

EAST ANSTEY PARISH COUNCIL

**The minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday
7th January 2026 at Anstey Community Hall, Yeo Mill at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr's Miss L Moore (Chair), I Fasham, Miss J Gannon, R Gibson, R Milton (also District Councillor) and Mrs C Warne.

In attendance: County Cllr R Hopley and 40 members of the public

71/01/26. To receive apologies. No apologies.

72/01/26. Disclosure of interests in items on the agenda. Cllr Miss Gannon declared a personal interest because the applicant for planning application 78964 was a sub-contractor for the contractor who built a barn for her.
Cllr Milton declared an interest as the Ward Councillor for Bishops Nympton Ward, which includes East Anstey.

73/01/26. To agree the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 3rd December 2025 as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

74/01/26. Matters arising from the minutes, not included on the agenda. None.

75/01/26. Democratic period. Members of the public were attending in response to a letter sent to every dwelling house in the parish. The letter contained details of a proposal for East Anstey Parish Council to take out a loan of £15,000 from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). £5,000 of this to be loaned to West Anstey Parish Meeting as a parish meeting cannot take out a loan from the PWLB. This is in response to a request from the Anstey Community Hall Chairman to match fund a grant from Sports England. The target of £110,000 to build an extension on Anstey Community Hall would then be reached and work could start. West Anstey Parish Meeting would make regular payments to repay the £5,000. East Anstey Parish Council would need to increase its precept to meet its share of the PWLB repayments. The loan would be repaid over ten years.

The following points were made by members of the public:

- East Anstey has no facilities of its own. Anstey Community Hall is a great space and it could be improved by both councils joining together and improving it for the community.
- What happens if people don't want to pay, can they opt out? (No, it will be collected through council tax payments)
- Questions about whether the Clerk can vote, about her being paid to work for the Parish Council and the impact of her salary increases on increases to the precept (Not relevant to the proposal)
- Adding the cost of the repayments forces everyone to pay. Where is the money from the hall going? The accounts show a £2,500 deficit between income and expenditure. Parishioners only received a letter a week before Christmas, why wasn't three months' notice given if the decision has to be made tonight? (The Parish Council was only approached on 3rd December)

- Three legal entities involved; East Anstey Parish Council, West Anstey Parish Meeting and Anstey Community Hall.
- Allegations that this meeting had been badly organised and the letter to parishioners appallingly written

Cllr Milton spoke as a member of East Anstey Parish Council and explained about plans for an extension for the hall, the request for match funding, plans to borrow money from the PWLB to donate the money to the hall and how the loan would be repaid. He pointed out that there were vacancies on the Parish Council and the hall committee and asked for volunteers to fill those positions. No volunteers came forward.

- In favour of going ahead but a query about the percentage split of the £15,000 between the two parishes. Having looked at the census, the split should be 45% West Anstey and 55% East Anstey. Everyone should pay the same.
- If you don't update the hall you will lose users to other, more modern, halls.
- Allegation that the Young Farmers Club didn't get their deposit returned and as it wasn't resolved they are using the hall at Brushford.
- On occasions both rooms are booked and the third could be let if it was available.
- A councillor gave a breakdown of bookings from the booking calendar on the Hall website and reported the hall is only being used for 35% of the time.
- The hall is losing a lot of functions because the bar isn't good enough. A number of comments received about the difficulty of running a bar during events.
- Offer to run pop up bars.
- Requirement for a business plan to support the investment.
- Complaint from the Anstey Community Hall Chairman/West Anstey Parish Meeting Chairman that his request to make a presentation at the meeting had been refused.

The Clerk left the meeting due to the behaviour and comments made by certain members of the public.

- The Anstey Community Hall Chairman/West Anstey Parish Meeting Chairman gave a detailed explanation of the need for an extension for a bar, timeline of plans to build an extension, the laying of foundations to fulfil planning approval requirements, amendments to the plans for the extension, funding received, the risk of losing promised funding if deadlines are not met and the risk that the project might be lost for good. West Anstey's support to borrow money to give a donation.
- East Anstey Parish Council does not have enough in its reserves to make a grant of £10,000. It will need to make an application to the PWLB. Interest will be payable on the loan and there might be charges. Query whether interest is fixed or set. Estimates given of the amount to be paid per household (Figures not checked for accuracy so not recorded)
- Questions about where the profits from the bar will be going. (Chair of Anstey Hall Committee - everything is completely and utterly transparent.

