



Ashburton Town Council

MINUTES OF FULL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON
TUESDAY 9th DECEMBER 2025 AT 7.30pm
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE TOWN HALL

Present: Cllr. Bovey, Wood, Coles, Distin, Giles, Harper, Nutley, Pugh, Searight, Snowsill and Wood.

In attendance: Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Cllr. Rogers (DCC & TDC), Portreeve, Master Bailiff and 3 members of the public.

Cllr. Bovey opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

179.25 Apologies.

The Clerk reported that apologies had been received from Teignbridge District Councillor Jack Major due to illness.

180.25 Declarations of interest.

Cllr. Nutley noted he abstains on voting on planning due to his membership of both the DNPA and Teignbridge Planning committees.

181.25 Public comments and statements.

None received.

182.25 To receive and approve the minutes of the previous meetings of 11th November 2025.

The Chair confirmed that the minutes of 11th November had been circulated. Cllr. Giles proposed that they be signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting; seconded by Cllr. Harper. All in favour.

183.25 To receive the Mayor's report.

Cllr. Bovey gave a short report, thanking the Deputy Chair Cllr. Wood for attending events in her absence; Cllr. Wood attended the Court and Law Day ceremony and Portreeve's Dinner at the Dartmoor Lodge on 25th November to welcome in the new Portreeve, Shane Fleming, and his Master Bailiff, Terry Hayman.

184.25 To receive the Police report.

(Appendix 1) The Clerk presented the Police report noting that, again, just one person had made use of the 'Talk with your Local Police Team' in the Information Centre.

ACTION – Clerk's Office to assist publishing the next Police surgery on social media.

185.25 To receive the Devon County Council report.

Cllr. Rogers delivered his report including:

- Kenwyn has been put back on the open market due to the potential developer pulling out of the sale.

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- Concern raised over the increase in Business Rates by local traders has been reported to DCC and Cllr. Rogers is awaiting feedback.
- There will be a follow-up meeting planned in January or February with the heads of TDC, DCC, DNPA and local town councils. Cllr Rogers will inform us of the date.

For any further detail, please contact Cllr. Stuart Rogers.

186.25 To receive the Teignbridge District Council report.

Cllr. Nutley reported that the sandbag store had been damaged and the parking officers had reported this to TDC. The Clerk assured him that it had already been repaired. The doors do keep coming off the runners due to a build up of sand, this may need looking further into at a later date.

Cllr Turner noted that the recent TDC newsletter shared many good news stories around Teignbridge, including grants given to leisure centres, yet nothing regarding Ashburton. Cllr. Snowsill asked if anything more can be done by the Town Council to access funding – Cllr. Nutley responded that due to the lack of S106 funds or CIL, Ashburton is 'Teignbridge's poor relation' and any funding available will be published in newsletters or directly to local councils.

187.25 To receive the report from the Chair of the Finance and Town Hall Buildings committee.

Cllr. Turner confirmed that the minutes had been circulated for comment ahead of the next meeting and asked if there were any questions regarding the circulated asset transfer report (appendix 2), the budget and precept report (appendix 3) and a discussion note regarding the Information Centre (appendix 4).

With no questions at this time, the budget and precept will be recommended for adoption at the Full Council meeting in January. The Information Centre sub-committee are due to meet in early January, to be reported on at the next Finance meeting.

Cllr Harper reminded Councillors that an Open Day regarding Teignbridge owned assets has been planned for Saturday 31st January. The next meeting will be in early January to prepare. Cllr Harper will work with the Clerk's office to prepare a questionnaire regarding assets for the day. Cllr Wood requested that this is also made electronic for use on social media – Cllr. Snowsill offered his assistance with creating an electronic questionnaire.

ACTION – Cllr Harper, the Clerk's office and Cllr. Snowsill to prepare questionnaires ahead of the open day on Saturday 31st January.

188.25 To approve correspondence to local landowners regarding the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Clerk circulated a letter from the Neighbourhood Plan steering group wishing to invite local landowners to state their land as a community recreation site within the Neighbourhood Plan. A list of sites were shared including the Town Hall and Information Centre. Cllr Distin noted that Ashburton Football Club should be included on the list also. Cllr. Snowsill proposed for the Clerk to circulate the letter, seconded by Cllr. Turner. All in favour.

ACTION – Clerk's office to include the Football Club and circulate the letter.

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189.25 To receive the Councillors' reports of attendance at sub committees and meetings of other organisations.

