

## Bere Ferrers Parish Council

At the Annual Parish Meeting, held in the Parish Hall, Bere Alston on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

### Present

Cllr. R. Leithall	Chair of the Council
Cllr. P. Archer	Cllr. P. Crozier
Cllr. V. Grose	Cllr. B. Lamb
Cllr. R. Maycock	Cllr. J. Maciejowska
Cllr. M. Patterson	Cllr. C. Shaw
Cllr. G. Sutton	

### **28. Apologies and welcome and Chair's Report**

Apologies were received from Cllrs. Perry and Wager.

Good evening. I'm Cllr Ralph Maycock, Vice-Chair of the Parish Council. Unfortunately, the Chair is unable to be with us this evening, so I will be delivering the Chair's Report on his behalf. Thank you for attending the Annual Parish Meeting.

It's particularly good to see such a strong turnout this evening, and to welcome not just residents but also the many local organisations who contribute so much to life in our Parish. As you will have seen, this year's meeting is part of a wider Bere Community Celebration—an opportunity to showcase the remarkable range of groups, activities, and volunteers that make this such a vibrant place to live.

We begin this evening with the Chair's Report. This will be followed by some musical entertainment, and then an opportunity to hear from a number of our local organisations, each giving a short introduction to what they do. I hope you will take the time this evening to meet some of those involved

There is also information available this evening about Tamar Energy Community, with flyers for anyone interested in finding out more about the support and initiatives they offer.

This is our opportunity to reflect on the work of your Parish Council over the past year, explain what we have been doing on your behalf, and look ahead.

Much of the Council's work is carried out through its four standing committees, supported by Full Council where decisions are brought together and agreed. While not all of this work is highly visible, it underpins many of the services and facilities residents rely on.

Let me start with Open Spaces, which is perhaps the most visible part of what we do. Over the past year, we have continued to maintain and improve our recreation grounds, play parks, allotments and green spaces. This includes regular safety inspections, repairs, and responding to issues such as damaged equipment, fencing, and drainage.

We have also made progress on longer-term improvements. At Bere Ferrers Orchard, we have worked with the Tavy and Tamar Apple Group to bring the site back into active community use, supported by funding and volunteers.

At the same time, we continue to develop plans for the Recreation Ground Pavilion, a significant project that will require careful planning and funding over the coming years.

Turning to Finance and General Purposes, this is where the Council ensures public money is properly managed and plans responsibly for the future. Over the year, we have set the budget and precept, maintained oversight of our finances, and ensured appropriate reserves are in place.

The Council's finances remain sound. During the past year, total income was around £98,000 and expenditure around £100,000, resulting in a small deficit of approximately £2,400. This was largely due to a number of unexpected one-off costs, including the replacement of a failed CCTV system and additional maintenance work, some of which was partly offset by an insurance claim. Despite this, the Council continues to hold adequate reserves and remains in a stable financial position.

A key focus has been the Parish Hall, which remains central to village life. It continues to be run by Beregen, who do an excellent job in keeping it active and well used. As owners, the Council has invested in its upkeep, including the replacement of the old wooden front doors with new automatically powered glass doors to improve both the appearance and accessibility of the building. The Council continues to explore funding opportunities.

We have also continued to address the long-standing issue of parking in the village centre. In particular, we have been pursuing the potential acquisition of land at Pilgrim Drive for additional parking. This has been a complex process, but we are hopeful of a positive outcome. If successful, the next step will be to secure funding to develop the site into a usable car park. More broadly, the Council continues to invest in its assets, improve systems and security, and seek external funding where possible.

The Planning and Highways Committee plays a different but equally important role. As a Parish Council, we are a statutory consultee on planning applications. We review and comment on proposals, although final decisions are made by West Devon Borough Council. Over the past year, we have continued to assess applications using the Bere Peninsula Neighbourhood Plan to ensure development reflects the character and needs of the community. A significant issue this year was the proposed retail development. While views were mixed locally, the application was refused on appeal, highlighting both the importance of planning policy and the limits of the Parish Council's role. We have also engaged with changes to national planning policy and worked with other councils to ensure that local views continue to be represented. In addition, the Committee has raised highways and transport issues, including bus services. While these sit largely with Devon County Council, we continue to press for improvements.

