



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 16th SEPTEMBER 2025 7PM AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

Present: Cllr N Orchard (Chair), Cllr S Avery, Cllr C Bell, Cllr M Atkinson, Cllr S Spokes, and Cllr E Barnard

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

1. The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00pm and received apologies from DCC Cllr Heather Horner.
2. **To declare any interests arising at this meeting.**
No interests were declared.

3. **Reports:**

3.1 County Councillors' report.

At the time of the meeting no report had been received. However, DCC Cllr Horner indicated in her apology that one would follow shortly. Members noted some difficulty establishing contact and discussed possible ways to support improved communication.

3.2 District Councillors' report. –

District Councillors Jane Taylor and John Radford reported on a major update concerning Harewood House in Kingskerswell, recently purchased by Teignbridge District Council for use as temporary family accommodation. Councillors clarified that it would provide seven ensuite rooms with shared facilities and will not be used for asylum seekers, countering misinformation that had circulated online.

Significant community concern and hostile social media activity were reported, though an open day with Housing Officers reassured most residents. It was noted that tension reduced markedly once anonymous posting on Facebook was disabled. The application for Harewood House is expected to go to committee in October, with approval likely. Planned internal alterations will create an additional bedroom before families move in, and the District Councillors emphasised that all tenants will be appropriately vetted. Discussion followed concerning the protest flags that require planning permission, and some had already been reported to enforcement.

District Councillors also noted that while the wider region has many HMOs, the local area has comparatively few, with those nearby mainly occupied by professionals such as doctors and nurses. They added that although national contractors could theoretically use HMOs for asylum accommodation, this is unlikely due to low Government payment rates compared with local rent values. It was also noted that public interest had since quietened.

The District Councillors also reported that there are continued financial and staffing pressures at Teignbridge District Council, including post-Covid audit issues and the loss of the Finance Officer. Planning enforcement remains stretched, with temporary staff and shared workloads introduced to ease pressure. Recruitment challenges and staff absences are causing significant strain on the service.

3.3 Police Advocate and Neighbourhood Watch reports and updates.

The Chair noted that there was no formal report from the Police Advocate or Neighbourhood Watch for the month. However, District Councillors and the Parish Council discussed general policing matters, including a new £100,000 fund from Police Commissioner Alison Hernandez to support Parish CCTV installations, with up to £10,000 available per Parish for identified crime "black spots." Although past incidents such as driveway vehicle thefts were mentioned, members agreed that overall crime levels in the Parish remain low. They also discussed the limited deterrent effect of measures like Ring doorbells, and practical challenges around CCTV installation, including GDPR restrictions on filming public roads. Low-cost alternatives, such as wildlife or tracking cameras, were briefly considered.

It was agreed that a significant CCTV investment was not justified, and the Council would therefore not apply for the Police Commissioner's funding.

**** District C Jane Taylor left the meeting at 7.35pm ****

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

The Minutes from the 17th of June 2025 meeting were reviewed, Cllr C Bell proposed, and Cllr M Atkinson seconded that they should be approved with no corrections and unanimously agreed.

5. Finance

5.1 The Payments Schedule was agreed and approved.

5.2 The bank reconciliation for June, July and August 2025 were agreed and approved.

5.3 The budget update for period 1st June 2025 to 31st August 2025 was presented with no matters arising.

The Chair reported that the budget is currently on track. A P3 payment of £790 was received from Devon County Council, comprising £300 for completing works on Footpath 1, £300 for training an additional strimmer operator, and £190 for general maintenance including servicing the petrol strimmer.

The Chair also reminded members that the preparation of the draft budget for 2026–2027 will begin shortly and will be circulated ahead of the November meeting.

6. Funding & Grants:

Discussion followed concerning this subject and the Councillors duly noted potential future financial pressures under devolution but agreed that next year's budget (2026–2027) should be planned based on the current year, without assuming additional responsibilities unless corresponding funding is provided. The Council reaffirmed the importance of Parish Councils for local democracy while maintaining cost efficiency.

The Councillors were advised that a Freedom of Information request had been received covering the last three years' finances. While much information is already public, the FOI will be responded to by providing the Parish cash book within the twenty-day requirement.

7. Footpaths & Highways

The Chair reported that work on Footpath 1 was completed in August, with geotextile underlay and chippings laid along the remaining sections. A short 20-metre stretch has no underlay due to limited materials but is not usually prone to mud. Thanks were recorded to the volunteers involved, including Neil and Sue Bowers, Tim Rumball, Mike Harris, Sheenagh Orchard, and especially Iain

Rowlands. The Chair has begun adjusting the kissing gate at the Bothy end to improve push-chair access, with completion expected shortly.

Other footpaths remain generally well maintained, with thanks to the volunteer strimming team—Tim Rumball, Neil Bowers, and Mark Claydon. Some minor areas may now require tidying. Thanks were also given to Roger Wills for repairing a gate post on the 14 Acre Field permissive path.

The Council also noted recent incidents involving large vehicles accessing unsuitable rural lanes, including damage caused by HGVs travelling through Dacombe and Coffinswell, which resulted in verge and hedge damage and temporary obstruction of a lane. Volunteers assisted in clearing debris to re-open the road. The drivers were advised of liability for damage, and residents were encouraged to report any further issues. It was acknowledged that sat-nav systems often route large vehicles down inappropriate roads.

Concerns were raised about continued heavy vehicle movements linked to nearby Solar Farm construction. Deliveries are expected to follow an agreed traffic management plan, and any breaches should be reported to the site manager. Some heavy-vehicle deliveries to local businesses were noted as routine and unavoidable. The Solar Farm connection is expected to be completed between late October and December 2025.

No further comments or questions on footpaths or highways were raised.

**** District Cllr John Radford left the meeting at 8pm ****

8. To note any correspondence received

The Clerk reported that the External Auditor had confirmed that the Parish Council's Accounts have been accepted for the financial year 2024-2025.

9. Parish Matters:

9.1 Update regarding Councillors' Roles and responsibilities

The Chair confirmed that the Defibrillator maintenance had now been handed over to Cllr Barnard. Recent replacement of the battery in the Coffinswell unit and the pads in both units means only routine monthly checks are expected for the time being. It was noted that one battery had failed unexpectedly despite regular monitoring, but replacement parts were sourced and installed promptly. Cllr Barnard had been provided with the necessary information and login details for recording inspections, and support was offered for her first check. Members noted a temporary gap in availability for inspections during late September to early November, and arrangements for cover during this period will need to be ensured. The Chair also invited any councillor interested in taking on additional roles to come forward.

9.2 Update regarding Parish Council IT/email requirements.

The Council discussed the planned move to a gov.uk domain for the Parish website and email addresses. The Clerk reported ongoing correspondence with the service provider regarding costs and implementation, noting some delays due to unclear communication between different contacts. As the Parish has already paid for its existing domain for the year, clarification is being sought to avoid duplicate costs. There is no immediate urgency for the migration, but members agreed that adopting official Parish email addresses would improve security and professionalism. The Council remains supportive of the move once the outstanding details are resolved.

9.3TDC – Infrastructure Plan

The Chair provided an update on the requirement from Teignbridge District Council (TDC) to produce a Parish Infrastructure Plan, noting that new guidance and a template have recently been issued. Sections on existing infrastructure and expected development impacts have already been drafted, with the audit confirming that Parish-owned assets are limited to items such as footpaths, noticeboards, benches, Defibrillators, and the recently acquired phone box. Members agreed that the existing asset list is now complete.

The Council also reviewed expected pressures from nearby housing developments outside the Parish, which may increase use of local footpaths and raise issues such as dog fouling, traffic, and recreational use of Parish lanes.

The Chair explained that the Parish must spend the remaining CIL funds by the end of October and that previous spending had prompted queries from TDC. Ongoing discussions are being held with TDC officers to ensure future expenditure meets requirements, and advice will be sought on proposed projects. A draft "wish-list" of potential CIL spending had been circulated, and the Council agreed on a process involving TDC moderation, Parish consultation, and inviting residents to provide their views to help determine spending priorities. It was noted that depending on TDC's response regarding the spending deadline, an Extraordinary Meeting may be required before November.

9.4 To receive any further updates on Parish matters.

Solar Farm:

The Chair provided an update on the Solar Farm construction. Completion is expected by the end of October 2025, although the connection to the National Grid (originally planned for May 2025), is now likely to take place in December 2025, subject to confirmation. Overall, construction has proceeded with minimal impact on the villages of Coffinswell and Dacombe, though occasional lorries have mistakenly arrived at Court Barton.

Members discussed the provision of a footpath along the solar panel site. It was clarified that the footpath will be in areas unsuitable for panels, due to livestock or equipment access, and that its creation appears straightforward.

The Council also reviewed temporary traffic restrictions on St Mary Church Road, originally in place from February to September 2025, now extended to December 2025. A short road closure related to the Solar Farm is expected to last 7–10 days, pending confirmation. It was confirmed that Paul Gray, the Agent involved, will consult with the Parish regarding "*village only*" signage and confirm closure dates. Measures such as signage and formal diversions were discussed to manage traffic and enhance safety on narrow local roads, particularly for drivers unfamiliar with the area.

Phone Box.

Following confirmation that the phone equipment had been removed and the door secured, the Council noted the previous agreement to purchase the box from BT for £1. The Clerk advised that no further update had been received from BT but confirmed she would follow up on the offer.

10. Correspondence received by the Parish Clerk.

Reported under Agenda Item 8

11. Planning & Enforcement Public Question Time:

No public in attendance.

12. Planning:

12.1 To note the planning applications and responses since the last Parish Council Meeting in June 2025:

Application Ref: 25/n01087/LBC – Hillside & Brook Cottage

Proposal: Replace asbestos roof tiles with tiles of a similar appearance to match existing, and repair lead work around rear chimney of Brook Cottage.

Short Response submitted 15th July 2025

Listed Building Consent issued 2nd September 2025

Application Ref: 25/01236/FUL - High Meadow, Coffinswell.

Proposal: Demolition of existing house and construction of new replacement self-build dwelling with detached garage and annex (resubmission of 24/02094/FUL)

Full Response submitted 7th August 2025

The Chair advised that only very recently the Planning permission for the demolition and rebuilding of High Meadow was granted with a number of conditions, including a Construction Management Plan (to be submitted to TDC before any work commences), drainage, sewage, and tree protection. The Council had raised concerns about potential disruption to neighbours and the limited access roads. The proposed development significantly exceeds rural planning guidelines, but the application was approved on precedent. It was also noted that the property is for sale.

Application Ref: 25/01359/CAN – The Old Rectory.

Proposal: Remove Monterey pine; pollard Chestnut tree and remove entire limb.

Short Response submitted 8th September 2025

12.2 To note new Planning Applications:

Application Ref: 25/01484/TPO – The Old Parsonage - road from Westcombe Park to Princess Cottages

Proposal: Removal of deadwood and hanging branches throughout the canopy of the tree.

Applicant: Mr. V Flower

The Chair reported that the new application concerns tree work at the Old Parsonage. He had invited Mr and Mrs Flower to the meeting but unable to attend. However, they had provided a note explaining that the work is prompted by an insurance requirement for a professional tree survey. The report recommended the removal of deadwood and overhanging branches from a large Monterey Cypress to reduce risks to the property and neighbouring houses, with work to be completed within three months.

The Chair and Council members discussed the tree's size, location, and condition, noting that careful removal of deadwood would not significantly harm the tree. The Council agreed that the proposed works were reasonable and necessary and voted to support the application.

13. To receive any updates on outstanding enforcement issues.

The Chair reported that the only outstanding enforcement matter concerns the unauthorised removal of a gate and the alteration of the bank alongside St Marychurch Road at the end of Footpath 3. This was reported to TDC some time ago, but only a standard acknowledgement has been received. The Enforcement Team is currently operating with a single officer and a significant backlog, which is delaying progress.

A recent trespass incident involving a camper in a nearby field was also noted. The matter was reported to the owner, and the situation was coordinated by the Chair, and the camper, who had accessed the field via a gap in the bank, left the site voluntarily and without leaving any mess. Measures have since been taken to reduce access and prevent further trespass. Members discussed the limitations of police involvement in civil matters. It was confirmed that the issue is now resolved and the tent has been removed.

14. General Public Question Time:

None in attendance.

15. To note the date of the next meeting:

Tuesday 18th November 2025

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the Meeting ended at 9.27pm.

Signed:
Chairman of Coffinswell Parish Council

Dated: