

Milton Damerel Parish Council Minutes

Minutes of Milton Damerel Parish Council Meeting held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 18th March 2026 which commenced at 19:30

Present: Councillors Stephen Moyse (Chair), Richard Piper, Peter Bromley, Edgar Pett, Gareth Piper, Jim Richardson, Teresa Walters, also present were District Councillor Nigel Kenneally members of the public Bob & Julie Sage, David Wyatt and the Clerk Jane Elliott.

1. **Apologies** *Lynne Rowsell, Ken James.*
2. **Declarations of Interest**
 - a) Register of Interest: Councillors are reminded of the need to update their register of interests. *None were declared.*
 - b) To declare any personal interest in items on the agenda and their nature. *Cllr. Jim Richardson Stop Beacon Solar*
 - c) To declare any disclosable pecuniary interest in items on the agenda and their nature. *None were declared*
3. **Chair's announcements:**

Cllr S Moyse announced that clerk Jane Elliott had resigned as clerk to Sutcombe Parish Council and that the assets jointly owned by the two councils would need to be discussed.
4. **Public Comments**
 - a) A member of the public reported an adverse possession of a property listed as having no legal owner on a Facebook Page. The squatters were removed and the property is to be auctioned.
 - b) A member of the public thanked the council for the assistance in helping him to clear rubbish from a local layby.
5. **The minutes of the Parish Council meeting Wednesday 18th February 2025** which had been circulated by email, were unanimously approved as a true record of the meeting, they were duly signed by the Chair Councillor Stephen Moyse.
6. **Reports by District and County Councillors.**

District Councillor Nigel Kenneally gave a report about the council tax rise to the maximum level of 2.99% which is still under inflation. Under the Fairer Funding Review rural councils received less from Central Government leaving an estimated £400,000 shortfall to balance the books.

He had attended the Connectivity Event in Holsworthy chaired by G Cox MP. This area of Devon is the 1% that has not been connected to the broadband infrastructure and communities have been left to organise their own links. Starlink seems to offer the best deal for rural properties unless residents can club together to gain permissions to install cables across local land. To work towards the District Council's pledge to be Net Zero by 2030, £70,000 has been allocated to tree planting in Torridge; Cllr. N. K. suggested including high value walnut trees. The river fountain was repaired at a cost of £60,000. A short discussion followed regarding "ring fenced funds" this is money that has to be spent on specific projects and could not be used to fill potholes. Regarding planning enforcement Cllr. N. K. has met with Cllr. Rosemark Lock to discuss how the enforcement system operates. There had been no further update regarding Beacon Solar. Cllr. N. K. concluded his report with his apologies for the next meeting scheduled 15th April as his wife was due to give birth.

County Councillor Lynne Rowsell sent the following report:

Solar farm – Holsworthy Beacon

As you are probably aware, the solar farm at Holsworthy Beacon has been stopped for now. This is only a temporary situation and they are reported to be looking at other ways to get this through. We will be closely monitoring this area for any signs of activity in the near future, and I will of course share anything I hear with you as it comes up.

We are also watching other areas in Holsworthy Rural that have large areas of land up for sale, and have spotted a couple recently. It may be that they are just private sales, but as there is talk of extending the area between Alverdiscott to Barnstaple and the surroundings, we feel it is prudent to keep a close eye on things.

- **Next steps:** Monitor for any renewed activity or revised proposals; share updates with councillors as soon as received.
- **Watchlist:** Keep under review any large land sales within Holsworthy Rural in case of further solar proposals.

Community safety – reports of "Take Back Control" groups

We have been told about a group going around the Devon area called "Take Back Control". Apparently they have already been reported in parts of Truro and now Exeter, where these groups go into shops and take large amounts of goods without paying (similar to shoplifting), and redistribute it as they feel is right. It is assumed they will try to come further up towards our area over time. As smaller villages, we cannot afford to lose stock in this way, so we need to be vigilant. However, without police or security support it is hard to see what we can do at present to protect ourselves from this sort of situation.

- **Next steps:** Share information with local businesses and encourage reporting of any incidents to the police via 101 (or

999 in an emergency).

- **Request:** Seek advice from Devon & Cornwall Police / local neighbourhood team on practical deterrence and reporting routes for rural communities.

Highways – potholes drive-round

I did a drive-round with the Deputy Director of Highways in our local area, and was shocked when he commented that our roads are not good, but not a priority.

I am extremely unhappy, particularly as the few issues he did look at he did not consider needed doing.

He said he did not have time to go to Buckland Brewer, Milton Damerel and Bradworthy (amongst others), and has now passed me back to the Neighbourhood Highways Officers. It felt like he did not want to get involved.

He advises that his team report potholes to an outside assessor. They are then assessed and, if that person does not think it is an issue, it is not passed for repair. I do not believe that is the best way for our roads to be maintained, and I have asked for further contract information to see what criteria they use to come to their conclusions. It seems our NHOs are being regarded more as middlemen with little authority, despite them knowing the area better than an outsider. Passing me back to them now feels like a stalling tactic. I do not think it is acceptable.

There was only one pothole in North Road, Holsworthy, which he had to physically drive around because of the road condition. Even then, he commented it was bad but did not seem to think it was a problem that needed urgent attention. This was made more astonishing considering a series of holes were reported outside the nearby Holsworthy Co-op, of which only one in the series was repaired and the others were ignored. If there is a team in the area, surely it is sensible to expect they could do all potholes nearby while they were there.

Please could you help me, as I cannot get to all of the potholes this month to check. I need to know whether you have reported potholes online for Milton Damerel and whether they have been dealt with yet. If not, please provide the road name and any nearby landmarks (Highways say they have to have specific information or they cannot identify the correct place), and whether it is multiple potholes or just one. I will then compile a dossier and take it back to Highways to press for action. I will keep a log of what has not been repaired as our record. I have already said I will be prepared to take this publicly if things are not addressed soon—I think we have been patient long enough. Please send details to lynne.rowsell@devon.gov.uk. Likewise, if some have been repaired and broken up again, this needs addressing; I firmly believe the quality of dragon patch repairs is inadequate.

- **Action:** Councillors/parish to send pothole locations (road + landmark) and status updates to the email above.
- **Next steps:** Compile evidence pack and request clear criteria/contract details for assessment and repair decisions.

Police & Crime Commissioner – Alison Hernandez

I attended a meeting recently where we were addressed by Alison Hernandez. She felt that things were going the right way and that there had been improvements in our area, adding that she will not be opening any more police stations in our area. She went on to say that, as she looked around the room, she felt there was not enough diversity. She is fully behind including more diversity to address that situation in the future. I remain of the opinion that the police should not just “tick boxes”, but should choose the person best suited to do the job.

- **Next steps:** Continue to raise local policing visibility and access issues through the appropriate channels.

Parking – Holsworthy town (Wednesdays when the market is not operating)

I have spoken to a traffic warden who was operating in the Square, who feels that if the market is not operating in the Square on a Wednesday, he is not ticketing people for parking there on that day. His view is that it is wasting valuable parking spaces if we cannot use them, and it affects town trading. He is not our regular warden (they are different every time), but it is a valid point. I spoke with Town Councillor Cole, who agrees with me on this. We need to see if we can work together to put something in place.

Next steps: Liaise with Holsworthy Town Council and parking enforcement to confirm the position on non-market Wednesdays and agree a consistent approach.

7. Matters Arising

- 1) Beacon Solar: There was no update. This item will remain on the agenda.

8. Planning Applications

None were received

9. Planning decisions

Application 1/0706/2025/FUL was withdrawn

Planning Appeals

None were received

10. Financial Matters

a) The laptop is jointly owned with Sutcombe Parish Council. It was sold by Holsworthy Computers; the receipt was given to Councillor S. M by the clerk and will be valued. It was the unanimous decision of the Councillors to pay 50% of the value to Sutcombe PC.

Holsworthy Computers would be consulted regarding data on the laptop belonging to Sutcombe PC so that Councillors could

agree the best course of action to return this information to Sutcombe PC.

b) It was the unanimous decision of the Councillors to approve cheque for:

i) Clerk's salary £311.36 ii) Clerk's expenses £24.94 iii) Octopus Energy/Air Ambulance site £20.49

The financial report had been sent by email to councillors. Bank Balance is £12,198.50

11. Correspondence as below and as available at the time of the meeting

Emails from DALC, NALC, TDC and other sources have been forwarded to members of the council.

12. Matters brought forward with the permission of the Chairman

- a) Cllr. Jim Richardson had been involved in a serious RTA. This led to a discussion around speeding, Community Speed Watch and the general very poor state of the county road network. Devon has the second largest road network in the country and has suffered from years of under investment. Cllr Lynne Rowsell is working on this case, but the budget is insufficient. In some villages postmen will not deliver mail as the roads are so poor.
- b) A member of the public Michael Jackson has written to the council with regard to speeding and the use of signs as a deterrent. Cllr Steve Moyse has arranged to meet with someone from Highways to discuss this matter further.
- c) There was a discussion regarding the request from a developer wishing to fell trees near the bus shelter to allow a second access road. The Council does not agree that this is necessary.
- d) It was the unanimous decision of the Councillors to approve Vision ICT as the website provider for.gov.uk domain and emails.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20:45

The next meeting will be Wednesday 15th April 2026 19:30

Signed.....

Date.....