

MORCHARD BISHOP PARISH COUNCIL

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

At Morchard Bishop Memorial Hall

Present: Simon Baker, (Chair), Dawn Parkhouse (Vice Chair), David Gillbard, Sarah Gillbard, David Grant, Stephen Leese, Sheila Sinclair, Debbie Ticehurst, County Councillor Steve Keable, District Councillor Mark Jenkins, and David Parker (Parish Clerk).

1. **Apologies:** Andy Hankins, Les Partridge, Sarah Vere, District Councillor Helen Tuffin.
2. **Members of the Public :-** Rev. Peter Brown from Emmanuel Chapel and the Ringsash Circuit attended the Parish Council meeting to introduce himself. In addition to Morchard Bishop he also looks after Coplestone, Black Dog and Witheridge Parishes. His Licence was for five years but he hoped that would be his minimum term of office. Mr Steve Jeffrey appeared before the Parish Council to mention three things: (i) The land upon which Belstone View had been developed had been his land. The fields opposite were bought by Mr Jeffrey in 2014, and an overage had been put on that land by Mid Devon District Council (MDDC). Part of the land had been used as a surface water attenuation pond to slow the run off further downstream. Mr Jeffrey had been advised by a Planning Officer at MDDC that planning permission was likely to be given on the piece of land between the Doctors' Surgery and the lane to the water treatment plant because it was within the village settlement area. Outline permission would be sought for a linear row of properties between the surgery and the lane with the entrance being opposite The Mance. A maximum of nine houses would be built and therefore did not attract rules relating to biodiversity net gain, the development could also use the services that the developers had already laid. (ii) A planning application utilising Q permission would be made for the barn on Polson Hill opposite Pepperlake Cottage and Denewood. The entrance to the property would be off Broadgate Lane by the Pound. (iii) By the attenuation pond near the Doctor's Surgery there was a triangle of land that ran along the field to the hedge, Mr Jeffrey would be content to offer the land to the Parish Council to use as a Community Orchard. **The Parish Council voted to hold a site visit there to assess the area.** Mr David Wallis spoke in relation to the Premises Licence Application that the Morchard Bishop Playing Fields Association (MBPFA) had applied for in respect of the Clubhouse and Playing Fields. He stated that he was a Member of the Sports and Social Club and was aware that the Parish Council could only have regard to the Licensing Objectives. Mr Wallis wanted to address the Parish Council on two points: (i) the Application for a Licence and (ii) How would the Sports and Social side operate in the future. The MBPFA had included an article in the Morchard Messenger that had stated that anyone from the community could purchase alcohol from the bar, in fact, anyone from outside the community could purchase alcohol as no proof of address would be required. The four Licensing Objectives were: (i) Prevention of Crime and Disorder, (ii) Public Safety, (iii) Prevention of Nuisance including by noise and light. (iv) Protection of children from harm. Any individual had a right to make representations to Mid Devon District Council, the Licensing body. Mr Wallis strongly believed that to keep a Membership requirement would allow the Licensee to keep control and offer an element of security thus meeting the Licensing Objectives. Mr Wallis also commented that with the opening hours being extended that they exceeded the hours of The London Inn. The Application in relation to the playing of music did not include evenings where music was already being played such as during a darts match. Matt Grant a local resident also attended to listen to the discussion.
3. **The minutes** of the Parish Council Meeting held on 2 February 2026 were approved - Proposed: Sheila Sinclair, seconded: Stephen Leese - carried unanimously. The Clerk had previously recorded the wrong name for Ms Hannah Bancroft the Head Teacher at the Morchard Bishop Link Academy and this had now been corrected.
4. **Matters Arising (not dealt with elsewhere in the minutes):**
 - Councillor Steven Keable had agreed to act as a Mediator in the disagreement between the Morchard Bishop Playing Fields Association and the Sports and Social Club Committee.
 - **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 response from the Devon Highways Officer regarding the dangerous state of the block paving at Corner Close was that as this was private land it was not the responsibility of Devon Highways and that it was the responsibility of the Management Company to repair it.

- Stephen Leese could not find his "Not-Spot", the Clerk would send it to him so that he could amend the report and then send it to the South West Business Lead at Dragon Wi-Fi.
- The MDDC Business Rates information event had been added to the Parish Council Website.
- David Gillbard confirmed that he was willing to continue to be the Parish Council representative on the Morchard Bishop Playing Fields Association.
- Simon Baker and Stephen Leese said they would join on-line, the MDDC Planning Training for Town and Parish Councils on Thursday 26th March 2026 from 6.00pm – 8.30pm. MDDC had been informed.
- Planting at Belstone View – As the Developer had now planted shrubs/trees in front of the fence along the road it was deemed unnecessary for the Clerk to bring the concerns of the Parish Council to the attention of the Developer.
- The clerk had again written to Network Rail and the Devon Highways Liaison Officer bringing the Parish Council's concerns about the further subsidence at the railway bridge at Morchard Road.
- It was hoped that Councillor Steve Keable or the Devon Highways Liaison Officer would be able to update the Parish Council on a regular basis as to the potholes that were due to be filled imminently in the Parish. This would allow the Pot-Hole Team to focus their work.
- Two signs reading "Please Do Not Park on the Grass" had been purchased for the Parish Council. Sarah Gillbard had kindly cleared the mud on the kerbs at Polson Hill and placed blocks of wood on the grass to prevent parking.

5. Finance.

A cashflow table for March was circulated which explained the income and expenditure figures for February/March. Expenditure for March was £136.46 on the main account, nothing on the Reserve account and £55.00 on the footpaths account. Funds at the end of February before payment of these invoices stood at: Reserve Account, £9,854.42; Current Account £9053.41; P3 Account £3,627.69.

Current Account Receipts and Invoices to be paid:

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| Coffee Morning | Receipts | £ 37.60 credit |
| MorFest | Ticket Sales | £1070.00 credit |
| British Gas Energy | Outside lighting of the Church (est.) | £ 26.71 Direct Debit |
| David Parker | Expenses (printer Paper) | £ 9.80 BACS |
| Angela Parker | MorFest wristbands | £ 87.00 BACS |
| Simon Baker | Keep off the grass signs | £ 12.95 BACS |

P3 Footpaths Account

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| David Parker | Clerk and Coordinator Expenses | £ 55.00 BACS |
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The Current account stands at £8,916.95 after payment of these invoices, the Reserve account stands at £9,854.42 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 £3,572.69.

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

6. Planning

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|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 26/00230/HOUSE | Erection of two-storey extension | 2 Westhill Cottages, Morchard Bishop |
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After Discussion: Sarah Gillbard proposed that this application be SUPPORTED, Debbie Ticehurst seconded the proposal and it was CARRIED.

Planning: decisions / appeals / withdrawals:

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| 25/01699/LBC Granted | Listed Building Consent for internal and external works to restore property from 2 dwellings to 1: replacement of 5 windows and 1 external door. | The Forge, Morchard Road |
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7. County and District Councillors' Headlines

Councillor Mark Jenkin's report was received at the meeting and circulated the following day. Mid Devon District Council had agreed proposals to increase Council tax by 5.36% on the previous year and included all major precepting authorities. A full breakdown across those authorities was included within the report.

The Government had launched a consultation into Local Government Reorganisation with Mid Devon favouring the 4-5-1 proposal. Exeter City Council elections would now take place in May 2026. Active Mid Devon had purchased two Pool Pods to help more people enter and exit swimming pools safely, comfortable and with dignity. Two rapid car charge points had been installed in the car park at Tiverton Pannier Market. Early works were now underway to the Cullompton Relief Road. Councillor Steve Keable's report was awaited.

8. Correspondence not dealt with elsewhere in the meeting:

- The Clerk had been written to by a firm of solicitors notifying him of a legacy being left to the Parish Council. However, when the Clerk made further enquiries it became apparent that the legacy had in fact been left to the Parochial Church Council.

9. Ongoing Matters:

- a) Roads, Signage, Hedges, Potholes, Footpaths and Mud on roads, Road Wardens and Finger Posts: Discussion on this subject was left for the working party meeting that would take place following the Parish Council Meeting.
- b) Accidents and Incidents: Nothing to report.
- c) Defibrillators – All checked and in working order, the Pads at the Chapel had been replaced.
- d) Emergency Plan – The Chairman proposed that a work group considered the Emergency plan following the April meeting of the Parish Council.
- e) Neighbourhood Plan – No progress.
- f) Parking at Polson Hill – Now that the kerbs had been cleared and vehicles appeared not to be parking on the grass, it was agreed to take this item off future agendas.

10. Crediton Area Association of Local Councils Meeting Report – the Clerk had attended the meeting and had circulated his report prior to the meeting.

11. MorFest – A meeting of the organisers had been held on 24 February. The design of new advertising posters had been agreed and Banners would follow a similar theme. The bands and timings had been agreed. Draw tickets were being sold and requests were now being made for prizes. The site had been walked on Saturday 28 February and the proposed layout (using the nearer field for the event and the further field for car parking) agreed. There was a need to recruit volunteers. The next meeting would take place on 17 March 2026.