No reports received.

190.25 To suggest content for the Ashburton Town Council media post.

Councillors were advised to contact Cllr. Turner with anything they think is relevant. The Clerk requested that the next issue of Around Ashburton includes a 'shoutout' to Cllr. Harper, thanking him for his support and efforts during the recent flooding.

191.25 Matters raised by Councillors for information only or on a future agenda.

Cllr. Coles noted that he had collected several bike racks with Cllr. Harper and is storing them until installation can take place.

Cllr. Wood noted that the acoustics in the Main Hall are quite poor for people with hearing difficulty and suggested the council look into soundboards to absorb the echo.

ACTION – Clerk to add Main Hall soundboards to the January Finance meeting.

Cllr. Bovey thanked the councillors for attending and closed the meeting at 20.15.

Signed

Chair

Date

ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM FULL COUNCIL

9th DECEMBER 2025:

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Ashburton & Chudleigh Neighbourhood Police Team

- 101 Non-urgent
- 999 in an emergency
- www.devon-cornwall.police.uk
- 101@dc.police.uk
- DevonAndCornwallPolice
- @DC_Police
- dc_police.999
- DCPolice

ASHBURTON TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

9TH DECEMBER 2025

This report covers the parish of Ashburton including its road network. The Parish has the Police beat code of JA2C.

The Parish is served by the Neighbourhood Police team working out of Ashburton Police Station and Chudleigh Police Office. The Parish forms part of the Teignbridge Coastal & Rural Policing sector.

The team is led by Police Inspector Sean Roper and Sergeant Ryan Cook Neighbourhood Team Leader and PC Claire Hurrell is the Neighbourhood Constable (Neighbourhood Beat Manager) and is supported by PCSO Tina Jordan.

Although every effort has been made to produce an accurate representation of the figures included in the report there may be a slight discrepancy in the totals shown.

For the period 1/11/2025 to 30/11/2025 in the Ashburton beat area there has been a total of 41 Incident Reports of a varying nature logged resulting 26 Occurrence Reports being raised that required further investigation under the following categories:

- Public Safety and Concern for Welfare: 7
- Violence: 10
- Theft: 2
- Fraud: 1
- Stalking: 1
- ASB: 1
- Police Generated & Administration: 4

APPENDIX 2, ITEM 187.25 – Asset Transfer report

Asset Transfer Report, Full Council – 9th December 25, Cllr. Turner

I request that all councillors read this report to the end and think about what their contribution to this can be. I would like to thank Cllr Wood for her help in producing this report. In reality, I provided the background and doom and gloom and Cllr Wood provided the light at the end of the tunnel.

I appreciate that some may find these points uncomfortable, but it is important that we speak plainly. Ashburton is at a pivotal moment. Teignbridge District Council (TDC) is likely to disappear and be absorbed into a new, larger authority composed of surrounding districts. That new body is expected to inherit substantial debt and will have limited capacity to support non-statutory services. Ashburton must therefore decide now what it can realistically manage—and how.

The pattern of decline did not begin overnight. More than 15 years ago, Dartmoor National Park (DNP) and Devon County Council (DCC) withdrew grants from both the Information Centre and the Bank Youth Project. As a result, the Town Council could no longer afford a part-time administrator for the Information Centre, and responsibility for its operation was added to the clerk's role together with volunteers taking over the management of the day-to-day running of the centre.

Eleven years ago, the swimming pool was transferred to local volunteers by TDC. Since then, both DCC and TDC have continued to scale back services to the town. The consequences are increasingly obvious: reduced street cleaning, deteriorating play parks, and a general decline in the appearance of the town.

Over a year ago, I proposed relocating the Information Centre into the small office (now rented to Duffy's Barbers) enabling the existing building to be rented out for £10,000–£12,000 per year. This was not given serious consideration, partly because several councillors opposed it. Instead, the Town Council agreed to pay the centre's business rates—over £3,000 annually—added to the precept. I also suggested registering the centre as a charity, which would remove its rates liability entirely, but this was dismissed as “too much trouble.”

Meanwhile, visitor numbers to the centre have dropped from around 20,000 annually to roughly 5,000 over recent years. And with Cllrs. Bovey and Giles likely to step back at some time, there is no clear succession plan. This raises a fundamental question: is maintaining the Information Centre in its current form sustainable or cost effective for residents?

The future of the Information Centre needs to be part of the broader conversation about which assets the Town Council can reasonably take on.

