

## MORCHARD BISHOP PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 2 February 2026 at 7.00pm

### At Morchard Bishop Memorial Hall

**Present:** Simon Baker, (Chair), Dawn Parkhouse (Vice Chair), Sarah Gillbard, David Grant, Andy Hankins, Stephen Leese, Les Partridge, Sheila Sinclair, Debbie Ticehurst, Sarah Vere, County Councillor Steve Keable, District Councillor Helen Tuffin, and David Parker (Parish Clerk).

1. **Apologies:** David Gillbard, District Councillor Mark Jenkins.
2. **Members of the Public** – No Members of the Public attended.
3. **Academy Head of Morchard Bishop Church of England Primary School** – Hanah Bancroft introduced herself. She had been Head of the Morchard Bishop Primary School since Easter 2025. It was her third headship in eleven years and she had been teaching for 20 years. The community feel about the school, the staff and the children were what had attracted her to the school. In the first term she had watched and listened. In September, her second term she had started making the changes she perceived were necessary. The list of changes were in response to parent and community feedback. Last term there were some bumps in the road due to staff absences. She was pleased with the enhanced curriculum which would include the school putting on “Morchard’s Got Talent”. The school newsletter was full of joy.

Ms Bancroft made the following points in relation to Councillors’ questions: Similar to most public services the biggest issue was the budget. There was no flexibility in the academy to offer additional staff so that Ms Bancroft would not have to teach full time to cover the staff absences. The Academy Trust was already in concerning financial deficit. It was not possible for the school to leave the Trust. There was a national demographic problem which would see in September, the school only welcoming 9 children into the Reception Class, some schools would not see any new starters. With regard to wrap-around care, the school announced in September that it was running in deficit and fees were consequently raised. A lot of the children who had been attending the after-school club last year were in year 6, consequently they left at the end of the summer term. In the lower classes, the children appeared to have parents who could work from home and therefore did not need their children to attend the after-school club. The deficit for the wrap-around care was predicted to be £6,000 per year. The Care provision had therefore been reduced by 30 minutes at the end of the day in order to bring the deficit down. This had been hugely unpopular and the letters of complaint that Ms Bancroft had received were personal and unpleasant. The Trust had agreed to write off the past deficit and were now recruiting. There were two interested applicants. It was understood that another local school listed the cleaner as the second person in the building but Ms Bancroft felt that was not an appropriate way to staff the after school club. 10 children attended the first hour of after-school club dwindling to 2. An external provider had been brought in to run outside sports but there had been no take-up and she had had to pay them off. If volunteers were to step forward all they would need to do would be to complete a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) application and to provide a character reference. It had been agreed by the trust that the club would run in this form until the end of the Summer Term. It cost £15,000 a year to run the wrap around care. Hannah Bancroft agreed to send the Clerk the Financial details.

#### 8. **County and District Councillors’ Headlines**

Councillor Steve Keable’s report was circulated in advance of the meeting. Steve said that if Councillors had anything urgent to raise with him, then they should phone him. He couldn’t pick up e-mails to his County Councillor e-mail address whilst on the move. He was receiving 90 e-mails per day between his County and District roles. He had had a productive two hour meeting with the Devon Highways Liaison Officer. He had responded in relation to positioning of the VAS sign and would respond with regard to drains and finger posts shortly. He would also process our request for locality funding towards the VAS sign. The problems relating to roads across Devon stemmed from 2014/15 when £25m was taken out of the budget which had been for Edge ploughing and rural roads.

Councillor Helen Tuffin’s report was circulated in advance of the meeting. It contained information about the recycling of batteries, that their positive ends needed to be taped, placed in a clear plastic bag and left on top of recycling boxes. The District Council were holding drop-in sessions for businesses to learn about the changes to business rates. Helen requested that the Parish Councillors took part in the survey about Libraries.

4. **The minutes** of the Parish Council Meeting held on 5 January 2026 were approved - Proposed: Dawn Parkhouse, seconded: Sheila Sinclair - carried unanimously.