12. Licensing Application – Morchard Bishop Playing Fields Association (MBPFA) had made an application for a Premises Licence to cover the Sports and Social Club and the whole of the Playing Fields including the Pavillion and Bowls Club but excluding the Children's Play Area and Tennis Court. The Chairman expressed his sadness at the tone of reporting and public comments. Members of the MBPFA Committee stated that the members of the Sports and Social Club (SSC) Committee had known that it was the intention of the MBPFA to make this application since 1st June 2025. The MBPFA were trying to simplify the management structure at the Playing Fields to include the SSC. The opening hours applied for and the times when music was Licenced to be played was copied from the existing licence. The SSC Committee had been given a letter by the MBPFA about the proposed changes, when the Charity Commission changed their own rules to allow charities to become Licensees. It was suggested that there was a level of distrust between the two committees. The SSC Committee had chosen not to have a representative on the MBPFA despite encouragement of sympathetic members of the MBPFA. A member of the MBPFA committee said that the MBPFA had tried to accommodate the SSC Committee. The SSC was a not for profit organisation whose roles were to run the bar and the Sports and Social Club in order to raise funds for the MBPFA. The SSC had approximately 170 members. Membership would be unnecessary under the proposed plans. It was felt by the MBPFA that not requiring users of the club facilities to be members would not lead to fall in safety or security and a rise in public nuisance. A proposal that the Parish Council support the Application for a Premises Licence failed to get a seconder. The Parish Council suggested that a Mediation Meeting be held between the MBPFA and the SSC with County Councillor Steve Keable Mediating. (Councillor Keable had agreed to act a Mediator). A member of the SSC committee said that Mid Devon Licensing Department expected to make a decision on the application on 17 March 2026. He had no idea how quickly the licence would come into effect but if the licence came into effect shortly after that date, then the SSC committee may not be in existence to negotiate with. David Grant proposed that the Parish Council agree to leave the decision on the licence to the discretion of the Licensing Authority, Sheila Sinclair seconded the proposal and it was carried. It was understood that there would shortly be a meeting of the SSC membership and the Parish Council expressed a hope that it would be a cohesive meeting to avoid conflict within the Parish.

13. Parish Council Assets and their Maintenance

Bus Shelter – in good order.

Seats - All except the seats by Groberry Hayes and in St Gatien Garden were in good condition, Sarah and Debbie would see if they could put some paint on the seat at Groberry Hayes. The 2000 Commemoration seat in St. Gaien Garden needed to be repaired by a joiner, both seats in St Gatien would benefit from a rub down and a coat of wood preserver.

Church Floodlighting – in good order

Noticeboards x 3 – The newer noticeboard on the wall of the skittle alley needed a replacement locking mechanism. A joiner capable of doing this would be sought.

St Gatien Garden - in good order.

Land at Jane Ways Grave – in good order.

Land at the Pound – in good order.

Land around Bus Shelter and War Memorial – in good order. It would be good to encourage the coach drivers to allow School students to leave their vehicles onto the road and not the grass.

Church Clock – The Clock Face and hands would be refurbished as part of the Church Building and Tower restoration.

School Car Park – the drainage provision, made last year and this, is working – in good order.

K6 Phone Box at Frost – the box had been repainted, thanks had been passed to Greg Anson.

Fuji Salt Spreader – As neither Councillor were at the meeting to give a report, this will be an action point for the next meeting.

Langton Snow Plough – all in working order.

Seat for Best Kept Village – in good condition.

Christmas Lights – the new lights worked well, the older lights were coming to the end of their life.

Defibrillators x 4 – all in good working order.

Small Apple press – in good working order.

Evolution Hulk Compactor – in good working order.

Road signs and cones – in good working order.

Road Tools – in good working order.

Baked Potato Machine – in good working order.

Grit Bin in car park by School – in good order.

Two Grit bins in Belstone View – in good order.

DAAT Lights and electrical Box and Switch – in good order, DAAT had carried out an inspection on 26 January 26 and passed the facility.

VAS sign – in good working order.

14. Trustees and Village Organisations Reports

- Sustainable Morchard – There would be a seed swap on 7th March and a Wilding Film on 14th April.
- Memorial Hall – The hall had also been told that they would receive a legacy.
- Morchard Bishop Playing Fields – The Premises Licence was the main item on the agenda for their meeting as well as hiring fees. The Association had received a large water bill due to a water leak. David Gillbard said that they should apply for a water leak allowance. There were plans to change the layout of the Sports and Social Club and the Pavillion. TK play had been granted a service contract to maintain any moveable parts on play equipment. The Football Club were applying for some funding.
- School – The school had been on visits to the Museum and a Mosque, they were in Church on Thursday 5th March for World Book Day.
- Churchyard – Nothing to report.
- Parochial Church Council (PCC) – Nothing to report.

15. Items for Future Meetings (Note – items in this section cannot be discussed – merely scheduled for a future meeting).

- The Bowls Club would host an informal Roll Up as a social event. They may hold an inter village competition.
- A Dog owner exercising a dog who was not in their control shouted at those trying to marshal their horses in the land behind Polson Hill Lane.

Meeting Closed at 8.58pm

The next meeting of Morchard Bishop Parish Council will be on **Monday 13 April 2026** at the Memorial Hall at **7.00pm** where we will consider Parish Initiatives.