7th July 2026

YARNSCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday, 24th June 2026
7.30pm, Village Hall

Present: Cllrs. Brice (Chair), Ellison, Jeffery, Newberry, Pengilley, member of the public and M. Dymond (Clerk)

26.69 Apologies, Declarations of Interests and Dispensations

Apologies had been received and accepted Cllr. Cooke, Cllr. Farr, Cllr. Elliott (Torridge District Council/TDC) and Cllr. Cottle-Hunkin(Devon County Council/DCC). There no declarations of interest and no requests for dispensations had been received.

26.70 Public Participation and Feedback

Road Warden scheme

Resident who had attended last month provided councillors with an update.

Prospective road wardens have to attend an initial online course, DCC will fund £350 per person. However, unclear is what the overall cost of course is. Also, would there be a grant available for necessary equipment, for instance PPE, trailer, hand tamper and coal infill material(ton in weight would be provided). Materials and tools could be stored in container on playing field. Yarnscombe could work together with other parishes and each road warden can work with up to 6 volunteers.

Road wardens have to liaise with Local Highways Neighbourhood Officer and all works undertaken have to be agreed on with DCC. Potential repairs could include non-defect potholes (potholes that have straight edge and are at least 4cm deep are responsibility of DCC). Drainage works and verge repairs could also be carried out. All councillors agreed to nominate resident of 2, West View as road warden and once all queries have been resolved, to sign agreement between Yarnscombe PC and DCC.

Actions taken: Resident will establish boundaries of Yarnscombe parish and start database of defects. To be discussed next month, clerk to email Cllr. Cottle-Hunkin and ask for clarification of issues raised.

26.71 Representatives Reports

1) County/District Councillors

a) COUNTY

Pothole Pandemic and Revival of the Road Warden Scheme:

You may have seen on Spotlight recently, my colleague Cllr Louise Wainwright has been working extremely hard in reviving the road warden scheme to help improve the situation with our roads as much as possible. Call for volunteers to help fix Devon's £1bn pothole problem - BBC News

In parts of South Devon the road warden scheme has been working well, and we would love to see this happening right the way across Devon. If you know any keen and willing volunteers, do ask them to get in touch, and as a parish council I would be grateful if you could call 0345 155 1004 or email: communityselfhelp@devon.gov.uk to get the ball rolling and sign the parish up to the scheme.

I have printed copies available (one for each Parish) and for anyone wanting to take a look it is also available on Cllr Wainwright's website here too: Potholes | My Site 6

More info here on DCC website: Road Warden Scheme - Devon Highways

A Positive Direction for Devon

Things are very much on the up at Devon County Council. We have reported a £10 million underspend in our first year as a new administration. This is not because we have

cut services or held back spending, but because we are managing resources more effectively and efficiently. Significantly, both Children's and Adults' Services have delivered a surplus, something that very few councils are currently able to achieve. This reflects improved financial discipline, stronger decision making, and a collaborative approach between councillors and officers.

Importantly, these savings are now being reinvested into the services that matter most to residents, including highways, libraries and frontline support.

Investing in Our Roads

Improving our roads remains one of the biggest priorities I hear from residents. I have been out and about locally in the highways van, inspecting issues first hand and working closely with officers to push for improvements. We are investing another additional £4 million into highways, including rapid response repair crews and the continuation of a successful repair trial. This allows teams to fix multiple defects in one visit, making repairs more efficient, longer lasting and better value. It is important to note that the past year has largely been delivered under the previous administration's budget. I am hopeful that with continued investment and a good summer of working conditions, we will begin to see more significant and visible improvements to our road network in the months ahead.

Council unveils £4m boost for road repairs - News

Supporting Children, Families and Foster Carers

Improving outcomes for children and young people remains our top priority. The latest Ofsted report has recognised real progress, including stronger leadership, improved stability and more effective support for families. Social workers are building better relationships and more children are receiving the right help at the right time. There is still more to do, but we are moving in the right direction and remain fully committed to improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children. We are also continuing to appeal for more foster carers. I recently attended the Hearts and Homes conference, which was both emotional and inspiring. Our foster carers do an incredible job and make a lasting difference to children's lives. It is important to know that fostering does not have to be a long term commitment. Short break and weekend care are also hugely valuable and much needed.

New approach to recruiting foster carers in Devon showing early impact

Ofsted report highlights progress in Devon children's services

Celebrating Devon's Rural Life

It was fantastic to attend the Devon County Show, which is always a highlight of the year and a wonderful celebration of our rural communities. It was a great opportunity to meet residents, farmers and local organisations.

I was particularly pleased to speak with NFU President Tom Bradshaw. We discussed important issues including food security, the impacts of climate change on farming, and the farm inheritance tax. These conversations are vital to ensuring that the voice of rural Devon is heard at a national level.

Engagement with Torrington Rotary Club

I was pleased to be invited to speak at the Rotary Club of Torrington, reflecting on my first year as a County Councillor.

I highlighted key initiatives including the "Places to Go, Things to Do" youth grant scheme, the need for foster carers through Fostering Devon, and the reinvigorated Road Warden Scheme supporting local volunteers with highways issues.

I also spoke about my role as Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs and the importance of partnership working across agencies and with local communities.

Thank you to the Rotary Club, and in particular Martyn Butler and members, for their warm welcome and continued service to the community.

Support for Great Torrington Bluecoat School

I recently spoke at a National Education Union event to show my support for Great Torrington Bluecoat School, following a meeting earlier in the week with the Headteacher to discuss current challenges.

I have offered to support future discussions between the school and Devon County Council, and I am pleased that Cllr Julian Brazil (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education) and Cllr Denise Bickley (Cabinet Member for SEND) will be visiting the school soon.At the event, I highlighted the funding gap affecting Devon schools. Schools here receive around £2,000 less per pupil than the national average, and up to £5,000 less than those in the highest-funded areas, placing Devon's children at a clear disadvantage.

I continue to call for fairer funding and encourage residents to raise this issue with their MPs. I remain committed to working with all parties to support the school and secure the best outcomes for pupils and families.

Calls for a "rural reset"

Following the resignation of Prime Minister Keir Starmer I was contacted by the North Devon Gazette in relation to farming. I talked to them about the huge loss of trust in the current government, and the need for genuine engagement with rural communities, as well as providing a clear direction to give us the ability and confidence to plan for the long-term. North Devon farmer calls for 'genuine engagement' with rural communities after Starmer resignation

Reporting:

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

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

b) DISTRICT

As I will have touched upon before of my ongoing saga with regards to PCSO and the PCC. My issue has been raised as a complaint by the PCC and has been based officially to the Chief Constable. When or if I will hear any more, well that is the million pound question.

As you may or may not be aware, there is talk about a giant data centre not in your parish, but possibly on your doorstep. I havn't been given any official information yet, other than it will be around 700 acres consisting of possibly several cooling ponds and the likelihood of quite substantial site security and surveillance. Sir Geoffrey is holding a meeting on this in Torrington. Below is the cut and paste of his announcement for you. Again, I would hugely emphasise on his last remark, '***It is important that local people help shape if and how this project proceeds***'

Over the coming weeks, I shall be continuing my regular programme of meetings with local residents and organisations. This Thursday (25th June) at 6pm, in the main hall of Great Torrington Town Hall, I have been asked to be the independent Chairman of a public meeting to discuss the proposals brought forward by Xlinks for what is being described as the Devon Data Campus — a new AI data centre, together with associated battery storage, on land between Great Torrington, Huntshaw and Weare Giffard.

Like you, I will be making up my mind about this project over the coming weeks, but in speaking to X Links I am working immediately to ensure that those living in the surrounding communities have the fullest opportunity to hear directly what is being proposed, to ask direct questions, and to express their views as these plans develop. The two elements of the scheme are being advanced as separate planning applications on the same site.

I am determined that the voice of local people can be heard. I would strongly encourage residents to attend and learn more. Beyond this week's meeting, Xlinks will be holding a

series of Public Information Days across the area from 14 to 17 July, with a consultation open until 11 August, during which you can examine the plans, raise questions and respond directly. Full details are available at devondatacampus.com. It is important that local people help shape if and how this project proceeds.
Additionally, councillors made the following comments:
The firm behind the proposed data centre, XLINKS, has all necessary assets available.
The site would encompass an area of around 700 acres, situated between Huntshaw, Weare Giffard and Great Torrington. It would, once constructed, be surrounded by razor wire and security lighting. Questions remain, where the water supply for such a big operation would come from and how the energy it would use, would impact on resources available to surrounding communities. The lighting and emanating noise of data centre would be highly intrusive and have an adverse effect on wildlife. All agreed that a joined up approach on district and county level is necessary.
Actions taken: Consultation ends on 10th August, to be discussed at next meeting.

2) Village Hall / Social Club
Community Hub. Still awaiting further updates.

3) Youth Club – Open Evening
On July 10th, Sharron Newberry and Martina Dymond will host an open evening at the Village Hall. Poster had been put up in phone box and on website, inviting parents and children to come along and voice their views.
Actions taken: Clerk to report back next month.

4) PCSO/Police Report
Clerk had contacted PCSO Cole who had directed her to Devon and Cornwall Police website. Information on website only covered period up to end of March.
Actions taken: Await outcome of Cllr. Elliott's inquiry.

5) Playing Field
Grass has been cut, awaiting invoice.
Actions taken: None at present.

26.72 Minutes of Meeting of 27th May 2026
Minutes were approved and signed off as a true record

26.73 Matters arising from last Meeting

1) Feedback from Meeting of 18th June at Huntshaw Village Hall regarding Ref. No: 1/0039/2026/FULM , West Park, Yarnscombe, Proposed change of use of land from construction's training centre to show people's site consisting of 7 plots. Due to change of date of meeting at short notice, no councillors from Yarnscombe were able to attend. Councillors await decision, if application is called to full council.
Actions taken: None at present.

26.74 New Matters

1) ICO renewal fee £52-00
Cllr.Brice proposed, Cllr. Pengilley seconded. All agreed. Invoice signed and electronic payment schedule filled in and signed off.
Actions taken: Clerk to pay via BACS

2) Internal Auditor Invoice £190-00
Cllr.Brice proposed, Cllr. Pengilley seconded. All agreed. Invoice signed and electronic

payment schedule filled in and signed off.
Actions taken: Clerk to pay via BACS.

3) Register of Interests Forms – Forms will have to be emailed to TDC.
Actions taken: Clerk to check which councillor still needs to fill out form.

4) Village Fete – Fete will take place on 11th July. Village Hall/Social Club will have to fill in and sign Hire Agreement for playing field.
Actions taken: Clerk will email form to secretary of VH/Social Club.

5) Cllr. Farr resignation and vacancy for new councillor
Clerk has received resignation from Dan Farr from his position as councillor. He will remain snow warden for another year.
Actions taken: Clerk to email TDC to ask for official Notice of Vacancy, which will be posted on website and displayed on notice board.

6) Internal Audit Report
Council has passed its internal audit. Auditor made several recommendations:
- check if metal fence in playing field should be insured
- laptop appears twice within insurance schedule, check best cover for it
- council should consider identifying and financing new project (councillors proposed new equipment for playground or money for Youth Club)
- some subscription can be paid by direct debit, thereby saving money

Actions taken: Council to identify project and clerk to check insurance schedule and potential for direct debit payments.

26.75 PROW Monthly Report
Clerk had emailed Jon Boyd's successor in order to resolve questions surrounding purchase order of £120-00.
Actions taken: None at present.

26.76 Planning
1/0352/2026/FUL Conversion of redundant rural building to 2no. dwellings and associated work (Self-build), Agricultural Building At Grid Reference 255824 124492 Yarnscombe, Devon. This application refers to Stepp Hill, councillors made no comment.
Actions taken: None at present.

26.77 Additional Planning
None.

26.78 Accounts
1) ICO renewal fee £52.00
2) Internal auditor invoice £190.00

Meeting ended at 8:30pm