

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF YEALMPTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY, 10th FEBRUARY 2025 AT 7.30 PM AT THE COMMUNITY ROOM, STRAY PARK, YEALMPTON.

Members of the public present: None.

Public Forum – no members of the public attended.

Councillors present: Cllrs Baldry, Endicott, Craddock, Tucker, Barton, Riley, Hopkins, MacKay and Thomas,

No	Minute	Action
1)	To receive apologies for absence Cllr Street and District Cllr Edie	
2)	Report from County Council – Cllr Dan Thomas Last month, we ran out of time and to your enormous relief, I didn't get the opportunity to give you my tuppence on the Government's recent White Paper on Devolution. The paper, published the week before Christmas, delivered two messages; one entirely expected, the other less so. The first part was to do with the continuation of a policy of Strategic Mayoral Authorities (SMAs), which have been around for some time. In essence, all council areas need to join with neighbouring authorities to form these larger alliances, ultimately overseen by an elected mayor. The Combined County Authority of Devon and Torbay - which is now formally in existence - should be viewed as the first iteration of a larger body (as many of us predicted would be the case). The leaders of Devon, Torbay and Plymouth Councils have expressed their preference for a peninsular based SMA with a population of 1.8 million, encompassing their authorities as well as Cornwall. The Cornish are determined to go it alone and as such, there is no clear agreement. This will become relevant further on. The more unexpected part of the White Paper was Local Government Reform (LGR), indeed the most wide sweeping LGR since the establishment of the District Councils in 1974. Here, the Government's preference is to do away with two tiers of local authority, to be replaced with unitary councils as we see in Plymouth, Torbay, Cornwall and Somerset, to name but 4. What this means in practice is that an area, instead of being represented by District and Councillor(s), would instead be represented by one or more unitary councillors, who would be responsible for the whole spate of local government responsibilities. It was suggested that a suitable size for a new unitary authority would be 500 000 people. To put this in context, there are around 265 000 in Plymouth, around 130 000 in Exeter and 1.2 million in Devon altogether. To muddy the waters further, it was made clear that existing unitaries might be able to mount a case for continuation if they could prove their own sustainability and have a population nearer 300-350 000. Plymouth hopes to be such an extension but Tudor Evans has made no secret that consequently the city boundaries will need to grow. It is anticipated that this will mean Woolwell and Sherford are subsumed into the city. Assuming that Plymouth is allowed to be an exception - and that is still only an assumption - what of the rest of Devon? The pre-Christmas announcement also made it clear that areas that already had agreed plans for an SMA and/or for LGR should write to the Minister before January 10th explaining their reasons to be a priority case. Assuming the reasons were accepted, the Minister would then postpone the May County elections for 12 months	

