

St GILES IN THE WOOD PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 13th May 2026

Present Cllr L Herniman, chairman, Cllr A Chamings Cllr S Montague Cllr G Hookway Cllr J Ayre, Cllr B King Cllr R Petherbridge, Cllr S Dyer Mrs A Snell (Clerk)

In Attendance

Apologies Cllr P Middleton Cllr R Lock Cllr T Elliott Cllr C Cottle-Hunkin

1). The minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on the 14th May 2025 were agreed and signed.

2). Chairman's Report

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, it was agreed early in the year that there should be no parking on the Recreation Field for any reason. This was a unanimous decision. TDC are looking to phase out cash for parking in their car parks, as more payments are now made with cards or phones. Dog fouling is always a recurring problem, Kingscott now has a second dog bin, paid for by the Parish Council.

Complaints have been received regarding speeding through St Giles but the Parish Council would have to pay for a Traffic Regulation order at a cost of £5000, it was decided to put up signs instead.

A number of Stevenstone residents attended a Parish Council meeting in February as their connectivity to mobile signal is very poor. Cllr Herniman and Cllr King attended the recent meeting organised by Sir Geoffrey Cox MP on connectivity which was well attended, but it was mainly on broadband not mobile signal.

Mr Keith Barry of Bideford Cricket Club attended the meeting in February, with a request for their 3rd team to play on the Recreation Field, this would also involve training, ladies and friendly matches. In principle the idea was good, but taking into consideration the play equipment and the fact it would have to be closed off or protected greatly, it was decided to refuse the request.

Events throughout the year included the Autumn Show which made a profit in the region of £2000 for local organisations. The Firework display, which comes from donations from local people for the fireworks, resulted in approximately £1300 for the North Devon Hospice. A village lunch raised £1000 again for local organisations. All excellent well supported events. Parish Councillors were well involved with these events. The quote for the grass cutting is £1350 for the 2026 growing season, which was accepted, after persistent trying there are still no white lines at Deep Moor. Now there is a PCSO in post the Parish Council would very much like her to attend meetings.

The Precept was raised to £9500; the clerk's salary has been increased for this coming year to £3600, in line with DALC increases. Roads and potholes are very much ongoing problems; all planning applications have been responded too.

Thank you to our County Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin and District Councillors, Thomas Elliott and Rose Lock, for all their help, support and advice throughout the year, also any grant money. Thank you to the clerk, and all Parish Councillors who work for and on behalf of our Parish Council, they all do a marvellous job.

3). Financial Report, this was circulated to all present, with a current balance of £5384.34 (of which £288.03 is held by the PC for the Recreation Field) which all agreed and was signed by the chairman.

4). Report from the Parish Hall

Cllr Montague reported for St Giles Parish Hall. New facias for the hall have been ordered, new members are supporting by trying to get grants for the hall, the well supported excellent pantomime raised £1300 this is too used to upgrade the stage, the electrical tests on the hall are being undertaken.

Cllr Petherbridge reported that the Sports Club is still financially sound and the building in good repair, it has been another good year for the club, a full-time caretaker has been paid with an amount of money in reserve. The new Chairman is Mr Richard Hookway, with two new committee members and two new volunteers to work behind the bar. It was noted if the war is to continue it may impact on finances as the heating bill is £2000 per annum. A new door has been fitted, the building is looking in tip top condition, long may it continue.

Cllr King reported on the Recreation Field, following the recent Wicksteed inspection, work needs to be carried out on the big swings which needs two new poles and a top pole, the small swings also need poles and the ariel runway a new cross bar, so in total seven poles are needed, Cllr King is trying to source them. He has found some for £653 plus £353 for delivery, these come from Cambridge. The problem they need to be the exact dimensions, with very few knots and smooth.

Cllr Montague has been in contact with some of the expired St Giles cricket club members which has £1000 left in the Cricket Club account, which they are willing to donate to the Recreation Field, a big thank you was expressed as this will be used to purchase the new poles for the play equipment. This was proposed by Cllr Montague seconded by Cllr Hookway all in favour.

It was raised that a new net is required for the goal, it seems a new one is in storage. New seats are needed for the baby swings, the District Councillors will be asked if they are able to contribute with a grant towards this.

