

CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Monday 28th February 2022 at 7.30 p.m.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Those present:	Apologies	In Attendance
Mrs M Butler (Chair)	Mr D Bracher	Mr Tony Yates, Flood Warden
Mr R Bale	Mrs S Osborne (District Councillor)	Mr Anthony Gray, Chaffcombe PPLO
Mr S Robinson	PCSO John Martin	Ms Hannah Stanton, Countryside Ranger
Mrs S Morley (Clerk)		Jack, Assistant Ranger
		Mr Daniel Rand, Avishayes Estate
		6 Members of the public

2. Public Voice

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

3. Introducing Hannah Stanton, the Countryside Ranger at the Reservoir

Hannah Stanton and Jack, the Assistant Ranger, are based at Chard Reservoir Nature Reserve. Hannah has been in post for 8 months, and Jack for 3 months. They are there to maintain the reserve, to engage with people and to host events. During the past year new paths have been created to replace those damaged by the massive floods last year. Habitats have been managed including the reed beds and coppicing willow and new benches have been installed. Wildlife surveys are done each year, currently reptiles and birds and it is hoped to do more. There is a volunteer group who help with the work. The reservoir attracts a lot of families and it is hoped to expand the play area and to host more events. It was suggested that events and information is posted to the Chaffcombe Facebook Chat page and this will be done.

Car parking was discussed and they have tried to make parking more accessible. Information leaflets have been thrown in the water so they hope to create some more permanent information. There are more people than ever visiting the reservoir and more cars particularly in the Fisherman's car park. A question was asked if there is a plan to increase car parking because it is dangerous if cars are parked on the road. There are alternative car parks and these are shown on line but there is not much scope to increase the size of car parks.

Hannah and Jack were thanked for coming to speak to the Parish Council and members of the public. They left the meeting at 8.00 p.m.

4. Report by District Councillor - Cllr Osborne sent her apologies.

5. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held on Mon 19/11/21

Correction to Minute 10, final paragraph - This should read Lydmarsch, not Lydford.

Subject to the correction the minutes were approved and were signed by Mrs Butler.

6. Matters Arising

Vacancy on the Parish Council - it was decided to fill the vacancy in May when elections will be held.

7. Planning Applications

App No	21/03415/HOU
Proposal	Erection of replacement garage & workshop outbuilding
Location	East Lodge, Whitemoor Hill, Chaffcombe TA20 4AE

This was considered by email and Councillors had no objections to the proposal.

8. Highway Matters

Drive to the Church - This belongs to Blanda House and will be discussed at a Church meeting.

9. Footpaths

(a) Anthony Gray, the Chaffcombe PPLO presented his annual report as follows:

"I have made my annual report to Somerset Rights of Way on the last year's activities on the parish footpath network when I estimated that 107 hours were spent walking and cutting back by the monthly walking group and me, including time spent by Roland and Graham in constructing the splendid new steps up the steep bank on the Sprays Hill footpath. On reflection I think this may be an under estimate.

I can also report that we managed 10 monthly walks out a possible twelve, not bad bearing in mind CoVid restrictions during the year which stopped some walks being carried out.

The Statutory Notices relating to the proposed diversions to footpath CH4/16 on the Avishayes Estate previously approved by the Parish Council have now been posted and Rights of Way will determine if these should be approved in the light of any comments received.

We shall continue the monthly walks, already we have come across one field south of the A30 where the footpath across the field has not been reinstated after planting and seeding. This has been reported to Rights of Way as the landowner is a persistent offender.

Questions have also been raised about some footpaths in the parish depicted on old mapping having fallen out of use but I am advised by Rights of Way that old maps on their own are not sufficient evidence of a Right of Way, so other supporting documents would be required to re-open them. I am also aware that Rights of Way have a backlog of about 600 applications for changes to the definitive rights of way mapping to be resolved before the dead line set by the government 2026 so there seems little chance of success, in addition to which changes to land and buildings may make them now impracticable

I can also report that the Rights of Way Ranger for the parish is now Debbie Ebsary as a result of Sarah Cresswell taking over the Exmoor patch."

Mrs Butler thanked Mr Gray for his report and for all the work he does on behalf of the Village.

(b) Avishayes Estate Footpath CH4/16 Proposed Diversions

The Parish Council had no objections to the original proposed diversion around the Clock Tower. In July the landowner proposed a second diversion of the footpath along the main drive. After much discussion at the Parish Council meeting in August the Parish Council voted by a majority vote to approve the proposed diversion along the main drive, with one councillor voting against the proposal. Notices informing the public of the proposed diversions were recently posted and a number of complaints from members of the public about the proposal to divert the footpath away from the main drive have been received. As a result the Parish Council felt it important to re-open the question of the proposed diversions.

Much discussion followed with Daniel Rand putting forward the views of the Avishayes estate owners. The owners have had problems with members of the public letting dogs loose over their land, particularly during the Covid lockdowns. The number of walkers greatly increased during this time and people did not always respect the property they were walking over. It was acknowledged that now that Covid restrictions have eased the number of walkers has dropped off significantly. Members of the public who objected felt that the main drive has always been a public footpath and there seemed no good reason to divert it. It functions very well as a footpath and should not cause the owners a problem. It was acknowledged that dogs can be a problem but unfortunately this is caused by irresponsible dog owners and is a problem for all landowners and will continue to be so wherever a footpath is diverted to. There was concern that the proposed diversion could become boggy and not be properly maintained. There were no complaints about the original proposed diversion around the Clock Tower.

Mr Rand offered to speak to any members of the public who would like to bring their concerns to him.

At this point the discussion was summarised by Mr Robinson who said that the Parish Council is in a difficult position. He can personally see both sides of the argument and is personally not aware of any objections. He felt that it is not sensible to divert a long established footpath because of a large temporary increase in the number of walkers due to a pandemic lockdown which should be a once in a 100 year event. On the other hand he cannot see any an objection to a footpath being moved a few metres to one side. Mr Robinson concluded that if he had been approached with objections he would have a duty to object to the diversion. Mrs Butler and Mr Bale agreed with Mr Robinson's summary.

It was noted that the consultation period had been extended to allow the Parish Council time to discuss the matter. Accordingly the Clerk was asked to set out the points of discussion to the Rights of Way team and to conclude that Chaffcombe Parish Council is neither able to support nor object to the proposal to divert the first part of the footpath CH4/16 to the side of the main drive. The full text of the report to the Rights of Way team are appended to these minutes.

10. Flooding

There has not been another flooding event. Consultation is ongoing with landowners and other external bodies including SSDC, SCC and the Wildlife Advisory Group who are all keen to develop workable solutions, including advice on funding and the technical challenges. It is hoped to see something in the next 2 to 3 months from the plans. The issues on the road and drains have gone back to County Highways. There is clearly a blockage and some of the drains may be collapsing.

Sandbags by the bridge are re-directing the water into the stream and Highways have agreed to make this permanent after April when they get their new funding.

11. Sandbags and Container

Chaffcombe Gate do not need sandbags. The main container has been moved to the front of the Village Hall.

12. The Pound

The Pound needs a container and bags. Mrs Butler will order a new container and sandbags.

ACTION - Mrs Butler

13. Orchard Plot

Councillors considered a replacement fruit tree for the mulberry which has died. It was agreed to plant a plum tree. Mrs Butler will order one.

ACTION - Mrs Butler

14. Broadband

Work has started and the trees at Chaffcombe Gate have been done. The cables will be done next. In the next week the work should be done in the Village and everything should be finished by the end of next week. Once the work is done residents will be able to find their provider who will do the final connection to the box. The final connection is not done by Open Reach.

A question was asked about when the Village Hall will get its phone line so it can connect. It is not necessary to have a phone line to connect to Broadband.

15. Jubilee in June 2022

The Parish Jubilee celebrations will be on Friday 3rd June in Chris's field. Geraldine Wills will provide the electricity. Loos have been acquired. Half of the field will be used and the grass will be cut in time. There is a big marquee. Peter Botterill will provide a PA system and organise the catering equipment and do the barbecue. The Parish has a Bookers card to buy things at wholesale prices.

The Clerk to order 25 Jubilee mugs for the children of the Parish. The mugs to say "The Parish of Chaffcombe" and not "Chaffcombe Parish Council" so as to cover Lydmarsch. **ACTION - The Clerk**

16. Accounts

(a) The balance at the bank as at 28/02/2022 - £9,307.04.

(b) The following cheques were raised:

000383	-	£ 150.00	-	Radio Ninesprings donation
000384	-	£ 216.29	-	Salary and expenses
000385	-	£ 45.36	-	I Butler, reimbursement website
000386	-	£ 264.00	-	I Butler, reimbursement trimming bank in Orchard Plot
000387	-	£ 37.60	-	HMRC paye

17. Precept

It was agreed not to increase the precept and to request £3,000, the same as last year.

18. Matters and Items to Report

(a) Golf Club

Preparatory works for the course remodelling are starting in July with other work starting in the next few weeks. The hedges have been cut.

(b) Thorns Farm

99% of the trees have been cleared, the pond has been drained and will be re-instated as a wildlife pond with new gates to keep out intruders.

(c) Nomination forms

Nominations forms for Parish elections in May were completed. The Clerk will deliver them to SSDC.

19. Next Meeting

Date of next ordinary meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council - Monday 16th May 2022 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall

Date of Annual Parish Meeting - Monday 25th April 2022 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall.

The meeting finished at 9.10 p.m.

Mary Butler - Acting Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council