

BERE FERRERS PARISH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council held in the Council Chambers, Bere Alston on Tuesday 27th January 2026.

Present

Cllr. R. Leithall	Chair of the Council
Cllr. P. Archer	Cllr. P. Dennis
Cllr. P. Crozier	Cllr. B. Lamb
Cllr. J. Maciejowska	Cllr. C. Shaw
Cllr. G. Sutton	Cllr. E. Wager

485. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. V. Grose, Cllr. M. Patterson and Cllr. R. Perry. Accepted by the Council.

486. Declaration of Interests

None.

487. Notifications of items of interest as the discretion of the chair. No action can be taken on these items

Cllr. Leithall has received updated letter from Sir Geoffrey Cox MP regarding the Connectivity Forum he is holding on 30th January. Organisations that have now confirmed their attendance, include BT Openreach, Building Digital UK (which has responsibility for the delivery of Project Gigabit), Airband, Bush Broadband and Connecting Devon and Somerset and is hoping that a representation from Jurassic Fibre and Wildanet will be confirmed in due course. Cllr. Leithall asked that any information to send be to the Clerk. Information will be forwarded to Cllr. Crozier who is attending the event on behalf of the Council. Cllr. Dennis said that Vonesus should have been invited to attend. Cllr. Crozier said they should have been invited, but might not have confirmed their attendance.

Cllr. Lamb had been contacted by the Tavistock Times regarding Denham Bridge. They enquired as to when Devon County Council (DCC) will remove the 'lego' type blocks. DCC have confirmed that they have prepared a scheme to replace these blocks and hope to consult with the Parish Council in due course with its design.

Cllr Shaw reported that there appears to have been an attempted break-in at the Council's container. The Police have been informed. It was agreed that the Council will move the container as soon as possible.

Cllr Dennis stated that, following the recent storms, the Dawlish railway line has again been closed and the sea defence wall damaged. It was therefore time to write again to the local MP to press for the Bere Alston–Tavistock–Plymouth rail link to be put back on the Government's agenda. There should be sufficient funding to provide a reliable and resilient railway system for the South West.

Cllr. Wager again enquired about the empty bungalow on Station Road. The Clerk said it has been reported several times to WDBC but not response yet. Will chase up again.

Cllr Lamb stated that, when work was being carried out at the Bere Ferrers recreational field, he visited the area with the local Devon Highways Officer. During that visit, the officer agreed to unblock two drains coming off Hensbury Lane and they have been blocked—one with stones and the other with wooden planks. The officer had promised that these blockages would be removed; however, this has not yet happened. Cllr Lamb has since formally reported the issue online. A significant amount of water is now running down the road and around the corner, as it is not draining away. The Clerk was asked to follow this matter up.

Cllr Lamb brought up recent correspondence from DALC requesting nominations from Parish Councils to attend a Buckingham Palace Garden Party in 2026. He proposed nominating Cllr Peter Dennis, which was seconded by Cllr Maciejowska. Cllr Dennis wished to nominate Cllr Lamb in recognition of his work on the new Pavilion build. Cllr Lamb thanked him but stated he was not eligible, having attended a garden party approximately 10 years ago. Members were all in favour of nominating Cllr Dennis.

Cllr Crozier raised the issue of drainage at Denham Bridge, first highlighted in 2023 when the bridge was damaged. He noted that the outfalls have never been cleared, resulting in water running down the road instead of draining into the adjacent fields, from the Woodyard down to the bridge.

Cllr Crozier stated that on Monday 26th January, the History Group were holding a talk in the Parish Hall but were unable to open the main doors. The doors were eventually opened with great difficulty, and he noted that this situation cannot continue. Cllr Dennis confirmed that a contractor is reviewing the doors on Wednesday 28th January and supported Cllr Crozier's comments. He is currently advising hirers to use the annex glass door to enter the Parish Hall and suggested that the main doors be closed off until repairs are carried out. Cllr Leithall stated that if the doors cannot be repaired, the Council will need to replace them. This matter will be discussed at the next F&GP meeting.

488.Chair's Report

Cllr. Leithall:

Since our last Full Council meeting in December, most Committees have met and their minutes have been circulated to Members.

F & G.P Committee considered and approved the draft 2026–27 budget and agreed a recommended precept for consideration by Council.

Progress continues on the Parish Hall doors, the Beregen lease extension. The Sport Pavilion planning application is expected to be resubmitted shortly. Memorial bench arrangements and policy have been reviewed.

The Open Spaces Committee undertook routine inspections of play areas, recreation grounds and allotments. Minor repairs and maintenance items have been identified; salt bag distribution has been arranged for icy conditions. Whilst key improved security improvements have been implemented, further protection has been identified and is being actioned.

The Plans & Highways Committee have, reviewed the new National Planning Policy Framework, and considered the position of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Committee's view is that the Plan remains valid and defensible, with only proportionate monitoring required at this stage.

The council agreed has made representations on behalf of residents regarding changes to the "9:30 am" bus timetable, and local footpath and signage matters continue to be pursued with the relevant authorities.

The HR Committee met to consider staff pay and salary matters for inclusion in the 2026–27 budget, with detailed discussions held in Part 2.

489. To receive a report from the County Councillor

Cllr. M Fife Cook:

- Attended a meeting with Matt Barrow from Connecting Devon and Somerset, along with a member of the Cabinet for Rural Affairs. The discussion was productive, focusing on promises made but not yet delivered. Emphasised that having some connection to the outside world is important than, for example, being able to watch multiple videos at once. The message was well received, and relevant departments will be followed up. It is hoped that progress will be made, and a positive outcome may be achieved. Expect to report back in approximately three weeks with details of what is available, including any grants. As soon as this information is received, it will be shared with the Council.
- Has been in contact with the local campaign group, TavyRail, which is campaigning to reinstate the Tavistock–Plymouth / Bere Alston rail link. Funding has been set aside to prepare a business case; however, Network Rail has so far refused to engage with it, as they do not consider the project viable. The Parish Council will be kept informed of any updates. Cllr Dennis noted that with further housing planned in Woolwell and Roborough, a railway would help ease congestion. Cllr Maciejowska added that when the Dawlish line is closed, the South West is effectively cut off, emphasising the need to secure funding and provide an alternative route into the region.
- Was disappointed that himself, Cllr. Sellis or Cllr. Grainger were not consulted when Stagecoach changed the bus timetable
- Is trying to arranging a Planning training session with Dartmoor Planning Department.
- Has not been able to source a Devonshire Flag, so suggested the Parish Council purchase one.
- Has the Clerk received a reply from Cllr Saxby regarding the provision of funds to help purchase a life buoy at Bere Ferrers Quay? She confirmed that she had not. Cllr Fife agreed to forward the email to the Clerk to follow up.

- Will chase up with the Local Highways Officer regarding the request to install warning signs at Bere Ferrers recreational field.
- Asked if the street light at Silver Street, Bere Ferrers has been fixed? Cllr. Lamb to check.
- Has there been any further update regarding the issue of the septic tank on footpath 89. The Clerk confirmed no. He will therefore chase up.

500. To receive reports from the Borough Councillors

Not present at the meeting.

501.To approve and adopt the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 16th December 2025 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

Matters Arising

Minute 425

Cllr Shaw confirmed that the Fire Brigade are no longer permitted to distribute leaflets on cars to inform drivers that a fire engine is unable to access the street. Cllr Fife stated that, as a member of the Fire & Rescue Service, he will follow this matter up.

Minute 430 (389)

The quote for CCTV installation has been accepted, and is waiting on a date for the work to be carried out.

Minute 430 (388)

Cllr. Dennis confirmed he has received comprehensive feedback from Cllr. Saxby on why Beregen's grant application to West Devon Community Fund may have not been successful. I.e. may have been better to submit four smaller applications, rather than one large application. Has been given guidance on what they would be looking for in the application and both Borough Councillors would assist Cllr. Dennis when the next round of funding is open.

Minute 430(416)

The company who installed the zip wire at BF playpark confirmed that they conducted a second site visit to tighten the wire. They advised that a further visit to tighten the wire would cost £500. It was agreed to discuss this further at the next Open Spaces meeting.

Minute 430 (393(370))

Cllr Leithall has written to the Manager of the Doctor's Surgery. Not received a reply yet.

Minute 432 (412)

Cllr Lamb confirmed that three benches have been delivered and a contractor has been engaged to install them. He has also received another application for a bench in memory of former Councillor Doris Chapman. He has provided the family with the necessary details and will be looking for a suitable site. Cllr Lamb further confirmed that a Contractor has been engaged to replace the noticeboard at Bere Ferrers Quay.

Minute 433

The Tree survey requested has been done and the final planning application for the Pavilion has been submitted.

All proposed adoption of the minutes.

SO, RESOLVED

502. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Plans & Highways Committee meeting held on 6th January 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

Cllr. Lamb proposed approval the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Archer.

Matters Arising

Minute 442 (406)

Cllr. Lamb reported that on 20 January 2026, Simon Lightwood, Parliament Under-Secretary, Dept for Transport in a written answer stated in the House of Commons:

‘Under the statutory elements of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme, Travel Concessionaire Authorities must reimburse bus operators for all concessionary journeys starting within their boundaries, This is part of the ring-fenced Local Government Finance Settlement provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. It costs around £795 million annually.’

Minute 447

Bunny Homes’ planning application for the new Woolacombe estate has been validated. Discussions are ongoing with them regarding the Section 106 funding in relation to the new pavilion.

Cllr. Lamb proposed adoption of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Archer.

SO, RESOLVED

503. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 13th January 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

Cllr. Shaw proposed approval the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Archer.

Matters Arising

Min 454 (353)

The Cemetery Hut is now more secure. CCTV will be installed shortly, and the container will be relocated from the dog field to a position next to the Hut.

Minute 455

Members of the Council reviewed the current job list, and several items were noted as being scheduled to be addressed in due course.

Minute 456

Letters have been sent to uncultivated plot at the Bere Ferrers sites.

Cllr. Shaw proposed adoption of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Archer.

504. To approve and adopt the minutes from the HR Committee meeting held on 20th January 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

There were no matters arising.

All proposed to adopt the minutes.

505. To approve and adopt the minutes from the F & G.P meeting held on 20th January 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

Matters Arising

Minute 475

Cllr. Crozier discussed the proposed budget. 60% of the budget goes on salary. There are two high price capital items, the purchase of new Parish Hall doors and money to be put aside to purchase a bigger ride on mower, or hire a contractor to conduct the big cuts required during the year.

After discussions, Cllr. Lamb proposed adoption of the proposed budget, seconded by Cllr. Dennis. 8 for, 1 abstained.

Cllr. Crozier proposed adoption of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Maciejowska.

SO, RESOLVED

506.To approve the F & G.P recommendation for the 2026-27 precept

Cllr. Lamb proposed approving the precept for 2026-27 at £114,466. Seconded by Cllr. Crozier. All in favour.

507.Discussion on this year’s Annual Parish Meeting

The meeting needs to be held between 1st March and 1st June.

Cllr Lamb suggested that the Council may wish to consider refreshing the format for the upcoming meeting. He had read about a Parish that had held a “Celebrating Our Volunteers” event as part of their Annual Parish Meeting. In that event, each organisation had a stand/present at the meeting, and each nominated a member to receive an award from the Chair of the Council.

Cllr Lamb proposed that 2–3 Councillors come together to explore this idea further and report back at the next meeting. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Maciejowska. Cllr Maciejowska volunteered to be involved, and in her absence, it was suggested that Cllr Patterson may also wish to participate.

508.To consider donation request from Youth2Youth

Cllr. Crozier proposed a donation of £250, seconded by Cllr. Lamb. All in favour.

509. Correspondence

1. Email from Wales & West Utilities:

Important information regarding a road closure in Broad Park road. We are connecting a new customer to the gas network, due to the location of the gas main a road closure is required to complete this work quickly and efficiently whilst maintaining the safety of road users, pedestrians and the workforce involved in the project. Broad Park road will be closed from the outside of 77 to 81 on 09/02/2026 for 1 day’s work and up to 5 days reinstatement . An alternative vehicle route will be signposted, and pedestrian access will be maintained during the works. We regret that this work cannot be carried out without causing some disruption and we apologise for any inconvenience we may cause. Your co-operation and patience whilst we carry out this work would be much appreciated.

510. items for the next agenda

The usual items, plus the Annual Parish Meeting.

511. Questions from any members of the public present, at the discretion of the Chair.

A member of the public reported that a salt bag placed on the road from Bere Ferrers to the Bowling Club has been taken. It was noted and the bag will be replaced.

A member of the public also attended the meeting as a spokesperson for a number of residents, to update the Council on the ongoing situation regarding a piece of land adjacent to Norton Farm. A person has been living on the land in temporary accommodation for over 12 months, and there continues to be ongoing anti-social behaviour. Information has been submitted to West Devon Borough Council’s (WDBC) Enforcement and Environmental Health departments; however, residents continue to be passed between departments with no confirmed action taken. Cllr Fife Cook confirmed that he had also been contacted by neighbouring residents and is looking into the matter. He advised that an enforcement notice had been issued, but it had not been

enforced. The spokesperson stated that residents were not aware that any enforcement notice had been issued. It was noted that any continuing incidents of anti-social behaviour should be reported to the Police. All members expressed sympathy for the residents. It was agreed that a letter be sent to Drew Powell and the Environmental Health department stating that no action appears to have been taken and requesting clarification as to why, in an effort to move the matter forward.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.31 pm.

Signed by the Chair of the Council

Signed this date 28th February 2026