

Merton Parish Council

www.merton.com

clerk@mertondevon.com

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 12th January 2026 at The Clinton Hall.

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

Also present: D.Cllr. Chris Wheatley, 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. Cottle-Hunkin – committed elsewhere. Apologies accepted.

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

Cllr. Littleales asked that the minutes of the last meeting dated 10th November 2025 be signed as a true and accurate record. Proposed Cllr. Kops, seconded Cllr. Nancekivell. Motion carried.

4. Declarations of Interests

Cllr. Littleales declared an interest in the Grass cutting contract.

5. Public speaking time

2 members of the public attended and introduced themselves as new business owners in the Parish.

Minutes of meeting held on 12-01-2026

Signed as a correct record 

6. County/District Councillors

a) DCllr. Wheatley provided a report for Council which was sent to Councillors prior to the meeting and Cllr. Wheatley highlighted certain points within this report for further discussion. He also asked the Parishioners continue to report any issues with litter from the Bin lorries to be reported to Torridge District Council. This report can be found on the website.

b) CCllr. Cottle-Hunkin was unable to attend and provided a report which is to be found on the website.

7. Current and New Business

a) Drainage in The Square and recent e mail from Mrs Connie Coleman. All Councillors confirmed they had read the e mail and had sight of the hand drawn maps. Cllr. McLaughlan asked if the Probation service could revisit for another clean. Cllr. Littleales reported that the Probation Service have experienced significant cuts and they were unlikely to come out to us in the near future. Cllr. Tagg reported that he had been checking our drains and clearing them of debris regularly this Autumn and Winter so far to ensure there is not a lot of debris going through. Cllr. Kops questioned whether the Water company had adopted the drains and that this was something that needed to be explored. Cllr. Littleales reported that there is still an issue in the corner of The Square where the water is puddling and that he had contacted Sam Percival who is a Specialist Heritage and Conservation Surveyor recommended by TDC Conservation Officer for our listed land, who can look at the drainage issue and water management within The Square and may be able to advise on the further drainage in Moorview. Cllr. Littleales had been unable to find any other company suitable for the inspection. Mr Percival provided a quote of £85 per hour with an expectation of 3 – 4 hours for the initial inspection. Cllr. Kops proposed that the inspection is approved and that £500.00 is put aside from the Village Maintenance EMR - seconded Cllr. Papworth. Motion carried.

b) s.106 monies – Cllr. Tagg reported that he had been speaking with other parents to gather ideas and the favourite ideas had been – a

Minutes of meeting held on 12.01.2026

Signed as a correct record 

basketball half court/half hoop; football goals; bigger swing for older children; small shelter; half pipe; assault course; climbing wall and skatepark. The MUGA was partly discussed but it was acknowledged that this was nothing to do with the Council and in any case, it was a facility that had to be paid for/accessed via tokens. The Clerk reported that TK Play are visiting the site on the 28th of January and these ideas can be discussed with the representative then along with the budget available.

c) Christmas Tree Festival – The Clerk and Cllr. Littleales reported that the festival was a success again, with an estimate of 75 to 100 people plus visiting. The comments on social media and from the comments box had been positive, the Carol Service was a great success, and more trees were sponsored this year. The donations raised £262.01 for the church fund.

d) Grass Cutting contract for next year - brought back to the meeting as it was unclear as to what exactly we would ask to be cut in the next financial year. Maps were perused and Cllr. Papworth clarified where additional areas had been requested of Steve Jennings. He also pointed out some areas that were our responsibility, but others had taken on. He pointed out that Steve Jennings strims the area from the Hall to Torridge Gates. Cllrs agreed an area – which is the Urban Visibility area required by Devon Highways as shown on their map, along with additional areas as agreed upon by Councillors – and we need to ask Steve Jennings to check those areas that others cut to ensure that they are being done. Cllr Littleales proposed we provide the map to Steve Jennings and ask him to cut/consider cutting it 4 times a year - seconded Cllr. Papworth – motion carried.

e) E mails – Cllrs were asked again to let the Clerk know if they were unable to access their Cllr. emails.

f) Auditor – two quotes for services along with an outline of matters to be inspected were presented to Cllrs. Cllr. Littleales proposed that we engage Mrs. Penny Clapham, seconded Cllr. Kops – Motion carried.

g) Planters around the village – Cllr. Papworth highlighted that there is a small planter at the top of the village which a householder plants each

Minutes of meeting held on 12-01-2026

Signed as a correct record 

year. Cllr. Papworth asked that the council look to paying for this. The Chair suggested that she be asked to quote the council for the compost and plants early spring and the Council can then consider the matter further. Agreed.

h) Speed signs – the Clerk confirmed that Devon Highways have replaced the broken speed sign at the Torridge Gates end of the village and also the speed sign at the Garage end of the village. Both signs were removed from another location and as they were still in good working order were attributed to Merton. Cllrs. were happy with this though there was still a question mark over whether the Parish could supply better signs with speed monitoring within them. Clerk to recontact Devon Highways who have yet to answer this query.

8. Policy Updates

a) MPC014 - Data Protection Policy – Cllrs. had already had sight of the document with red highlighted changes proposed by the Clerk. Prop. Cllr. Littleales to accept the policy changes as seen. Seconded Cllr. McLauhlan.

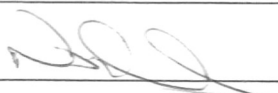
b) MPC015 - Health and Safety policy – Cllrs had already had sight of the document with no changes suggested. Proposed to accept the document Cllr. Littleales, second Cllr. Papworth - Motion carried.

c) MPC016- Lone Worker Policy –Several highlighted changes previously sent to Councillors and worked through with them. Changes proposed by Cllr. Kops, seconded Cllr. Tagg – motion carried.

d) MPC019 - Internal Audit Policy – previously reviewed 2020 –some changes highlighted - changes suggested that review is taken back to once a year not twice a year. Proposed Cllr. Tagg, seconded Kops – motion carried.

e) MPC022 – Reserve's Policy – no changes suggested by Clerk. Proposed Cllr Littleales, Seconded Cllr. Nancekivell. Motion carried.

Minutes of meeting held on 12-01-2026

Signed as a correct record 

9. Financial Matters (Clerk)

- a) Bank Reconciliation – against statement – reviewed and signed by Cllr. Kops and Cllr. McLaughlan
- b) Banking checks were conducted by Cllr. Kops and Cllr McLaughlan for payments made against the bank statement between 10th November 2025 and 3rd January 2026.
- c) Budget review and Precept setting for new financial year.

Cllr. Littleales and The Clerk went through the pre supplied Budget – cost by cost with councillors, reviewing the previous years budget and any further expected spend and agreeing the costs for each item for next year.

Cllr. Littleales proposed we remove Legal from the budget – seconded Cllr. Kops – motion carried.

We arrived at 9.30pm and Cllr. Papworth proposed we extend the meeting, seconded Cllr. McLaughlan, motion carried.

Motion to zero the Defib pads/batteries EMR and remove it from EMR – pads and batteries should go into assets maintenance in normal budget. Proposed Cllr. Littleales, seconded Cllr. McLaughlan. Motion carried.

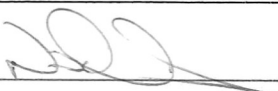
Cllr. Littleales proposed precept request (based on the handwritten figures documented within the meeting) is made by the Clerk – once the figure totals are double checked - seconded Cllr. Kops and motion carried.

- d) Approval to remove £154.17 from General Reserve EMR to zero negative monies in Defib pad and Batteries EMR – see above at C – motion carried.

10. Future Agenda Items

- a) Snow warden processes and equipment – Cllrs. McLaughlan and Nancekivell to look at new grit bins and better accessibility, and to look at the DCC online course which gives us better access to the grit and bins etc.,
- b) Revise Risk policy because it is not really a policy.

Minutes of meeting held on 20.01.2026

Signed as a correct record 

- c) The Lord Clinton picture up in the hall.
- d) Date change for Mays meeting due to Chair and Clerks absence.
Agreed to move to Monday 18th May 2026
- e) Cllr. Kops would like the first discussion on the budget to be done in November next year.

11. Confirmation of next meeting date - Monday 11th March 2026 at 7.30pm

12. Confidential matters Part 11 Public Bodies Admission to meetings Act 1960 s1 (20)

- a) Resolution required to move the council into Part 11 – proposed Cllr. Papworth, Seconded Cllr. Littleales. Motion carried

The Clerk confirmed that the audio recording had been switched off.

- b) To review the appraisal for Clerk – Kerry Littleales (left the room)
- c) The Chair to return the meeting to public session to hear resolutions

To review the appraisal for Clerk – Kerry Littleales- reviewed and accepted. No resolutions made.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 10pm

Minutes of meeting held on 20.01.2026

Signed as a correct record 