

Marhamchurch Parish Council

Tuesday 21st July 2026

The meeting of Marhamchurch Parish Council was held on the above date at 7:30pm, in Marhamchurch Sunday School Rooms.

Councillors Present:

Chairman Cllr Perry, Vice-Chair Cllr Edwards, Cllr Biddick-Bray, Cllr O'Sullivan, Cllr Polkinghorn.

Also in attendance: County Cllr Nicky Chopak and Clerk E Hawkins.

12 members of the public were present for the meeting. Chairman Cllr Perry opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Chairman Cllr Perry read out the Civility and Respect Pledge:

Civility and respect should be at the heart of public life, and good governance is fundamental to ensuring an effective and well-functioning democracy at all levels.

The intimidation, abuse, bullying and harassment of councillors, clerks and council staff, in person, or online is unacceptable, whether by councillors, clerks, council staff or public members.

Any person considered by the Chair of the meeting to have breached this rule may be asked to apologise, withdraw their statement and/or be asked to leave the meeting.

Record and Approve Apologies.

26/151

None.

Confirm Minutes from the 16 June 2026 and ratify all decisions taken therein.

26/152

It was resolved to approve the minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 16 June 2026 and ratify all decisions made at the meeting. Proposed Cllr Biddick-Bray. Seconded Cllr Edwards. 4 in favour. 1 abstained due to not being at the meeting. Chairman signed them as a correct record.

Declarations.

26/153

- (i) Cllr Perry declared longstanding interest in Agenda item 9c: Playpark.
- (ii) Cllr Polkinghorn declared an interest in Agenda item 10: Hele Valley Trail.
- (iii) Cllr Biddick-Bray declared an interest in Agenda Item 8a(i): Planning PA25/04531.

Dispensations.

26/154

- a) To note approved dispensations relevant to items on the agenda:
 - (i) Dispensation noted for Cllr Perry re Agenda item 9c: Playpark.
- b) To review new dispensations requests.
 - (i) Dispensation request from Cllr Polkinghorn re Agenda item 10: Hele Valley Trail. Dispensation request was to participate in discussions but not to vote. It was resolved to approve the request. Proposed Cllr Bidick-Bray. Seconded Cllr Edwards. 3 in favour. 1 against.

Matters Arising – for report only.

26/155

None.

Public Open Session.

(To receive statements, questions, and answers from the public on an agenda item)

26/156

Cllr Perry invited members of the public to talk on matters listed on the agenda. He advised everyone who wishes to speak will be allocated 3 minutes.

There were 4 members of public who made comments regarding the Hele Valley Trail and tree safety survey.

Comments were made regarding:

- Woodland management and tree risk assessments.
- Tree safety inspection surveyors.
- Friends of the Earth involvement.
- Alternative forms of communication instead of only minutes circulated.
- Issues flagged re parking concerns.
- Request for Marhamchurch Matters Facebook page to be opened up to all, including those who had been removed.
- Query re how many quotes for tree survey were obtained – Cllr Edwards advised he would address this shortly.

Cllr Edwards read out a Statement to address concerns raised following social media posts. This Statement is posted on the Parish Council website.

Marhamchurch Parish Council Statement Regarding Tree Surveys at the Hele Valley Trail July 2026

Background

August 2025

A tree survey of the Hele Valley Trail was commissioned following advice relating to the Parish Council's insurance requirements. Four councillors voted in favour of appointing a supplier who was able to complete the survey within the required timescale, with one councillor voting against. The appointed supplier had no links to the Parish Council and was recommended by another provider.

The Parish Council's insurance provider advised:

"The requirement is that we must follow industry guidance, which is a tree survey needs to be completed between every 3 to 5 years. The frequency of inspection depends on the potential risk posed by the trees and so for example needs to consider disease and location, which will be partly informed by the survey. Between surveys, visual inspections should be carried out and if anyone reports a concern regarding the trees it must be acted upon. If there was an incident, the insurance company would ask to see the most recent tree survey."

December 2025

The purchase of the Hele Valley Trail was completed. Following periods of adverse weather, concerns were raised regarding the condition of trees within the site and whether they posed a safety risk. Photographs highlighting those concerns were submitted to the Clerk. In response, Marhamchurch Parish Council issued a public statement regarding the matter.

April 2026

The Clerk sought advice from the Cornwall Association of Local Councils (CALC) regarding concerns about potentially unsafe trees. CALC advised:

"Concerns regarding unsafe trees, whether raised by a Councillor or a member of the public, must be referred to the Parish Council, who will instruct a qualified contractor to assess the trees and determine the level of risk. The contractor's report will inform works that may be needed and also inform any future insurance claims."

Tree Safety Inspection Considered at the Meeting of 16 June 2026

At the Parish Council meeting held on 16 June 2026, councillors considered whether to commission a further tree safety inspection of the Hele Valley Trail. The previous inspection had been completed in August 2025 by Evolve Tree Consultancy. In light of recent comments concerning trees at the site, it was considered appropriate to obtain a further professional assessment. To ensure the matter could be considered promptly, the Clerk obtained quotations in advance of the meeting.

The quotations received were:

- Evolve Tree Consultancy - £696
- Trudy Polkinghorn Tree Consultant - £975
- Jason Bellenger Professional Tree Surveys and Arboricultural Consultancy - £1,200
- Oak Valley Tree Surveyors - £1,600

Following consideration of the quotations, councillors agreed that it would be beneficial to appoint a different provider from that used previously in order to compare reports. The Council therefore resolved to appoint Trudy Polkinghorn Tree Consultant. The proposal was proposed by Cllr Biddick-Bray, seconded by Cllr Perry and carried with three votes in favour. Cllr Polkinghorn abstained.

Cllr Polkinghorn had declared an interest in the item because she had submitted a quotation for the work. Although she was initially due to leave the meeting, her departure would have rendered the meeting inquorate. A dispensation request was therefore submitted, allowing her to remain present. She took no part in the discussion or decision-making process and abstained from the vote.

Additional Information

All councillors received the quotations and supporting information before the June meeting. No objections or concerns regarding any of the quotations were raised with the Clerk or councillors prior to the meeting. Separately, a Code of Conduct complaint relating to newly co-opted Councillor Polkinghorn was considered and determined to be an inadvertent breach. It was noted that her intentions were positive, but that councillors should avoid mixing council and professional business. The matter was regarded as an administrative error that nonetheless constituted a breach of the Code. The findings also confirmed that a councillor may submit a quotation for work to be undertaken on behalf of the Parish Council, provided a declaration of interest is made and the appropriate procedures are followed.

In reaching its decision, the Council noted that the successful quotation was the second most competitive received, that the contractor held relevant expertise and qualifications, was familiar with the locality and site, and that obtaining a report from a different provider would assist comparison with the previous survey. For further information, please contact the Clerk at clerk@marhamchurch-pc.gov.uk

Following the Statement, there was a discussion between 2 Cllrs regarding qualifications and insurances. The previous owner of HVT was also asked how often he had tree inspections carried out. It was noted that the Parish Council are bound by very different regulations and laws than that of a private owner.

Correspondence.

26/157

Circulated via email.

Planning.

26/158

a) Decision Notices/Updates:

- (i) **PA25/04531** | Installation of an agricultural anaerobic digestion facility and associated plant and equipment including underground pipework, digestate lagoon, site access road and landscaping. | East Helscott Farm Marhamchurch. Approved with conditions.
- (ii) **PA26/02896** | Siting of three holiday accommodation units with associated access, servicing and landscaping. | Land North Of Gwari Barns Whalesborough Farm Marhamchurch. Approved with conditions.
- (iii) **PA26/03985** | Non-material amendment in relation to decision notice PA23/06490 dated 23.02.2024 for amendment to description of development to remove the reference to the padel tennis court element | Whalesborough Farm Marhamchurch. Approved, unconditional.
- (iv) **PA26/02895** | Siting of six holiday accommodation units and two shepherd huts, with associated access, servicing and landscaping | Land North Of Whalesborough Bungalow Marhamchurch. Approved with conditions.
- (v) **PA26/03028** | Proposed construction of outbuilding to form garaging and garden store for use incidental to existing dwelling | Langford Orchard Marhamchurch. Approved with conditions.

b) Planning Applications/Appeals:

Any late planning applications received will be discussed but not decided under this section.

- (vi) **PA26/04618** | Works to Tree within a Conservation Area (TCA) - T1 - Cornish Elm and smaller dead Elm to north and T9 - Cornish Elm - Fell all to ground level. | The Revel Field Pinch Hill Marhamchurch.
- (vii) **PA26/04332** | Listed Building consent extension and alterations to provide WC and kitchen facilities | St Marwennes Church And Cemetery Helebridge Road Marhamchurch.

Both applications had come through to Clerk after the agenda was published, therefore no formal comments can be made unless Council wanted to call an extraordinary meeting. Both applications were noted and no Cllrs had any issues with either. The Parish Council will not make any comments on the late planning applications. It was also noted that should anyone wish to make a comment, they can do so personally via online portal.

To receive oral or written reports and authorise any action

26/159

a) Chairman.

No updates from Chairman.

b) Cornwall Councillor.

Cllr Chopak updated that she had been in Full Council meeting in Truro all day. There was a lengthy debate on how South West Water operate. A vote of No Confidence was passed. There will be further steps taken from a Cornwall Council point. Quite a few Parish and Town Councils have voted.

Planning changes imminent at end of October, there will be a national roll out. Challenges with Planning apps as the process is lengthy and we may see changes in how this operates, query whether Parish and Town councils will be consulted.

Community Highways Improvement Program scheme is rolling out and should see 20 mph signs installed in Marhamchurch imminently.

Adult and Social Care – about to start an enquiry into ‘Corridor Care’. Attended a visit to Treliske. Move to understand why so many people are accessing A&E services.

Elected as Chair of Devon & Cornwall Police Crime Panel. Many Police reforms coming.

Locally – parking at Helebridge Road. Highways have been out twice to inspect, however no cars parked there. If anyone sees it please send some photos.

Viewing Point North – signs installed for charging. This is a trial period for 12 months. 1st hour is free.

c) Playpark.

- (i) Revised quote from ARB-Sense to include all works required from Tree Surveyor report up to and including 6 months. Previous quote of £300 increases to £756 (inc VAT). Proposed to accept revised quote, to include T5: Common Ash: Remove deadwood. T6: Common Ash: Remove small dead Ash from under canopy. G3: Remove Ash with dieback. Crown lift remaining trees over play area to ensure 4m clearance from ground level in summer months removing third order branches only. G4: Crown lift over play area to clear play equipment by 3m when in full leaf. T3: Common Ash: Fell both stems and remove small Norway Maple under canopy with no long-term potential. T4: Italian Alder: Crown lift over swings to clear by 4m when in full leaf, removing third order branches only. Proposed Cllr Biddick-Bray. Seconded Cllr Edwards. 4 in favour. 1 abstained. Ask the contractor to leave the chippings for the playpark.
- (ii) Bark delivery completed but not enough to cover all areas. Need to continue looking into viable options for this, as bark has sharp pieces. Thanks to the Cllrs who helped spread this.

d) The Clerk.

Increase in Cemetery and Playpark maintenance costs circulated to Cllrs. Noted by Council.

Reminder re Register of Interest Forms.

VAT Claim submitted and payment (£575) received, excluding all Community Ownership funds.

Annual leave request submitted for some time off over holidays and to work reduced hours, work load

permitting.

A query was raised re latest Code of Conduct complaint. This will be listed as an agenda item at the September meeting, and uploaded to the parish council website, pending Council approval.

Clerk was advised that the previous Code of Conduct complaints were not on the website. Clerk to look into as have not been removed.

The Hele Valley Trail.

26/160

(i) Independent Accountant Report & Grant Usage Form.

Completed and invoice for £300 received, as per quote. Clerk to compile files to send through to COF.

(ii) Maintenance at HVT (Kissing Gates, Strimming grass).

Thanks to Cllr Chopak for arranging delivery of kissing gates to Cllr Perry. Cllr Perry has informed that Joe Grigg is going to install the new gates, free of charge. Strimming around signs at HVT will be facilitated by Cllr Perry.

(iii) Successor's Form.

Woodland Management Contract the Parish Council had to succeed from previous owner. All completed and submitted with Forestry Commission. Noted.

(iv) Friends of The Earth / Westcountry Rivers Trust.

This was a query from a member of public asking if the PC had made contact with above, following completion of the sale, as stated in the Business Plan submitted to Community Ownership Fund.

Friends of the Earth offered support with management of the natural heritage of the area, and advice on the environmental aspects of managing the site.

Westcountry Rivers Trust offered practical support to the Parish Council advising in their letter of support that they are happy to work with the community to make the most of the river. This includes monitoring through their citizen science scheme and running educational activities with local groups and schools.

Clerk to make contact with both. Proposed Cllr Edwards. Seconded Cllr Biddick-Bray. 4 in favour. 1 abstained.

(v) Any other matters.

Thank you to Cllr Polkinghorn and Cllr Edwards for help with spreading the rubble in the carpark at HVT and to Mark Dennis for delivering the rubble.

Cllr O'Sullivan stated that he has never been thanked by anyone on the Parish Council for all his hard work when he worked on the Hele Valley Trail project. Cllr O'Sullivan also claimed that the Code of Conduct complaint put in against him cost the fundraising efforts £5000.

A request was made for The Statement made by Cllr Edwards to be posted on the website.

Issue raised with Clerk re Dog fouling. Agreed to arrange for signs to be installed around HVT. Cllr Chopak asked if the PC would like the dog warden to drop by. The Council agreed this would be useful. Clerk directed

to also get some quotes for small dog fouling signs.

Issue raised re parking between users. It was noted that 'Dogtopia' has its own parking area and users of that facility should not need to park in Hele Valley Trail carpark. It was also noted that due to warm weather, the area is being used by more people.

SLCC Annual Renewal 26/27

26/161

The clerk received the 26/27 SLCC membership renewal quote of £200. The previous membership was £180. It was resolved to continue the membership proposed Cllr Perry. Seconded Cllr Edwards. Unanimous.

Emergency Planning

26/162

Clerk circulated Template for Cllrs review. Unsure if PC have one registered with Cornwall Council. To follow up and liaise with Chair of The Bray Committee.

Motion prepared by Dowl Glan re Vote of no Confidence in South West Water request.

26/163

Clerk circulated information regarding this ahead of the meeting.

After a discussion, it was agreed to propose a vote of no confidence in South West Water. Proposed Cllr Edwards. Seconded Cllr Polkinghorn. Unanimous. Clerk to action.

Training.

26/164

- (i) Clerking Essentials: Thursday 10th Sept 2026 Launceston Town Hall.

It was unanimously agreed to approve the Clerks request to attend the training. Proposed Cllr Perry. Seconded Cllr Polkinghorn. Unanimous.

To Note:

26/165

- (i) Quarterly Budget Report 01.04.2026 – 30.06.2026. Noted.
- (ii) Quarterly Financial Check 01.04.2026 – 30.06.2026. Completed and noted.

Finance & Legislation.

26/166

- a) Approval of payments as per schedule (£2891.07) and approval of August payments as per schedule (£1868) and consider payment of urgent accounts presented by the date of the meeting. Proposed Cllr Perry. Seconded Cllr Biddick-Bray. Unanimous.
- b) To note Income & Bank Balances as per the schedule. Noted.
- c) To note Bank reconciliations. Noted.

Parish Matters – Agree action and authorise associated expenditure.

26/167

Maintenance of the overgrown bushes leaning over onto the footpath, the Old Post Office. – Council to make contact with owners.

Maintenance of holiday home in Perran Close. Front of private house. Overgrown into road. Cllr Chopak to

Speak with Highways.

Thank you to Anthony Grills for cutting the hedges at Hele Valley Trail. Benches need to be removed from site. Anthony to provide a schedule for planned cuts.

Problematic bench at top of HVT has been removed. Cllr O’Sullivan advised he thought there were a number of people who would be willing to contribute to the purchase of new benches for the HVT. Cllr Perry asked him to direct them to the Council.

**Urgent Matters raised with the Chairman since the Agenda was published.
26/168**

None.

**Date of next meeting and note items from Councillors for the Agenda.
26/169**

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 15th September 2026.

Meeting closed at: 8:51pm

PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) Act 1960 S1(2) & S1(6)

During the meeting it may arise that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential or special nature of the business to be transacted and the press and public will be instructed to withdraw.

When this arises, the Chair will recommend to consider passing the following resolution: “to resolve that in view of the confidential or special nature of the business to be discussed, the public are excluded and instructed to withdraw.”