TDC is now asking Ashburton to assume responsibility for several assets—many originally owned by the Town Council before 1972—without offering funding for their maintenance and without committing to refurbish them prior to transfer.

Crucially, TDC has stated that it is highly unlikely to transfer the only income-generating assets: the car parks with the income of over £200,000.

If the Town Council chooses to take on facilities such as the public toilets, play parks, and green spaces, then thorough costings, realistic operational plans, and a clear governance structure are essential. Managing these assets will significantly increase the workload of the clerk's office and may require additional staffing. Councillors must therefore be prepared to engage fully in early scoping, hands-on planning, and cost analysis. Being a councillor involves far more than attending a few meetings—it requires active participation in major projects that shape the future of the town.

This situation, however challenging, can also be viewed as an opportunity to improve Ashburton's facilities, strengthen its identity, and enhance the town for residents and visitors alike. But the responsibility cannot rest solely on the clerk's office.

Local businesses also have a vital stake. The closure of public toilets or continued deterioration of the town's appearance would directly affect them. Ultimately, any increase in precept will be borne by residents, so the Town Council must set clear, defensible priorities for where limited resources should be invested.

Practical community-based solutions

To ensure asset transfer is manageable, sustainable and rooted in community involvement, the following options should be considered:

1. Community asset partnerships

- Establish volunteer-led "Friends of..." groups for play parks, green spaces, and the Information Centre.
- Create formal agreements that allow these groups to support maintenance, fundraising, and small-scale improvements.
- Use these groups to drive community pride and shared ownership.

2. Establish a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

- Convert the Information Centre—or even multiple assets—into a town-wide CIO.
- This reduces rate liabilities, unlocks grant funding, and enables local fundraising through donations and legacies.
- A CIO model could also incorporate heritage, tourism, and community wellbeing functions.

3. Shared stewardship with local traders

- Invite traders to participate in a Town Centre Working Group focused on cleanliness, signage, visitor experience, and public toilet provision.
- Explore a voluntary trader contribution scheme or sponsorship model for specific improvements (e.g., flower planters, benches, signboards).
- Partner with the Chamber of Trade to co-fund key amenities that support footfall.

4. Community maintenance days

- We already have a town team, we could increase participation to include school kids.
- these are volunteer days supported by the Town Council (tools, materials, coordination).
- Activities could include litter-picking, repainting small structures, and tidying green spaces.
- This strengthens community pride and reduces strain on the council budget.

5. Income-generating micro-projects

- Explore seasonal pop-ups or small paid-for services at council-managed sites (e.g., kiosk hire at recreation areas, event use of green spaces).
- Rent unused council spaces at modest but steady rates to support ongoing maintenance.

6. Succession planning and skills mapping

- Actively recruit volunteers with finance, project management, gardening, youth work, or heritage skills.
- Create a clear plan for handing over duties at the Information Centre to avoid collapse when key individuals step down.

Councillor briefing: asset transfer – key issues and required actions

Purpose

To outline the current position on asset transfer from Teignbridge District Council (TDC), highlight risks and opportunities, and set out what is required from councillors to make informed decisions.

1. Context: a critical moment for Ashburton

- TDC is expected to be absorbed into a larger unitary authority carrying significant debt.
- Future funding for non-statutory services is likely to be extremely limited.
- Ashburton must therefore determine **now** which assets it can sustainably manage.

The town has experienced a gradual decline over 15 years due to withdrawal of support from TDC, DNP and DCC, reducing capacity for services such as street cleaning, youth provision, and upkeep of public spaces.

2. Information Centre – a necessary decision

- Visitor numbers have dropped from 20,000 to 5,000 annually.
- Annual costs to residents will only increase with the Information Centre in its present location.
- No succession plan is in place for when the current volunteers step down.

- Options such as relocation or establishing the centre as a charity were not pursued but remain viable.

Councillors must decide whether the Information Centre should remain as is, be relocated, restructured, or replaced with a more modern visitor-information model.

3. TDC's proposed asset transfers

TDC is seeking to transfer several assets—many originally owned by the Town Council before 1972—**without funding for refurbishment or ongoing maintenance, and without transferring any income-generating assets** such as car parks.

Assets under discussion include:

- Public toilets
- Play parks
- Green spaces and amenity land
- Other small parcels and responsibility areas

Taking these on will require:

- Full costings (short and long term)
- Clear management plans
- Additional clerk's office capacity
- Potential extra staffing or contractor support

4. Expectations of Councillors

Councillors must be prepared to contribute more than attendance at meetings. Asset transfer requires:

- **Active involvement** in early scoping, site visits, and options appraisal
- **Practical input** into cost analysis, maintenance standards, and risk assessment
- **Commitment** to long-term project work and oversight
- **Clear prioritisation** to ensure the precept is used responsibly

This work cannot fall solely on the clerk's office.

5. Financial Implications

- The burden of asset management will fall on the precept unless new income streams are developed.
- Declining town appearance and potential toilet closure would affect traders and tourism.
- Ashburton must balance pride in local assets with the hard reality of what residents can afford.

6. Opportunities – community-based solutions

Asset transfer also offers a chance to rebuild community involvement and improve facilities if approached strategically.

Potential solutions include:

1. **Community Asset Partnerships**
Volunteer “Friends of...” groups for parks, green spaces, and the Information Centre to support small maintenance tasks and fundraising.
2. **Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)**
A town-wide charity structure to access grants, remove rates liabilities, and coordinate community fundraising.
3. **Business involvement**
A Town Centre Working Group and potential sponsorship schemes (planters, benches, maintenance contributions).
4. **Quarterly community clean-up days**
Supported by the Town Council with materials and coordination.
5. **Income-generating micro-projects**
Small rentals (kiosks, events, pop-ups) in public spaces to support upkeep.
6. **Volunteer skills mapping and succession planning**
Particularly important for the Information Centre and for any asset reliant on key individuals.

7. Immediate questions for Ashburton Town Council

Councillors are asked to consider:

1. Which assets are essential for Ashburton to control?
2. What level of precept increase (if any) is acceptable to residents?
3. What community structures (charitable, volunteer-led, business-based) should be developed to support asset management?
4. What is the long-term plan for the Information Centre?
5. Does the council have the capacity to manage these assets, or is expansion required?

Conclusion

Ashburton is facing a decisive moment. Asset transfer could either place a heavy financial burden on residents or—if handled proactively—become a genuine opportunity to revitalise the town. The outcome depends on clear decisions, realistic planning, and active involvement from all councillors.

Cllr Karen Turner

8.12.25

APPENDIX 3, ITEM 187.25 – Budget / Precept report

Precept report for Full Council

Please send any questions to myself or the clerk prior to Full council to speed things along.

A new budget line has been added – Asset management – and £10,000 has initially been added to the precept. This will increase to £20,000 if the toilets are taken on and who knows what next year if the town council take on other assets.

CCTV - £7,500 added although we are hoping for a grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

£3,000 for a referendum for the neighbourhood plan. I have asked the clerk to check this figure with TDC. To date no reply.

The grants agreed were:

1. BYP requested £30,000. £15,000 proposed and accepted.
2. The community fridge £3,150 proposed and accepted
3. Ashburton Cricket Club £500 proposed and accepted
4. Moorland Community Caring a grant in kind for free use of the town hall for its social events twice per month for the socially isolated.

Other increases are mostly in line with RPI. The current figures will increase the precept by 10%. Costing the average Band D household 28p per week.

Unless the clerk has any changes to make to the budget sheet you will receive before full council is the final figures.

If there are no problems or expected changes by the clerk then this can be finalised at full council on 16 December 2025.

Cllr Karen Turner

APPENDIX 4, ITEM 187.25 – Information Centre discussion note

Information Centre – discussion note

Following my previous report I thought about where the Information Centre could relocate to at minimal cost.

I approached the Postmaster about the room at the rear of the post office and he agreed that this could, in theory, be a possibility.

Advantages

- Save town council over £3,000 in council tax.
- Allow present centre to be let for £10,000 or more.
- Reduce some of the work of the clerk's office.
- No sales to deal with so no time needed on ordering or managing finances.
- Maps, guides etc could be sold by the Post Office to give them a small income from the centre.
- Volunteers could man at most busy times.
- A mobile phone could be used as the Information Centre number rather than adding another landline to the Post Office.
- Information leaflets available 7 days a week during post office opening times.
- If there are any incidental costs such as photocopies, the town council could give a small grant.

The room at the post office would need initial fitting out and this would need to be paid for by the town council but the overall savings would be significant.

There is no money available to us from anywhere it appears. So we need to save where we can while trying to maintain as many services as possible.

Location in the post office would be a central, well-known space.

Cllr Karen Turner
9.12.25