There is no profiteering by anybody. If a bar runs, it's all on a voluntary basis but nobody wants to queue up that way and revenue is lost.)

- The hall is not owned by West Anstey parish. As a charity registered with the Charity Commission the Hall Committee hold the hall in trust for the community. The Hall's finances are published on the Charity Commission website. Five years ago the Charity Commission approved the change of the name of the hall and the trust to Anstey Community Hall. Noted that there is a mistake in the Charitable Objects and it should say East and West Anstey throughout.
- Concern that the décor of the hall isn't as good as it could be. (Priority given to finding funding for the extension. Hall Committee now has Grants Manager who is looking for grants for smaller projects connected with the upkeep and maintenance of the hall).
- Several requests for a sustainable business plan to be produced.
- Confirmation that West Anstey Parish Meeting has the funding in place to pay this year's instalments of the repayments. (10 years of repayments with only one years confirmed)

Drawing the public participation to a close the Chair explained that the Parish Council had to her knowledge, never had a loan from the PWLB before and Devon Association of Parish Councils have been asked whether legally the Parish Council is allowed to borrow money in order to give it as a grant to another body,

She confirmed the proportion of the £15,000 loaned to West Anstey Parish Meeting would be repaid to East Anstey Parish Council in order that it could repay the loan. West Anstey Parish Meeting will receive that money from North Devon Council as part of its precept. Before any loan can be made confirmation is needed on how it can be ensured legally that the loan is repaid in full to East Anstey Parish Council.

Anstey Community Hall is a separate legal entity. It was proposed to those present that if they wanted the Parish Council to proceed and take out a loan to give a donation to Anstey Community Hall for the benefit of East Anstey residents, an agreement could be given in principle but it would be subject to the following conditions:

- The Parish Council has representation on the Hall Committee.
- The charitable objectives need to be changed to make it clear throughout that it's the provision and maintenance of a village hall for the inhabitants of both parishes and not just West Anstey.
- A sustainable business plan is produced.

Councillors can be very keen on the idea and the principle of it, but due diligence has to be carried out. The Parish Council will try but there is no guarantee that a decision can be made by 20th January as it is dependent on when legal advice is received. The public would be the first to complain if the loan to West Anstey Parish Meeting was not repaid. The short time frame to reach a decision was noted. The request for match funding came out of the blue at the beginning of December and the country shuts down for two weeks over Christmas.

It was suggested that if people want to go ahead now and they want to get this project up and running quickly another option would be to think about voluntarily sitting down with the Chair of the Hall Committee to sort out the money.

Suggestions were a gift day and crowd funding or something similar.

It was pointed out that is both George Nympton and Bishops Nympton wouldn't have a hall today if they hadn't gone to the PWLB for a loan and put a levy on the precept for a 10 year period,

A member of the public asked what happens if the extension is built, it doesn't work and it's not sustainable. Cllr Hopley, County Councillor explained how Templeton made its bar sustainable.

In a show of hands vote 29 members of the public were in favour of the proposal. with no votes against. Twenty five voted in favour of the ten year loan option and two voted in favour of the one year option.

- 76/01/26. To decide whether to donate £10,000 to the project to build a lean-to extension at Anstey Community Hall and, if agreed, how it will be funded. To decide whether to borrow £5,000 as a Public Works Board Loan for repayment by West Anstey.** 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 the following conditions being satisfied:
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
 2. A legal agreement being put in place which obligates West Anstey Parish Meeting to repay their share (based on the total number of households) of the loan to East Anstey Parish Council over 10 years
 3. East Anstey Parish Council to have representation on the committee of Anstey Community Hall. (Type of representation to be decided but will need to be something to protect the interests of East Anstey Parish Council residents)
 4. The charitable objectives of Anstey Community Hall to be changed to read so that the hall is for the benefit of both East and West Anstey residents
 5. The Anstey Community Hall trustees to prepare and adopt a business plan showing how the improvements will enable the ACH to achieve and maintain financial sustainability from its operations

Four councillors voted in favour, one voted against and one abstained.

The Chair of West Anstey Parish Meeting confirmed that there is support from their residents to pay the same as East Anstey residents.

7/01/26. Planning

a) To make a recommendation on any planning applications received by the council before the meeting.

