

BERE FERRERS PARISH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council held in the Council Chambers, Bere Alston on Tuesday 26th May 2026.

Present

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

59. Apologies

Cllr. P. Archer, Cllr. R. Perry and Cllr. E. Wager sent their apologies. Accepted by the Council.

60. Declaration of Interests

None.

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

Cllr. Dennis - the Judging Day for Bere Alston in Bloom will be Friday 10th July. The theme this year is scarecrows and gnomes.

Cllr. Grose - Footpath 89 will be closed on 5th June to allow sewerage works to take place. The Public Rights of Way Warden, has been notified and will send Cllr. Grose two notices to erect stating that the footpath will be closed on that day. A representative from West Devon Environmental Health will be on site to mediate.

Cllr. Maycock - has heard from notable sources that sycamore trees may become protected trees due to ash dieback. He had been unable to find any confirmation of this online but wished to make the Council aware of what he had heard.

62. Chair of the Council's Report

Cllr. Leithall's report:

I would like to begin by thanking Members for re-electing me as Chair at the Annual Meeting. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend due to a prior commitment, but I am grateful for the confidence placed in me and look forward to continuing to work with you over the coming year.

My thanks to Vice Chair, Cllr Ralph Maycock, for chairing both the Annual Meeting and the Annual Parish Meeting in my absence. Members will have seen that the new glazed entrance doors at Bere Alston Parish Hall have now been installed. As well as providing a significant improvement to accessibility through their electrically actuated operation, they present a more welcoming and modern frontage to one of the Parish's principal community buildings. Alongside this, a number of failed and misted double-glazed units have also been replaced.

Work has also continued on preparations for the next stages of the sports pavilion project and maintaining momentum on wider Council priorities.

However, the most significant event over the past month was this year's Annual Parish Meeting. While the Annual Parish Meeting has always sought to include elements of wider community interest alongside the Council's formal business, this year we chose to build on that approach by inviting local clubs, societies and voluntary organisations to play a role in the event and showcase their contribution to life across the Bere Peninsula. More than thirty organisations took part and attendance exceeded one hundred residents, making this, by all accounts, one of the best attended and most engaged Annual Parish Meetings held in recent years. Particular thanks should go to Cllrs. Brian Lamb, Judy Maciejowska and Margaret Patterson, whose organised the event.

I would especially like to recognise Cllr Brian Lamb, who first suggested broadening the Annual Parish Meeting to celebrate local clubs and societies after seeing a similar idea used elsewhere. It proved to be a great way of encouraging wider community involvement. The success of the meeting demonstrates that there is real value in creating opportunities not only for the Council to report to residents, but also for residents to celebrate and better understand the contribution made by local voluntary groups.

I would also like to record thanks to all the organisations who participated, to the Women's Institute for providing refreshments, to the Peninsula Singers for helping open the event, and to everyone who attended and contributed to making it such a positive occasion.

Feedback since the meeting has been very positive, and I hope Members will agree that we should look at carrying some of these ideas forward into future years.

The Clerk confirmed she is adding the details of the clubs/organisations to the Council's website. Cllr. Lamb confirmed one group had been missed – the Bere Alston Model Rail Club and they meet the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Bere Alston Bowling Club. Cllr Maciejowska confirmed that a press release and photographs have been sent to the Tavistock Times.

63. To receive a report from the County Councillor

Cllr. Fife-Cook's had sent his apologies. The Clerk confirmed that he is still chasing Devon County Council for information on whether any of the drains within the Parish flow directly into estuary or rivers

64. To receive reports from the Borough Councillors

Cllr. Blackman:

- West Devon Borough Council intends to divide the unused piece of land on Chapel Street into two lots and invite closed bids for the leases. She has received no further update regarding timescales, how the closed bidding process will operate, but will continue to chase for further information. However, the covenant will be removed, allowing the land to be used as the leaseholders see fit, although no building development will be permitted. Cllr Maycock asked whether, in principle, the Parish Council could submit bids for the leases as part of the closed bidding process.
- Is in discussion with West Devon Borough Council's (WBDC) Planning Department regarding an enforcement case.
- She can provide the contact details of an individual in Weir Quay who may be interested in assisting with the Parish Council's Road Warden Scheme.
- The installation of the EV chargers in Pilgrim Drive is still ongoing. She has been in discussions with WBDC and advised members that a significant amount of work is taking place behind the scenes to get this resolved. It has taken nearly five years for these two chargers to be installed, and it is still not known what charging speed will be provide. The Contractor may now be in breach of contract. A further update is expected in June.
- There is a Devon Matters meeting in Tavistock on 27th May. Cllr. Blackman is unable to attend and wondered if Cllr. Saxby could? Cllr. Saxby to check if she can.
- West Devon Borough Council have elected a new Mayor, Cllr. Chris Edmonds.
- An update from WBDC on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is due on 2 June.
- The next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting is scheduled for 23 June. If any members wish to raise an item for consideration, they should forward it to her.

Cllr. Saxby updated members that she had recently returned from a period of leave and was keen to engage with the Parish Council to gain a current understanding of the needs of the parish and its residents. She expressed a particular interest in opportunities for economic development.

Requested an update on the proposed additional car parking at Pilgrim Drive? Cllr Leithall and the Clerk advised that the project is progressing and that the solicitor appointed by the Council is currently undertaking the necessary legal work.

65. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 26th April 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

Matters Arising

Min 694

Cllr. Shaw stated the pot holes in the Parish Hall carpark will be filed in tomorrow. (27th May).

It had been agreed at the recent F & G.P meeting that a sign be erected in the Memorial Garden requesting people respect the area.

A letter was not placed on a van that was consistently parked in the marked bay near Sarah Park. It was agreed that the situation should be checked, and if the issue is ongoing, the Clerk will issue a letter.

Min 699 (623)

The Clerk has written to the local MP highlighting the importance of reconsidering the reopening of the Tavistock rail line.

Minute 699 (623 (562))

An addendum has been sent to the Doctor's Surgery and they have queried why they would now have to pay £100 wayleave fee. After discussions, Cllr. Leithall agreed to draft a reply to the Surgery.

Min 699 (627 (612))

The Clerk is to arrange for a local carpenter and the Workman to meet and review the requirements to repair the accessible public toilet door.

Min 701 (654)

Cllr Grose stated that she could not find the grading system on footpaths on the Cornwall Council website. It was noted that this information is available on the RSPB and Ramblers websites. Cllr Sutton stated that he would be making suggestions at the next Footpaths & Environment meeting on how the Council could grade the Parish's local footpaths.

Min 701 (655)

In view of Cllr Blackman's comments regarding the ongoing delay in the installation of the EV chargers at Pilgrim Drive, Cllr Lamb stated that this should be forwarded to Cllr Fife-Cook for him to look into too.

Cllr. Leithall proposed adoption of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Maycock. All in favour.

SO, RESOLVED

66. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Plans & Highways Committee meeting held on 5th May 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All approved the minutes.

Matters Arising

Min 716

Harling Farm's application, 0035/25/FUL, was refused at the WDBC Committee meeting held on 12 May 2026. Cllr. Crozier, who attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the applicant, stated that members of the Committee turned it down following the Planning Officer's recommendation. The vote was 6–4. He stated that the Planning Officer had said to him that the application would have been approved if the word "rural" had been used instead of "agricultural". Cllr. Leithall suggested there might have been other reasons for the refusal. Cllr. Maycock suggested sending a letter of complaint to WDBC regarding the refusal.

Cllr. Lamb stated that, at the next Plans & Highways Committee meeting, members should consider writing to the Planning Department to state that the Parish Council is a statutory consultee, as are five or six other organisations. However, it appeared that environmental and one or two other organisations were given more weight than the Parish Council, which represents all the people of the parish. He asked whether the Planning

Department could provide further clarification on this matter. To be added to the next Plans & Highways agenda.