	in readiness for an election to the body of a shadow unitary authority in May 2026. This shadow would exist for 12 months before taking over fully in 2027. With what can only be described as indecent haste, James McInnes, the Conservative Leader of DCC, gave a press interview explaining that the only solution was a single unitary authority for the whole of Devon and that he would hold an extraordinary meeting at County Hall on January 9th to ratify a request to the Government to postpone elections (as above). It was repeatedly pointed out to him at the meeting that none of the lower tier District, Borough or City Councils agreed with this stance, moreover the upper tier Torquay Unitary was also against. Furthermore, and as described above, there is not a consensus from all parties for an SMA either. However, Cllr McInnes ignored Devon's abject failure to meet the tests set (by the Government for postponement to be considered) and claimed that the situation was too important to allow new members to be dealing with LGR and that the experienced, sitting councillors were the only people qualified to make these decisions. With that, all the Conservatives voted to write to the Government asking to postpone elections. It should come as no surprise to the fair minded among you that last week, the Minister roundly rejected Devon's case because it clearly failed to meet the test. The County is now on Track 3 - the lowest category of multi-tier councils and a transition in 2028 at the earliest. It is difficult to see how it could possibly be any quicker, since there may well have to be Boundary Commission changes (due to Plymouth's ambitions). It is also difficult to see how this was anything more than a case of the self'-preservation society in action at County Hall from Councillors keen to avoid the entirely justified anger and disappointment of their electorate. Let's not forget that Children's Services has been in Special Measures (the lowest possible OFSTED rating) since 2010. As to the future, we are still no clearer now as to what will actually happen. If I could choose, I'd probably accept Plymouth's ambitions for growth and then have 2 further unitaries: one encompassing West Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge and Torbay; the other being Exeter, East Devon, Mid Devon, North Devon and Torridge. But in case you think that sounds an easy option, it's worth pointing out that the Labour Leader of Exeter City Council would also like his city to be an exception and become its own unitary. It seems that, perhaps unwittingly, the Government has created a local government version of the Hunger Games.
3)	Report from District County Council. Cllr Edie SHDC – February 2025 Garden Waste Service Just a reminder - South Hams residents can now sign-up to or renew their subscription for our garden waste collection service. Please help spread the word that the quickest and easiest way of doing this will be on our website www.southhams.gov.uk/gardenwaste. Messages for residents: •The fee is going up to £68 this year to cover costs •Anyone who signs up between 3 February and 1 April 2025 will pay a discounted fee of £65 •There is a maximum of two subscriptions (which would cover two brown wheelie bins) per household. •For current subscribers who renew before 1 April, there will be no changes to their service, and they can continue to use their brown bin with no interruptions. Council Tax Second Homes Premium

	Subject to agreement by Full Council, the Council Tax Second Homes Premium will appear for the first time on the Council Tax bills for 2025/26. There will be limited circumstances where the premium of 100% will not be payable, as set out in mandatory and discretionary exceptions. The Council's website will be updated with further information and an explanatory note will be included on the annual Council Tax bills, which will be issued in early March. Bottle banks removal The removal of bottle banks across the South Hams has now begun, as part of our ongoing efficiency programme of our waste and recycling service. 13 banks across the District have been taken away in the first wave of removals, which began at the start of this week. The second phase of removals begins on 24 February. Ten banks are to be removed from the least used sites in public settings. The banks set to be removed in phase 2 are: •Rattery Village Hall, •Noss Mayo, tennis court car park, •Loddiswell, Butts Car Park, •Harbertonford Car Park, •East Prawle, layby, •Strete, layby, •Beesands seafront, •Woolwell Community Centre, •Lee Moor, Village Hall, •Modbury, Poundwell Meadow The third and final phase is scheduled to start from 17 March, removing the remaining bottle banks in public settings. 15 bottle banks across nine sites will remain in place. [END] Cllr Thomas reporting that the District Council officers are meeting with residents along the stream at Footpath 18, who have been concerned by the recent collapse of the stream bank.
4)	Councillors' Declaration of Interest: none.
5)	Previous minutes: The minutes of the meeting held on 13 th January 2025 were approved and signed.
6)	Planning matters a. A brief update was given on applications relevant to the Parish. b. YPC have been sent details of two applications to vary existing planning permissions granted by SHDC. The variations have been reviewed by members of the planning committee and it is not felt that it is something which the Parish Council is required to comment on – they relate to changes of materials and changes to the location of non-visible structures. No YPC response will be made.
7)	Financial matters a) Accounts to end of January were reviewed. b) Payments were approved totalling £8,741.39 c) It was agreed that £40,000 would be placed in a higher interest yielding account for six months.
8)	Environmental Report YEG report February 2025 Water The EA have encouraged us to report in anything that may be a pollution incident to the incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60 along with photos date, time, observations, grid refs. Without this information reports can only be treated as anecdotal. YEG is considering how best to achieve this. Contact information for local newsletters for the relevant parishes (Wembury, Brixton, Sparkwell, Cornwood, Ermington, Yealmpton, Newton and Noss) would be welcome. The RYWQG has also taken steps to improve access to information on water quality in the Yealm through setting up a website

https://www.rywqg.com/?fbclid=IwY2xjawlQSUpleHRuA2FlbQlXMAABHbkja6LWpFaLY1ZDVt91_HzpYG8ROmxBm6wD0siQ9h0ce8FGpqdzlbQhWg_aem_aBDLxdhT5dJiDMSDuQalaw and a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/951554389942895>

The EA is taking further steps to mitigate the decline in bathing water quality at Wembury. At a meeting (EA and lead people for CSI on the Yealm) it was agreed to increase sampling sites to include streams feeding into Yealm Estuary that have not been sampled to date.

Jane Pennington will be attending MudSpotter training on 5 Feb 2025. The MudSpotter survey and app based methodology gives us a standardised way to record the sources and pathways of mud being transported into rivers during or shortly after rainfall. Results will be uploaded to Cartographer which our volunteers use to record water quality and riverfly survey results.

There has been a meeting with SWW to discuss results from CSI monitoring leading to an offer of SWW help to identify the location of our pollution hotspots and potential solutions.

Saltmarsh and intertidal habitat resilience project

Within sheltered water bodies such as estuaries, saltmarshes can play a particularly important role in regulating water quality. Their ecosystem can reduce high nutrient levels such as inorganics, phosphates, nitrates and faecal organism concentrations. Saltmarshes also absorb heavy metals such as mercury, cadmium and uranium from the water. South Devon Natural Landscape (SDNL) have been successful in securing some Water Environment Improvement Funding (WEIF) from the Environment Agency (EA) and will start work on a Yealm Estuary Saltmarsh and Intertidal Habitat Resilience project. The first priority is to survey and consider the health of the estuary's saltmarshes with a view to how we may conserve, enhance and/or restore them, and the project is in the process of engaging the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology for their expert assistance in this. The project is managed by SDNL working closely with the EA and the community via YEM.

https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Saltmarsh_Restoration_Handbook_FINAL_20210311.pdf

<https://www.wwt.org.uk/uploads/documents/2023-01-30/wwt-blue-carbon-route-map-2023.pdf>

Active travel

We still await the final report from South Hams on the LCWIP consultation process.

Control of Invasive species

A Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed eradication programme is currently being planned for three sections of the Yealm river, the middle and lower sections being in the Yealmpton parish. This will involve volunteers 'pulling' the Himalayan Balsam out, but at large stand where it grows amongst brambles and ferns, it will require professional 'brush cutting'. There are also two large stands for Japanese Knotweed, which will require professional spraying. This will take an estimated six days work at £2,650 and funding is sought for this.

Planting trees

On Wednesday 12th February a Wildlife corridor hedge 275-metres long consisting of 1,500 trees with guards and stakes will be planted along an unmade lane at Torr Farm south of Yealmpton by volunteers under the supervision of ParkLife SW CIC. Trees for the planting will be lifted from the Kitley Community Tree Nursery on Monday 10 and Tuesday 11 February by volunteers, supervised by Liz Tutty, who manages the nursery. These include hazel, hawthorne, dog rose, spindle, hornbeam and wyche elm, from seeds gathered at previous Tree Seed Sundays. Additional trees are being sourced from the YEM Tree nurseries at Noss Mayo and Newton Ferrers as well as from Devon Wildlife Trust.

In late February/early March, Tree planting will also take place at:

- Worston Farm and Ewells Wood, with circa 3,000 trees being planted over 12-HA with volunteers under the Plymouth & South Devon Community Forest scheme

