Ashburton Town Council

Minutes of the Asset Management Working Group Meeting held on Tuesday 30 September 2026 at 7.00pm, in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs. Snowsill (Chair), Coles, Giles and Wood. Clive Buckland-Bork, Wyn James, Sarah Prince, Sally Rhodes, Annie Hill-Smith, Allaric Spendlove, Graham Tarsky, Sam Walker and Sophia Young.

In attendance: The Deputy Town Clerk, Admin Assistant and 1 member of the public.

037.26AW APOLOGIES

Cllrs. Bovey, Distin, James and Turner had given their apologies due to prior commitments. The absence of Cllrs. Nutley and Harper was also noted, although no apologies were received.

Resolution

APPROVED:
Proposed: Cllr. Giles
Seconded: Cllr. Wood

038.26AW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Cllrs. Snowsill and Giles declared that they are residents local to Miners Close
- Sally Rhodes declared that she has a parking permit for Market Place
- Sarah Prince declared that she is a local resident to Amberley Close

---

039.26AW TO APPROVE THE PREVIOUS MINUTES OF 7TH JULY 2026.

Cllr Snowsill went through the minutes of the previous meeting.

There remains some uncertainty as to whether the newly formed *Old Manor Green Residents Association* wishes to take on ownership of the asset. Ms Prince, a member of the Residents Association, believes that its intention is to apply for Village Green status rather than take ownership. The Deputy Clerk advised that the Clerk's Office has written to the Chair of the Residents Association to seek clarification but has not yet received a response.

Cllr Snowsill requested that item 032.26AW be carried forward to a future agenda, once the assets are owned by the Town Council. **ACTION**

There was some discussion regarding the details of the current Teignbridge playpark funding scheme. The Deputy Clerk advised that Teignbridge District Council has confirmed that match funding will be available for any funding awarded to Ashburton. TDC has also confirmed that, once funding has been allocated, if it is used for an asset being transferred to the Town Council, Ashburton Town Council will be able to use the funding for playpark improvements as it sees fit.

Resolution

APPROVED: The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true and accurate record.
Proposed: Cllr. Giles

Seconded: Cllr. Wood

Action
Town Clerks Office to carry forward action 032.26AW until the assets are owned by the council.

040.26AW LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

Cllr Snowsill updated the committee on the pause to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in relation to asset transfer. Teignbridge District Council (TDC) has stated that the asset transfer process and LGR are separate matters and, as far as the Town Council has been advised, the existing asset transfer timeline should continue.

It was noted that TDC is unwilling to increase council tax by more than 5%, as this would trigger a referendum, and is therefore looking at reducing services as a way to save money. This will likely mean that TDC will need to transfer assets regardless of the outcome of LGR.

Cllr Snowsill confirmed that the current timeline requires a decision on which assets the Town Council wishes to progress to negotiations with TDC to be made at the October Full Council meeting. Cllr Snowsill then suggested that the LGR pause could provide an opportunity for the Town Council to slow the asset transfer process, allowing further clarification to be obtained on outstanding issues, including playpark funding, before progressing further.

Cllr Wood explained that the current timeline is also driven by the Town Council's own budget-setting process, as the precept for 2027 will need to be determined within the next few months. The Town Council therefore cannot delay a decision indefinitely. She suggested that, as part of the 2027 budget-setting process, the Council could consider alternative ways of funding the costs associated with taking on additional assets, rather than placing the entire cost on local taxpayers through the precept. For example, the formation of a Community Interest Company (CIC) or Community Interest Organisation (CIO) could provide additional fundraising opportunities.

Mr Walker suggested inviting the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) to attend future discussions, as they may be willing to consider taking on responsibility for some assets, such as the town toilets. He felt that the toilets could be viewed as an asset to the National Park by supporting tourism and encouraging visitors to the area.

There was also discussion about the forthcoming TDC elections that will now happen in May and whether candidates could campaign on issues such as protecting local toilets, potentially generating greater political attention and support for the issue.