Cllr. Maycock proposed adoption of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Patterson.

SO, RESOLVED

67. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Annual General meeting held on 5th May 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

Matters Arising

Min 6

The HR Committee will be discussed further in the meeting.

All agreed adoption of the minutes.

68. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 12th May 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

Matters Arising

Min 30

Cllr Grose stated that there are now more caravans located in a field off Collytown. She will mark them on a the map and send it to the Clerk, who will report the matter to Planning Enforcement.

Min 33

A date is to be arranged for Cllr Shaw and the Workman to conduct a site visit to review the issues highlighted in the ROSPA safety reports.

Min 36

The cutting of the Bere Ferrers allotment path is on the Workman's job list. In view of the current hot weather, the Clerk will discuss with the Workman the possibility of adjusting his working hours to avoid the hottest parts of the day if the conditions persist.

Min 40

Graffiti remains on the Openreach boxes. If paint were supplied, the Council would be willing to paint over it. The graffiti on National Grid property also remains in place.

Cllr. Shaw proposed adoption of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Patterson. All in favour.

SO, RESOLVED

69. To approve and adopt the minutes from the F & G.P meeting held on 19th May 2026 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

All agreed to approve the minutes.

Matters Arising

Min 51

Cllr Dennis advised that the chair would cost approximately £1,000, excluding VAT, and that there could be difficulties if individuals trained in its use were not present in the building when required. Cllr Shaw was asked to enquire with the local Fire Service as to whether such a chair is required and if required, what training is required. Cllr Dennis also stated that both the offices and Council chamber have fire doors, allowing individuals to remain in place while awaiting the Fire Brigade.

Min 52

Cllr Dennis stated that there are two ways to lock and unlock the paddle; however, following review of an email received from the supplier in March, the diagram appears to indicate that the current “screwdriver” method installed should not be used. He therefore suggested that the Council contact the supplier to request a modification of the door, removing the current locking mechanism and replacing it with a turning knob.

Min 53

The solicitor reviewing the extension of the lease at the Parish Hall with Beregen has emailed stating that it would be best to end the existing lease by deed of surrender and, at the same time, grant a new lease. A quote for this work has been provided. After discussion, it was agreed to also contact the solicitor acting on behalf of the Council in relation to the piece of land at Pilgrim Drive to obtain their quote for extending the lease.

Min 54

Vans continue to park in the car park. The Clerk is to resend letters requesting that this activity cease. It was also noted that it had been reported that people may be sleeping in one of the campervans.

Cllr. Crozier proposed adoption of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Maycock. All in favour.

70. To receive the Internal Audit Report 2025/26

All agreed to accept the report.

71. To approve and sign the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

All agreed to approve the statement. Cllr. Leithall, as Chair of the Council to sign the statement.

72. To approve and sign the Accounting Statements 2025/26

All agreed to approve the statements. Cllr. Leithall, as Chair of the Council to sign the statement.

73. To approve bank and CCLA Investment reconciliation ending 31st March 2026

All noted and agreed to approve.

74. To note the dates of the Exercise of Public Rights as from Tuesday 3 June 2026 to Monday 14 July 2026

Dates noted.

75. To note the Statement of Variances for 2025/26

The Clerk explained the statement of variances for Box 3 and 6 on the Accounting Statements. It was requested that going forward the F & G.P Committee should review the variances before presenting to Full Council.

76. Discussion on the Council's HR Committee

Cllr Leithall reported that, following the election of members to the HR Committee at the recent Annual Meeting of the Council, a review of the HR Committee Terms of Reference at the recent F&GP Committee meeting identified that provisions relating to staffing governance contained in previous versions of the Council's Standing Orders did not appear to have been carried forward into the current version.

