appraisal - all good. Proposed Cllr Littleales. Seconded Cllr. Papworth

k) Kompan quote and Kompan report . Quote – accepted by Councillors for next years inspections. Prop Cllr. Littleales, Seconded Cllr. Tagg. Carried

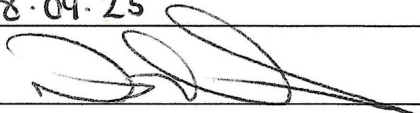
Report shows us as green still though with some works needing doing, TK play still haven't carried out works from the last inspection – and have offered to catchup with the further issues found in the latest report free of charge unless something is more difficult than thought. Proposed Cllr. Littleales, seconded by Cllr. Tagg. Carried.

Cllr Tagg raised issue of cigarettes littering the table during the dog event at the hall. To notify Michelle Stacey of this matter.

8.Financial Matters (Clerk)

a) to review Bank reconciliation (bank reserves against statement) - conducted by Cllr. Kops and McLaughlan

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b) To conduct banking checks (payments made against bank statement between 15th July and 2nd September 2025) conducted by Cllr. Kops and McLaughlan

c) Budget review – conducted and Cllrs. asked for a comments section on the budget report.

9. Future Agenda Items

Air Ambulance – 205 incidents in July – Cllr. Papworth thought it was worth noting that they are working hard for us.

Allotments – Cllr. Papworth queried the asking of Clinton Devon if there was any land – Cllr. Littleales asked as a private resident not as a Cllr.

10. Confirmation of next meeting date

Monday 10th November 2025 at 7.30pm at the Clinton Hall.

Further meetings on 10th November, 12th Jan 2026 and 11th March 2026.

Meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

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