

BERE FERRERS PARISH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held in the Council Chambers on Tuesday 22nd September 2026 at 7.30 pm.

Present:

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

235. Apologies

Cllr. V. Grose sent her apologies. Accepted by the Committee.

236. Declaration of Interest

none

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

Cllr. Crozier reported that Denham Bridge had been closed that day, but there was insufficient advance notices of it being closed. Several vehicles, including his own, became caught on a narrow section of the road, causing difficulties for vehicles trying to pass and obstructing a first responder who was travelling to an emergency.

Cllr. Dennis reported that this was the second time the bridge had been closed without adequate advance warning notices. All agreed that a greater consideration needs to be given to local residents and for appropriate signage to be placed at key junctions to alert drivers to road closures before they entered the affected route.

Cllr. Lamb requested an update on the transfer of land at Pilgrim Drive to the Parish Council. The Clerk reported that the transfer was progressing. The Council's solicitor had been in contact with LiveWest and would now liaise with West Devon Borough Council regarding the transfer.

Cllr. Dennis reported that Mr Graham Reed had resigned as a Director of Beregen and, as he was the sole Director, a replacement would need to be appointed to enable Beregen to continue operating; otherwise, the organisation may fold. He suggested the proposed extension of the Parish Hall lease be placed on hold until a new Director was appointed.

Cllr. Lamb asked how long Beregen could continue without a Director. It was advised perhaps two months, provided that steps were being taken to appoint a replacement. In the meantime, Cllr. Dennis would step in on an interim basis in his capacity as Beregen's Secretary. It was agreed to include the matter on the agenda for the Full Council meeting on 29 September 2026.

Cllr. Dennis raised the ongoing issue of parking in the Parish Hall car park, particularly where hall hirers were unable to find a parking space. It was noted that a number of vehicles, including large vans and camper vans, continued to use the car park despite previous warning letters having been issued. Members agreed that issuing further warning letters without subsequent enforcement action was unlikely to resolve the problem. Various enforcement options were discussed, including the possible use of a third-party parking enforcement company. It was agreed that advice would be sought on the legal options available to the Council to enforce parking restrictions within the car park, together with information on the potential use and cost of a third-party enforcement company. The matter would be included on the agenda for the next Full Council meeting for further consideration.

Cllr. Shaw reported that he had been notified of a large crack in a wall adjacent to the footpath between West View Road and Chapel Street, which could pose a risk to walkers. The Clerk agreed to establish whether the route was a public right of way and, if so, report the matter to the Public Rights of Way Officer, who may be able to contact the wall owner. If not, the Council would seek to establish ownership of the wall.

A concern was also raised to Cllr. Shaw regarding security at the Parish Hall following an occasion during the summer when the emergency doors had been left open while a children's dance class was taking place. It was acknowledged that the doors had likely been opened due to the hot weather. It was suggested that the Hall's Conditions of Hire could be amended to make hirers aware of their responsibility for security when doors are opened during an event or activity.

238. Matters arising from the meeting held on the 21st July 2026

The minutes have been adopted and approved at the Full Council meeting held on 28th July 2026.

Matters Arising

Min 171 (115 (45(65))

The Clerk reported that the Doctor's Surgery had agreed to pay the wayleave fee. The addendum to the Doctor's Surgery right of way deed now requires signing by the Council and then forwarded to the Surgery for them to sign.

Min 115 (52)

New Parish Hall Doors – A new Project Manager had been appointed and has requested an online meeting to discuss the outstanding issue with the Parish Hall door locking mechanism. Final payment would be made once the required change had been completed, as the mechanism currently installed was not what the Council had originally requested.

Min 182

A site visit attended by Cllr. Patterson, Cllr. Shaw and the Clerk took place together with members of the Bere Alston in Bloom Group, regarding their request to install a water tank by the mosaic garden. It was agreed not to support the original request due to the size of the tank and the extent of vegetation that would need to be removed to accommodate it.

Alternative locations and options were discussed, including the possible use of smaller tanks which would have less impact on the surrounding vegetation. It was confirmed that the water supply would continue to come from the existing private spring. The Group to consider the alternatives discussed and return to the Council with a revised proposal.

239. To accept the September 2026 accounts for payment

Cllr. Lamb proposed accepting the accounts, seconded by Cllr. Maycock. All in favour.

240. To accept the F & G.P Detailed Receipt and Payment report ending 31st August 2026

Cllr. Maycock proposed acceptance of the report, seconded by Cllr. Leithall. All in favour.

241. To accept the bank reconciliation ending 31st August 2026

Cllr. Maycock proposed acceptance, seconded by Cllr. Leithall.

242. To consider and agree arrangements for the maintenance and planting at Bere Ferrers War Memorial and Shelley's Well, including liaison with relevant local community groups and residents.

The recent clearance of vegetation around Shelley's Well was discussed. It was noted that local residents had voluntarily maintained and planted the area for a number of years and that the Council had previously acknowledged and thanked them for their work.

It was explained that the clearance had been undertaken following concerns regarding vegetation around the structure and a request to clear weeds from the adjacent drainage channel. It had been stated at the last week's Open Spaces meeting, that there had been insufficient communication with the residents who had been maintaining the area prior to the work being undertaken, and an apology had been given.

Members discussed the future maintenance of Shelley's Well and the nearby War Memorial. Particular consideration was given to whether a Virginia Creeper should be grown on the well. After further discussions, Cllr. Leithall and Cllr. Lamb agreed to meet with the local residents to discuss and establish a clearer arrangement for future maintenance of the area going forward. The Clerk was asked to investigate the process for applying to have the Well designated as a listed building.

243. To elect three members to the HR Sub-Committee.

Cllr. Crozier, Cllr Maycock and Cllr. Shaw were nominated and, following a vote, were duly elected to the Committee.

It was agreed that the HR Committee would meet at 7.00 pm on 20 October 2026, prior to the next F & G.P meeting, to consider the agreed salary increase and other relevant HR matters.

244. To review and approve Equality & Diversity Policy.

The Equality and Diversity Policy was reviewed. Following consideration of the amendments made to tailor the policy to the Parish Council, it was proposed, seconded and agreed to adopt the policy.

245. To review and approve Sick Absence Policy.

Members considered the draft Sickness Absence Policy and discussed how its provisions would interact with employees' existing contracts of employment, particularly in relation to occupational sick pay entitlement and the period over which entitlement is calculated.

It was agreed not to adopt the policy at this stage. The Clerk to review the employment contracts to ensure that the sickness absence provisions were clear, consistent and up to date with current legislation, with the matter to be considered further by the HR Committee.

246. To review and approve a quotation for repairs to the accessible door at the public toilets

The quotation for the replacement of the accessible toilet door was considered. The work included removal of the existing door and frame as required, the supply and installation of a new solid plywood door and frame, new hinges and a RADAR lock.

Members considered that the new door would require additional protection against vandalism and requested that the contractor provide a revised quotation to include a metal covering to the door.

Members were supportive of the proposed works in principle, and it was agreed that the revised quotation would be presented to Full Council for approval.

247. To consider a request for the Pavilion public toilet to remain open throughout the year.

A request to keep the public toilet at the Sports Pavilion open throughout the year was considered. The toilet is currently open from April until the end of October.

Members discussed the additional costs associated with extending the opening period, including cleaning, consumables and electricity, together with the likely level of usage during the winter months.

Following discussion, it was agreed not to extend the opening period due to the additional costs involved and the anticipated low level of usage during the winter months. The toilet would therefore continue to operate on its current seasonal basis.

248. Correspondence

A resident has requested for signage to be erected in the area behind the Council Offices asking people not to play ball games, play loud music or consume alcohol after 11.00 pm. The request followed concerns regarding incidents of late-night noise and anti-social behaviour during the summer months.

Members discussed and it was agreed that additional signage was unlikely to deter those responsible for the anti-social behaviour and therefore not be installed at this time. It was noted that the area was covered by CCTV and that any further incidents should be reported to the Police.

249. Agenda items for the next meeting

Aside from the usual items, no additional items were put forward.

250. Questions from the public, 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 the meeting and declared the meeting closed at 8.57 pm

Signed by the Chair

Dated 29th September 2026