	- at Long Meadow by Steps River Lane, with 80 low density trees in guards. The 500 holly trees planted last season in the wood beside the Yealmpton sewage works that had not survived were removed and a number were replanted in gaps. The tree orchard and other trees in Stray Park have been pruned. Biodiversity Ruby's wood biodiversity surveys will continue in the spring funded from a locality grant, with the Ivybridge Community College, local volunteers and ParkLife SW CIC. Also in the spring, volunteer bird, mammal and bat surveys are planned, which will form part of an ongoing monitoring programme to assess change along the Yealm corridor. A new pond for invertebrates is planned at a location beside Steps River Lane. Linda Durman Chair, YEG	
9)	Road Safety Total costings for remarking the Yeo Park SLOW signs, creating a new roundel on Ford Road and remarking the other three roundels have not yet been received – this matter will be considered next month.	
10)	DCC urban grass cutting scheme Council agreed to remain in the scheme and this would be delivered by our grass cutting contractor.	Clerk – to sign and return the agreement
11)	Footpaths The Clerk had now heard from DCC P3 officer. We have been promised £2,290 in respect of the last two year's basic payments and funds for projects this year. Cllr Barton is progressing the return for this year. Footpath 19 stiles will fail the inspection and this will be reported to DCC. They were going to meet with the landowner and arrange for new gates to be installed, but we have not been updated on this. Chippings will need to be placed on the surface of footpath 19 to stop it getting muddy again. Cllr Thomas agreed to liaise with DCC Footpath Warden.	Cllr Barton and Clerk to submit paperwork for P3. Cllr Thomas to encourage progress.
12)	Shared Youth Worker Wembury PC was taking the lead on coordinating a Shared Youth Worker to work for local parishes to encourage young people to engage with them and hopefully prevent antisocial behaviour. It is hoped that this project can be grant funded. YPC agreed to be part of the project.	Clerk to report to Wembury PC.
13)	Gardening Contract Council approved the scope of the new gardening, footpath and asset maintenance contract was agreed. We have not had many approaches from local gardeners, hopefully an appointment can be made next month. The routine use of pesticides was discussed, council voted by majority not to allow contractors to use pesticides in the routine maintenance of YPC grounds/gardens and on footpaths in line with SHDC.	Clerk to update the gardening specification
14)	Stream on Bowden Hill The stream that leaves the property of Squires Acre and flows into a culvert on Bowden Hill has been overflowing more recently. This is caused by leaf debris accumulating on the trash screen. The Clerk has been in touch with DCC Flood and Coastal Risk and Devon Highways. It has not been possible to identify the landowner. It is agreed that Cllrs Thomas, Endicott and Tucker to meet to consider what can be done to improve the situation.	Cllrs Thomas, Endicott and Tucker to meet and report.

15)	Accessible bench An accessible bench has been gifted to YPC by the National Landscape. Three potential locations have been identified and the relevant landowners will be approached to gain consent.	Clerk to approach landowners
16)	Road Warden Scheme YPC agreed to join the scheme, the Clerk, Cllrs Hopkins and Barton will be trained under the scheme.	Clerk to arrange.
17)	Footpath – Villa to Yealmbridge Cllr Tucker will arrange for the hedge to be cut and will scrape the surface of the hedge back to widen the pavement area. Clerk to confirm permission with landowner and consult Devon Highways.	Cllr Tucker/Clerk
18)	Report on actions from previous meetings. None.	
19)	Reports on areas of responsibility. a) Works – YPC agreed to pay for an early cut of the verges now with new contractor b) Cllr MacKay reporting a new speed monitor had been purchased and he had met with a DCC contractor who would install a new pole at Yealmbridge. c) Cllr Barton reporting that two new shelves were required for the library. Cllr Craddock had spoken with the Men's Shed and the shelves for the phone box book/puzzle exchange were being built. d) Cllr Tucker asked the Clerk to ascertain whether the grassy area by Yealmbridge was an intentional verge of DCC or an accumulation of soil/vegetation. We could then decide if this needed to be cleared.	Clerk to confirm with contractor.
	Correspondence a. It is noted the bottle bank has been removed. b. It was agreed the Clerk and Cllr Baldry would attend the SHDC Parish Forum at 6pm on 27th March 2025. c. Churchyard push testing would be taking place in the churchyard – any stones which fail, will be placed on the ground. d. An email received from someone who frequently uses Yeo Lane and has done for a long time, to say they have never had a problem with traffic and do not consider it warrants investment in signs or road redesign. e. South Hams Community Action closure is sadly noted. Meeting closed at 9.21pm	
	Date of next meeting: 10th March 2025	