



Coffinswell Parish Council

Serving the Communities of
Coffinswell & Dacombe

The Cirl Bunting is the UK's rarest farmland bird. The entire breeding population is found between Exeter and Plymouth.

MINUTES OF THE COFFINSWELL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY 18th NOVEMBER 2025 7PM AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

Present: Cllr N Orchard (Chair), Cllr C Bell, Cllr M Atkinson,

In attendance: District Cllr Jane Taylor
District Cllr John Radford
Mrs L Moore – Parish Clerk
No public in attendance

1. The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.09pm and received apologies from the Vice Chair, Cllr Avery, Cllr Spokes, Cllr Barnard and DCC Cllr Heather Horner.
2. **To declare any interests arising at this meeting.**
No interests were declared.

3. Reports:

- 3.1 County Councillors' report. Cllr Horner was not present but indicated a report to follow.
- 3.2 District Councillors' report.
District Cllrs Taylor and Radford provided an update on the proposed local government re-organisation, outlining the alternative options, noting Torbay and Plymouth's current uncertainty. Electoral arrangements were discussed, with new elections expected in May 2027 and current District Councillors continuing until May 2028.

Strong concerns were raised regarding the proposed closure of Torquay Custody Centre, highlighting potential policing and safety impacts. The Parish Council agreed to write to Chief Constable to oppose the closure, citing risks to local police presence and safety.

It was further reported that planning matters included approval for temporary accommodation at Herald House, Kingskerswell, and there were still ongoing issues with flag displays.

Discussion then followed concerning the Local Government restructuring noting there is continued support for the preferred model despite Torbay's Council withdrawal, with new electoral arrangements to be expected by May 2027. There was also acknowledgement of the possibility of increased workload and financial pressures on Parish Councils, with final decisions on structure and boundaries resting with central Government.

- 3.3 Police Advocate and Neighbourhood Watch reports and updates.
The Chair reported that the government will abolish the role of Police and Crime Commissioner with effect from the end of this electoral cycle in 2028. This being mainly due to cost savings and low public awareness of the position.

****District Cllrs Jane Taylor and John Radford left the meeting at 7.32pm****

4. Approval to consider, amend as agreed by the Council and approve the minutes of the following meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2025, were approved without objection. (Proposed by Cllr Atkinson and seconded by Cllr Bell).

5. Finance

5.1 To agree and approve the payments schedule.

The Chair advised those present that this month's schedule includes additional items due to CIL expenditure. Larger payments were made via BACS, while smaller items for bench maintenance were paid personally and subsequently reimbursed. It was noted that Appendix 1 gave the full itemised list and the Councillors were asked to confirm their approval, which they duly did.

5.2 The bank reconciliations for September and October 2025 were agreed and approved.

5.3 To receive the budget update for period 1st April 2025 to 31st October 2025. The Chair reported that the Parish Council and P3 budgets are currently slightly underspent but expected to be mostly used by year-end, noting upcoming training and equipment servicing. CIL funds have largely been spent on benches, noticeboards, a Defibrillator cabinet; signpost and footpath work thereby leaving a small balance of £85.

5.4 To discuss the budget for 2026–2027. The Chair presented the first draft of the 2026–27 budget, proposing a 3.2% precept increase to £7,002, roughly in line with inflation. Councillors discussed the proposal and agreed it in principle, with final approval to be considered at the January Parish Council meeting.

6. Funding & Grants:

No new updates reported.

7. Footpaths & Highways:

To receive any updates on any footpath or highways issues.

The Chair reported that work to improve access to Footpath 1 at The Bothy end has been completed, including the installation of honeycomb-style matting to stabilise gravel. The improvements are welcomed, with the route now safer and more accessible - including pushchairs.

Devon County Council promptly replaced a missing public footpath signpost within a week, including signs clarifying the route as a footpath.

It was also reported that advance warning signs have been installed for the planned closure of St Marychurch Road from 1st December 2025 for two weeks to connect the Solar Farm to the grid. The Chair noted that previous unannounced closures, such as the October emergency closure for cable repairs, caused minimal traffic disruption. The Chair advised that to make use of the upcoming closure, a community litter pick has been scheduled for Wednesday, 3rd of December, with Teignbridge District Council providing equipment and collection support. This will focus on the closed section between Connybear and Pitland Lane, and data from collected wing mirrors will be used to support a case for a reduced speed limit.

Finally, the Chair advised of a further planned closure through Dacombe from 26th January 2026 to 27th February 2026 (approximately five weeks), to remediate soil contamination from a heating oil spill.

8. To note any correspondence received:

None.

9. Parish Matters:

9.1 Update regarding Parish Council IT/email requirements.

Councillors discussed options for the Parish Council's website hosting and email provision. The provider "20i" (TEEC partner – Council's current provider) offers an "economy" package at £156 plus VAT per year with ten email addresses, alongside the ".gov.uk" domain registration at £30 plus VAT, giving a total of £186 per year. Alternative providers, including "Parish Online" and "JISC", were considered, but it was agreed to remain with "20i" for administrative simplicity. The Council noted that the small budget adjustment required is minimal, and that having spare email addresses is useful. A clear domain format (coffinswellparishcouncil.gov.uk) and professional email naming conventions were agreed. Councillors approved proceeding with registration with the clerk managing the paperwork.

9.2 Local Government Reorganisation Update

The Chair referred to the discussion by District Councillors (Agenda item 3.2) on national proposals for local Government reorganisation, aimed at reducing costs by moving from Devon's three-tier system to two tiers. Each authority must submit a preferred plan by 28 November 2025, with elections for "shadow" councillors in May 2027 and new unitary authorities taking over in May 2028.

The Chair explained the challenges in Devon, including the Government's population target per unitary authority and the lack of consensus among Councils. Rural authorities largely support the "4-5-1" model, grouping South Hams, Torbay, Teignbridge, and West Devon; Torridge, North Devon, Mid Devon, East Devon, and Exeter; with Plymouth remaining independent, though Torbay, Exeter, and Devon County Council do not support it.

He emphasised that Parish Councils have no control over the outcome and that the transition will be complex, with numbers of District Councillors expected to reduce. Given the uncertainty, the Chair recommended planning and budgeting for the next two years as usual while monitoring developments at the higher level. Discussion followed between the Councillor, with the conclusion that, while interesting to observe, the council should not attempt to plan financially for changes so far in the future.

9.3 To receive any further updates on parish matters.

Parish Clerk Review: The Chair reported that the Clerk's annual review had been completed, noting her particularly good performance with a one-point pay increase.

10. Planning:

10.1 To note the planning applications and responses since the last Parish Council Meeting in September 2025:

- Ref 25/01743/CAN (High Meadow): Prior approval noted for Openreach tree trimming.

10.2 To note the following planning decisions:

- Application Ref: 25/01484/TPO – The Old Parsonage - road from Westcombe Park to Princess Cottages. Grant of Consent issued 3rd November 2025 for removal of deadwood.

11. Correspondence received by the Parish Clerk

12. Enforcement Issues:

No formal updates on outstanding issues, including the gap in the hedge at Footpath 3.

13. Public Question Time:

No members of the public were in attendance; no questions were raised

14. To note the date of the next meeting:

Tuesday 20th January 2026

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the Meeting ended at 8.17pm.

Signed:
Chairman of Coffinswell Parish Council

Dated: