

BERE FERRERS PARISH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held in the Council Chambers on Tuesday 20th January 2026 at 7.45 pm.

Present:

Cllr. P. Crozier Chair of the Committee
Cllr. P. Dennis Cllr. B. Lamb
Cllr. R. Leithall Cllr. V. Grose
Cllr. C. Shaw

468. Apologies

None

469. Declaration of Interest

None

470. Notification of items for information at the discretion of the Chair. No action can be taken on these items

Cllr. Lamb attended the recent Local Government Reorganisation - Town and Parish Council Briefing online session given by West Devon Borough Council. Points to highlight:

- Cost of Devon's reorganisation will be approx. £76 million
- The Government is expected to announce its preferred options for local government reorganisation proposals in February, followed by the launch of a public consultation.
- The Parish Council is not being formally consulted but we are able to submit comments and views to the Government as part of this process. Cllr. Lamb therefore recommended that this item be included on the February Full Council agenda for discussion.
- The result will be announced in June/July this year. It will then go to Parliament in the Autumn.
- Elections will be held in 2027 and the handover to the new Council(s) will be in March 2028.
- Parish Council elections are still expected to be held in May 2027.

Cllr Dennis reported that he also attended the meeting and was disappointed that not all questions had been answered. He asked whether a representative from WDBC could be invited to attend the February meeting to provide further explanations. Brian pointed out that they had refused this request because there are 50 parish councils in the combined area.

Cllr. Lamb stated that WDBC are due to remove bottle banks across West Devon in the coming months as part of their ongoing waste and recycling service improvements programme. All residents can continue to put bottles out through their kerbside recycling or take to recycling centres. Stickers will be placed on the affected banks over the coming week to inform residents. Cllr Lamb said it was disappointing that there had been no consultation on this matter.

Cllr Crozier confirmed that he will be attending the Connectivity Forum, organised by Sir Geoffrey Cox MP at Holsworthy on 31st January 2026, and requested that all questions and issues from Councillors be sent to him. Cllr. Crozier will report back on the meeting at the next F & G.P meeting. Cllr Dennis reported that he had replied to Cllr Leithall regarding the poor mobile and broadband coverage in the area and passed the information onto Cllr. Crozier.

471. Matters arising from the meeting held on the 9th December 2025

The minutes have been adopted and approved at the Full Council meeting held on 16th December 2025

Matters Arising

Min 411

It was noted that it is frustrating that the timetable for bus 87 cannot be changed back to its previous schedule until April 2026.

Min 412 (370) (307)

The concrete of the old benches in Bere Ferrers have been removed and the new benches should be delivered at the end of the month. Cllr. Lamb confirmed that the site of the third bench at Weir Quay is still to be decided on.

Min 412 (370 (313))

Cllr Leithall has written to the Doctor's Surgery Manager regarding the In Post lockers located in their car park. No reply has been received as yet.

Min 412 (374)

The Clerk waiting on a quote from the window cleaner to clean the Parish Hall/Council Office windows.

412 (377)

The projector has been purchased and the Clerk to raise an invoice for 50% of the cost to Beregen.

Min 416

The Clerk read out an email from WDBC requesting that the transfer of the piece of land at Pilgrim Drive be put on hold for now. WBDC are currently undertaking an internal process looking at their community asset transfers and will let the Parish Council know the outcome as soon as they are able to.

Cllr. Leithall proposed going into Part 2, seconded by Cllr. Crozier.

Cllr. Leithall proposed coming out of Part 2, seconded by Cllr. Crozier.

Due to circumstances beyond the Council's control, it was agreed not to pursue the transfer of the piece of land at Bedford Villas at this time. The Clerk is to inform the Bere Alston in Bloom Group and to notify the solicitor acting on behalf of the Council.

Min 419

The Clerk informed that a notice on the Parish Hall carpark will be in the February issue of Berelink. It will also then be put on social media.

472. To accept the January 2026 accounts for payment

Cllr. Dennis proposed accepting, seconded by Cllr. Maycock. All in agreement.

473. To accept the F & G.P Detailed Receipt and Payment report ending 31st December 2025

The Clerk was asked to look at the figures listed under Property Maintenance and Vandalism and report back at the next meeting.

The Clerk to chase up with the Contractor when the emergency lighting repairs will be scheduled in.

All agreed to accept the report.

474. To accept the bank reconciliation ending 31st December 2025

Cllr. Dennis enquired regarding why the adjustment for Screwfix payment was still showing on the report. The Clerk to look into this.

All agreed to accept the report.

475. Review and approve 2026-27 budget

After a review and discussions, Cllr. Crozier proposed a budget for 2026-27 of £114,466, seconded by Cllr. Dennis. All in favour.

476. Recommendation to Full Council on the 2026-27 precept

After discussion, Cllr. Grose proposed recommending a precept of £114,466. Seconded by Cllr. Dennis. All in favour.

477. Update on the Parish Hall doors

Cllr Dennis will be obtaining a quote this week for repairs to the Parish Hall doors. He also reported that he has received comprehensive feedback from Cllrs Blackman and Saxby regarding the reasons why Beregen's grant application to the West Devon Community Fund may have been rejected. For example, it was suggested that four separate smaller grant applications should have been submitted rather than a single application.

The next round of funding will be released in April 2026, and both Borough Councillors have offered to assist Cllr Dennis with completing the application form.

478. Update on extension of lease between the Parish Council and Beregen

The solicitors who originally drafted the agreement have requested a further discussion with the Council regarding its requirements. Cllr Leithall agreed to speak to them.

479. Update on the new Sport Pavilion's planning application

Cllr. Lamb confirmed the revised planning application will be submitted very shortly for validation.

480. Consider donation request from Citizen Advice Bureau

After discussion all agreed to donate £150.

481. To review and approve the new Memorial Bench Policy

The Clerk had send out the proposed policy prior to the meeting. Cllr. Lamb wished to propose amendments and suggested he and the Clerk met to discuss and present the revised policy for approval at the next F & G.P meeting.

482. Correspondence

1. GWR's Customer and Community Improvement Fund will open at noon on Monday, 5 January 2026.

The fund is designed for small and medium rail-related projects that can be completed during the 2026/27 financial year.

You can visit our dedicated webpage now at <https://www.gwr.com/about-gwr/what-you-can-expect/community/community-investment>, which includes a link to our guidance booklet where we have case studies of previous projects as well as guidance materials to help applicants prepare strong bids. The application link will go live from noon on Monday (5 Jan). The deadline for submissions is 12:00 noon on Monday, 2 February 2026. Bids must relate to the railway and address an area of social need. - proposals that do not connect in some way to customers (or potential customers), stations, railway property, rail services, rail education, or careers in rail will not be considered. A strong bid will address an area of social need, and demonstrate community involvement and the potential for lasting benefits. Match funding is advantageous but not necessary. We welcome applications of all sizes however the fund needs to cover our entire network, so we are particularly interested in small and medium projects. The maximum bid amount is £25,000 and last year the average awarded amount was £12,500.

For more information or to discuss your ideas before making a submission, please email us at Community.Fund@GWR.com.

Noted.

483. Agenda items for the next meeting

1. Update on extension on Beregen's lease
2. Review and approve the new Bench Policy
3. Review and approve new IT Policy

484. Questions from the public, at the discretion of the Chair

The member of the public present had no further questions. There being no further business, the Chair thanked members for attending the meeting and declared the meeting closed at 8.54 pm

Signed by the Chair

Dated 27th January 2026