

CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

COVID - 19 EMERGENCY

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting for Chaffcombe held by remote connection using Zoom on

Monday 26th April 2021 at 7.30 p.m.

Residents were invited to attend the remote meeting using Zoom. In order to attend the meeting a resident will need to download Zoom and to contact the Clerk prior to the time of the meeting for joining instructions.

It was noted that the Annual Parish Meeting 2020 was cancelled due to the Covid Pandemic.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Those present:

Mr K Dunthorne (Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council)
Mrs M Butler (Vice Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council)
Mrs L Vjeh (County Councillor)
Mrs S Osborne (District Councillor),
Mrs S Morley (Clerk)
2 Members of the public

Apologies - Mr R Bale, Mr D Bracher, Mr S Robinson, PCSO John Martin

2. Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council covering activities for the years 2019/21

2019-20

I suppose I can only start this, what should be a presentation, of the year in Chaffcombe by saying how strange a year it has been, in not just Chaffcombe, but Britain and the World. A year ago we couldn't have even dreamed of a pandemic of the proportions of COVID-19, even now it is claiming many lives and changing many others, possibly for good or possibly for bad, but definitely in ways unimaginable a year ago. Let us hope that we return to, what we knew as normality, as soon as possible.

The year for the Parish Council started with the previous Chair, Josie Miles resigning after 8 years to finally retire and enjoy a well earned rest. This was followed immediately by an election, this was triggered as there were 6 candidates and there being only 5 positions on the Council. After the election the successful candidates were, in alphabetic order, Rob Bale, David Bracher, Mary Butler, myself, Ken Dunthorne, and Stan Robinson. Tony Yates was unsuccessful, but I am sure that in the future he will be on the Council, it has not stopped him doing many good things for the village, and I thank him for his continuing efforts. At the first meeting I was, surprising to me, chosen as the new Chair, Mary as Vice Chair.

In the same election our County Councillor Linda Vjeh and our District Councillor Sue Osborne were also re-elected, congratulations to them and I expect them to continue to give the village their full support, as they have in the past. We also retained the good services of Parish Clerk Sue Morley and Footpath and Tree Warden Tony Gray.

The council year started during Josie's term as chair of the February meeting with 4 items which would keep us talking for quite a few later meetings, and will probably crop up again:

1. The ongoing complaint of speeding in the village and how we could attempt to curb it.
2. Dog bins and the ignoring of them by certain villagers.
3. Broadband and lack of progress for Chaffcombe.
4. Footpaths.

My first meeting after the election was to be nominated as Chair, as I have said previously this was something of a surprise. During this meeting it was confirmed that the last of 4 HGV signs had been erected to try to prevent large vehicles going toward Sprays Hill.

Several drainage issues were highlighted and, in the main, were eventually resolved, that is until the woods on Knapps Lane received a fairly major 'pruning'. Also the planning permission for Deardens to extend their site into the old waste site was granted.

The bridge by the phone box was finally rebuilt after possibly the only accident in the village for some time. David took over from Josie as our representative on the reservoir steering committee.

On 22nd July we held an extraordinary meeting to discuss 2 items that needed resolving, one was the erection of an extension to the front porch of the village hall to provide storage of the table tennis tables used by David and Val Bracher's highly successful club. This was agreed and with the help of grants from the Council and the Village via the Parish Council was completed thanks to Rowland, John and many volunteers and is, most people think, a useful addition to the Hall. The other subject was the purchase of 3 'Welcome to Chaffcombe' signs, to, hopefully, slow the traffic through the Village, these have now been erected, but due to the reduction in traffic due to the work going on in Knapps Lane and subsequently Covid-19 it is not yet fully apparent that it has slowed down traffic, but in Knapps Lane I think it is working.

The meeting on 19th August discussed the subject of Bats possibly using the Village Hall and that a survey would be required before work started on the extension, SSDC wild life officer was consulted and confirmed that at the time of year the work was starting a survey would not be needed. Two new signs were erected to indicate the location of the dog waste bin in the Hall car park. The telephone box was repainted, mainly by David and Val and a small opening ceremony was held on a wet day later in the year, we were able to get Rick the postie to be in the photos.

The main subject of the November meeting was whether to purchase a defibrillator for the Village to be mounted in the hall foyer, this was agreed and the procurement was arranged by Mike Miles from the Chard Defibrillator Group (CDG) who subsequently gave a presentation on its use, which was well attended and possibly means that if ever needed there should be someone nearby who can competently use it, it is now in position and ready for use.

February's 2020 meeting mainly involved 2 subjects, footpaths and Broadband. The footpath issues related to paths in and around Avishays House. A meeting was later arranged with the Rights of way Officer to try to resolve the problem, and from this meeting the new owner was seen and the issue has been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

2020-21

The main issue this year was the ongoing problem of the totally inadequate provision of Broadband in the village. Mike Otterbeck has been researching the subject of vouchers issued by the Government to help facilitate the procurement of a faster service for the village; he has subsequently investigated further and approached every household in the Parish to find out the amount of interest there is. He has provisionally found that if that interest is followed up he can obtain vouchers to the value of £95,000, Openreach the main supplier of infrastructure for BT have quoted a figure of £135,000, discussions are continuing. Mike approached ITV re the problems that the level of Broadband service received is causing the village during the Covid-19 pandemic with particular reference to children trying to carry out school work from home with service levels nearer 2Mb than 5Mb. They sent a film crew around on 18th April to interview him, I'm not sure of the outcome. Watch this space.

It has been an interesting first two years as Chair, Josie certainly knew what she was doing when she retired, but I, and I am sure everyone in the Parish is looking forward to the end of 'lockdown'. Although currently the South West seems to be faring rather better than most parts of the Country, we must not forget the massive toll of life because of the virus and pray that something good will come out of this awful period.

Ken Dunthorne (Chair of Chaffcombe Parish Council)

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2019

The Annual Parish Meeting for 2020 was not held due to the ongoing Covid Pandemic. The minutes of the last Annual Meeting which was held in 2019 were presented and were approved as a true record and will be signed by the Chairman.

3. Public Voice.

Councillor Vijeh thanked the Chairman and all Councillors for their efforts last year particularly in the matter of Broadband provision for the village which has been very difficult, and the Clerk for all her work on behalf of the village.

Councillor Osborne said she echoed Councillor Vijeh's comments, particularly with regard to the Broadband issue which has been very time-consuming and frustrating for all concerned. The voucher

scheme is still open but with different arrangements. Councillor Osborne also thanked Councillor Vijeh for her excellent monthly reports.

The 4 local district councils are arranging a public poll on the question of the change to a unitary authority. The public will be able to vote on whether they support the County Council model of one unitary authority - One Somerset - or the district councils' option of two unitary authorities - Stronger Somerset. The poll will run from May to June.

The Chief Executive of SSDC has left and an interim CEO is being appointed.

The Covid recovery programme is ongoing. Somerset is one of the leading authorities in the delivery of vaccines in the country.

The Police and Crime Commissioner election will be held next Thursday. Whoever is elected will have control of the budget and will appoint the new Chief Constable.

Mr Dunthorne thanked Councillors Vijeh and Osborne for their continued support during the year.

Mr Botterill, a new resident to Chaffcombe, commented that Chaffcombe is a great village and what a good job everyone had done regarding the work to bring Broadband to the village and thanked everyone involved.

The meeting finished at 8.05 p.m.

Ken Dunthorne

Chairman Chaffcombe Parish Council.