**5. Matters Arising (not dealt with elsewhere in the minutes):**

- The Clerk had written to the Devon Highways Liaison Officer to request that "Danger – ICE" signs be placed at the top at bottom of the hill on Canns Mill Road
- Simon reported that he had spoken to the Clerk and the Emergency Plan was more advanced than he had realised.
- The Clerk had written to a neutral person to ask them to act as a Mediator in a dispute within the village, **he awaited a reply.**
- The Clerk had sent a letter stating the Parish Council's support for the project to SMATCH the group raising funds to restore and improve the Parish Church. **Andy Hankins would fit a new digital timer for the outside lighting of the church tower once the weather was dry enough to make it safe to fit.**
- The Chairman had sent a holding letter to the group of parents who were concerned about the reduction in wrap-around care at the Primary school.
- The Clerk had brought to the attention of the Devon Highways Officer the dangerous state of the block paving at Corner Close – **he awaited a response.**

**6. Finance.**

A cashflow table for February was circulated which explained the income and expenditure figures for January/February. Expenditure for February was £2,152.73 on the main account, nothing on the Reserve account and nothing on the footpaths account. Funds at the end of January before payment of these invoices stood at: Reserve Account, £9,846.73; Current Account £10,097.50; P3 Account £3,627.69.

Current Account Receipts and Invoices to be paid:

British Gas Energy	Outside lighting of the Church	£ 27.75 Direct Debit
David Parker	Clerk's Salary – Oct - Dec	£1071.60 BACS
HMRC	Clerk's Tax	£ 20.40 BACS
David Parker	Expenses – Printer Ink	£ 32.98 BACS
Churchyard Committee	Annual Grant	£1000.00 BACS

The Current account stands at £7,944.77 after payment of these invoices, the Reserve account stands at £9,846.73 including funds for Jubilee Funds (£113.46), DAAT (£150.48), Clock Face fund (£613.99), Election Expenses (£4,000), and the P3 account stands at £3,627.69.

Stephen Leese proposed, and David Grant seconded that these invoices be paid and the Financial report accepted – carried unanimously.

**7. Planning**

26/00107/LBC	Listed Building Consent for the replacement of 6 windows and 3 doors	12 Fore Street, MB
--------------	--	--------------------

After Discussion: Sarah Gillbard proposed that this application be SUPPORTED, Les Partridge seconded the proposal and it was CARRIED.

25/01003/PNCOU <b>For information</b>	Prior Notification for the change of use of agricultural building to dwelling under Class Q <b>Appeal to the Secretary of State against the decision of MDDC to refuse the application</b>	Land and Building at NGR279701 105633 New Buildings Sandford
--	---	--

Planning: decisions / appeals / withdrawals:

25/01670/CLU <b>Refused</b>	Certificate of lawfulness for the replacement of roof materials; replacement of double barn doors with garage door and replacement of 2 doors.	Land and Buildings at NGR 275295 104685 Noahs Ark, Morchard Road
--------------------------------	--	--

25/01734/HOUSE Granted	Erection of steel framed garage/store following demolition of existing wooden barn.	Sharland House, Morchard Bishop
---------------------------	---	---------------------------------

#### 9. Correspondence not dealt with elsewhere in the meeting:

- Dragon Wi-Fi – mobile phone coverage in Devon Parishes – **Stephen Leese would send his “Not-Spot” report to the South West Business Lead at Dragon Wi-Fi.**
- A Mobile Pizza Stall would be coming to Morchard Bishop on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> February.
- MDDC – was holding a Free Business Rates Information event for local firms on Tuesday 17 February 2026 between 10.30am and 5.00pm. **This information was to be added to the News section of the Parish Council Website.**
- Playing Field Association – had asked for confirmation of the nominated Parish Council Trustee – it was agreed that **David Gilbard should be contacted to confirm that he was willing to continue in this role.**
- DCC - Resurfacing works on the A377 Road from Nymet Bridge Cross to Bury Bridge LAPFORD between Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February and Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March weeknights only between 19.00hrs and 06.00hrs. *Note: - This is in addition to the A377 being closed for tree cutting works at Eggesford Forest between 9 February and 27 February – day time .*
- MDDC – Invitation to Planning Training for Town and Parish Councils - Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026 from 6.00pm – 8.30pm – Simon Baker and Stephen Leese said they would join on-line – **The Clerk will notify MDDC.**
- Mid Devon District Council were consulting on their Caravan site and mobile homes policy. The closing date for the consultation was 8<sup>th</sup> April 2026.
- Planting at Belstone View – A resident brought to the attention of the Parish Council his correspondence with the Developer of Belstone View regarding the planting scheme. **The Clerk was asked to bring the concerns of the Parish Council about the wooden fence to the attention of the Developer.**

#### 10. Ongoing Matters:

- a) Roads, Signage, Hedges, Potholes, Footpaths and Mud on roads, Road Wardens and Finger Posts: **The railway bridge at Morchard Road was showing further signs of subsidence.** A pot-hole by the Devonshire Dumpling was dangerous to Vehicles turning towards Morchard Bishop. The Road damage at Swannywell Hill had been drawn to the attention of Cllr Steve Keable to raise with the highways officer. There was a discussion as to whether the work of the pot-hole team was stopping Devon Highways from repairing pot-holes in our parish. Once the weather improved Sarah Gillbard would set a regular day for pot-hole repairs and contact residents in the area where she planned to be working. – A meeting of Road Wardens would be held just before work commenced again. **The Parish Council and Pot Hole team needed a regular update from the Highways Officer or Councillor Steve Keable as to what work was due to be carried out. Two cones would be placed on Swannywell Hill after the Devon County Council Inspection.** Cllr Keable to be informed that the Parish Council needed a response following his meeting with the Highways Officer on 4 February 2026. The Parish Council gave a vote of thanks to Sarah and David Gillbard for clearing the flood in a garden at The Green. It was noted that water ran into that garden from north, south and east and that the drains were not working properly.
- b) Accidents and Incidents: Nothing to report.
- c) Defibrillators – All checked and in working order, the Pads at the Chapel need replacing.
- d) Emergency Plan – Simon and David were discussing the Emergency Plan.
- e) Neighbourhood Plan – No progress.
- f) Parking at Polson Hill – Vehicles have again been seen on the grass. – **It was agreed clear the mud to expose the curbs and to purchase two “No Parking” signs.**
- g) Trustees for Memorial Hall – Anton Heal, the Chairman of the Memorial Hall Committee had confirmed with the Charity Commission and their own Constitution that whoever is on the Parish Council at the time is automatically a Trustee of the Memorial Hall.

11. **Crediton Area Association of Local Councils Meeting Report** – Next meeting would be on Monday 9 February – the Clerk would attend.

12. **Carer’s Café** – 10 Carers attended the first meeting, it had a good vibe. It would continue on the second Friday of each month and was a good opportunity for the carers to pass information to each other. Thanks were passed on to Debbie and Sheila for developing this initiative., Thanks were also passed to Sarah Gillbard and Emma Heal for the refreshments and Cakes.

13. **Governance Documents** – Debbie Ticehurst proposed that all the Governance Documents be approved en-masse. Sheila Sinclair seconded the proposal and it was carried. Simon Baker, proposed that next year each Councillor takes one document to review and report back on. The Parish Council agreed to look at

Cloud storage for the back up of the Parish Council Documents, particularly the Financial Documents. There would be spot checks in future on the financial summary by reference to bank statements.

14. **Village Coffee Morning – Parish Council duty on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2026** – Debbie, Dawn and the Clerk volunteered to attend on behalf of the Council and Stephen Leese confirmed that he and Frances would be there also to support as did Sarah Vere. Those Parish Councillors who had not previously given prizes for the raffle were encouraged to provide them.
15. **Trustees and Village Organisations Reports**
- Sustainable Morchard – Numbers of members were dwindling – they were now only six. There would be a seed swap on 7<sup>th</sup> March and a Wilding Film on 14<sup>th</sup> April. They did not have enough people to do the litter pick at MorFest – but would set up the recycling.
  - Memorial Hall – There had been no meeting of the Memorial Hall Committee since the last Parish Council meeting.
  - Morchard Bishop Playing Fields – A Premises Licence would now be applied for by the Playing Fields Association and would include the Bowls Club and the Pavilion.
  - School – Further to the report from the Head of the School earlier, a discussion ensued. The Parish Council agreed that the School should be regarded as a community asset. It was noted that no further complaints had been received recently and no parents had attended either of the past two parish council meetings.
  - Churchyard – Nothing to report.
  - Parochial Church Council (PCC) – Nothing to report
16. **Items for Future Meetings** (Note – items in this section cannot be discussed – merely scheduled for a future meeting).
- **MorFest 26 to go on the March agenda.**
  - A Councillor reported the view of one resident that the bus service was unreliable.
  -
- Meeting Closed at 8.58pm

The next meeting of Morchard Bishop Parish Council will be on **Monday 2 March 2026** at the Memorial Hall **at 7.00pm** where we will consider our Village Assets and their Maintenance.