

# *Bridestowe Parish Council*

*Miss Kayleigh Walker - Clerk to the Council*  
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## **(draft) Bridestowe Annual Parish Meeting Minutes**

### **Meeting held – Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026 at 7.30 pm The Ark, Bridestowe.**

**In attendance:** Clerk, Parish Cllrs Young, Thirtle, Bickle, Pritchard and Hodgson, Borough Cllrs Mott and Southcott, Representatives of Baker Estates Developments (2), members of the public (3).

#### **1. Apologies.**

Cllr Burder – apologies accepted.

#### **2. Approval of minutes of last year’s annual parish meeting held on 23/04/2025 and any matters arising.**

Councillors present agreed the minutes showed an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were proposed a true record of the meeting by Cllr Thirtle, seconded by Cllr Young and agreed by all.

#### **3. Members of the public who wish to speak/ask questions.**

None.

#### **4. Guest Speaker – County Councillor James Grainger.**

Cllr Grainger introduced himself to those present, outlining his professional background in the Royal Navy and his current role as a mental health nurse, before explaining how he became a County Councillor. He explained that the main responsibilities of Devon County Council include highways, education, and libraries. On a local level, he expressed concern regarding the poor condition of the roads and his dissatisfaction with the response from the County Council. He advised that he has been writing articles on the issue, sharing them on social media, and corresponding with the Leader of the Council, the Director, and the Cabinet Member responsible for highways. Referring to recent statistics, Cllr Grainger reported that £7,200 had been paid out across the county in 2025 in compensation for vehicle damage caused by poor road conditions. He stated that he had requested a review of the compensation process, as he believes it is not fit for purpose. Although approximately 2,500 pothole repairs are being carried out each week, he said this is still insufficient. While the highways budget has increased, he noted that inflation has largely offset the additional funding. Turning to public transport, Cllr Grainger explained that despite efforts to advocate for improved bus services, the 84 service had been withdrawn, which he described as a significant loss for local workers. He was, however, pleased to confirm that the 118 service would continue, although changes will be introduced once the new interchange in Okehampton opens. Reporting on library services, he advised that a reversal had been made on proposed budget cuts, allowing services to continue, albeit with some changes. Within the parish, Cllr Grainger reported that he had assisted with surface repairs at Fernworthy Farm and was working with the police to address anti-social behaviour associated with motorcycles using the byway to access the moor. He also advised that volunteers are needed to support Community Speedwatch initiatives, with sessions planned near the Bearslake Inn. Borough Cllr Southcott suggested that highways officers may have equipment available to collect traffic data along the road. Finally, in relation to the Baker Estates development, Cllr Grainger advised that he had received correspondence expressing concerns over flood risk. Having reviewed the matter, he stated that the engineers’ report demonstrated confidence in the proposed systems designed to manage drainage and flooding. Cllr Young thanked Cllr Grainger for his attendance and report.

#### **5. Parish Council Chairs’ annual report**

This year has been one of both practical challenge and steady progress for the Parish Council, with a clear focus on safeguarding our village environment, managing financial pressures responsibly, and strengthening the foundations for future decision-making. Before going into a little more detail, I would like to thank Chris for his leadership and commitment to Bridestowe and the council both as a councillor and recently as chair. I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for supporting me in taking on the role as chair following Chris’ s resignation. Of note this year the council has addressed a number of issues raised by residents. Two of these requiring significant work. Concerns were raised regarding trees encroaching on properties in Tanyard Court, as well as the urgent need to fund repairs to the collapsed church wall. These were substantial and unavoidable expenditures, and they have had a direct bearing on the financial planning that followed.

Discussions were held in the Autumn regarding the management and planning of the cemetery, and a dedicated working group was set-up. This group have worked to formalise and update policies and protocols, map remaining space, and ensure that future management of the cemetery is consistent, respectful, and sustainable. It would be remiss not to acknowledge the two major planning applications for housing development that have been submitted this year. The council objecting to one and taking a neutral stance on the other. While opinions on housing development in the village understandably vary across the parish, the council's role has been to ensure due process, transparency, and fairness. The annual requirement of the Council to set the precept always requires a challenging and robust discussion and this year was no exception. Given the pressures of the past year and the responsibilities we hold, this was an essential step to ensure we can continue to serve the community effectively and outline clear intentions to future-proof the Parish Council's financial security. Once again, I would like to thank my fellow councillors, as well as our clerk, borough councillors and parishioners for their support and look forward to serving as chair in 2026.

## **6. Close**

The meeting was closed at approx. 8pm.

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#### **Meeting held – Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026 at 8pm The Ark, Bridestowe**

**In attendance:** Clerk, Parish Cllrs Young, Thirtle, Bickle, Pritchard and Hodgson, Borough Cllrs Mott and Southcott, Representatives of Baker Estates Developments (2), members of the public (3).

#### **1. Apologies.**

Cllr Burder – apologies accepted.

#### **3. Possible Declarations of interest.**

None.

#### **4. Public Open Question Time.**

A member of the public asked for clarification regarding the significant increase in the precept for the current year. The Chairman explained that the decision had followed a thorough review of the Parish Council's financial position and extensive discussion, and that it had not been taken lightly. She advised that all factors had been carefully considered, including the impact on residents as well as the importance of maintaining the services and facilities provided by the Parish Council, such as the cemetery, playground, and grass cutting services. She explained that the Council had faced difficult decisions, including whether to close the children's play area or increase the precept to work towards restoring it to a safe and suitable condition, thereby continuing to provide outdoor recreational space for parishioners.

The Chairman further advised that steps are being taken to help mitigate similar issues in the future, including a full review of the cemetery regulations, improved forward planning, and the introduction of regular inspections of Council assets to help prevent deterioration and reduce the likelihood of emergency repairs being required.

Regarding item 4 on the agenda a member of the public asked what steps Bakers Estates were taking to protect wildlife such as brown trout, crayfish and otters and how are they going to protect the riverbanks.

The Chairman opened item 4 on the agenda and invited representatives of Baker Estates to participate in the meeting and respond to public questions.

Baker Estates advised that the development plan includes an exclusion zone which specifies the minimum distance that must be maintained between the development and the watercourse. They explained that the proposals had been prepared in consultation with Devon County Council (DCC) and other professional agencies, including engineers providing specialist advice across all aspects of the development. DCC holds the role of the local flood authority. In response to a query regarding the riverbank, Baker Estates agreed to provide a direct response to the member of the public following the meeting. Baker Estates also explained the purpose of the VAR application and outlined the proposed amendments. They confirmed that full planning permission for 30 homes had been granted in February. However, following a land ownership issue, amended plans had been prepared which altered the access arrangements to the site and affected a small number of plots. They advised that Highways officers had confirmed the revised access to be safe and suitable, and that the amended proposals were supported by DCC's Strategic Planning Officer. A member of the public commented that the amendments did not appear consistent with the description of "minor amendments" contained within the application and expressed the view that the changes were significant. Baker Estates responded that the classification of "minor" is considered in the context of each individual

application and that, in relation to the development, DCC had deemed the proposed changes to be minor. A member of the public then addressed the Parish Councillors directly, referring to the Neighbourhood Plan and its commitment to “protect parishioners”. It was noted that a detailed letter and supporting photographs had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr Thirtle asked Baker Estates whether alternative options had been explored. Baker Estates advised that, due to ongoing legal correspondence, they were unable to comment in detail but stated that the proposed arrangement was the only solution that met all requirements of the scheme, including biodiversity net gain obligations. County Cllr Grainger asked whether Baker Estates had considered purchasing the land subject to the ownership dispute. Baker Estates replied that, due to the ongoing legal matters, they were unable to discuss this further.

#### **4. Planning**

**4.1 0525/26/VAR Land Adjacent Cemetery Pool Hill Bridestowe -** Representatives of Baker Estates will provide a brief overview of the application for consideration.

Following the discussion under Item 3, councillors considered the application and confirmed that they understood both the proposed amendments and the reasons for them arising from the land ownership issue. Councillors agreed that the revised plans would have a significantly different impact on neighbouring properties compared with the original approved scheme. In considering the application on its own merits, while acknowledging that planning permission had already been granted for the site, councillors expressed concerns relating to loss of privacy, overlooking of neighbouring properties, and potential flood risk. Cllr Thirtle proposed that the parish council object to the application on these grounds. The motion was seconded by Cllr Bickle and supported by Cllrs Hodgson and Pritchard. Cllr Young abstained from voting. The Chairman advised that a full written response would be prepared and submitted to the planning authority.

#### **5. Approval of minutes of meetings held February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026.**

Cllr Thirtle proposed the minutes be signed as a true record of the meeting, this was seconded by Cllr Bickle and agreed by all. The chairman signed a copy.

#### **6. Matters arising.**

None.