78964 Extension to equine arena (amended plans) at Whitemoor Stables, East Anstey. Comment: East Anstey Parish Council (EAPC) has been made aware by a number of parishioners that the Design and Access Statement Access submitted for this application is misleading and contains incorrect information regarding the size and nature of the business and its claimed benefit to the local community. Statements relating to the impact of previous work are incorrect. Significant disruption was caused to neighbouring properties due to noise, the number of large lorries delivering to the site and the route they chose to use,

working times and large machines working outside of standard approved construction working hours for noisy activities breaching UK Environmental Health regulations, primarily those in the Control of Pollution Act 1974. This disruption was brought to the attention of EAPC and is evidenced in meeting minutes.

During the Democratic Period of the East Anstey Parish Council meeting held on 14th May 2025 the applicant said he would get his planning agent to put together a plan of work to go in with the application. and a copy would be given to the Parish Council. The plan has never been supplied to EAPC and it is not included with the documents supplied to North Devon Council to support this application. At the same meeting the applicant stated that the materials that were going to be brought onto the site included stone from Brayford and sea sand from Padstow in Cornwall, as the ideal materials for the project. The amended application only refers to red subsoil from Crediton, which supports parishioners' concerns that this is another attempt to bring in large amounts of material for financial gain only. They feel that the concerns they raised on the first application have been ignored by the planning department.

Should the planning officer be minded to approve this application East Anstey Parish Council request that the following conditions are included:

1. a robust and enforceable Construction Management Plan to be submitted and approved before any work starts in order to protect the neighbours and wider community from any nuisance likely to be caused by the delivery of materials to the site and the construction of the extension to the equine arena.
2. That the materials brought onto the site are limited to those to be used for the construction of the equine arena, are suitable materials for the construction of an equine arena and are subject to approval by the planning authority.

b) To note any decisions made on planning applications by NDC. No decisions received.

c) Any other planning matters. None.

78/01/26. Highways: Any highways issues. Councillor Warne advised she had received complaints about the lack of salt bins and issues opposite the Froude Arms and at Oldways End. Suggested to map where salt should be located and look into placing supplies there. Several locations that used to have salt don't anymore eg Yanhey Hill. The surface of the road between Oldways End and Woodburn Cross is in a very bad condition and needs resurfacing.

Melanie Mckenna is the new Neighborhood Highways Officer for the North Devon area.

79/01/26. Reports

a) District Cllr. The council tax is very likely to go up in the next budget year. There will be a vote at Monday's NDC meeting on a proposal to stop all trade waste collections. If the vote is carried businesses will have to make private arrangements even though the service has been breaking even

b) County Cllr. Cllr Hopley reported that potholes continue to be an issue and he is receiving at least 10 calls a day. He encouraged people to email him directly. DCC will be receiving £50m less funding from central government. He expressed frustration with the procurement process within highways and the high costs and inefficiencies as a result

80/01/26. Finance:

a) To approve invoices for payment. Deferred to the next meeting as the Clerk was not present.

b) To note any receipts since the last meeting and the bank balance.

Deferred to the next meeting.

c) Bank reconciliation 31.12.25. Deferred.

d) To approve the budget for 2026-27. To be finalised when a decision is made about a PWLB is made. This will need to be submitted with an application for a loan.

e) To agree the precept for 2026-27. It was resolved to agree the precept as agreed at the last meeting with an additional amount added to meet the first loan repayment if needed.

81/01/26. Play Area

a) Any issues arising from playground inspections. It was reported that some young people had been seen on the top of the castle of the new piece of multi play equipment.

b) To agree who will carry out inspections until the next meeting. Cllr Miss Moore.

c) Any other matters. Cllr Mrs Warne said her husband would remove the redundant concrete base from the flag pole which is currently on the edge of the car park.

82/01/26. Update on recruitment of two councillors to fill the vacancies. Members of the public were invited to apply to the Parish Council to be co-opted.

83/01/26. Correspondence. No correspondence. A member of the public alleged she had not received any replies to emails she had sent to the Clerk and they had not been recorded in the minutes, The Chair asked the member of the public to forward these emails to her and she would look into it.

84/01/26. Date of the next meeting. To be arranged once further information regarding conditions for agreeing to apply for a loan are met.

Signed:
Chair

Date: