

# BUCKLAND FILLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

## Meeting Minutes

### Community Day Centre, West Heanton

Thursday 8th January 2026, 7.30pm

Present, Cllr Bond (Chair) Cllr Nethercott (Vice Chair) Cllr Salter, Cllr Balsdon, Cllr Davies. Selina Woollacott (Clerk)

**1. Apologies,** District Cllr Wheatley and County Cllr Cottle-Hunkin.

**2. Declarations of interest, Councillors to declare any interests in matters on the agenda.** None.

**3. Open Session for members of the public to speak.**

**3.1) Discussion of matters raised by members of the public.** No members of the public present.

**4. Reports.** Reports emailed to the Clerk. The clerk emailed the reports to all Councillors. Due to a weather warning it was agreed to keep the meeting short. The clerk just gave the highlights of the reports at the meeting and informed Councillors they have the reports to read. Some Councillors had read the reports.

#### **4.1) Report from District Councillor.**

I would like to start with wishing everybody in our ward a Happy New Year! The next Taw and Torridge River Champions (TTRC) meeting takes place on Saturday 10th January from 10am at the Lib Dem office at Chigwell Street where we will undertake our next dipping session at Kenwith Stream.

Those people interested in taking part please contact us via our website on Facebook at (Taw and Torridge River Champions) or join us on Saturday 10th January. We are now a formally constituted group working with the North Devon Biosphere to connect communities' streams and tributaries across the Taw and Torridge catchment area.

Another recurring problem which has been ongoing for a long time now is recycle vehicle spillages. This has continued to happen around some of the lanes particularly along hedge and roadsides in Petrockstowe, Newton St Petrock and Merton. The new Operation Centre will hopefully be delivered and completed by the end of this month which certainly will improve the working conditions for the Waste and Recycling Team. We are continuing to monitor the situation too see improvements and please contact me if there are future spillages

**Torridge District Council Projects** Moving forward to the New Year and even allowing for LGR (Local Government Reorganisation there is much to do in Torridge! There are many positive projects ongoing including the AIC (Appledore Innovation Centre) with the prospect of bringing jobs and investment by the end of this year. The Community Regeneration Fund Projects which Torridge Council is the delivery agent for Hatchmoor Industrial Estate in Torrington due for completion in March 2027. The Pannier Market in Bideford and Westward Housing Improvements are ongoing with the Council acting as a facilitator. Holsworthy Agri-Cultural-Business Centre now with Councils go ahead with a target completion date of March 2028, and the land surrounding the cattle Market in Holsworthy. Brunswick Wharf mentioned in my last month's report. There are other projects and likely more to happen in 2026.

**Full Council in December 2025** TTVS (Taw and Torridge Voluntary Service) requested a one of payment of £33,000 to tie them and it was decided by Council members to refer this to MBWG (Members Budget Working Group) to decide to recommend the payment or not. Many councillors have already supported TTVS and realise the great work they do for the community.

Council received an update reference the Brunswick Wharf Development in Bideford East of the Water from Simon Friend - Developer and said there has been much preparation work ongoing including the temporary flood defence in last two weeks. The main contract is due to start in spring 2026.

North Devon Place Story was presented to Council and to be adopted evoking a narrative on the culture, history, challenges, and aspirations for our area working with North Devon Futures Partnership, North Devon Councils and Torridge to help potential opportunities and the areas' identity. It was highlighted in November's council meeting that agriculture has an important role to play in our Place Story.

Other Agenda items:-

Appointment of a new Lead Member, Appointment of Chief Officer, Review of Treasury Management Report on Council Tax Bands

#### **4.2) Report from County Councillor.**

As you know the delays with highways are absolutely infuriating, and its not just Buckland Filleigh! Please just keep reporting anything that you see. I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas. We were so lucky with the lovely dry

weather this year, and I really enjoyed spending time with my family. It was a much-needed chance to recharge before getting stuck back into council work as we head into 2026!

I'm very pleased to finally share some really good news for Great Torrington regarding Stagecoach bus services. After a great deal of work – including petitions, meetings with MPs, the headteacher of Great Torrington School, and the Managing Director of Stagecoach – the Barnstaple Zone has now been extended to become the North Devon Zone. This covers a much simpler ten-mile radius of Barnstaple and, crucially, now includes Great Torrington. The change came into effect on 4th January and has led to significant price reductions for people travelling within the zone, important for so many, particularly those who use the buses regularly to get to places of education and to work. [Major shake-up of Stagecoach bus fares welcomed for North Devon passengers - North Devon Today](#)

Another issue I have been very vocal about during 2025 is the proposed farm inheritance tax changes that are due to come into force in April 2026. Just a couple of days before Christmas, the government announced a partial U-turn, increasing the threshold from £1 million to £2.5 million. This was a welcome relief for many farming families after more than a year of worry, stress, as well as wasted money and time spent trying to plan as best as they could for the future, under what would have been a crippling tax. There is still more work to do, but this step was certainly welcome and is testament to the relentless pressure put on the government from all angles and across the whole country! [Welcome concession is a win for farmers and rural communities across Devon - News](#)

There was also some positive news from Ofsted at the end of last year, who praised the progress being made by Devon County for care leavers. They described “considerable progress”, highlighting the clarity of plans, consistency of the service and the commitment shown by teams. Importantly, care leavers themselves spoke enthusiastically about the changes, which is a powerful endorsement of the work being done. [Ofsted praises major improvements for care leavers in good news for children's services - News](#)

Before Christmas, a small group of us as County Councillors in North Devon and Torridge also met informally with local foster carers. As we were all newly elected in May, it was especially important to hear directly about their experiences, what needs improving, and what would help support and retain foster carers. There was particular praise for the Mockingbird model, which carers would like to see offered to every foster family in Devon. Our foster carers play such an incredibly important role, caring for some of Devon's most vulnerable children. Devon County Council is now making fostering a clear priority, and last year the Chief Executive publicly acknowledged that the council had not been doing enough in the past. As a new administration, we are committed to making meaningful changes. Alongside retaining existing foster carers, we also need to recruit more. There are a range of options available, from offering weekend breaks to long-term care, so if you have a spare bedroom and would like to find out more, please visit the Devon County Council website. [Change a young person's life and consider Fostering Devon](#)

Finally, our library consultation is now well underway, with a deadline of 22 February. I am encouraging as many people as possible to take part. There is also a children's survey, which parents of children under 13 can complete on their behalf. The consultation is online, and paper copies are available in local libraries for those who need them. [Have Your Say Today - Shaping Devon's Library Service - Commonplace](#)

Many of you will remember that a couple of years ago I led the campaign to try to save our mobile libraries, which were axed under the previous administration. Years of reduced funding have left our libraries under real pressure, and Libraries Unlimited agreed that a public consultation was needed from Devon County Council to explore new models, and it will start conversations with communities to enable us to develop a long-term strategy.

We are very open about the financial challenges facing Devon County Council; we live in a large rural county and it costs a huge amount to deliver services here in comparison to authorities serving urban regions. Despite consistent lobbying, this is still not properly recognised by central government, and as a result we are severely underfunded. We are forced to find savings which are increasingly hard to find. We are looking at other parts of the country to try and work out positive ways forward. In relation to libraries, we have been directed across the border to Cornwall. There they underwent a Library Transformation Programme ten years ago and most libraries are now managed locally, often with the support of town and parish councils, which has led to a 34% increase in opening hours and greater use of libraries, all while still managing to retain a mobile library service! The book stock, technology and distribution is still owned and run by Cornwall Council but the funding and management of individual libraries (including librarians) is in most cases now run on a local level. [Cornwall Council says local libraries are 'bucking UK trend' - BBC News](#)

In other parts of the country, “open access” technology is being used and has helped to extend opening hours beyond traditional staffed times. Following an induction, library users are then able to access the library using their library card. This is currently being piloted in Devon, and I am very optimistic about its potential. It has been proven to work elsewhere, and would allow greater opportunity for community groups to use the library spaces, provide free study areas for students, and offer welcoming places to access free Wi-Fi etc. [Open Access guidance note FINAL.pdf](#) example of how it works is here: [Bing Videos](#)

Libraries are now so much more than book-lending services – they are vital community hubs. I am absolutely committed to working with our communities to find sustainable, long-term solutions, but local support is essential. This

year is the National Year of Reading, so please do visit your local library, sign up if you haven't already, and take part in the consultation. Your support and views really do matter.

If there are any safety defects or other highways type issues please do report them here: [Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

Grit bins can be requested via [Grit bins and salt bags - Roads and transport](#)

Speed concerns can be raised from the "report a concern" link at [Speeding, Speed Limits and SCARF - Roads and transport](#)

**5. Approve Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 6th November 2025.** The Minutes were sent to all Councillors prior to the meeting. All Councillors agreed the Minutes are an accurate record of the meeting. Cllr Bond signed the Minutes.

**6. Urgent matters raised by the Chairperson which are not included in the agenda.** None.

## **7. Website and Email**

**7.1) . Gov email address.** Clerk and Cllr Bond to look into getting a .gov email address for the Parish Council.

**8. Clerk's Report.** No Report.

## **9. Finance**

### **9.1) Bank Account Balance and update on accounts.**

On the 5th December 2025 the bank account balance was £14,142.61

Outstanding Cheques

£167 Shebbear Youth Club, cheque has been returned due to it now being out of date and a new cheque will be written. Cheque was not banked due to bank account issues which have now been resolved. New cheque signed at the meeting.

The account holds £398.22 of P3 Money.

Cheques on this agenda total to £84.99

This leaves a useable balance of £13,492.40

**9.2) Microsoft 365 Annual Subscription. £84.99** Cheque signed and all Councillor agreed the payment.

**9.3) Invoices to be paid not listed above.** None.

## **10. Parish Precept and Budget.**

Clerk had put together a Budget for 2026/27 using current and previous years accounts. The precept amount the Budget is worked out to is the current Precept amount of £3,377. The Councillors reviewed the Budget and the Clerk explained any changes from the 2025/26 Budget. The Councillors agreed to keep the Precept amount to the same as 2025/26 £3,377. Due to property changes in the Parish this will mean a small increase to Council Tax the increase is £1.35 a year for a Band D property. Less increase for lower Bands and higher increase for higher Bands. Band A = 91p increase for the year. Band H £2.71 increase for the year.

The Councillors agreed the Budget and agreed to set the Parish Precept at £3.377. Clerk to complete the paperwork.

## **11. Planning.**

**11.1) Review of Planning Applications in Buckland Filleigh and adjoining parishes.** None.

**11.2) Planning Decisions.** None.

## **12. Footpaths and Roads**

**12.1) Footpath update. Checking footpaths. P3 funds.** A helpful member of the public has started checking footpaths and will let the Clerk know if she is unable to check any. The clerk will complete the P3 forms when they are sent. Cllr Nethacott reported that a few trees on the footpath from the bridge going into Callhanger need looking at. Trees are the landowners responsibility and Cllr Balsdon and Cllr Nethercott are sure the landowner is felling trees in the area.

**12.2) Drainage update. Galmington and Glebe roads.** The following email for the Highways Officer gives an update. I'm afraid, no change. There is still no budget currently for ditching works (Glebe Road) and the CCTV investigation is still pending (Galmington Road). The patching work on the Filleighmoor Gate road is still on the list and at the moment the gangs are prioritising defect repairs, so I have no indication of a likely date that they will begin serviceability patching again.

**12.3) Bridge.** Report from the Clerk. The bridge report was not on the system when I checked and still not repaired. I have taken a new photo and reported the damage again.

**12.4) Filleighmoor Gate road.** See email above from Highways Officer.

**13. Correspondence email to Councillors prior to the meeting.**

**Road Closed. Monday 19th January 2026 Between the hours of 09:30 and 15:30**

**ROAD FROM FARTHINGLAND TO STONEMOOR CROSS.**

**This temporary restriction is considered necessary to enable - POLE TEST.**

**Road Closed. Friday 23rd January 2026 Between the hours of 09:30 and 15:30**

**ROAD FROM BONDS CROSS TO HORSESHOE BRIDGE, BUCKLAND FILLEIGH**

**This temporary restriction is considered necessary to enable -POLE TEST.**

Above was read out at the meeting.

Cllr Balsdon there is a number of potholes developing on the Fuze to Sedgewell Cross road. Clerk to take photos and report.

**14. Matters for inclusion in the next meeting.**

**The next meeting will be held on Thursday 5th March 2026 at 7.30pm. P3 Funds**

Meeting Closed 7.45pm

**Members of the public are invited to attend.**

Selina Woollacott, Buckland Filleigh Parish Clerk.

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