



# 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.

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## MINUTES OF THE COFFINSWELL ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2026 7PM AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

**Present:** Cllr N Orchard (Chair), Cllr S Avery (Vice Chair), Cllr M Atkinson, and Cllr S Spokes.

**In attendance:** DCC Heather Horner  
Cllr Stephen Horner, Teignbridge District Councillor  
Mrs L Moore – Parish Clerk  
Three members of the public

Cllr N Orchard welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised of the formalities that are required to be conducted before the commencement of the Parish Council Meeting.

**1. Election of Chair and signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office.**

Cllr Avery proposed, and Cllr Spokes seconded that Cllr N Orchard be re-elected as Chair, this was agreed by all, and the Chair signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

**2. Election of Vice Chair and signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office.**

Cllr Atkinson proposed, and Cllr Spokes seconded that Cllr S Avery be re-elected as Vice Chair, this was agreed by all, and the Vice Chair signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The Chair advised members that he was unlikely to seek re-election at the end of the current Council term and gave members advance notice of his intentions.

**3. The Chairman to open the meeting and receive apologies.**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.23pm

Received apologies from Cllr Bell, Cllr Barnard, and District Cllr J Radford. Following the meeting it was noted that apologies had also been received from District Cllr J Taylor prior to the commencement of the meeting but were not available to the Chair at the time the meeting opened.

**4. To declare any interests arising at this meeting.**

None.

**5. Reports:**

**5.1 County Councillors' report.**

The Chair welcomed Devon County Councillor Horner and invited her to present her report.

DCC Heather Horner reported that Devon County Council was entering the second year of its current four-year term, with leadership positions, Committee memberships, and Cabinet appointments due to be confirmed at the forthcoming Annual Council Meeting. The Council would be moving from priority-setting to implementation of its 2025–2029 Strategic Plan.

She highlighted the significant financial pressures facing the Authority, particularly in relation to Adult Social Care and Children's Services. To maintain investment in highways, schools and infrastructure, the Council had increased its borrowing levels, resulting in substantial ongoing interest costs.

Highways remained a key concern for residents. A new pothole repair trial in North Devon had shown promising results and further information was expected in due course. Road Wardens were also being encouraged to undertake repairs on minor roads where appropriate.

DCC Cllr Horner advised that she remained committed to addressing transport and access-to-services issues affecting rural communities and older residents.

The Parish Councillors were encouraged to make use of the County Council's locality funding scheme whilst funding remained available, noting that future arrangements may change as a result of Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Horner also outlined her work on 'The Children's Scrutiny Committee', a committee of non-executive councillors responsible for scrutinising children's services and ensuring accountability, with a particular focus on safeguarding and the welfare of children and young people within the region.

In response to questions from the Members, Councillor Horner provided an update on a local highway issue and confirmed that she was pursuing the matter with Devon Highways Officers. Members also discussed concerns regarding highway access associated with the recently approved Solar Farm development.

**5.2** District Councillors' report. – None provided for the meeting. (subsequently District Cllr Taylor's short report emailed to all Councillors).

The Chair proposed that the Planning items be brought forward on the agenda to allow the Devon County and Teignbridge District Councillors present to participate in the discussions. Members agreed and consideration of Planning Applications commenced at Agenda Item 14.1.

**14. Planning:**

**14.1** To discuss the following planning applications:

**26/00711/PIP – Connybear Farm Shop, St Marychurch Road TQ12 4SE**

*Permission in Principle for up to 9 dwellings*

- *Comments to TDC by 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2026*

The Chair introduced the first planning application, relating to the proposed development of nine bungalows on the site of Connybear Farm Shop, St Marychurch Road. He explained that the application was for *Permission in Principle*, which sought agreement to the principle of residential development on the site rather than approval of a detailed scheme. Members noted that full details

of the development were not required at this stage and that, if *Permission in Principle* were granted, a subsequent application would be necessary to consider the detailed design, layout, and technical aspects of the development before any final approval could be given. It was further noted that the *Permission in Principle* process applies only to developments of nine dwellings or fewer on sites of less than one hectare.

It was also noted that the Council had received a Planning Statement from Broadgrave Planning & Development which set out the applicant's case in relation to the Teignbridge Local Plan and emerging planning policy considerations.

In accordance with the Council's usual practice, the Chair invited the applicant, Mr. Ian Mitchell, to address the Council and provide background information regarding the proposal and then to answer any questions from the Councillors and public.

Mr. Mitchell then addressed the Council and presented a prepared statement in support of the application. He advised that the land is owned by his Daughter and that he is the applicant for the proposal which seeks *Permission in Principle* for residential development and that detailed design matters would be considered at a later stage if approved.

