



# MODBURY PARISH COUNCIL

## ANNUAL REPORT 2025 – 26

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the Council's actions and achievements during the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, referenced to the eight programme areas laid out in the Council's Strategy and the Strategic Delivery Plan approved by Council on 5 August 2025.

### **2.0 Programme Area A - Administration and Finance**

- 2.1 Oversight of the Council's financial and administrative affairs is undertaken by its Finance and Human Resources Committee, Chair initially Councillor Richard Foss and subsequently Tony Price .
- 2.2 All administrative and finance targets were achieved during the year including a successful audit of the 2024/5 accounts and the approval of the 2024/5 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).
- 2.3 Our only employee is Parish Clerk, Bleddyn Griffiths, who works a 17 hour week. During the year we consolidated his working hours to ensure that the office is occupied and open to the public for two days per week, on a Tuesday and a Wednesday from 1030 to 1630. We also continued to provide Saturday morning surgeries from 1000 to 1100.
- 2.4 Unfortunately, we lost a councillor during the year, Richard Foss moving house and resigning in October 2025. This means that the Council is currently eight members strong with four vacancies.
- 2.5 A key administrative issue for the Council over the last year has been that of local government reorganisation (LGR). The national government has signified that it wishes to streamline principal authorities by replacing all remaining two-tier arrangements with unitary councils. Although parish councils like Modbury will not be directly affected, we clearly have an interest in how the current arrangements in the South Hams will change. To this end we have attended a number of online meetings and hosted one to discuss the implications, have studied the five options being considered, and have submitted our comments by the deadline of 26 March 2026.
- 2.6 A final decision on the outcome of LGR is expected in July 2026 with shadow elections being undertaken in May 2027 and the new authorities taking over on 1 April 2028. The

Parish Council will continue to monitor progress on LGR with the aim of protecting the interests of Modbury parishioners.

- 2.7 Our 2025/6 Delivery Plan added a further strategic task to our work programme - that of reviewing and renewing our emergency plan. To this end we have set up an Emergency Plan Working Group which has met twice in the late summer and autumn of 2025 but has still to achieve its prime objective of a new emergency plan. This will be a priority for the new financial year.

### **3.0 Programme Area B – Asset management**

- 3.1 The Council continued to manage and maintain its land holdings and built assets.
- 3.2 Our most significant asset is the QE2 Recreation Ground, pavilion and associated outbuildings.
- 3.3 In accordance with best practice and in compliance with audit recommendations, we have set up a charitable trust - Modbury Recreation and Sports Trust - to manage these facilities and this is chaired by Councillor Tony Price. In March 2026 the Council approved the grant of a 30 year lease of the QE2 premises which commenced on 1 April 2026.
- 3.4 The Trust is now in the process of delegating its management and maintenance responsibilities to a new Modbury Recreation and Sports Management Committee which will perform a similar function to the former MARS entity. Councillors Barbara Price, Tony Price and Dave Trigger will sit on the new committee.
- 3.5 We again acknowledge and thank the volunteers who previously sat on the MARS Committee and now sit on the new management committee. They continue to promote and manage the facilities on the Council's behalf and recreation and sports continue to flourish in Modbury as a result.
- 3.6 Other assets are generally managed by the Maintenance Committee, Chair Councillor Phil Smith. To help us with the associated maintenance works we currently operate three term maintenance contracts:
1. Grass cutting 2022-27 - Arborcure Ltd;
  2. Tree and hedge surgery 2024-29 - Coastal Garden Services Ltd;
  3. General handyperson services 2023-28 - J Friend Garden Services.
- 3.7 The Council maintains 51 different grassed features around the town through its grass cutting contract with Arborcure. Most of the sites are cut on a four weekly cycle from March to November with a smaller number of sites receiving quarterly cuts. A full programme was completed in 2025/6.
- 3.8 We also maintain three separate play areas in the town – at the Memorial Hall, at Palm Cross and at Champernowne. All are inspected on a monthly basis for safety by South

Hams District Council (SHDC). Much of the routine maintenance work is undertaken by our handyperson contractor but it has also been necessary to request warranty work by the original installers of the timber play equipment at the Memorial Hall and Champernowne.

- 3.9 During the autumn of 2025, the timber fence between the upper and lower Memorial Hall play park was condemned as unsafe and so had to be replaced. A tendering exercise was undertaken and a contract awarded for its replacement with Leaf it Out (SW) Ltd of Plymouth. The project was completed on time on 28 November 2025 at a cost of £5,300.00 ex VAT.
- 3.10 The Council also owns or leases other public open spaces at Palm Cross Green, the Millenium Meadow and Wood and the Galpin Street Community Orchard as well as allotments at on the Palm Cross estate. A new five year lease for the latter site was executed in favour of the Palm Cross Allotments Association on 1 April 2025.
- 3.11 The Palm Cross car park is managed and maintained by the Council and occupancy during 2025/6 averaged in excess of 75%.
- 3.12 The Council also owns and maintains a storage facility at Palm Cross Green, principally for the Road Warden and P3 teams.
- 3.13 We continue to maintain a network of 25 parish benches and 4 parish picnic tables.
- 3.14 Having purchased the old telephone box in Poundwell St for a nominal sum during 2024/5, we are still to undertake its renovation and repurposing. Our Heritage Working Group, set up in 2025, have a number of plans for the refurbishment and use of the box, including a possible art installation or mini-museum, and will be moving these forward in 2026.
- 3.15 The parish office continues to provide quality accommodation for the Clerk as well as improved meeting facilities for councillors, a police surgery and other community groups, such as Modbury Caring.

#### **4.0 Programme Area C – Town and Countryside Improvement**

- 4.1 The Council continues to support various community initiatives to improve the built and natural environment of Modbury. Although not officially representing the Council many of our Councillors participate in the volunteer groups in the Town and we are lucky in that this enables us to have a good grasp of the initiatives planned and review how we can link in our work and support them as necessary. We work closely with the newly revived Modbury Town Improvement Charity, Millenium Meadow Committee, Galpin St Community Orchard Committee, Modbury Wildlife Action Group (MODWAG), Modbury Bloomers, Modbury Litter Pickers and the Modbury Traders Group. We offer our thanks to them for their continued involvement in making Modbury a pleasant place to live.

- 4.2 Councillor Sarah Wyatt is the Council's official representative on the South Hams Chamber of Commerce and the Town Improvement Charity.
- 4.3 A town improvement plan was developed in 2024 in partnership with the Traders Group and other interested residents to develop a variety of actions to improve the aesthetics of the town. Councillors Wyatt and Turner continue to lead on this work.
- 4.4 A significant feature of this work was the was the creation of a new mural on the Health Centre car park wall. This work, undertaken by local artist John Ashton, was officially unveiled by BBC Spotlight's Janine Jansen in August 2025 and has received many positive comments from residents and visitors alike.
- 4.5 The Council, via the Town Improvement Charity, also arranged for a Marvellous Modbury Makeover weekend in late April 2025 to encourage voluntary effort to tidy up the town ahead of the May Fair and the summer season. This included weeding of the town centre pavements and Poundwell car park, sweeping of Fullers Ope and the decoration of the highways bollards around the town. We are very grateful to the residents and traders who supported this initiative by either coming to help and tidying up their own areas or those near them.

## **5.0 Programme Area D - Development Control**

- 5.1 The tasks of commenting on planning applications, implementing the Council's Neighbourhood Plan policies and liaising with the statutory planning authorities rests with the Planning Committee and Chair, Councillor Ann Turner.
- 5.2 During the last year, the Council commented on 48 routine planning applications and one major application.
- 5.3 The major application related to the proposed development by Bloor Homes on land to the west of Long Park. The Parish Council had objected to the application because of concerns about access and road safety and because it fell totally outside the town development boundary and was therefore in conflict with Modbury's Neighbourhood Plan. Despite this, the application was supported by South Hams District Council on a Chair's casting vote and we have since been considering how to continue our opposition. We organised a public meeting on 20 March 2026 to gauge public opinion and have since decided to pursue an Ombudsman complaint about the way the application has been handled by the local authority.

## **6.0 Programme Area E – Housing and Regeneration**

- 6.1 We continue to lobby for improved delivery of affordable housing in Modbury and continue to argue for higher rates of affordable home provision in major planning applications.

6.2 Further attempts were made during the year to bring underused buildings back into use, including the Baptist Chapel in Church St although to date these have been unsuccessful.

## **7.0 Programme Area F – Sustainability**

7.1 The Council's sustainability agenda is largely driven by the Sustainability Working Group led by Chair, Councillor Ann Turner.

7.2 During the last 12 months the Working Group has worked to implement its Strategy Action Plan, approved during 2023/4.

7.3 An important feature of our approach was the work we have undertaken with Sustainable South Hams and this culminated in the running and hosting of an Energy Efficiency Fair in January 2026 at the QEII pavilion. This was well attended and included representatives from non-profit advisory groups as well as businesses.

7.4 The Council supported with grant and the use of its facilities at the QE2 Recreation Ground for Modbury's second Nature Fest event.

7.5 We continue to apply for Tree Preservation Orders on endangered trees in conjunction with our local Tree Warden.

7.6 Flooding at Orcheton Quay and water quality in Ayleston Brook remain a concern, despite repeated attempts to achieve a coordinated response from the agencies concerned. Councillors Turner and Coles continue to work on this.

7.7 The Council continues to support the Erme River Alliance and has supported volunteers by providing water testing equipment to provide data which will assist in making the case to South West Water (SWW) for improved sewage treatment and reduced spillages throughout the Erme catchment.

7.8 We continue to have discussions about our concerns about sewage treatment and surface water runoff with SWW and will be taking steps to ensure that the delayed town centre drainage works, now scheduled for the autumn of 2026, are carried out with the minimum impact on Modbury businesses and residents.

## **8.0 Programme Area G – Transport, Road and Path Networks**

8.1 The Council, through its Maintenance Committee, continued its support for the Devon County Council (DCC) Road Warden Scheme during 2025/6.

8.2 Our Road Warden is Councillor Bill Cole and the potholing team has worked hard throughout the year, filling no less than 188 potholes at 135 locations around the parish.

8.3 Councillor Cole also leads the highways drainage team and they have been busy during the last year clearing buddle holes and drainage gullies around the rural road network,

working with local landowners to help disperse surface water. Major works to address repeated flooding were carried out at six locations - at Friendwells, Bluegate Hill, Ashridge Hill, Whympston Cut, Trehele Cross and Annapurna.

- 8.4 Bill Cole has also acted as the Snow Warden during the past winter, ensuring that all grit boxes were continually replenished, whilst Councillor Phil Smith acted as Flood Warden.
- 8.5 During the last autumn and winter, councillors have worked hard to ensure that DCC and SHDC cleared drainage gullies and swept the roads around the town of Modbury. In the main this was successful in avoiding the flooding problems of the previous year.
- 8.6 Research has been undertaken to identify a suitable machine to help keep our paved areas and gutters clear of weeds, recognising that the principal authorities no longer undertake this work. An application for funding to cover the purchase of the machine was submitted to DCC in early March 2026 but was unsuccessful although we have been promised that it will be reconsidered later in the new financial year.
- 8.7 During the year the Council lobbied DCC hard to secure investment in the main carriageway of the A379 and was rewarded by the resurfacing of the potholed approach into Modbury from Kingsbridge in March 2026. The Council's handyperson contractor has continued to repair and rebed unstable and unsafe paving slabs around the town centre.
- 8.8 During the last year, despite all efforts, the Parish Council had been unable to re-establish working relationships with DCC's Public Rights of Ways team. Despite having submitted annual reports no P3 (Public Paths Partnership) grant had been received from DCC for either 2025/6 or 2024/5. As a result, efforts to recruit a new parish P3 coordinator and team were put on hold and County Councillor Louise Wainwright was approached and asked to intervene. Eventually, in March 2026, the backdated grant payments were authorised, along with outstanding training costs dating back to June 2024. A new volunteer team, eight strong, has now been formed and will be led by Councillor Phil Smith as the P3 Coordinator.
- 8.9 We continued to lobby for improved public transport connectivity, especially to Ivybridge, but without success.

## **9.0 Programme Area H – Community Engagement and Partnership Working**

- 9.1 Our objectives under this heading include engaging with residents, enhancing our community well-being, and fostering local initiatives that strengthen the parish's social and cultural fabric.
- 9.2 Last year we provided community grants to Modbury Community Orchard Group, Modbury Lunch Club, South Hams CAB, Modbury Tiddlers Group and MODWAG.

- 9.3 Councillors hold a Saturday surgery every week and through the increased opening hours of our Parish Office we have offered more opportunities for residents to engage with the council. Other ways in which we have communicated include:
- Using our social media and website offering;
  - Submitting articles to the Messenger over the year ensuring that residents have been kept abreast with projects and Council endeavours;
  - Providing a monthly summary of the Council meeting to the Messenger;
  - Ensuring all public meetings are advertised on Parish notice boards and the website.
- 9.4 Through our engagement we have been able to identify a number of issues raised by the public during the year and this has included: traffic speed, safety of access to the QE2 Recreation Ground, loose paving stones around the town, water quality, reduced number of volunteers, lack of youth facilities, reduced number of visitors, financial hardship for individual families and individuals, lack of social housing and specific housing for older residents.
- 9.5 Responses to some of these issues have been referred to earlier in this report but other initiatives taken to address residents' concerns include:
- We are taking steps to become a Dementia Friendly Town by working with the Four Rivers Dementia Alliance;
  - We have set up a new working group to develop facilities for young people;
  - We have applied again to Devon Highways for 20mph speed limits in specific areas;
  - We have continued to lobby for improved street lighting along the access road to the QE2 Recreation Ground;
  - We attempted to develop a speed awareness response but a lack of volunteers has not yet enabled us to take this forward;
  - We continue to develop plans to host a community fridge in the town.
- 9.6 The Council continues to be officially represented on the Modbury Welfare Committee (previously the Fund for the benefit of the Sick Poor in Modbury) who provide grants to individuals in the parish.
- 9.7 To support our cultural heritage we have set up a Heritage Working Group, membership of which includes the History Society and interested residents. The Group will be developing initiatives using the wonderful history of Modbury to encourage visitors.

## **10.0 Financial Implications**

- 10.1 Outturn expenditure in delivering these activities totalled £66,010 in the year. This represented an underspend on the original budget for 2025/6 of £12,838 although there were several invoices and planned movements into earmarked reserves that were outstanding at year end. When these are taken into account the level of actual underspend drops to less than £1,000.

- 10.2 Income was also greater than budgeted - £77,129 against a budget of £71,325 – meaning that, overall there was a modest surplus of around £6,000.
- 10.3 The expenditure total is equivalent to an average of £84.58 for a Band D property. This compares with the precept figure for the year of £73.48 per Band D property.
- 10.4 This excellent financial outcome was due, in the main, to the successful acquisition of additional funding and the judicious management of Parish finances.

## **11.0 Conclusion**

- 11.1 This report summarises the activity undertaken by Modbury Parish Council during 2025/6 and demonstrates that, despite difficult circumstances including changes in personnel and shortages of volunteers, substantial progress has been achieved in delivering on its four-year objectives.

**Modbury Parish Annual Report 2025/6: Approved 2 June 2026**

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