

CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Monday 20th February 2023 at 7.30 p.m.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Those present:	Apologies	In Attendance
Mrs M Butler (Chair)	Mrs V Keitch (County Councillor)	3 Members of the public
Mrs G Wills (Vice Chair)	Mr Tony Yates, Flood Warden	
Mr R Bale		
Mr D Bracher		
Mr S Robinson		
Mrs S Osborne (District & County Councillor)		
Mrs S Morley (Clerk)		

2. Public Voice

There were no issues raised not on the agenda.

3. Report by District / Unitary Councillor

Councillor Osborne reported that the new Somerset Council have been setting budgets and are over budget on most statutory services. On the 1st April the four district councils will merge with the new council to become one unitary authority. Borrowings will increase due to existing council debt.

Planning will be organised with four committees based on the old four district areas; this area will be in Area South. There will be an over arching committee to link cross border areas.

There will be 18 Local Community Networks (LCNs) with Chaffcombe in area 11 together with Ilminster and Crewkerne but not with Chard. The budget for the LCNs has been cut so there is little money. Core membership will consist of councillors for the area plus a representative from each Parish and Town council within the area, plus Police, Fire, Health and the Voluntary Sector representatives. The first meeting will be in June or July. There will be one or two officers. The Chair and Vice Chair must be an elected councillor. It will be up to each LCN to set its own timetable for meetings which will be 6 - 8 times a year.

Phosphates are still affecting all planning applications, not just the larger ones.

4. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held on Mon 5/12/22.

The minutes were approved and were signed by the Chair.

5. Planning Applications

App No: 23/00112/COL
Proposal: Certificate of Lawfulness for an existing use: use of building as a dwelling etc
Location: Gatehouse Cottage, Chaffcombe, TA20 4BG

Councillors had no objections to the proposal.

6. Highway matters.

- (a) Proposed Relief Road for Chard - This has been passed to the new unitary Somerset Council to take forward.
- (b) Drain at Kerris Vean - The work here has been done successfully. The level of the drain was raised so that water is now flowing across the road. The pipe under the road needs to be dug out occasionally to ensure the flow of water.
- (c) Drain at Knapps Lane - This has been done but there is concern that the pipe is not large enough for the volume of water and also concern about whether the gravel will block the pipe. There is still another drain which needs to be done.
- (d) Bridge - It was hoped that the temporary hump at the bridge would be done and made into a permanent structure. The current arrangement is not causing an obstruction so will be left where it is until a more permanent solution has been completed.
- (e) Pot holes - There are a number of potholes which need to be reported. **ACTION - Mr Bale**

7. Footpaths

Tony Gray, Chaffcombe PPLO, sent his report which was read by the Chairman in Mr Gray's absence.

"During a recent amble around the village, I chanced upon the Avishays Estate Manager cutting up a fallen tree. He advised that the Estate was still awaiting legal paperwork from Somerset County Rights of Way for the diversion of footpath CH4/16 so nothing can be started. It seems that the councils wheels grind extremely slowly.

Last Tuesday we did a village walk which included the Avishays Estate which I repeated with my wife today Sunday 19th February. To my surprise new notices have since been posted around the estate relating to the planned diversion of Footpath CH4/16 including plans, inviting comments by the 17th February (4 days' notice at best). I have now e-mailed Rights of Way asking why these notices have been posted bearing in mind that the diversion has been approved and we were expecting that the estate would be receiving legal paperwork allowing the diversion to be put in train. I will let you know further when I receive a response

I will be sending in an annual report to Rights of Way at the end of the month confirming that all footpaths within the parish network have been walked at least once in the year (with the exception on the short section of CH4/23 east of Tolleys Lane on the A30 which I previously advised would no longer be cleared) and that in excess of 91 hours have been spent in the year carrying out local cutting back including time spent on the monthly walks and villagers at other times, dealing with footpath issues, admin and generally keeping the footpaths open for all to use.

Despite the effects of CoVid and bad weather my records show that we managed 10 monthly walks around the village out of a possible 12 in the past year, so every effort is being made by all to keep the network open.

We should also thank Lydmars Farm for setting up a temporary footpath diversion across the fields whilst yard concreting works are in progress, this has saved us all from a sticky end."

It was confirmed after this report by Cllr Osborne that the notices should have read 17th March not February. Councillors were still surprised that notices had been put up because the changes to the footpath had already been agreed; there had been just one objector who had withdrawn the objection so it did not seem necessary to put up more notices.

Mrs Butler thanked Mr Gray for his report.

8. Flood Warden Report

Properties at risk - It is hoped to get the local landowner to agree to change the profile of the river to make it more resilient to flooding. To do this the hedge is likely to need to be removed and replanted further back to change the profile of the river bed and banks. Permission to remove the hedge will be needed and an assessment on the impact removal will have on wildlife. This would be a significant amount of work which is still in the planning stage.

9. Broadband

Mrs Wills presented her latest report on the installation of Fibre Broadband as follows:

I took over from Michael Otterbeck as lead customer for this scheme in the autumn of 2020. At Christmas that year we had agreement in principle to the scheme from the DCMS, with the support of our MP, and the official contract was signed by Ken Dunthorne as Chair of the Parish Council on behalf of the village on March 2021.

The physical rollout of the infrastructure started in February 2022, and went on through the spring and summer, with the system finally becoming available for connection in July 2022. Connections then were then made by individual householders from that point up to the current time.

By the time the system went live, the original voucher contract had expired (on its year anniversary), but Openreach arranged with DCMS for a re-issue of the vouchers.

Various complications were experienced by residents, largely due to

- a) Difficulty getting a provider to arrive and connect them as arranged (there were many missed appointments by Openreach engineers and/or provider engineers)
- b) Difficulties receiving the new vouchers (many failed to arrive and had to be re-sent by DCMS)
- c) Difficulties in ordering a connection where BT had a different address for a property to that on the Openreach system.

The final (57th) resident is scheduled to be connected on 6th March 2023, and their voucher finalised.

There are still two missing re-issue vouchers which cannot currently be re-ordered by Openreach. However, the total value of the vouchers exceeds the cost of the roll-out by enough to cover the shortfall so I do not anticipate any problems arising from this.

This has been a long saga. At times it was virtually my full-time occupation; the admin has been immense - over 1900 emails and many telephone calls.

I would like to thank Michael Otterbeck for the vision and energy to get the scheme going in the first place, and the residents of Chaffcombe for their unfailing good temper and patience throughout, even when driven demented by the epic incompetence of Openreach and the various internet providers.

I hope everyone is now enjoying good internet speeds and will think the result has been worth the long effort."

Mrs Butler thanked Mrs Wills for her report and for all her work on the Broadband rollout.

10. Defibrillator

The current defibrillator contract is due to finish at the end of June. A new contract will cost the same as 3 years ago - £1,000 + VAT for 3.5 years. Councillors agreed they would like to continue to support the defibrillator on the same basis as previously: a 50% / 50% split with the Village Hall. Mrs Butler will contact the person in Chard to arrange a new contract and order the new defibrillator.

ACTION - Mrs Butler

11. The Coronation of HM King Charles in May

After discussion it was agreed to circulate a flyer to ask for people's thoughts and ideas. One suggestion was to have the Village Hall available for use as a bring your own event, perhaps with some local entertainment if people wish. The Hall will be suitably decorated and the Union Flag will fly on the Church Tower.

It was agreed not to buy mugs or other memorabilia for the event.

12. Accounts payments and receipts

- (a) The balance at the bank as at 31/01/2023 was £9,290 of which £2,135 is restricted for specific purposes.
- (b) An amount of £335.31 VAT repayment was received from HMRC.
- (c) The following cheques were raised:
 - 000409 - £ 150.58 - Salary and admin expenses
 - 000410 - £ 37.60 - HMRC, paye
 - 000411 - £ 180.00 - Chaffcombe Village Hall, rental 12 meetings from July 2019

13. Local Community Networks

These were discussed under agenda item 3.

14. Matters and items to report

There were no matters or items to report.

15. Date of next meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council

The Annual Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council - Monday 15th May 2023 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall

16. Date of Chaffcombe Parish Meeting

The Annual Chaffcombe Parish Meeting will be held on Monday 17th April 2023 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall.

The meeting finished at 8.45 p.m.

Mary Butler - Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council