Mr. Mitchell then stated that the proposal would improve accessibility to and from the site, and outlined potential enhancements to the local footpath network linking the village with surrounding routes. He also referred to possible improvements to public transport provision, including the potential for improved bus services and the provision of additional stopping points.

He considered the proposed development of nine bungalows to be modest in scale and suggested it would have less impact on traffic than the site's existing lawful commercial use. He gave reference to the site's previous commercial uses and stated that it currently benefits from established planning history and there are also existing buildings on the site. He also advised that the proposals would include ecological enhancements, including provision for wildlife habitats such as bat and bird boxes, and indicated that biodiversity improvements were intended as part of the overall scheme.

The Councillors then considered the application. They asked for clarification regarding the relationship between the proposed development and any wider residential plans for the applicant's main property. They also asked for confirmation of access arrangements including whether any new access would be created from Connybear Lane.

The applicant confirmed that all vehicular access to the proposed dwellings would be taken from St Marychurch Road. He stated that existing access points on Connybear Lane would remain in place but would not form the primary access to the development. Members discussed existing access arrangements and potential changes to improve safety, including the proposed closure of a historic access to the main house and the use of an alternative, safer entrance from St Marychurch Road.

Concerns were also raised regarding highway safety; pedestrian access, and the suitability of surrounding roads for increased traffic. The applicant responded that improvements to access arrangements would form part of the overall benefit of the proposal and would reduce reliance on the existing access.

With respect to the ecological matters, including the provision of bat and bird boxes and wider biodiversity enhancements, Councillors noted that some of these ecological measures exceeded those required by condition and were being offered voluntarily by the applicant.

Concerns were raised regarding the sustainability of the proposal, particularly in relation to limited public transport provision; accessibility by walking and cycling; as well as the steep rural nature of the site. Members questioned the accuracy of the supporting planning statement in relation to accessibility and transport links.

The attending DCC and District Councillors commented that there appeared to be a number of significant challenges associated with the proposal and indicated agreement with concerns previously raised regarding sustainability.

Members also discussed the absence of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish and the implications of increased housing targets within the Teignbridge Local Plan.

Following debate, the Chair proposed that the Council object to the application on the grounds that the development was not considered to represent sustainable development in accordance with the Teignbridge Local Plan. All Members present voted and it was therefore resolved that the Parish Council objects to the application on sustainability grounds.

The Chair thanked Mr. Mitchell for his attendance and contribution to the meeting.

*\*\* Mr Mitchell and associate left the meeting at 7.54pm\*\**

Following the applicant's departure from the meeting, members discussed the basis of the Council's proposed objection. It was noted that, whilst the planning consultant's report had assisted in identifying relevant planning concerns, the Council's objection would be founded on the proposal's conflict with Local Plan policies rather than on the consultant's report itself.

Members agreed that their objection was based principally on the view that the proposal constituted unsustainable development in the countryside and failed to accord with relevant planning policies.

The Chair confirmed that he would provide the Clerk with the relevant policy references and final wording for submission to the Planning Authority on behalf of the Council. It was noted that the final determination of the application would rest with Teignbridge District Council through the formal planning process.

**26/00546/MAJ & 26/00545/MAJ – Adjacent Parish Consultation**

KINGSKERSWELL - Land Off Newton Road And Coffinswell Lane, Kingskerswell

*Proposal: Application for Approval of Reserved Matters (layout, scale, landscaping, and appearance) pursuant to Outline Permission 17/00132/MAJ, comprising of 174 residential dwellings*

*– comments to TDC by 27<sup>th</sup> May 2026*

The Chair then briefly outlined the Reserved Matters application, which, although not within the Parish had nevertheless been asked for the Council's opinion.

Members noted that the principle of development had already been established and that the application concerned the detailed aspects of the scheme. Discussion followed concerning the location of the site and its proximity to the Parish boundary. It was noted that concerns had already been raised elsewhere regarding the potential impact on local infrastructure, including school capacity and the generating of more traffic, and the Councillors also queried and discussed the proposed access arrangements and the surrounding road network.

Following consideration, members agreed that they had no specific planning objections to the application and resolved not to submit an objection to the Local Planning Authority.

**14.2** To note the following Decision notice(s)

**26/00628/AGR – Manor Farm, Dacombe. General Purpose Agriculture building**

*Decision Prior Approval Required – request of further action and submission of further documentation to TDC within 28 days (effective from 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026)*

The Councillors duly noted the decision, and documentation had been requested from the applicant, to be submitted within 28 days of 6th May 2026.

Parish Council's previous concerns had been noted relating to matters including landscaping; building heights; drainage arrangements and the relationship between the proposed structures. The current status of the application was noted that no further action was required by the Parish Council pending the submission of additional information to the Local Planning Authority.

*With the agreement of members, the Chair varied the order of business and moved to Agenda Item 16 (Enforcement Issues) following consideration of the planning applications.*

**Agenda item 16. Enforcement Issues:**

Councillors received an update on a previously reported enforcement matter relating to a caravan and structure near Downaway Lane. The Chair reported that Teignbridge District Council had investigated the matter and was satisfied that no breach of planning control had occurred. The reported structure had been removed and there is no residential use and the case was considered resolved.

Members also discussed a separate site near Pitland Lane, Dacombe where concerns had been raised regarding recent works undertaken on the land. It was noted that a further enforcement request had been submitted to Teignbridge District Council and that the matter was awaiting investigation. No further action was taken by the Parish Council at this stage.

*\*\* 8.08pm DCC H Horner, Cllr S Horner and remaining member of public left the meeting.\*\**

The meeting then returned to Agenda Item 5.3

**Police Advocate and Neighbourhood Watch reports and updates.**

Nothing to report.

**6. Approval to consider, amend as agreed by the Council and approve the minutes of the following meetings:**

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026:** After the Chair confirmed there were no objections to the draft Minutes, it was proposed by Cllr Avery and seconded by Cllr Spokes they should be duly approved and signed. (It was noted that Cllr Atkinson was not in attendance at this meeting.)

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026 – Extraordinary Meeting:** Proposed by Cllr Avery and seconded by Cllr Atkinson that these should be duly approved and signed by the Chair.

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026 - Annual Parish Meeting.** Proposed by Cllr Atkinson and seconded by Cllr Spokes that these should be duly approved and signed by the Chair.

**7. Finance**

**7.1** Payments schedule was agreed and signed by the Chair and Vice Chair.

**7.2** Bank reconciliations for March 2026 (year-end) and April 2026. It was duly proposed by Cllr Atkinson and seconded by Cllr Avery that these should be approved and signed and agreed by all those present.

**7.3** Final quarterly budget update for the year 2025-26 was duly noted and approved

**7.4** Insurance Renewal for the Parish Council (1<sup>st</sup> June 2026).

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council's insurance renewal documentation had been received shortly before the meeting following a request to the insurer. Members noted that the renewal premium remained unchanged from the previous year. Following consideration, it was resolved to approve the renewal of the Parish Council's insurance policy and payment of the premium for 2026/27.

## **8. Audit 2025-26**

The Clerk advised that certain audit documents had been inadvertently omitted from the agenda listing when originally prepared, but all documentation had been issued to the Councillors prior to the Meeting.

### **8.1 Annual Governance Statement 2025/26**

The Councillors considered the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March 2026. It was resolved to approve the Annual Governance Statement, and it was duly signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

### **8.2 Accounting Statements 2025/26**

The Councillors considered the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31st March 2026. It was resolved to approve the Accounting Statements, and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

### **8.3 Fixed Asset Register**

Members reviewed the Fixed Asset Register and resolved to approve the Fixed Asset Register for 2025/26.

### **8.4 Certificate of Exemption 2025/26**

The Certificate of Exemption from a limited assurance review was duly accepted by the Councillors and it was agreed to approve the Certificate of Exemption for submission to the external auditor.

### **8.5 Internal Auditor's Report 2025/26**

The Councillors received and noted the Internal Auditor's Report for the year ended 31st March 2026 and considered the recommendations contained therein.

## **9. Funding & Grants:**

The Councillors were advised that the first instalment of the Parish Precept for 2026/27 and all present agreed that the Council's financial position remained satisfactory.

During discussion the Councillors also noted the increasing importance of grant funding and other external funding opportunities in supporting Parish Council projects and activities.

The Chair gave the Councillors an update regarding the Community Benefit Agreement with Recurrent Energy, in relation to the local Solar Farm development in that the agreement had now been signed by both parties and would provide for a community benefit contribution of approximately £20,000 to establish a Community Benefit Fund. Members noted that payment will be made in accordance with the terms of the agreement once the Solar Farm becomes operational.

## **10. Footpaths & Highways:**

The Chair reported that there was little new to report regarding footpaths. The completion of the Solar Farm is still awaited before the new permissive path between Ridgeway Lane and Downaway Lane can be brought into use. It was noted that the site appears substantially complete, although reinstatement works at the access points have not yet been undertaken.

The Chair advised that correspondence had been received from the Public Rights of Way Officer concerning the permissive path across Roger Wills' 14 Acre Field. This highlighted that, under the existing agreement, responsibility for the maintenance of gates rests with the Parish Council. The Chair noted that he had not previously been aware of a formal written agreement governing the permissive path and had therefore contacted the Public Rights of Way Officer to enquire whether a similar agreement would be required in respect of the new Solar Farm permissive path. A response is awaited. He also advised that unfortunately response may be delayed as the PROW Officer is currently recovering from illness.

The Councillors noted the revised arrangements for P3 funding applications. Under the new process, applications for additional works may be submitted as and when requirements arise during the year. No additional works are currently proposed, although the condition of Footpath 1 continues to be monitored following previous maintenance works.

The Chair reported that the Parish Council's strimmer had been serviced and was now operating satisfactorily.

With regard to highways, Councillors noted that Devon County Council had responded promptly to reports of potholes and had undertaken repairs within a short timescale. They all expressed appreciation with respect to the proactive approach taken in identifying and repairing additional defects during scheduled repair visits. It was noted that the road surface on St Marychurch Road is continuing to deteriorate.

**11. To note any correspondence received**

None.

**12. Parish Matters:**

**12.1 Update concerning the Parish Phone Box.**

The Chair reported that the Parish phone box is now accessible after BT's engineers removed the locking barrel, leaving the Council with full control over future access arrangements. Discussion then followed concerning whether the Phone Box should remain unlocked or whether a locking system would be beneficial to prevent vandalism or misuse. Various options were suggested, including a hidden key, key safe, or digital lock, but no decision was made. The general view was that the Council can review security arrangements at a later date if needed.

The condition of the Phone Box was then discussed, and it was agreed by the Councillors that restoration work should take priority before any enhancements such as installing shelves. It was noted that it requires cleaning, repainting, and repairs to the door and frame. The Chair noted that specialist replacement parts are available and that some damaged components, particularly the door frame and cast-iron glazing may need repair or replacement. Whilst a full restoration would be labour-intensive, it was felt by everyone that more modest repairs and repainting could make the Phone Box functional and presentable at a relatively low cost.

The discussion also covered potential future improvements and funding opportunities. Members noted that, should the anticipated Solar Farm Community funding become available, it could support a more comprehensive restoration project. Ideas were also raised for enhancing the Phone Box's appearance and community value, including replacing the existing signage with something more imaginative or more focussed for the community. No immediate commitments were made, but the Councillors agreed that it was useful to consider options in advance of any future funding becoming available.

**12.2 Update concerning Agreement regarding Solar Farm Community Benefit Fund.**

The Chair reported that the agreement with Coubar Solar Limited had now been signed, enabling the Community Benefit Fund to commence, and that the Parish Council was awaiting receipt of the first payment into its account.

The Councillors were reminded and it was duly noted that, under the terms of the agreement, the Parish Council is required to obtain Coubar Solar Limited's consent before issuing any public media statements relating to the development.

The Chair advised that no formal arrangements for the administration of the Community Benefit Fund would be established until the funds had been received. Once the payment is received, proposals will be brought forward regarding the operation, governance and distribution of the Fund.

It was noted that receipt of the payment may take some time and that no confirmation of payment date has yet been received.

**13. Planning & Enforcement Public Question Time:**

The agenda item was brought forward and considered earlier in the meeting.

**14. Planning:**

The agenda item was brought forward and considered earlier in the meeting.

**15. Correspondence received by the Parish Clerk**

With reference to the update by the Chair under Agenda item 12.1, the Clerk advised the Councillors that under this Agenda item, that following a further enquiry to BT regarding the adoption of the Parish Phone Box, confirmation had now been received that the transfer process had been completed and ownership would pass formally to the Parish Council within five days.

The Clerk advised that BT had also provided guidance relating to the maintenance and restoration of the phone box, including recommended paint specifications, and this information would be circulated to the Councillors.

A notice would be displayed within the Phone Box advising that it is no longer a public telephone facility.

The Councillors then discussed arrangements for the future restoration and management of it, and it was noted that local residents had expressed an interest in assisting with the project and that further volunteers could be sought if required.

The Chair suggested that a notice could be circulated inviting expressions of interest from residents willing to assist. During discussion on this Cllr Spokes suggested the establishment of an informal Coffinswell community WhatsApp group to facilitate communication between residents. Members noted that any such group would operate independently of the Parish Council. Cllr Spokes agreed to establish and administer the group, and it was agreed that details of how residents could join would be circulated via the parish email distribution list.

**16. Enforcement Issues:**

The agenda item was brought forward and considered earlier in the meeting.

**17. General Public Question Time:**

The remaining member of the public had left the meeting prior to this item being reached and therefore no questions were raised.

**18. To note the date of the next meeting:**

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2026

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the Meeting which ended at 9.09pm.

Signed:  
Chairman of Coffinswell Parish Council

Dated: