DOLTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON Monday 7th September 2026- Draft

PUBLIC SESSION – 15 members of the public attended

Verto Homes proposed development for 44 homes at land south of Rectory Road. Members of the public raised a plethora of concerns relating to the proposal. Dolton resident Michael Moody referenced points from his detailed letter (attached) which highlighted many of these. He expressed apologies for writing on behalf of Dolton residents.

Pym Gander commented that the hedgerow should be removed rather than any alterations made to the proposed site entrance. It was also commented that knotweed is present on site.

Jane Hawkings raised that Verto Homes leaflet drop was only circulated to certain homes in the village. Concerns were that by producing such a leaflet it could form part of an initial consultation process.

Members of the Council, the Clerk and Ward Councillors had all reached out to Verto Homes requesting that a representative attend a Council meeting to explain their proposals and answer questions. To date no response received.

Cllr Walker advised that a formal planning application needs to be submitted before the Council can take a view, and advised members of the public to put their concerns to Torridge District Council in the meantime.

Pym Gander asked if a microphone/ sound system could be provided for use during the meetings as difficult to hear discussions.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS: None

PRESENT: Cllrs Walker, Giles, Rendell, Jones, Martindale, Goucher, Moore, Ward Cllr Elliott and clerk Caroline Gay.

65 (26/27) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllrs Mullan, Tremayne, Ward Cllr Lock and County Cllr Cottle-Hunkin.

66 (26/27) MINUTES: The Draft Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 6th July had been circulated. They were agreed to be a correct record by all Cllrs and were signed by Cllr Walker, this was proposed by Cllr Martindale and seconded by Cllr Giles.

67 (26/27) MATTERS ARISING: Matters Arising from 6th July:

a) **Risk Assessment Procedure-**Cllrs Rendell, Walker and Tremayne held a meeting to discuss and produce a Risk Assessment template for the Council. Asset Register has been updated. Clerk to liaise with **Zurich** to advise of new play equipment and ensure this is adequately covered under the insurance policy. Further to a request made of the Clerk in the Parish Council meeting held on 6th July 2026, regarding **Public Liability** and **Personal Accident** cover in respect of contractors David Lock and Phil Greenwood and the Council's caretaker Gareth Crout, plus new volunteer Community Road Warden Simon Paine. This was checked with a representative of Zurich Insurance who advised that 'a bona fide sub-contractor who represents themselves, are given a task to do and choose to carry it out how and by what means they want - **are not covered**. And those that, to all intent and purposes, are 'labour only' and representing the Council (more in line with an employee, the difference being that

they invoice for the hours they have done, rather than paid through PAYE) should be covered. A formal contract is not necessary, but a written agreement should be in place. As it was felt to be a slightly grey area, it was unanimously agreed that the Council should approach Gareth about obtaining his own insurance and this will be reimbursed. David Lock and Phil Greenwood hold their own Public Liability insurance and a copy of the certificates should be kept on file. With regards to Simon Paine, as a volunteer of the Council, he is covered under the Council's policy.

b) **Budgetary Process**- a budget forecast was circulated in the meeting held 6th July 2026 covering the first quarter of the 2026/2027 financial year. A budget covering the second quarter will be produced by the Clerk to be presented at the October meeting with a view to precept planning, and finalised in November.

c) **Standing Orders**- The Clerk has drafted new Standing Orders and these have been circulated to all Cllrs for consideration and approval in October meeting.

d) **VAT**- Cllr Tremayne has submitted a reclaim for the previous four years to March 2025. Year 2025/2026 to be collated ready for submission.

e) **IT compliance/Data Protection/Councillors generic email addresses**-Cllr Jones. With reference to Data Protection it is being looked into as to whether the Council should rightly register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). An annual fee would be payable and this should be factored into our budget. System security, Microsoft Office 365, One Drive. The Clerk is to contact Ladds for clarification on Cloud services.

f) **Human Resources**- Cllr Moore is in the process of overseeing responsibilities for the Clerk and also external contractors' agreements.

g) **Previous Clerk's backpay**. It was unanimously decided to not pursue this further. The back payment has been settled. There is no official contract for payroll services between Torridge District Council (TDC) and Dolton Parish Council (DPC). Although instructions on pay scale and current rate per hour were given from DPC to TDC at inception, no further instructions were given over time. Therefore the responsibility legally falls with the employer (DPC) rather than TDC payroll services.

68 (26/27) CLLRS REPORTS:

a) **County Councillor Cottle-Hunkin's report** (copy attached). Cllr Walker read out Bullet points covering matters such as Xlinks proposed AI data centre and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), the Bluetongue outbreak, suspension of birth services at North Devon District Hospital and changes ahead with the reorganisation of local government. The full report will be published on the Council's website.

b) Cllr Walker also read out **Ward Cllr Lock's report** (please see minute **70 e) (26/27)** for details).

c) Ward Cllr Elliott advised that the Local Government Reform is being paused for review in Devon and Torridge District Council will provide more details as and when they have any. Cllr Martindale commented whether this means that elections for Shadow Councillors also paused. Cllr Elliott also spoke on VERTO Homes, having met with the Highways Officer at the proposed site. Relaying that he initially pulled up in the layby to determine the extent of visibility and stated that it was very poor. Ward Cllr Elliott also advised that as of 31st October Ward Cllrs can no longer call in planning application with the exception of major development. This would sit with the main planning officer. They would only meet for significant applications such like the proposed data centre. Every pre-application is highly

confidential between applicant and the planning officer. Cllr Jones asked about being able to get information back on Freedom of Information (FOI). It was confirmed that anything to do with a public body a FOI can be put in. However, unsure of how much will be divulged. Xlinks plans are different to the pre-application. It is possible with the Local Government Reform that the number of Ward Cllrs could be reduced. Ward Cllr Elliott also spoke of the AI Data and BESS petition advising Cllrs that signing as an individual is fine but not to join any protest, unless you remove yourself from the Council's vote. Attending an information meeting is fine. Cllr Elliot advised that DPC may be asked on the consultation because of the size of the development.

69 (26/27) FINANCIAL MATTERS:

a) Accounts to pay 7th September 2026

Payee	Date of Invoice		Gross	Inc VAT	Cq No
To sign at the meeting					
George Stephen	16.07.26	Flowers for barrel planters	24.00	4.0	1608-Paid
Gareth Crout	03.08.26	Chq cancelled-incorrect amount	-		1609
Gareth Crout	03.08.26	Caretaking duties – July	371.00		1610-Paid
Dolton & Dowland Village Hall	31.07.26	Hall hire – July	9.00		1611
Caroline Gay	31.07.26 & 31.08.26	Home office expenses – July & August	55.81		1612
Gareth Crout	28.08.26	Caretaking duties-August	392.00		1613
Phil Greenwood	31.08.26	4 x grass cutting of football pitch	240.00		1614
Niels Walker		Source 4 b – 6 month's water bill	104.76		
Niels Walker		Ladds of Crediton-12 months antivirus software	38.95	6.49	1615

b) RECEIPTS after 31st July 2026	
BANK RECONCILIATION TO 31st July 2026	

Balance as at bank 31/07/2026			
Natwest current account	18,103.92		
Unity Bank	5,357.78		
Total balance at bank as at 31/07/2026	23,461.70		
Less un-presented cqs at 31/07/2026	395.00	chq	amount
		1608	24.00
		1610	371.00

Plus uncleared credits at 31/07/2026	0.00		
Cash Book			
Opening Balance from Accounts at 01/04/2026	26,980.02		
Less payments to 31/07/2026	13,086.32		
Plus receipts to 01/06/2026	9,180.00		
Sub total balance as per cash book as at 31/07/2026	23,073.70		
Less service charge payments – Unity – as at 31/07/2026	7.00		
Balance as per cash book as at 31/07/2026	23,066.70		
			395.00
Variance	395.00		

Note.
Statements produced beginning of August not yet received. Cllr Moore checked the accounts for payment. Proposed by Cllr Martindale, Seconded by Cllr Rendell.

a) **any other financial matters: Annual Governance and Accountability Review (AGAR).** The Clerk confirmed that this is in the final stages with PKF Littlejohn and their report is expected soon.

b) **Direct Debits** now set up with Source4Business in relation to the water supply at the football club along with the electricity through British Gas. Since changing service suppliers there has been a significant reduction in cost.

c) **New Licence**- Dolton Parish Council and Learning Academy Partnership (South West) in relation to Dolton Primary School's use of the playing field. The Licence was signed during the meeting with all members unanimously in agreement. The annual fee for use of the field remains at £250.

d) **New noticeboard-costings**- Cllr Rendell advised that he dealt with the purchase of the noticeboard and will pass details to the Clerk to make enquiries as to cost of replacement/renewal of the backing board.

70 (26/27) PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

a) Applications to consider**: 1/0555/2026/FUL.** Part retrospective application for installation of agricultural track and hard standing. Land Off Rectory Road, Dolton, Devon.(E) 257908 (N) 112791. No objections raised.
b) Applications permitted: **1/0463/2026/FUH**-Replacement of existing conservatory with new sun/garden room - Silverdale, Barfield Close, Dolton. E 257576 N 112371. **1/0325/2026/LBC** - Convert an existing barn into holiday accommodation. Grid Ref: 255989 111148 Dolton. **1/0324/2026/FUL** - Same grid ref: 255989 111148 - affecting a right of way. No objections raised.
c) Applications withdrawn: None
d) Applications refused: None
e) Any other planning matters –Covered in Ward Cllr Lock's email of 07.09.26. In addition to those listed in a) above:

(i) **Land South of Rectory Road -Verto Homes-proposed residential development for 44 new homes** (covered in Ward Cllr Elliott's report-see minute 68 (26/27) c)**.**

(ii) (ii) **Aller Road development**-unaware of any movement.

(iii) **Application 1/0834/2025 Orchard Gate phase 3 -** they have applied to vary condition no. 3 relating to section 106 payments of the original granted permission. TDC have gone back to the applicants to ask for a further set of figures before a decision is made.

(iv) **Cleave Hill development-**The Agent dealing with the auction confirmed the auction has been delayed – awaiting further information.

(v) **Data Campus and Battery Storage Site:** North Devon update in County Cllr Cotte-Hunkin's report.

71 (26/27) PARISH GROUNDS:

a) **Dennis Cross Playground** –Cllr Martindale – update on removal of wooden balance beams. Cllr Walker suggested contacting Jamie Parsons to obtain costs to carry out the work.

b) **Weed Clearance for block paving near village notice board**– update. Cllr Jones advised that contrary to emailing details of a gas torch to burn off the weeds, the reviews were not very encouraging. Cllr Rendell and Cllr Walker discussed the use of a 'safe' chemical. However, if reference is made to DALC or equivalent website, it is never clear as to the specification, the need to be licensed to use it as in a public place and signage. Ward Cllr Elliot offered to repair the brush machine and have a go at using it.

e) **Memorial Bench –** Barfield Road-Cllr Walker updated that he has spoken with Roger Dunn-waiting on family agreement.

f) **Village Flower Tubs-**Members were unanimous in saying how good everything looks. Cllr Giles requested that for the carnival one of them be moved to make room for carnival events. Cllr Elliot will move it. Cllr Moore asked if the 'broken one' would be replaced. Pym Gander has asked a thank you to go out to Caroline Cole for all her efforts with the flowers.

g) **Football Field**-'No Dogs Allowed' signage. Signs in place but look to have a new sign made.

h) **Road painting-** Cllr Jones Cllr Jones said a few people have reported slipping on the painted '20' mile per hour road sign. However, the conclusion is that it is no more slippery than any other road sign, just newly double painted.

i) **Emergency Committee**-The village hall is now the official community hub and is fully insured. Communication from the levy fund Council advised of possible funding of ev installation through Believ. Cllr Jones to attend a September meeting.

j) **Road sweeper-**Cllr Moore asked about the road sweeper, thought it was timetabled for once a month. Ward Cllr Elliot to follow up.

72 (26/27) MAINTENANCE AND TRAFFIC ISSUES:

a) Community Road Warden Scheme – signing of an Agreement between Devon Council and Dolton Parish Council took place. All members were in agreement. Once this has been returned to DCC Simon Paine can begin his training.

b) **State of Roads – Landowner responsibilities-boundary trees.** Cllr Walker will put a notice in the Dolton & Dowland Diary to highlight this.

73 (26/27) VERBAL REPORTS FROM MEETINGS ATTENDED, IF ANY: Cllr Walker and Cllr Jones attended a public meeting in Torrington Church on 03.09.26 concerning the AI Data and BESS development, which does not directly impact Dolton. No further details to report.

74 (26/27) ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD: None

Cllr Walker and Cllr Rendell both gave advanced apologies for October's meeting.

Cllr Walker declared the meeting closed at 20:27

Signed…… Date…….

Date of next meeting to be held in the Village Hall will be Monday 5th October 2026 .