

EAST ANSTEY PARISH COUNCIL

**The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 4th March 2026
at East Anstey Primary School at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr's Miss L Moore (Chair), I Fasham, Miss J Gannon and Mrs C Warne.

In attendance: County Cllr R Hopley and nine members of the public

85/03/26. To receive apologies. Apologies were accepted from Cllr's R Gibson and R Milton (also District Councillor)

86/03/26. Disclosure of interests in items on the agenda. Cllr Ms Moore declared a personal interest in item 98/03/26 as a neighbour.

87/03/26. To agree the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 7th January 2026 as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and duly signed by the Chair.

88/03/26. Matters arising from the minutes, not included on the agenda. No matters arising.

89/03/26. Democratic period. A parishioner asked for an update on what East Anstey Parish Council were doing to support Anstey Community Hall's request for match funding for a grant from Sports England.
The Parish Council was asked if the application to the Public Works Loan Board had been submitted and had they heard back from them. Mentioned that a lot of work had gone into the business plan.
It was explained this would be covered under item 91/03/26.
Members of the public complained that they wouldn't have the opportunity to ask questions at that point in the meeting and it was agreed to allow questions then.
The Parish Council were asked to write to a resident about an issue with rubbish.
The Parish Council was asked if the ditch below Rhyll Manor could be cleared because April Cottage is flooding.
It was alleged that an arm of the fingerpost sign at Hawkwell Cross had come off and had been stolen. It was claimed that if this had been acted upon when the arm fell off, it wouldn't have been stolen. Another member of the public said they had picked up the arm that had fallen off and it hadn't been stolen.
There was a query about the cost of the new play equipment, parking area and fence and the number of quotes requested. The Parish Council had put the play equipment for the children but what about the community need for a hall. Most of the funding for the play area project had come from a £30,000 grant from the Batsworthy Cross Wind Farm Community Fund which the Parish Council had successfully applied for. Anstey Community Hall Committee has received a grant from the same fund for the extension. The member of the public was asked to

email the Clerk with a request for the information he was asking about.

90/03/26. Business items

a) To agree items for payment: It was resolved to make the following payments:

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Anstey Community Hall - £16.00 hire of hall for the meeting held on 7th January 2026 (Payment ref: 2526/23).

Exmoor Creative Ltd - £85.00 hosting of website and domain renewal (Payment ref: 2526/24)

Bank charges of £6.00 were taken from the Current Account on 31st December 2025, 31st January and 28th February 2026. Bank charges of £7.00 will be taken on 31st March 2026.

An internal transfer will be made from the Instant Account to the Current Account to return the balance to £500.00.

On 31st December 2026 bank interest of £83.98 was received.

The Current Account balance is £488.00 and the Instant Access Account balance is £14,106.23

b) To approve spending to meet the new Assertion 10 on the Annual Governance Statement for 2025-26. It was resolved to approve spending for a clerk@eastanstey.org.uk business email address to comply with Assertion 10.

c) To note the checking of the bank reconciliation at 28.02.26. Noted.

d) To agree the updated Financial Regulations and Standing Orders. Agreed.

e) Review of Business Risk Management Document. The document was reviewed and agreed.

f) Review of Internal Controls and Internal Auditor. The document was reviewed and agreed.

g) Appointment of Internal Auditor. Carried forward.

h) To approve the IT Policy. Approved.

i) To approve the Data Protection Policy. Approved.

91/03/26. Following the receipt of the business plan from Anstey Community Hall Committee, councillors to agree the next steps. At the meeting held on 7th January 2026 East Anstey Parish Council agreed to apply for a loan of £15k from the PWLB with a repayment period of 10 years to be repaid through an increase in the precept. The calculation of the repayment to be based on the total number of council tax households in both East and West Anstey with every band D household paying the same, subject to five conditions being satisfied.

Condition 1. Legal opinion from DALC which confirms that borrowing money for a third party charity in an adjoining parish and recovery of part of that money from the adjoining parish is acceptable. DALC was asked for asked for a legal opinion and referred the request to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) for legal advice and while they gave advice they also suggested that DALC sought advice from The Parkinson Partnership LLP, recognised experts in Local Council finance.

The advice from The Parkinson Partnership LLP was 'We are not lawyers, but as far as I'm aware, there is no legal power for the council to lend to a parish meeting, no legal power for a parish meeting to borrow and there isn't really any way to enforce repayment. I'm not convinced that the parish meeting has a power to contribute to the hall'.

NALC advised the following 'My understanding is that a parish council can borrow to make a grant but not to lend'.

This advice was shared with the Chair of Anstey Community Hall, also the Chair of West Anstey Parish Meeting, who disputed the advice and asked if the Council would be obtaining more professional advice as they had received different advice. When questioned about where their advice had come from it was advice obtained from Google AI.

Since then, conflicting information had been received about how West Anstey

Parish Meeting would find their share of the £15,000 and whether it would be from their precept or funded by donations from individuals. It was questioned whether EAPC should be taking out a ten year repayment loan from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) if it was meant to be fair. Cllr Miss Moore had requested a meeting with the Chair and Treasurer of Anstey Community Hall to get answers to some queries but that request was turned down as it was believed the business plan that had been provided answered the queries and some queries were answered in another document.

A business plan had been requested from the Anstey Community Hall Committee because it was required to make an application to the PWLB. The Parish Council had been told the Business Plan was confidential and was unable to share it with residents. A second version of the plan which could be shared was suggested but not received. There was concern that Councillors did not have sufficient information to make an informed decision on behalf of the residents of the parish who would have to cover the cost of the repayments. It was felt the Anstey Community Hall Committee could have done more to raise the funds required. The Parish Council was accused of being negative. The hall brings the community together, a community that doesn't have anything but a school and a Church. The proposed extension to the hall would mean there would be a smaller room to rent out.

Some parishioners had told councillors that they have spoken to the committee about giving donations.

East Anstey residents had been told they would be paying the same amount of additional council tax as West Anstey residents and as that is no longer workable another consultation would have to be carried out before any decision could be made about taking out a £10,000 loan from the PWLB and this would take time. It was not known how long the committee had to raise the match funding because although the Parish Council had asked for details of the offer of a grant from Sports England full details had not been supplied.

East Anstey residents would also have to cover the interest if a loan was taken out and would end up paying more than West Anstey. Taking out the loan would increase East Anstey Parish Council's precept and some residents have told councillors they don't want this added to the precept.

A resident was disappointed that no one had said how good the hall is.

It was recognised that it was a difficult time to raise money particularly with the uncertainty now the United States of America is involved in conflict with Iran.

It was suggested that East Anstey Parish Council makes a donation of £2,500 from its reserves and the community gets together as a working group to raise the rest of the money. It was felt this would be a step in the right direction.

It was agreed to formally offer Anstey Community Hall Committee a donation of £2,500 towards the extension. This would be paid when the extension has been built.

It was pointed out that at no point has East Anstey Parish Council said they are against the project. Cllr Miss Moore said she was happy to do a joint letter regarding holding a gift evening.

The member of the hall committee responsible for applying for grants said it was difficult to raise money through fundraising and they relied on grants. An East Anstey resident made some suggestions for fundraising (sponsor a brick, fund raising/gift evening). A pancake lunch held at the hall on Pancake Day had raised £1,000 for the Church in East Anstey.

Cllr Hopley said the community could come together and come up with some good ideas. He acknowledged the difficulties of being a Parish Councillor and

added that it was a thankless task.

92/03/26. Planning

a) To make a recommendation on any planning applications received by the council before the meeting. No applications received.

b) To note any decisions made on planning applications by NDC.

78964 - Extension to equine arena (amended plans) at Whitemoor Stables, East Anstey. Decision: refusal.

c) Any other planning matters. No other planning matters.

93/03/26. Highways: Any highways issues. Cllr Mrs Warne reported to DCC Highways that one arm of the fingerpost sign at Rhyll Gate Cross had fallen off and the whole wooden signpost was rotten and in need of replacing (Report ref: W261952939). Highways responded that they would carry out an assessment, anticipated to be completed by 19th February but Cllr Warne has heard nothing further and she will take this up with Melanie McKenna, Neighbourhood Highways Officer (NHO).

She also reported that one arm of the fingerpost sign at Hawkwell Cross (Hawkridge, Tarr Steps) had fallen off and was lying on the ground and that her husband would rehang it (Report ref: W261952936). When he went to carry out the repair it was missing. It was discovered during the meeting that this had been picked up by a resident. She will collect it and her husband will reinstate it. When this is done; she will inform highways that it has been dealt with.

Also reported was the regular flooding of the section of road between Tregarne and Woodburn Cross (Report ref: W261952947). On the 17th February Highways emailed to say the problem had been rectified but the following day the road was flooded again. Cllr Mrs Warne would like to arrange a site meeting with the NHO to show her that the surface water has nowhere to drain away.

Potholes in need of repair were reported on the road between Rhyll Gate Cross and Five Cross Way and the road from Woodburn Cross to Swineham Hill.

The large pothole between Oldways End and Tucker's Cross has been filled in again, but the Highways contractors said it needed to have a gutter opened up further up the road to avoid surface water running down road and under the new tarmac patch.

On the hill from Henspark to Waddicombe surface water is running into the entrance of April Cottage.

Everyone was reminded to report highways defects on the DCC website reporting Page. They will receive a reference number which Cllr Hopley will need if he is required to follow up the problem with Highways.

94/03/26. Reports

a) District Cllr. No report.

b) County Cllr. Cllr Hopley noted that highways problems had already been discussed.

He is trying to get South Molton Police Station to open their front desk. A suggestion had been made that a councillor could man the desk for a few hours on a regular basis. Cllr Hopley is willing to go in so that people would have someone to talk to. He had heard a talk about the riots in Plymouth and Exeter in July 2024 and the precautions the Police take before the riots take place.

95/03/26. Play Area

a) Any issues arising from playground inspections. No issues reported.

- b) To agree who will carry out inspections until the next meeting.** Cllr Mrs Warne and Cllr Fasham agreed to check the play area.
- c) To agree the removal of the redundant piece of play equipment.** No one is interested in removing the old piece of play equipment so it will need to be removed. Cllr Miss Moore will organise its removal.
- d) To note the annual inspection of the play area has been booked.** This has been booked with Rospa/Play Safety.
- e) Any other matters.** Dan Passmore will be asked for a price to cut the grass during 2026.

96/03/26. Local Government Reorganisation consultation – to agree a response. Cllr Hopley said he was concerned about the impact of the reorganisation on rural communities. DCC will go and the number of councillors representing the public will be reduced. Cllr Hopley is working fifty to sixty hours per week in his role as a County Councillor and it will be harder for Unitary Councillors if there is less of them. He was concerned about the impact of this on the councillors and their careers. He hopes there will be 'community groups' working together. DCC is pushing for a 9.1.1 split across Devon.

97/03/26. Update on recruitment of two councillors to fill the vacancies. No one has expressed an interest to become a councillor. Efforts will continue to fill the vacancies.

98/03/26. Correspondence including emails from a resident asking for a correction to the minutes and a Freedom of Information request.

Cllr Miss Moore declared a personal interest as a neighbour of the resident and made the decision to leave the room while this item was discussed.
A resident has asked for minute 63/12/25 d) (To report on concerns about NDC's response to a report of breach of planning conditions) to be corrected. It was clarified that this item was about the Parish Council's concerns that the NDC Planning Enforcement Officer was not enforcing the conditions that NDC Development Control have put in place for some planning approvals. The minutes were approved at the meeting held on 7th January 2026 as the wording of that item was a true record of what was discussed at the meeting. Councillors acknowledged that the time scale referred to in the allegation had turned out to be wrong but that was the information that was given. It was agreed that the minute 63/12/25 d) of December 3rd 2025 would not be corrected.
The resident has made a Freedom of Information Request and the Clerk will supply the information requested in the time frame allowed.
There was no further correspondence.

Cllr Miss Moore rejoined the meeting.

99/03/26. Date of the next meeting. 6th May 2026.

The meeting closed at 9.17pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date: