

BUCKLAND FILLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Community Day Centre, West Heanton

Thursday 5th March 2026, 7.30pm

Present, Cllr Bond (Chair) Cllr Salter, Cllr Davis, County Cllr Cottle-Hunkin, Selina Woollacott (Clerk)

1. **Apologies**, Cllr Nethacott, Cllr Balsdon, District Cllr Wheatley.

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

4.1) Report from District Councillor. Cllr Wheatley sent the Clerk a report which was read out at the meeting. Clerk was not sure if the meeting would go ahead as was not sure if it would be quorate. Clerk advised Cllr Wheatley to not travel for the meeting.

The next Taw and Torridge River Champions (TTRC) meeting will take place on Saturday 7th March from 10am at the Lib Dem office at Chingswell Street then onto Kenwith Stream and carry out our water quality tests. No doubt some of you have seen the excellent channel 4 3-part series entitled Dirty Works. It has been streamed on Channel 4 and is an eye opener and a must watch! There has been much media and public awareness of the current plight of the awful state of our rivers, streams, estuaries, beaches and coastline and the need to get it cleaned up! It is encouraging that we are making some progress yet there is still much to be done. The next meeting of TTRC in April to be confirmed.

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. We are continuing to monitor the situation too see improvements and please either contact me if there are future spillages or report to the Waste/Recycling Team on the Council. Fortunately, the new operations centre where our bins, recycling vehicles and street cleaning are based is now operational in Bideford OSCAR - (Operational Services Centre, Alverdiscott Road). The staff and working conditions have improved greatly at OSCAR.

Pleased to announce that Shebbear School is the beneficiary of my remaining Councillor Grant Funding for this financial year. Both Cheryl and I have contributed.

FULL COUNCIL I attended the Full Council Meeting where the Torridge District Council Climate commitments were on the agenda and initially, we had three public speakers and a presentation from our Climate and Sustainability Officer who presented the Report to review progress of the Councils climate commitments and ambitions. There then followed a debate with questions and comments. It was eventually agreed to update the Councils target to be NET ZERO by 2030 and to reduce our carbon footprint from a practical perspective whilst balancing priorities that are important to residents. Funding targets may not be met due to significant funding requirements though likely offset by renewable energy incomes and savings. A vote took place and was carried For - 21, Against -6 and Abstention -1.

FULL COUNCIL - BUDGET SPECIAL MEETING I attended the Budget Special Meeting where we discussed and voted for £70,000 for planting trees on TDC land. Sites identified by treeconomics are Bideford, Bradworthy, Holsworthy and Northam. Fortunately, the vote though very close was FOR by one vote and carried and goes ahead at the following locations-

Bideford - Abbotsham road, Chudleigh Fort, Ford Rise, Oaklands, Pollyfield Skate park, Victoria Park, East- of-the -Water and Higher cemetery.

Bradworthy - Tuckers Park

Holsworthy - Holsworthy cemetery

Northam - Great Barrow Road.

Additionally on the Agenda was - Budget 2026/2027 Financial Strategy, Council Tax Resolution, Capital Programs Treasury Management Report and Capital Strategy, Pay Policy

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION All Parishes should have received the link to the government website via Gov Delivery reference LGR public consultation which is open until 26th March 2026 and provides links for people to respond.

4.2) Report from County Councillor. Cllr Bond was pleased to have Cllr Cottle-Hunkin at the meeting as he is not happy with work that has been completed on a number of local roads. Cllr Bond voiced the following. It is not sensible for a team to drive miles and fill one pothole when there are 3 others that are worse than the one they filled in the same area. The non filled potholes are still on the system saying past to the contractor. If Highways did proper repairs in the first place then there wouldn't be as many potholes. None of this is cost effective. Dragon patching on the road from the Nursing Home down to Horseshoe bridge didn't help as the chippens were soon washed off and filling up the drains. Which now means more water on the road washing the road surface away. I am always digging chippens out of the drains and that is 18 months after the dragon patching was done. I have elderly home care patients that we can not get to because of the roads being too bad. My staff, rightly so, are refusing to use their cars to drive to them. I have a fleet of 3 year old Home Care cars which all have suspension issues and have had so many new tyres. The Sedgewell to Battledown road a few years ago work was completed on this road but Highways decided to leave a 100m area in the middle of the 2 areas they did do, and now that 100m area is awful. And nothing is being done about it. It has been reported so many times. Cllr Bond showed Cllr Cottle-Hunkin photos of the potholes which were worse that they didn't fill but filled the small one less than a metre away. Cllr Cottle-Hunkin 600 safety defects a day are reported. Cllr Davis, Highways are not managing the money correctly and funds are being wasted. The Galmington road was dragon patched and it has now got potholes due to water running down the road. Cllr Cottle-Hunkin we have had 200% rain fall and I hope with the extra funding all these issues will be sorted. There is a Road Warden scheme which is working well in South Devon and in other areas where Parish Councils can have a trained volunteer to fill potholes. Cllr Cottle-Hunkin was sending these concerns onto Highways during the meeting.

Cllr Cottle-Hunkin summarised the following report at the meeting.

January and February have been significant months for Devon. Devon County Council has now agreed its 2026–27 budget, our first full budget under the new administration, setting a clear direction: stabilising essential services, starting to repair what has been neglected, and investing in the foundations that keep our rural communities moving. Devon Council spending plans for next year with nearly 5 per cent tax increase - Yahoo News UK

£19 Million Extra for Highways Including £4 Million for Drainage and Gullies

The condition of Devon's roads remains one of the biggest concerns for residents, especially after the severe storms and freeze thaw damage we have faced this winter. I'm sure you will all be pleased to hear this year's budget includes £19 million of additional highways funding, with £4 million of this ringfenced specifically for drainage and gullies.

Improving drainage is one of the most effective forms of preventative work. When water is allowed to sit on or under the surface, roads deteriorate rapidly. This investment will support more ditching, gully clearing and preventative work, helping reduce future potholes and protect new resurfacing work. There are also plans to work more closely with town and parish councils on highways issues over the coming years through a "Community Protocol", strengthening local input and collaboration. The reality is that it would take hundreds of millions of pounds to bring Devon's roads up to standard because they are now in such a poor condition, after more than a decade of decline and underfunding.

However, I sincerely hope the £19M increase in funding this year will deliver noticeable improvements. Let's all hope for some drier weather and progress on the ground. As the weather improves, highways teams will move from winter emergency response into planned resurfacing and extensive drainage work. Please continue reporting problems, the easiest way to do this is through the "DCC- report a problem" website; your reports directly help prioritise work. Report a problem - Roads and transport

Protecting Essential Services Despite huge funding pressures, (and National Government not properly recognising the impacts of Devon being a huge rural county and the significant increased costs of delivering services compared to urban areas), Devon County Council has delivered a balanced budget for the year ahead. The budget was approved unanimously by Council, with 52 votes in favour, 2 abstentions and 0 against. This strong level of support demonstrates the shared commitment across the council to prioritise essential services and ensure long term financial Stability. Adult social care represents nearly half of the Council's total spend, and demand continues to rise as Devon has one of the oldest populations in the UK. The budget aims to stabilise and modernise services while maintaining dignity and independence for those who rely on support. There has also been major national news for children's services and SEND. The Government has confirmed it will write off around 90% of councils' historic SEND deficits, including 90% of Devon's £200 million High Needs overspend. This deficit was not caused by local overspending; councils were required to support children's needs even as national funding fell behind. The write off essentially corrects a long-standing national funding gap, but nonetheless the news was a very welcome relief. Most of Devon County Council £200m SEND debt cleared - BBC News

Libraries, Community Investment and Locality Funding The response to the recent Devon Libraries consultation has been nothing short of incredible. More than 22,000 residents took part, which is around four times more than the last major library consultation. This shows just how much our communities value their libraries. Libraries, especially in rural areas, are warm hubs, digital access points, advice centres, learning spaces and vital community meeting

places, going far beyond the statutory book-lending service. The results of the consultation will be published later in the spring, but, as cabinet member with responsibility for libraries, I have been attending many community meetings as part of the consultation, and the message from the public has been very clear: residents truly value these spaces and want their libraries protected. I am really pleased that the Council will be keeping the library budget the same as last year at just over £7M, with an extra £1M set aside to invest in genuine transformation of libraries and community-led improvements. Devon libraries budget sees surprise plot twist in new funding reversal - North Devon Today I also want to highlight the great success of the new Youth Grant "Places to go, things to do". All £160,000 was allocated in the form of small grants right across Devon. It was so successful that I am pleased to say we are continuing with it this year. It has been brilliant to see new youth groups form and to be able to support more activities for our young people, especially in areas where they are a long way from any kind of youth centre. Locality (community) budgets are also increasing, with each County Councillor receiving £10,000 from April to fund projects specifically within their area, supporting community organisations. These small grants can make a really big difference at parish level, supporting a range of initiatives, from youth work, events, equipment, to accessibility improvements.

Rail Investment and The Tarka Line Later this month, I will be attending the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance (NDRDA) Rail Convention, where one of my key priorities will be making the case for urgent upgrades to the Tarka Line, and the need to find a parking solution at Eggesford Station. This rail route is vital for our rural economy, education, commuting and connectivity, yet it continues to suffer from reliability issues and outdated infrastructure. Our petition, taken to Parliament by Ian Roome MP, has already received encouraging responses from ministers and National Rail. We are determined to keep up the pressure for proper long-term investment in the line. Tarka Line rail investment petition handed to Parliament - BBC News

Broadband There is finally some real progress being made in relation to broadband and Project Gigabit. I have for months requested meetings with government ministers, and last month had an online meeting with Programme Director Andrew Field from Building Digital UK (BDUK). I have also been working with Devon MPs, and the government have now reopened the voucher scheme for suppliers. We are currently looking at which areas are best placed to use these, with the voucher deadline being August. We are working with Devon MPs cross-party seeking a joint meeting with the government minister to discuss the rural connectivity gap, the day to day challenges it creates, and further solutions to help ensure no community is left behind. I will update when I have more information.

Visit to Great Torrington School It was a pleasure to be invited in as part of GTS Alumni to talk to year 9 students about life after Great Torrington School! I think I spoke more about travelling and teaching English abroad than I did about being a councillor- and I'm very proud of myself for not mentioning the P word once (potholes!!!). I emphasised how you can never be sure what the future holds and you can never be sure of what you will end up doing. I never considered myself to be interested in politics when I was growing up and I don't think I even knew what a councillor was when I was at school! I always hated public speaking and I still get nervous now! I hope I managed to get across the importance of doing things that you care about to help your community, to live a wholesome life and for everyone to know that they can make a difference. These pupils are our hope and our future and I hope some future young councillors too!

5. Approve Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 8th January 2026. 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. Cllr Bond is unable to apply for a .gov domain for the website and email address. He has printed off information for the Clerk. The Clerk will take on the task.

8. Clerk's Report. No Report.

9. Finance

9.1) Bank Account Balance and update on accounts.

On the 5th February 2026 the bank account balance was £14,057.62

Outstanding Cheques

£167 Shebbear Youth Club,

Cheques on this agenda total to £0

The account holds £398.22 of P3 Money.

This leaves a useable balance of £13,492.40

9.2) TDC cheque for Payroll and Clerk Salary. The invoice did not arrive before the meeting. It was agreed once the invoice arrives the Clerk can meet with Cllr Bond and another Councillor to have the cheque signed.

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

10. Planning.

10.1) Review of Planning Applications in Buckland Filleigh and adjoining parishes.

1/0112/2026/FUL Demolition of 1no. barn and the construction of 2no. dwellings. Agricultural Building At Grid Reference 246108 110894, Comments by 22nd March 2026 Councillors were sent the planning prior to the meeting to look at. The Clerk opened the planning on her laptop for Councillors to discuss the plans. The Councillors agree to submit the following comments. Buckland Filleigh Parish Council do like the idea of 2 smaller properties as they will likely be more affordable for the area than 1 large property. The part the Parish Council does not like is the fact the barn will be demolished to build the 2 properties when the previous planning kept the appearance, look and shape of the barn which was in keeping with the area and the current aesthetic. The Parish Council would have liked to have seen parts of the barn used in the build to keep the appearance of a barn that has been converted. Clerk to submit the comments before the 22nd March.

10.2) Planning Decisions. None.

11. Footpaths and Roads

11.1) Footpath update. Checking footpaths. P3 funds. A member of the public has checked the footpaths for the Council. Clerk will complete the P3 footpath forms. The clerk has been trying to contact the contractor to find out when work will be completed on the Steps on The Glede to Challhanger footpath.

11.2) Drainage update. Galmington and Glebe roads. Update from the Highways Officer, I'm afraid that we won't be surveying the gully at Galmington until the weather settles.

Our contractor has begun to work on the list of ditching requests they have. They are starting on main roads before moving on to the minor road network, so I'm unable to give you a likely date that they will get to Glebe House.

11.3) Horseshoe Bridge. Not a priority to Highways. It has been checked by Highways.

11.4) Filleighmoor Gate road. Update from Highways officer, Patching works will be unlikely to recommence until late spring/early summer unless we see a dramatic improvement in weather conditions. This road is also being assessed for treatment by our Dragon Patcher, which is able to treat a wide variety of defects that do not meet our usual intervention criteria. If it is deemed appropriate to use the Dragon Patcher, this treatment will also take place during drier, warmer months in the summer. Cllr Bond feels it is too bad to be dragon patched.

Cllr Bond informed the Council that the Dip did flood on Friday evening 27th February and a car did get stuck in the flood water. The Dip normally only floods once a year in October time when fallen leaves block the drain and grid. This flooding was a mix of leaves and pine needles and the large amount of rain in a short space of time. The Dip was soon cleaned of water by Cllr Bond.

Cllr Bond agreed he would like to look into the Road Warden scheme, Cllr Cottle-Hunkin is going to send him information.

12. Correspondence email to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Local Government Reorganisation in Devon Consultation.

13. Matters for inclusion in the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 7th May 2026 at 7.30pm.

This will include the Annual Parish Meeting.

Meeting Closed 8.26pm

Selina Woollacott, Buckland Filleigh Parish Clerk.
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