

BERE FERRERS PARISH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council held in the Council Chambers, Bere Alston on Tuesday 24th February 2026.

Present

Cllr. R. Leithall	Chair of the Council
Cllr. P. Archer	Cllr. P. Dennis
Cllr. V. Grose	Cllr. B. Lamb
Cllr. J. Maciejowska	Cllr. M. Patterson
Cllr. R. Perry	Cllr. C. Shaw
Cllr. G. Sutton	Cllr. E. Wager

556. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. R. Maycock and Cllr. P. Crozier. Accepted by the Council.

557. Declaration of Interests

None.

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

Cllr. Grose reported that she had received a call from a member of the public regarding the condition of the footpath from Broadpark Road down to the Tamar. The path was very slippery and difficult to walk for some members of the group. Cllr. Grose therefore suggested that it may be helpful to indicate, in the footpath guide, which footpaths routes are easier or more challenging to walk, to assist members of the public in assessing their suitability. It was agreed that this item would be included on the agenda for the next Footpaths & Environment Committee meeting.

It has been reported to Cllr. Dennis that there is broken glass on the ground where the bottle banks in Pilgrim Drive used to be. Could the Council clean up the area? The Clerk advised that this has already been reported and that she had contacted the West Devon Locality Department to arrange clearance. Cllr. Shaw added that he had cleaned the area a few weeks ago.

Cllr. Perry reminded members that he continues to attend the Port of Plymouth Marine Liaison Committee meetings and has several user guides available for members to take away. The Clerk is in the process of arranging for representatives of the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum to attend a future Council meeting to provide members with information about the Forum and the management of the estuary. Cllr. Perry noted that the Harbour Master would also attend the meeting.

559. Chair's Report

The new Parish Hall doors should be on order, and tonight we will consider quotes for the replacement of damaged and blown (double glazed) window panes.

The new Sports Pavilion project planning application has been submitted, and the next stage will be developing a strong business case so that can pursue grant funding.

Three new bench seats are ready to be installed: one has been installed at a new cleared location at Weir Quay, and the others will be installed in Bere Ferrers. The new notice board at Weir Quay has been installed.

Safety improvements are planned at the lower entrance to the Recreation Field, and we will be purchasing a life buoy and throw line for Bere Ferrers Quay in partnership with others.

Security improvements for tools and equipment in and around the Cemetery Hut are nearing completion – security cameras have been installed and are operational.

The prolonged wet weather has created problems with some footpaths, with fallen trees and erosion reported to Devon County Council.

Our Planning Committee has considered several applications this month, including a small self-build proposal supported in line with our Neighbourhood Plan. We are also preparing a response to proposed national planning changes that could reduce democratic oversight of smaller applications — something this Council feels strongly about.

We will be discussing Devon's Local Government Reorganisation consultation this evening. Connectivity, water pressure concerns, and general infrastructure issues have also been raised.

Looking ahead, we have a working group planning preparations for the Annual Parish Meeting proposed theme of a "Bere Parish Celebration".

A brief factual summary before we consider writing to our MP about the Plymouth to London mainline. There are two quite different rail concepts affecting Tavistock.

- The first is (possibly a metro-style) reopening of the Tavistock–Bere Alston branch line, reconnecting Tavistock to Plymouth via the Tamar Valley Line. This is a local transport scheme. Previous central government funding has been withdrawn. Around £2 million of developer contribution funding remains with Devon County Council, but it has not been released for further development work. In practical terms, the scheme is stalled.
- The second is the much larger concept of an inland mainline diversion — upgrading the Bere Alston route to twin track and reinstating the line through Tavistock and Okehampton to Exeter, creating a resilient alternative to the Dawlish coastal section (although this is not the only re-route that has been proposed).

However, formal national resilience studies concluded that all inland diversion routes offered significantly poorer value for money than strengthening the existing Dawlish route, and none was adopted as a preferred alternative. That is why government policy has continued to focus on reinforcing the coastal line instead. Tens of million £'s have already been spent on Dawlish resilience works, yet recent storms demonstrate that vulnerability remains.