The Footpaths and Environment Committee focuses on countryside access and environmental matters. Over the year, we have monitored and reported issues affecting footpaths and bridleways, working with Devon County Council to keep routes accessible. Through the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme, we have again secured funding for maintenance work, including summer grass cutting across a number of routes, carried out by our Parish Workman. We have also supported environmental initiatives, including the thermal imaging camera scheme to help residents improve energy efficiency, and worked with partner organisations on wider environmental issues.

All of this work is brought together through Full Council, where key decisions are made. This has included setting the budget and precept, progressing major projects such as the Pavilion and parking proposals, and responding to wider issues including planning policy changes and infrastructure concerns. The Council also continues to act as a voice for the Parish, raising issues such as transport, connectivity and local services with the relevant authorities.

Before I finish, I would like to recognise the effort behind all of this work. The Parish Council is made up entirely of volunteers, and we would like to thank all councillors for their commitment over the past year.

We would also like to thank our Clerk for ensuring the Council operates effectively, and our Parish Workman for maintaining our open spaces and facilities.

We are also grateful to the many community groups and volunteers who work with the Council to support the life of the Parish. In closing, while much of the Council's work takes place behind the scenes, it is focused on maintaining what we have, improving where we can, and planning responsibly for the future. We remain committed to representing the interests of the Parish and ensuring that resources are used carefully and effectively for the benefit of the whole community.

There will now be an opportunity for parishioners to ask questions or raise any matters of interest or concern

## **29. Questions from the public**

Q: Has the Council considered publishing the annual Chair's report in Berelink?

A: The report can be published on the Council's website and, going forward, could also be included in Berelink. The Council would need to liaise with the person responsible for producing Berelink.

Q: With the new housing development to be built by Bunny Homes in Bere Alston, more people will be using the shops in Fore Street. When will the additional parking in Pilgrim Drive be sorted?

A: The Parish Council's acquisition of the land from West Devon Borough Council is taking some time; however, it is progressing. Updates will be provided as and when available.

Q: When the new housing estate by Bunny Homes is built at the top of Bere Alston, will there be a new planning application for the Co-op?

A: The previous Co-op application was refused, and there are currently no plans, as far as the Parish Council is aware, for it to be resubmitted.

Q: The Youth Worker from The Hut stated that, despite the national youth strategy, no funding was being filtered down to rural clubs, like theirs. Other rural parish councils have taken the lead in helping youth clubs; is this something that the Parish Council could get involved with?

A: The Club was asked to follow up with the Council and that representatives are welcome to attend a Council meeting to discuss how they may be able to work together.

### **30. Presentations from Local Community Groups**

List of speakers and organisations who attend the evening and spoke to those present:

Clive Charlton	History Group
Glenys Whelan	St. Andrews Singers
Pat Moss	Play reading
Jenny George	Badminton
Virginia Grose	Rounders
Carol Orlebar	Tennis
Charlotte, Sally and children	Cubs and Scouts
Glenys Whelan	Food bank
Chris	BA Football Club
Adrian Mitchell	Men's breakfast
Brian Lamb	Sports Pavilion
<u>INTERVAL</u>	Refreshments were provided by the WI, with songs sung by the Peninsula Singers
Jane	Peninsula Singers
Kim Tremayne	Bere Crafters
Angela Hooper	Art Group
Melissa Thomas	Youth 2 Youth
Liz Rowley	Language Class
Sue Williams	Bowling Club
Jeanette Englefield	Bere in Bloom
Claire Wingfield	Drama Company
Heather Singleton and Karen Reeves	Tamar and Tavy gig Club
Rob Kirby	Sailing Club
Alan Reid and Sarah Scarlett	Gardening Club
Phil Gallagher	Women's Institute
Graham Reed	Tamar and Tavy Apple Group

List of organisations present at the event, but did not make a presentation:

Yoga and Pilates  
Singing and Ukele  
Bere Ferrers Social Club  
Bere Alston Social Club  
Brownies & Rainbows  
Friends of School

After all the presentations the Council thanked everyone for attending the meeting and closed the meeting at 9.00 pm

Signed by the Chair

Date