

# CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of a Parish Meeting for Chaffcombe held on

Monday 19th July 2021

Chaffcombe Village Hall at 7.30 p.m.

Residents were invited a Parish Meeting to raise issues concerning the Parish, to comment on the business of the Parish during the last year or to ask questions of the Parish Council. The meeting was in addition to the Annual Parish Meeting which was held by Zoom on Monday 26th April but which was not well attended.

### 1. Attendance and Apologies

Those present:

Mr K Dunthorne (Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council)  
Mrs M Butler (Vice Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council)  
Mr R Bale (Chaffcombe Parish Councillor)  
Mr D Bracher (Chaffcombe Parish Councillor)  
Mr S Robinson (Chaffcombe Parish Councillor)  
Mrs L Vijeh (County Councillor)  
Mrs S Osborne (District Councillor),  
Mrs S Morley (Clerk)  
4 Members of the public

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

The Chairman presented his annual report again to this meeting, noting that he had also presented his report at the formal Annual Meeting in April and it is covered in the minutes of that meeting.

#### 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 Vijeh 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)

Mrs Butler noted that Peter Mutter also did a great deal of the work with John and Rowland in building the extension to the Village Hall.

### **3. Public Voice.**

- (a) Orchard Plot - 2 gates need to be repaired. **ACTION - Agenda item August**
- (b) Flooding - The Chairman paid tribute to the good neighbours who helped out during the flooding and whose actions prevented much worse flooding and he thanked everyone who came forward. He said that he had worked as the Flood Warden for the Village but could never have envisaged a flood like the one which occurred the previous week. The Chairman went on to say that he does not have the time to devote to continuing as Flood Warden.

During the flooding Tony Yates was one of the helpers. Mr Yates works in the water industry and because of his knowledge of water he has volunteered to be the next Flood Warden for the Village. Mr Dunthorne would like to propose that Mr Yates is the new Flood Warden. It was agreed to formally ratify his appointment at the next Parish Council meeting.

**ACTION - Agenda Item August**

It was suggested that Mr Yates is given a list of all those willing to help in an emergency.

It was noted that the Forestry Commission require dams on cleared land to slow water runoff but this had not been done on Knapps Lane after the trees had been cleared and a lot of water came from there. It was commented that the planned attenuation pond on the Golf Course should help with this.

- (c) Sandbags - It was found that the stocks of sandbags are inadequate. They were also badly stored and hard to reach. It was agreed to look at getting some more bags and better storage facilities. **ACTION - Agenda Item August**
- (d) Emergency Contingency Plans - These should also be looked at to make sure there is salt in good condition as well as sandbags etc. **ACTION - Agenda Item August**
- (e) Broadband - The contract has been signed and work is supposed to start within 4 months and be completed within a year.
- (f) Drain at Kerris Vean - Mr Vincent is liaising with Highways about this drain. Mr Dunthorne will contact Highways to see what they have decided. A jetter was used which proved that the drain is blocked and a cutter was suggested to clear tree roots but this has not been done. **ACTION - Mr Dunthorne**
- (g) Giant Hogweed - This is a very dangerous plant which can cause severe burning. It must be reported. Some has been seen in the Yeovil area but the resident found it very difficult to report or to know who to report it to. Mrs Vijeh said to alert her to any problems in reporting issues.
- (h) Reservoir - There is a new Warden at the Reservoir and Mr Bracher has been in contact with her. She is happy to come along to one of the coffee mornings at Chaffcombe.

#### **4. Other Business**

##### **4.1 Footpaths**

- (a) CH4/16 Avishayes - Mrs Butler recently attended a meeting with the Parish Path Volunteer Liaison Officer and the owners of Avishayes House to discuss the diversion of the current footpath across Avishayes Estate. The Parish Council had already agreed to the diversion of part of the footpath which will be diverted to skirt the clock tower and councillors were therefore happy to agree to the proposed new route which had already been considered at a Parish Council meeting. There were concerns however about the second diversion which is to build a new footpath parallel to the main drive. This is a new development and had not been considered previously. It was agreed not to support this second diversion at this time and to consider it further at a Parish Council meeting. **ACTION - Agenda Item August**
- (b) CH5/40 Mill House Lane - A short section of the footpath across the field adjacent to Mill House (behind Deardens Yard) leading to the Sustrans Cycle Track has not been used for some time. The Volunteer Footpath Officer will be cutting back the vegetation to clear the metal gate leading to the cycle track so that it is accessible as well as fitting missing footpath signs. The owners of Mill House have indicated that they intend to apply for this footpath to be closed. They were advised by the Footpath Officer that they are likely to receive objections from the Ramblers and Open Spaces Society to the loss of a long established footpath. As this is not a Parish Council meeting Councillors did not discuss the matter. **ACTION - Agenda Item August**
- (c) A question was asked if members of the public can comment on the closure of diversion of footpaths. The answer is that any changes to a footpath must be advertised at the site of the footpath itself and in other public ways. There is then a consultation period during which members of the public can object or comment.

##### **4.2 Jubilee in June -**

**ACTION - Agenda Item August**

- 5. Next Meeting** - The next Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council will be on Monday 16th August 2021 at 7.30 p.m. at the Village Hall.

The meeting finished at 8.30 p.m.

Ken Dunthorne - Chairman Chaffcombe Parish Council.