So today:

- The local branch reopening is unfunded.
- The strategic inland diversion is not government policy.
- And the Southwest still depends on a single coastal mainline exposed to climate risk.

That is the context in which we need to consider carefully what outcome is realistically achievable, and what outcome we actually wish to advocate for. A local branch reopening between Tavistock and Bere Alston, while currently stalled, is a far smaller and more deliverable scheme than reinstating a full inland mainline. A local branch reopening between Tavistock and Bere Alston, while currently stalled, is a far smaller and more deliverable scheme than reinstating a full inland mainline high-speed diversion to London. Both face significant obstacles, but one sits in the realm of local transport delivery, while the other would require a major national infrastructure decision. Members may therefore wish to reflect on which objective is most feasible, and where our voice is likely to carry most weight?

Cllr Lamb reported that a statement had been released a few weeks earlier stating that no further closed railway lines would be reopened. Following discussion, Members agreed that the letter should be drafted and sent.

560. To receive a report from the County Councillor

Cllr. Fife-Cook had sent his apologies for not attending the meeting.

561. To receive reports from the Borough Councillors

Not present at the meeting. It was noted that both members had not attended meetings for a few months. The Clerk was asked to encourage their attendance at the next Council meeting.

562. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 27th January 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

Matters Arising

Min 487

Following a site visit, it was confirmed that the container can be relocated to a position adjacent to the Cemetery Hut. A tree surgeon is to be contacted to remove a tree located near the Hut and hedging around the container. Discussion took place as to whether the Council would require planning permission to move the container. The Clerk to contact a local Contractor and obtain a quote for widening the road leading up to the Hut.

The Clerk is still waiting on information regarding the reported empty properties she has in the village.

The Clerk is to follow up with Devon County Council Highways regarding the reported blocked drains on Hensbury Lane, Bere Ferrers.

Minute 489

The Clerk is to follow up with Cllr. Fife Cook regarding updates on the actions he raised at the meeting.

Minute 501 (430)

The Manager of the Doctor's Surgery has replied, stating that he is happy for the Council to draw up a wayleave document allowing the InPost Lockers' service to be in place for patients and parishioners. Cllr. Leithall and the Clerk to prepare the document and forward it to the Surgery for approval and signing.

All proposed adoption of the minutes.

SO, RESOLVED

563. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Plans & Highways Committee meeting held on 3rd February 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

Matters Arising

Min 514

Cllr. Dennis requested an amendment to the minutes, as it is incorrect. The reason this year's Victoria Evening is not going ahead is due to the Committee not having enough volunteers to run the event. The decision is unrelated to the Parish Hall already being booked.

Min 520

Cllr. Lamb had heard via Cllr. Graham Reed that following a meeting he attended at West Devon, Neighbourhood plans that are over 5 years are now invalid. Cllr. Lamb has emailed West Devon requesting further clarification.

Cllr. Patterson proposed, subject to the amendment, adoption of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Archer.

SO, RESOLVED

564. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Footpaths & Environment Committee meeting held on 3rd February 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

Matters Arising

Min 527

The debris reported has been cleared.

Min 528 (285)

Via email, Cllr. Fife Cook reported that the Senior Environmental Health Officer is awaiting a quote for a replacement septic tank and associated remedial works on footpath 89. Due to current saturated ground conditions, percolation tests cannot yet be undertaken; a dry spell of at least two weeks is required before these tests can proceed. The field is owned by the Diocese of Exeter, and residents are advised to contact their representatives regarding remedial works. DCC has also expressed an interest in relocating Footpath 89 back to its original alignment within the field. This would align the path with the top and bottom gates and prevent members of the public from having to step around the existing or a future septic tank. DCC has been contacted for an update. The Environmental Health Officer will continue to provide updates to Cllr. Fife Cook.

Min 531

It was noted that bollards have been in place in Pilgrim Drive for the installation of electric car charging points for several weeks, but no further work has been completed. The Clerk to chase.

All agreed to adopt the minutes.

SO, RESOLVED

565. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 11th February 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

Matters Arising

Min 527

Photos of the new benches in Bere Ferrers and the noticeboard in Weir Quay were shared. Cllr. Lamb confirmed that one more bench for Bere Ferrers and a bench/picnic table for the Orchard are on order. All funded by residents and the Tamar National Landscape.

