



**ROCKBEARE  
PARISH COUNCIL**

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## **Draft Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting**

HELD ON

**Wednesday, 20th May 2026**

AT

**Rockbeare Village Hall, commencing at 6 p.m.**

### **Agenda**

**Present:** Cllrs. Franklin (Chairman), Nequest (Vice-Chairman), Brookes and Wall.

**Parishioners:** Twenty -one parishioners in attendance

**Clerk:** Carolyn Y. May

#### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

The Chairman welcomed Parishioners and Members to the Annual Parish Meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He noted the value of the meeting as an opportunity for residents to hear updates on parish activities, raise matters of local interest, and engage directly with the Parish Council.

#### **2. Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting**

The Minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting were considered by Members. It was **proposed** by Cllr Nequest, **seconded by** Cllr Brookes, and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2025 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Unanimous. **Carried.**

### **3. Chair's Report**

**Millennium Field, Marsh Green** – The Parish Council has continued the development of the Millennium Field, including the establishment of new paths and the cladding of the storage container. The area has proved popular with villagers, and several successful community events have been held at the site. Further development will continue, supported by funding received from the Ford Oaks Solar Farm development.

**Marsh Green Improvements** – The Parish Council has committed funds for the refurbishment of the Marsh Green bus shelter and for improvements to the area surrounding the Marsh Green War Memorial.

#### **Community Café / Hub**

The Chairman reported that the Café/Hub, which had previously been financed by the Parish Council, has now been taken over by a dedicated group of volunteers, including two Parish Councillors. The facility continues to be popular and is now self-financing, with the Parish Council electing to continue covering the cost of hall hire.

Excess funds generated by the group have financed the refurbishment of the Rockbeare Bus Shelter, including the installation of a new noticeboard. Additional funding has been raised through the operation of a monthly bingo evening, which has proved to be very popular. The group has also funded the provision of flower boxes and plants that have been placed throughout the village.

The group has accumulated a surplus of £856, which is being held in a ring-fenced account by the Parish Council.

Cllr Franklin thanked those present for their hard work, and parishioners at the meeting also expressed their appreciation to the volunteers.

#### **Telephone Library**

The Parish Council has financed the refurbishment of the telephone library. The only outstanding task is the laying of a proper access path. The facility has proven to be a popular amenity for parishioners and continues to be well used.

#### **EDDC / Cranbrook Boundary Review**

The Parish Council has submitted a formal objection to East Devon District Council (EDDC) regarding the proposed incorporation of an area of Rockbeare Parish into the Cranbrook Town Council area. Members expressed significant concern about the nature of the “consultation” undertaken by EDDC in relation to this proposal.

Following the January 2026 Ordinary Parish Council Meeting, the Clerk requested evidence to support assertions made by the EDDC Ward Councillor during the meeting. Despite three separate requests, the information was not provided. The Clerk subsequently submitted a Freedom of Information request to EDDC, which confirmed that the information referred to did not, in fact, exist.

On this basis, the Clerk has submitted a legally-based objection to EDDC on behalf of the Parish Council. The local Member of Parliament has also been contacted in respect of this matter.

#### **4. Clerk's Report (Finance)**

Verbal Financial Report for the Parish Council

Chair, Councillors

I'm presenting the financial report for the 2025/26 financial year.

We began the year with £68,303 carried forward from 2024/25.

During the year, the Council received a total income of £71,798. This included the £42,000 precept, a CIL payment of £24,272, grant funding of £4,670, and £856 generated through the Community Hub, Café and Bingo activities.

Total expenditure for the year amounted to £68,492.

As in previous years, staffing remains our largest cost, at £33,041, which includes all HMRC obligations. We invested £16,831 in the Millennium Field at Marsh Green, £916 on grass cutting, £3,800 on the Hub Project, and £2,930 on the Village Amenity Feasibility Study.

I would also like to highlight the substantial reduction in the cost of maintaining the café and hub. Inspiring Connections are no longer managing the project and, thanks to the hard work of a dedicated group of members and service users, the hub has now become self-funding. The only cost met by the Parish Council is the hall rental, which represents a significant saving compared with previous years.

In addition, the £10,000 ring-fenced for a potential challenge to the EDDC boundary change remains fully intact. All legal work undertaken so far has been carried out by the Clerk, meaning no expenditure has been drawn from that reserve.

Overall, this leaves us with a closing balance of £71,609, giving the Council a stable financial position and a modest increase of just over £3,300 at year end.

Chair, that concludes the financial report

## 5. Reports from Local Organisations

**Village Hall Committee** No report was received, despite a request being made.

**Primary School** No report was received, despite a request being made.

**Church** (Vicar's Report) No report was received, despite a request being made.

**Community Groups** No reports were received from community groups, although requests had been issued.

## 6. Open Forum for Electors

### Planning Matters Raised by Parishioners

Parishioners present wished to raise their concerns regarding a recently published planning application. The Chairman advised the meeting that the Parish Council, as a body, was unable to discuss or comment on the application due to a **prejudicial interest** affecting the Council as a whole.

The Chairman further explained that legal advice had been sought on the matter, and this advice confirmed that the Council's position—namely, to refrain from discussion or forming any view—was the correct and lawful course of action. Parishioners were informed that individual residents retain the right to submit their own representations directly to the Local Planning Authority.

### Feasibility Study

Parishioners present referred to the recently published feasibility study commissioned by the Parish Council. Concerns were expressed regarding the proposal contained within the study, which those present felt was not appropriate for the parish.

The Chairman clarified that the feasibility study did not represent a decision of the Parish Council, nor did it indicate any predetermined course of action. Rather, the study was intended solely as a means of gathering information and obtaining public opinion on potential future options.

During the discussion, it became apparent that none of the parishioners present had engaged with the consultation process associated with the feasibility study. The Chairman emphasised the importance of community participation in such consultations, noting that the Council relies on feedback from residents to inform its decisions.

Parishioners requested that the issue of the feasibility study be discussed further. Following brief consideration, it was agreed that the matter would be

listed as an agenda item for the **June Parish Council Meeting**, allowing for fuller discussion and the opportunity for parishioners to express their views formally.

**7. Close of Meeting – 6.35P.M.**