

Merton Parish Council

www.merton.com

clerk@mertondevon.com

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Council Meeting held on Monday 18 May 2026th at The Clinton Hall.

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

Also present: Kerry Littleales – Clerk

Annual Parish Meeting

1. The chair welcomed councillors to the meeting – there were no members of the public present.
2. Chairmans report – see attached.
3. There being no public wishing to raise any matters, the Parish meeting was called to a close. Cllr. Papworth proposed the Annual Council Meeting be moved forward to 7.45 to save wasting Cllrs. time and that if any public arrived, they would be fully informed of the progress so far and allowed to speak. Cllr. Kops seconded and all Cllrs. Agreed. Motion carried.

Annual Council Meeting

Business Transacted

1. Election of Chair

The Chair 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. Cllr Littleales then asked for nominations or volunteers for Chair of the Parish Council for the following year. Cllr. Papworth proposed Cllr. Littleales. Cllr. Tagg seconded and motion carried. Declaration of acceptance form to be signed at the end of the meeting.

Minutes of meeting held on 18/5/2026

Signed as a correct record 

2. Election of vice Chair

Cllr. Littleales asked for volunteers of nominations for the position of Vice Chair. None were received.

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllrs were reminded of the responsibility to keep up their Register of Interest which have recently been renewed.

Cllrs Papworth and McLaughlan declared an interest in the allocation of funds for the Churchyard.

4. Apologies for Absence

Cllr. Cottle-Hunkin and Cllr. Wheatley – committed elsewhere. Cllr. Littleales proposed resolution to accept apologies. Motion carried.

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

Cllr. Littleales proposed that the minutes of the last meeting dated 9th March 2026 be signed as a true and accurate record. Motion carried.

6. Public speaking time

No public present.

7. Annual Review and approval of:

a) Annual subscription to NALC/DALC

£131.00 for the year – Cllr. Papworth proposed paying the fee, seconded Cllr. Kops. Motion carried.

Power to spend: LGA 1972s.143(1)(b) Budget = Prof. Fees/Subs

b) To review and approve the Council's Insurance.

£662.95 Proposed Cllr. Littleales, Seconded Cllr. McLaughlan. Motion carried.

Power to spend: LGA 1972 s.111 Budget: Admin/Insurance

c) Cllrs roles and membership on external groups-

Churchyard Committee – Cllrs. Papworth and McLaughlan

Liaison with Handyman – Cllr. Papworth and Clerk

Minutes of meeting held on 18/05/2026

Signed as a correct record 

Snow warden – Cllr. McLaughlan and Cllr. Nancekivell

Asset Inspections – reviewed and some items reallocated. Cllrs. to review all their assets to report back at the next meeting.

d) Release of Grants (Clerk)

Merton Churchyard Committee - £300.00 – Proposed Cllr. Littleales, seconded Cllr. Nancekivell. Motion carried

North Devon Records Office £50.00 – Proposed Cllr. Papworth, seconded Cllr. Littleales. Motion carried.

Citizen's Advice £75.00 – Proposed Cllr. Littleales, seconded Cllr. Nancekivell. Motion carried.

Poppy appeal - £20.00 as a donation and £25.00 for Lamp post poppies – Proposed Cllr. Littleales, seconded Cllr. Tagg. Motion carried.

(Power to spend: LGA 1972 s.137 – Budget: Grants and donations)

e) Review of monthly standing order for working from Home allowance. Proposal to continue paying by monthly Standing order by Cllr. Tagg, seconded Cllr. Nancekivell. Motion carried.

f) To agree a budget for obtaining antivirus protection for laptop.

Norton 360 at £25.00 proposed by Cllr. Littleales, seconded Cllr. Nancekivell. Motion carried.

8. Review of the following policies:

MPC01 – Standing Orders – model orders previously circulated to Cllrs. Reviewed in meeting and Cllr. Kops proposed accepting the new orders as seen, Seconded Cllr. Papworth. Motion carried.

MPC02 – Code of conduct – no changes necessary. Proposed Cllr Papworth, seconded Cllr. McLaughlan. Motion carried.

MPC03 – Financial Regulations – no changes necessary. Proposed Cllr. Papworth, seconded Cllr. McLaughlan. Motion carried.

No changes necessary. Proposed Cllr. Littleales, seconded Cllr. McLaughlan. Motion carried.

