

**Minutes of the Sourton Parish Council meeting held at 7:00pm
On 5th October 2026 at Sourton Village Hall.**

Council Members Present:

Cllr Firth (Chair)
Cllr Kennedy
Cllr Mott
Cllr Southcott

In Attendance:

Mrs A Horn (Clerk) Cllr James Grainger, 9 members of the public
Cllr Firth chaired the meeting.

81. Chair's Report

On legal advice received from the Monitoring Officer at West Devon Borough Council confirmed that, as the Parish Council had been quorate in March, WDDBC's involvement had ceased and a new order would be required if the Council subsequently became inquorate. However, between April and the present, the Parish Council had ceased to be quorate, with only two Parish Councillors remaining. As the Council was unable to form a quorum, a new order was required and was issued today to enable the meeting to proceed.

Decisions made at previous meetings will be presented for ratification at the November meeting of the Parish Council.

Following confirmation that Cllr Mott had rejoined the Parish Council, it was noted that she would no longer hold the position of Chair. Cllr Firth, as Vice-Chair, therefore assumed the role of Chair. Cllr Kennedy took on the vacant position of Vice-Chair.

82 Apologies for Absence

None

83 Public Forum

- A member of the public asked for their statement to be minuted:

Chair I am standing tonight as a local resident to object in the strongest terms to your proposed merger of Sourton Parish Council.

As I have said to you before, I'm more than happy to be proved wrong, but...

As the agenda states: that "No decision can be taken on items not detailed on the published agenda" and as the merger is missing from tonight's agenda, the council is prohibited from discussing or voting on any such resolution. The Chair cannot legally use her dual- office "Borough Councillor hat" tomorrow morning to bypass the very statutory agenda controls she is bound by as the Parish Council Chair tonight. You cannot execute a backdoor political manoeuvre to evade democratic public oversight.

West Devon Borough Council's Monitoring Officer, formally confirmed to me in writing at 16:31 today that the 2024 Section 91 Order automatically expired when our local quorum was filled. While he states he rushed a new order this afternoon, a last-minute piece of paper signed today cannot retrospectively validate an agenda published days ago by unauthorized individuals. Tonight's meeting remains unlawfully convened under public law.

You now claim that the merger is due to "a lack of public interest" yet the February minutes show you turned away a willing local resident under the false premise that you were permanent co-opted members.

It is also concerning that no parish minutes report the resignation of Councillor Kaczanow.

Whilst I appreciate these next details won't make a lot of sense to many people in the gallery, but to me at least, it seems you have been intentionally starving the council of members for nearly 2 years

to maintain control, but now after the recent ASB Case Review, the Statutory Public Register Request and the Section 28 complaint to the Monitoring Officer you now appear to be manoeuvring to destroy the parish council you were appointed to protect.
Thus, I would like an answer to this question:

1. Will the Chair formally confirm right now that no vote or decision on a merger can legally take place tonight?

Please note: the Deputy Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer were formally served with a statutory notice of these facts at 11:50 this morning and at 12:09 the Chief Executive's Office formally confirmed that the Monitoring Officer had the file.

I am now physically handing the full text of this statement to the Clerk, and I require that it along with my question, be attached to the official public minutes.

Thank you. **It was confirmed that the meeting had been lawfully convened and that no discussion or vote on merging the parish with another would take place. It was on advice from the Elections Officer, that when Cllr Edmonds resigned his seat had to be advertised and could not be co-opted until after that period had expired.**

- Is the noticeboard at the end of Trescote Way being replaced? **The new board has been purchased and was waiting to be put up.**
- Property known as Joyland's, the verge is covered in rotten silage. **The verge is private land.**
- A joined-up Parish Council would be joined with Bridestowe, Bratton Clovelly or Beaworthy as they are the parishes that join Sourton. Who pays the Mrs Horn's redundancy does the parish or does West Devon and the parish get recharged? **Creating a combined Parish Council would be a lengthy process and could take several years. As no formal proposal has been made or considered, it is not yet known whether any redundancy costs would be met by the Parish Council or West Devon Borough Council, or subsequently recharged.**

84 Declarations of Interest

None

85 WDBC, DCC, DNP PCC and Sourton Hall Report

Cllr Grainger advised that traffic-calming measures and a permanent speed camera were not considered appropriate due to insufficient data. Flashing signs, a possible speed-limit change, and alternative methods of collecting speed data could be explored. The Road Safety Team also considered the location unsafe for pedestrians because of both vehicle speeds and inadequate infrastructure. A meeting would be arranged with councillors, the Road Safety Team and Cllr James Grainger.

The track leading to Sourton Quarry is to be resurfaced.
Blocked drains should be reported promptly.

WDBC – Cllr Mott reported that the Council would consider the Consultation on a Devon Mayor later in the meeting.

DNPA - No report

ITEMS REQUIRING A DECISION

86 Minutes

86.1 Minutes of the previous meeting

On the proposition of Cllr Southcott and seconded by Cllr Mott it was **RESOLVED** to approve and sign the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 7th September 2026

87. Co- option

The Clerk reported that no applications had been received

3 members of the public left 7:30pm

Cllr Mott expressed disappointment that some members of the public felt the Council had not done enough to encourage new councillors. She outlined the efforts already made to engage with the community, including attending the cream teas and bacon bap events at the hall, involvement with the volunteer group and advertising in the Base magazine. She acknowledged that it was difficult to know what more the Council could do to encourage people to stand as councillors. It was also noted that repeatedly raising the same concerns on the Sourton Facebook page was unlikely to encourage people to come forward.