#### **7. West Devon Borough Council Asset Transfer.**

Councillors discussed the opportunity to obtain ownership of the small section of land near Princess Elizabeth Terrace. It was acknowledged that the parish council already cuts the grass. With costs involved in the transfer councillors agreed to take no action on this matter.

#### **8. Cemetery regulations.**

The Chairman provided a report from the working party group explaining the review of the regulations and fees that had taken place. The documentation had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. Proposals were made for changes to the regulations.

- The period of exclusive rights of burial – proposal to reduce this to 50 years – proposed by Cllr Bickle, seconded by Cllr Young and voted unanimously.
- The definition of ‘parishioner’ – proposal to amend this to a person who lives in the parish at the time of death and has been a resident for at least 12 months. An exception will be made for parishioners who have moved from the parish into a place of care – proposed by Cllr Pritchard, seconded by Cllr Thirtle and voted unanimously.
- Amendments to the fee’s – proposed by Cllr Pritchard, seconded by Cllr Hodgson and voted unanimously. A copy of the fee’s is available from the Clerk.

All changes will be adopted from May 1, 2026. The Clerk was asked to arrange a meeting with the grave digger next time he is on site at the cemetery to discuss procedures and regulations. Locations of interments will be discussed at a future meeting.

#### **9. DCC P3 Footpath Scheme update.**

The Clerk advised that she had not received a response to the request for an extension to the survey period and no copies of maps had been received. Cllr Grainger agreed to follow this for councillors and Cllr Mott said she would be able to share a link to a digital map.

#### **10. Playground Inspection Report.**

The Chairman advised that a volunteer day for a clean-up in the play area had been advertised in BaSE and despite a lack of volunteers it was successful. Slippery areas were cleaned, moving parts were greased and the foliage was trimmed. A new volunteer has come forward to undertake weekly inspections of the equipment. Cllr Young will speak to Bakers Builders to see if they can assist with replacing the links on the monkey bars. A notice is needed for all users of the Sporting Green to remind them that all dogs must be kept on a lead in the area.

## **11. River Maintenance.**

Councillors acknowledged the response from Devon County Council which read *'the riverbed levels are the same as they have always been, in fact, they are slightly lower than our records show from 50 years ago. There is some overhanging vegetation from the adjoining land on the downstream side, that perhaps could be removed, but nothing serious. We would not be looking at lowering the bed levels underneath the bridge as they haven't changed. It would also be pointless doing so unless the river downstream was also cleared for a considerable distance, this work would be down to the riparian owner of the adjoining land to undertake. At current we will not be carrying out any works in this location.'*

## **12. Planning.**

**12.1** 0708/26/HHO Tor View Pool Hill Bridestowe

**12.2** 0820/26/LBC and 0821/26/FUL Diggaport House Bridestowe

Councillors consulted on each application individually and agreed a neutral stance to all. Motion proposed by Cllr Thirtle, seconded by Cllr Hodgson and voted unanimously.

## **13. Accounts for payment:**

**13.1** Zurich Insurance £632.57

**13.2** DALC Membership £257.63

**13.3** Playground Inspection £114.00

**13.4** WDBC Bin Emptying £190.94

**13.5** WDBC Cemetery Rates £419.90

**13.6** Contribution to parish website. Total cost £180.00, contribution amount to be agreed.

Current account statement balance on March 25th, 2026, £13645.53 Cashbook circulated to all Cllrs.

Cllrs agreed to pay all accounts stated above including a 50% contribution to item 13.6. Proposed by Cllr Pritchard, seconded by Cllr Young and agreed by all.

Cllr Mott advised that the budget sheet should be visible on the website. The Clerk will ensure all required documents are uploaded.

## **14. Correspondence: Mostly circulated to councillors.**

**14.1** Newsletters – acknowledged.

**14.2** Temporary Traffic Notice – acknowledged.

**14.3** Updated bus services – Cllr Young agreed to put a copy in BaSE.

**14.4** Playground inspection volunteer change – acknowledged.

**14.5** Springfields bench – the clerk advised that the care home had removed the bench due to it being unsafe to use.

Cllrs agreed they are not in the financial position to replace it now but would collect it if required.

**14.6** Cllr Hodgson raised concerns over the amount of dog fouling taking place. Cllr Mott will provide the clerk with details of the dog warden to report the issue to.

## **15. Date of next meeting.**

The next full council meeting was agreed for Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026.

## **16. Close**

The meeting was closed at 9.45pm.