041.26AW TDC PLAYPARK IMPROVEMENT SCHEME AND FUNDING UPDATE.

As this matter had been discussed earlier in the meeting, the committee agreed to move on to the next agenda item.

042.26AW TO RECEIVE THE PROPOSAL FROM ACE REGARDING CLEDER PLACE

Mr Buckland-Bork spoke on behalf of the Ashburton Climate Emergency Community Spaces – Cléder Place Redevelopment Group, providing an overview of the proposals the group has

developed for potential improvements to Cléder Place, should the Town Council acquire the asset.

The proposals focus on climate awareness and include the provision of benches in shaded areas, a bandstand and the planting of climate-resilient trees. Mr Buckland-Bork explained that the group has met on several occasions and developed a number of ideas which it would like to consult on with the wider community, with the aim of encouraging community involvement and engagement. The group has used AI to produce a rough estimate of £10,000 for the first phase of the proposed improvements.

Cllr Wood thanked the group for the time and effort they had put into developing the proposal. She suggested that Cléder Place could provide an opportunity to test a community led approach to asset development and this approach could potentially be applied to other assets in the future.

Mr Spendlove noted that Cléder Place is currently used for car parking and community events, including the Fun Run, and therefore needs to remain accessible and usable for the community. He suggested that parking could be encouraged and charges introduced to generate income. There was discussion regarding the potential advantages and disadvantages of car parking on Cléder Place. It was noted that formalised parking on the site had previously been rejected due to concerns regarding the safety risks associated with reversing onto North Street and the potential for pollution entering the River Ashburn.

Mr Buckland-Bork suggested that ownership of Cléder Place should remain with the Town Council, while a Community Interest Organisation (CIO) could potentially be established to manage the site and other assets.

Cllr. Wood proposed that the approach of engaging volunteer community groups to discuss and develop proposals for improvements, which has been initiated with Cléder Place, be replicated for the Recreation Ground.

ACTION

Resolution
APPROVED:
Proposed: Cllr. Wood
Seconded: Cllr. Snowsill

Actions
Volunteers from the AWG and others to form volunteer community groups to discuss and develop proposals for improvements to potential town assets

---

043.26AW TO DISCUSS ASSET INSPECTIONS IN ORDER TO DETERMINE WORKS REQUIRED AT EACH SITE.

Cllr. Snowsill explained that some of the assets under consideration are in poor condition, citing the river wall at Cléder Place as an example. The town council has suggested that it would be beneficial for the Asset Working Group (AWG) to undertake a visual inspection of each asset before they enter into formal negotiations with TDC. This would help to identify any issues that could potentially be addressed as part of the asset transfer negotiations.

Mr Spendlove suggested that the Town Council consider commissioning professional inspections, as these would provide a more detailed assessment of the condition of the assets and greater clarity regarding any works that may be required.

Cllr. Snowsill noted that the Town Council has access to playpark equipment safety reports and tree surveys undertaken by TDC in the previous years. He explained that the proposed visual inspections would be done with the aim of providing an overview assessment of the current condition of the assets.

Cllr. Giles advised that TDC is due to inspect all of the playparks in October as part of its playpark funding scheme. It was suggested that, subject to the Town Council being able to access these reports, it may not be necessary to commission separate inspections of the playpark equipment.

There was discussion regarding the potential cost of professional inspections and whether the TDC playpark inspections would cover only the playpark equipment or the wider areas of sites such as the Recreation Ground.

The Deputy Clerk advised that some funding for 'asset transfers' had been allocated within the current year's budget which could potentially be used for inspections. Cllr. Snowsill asked the Clerk's Office to prepare a plan and associated costs for commissioning professional surveys, which could then be considered by the Finance Committee for approval. **ACTION**

Actions
Clerk's Office to prepare a report and costed proposal for professional asset surveys for consideration and approval by the Finance Committee.

044.26AW TO DISCUSS THE AFFORDABILITY OF ASSETS AND POTENTIAL ASSOCIATED HIDDEN COSTS.

Cllr. Snowsill explained that, following a meeting of Full Council, the Asset Working Group (AWG) had been asked to review the proposed list of assets to acquire from Teignbridge District Council (TDC), with particular consideration given to their affordability.

Cllr. Snowsill presented a breakdown of potential hidden costs associated with taking on assets which might not have been previously considered by the group, including additional staffing requirements, fly-tipping, flooding and increased insurance costs (**Appendix 1**).

He asked the Asset Working Group to consider these potential costs in addition to the day-to-day running costs already provided, and to then consider whether it still wished to recommend taking on the same assets previously identified.

Cllr. Snowsill suggested that the Recreation Ground, Cléder Place and all of the car parks should remain on the list of assets that the Town Council would like to consider taking on. He proposed that the AWG review their recommendations on the public toilets, grass verges and smaller playparks again.

Dolbeare Road Car Park

The group decided that it also wished to consider and vote on whether to take on Dolbeare Road Car Park. It was noted that local residents of Dolbeare Road would like Ashburton Town

Council to take on responsibility for the car park rather than TDC. The car park is currently free to use and is maintained by local residents.

It was suggested that, should the Town Council take on the car park, the spaces could potentially be allocated for residents only, with a small annual charge introduced to help cover public liability insurance and any other associated costs.

Alternative views were expressed that taking on the car park could create an additional liability for the Town Council. It was suggested that residents of Dolbeare Road could instead consider forming a Residents Association which could then approach TDC to request that the car park be designated only for residents' use, in return for the residents continuing to maintain the area.

Cllr. Snowsill called for a vote on whether Dolbeare Road Car Park should remain on the list of assets being considered for transfer. Results were are follows:

- For: 7
- Against: 4
- Abstentions: 1

Grass Verges at Home Park

Discussion then turned to whether the Town Council should acquire the grass verges at Home Park. A vote was taken, with the working group unanimously agreeing *not* to include the Home Park grass verges in the assets being considered for transfer.

Home Park, Minors Close and Westerbrook Play Parks

There was a lengthy discussion regarding whether the Town Council should take on the three smaller playparks at Home Park, Miners Close and Westerbrook Avenue.

Particular discussion focused on Miners Close Playpark. Some members raised concerns about the condition and location of the playpark, noting that it is shaded and overshadowed by trees from a neighbouring garden. It was suggested that this can result in the play equipment becoming slippery and potentially unsafe and this may contribute to the playpark being underused.

Other members felt that the playpark is used and highlighted the value of having a small, local facility within walking distance of residents. It was noted that a nearby playpark may be particularly beneficial for parents or carers who may find it difficult to walk to a larger, more central facility.

Some members questioned whether the smaller playparks provide sufficient equipment and facilities to keep children of different ages entertained. It was suggested that, given the limited resources available to the Town Council, funding could potentially be better directed towards a high-quality central destination playpark which could serve the wider community and provide facilities for a range of age groups.

Cllr. Snowsill reminded the group that the Town Council would not simply be taking on the smaller playparks to prevent them from being removed. Once ownership was transferred, the Town Council would have responsibility for maintaining the sites and would also assume liability for issues arising from their use which would all carry costs. A vote was taken as follows:

- For: 8
- Against: 3

Kingsbridge Lane Public Toilets

Cllr. Snowsill then asked the AWG to consider the town's public toilets. He highlighted the importance of providing public toilet facilities for visitors to the town and for local businesses that do not have their own toilet facilities for staff.

Mr Spendlove expressed concerns about the condition of the existing toilets and suggested that significant expenditure may be required to bring them up to an appropriate standard. He suggested that it could potentially be more cost-effective to completely replace the existing facilities with new, modern toilets rather than undertake extensive renovations.

The possibility of introducing a charge for use of the public toilets was also discussed as a means of helping to fund their ongoing maintenance and operation. Some members suggested that, if charging were introduced, local businesses and/or residents could be provided with a local resident's card, similar to the scheme used in Torbay, allowing free or discounted access.

