

Buckerell Parish Council Meeting - 16 September 2026

Town and Parish Report September

Cllr Richard Jefferies, Devon County Councillor

I am pleased to provide the following update on matters relating to Devon County Council.

Children's Services Improvement

I am delighted to report significant progress in Devon County Council's Children's Services. Following a recent Ofsted monitoring visit in August 2026, inspectors recognised substantial improvements in frontline practice, early help services, safeguarding arrangements and partnership working across Devon. Children and families are receiving more timely and coordinated support, with particular praise given to our early help services and emergency response arrangements.

The report acknowledged that concerns for children are reviewed promptly, that decision-making is proportionate and child-focused, and that support is being provided earlier to prevent issues from escalating. Ofsted also highlighted the strong collaboration between services and partner organisations.

While our improvement journey continues, this represents another positive step forward and reflects the dedication of staff, partners and elected members who have worked tirelessly to improve outcomes for Devon's most vulnerable children.

Highways

I continue to raise concerns and issues affecting Honiton's road network with Devon Highways.

The condition of local roads remains a recurring concern for many residents. I would encourage Town Councillors and residents to continue reporting defects via Devon County Council's reporting systems so that repairs can be prioritised appropriately.

I have raised the issues in Honiton Highstreet again. As previously reported, repairs have to be scheduled after works have been completed by National Highways on the A30 (so diversions are available) and after utilities works (to save digging up newly repaired areas soon after they are laid).

Ideally the main repairs would have been carried out by now, however with the constraints above and with the condition as it is I have asked for temporary repairs to be carried out. These are starting imminently. Please note these may not be the most aesthetically pleasing repairs, but will improve the situation. Once utilities works are carried out the major patching will be scheduled in. All plans are subject to the constraints dictated by the weather.

Upcoming works.

- Northcote lane estate: 09/09 – 10/09. Patching.
- Heathpark estate: 15/09 – 16/09. Patching. There will also be night works here next week to prep the site for the patching.
- Road from Fenny Bridges to Old Feniton: 26/10-29/10. Patching.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government's programme of local government reorganisation has experienced a significant change since my previous report. On 7 September 2026, Ministers announced a pause and review following updated legal advice.

Cabinet met on the 9th September to consider commencing judicial review proceedings with regard to the Government's decision of 16 July 2026 to progress a four-unitary authority model for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.

In light of the 'pause' announced on the 7th it was decided to defer a decision to issue judicial review proceedings while seeking clarification from Government about the meaning of its newly announced "pause" and review of the reorganisation proposals. The council stated that it would continue to protect its legal position and preserve the option of issuing proceedings if necessary.

Councillor Julian Brazil, Leader DCC, said the council had not abandoned the judicial review but wanted clarification from ministers before deciding whether to proceed.

I welcome this pause by government as I have raised many concerns about the form and pace of reorganisation in Devon.

I am however also disappointed by the money spent and disruption caused by this government dictated project. A large % of officer capacity had been deployed to do the restructuring work, I will be asking if the government will be paying our bill.

Climate and Environment

Devon continues to experience the effects of increasingly unpredictable weather patterns. Recent county-wide discussions have focused on resilience, flooding, drought conditions and what has been described as "climate whiplash", where periods of very wet weather are followed by prolonged dry conditions. Local authorities and partner organisations are continuing to work together on preparedness and resilience planning.

I would like to thank those who organised the two Honiton showings of the National Emergency Briefing and enjoyed being a panel member on the first showing at the Beehive.

A big thank you to the organisers of Honiton Pride for Honiton Pride 2 back in August. It was a great celebration of inclusivity, and community spirit.

Congratulations to all those who took part in the Honiton Hippo on Sunday and thanks to organisers and volunteers. I enjoyed handing out water with the Brownies and Guides at the halfway point.

I remain committed to representing the interests of our residents at Devon County Council and would like to thank Buckerell Parish Council for its continued partnership working on behalf of our community.

Should members have any questions regarding county council matters, I would be pleased to answer them.

Cllr Richard Jefferies

Devon County Councillor

Feniton and Honiton Division

Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Children's Social Services