Minutes of meeting held on 18/05/2026

Signed as a correct record 

9. Current and New business

- a) Drainage in the square and maintenance of it (weeding and silt removal) – Cllr. Littleales reported that he was no further forward with this matter and it would need to come back to the next meeting.
- b) Snow warden – bins for ordering for next year. Cllr. McLaughlan still working on this – there was a decision made to request 3 bins from Torridge for salt – for Back Lane, Beaford Road and near the Bench outside Clinton Hall.
- c) Cleaning of Playpark - look to agree a rota of cleans and send out for quotes. Cllrs discussed that we already had Aqua Busters working on the playground and to approach Jade to diary in 2 cleans a year - around now and again in autumn.
- d) Results of Playground survey and the way forward on this – Cllr Littleales reported that there was very little response from the village to the survey but those that did bother had voted for the Trampoline in the highest numbers. Cllr. Littleales proposed that this is now progressed to informing Torridge District Council of our progress and to obtaining 2 further quotes for a similar trampoline from other companies. Seconded by Cllr. Papworth and motion carried.
- e) Planning application No.1/0323/2026/AGMB – Cllrs had previously reviewed this application and had no objections to put forward. Proposed Cllr. Littleales, seconded Cllr. Nancekivell. Motion carried.

10. Internal Audit

- a) Certificate of Exemption – to resolve to approve the Certificate of Exemption.

Proposed Cllr. Littleales, Seconded Cllr. Nancekivell. Motion carried.
Certificate signed by clerk and Chair.

- b) Annual Internal Audit Report – completed in April – to resolve to accept this report and pursue any recommendations.

Report previously circulated to Councillors. Cllr Littleales proposed Cllrs. accept the report and pursue options for a separate savings bank

Minutes of meeting held on 12/05/2026

Signed as a correct record 

account and research options for a new website host with gov.uk email access. Seconded Cllr. Nancekivell. Motion carried.

c) Annual Governance statement – to consider, complete and resolve to agree and sign this. This was read out to Cllrs who agreed each section which was then completed in their presence. Cllr. Littleales proposed signing the document, seconded by Cllr. Tagg. Motion carried. The document was then signed by the Chair and clerk.

d) Accounting statements for 2025/2026 to be reviewed and resolved. This had previously been sent to Cllrs. Cllr. Littleales proposed the Accounting Statements be approved as accurate. Seconded Cllr. Tagg. Motion carried and statement signed by Chair at the meeting.

e) End of year Bank reconciliation and Explanation of Variances to be reviewed and resolved. All Cllrs reviewed these documents in the meeting. Cllr. Papworth proposed accepting them, Seconded by Cllr. Kops. Motion carried.

f) Purchases over £100.00 to be reviewed and accepted. Proposed Cllr. Kops, seconded Cllr. Papworth. Motion carried.

g) Notice of Public rights and Publication of Councils Accounts – to resolve to agree the dates of publication. Proposed Cllr. Kops, seconded Cllr. Tagg. Motion carried.

10.5.25 Finance (Clerk).

a) **Budget review** - All Cllrs had access to budget statement at the meeting and Cllrs happy that budget is at the right place for the time of year. Cllr. Kops proposed Cllrs happy with the review, seconded Cllr. Tagg. Motion carried.

b) **To approve the Bank reconciliation against statement** – documents reviewed and signed by Cllrs Kops and McLaughlan

b) **To carry out banking checks (payments made against Bank statement) between 1st April 2025 and 18th May 2026 of both retrospective and pre-authorised payments** – documents reviewed and signed by Cllrs. Kops and McLaughlan.

Minutes of meeting held on 12/05/2026

Signed as a correct record 

11.5.25 Cllr. reports and Items for future agendas

Councillors are requested to use this opportunity to report information and to raise items for future Agendas.

A) Both Cllr. Cottle-Hunkin and Cllr Wheatley supplied reports for the meeting which Cllrs had access to.

b) Cllr. Tagg raised the issue of the lower village speed sign not working very well. To be report to Highways.

c) Cllr. Littleales then acknowledged that this was the last meeting for Cllr. Tagg before he and his family returned to America. Everyone wished him very well and thanked him for his time, commitment and the cupcakes!

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 9.30pm

12.5.25 Confirmation of the next Council meeting:

Monday 13th July 2026 7.30pm at The Clinton Hall.

Minutes of meeting held on 18/05/26

Signed as a correct record 