There was also discussion about the provision of public toilets at the Recreation Ground, with several members expressing support for reinstating toilet facilities at the site. A vote was taken as follows:

- For: 10
- Against: 0
- Abstentions: 1

Resolution

APPROVED: The Asset Working Group agreed to recommend to Full Council that the following Teignbridge District Council assets be taken on:

- Cléder Place
- The Recreation Ground
- Kingsbridge Lane Public Toilets
- Kingsbridge Lane, Market Close and Dolbeare Road Car Parks
- Home Park, Miners Close and Westerbrook Avenue Playparks

The Asset Working Group further agreed to recommend that the grass verges at Home Park and the open green space at Old Manor Close not be considered for transfer at this time.

045.26AW ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

Cllr. Snowsill reminded the group that the recommendations from the Asset Working Group would be presented to Full Council on 13 October. Subject to approval, the selected assets would then proceed to negotiations with Teignbridge District Council, with the current aim being for the process to be completed by April.

It was noted that this timeline is not fixed and that the Town Council would retain the option to withdraw from acquiring any assets should the negotiations not progress satisfactorily.

Cllr. Snowsill advised that the proposed surveys should be completed by March, allowing the Town Council to have sufficient information about the condition of the assets to make informed decisions before the anticipated April completion date.

Mr Walker volunteered to establish a Recreation Ground Redevelopment Group, with Mr Tarsky offering to assist. Cllr. Snowsill asked that they organise themselves in tandem with the existing Cléder Place Redevelopment Group.

Cllr. Snowsill thanked those present and closed the meeting at 20.54

SIGNED _____

DATE _____

Action Points Arising from Asset Working Group Meeting held on Tuesday 30 September 2026 at 7.00pm, in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall.

Agenda Item	Actions	Responsible
039.26AW	Town Clerks Office to carry forward action 032.26AW (regarding Old Manor Green) to a future agenda once assets are owned by the council.	Clerk's Office
042.26AW	Volunteers from the AWG and others to form volunteer community groups to discuss and develop proposals for improvements to potential town assets	AWG to self organise – see 045.26AW
043.26AW	Clerk's Office to prepare a report and costed proposal for professional asset surveys for consideration and approval by the Finance Committee.	Clerk's Office

Appendix 1

Possible additional costs to consider

Area	Potential additional expense
Staff time	Extra Clerk/Admin hours dealing with contractors, residents, complaints, enquiries, invoices, inspections and general administration
Management/contractor oversight	Time spent obtaining quotes, commissioning work, checking completed work and managing contractors
Reactive repairs	Unplanned repairs to play equipment, benches, bins, gates, fencing, toilets, paths, lighting etc.
Vandalism	Repairing or replacing damaged equipment, graffiti removal, broken doors, locks, sanitary fittings, lights and other damage
Insurance	Increased public liability/property insurance premiums due to the additional assets and activities
Insurance claims	Excesses and costs arising from claims, including incidents involving playparks, paths, public toilets or other facilities
Legal costs	Dealing with liability claims, disputes, boundary/ownership issues, contracts, easements, leases or other legal matters
Drainage	Drain surveys, clearance, repairs, blockages and dealing with flooding
Fly tipping	Fly-tipping removal and disposal charges
Emergency call-outs	Out-of-hours response to damage, flooding, dangerous trees, vandalism, broken equipment or other urgent issues
Signage	New/replacement signs, notices, safety information, contact details and legal notices
Capital expenditure	Major future works such as resurfacing, replacing playparks, toilet refurbishment, fencing, drainage or structural repairs
Initial due diligence (legal)	Surveys, valuations, title checks and inspections before accepting an asset
Condition/remedial works	Cost of bringing assets into an acceptable condition before or immediately after transfer
Backlog maintenance	Existing maintenance that TDC has deferred and which may become the Town Council's responsibility