Min 528 (454)

Cllr. Lamb to arrange a meeting with Mr Mitchell, in order to be shown how to tighten up zip wire.

Min 529

The Clerk has requested WDBC empty the bin at Hope Cottage but has not yet received a reply. Members noted that some bins around the Parish were overfull. The Clerk will report the issue to WDBC's Locality Officer.

Min 530

The tyre behind the Pavilion belongs to the local fitness instructor.

Cllr. Leithall to send the measures of the two recreational fields, dog field and the Quarry to the Clerk. The Clerk to then obtain grass cutting quotes.

Following discussion, it was agreed that any issues of ash dieback need be reported to DCC.

Bere Ferrers play park - Cllr. Lamb has removed the top half of the mushroom play equipment and a contact of his is looking into how to weld the top back on.

The following jobs have been requested at the Bere Ferrers allotments:

- Repairing the downpipe from the Social Club building's gutter so it feeds into one of the water cubes.
- Emptying the four plastic water tanks and moving them away from the building to clear the area of vegetation behind them.
- Installing a pipe from the downpipe along the top of the cubes, with outlets to fill all tanks efficiently.

The Clerk has been provided with the details of a local handyman who could carry out the repair work and some allotment holders have volunteered to assist with other tasks.

Minute 532

A photo of the proposed new Pavilion was shared. Cllr Lamb discussed the business plan and stated that, if all Members are in agreement, he will proceed to finalise the plan with the Sports Development Committee.

Minute 533

Via email, Cllr Fife Cook is still waiting on a response from the two Borough Councillors regarding their potential contribution towards the purchase of a life buoy for Bere Ferrers Quay. He has confirmed that he is willing to cover the full cost if they are unable to contribute. The Clerk will follow up on this matter.

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

SO, RESOLVED

566. 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 540 (471)

The Clerk was again asked to put letters on vans who continue to park long term in the car park and keep a record.

All agreed to adopt the minutes.

SO, RESOLVED

567. Review and approve quotes for the replacement of the Parish Hall window panes

Cllr. Dennis has obtained a quote from Tavy Windows Solutions to replace the broken and blown window panes. Other companies he contacted stated they do not replace individual panes, only whole windows.

Cllr. Dennis will be conducting a site visit with another company tomorrow.

After discussion, Cllr. Lamb proposed that approval of a quote be delegated to the Chair of the Council, Cllr. Leithall, Cllr. Dennis, and the Clerk. This was agreed by all members.

568. Discuss on Devon's Local Government Reorganisation Consultation

After discussion, it was agreed that all Members should review the proposals, consider them, and discuss them at the next Full Council meeting. The clerk highlighted that DALC are running two online zoom sessions next week to give all an opportunity to share views, raise any concerns, and hear from fellow members.

569. Update on discussion on this year's Annual Parish Meeting, Bere Parish Celebration

Cllrs Lamb, Maciejowska, and Patterson have been meeting to discuss the event content and the organizations approached to participate, who have indicated their willingness to attend. If the Council agrees to proceed with the event, a date will need to be confirmed. All Members were in favour of the event.

It was agreed that the Parish Council will present a certificate of thanks to each attending organization. Each organization may give a short presentation if they wish. The Council will also display information about all its activities, assets, and the plans for the new Sports Pavilion.

After discussion and considering availability, it was agreed that the event may need to be held on a Saturday, either 9th or 16th May. Cllr Lamb will check availability and confirm the final date.

570. Correspondence

1. Invoice from SmarTrack for purchase and installation of tracker for Ride of Mower.
Total cost incl VAT: £299. All approved.
2. Invoice from Dormakaba to pay 30% upfront for the new Parish hall doors. Total cost: £3,409.42. All approved.

571. items for the next agenda

1. Update on Annual Parish Meeting.
2. Devon's Local Government Reorganisation Consultation
3. Update on Sport Pavilion planning application and business case.

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

There were no members of the public present. There being no further business, the Chair thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Signed by the Chair of the Council

Signed this date 31st March 2026