

CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Monday 17th February 2020

1. Attendance and Apologies

Those present:

Mr K Dunthorne (Chair)
Mrs M Butler (Vice Chair)
Mr R Bale
Mr D Bracher
Mr S Robinson
Mrs L Vijeh (County Councillor)
Mrs S Osborne (District Councillor),
Mrs S Morley (Clerk)

Apologies

In Attendance

PCSO John Martin
9 Members of the public

2. Police Report

PCSO Martin said there was not much to report for Chaffcombe. There has been some criminal damage at Deardons but otherwise it has been very quiet. A resident reported that two no-parking signs had been stolen from outside their property. PCSO Martin will investigate. A councillor reported that a black pick-up truck was taken from a local farm at Lydmarsh, which was used in a theft at Crewkerne, and has subsequently been recovered.

PCSO Martin left the meeting after his report.

3. Public Voice

- (a) A resident said that the planning permission for the Old Rectory was conditional on the hedge being replaced with native planting. This has not been done.
- (b) Some residents have been leaving their waste and recycling bins and containers out, some for the whole week. Waste which is left out for any time should be left in a secure container to prevent it being spread about by wildlife. Mrs Butler will speak to the residents.

ACTION - Mrs Butler

4. Report by County Councillor

Mrs Vijeh's report was circulated by email.

There has been no update on the future of broadband and she will look into this.

SSDC and SCC will be setting their budgets this week and looking at the future of local government in Somerset. The intention had been that both the leader of SSDC and SCC would attend parish council meetings but that is difficult given the number of parishes there are, possibly more than 20. It is now the intention to have a public meeting although the leader of SSDC has said she will be visiting all parishes. Mrs Vijeh will follow this up and see what the current plans are.

There is nothing to report on flooding but blocked drains are an issue in several parishes.

5. Report by District Councillor

The final government settlement for districts has been delayed which means it is very difficult to budget without knowing the income. Council tax will be set at the maximum increase allowed.

The state of the roads is an issue following two big storms in a week. There is nothing more to report which directly affects parishes.

6. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on Monday 18th November 2019

The minutes of the last parish council meeting were duly agreed and signed.

7. Matters arising from these minutes

- (a) Overgrown holly tree in Orchard Plot hedge - It appears that the holly tree is in the Orchard Plot. When he met with the adjoining landowner, Mr Dunthorne agreed that the landowner could cut the tree and this has now been done. The lane is now clear.
- (b) Hedge at the top of Knapps Lane - This has now been cut back by the contractor working in the woods.
- (c) VE Day Celebrations - There has been no more news from the resident who was interested in doing something. The Village Hall is already booked for that weekend for a music concert so could not be used for anything else.

8. Planning Applications - there were no planning applications

9. Highway Matters

- (a) Welcome to Chaffcombe signs - These have now been put up. A comment was made that they are very bright. There will be wording added on the road by the signs to say 'Slow'. Not everyone in the village has welcomed the signs and some have commented that they are not in keeping with the village and won't stop people speeding. The Chairman reminded people that speeding has been an issue which has been discussed at almost every parish council meeting and a number of possible strategies considered, most of which have not proved to be possible. All councillors agreed to try signs and it is hoped that they may reduce the problem of speeding as it seemed to be the only option available.
- (b) Blocked drains - Most of the drains were jetted last year but the bottom two in Knapps Lane were missed. Highways are unwilling to come while the tree cutting work is ongoing in Knapps Lane. However once the new budget has been received these drains will be high on the list. Rodding was tried but they are too badly blocked. The drains further down the hill are clear so the water is running there.
- The drain outside Kerris Vean is permanently blocked. The landowner says it is Highway's side which is blocked and Highways say it is the landowner's side. There appear to be some tree roots causing a problem. Once the weather dries out Highways will carry out some investigation.
- Mr Dunthorne said he has received a private donation which can be put towards sorting out some of the problems with the drains.
- (c) Potholes - These are appearing again. Some have already been marked for attention. Highways have asked that if there are any problems with potholes, can the information be passed to Mr Dunthorne who will then email a list to Highways. Highways will inspect the road when the logging has finished.

10. Footpaths

- (a) Footpath CH4/16 Avishayes Estate - There is a long ongoing issue with this footpath where it crosses land forming part of the Avishayes Estate. It has been reported to SCC Rights of Way as being blocked for more than 2 years, since January 2018.
- The issue is with the section of the path at North Lodge off Whitemore Hill where standard OS Mapping does not make the line of the footpath clear. However looking at the Rights of Way mapping at the very largest scale this shows that the line of the path is around the west side of North Lodge rather than alongside the boundary hedge to Whitemore Hill. Either way it still goes through land in close proximity to North Lodge.
- An inspection carried out on Sunday 16th February revealed that the gate in the line of the path set in a post and wire fence (Farm Gate C) is now missing so that this section of the path cannot be used.
- It is also clear that an alternative route through an adjoining gate (Farm Gate D) would not be permitted as it would lead to the estate road to Avishayes House behind a set of powered security gates.
- The start of footpath CH4/16 in Whitemore Hill should be a gate with steps leading directly to North Lodge which is currently blocked by a caravan and other storage. If there was ever an alternative gate or stile it is no longer apparent as the boundary is secured with fencing, hedging as well as being a steeply banked area.
- In order to properly reinstated the footpath on its original line, it would require either the gate off Whitemore Hill to be unblocked or an alternative access point arranged, which could necessitate building steps up the banking. In addition the missing gate C would need to be reinstated.
- From notices placed by the Estate elsewhere it would appear that the new owners are seeking to be more private and are discouraging the public from entering their land. Therefore it seems unlikely that they would reopen the blocked section of path so that re-routing this path may be a way forward, possibly starting it at an existing gate further up Whitemore Hill (Gate G) and crossing the field to Gate A to continue as before.
- However it is quite clear at present that the Estate has illegally blocked a public footpath. If an alternative route is to be agreed the Estate would need to apply for a formal Footpath Diversion Order so that official records can be updated.
- There is another issue with the Estate and that is of access to the Monmouth Clock Tower where the gate leading into the land around the tower has recently installed a NO PUBLIC ACCESS sign. Chaffcombe villagers of long standing have confirmed that in the time of the previous estate owners there was free access to this tower.

The local Rights of Way Ranger has made enquiries of the Estate and it seems that there was a Permissive Path access at some time but this was stopped due to vandalism and dog owners crossing the land letting their dogs run free.

It may be that the Permissive Path could be reinstated as part of any negotiations on footpath diversions.

A meeting with the Rights of Way Ranger, the Parish Council and a representative from the estate has been suggested.

Councillors agreed that a meeting is a very good idea and a convenient date for all will be agreed by email.

ACTION - Mr Gray, Parish Councillors

The unsafe stile at the southern end of CH4/16 which was reported a few weeks ago and found to be still unsafe during last Tuesdays Village Walk has been repaired to a good standard and is now secure.

- (b) Footpath CH 4/1 Village Hall to Chaffcombe Gate - The School Lane footpath adjacent to the Village Hall does belong to No 1 School Lane and is shown on their deeds. The Village Hall trustees are looking into whether the Village Hall has right of way over the path.
- (c) Stiles - A number of stiles have been repaired including the stile at Chaffcombe Gate on the steep embankment past Ashton. Here a vertical post has been added to the stile and a handrail to the steps to make this much safer to use.
- (d) Gate on footpath CH 4/1 - The landowner put in a gate many years ago and SCC put in the new gate. However the spring catch is not fitted properly and some people felt it should be re-positioned. This was discussed but councillors felt that it is not a big problem because the gate does shut. It was agreed to leave it as it is.

11. The Pound

Wildlife Information Board - Mr Bracher has contacted three companies for a quote for an information board similar to the one at the reservoir which is weather and vandal proof.. He has received quotes of between £350 to £800. Mrs Butler will also ask for some quotes. **ACTION - Mr Bracher / Mrs Butler**

12. Defibrillator

Since the figures quoted at the last meeting a better deal has been negotiated and a price of £1,000 + VAT agreed on a 3.5 year lease.

The defibrillator was ordered from South West Ambulance Trust by the Chard Defibrillator group and delivered on 3rd January 2020. It has now been fitted on the wall as you enter the Village Hall. The wiring was an additional £111 + VAT. It was agreed that the parish council and village hall would pay 50/50.

The parish council are the owners as per the invoices; the defibrillator will be administered by the village hall. The terms of the agreement are in emails sent to Mr Mike Miles. The agreement will expire in July 2023. There is nothing further to pay until then. The machine is covered in the case of theft.

A date for training has been set for 25th February and will be circulated to local residents. Training will be done by the Chard Defibrillator Group.

13. Correspondence

Most correspondence is now forwarded directly by email to all Councillors

- (a) Clerks & Councils direct.

14. Broadband

Mr Mike Otterbeck attended the meeting to set out a plan for getting broadband in the village.

Now that Gigaclear have had the contract removed, the government is going out to tender again. But it will be at least 18 months before they choose another contractor to continue with the work. There are currently three categories: those that are to be done as soon as possible; those to be in the next phase; and the third list of those to be done last. Chaffcombe falls into the third list and it could be up to five years before broadband is done in the village.

The speeds people currently get are around 5 - 10 mg at Deardons and 1 - 2 mg or less in the village. Copper wire is degrading very quickly with 22 faults reported since January. The lack of a decent broadband service is also a problem for house owners; house buyers demand good internet access.

The government has promised that everyone can demand a reasonable service. If you can only receive 10 mg or less someone will come out to make an assessment. There is a scheme for individuals where the government will issue vouchers of £1,500 per household or £3,500 per business. Vouchers will be issued once broadband has been connected.

Mr Otterbeck said that if there are 35 interested households and/or businesses in Chaffcombe there is a good chance that the village could get broadband without residents paying anything. Fibre will be laid to the box and then copper wire to individual homes. No one will talk about money until there is a list of those who are interested. After receiving the list the company will have 15 days to come out and assess the village. There are likely to be 2 boxes; one outside Crossways and one outside the village hall. The total cost will be approximately £60,000.

It is not possible to give exact figures of how much it may cost until a list of names are submitted to the various providers. There is no commitment to a particular provider. Repairs will be done by the installers and then by Open Reach.

Councillors agreed that they will support this initiative. Mr Otterbeck will visit residents and draw up a list of those interested. The Clerk will send a list of the properties in Chaffcombe with the names redacted.

ACTION - Mr Otterbeck, The Clerk

15. Accounts payments and receipts

- (a) Clerk's Salary - Currently the Clerk receives £672.00 per annum. This was raised from £600.00 per annum last year. Mr Dunthorne proposed that the annual salary be raised to £750.00 per annum. All Councillors were in agreement with this proposal.
- (b) Balances @ 31/12/2019 - £7,318 after taking account payments from the village hall towards the defibrillator and the VAT refund claim of £337.00 currently outstanding.
- (c) The following cheques were raised:
 - 000352 - £ 137.60 - S Morley, salary and Clerk's expenses
 - 000353 - £ 33.60 - HMRC - Paye
 - 000354 - £ 133.97 - M Butler, reimbursement of electrical work for defibrillator

16. Matters and items to report

- (a) Trees - Mr Bracher co-ordinated the SSDC tree giveaway scheme. Parishes were offered a pack of free trees and 60 saplings were collected. They must be planted in or on the boundary of the parish. Two or three people who have lost trees to the storms or would like extra trees are prepared to plant them. If the scheme works well this year it will be repeated. A lot have been taken. The trees have to be photographed and then again in 6 months time.
- (b) Chard Reservoir - the walkway around the reservoir is open to dogs on a lead.
- (c) Speeding vehicle - It was reported that recently when Summer Lane was awash with water a Grey VW Golf sped down the road passing a pedestrian without slowing down. Residents were reminded that if they can get the registration number of such vehicles, it can be reported to the Police as a case of dangerous driving.
- (d) Tree Felling in Knapps Lane - the ash trees which have been felled were infected with ash dieback.
- (e) Environment Champion - Mr Bracher is Chaffcombe's Environment Champion.

17. Date of next Parish Council Meeting

Date of the Annual Chaffcombe Parish Meeting - Monday 20th April 2020 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall.

Date of Annual Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council - Monday 18th May 2020 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall

The meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.

Ken Dunthorne / Chair