These earlier provisions included arrangements relating to staffing governance, including staffing sub-committees, disciplinary and grievance procedures, appeals arrangements, committee membership and the management of conflicts of interest. Their apparent omission had created uncertainty regarding the intended governance structure and the relationship between the F&GP Committee and the HR Committee, including whether membership of the HR Committee should be drawn solely from members of the F&GP Committee or from the Council as a whole, as had occurred at the Annual Meeting.

Cllr Leithall emphasised that the matter concerned governance arrangements rather than the actions or suitability of any individual councillor. It was noted that the Council appeared to have acted properly on the basis of the information and governing documents available at the time. The issue for consideration was whether the current staffing governance arrangements accurately reflected the Council's intentions and whether they should be clarified, revised or reinstated to ensure that responsibilities and membership arrangements were clearly defined going forward.

Cllr Leithall proposed that the Council note that uncertainty had arisen regarding staffing governance arrangements and the constitution of the HR Committee, and that the F&GP Committee be requested to review the staffing governance framework, Terms of Reference and any associated Standing Order provisions, and bring recommendations back to Full Council for determination. It was further proposed that the existing membership of the HR Committee continue on an interim basis pending completion of that review and any subsequent decision of the Council.

Cllr Patterson queried why the review should be undertaken by the F&GP Committee and whether membership of the HR Committee should be restricted to members of that committee.

In response, Cllr Leithall stated that the current arrangements appeared to treat the HR Committee as a sub-committee of the F&GP Committee and noted that the committee's remit included matters relating to staffing, including salaries, disciplinary issues and grievances. It was also noted that all councillors may attend meetings of the F&GP Committee and contribute to discussions, although only appointed committee members are entitled to vote. Members further noted that the Council may wish to consider whether HR Committee membership should be open to all councillors.

Following discussion, Cllr Leithall withdrew his proposal. Instead, it was agreed that the roles, responsibilities, governance arrangements and membership of the HR Committee would be included as an agenda item for consideration at the next meeting of Full Council. However, it was agreed that the existing membership of the HR Committee continue on an interim basis pending completion of that review and any subsequent decision of the Council.

77. Update from the Sports Development Committee

Cllr Lamb updated members that five contractors had been invited to submit budget estimates for the construction of the new Sports Pavilion, and that the quotations received would be considered at the next Sports Development Committee meeting on 8 June.

Cllr Lamb also confirmed that the committee would be split into two groups: a Sports Development Committee and a separate group focusing on the construction of the pavilion. Cllr Grose asked whether another member could join the group, and Cllr Maciejowska indicated that she would be willing to join.

Cllr. Grose confirmed that the Rounders group will start up again on Wednesday 29th April at the Bere Alston recreational field from 7 pm.

78. Discussion regarding the Council entering the Bere Alston Carnival 2027.

The Chair of the Carnival Committee had emailed to thank the Council for use of the recreational field and amenities during the Carnival weekend and looked forward to the Council's carnival entry next year. After discussion all agreed to submit an entry, pending the subject/theme for the Carnival.

79. Correspondence

1. Invoice from Viking Office UK Ltd – items of stationery/A4 paper - £74.57.

Cllr. Leithall approved payment, seconded by Cllr. Patterson. All in agreement.

2. Bere Ferrers Community Orchard Update – the next work party will be on Sunday 28th June commencing at 10 am. All members are welcome to come along and help.

80. items for the next agenda

1. HR Committee.

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

A member of the public wished to highlight the poor condition of both the entrance to the Bere Alston allotment field and the access track. It was reported that many vehicles are now bottoming out while travelling along the track. The member also requested that bait boxes be placed near the top of the allotments on the left-hand side, as there is evidence of rat activity in the area. The Clerk was asked to pass this request to the

Workman for action. It was agreed that the condition of the track would be discussed at the next Open Spaces Committee meeting.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.29 pm.

Signed by the Chair of the Council

Signed this date 30th June 2026