Cllr Grainger left at 7:41pm

88 Forward Planning

8.1 Meeting Dates for 2027

The meeting dates were agreed subject to hall availability.

88.2 Clerks Holiday

It was noted that the Clerk would be on holiday from 22nd December to 4th January.

89 Policies and Governance

89.1 Policies to review.

On the proposition of Cllr Kennedy and seconded by Cllr Mott it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the following policies:

Closed churchyard

Business Continuity Plan

Expenses

Meeting attendance

Equal opportunities

Absence Management

Complaints procedure

Data Retention Policy

89.2 Emergency Plan

It was agreed to consider the creation of a Parish Emergency Plan, and the Clerk would circulate Bridestowe's Emergency plan.

89.3 Devolution

It was agreed to send in individual responses, and the Clerk would circulate the link.

90 Planning

90.1 2593/26/PDM Barns Spurham Farm Thorndon Cross

This application was noted

90.2 2335/26/HHO Southmoor Thorndon Cross EX20 4NF

On the proposition of Cllr Firth and seconded by Cllr Kennedy it was **RESOLVED** to object to the application on the grounds that the proposed two-storey extension, when considered alongside the previous extensions to the property, raises concerns regarding the scale and cumulative enlargement of the original dwelling and its relationship with the surrounding rural environment.

The Council considers that the proposal should be assessed against Policy H5 (Design and Quality of New Development) of the Bridestowe and Sourton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016–2034, together with the design principles contained in Appendix VI, the Village Design Statement. Policy H5 requires development to reflect local character and distinctiveness through its scale, height, massing, layout, and design, and to respect the existing landscape and natural environment. The Council is concerned that the cumulative scale of the proposed and previous extensions may result in a dwelling that is disproportionate to the original house and fails to respect the character of its rural setting.

The Council also requests that the application be assessed against Policies DEV20 (Place-shaping and the quality of the local environment) and DEV23 (Landscape Character) of the Plymouth and Southwest Devon Joint Local Plan, as applicable. The Council considers that particular attention should be given to the overall scale and massing of the enlarged property and whether the proposal would adversely affect the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The planning history of the property is also a material consideration. The Council understands that an earlier proposal for a dwelling of a similar overall size was refused and that the property has subsequently been enlarged through successive extensions. The Local Planning Authority is therefore requested to consider the earlier refusal, its stated reasons and the cumulative effect of the subsequent development when assessing the current proposal.

The Council recognises that the current application must be determined on its own merits.

However, it considers that the planning history, the cumulative enlargement of the original dwelling

and the potential impact on rural character warrant careful assessment against the relevant development plan policies.

2 members of the public left at 8:15pm

91. Closed Churchyard

It was noted that there are still sheep in the Churchyard and an email needed to be sent to those who were responsible for the cycle track as well as SWW regarding the cattle grid at Prewely.

The Clerk gave an update on headstones and grass cutting.

2 members of the public left 8:20pm

92 Finance

92.1 Finance Report

On the proposition of Cllr Firth and seconded by Cllr Kennedy it was **RESOLVED** to accept Bank Reconciliation report dated 30th September and budget monitoring report.

92.2 Payments

To resolve to approve the payments as set out on the payment schedule.

On the proposition of Cllr Mott and seconded by Cllr Firth it was **RESOLVED** to accept the change in value to the SLCC invoice

On the proposition of Cllr Southcott and seconded by Cllr Firth it was **RESOLVED** to approve the payment list totalling £2277.87 plus VAT

93 Cluster meeting

The Clerk updated the group on the topics discussed including getting more parishes to join, the overcrowding on the trains and the condition of the road signs around the area.

It was noted that Okehampton Town Council was hosting on 15th June 2027 new councillor in person training. A Christmas Councillor Social would be held in Okehampton 10th December 7pm and the next meeting was 20th January at 10am in Meldon Village Hall

94 Drains

A contractor had been asked to give an estimate as to how much work it would take to clear the drains and ditches. It was estimated that it could take a day's work to clear the ditched and two to clear the drains which was an estimated cost of £1500. It was agreed to try and get a meeting between the Commoners, the PCC, The Village Hall, and the Trustees for the land and see if between them it was feasible to do.

95 Speed in Sourton

95.1 Speed watch

Cllr Southcott reported that Sourton only had 2 volunteers and needed more. If more volunteers did not come forward, then the group would stop.

95.2 Speed reduction options

The Highways officer was not available to attend the meeting but was willing to arrange a meeting with some of the council to discuss options.

2 members of the public left 8:40pm

96 Grass Cutting tender

It was agreed to add the verges at Trescote Way to the tender even though it was Highways responsibility. This would be advertised and sent to the current contractor.

97 Councillor reports

None

98 Items Brought Forward

Holding a Christmas event

PART TWO

Items which may be taken in the absence of the press and public. The Committee is recommended to pass the following resolution: 'Resolved that under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items as they involve the likely disclosure of sensitive and confidential information.'

99 WDBC Enforcement

An update was noted

100 Date of Next Meeting

2nd November at 7pm

Meeting closed 9:10pm