5). County Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin. This year has been my first year serving as your County Councillor, and it has been an incredibly busy and eye opening one. Being elected in May was a real honour, but the pace quickly picked up, particularly as I was also appointed Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs straight away. This has meant a steep learning curve and a very full diary, but it has also given me the opportunity to make sure rural communities like ours have a strong voice at County Hall. Cabinet Role- Rural Affairs. My Cabinet role comes with a very wide remit, covering issues such as rural connectivity, farming, transport, rural crime and hidden rural deprivation. I work closely with council officers, partner organisations, MPs and groups such as the NFU and Devon and Cornwall Police. I regularly speak at Cabinet, Full Council and scrutiny meetings to ensure that rural Devon is properly reflected in decision making and is not overshadowed by more urban areas. Roads Highways and Infrastructure. Road conditions have been one of the issues most frequently raised with me by residents. Devon is responsible for around 8,000 miles of roads, making it the largest highways network in the country. After a winter of severe weather, the pressure on this network has been immense. This year the council agreed an additional £19M of investment into highways, with £4M specifically ringfenced for drainage and gully clearance. This is crucial in rural areas where standing water leads quickly to potholes. I have spent time out on the ground with Neighbourhood Highways Officers inspecting local problem areas and feeding residents' concerns directly into future work programmes. Public Transport. Public transport has been another major area of work this year. I was contacted by a large number of residents following sudden increases in bus fares, particularly affecting children and young people travelling to school and college. Some post sixteen students were facing costs of over four hundred pounds per term for travel. After launching a petition supported by more than two thirds of county councillors, meeting directly with Stagecoach senior management, working with MPs and local schools, I am pleased that this resulted in the creation of the North Devon Zone, which now includes Great Torrington and some of the surrounding villages. This change came into effect in January and has delivered significant fare reductions, making travel more affordable for regular users commuting to education, work and appointments. Children Young People and Families. Supporting children and families has been a major priority. Devon currently looks after around eight hundred and ten children in care, and there is a continuing need for more foster carers. This year we have taken steps to improve foster carer support, including better allowances and access to equipment. I have also been proud to support the Places to Go Things to Do youth grant, which has already distributed £160,000 through over one hundred small grants to youth projects across Devon. These grants have supported everything from rural youth outreach sessions to creative and wellbeing activities. Due to its success, the scheme will run again this year with a further £160,000 committed. Health Social Care and Community Safety. Healthcare access remains a real challenge in rural areas. I have consistently raised concerns about NHS dentistry shortages, long ambulance response times and proposals to remove fire co responders from rural communities. These co responders often arrive first in emergencies where ambulance delays are unavoidable, and I have spoken out strongly about the risks of withdrawing this support. Alongside this, I have supported a new 4 year domestic abuse strategy 2026-2030, aimed at increasing access to safe accommodation and specialist support, particularly for people facing additional barriers. Libraries and Community Hubs Libraries are something I care deeply about, especially because of their importance as community hubs in rural towns and villages. Devon's library service currently supports fifty libraries, with more than 2.3million visits each year, supported by hundreds of volunteers. The recent library consultation received an unprecedented response, with over

25,000 residents taking part, making it the largest consultation of its kind the council has ever run. We are currently carefully considering all feedback, including thousands of written responses. A detailed report setting out the findings and recommended next steps will be presented to Cabinet in May. The existing library budget of just over £7M has been protected, and an additional £1M has been set aside to support genuine transformation and community led improvements. Throughout this process I have been clear that libraries are far more than places to borrow books. They provide warm spaces, digital access, learning opportunities and a welcoming environment for all ages. Local Grants and Community Support

Over the last year I have been pleased to support a range of community projects through councillor locality funding. From April, this funding will increase to £10,000 per councillor, helping to support youth groups, community facilities, accessibility improvements and local events. These small grants can make a big difference, and I am always happy to discuss ideas with local groups. Looking Ahead. This first year has been full on and at times challenging, particularly balancing the responsibilities of a Cabinet role alongside representing a large rural division. However, it has also been incredibly rewarding. I have met so many passionate people, learned a great deal, and been able to help secure real improvements for our area. Thank you to parish councils, volunteers and residents for your support, feedback and many conversations throughout the year. Please do feel free to get in touch at any time if there is something you would like to raise or discuss. I look forward to continuing to work with you over the year ahead.

The DCC website is devon.cc/report-it

6. No resolutions were brought forward to the meeting.

As there was no further business this meeting was closed.

.....Chairman

.....Date