

# CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Monday 15th May 2023 at 7.30 p.m.

### 1. Attendance and Apologies

Those present:	Apologies	In Attendance
Mrs M Butler (Chair)	Mr D Bracher	1 Member of the public
Mrs G Wills (Vice Chair)	Mr Tony Yates (Flood Warden)	
Mr R Bale	Mr Tony Gray (PPLO)	
Mr S Robinson	Mrs S Osborne (Somerset Councillor)	
Mrs S Morley (Clerk)	Mrs V Keitch (Somerset Councillor)	
	PCSO Wesley Ashbrook	

### 2. Election of the Chair of the Parish Council

Mrs Wills proposed Mrs Butler as Chair, seconded by Mr Robinson. All councillors were in favour and Mrs Butler was duly elected as Chair of the Parish Council.

### 3. Declaration of acceptance of office by the Chair

Mrs Butler signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

### 4. Election of the Vice Chair of the Parish Council

Mrs Butler nominated Mrs Wills as Vice Chair, seconded by Mr Robinson. All councillors were in favour and Mrs Wills was duly elected as Vice Chair of the Parish Council.

### 5. Report by Somerset Councillor

Cllrs Osborne and Keitch sent apologies.

### 6. Report by Reservoir Warden

Hannah Stanton apologised for not attending the meeting and sent a report on the Reservoir as follows:

We are now in the midst of Spring and waves of bluebells, wild garlic, celandine and buttercups are sweeping through the reserve. It has been rather a wet autumn/winter and water levels were perhaps a lot higher than they usually would be.

With scrub management of the reedbeds earlier this year, and perhaps a greater influx of water, we are starting to see a big growth in new reeds coming through, which hopefully will expand and enrich the current reed beds that exist on the reserve, providing more habitat for birds and insects alike.

We recently had a sighting of an osprey at the reserve and I believe a Chaffcombe resident managed to get a shot of the bird. We have had visits from swallows, house martins, sand martins and sandpipers of late skimming across the water, and we have begun to hear the calls of the reed warblers nesting in the reeds near the bird hide.

Sadly we have had to resort back to locking the hide in the evenings and at times when no-one is on site due to big bouts of vandalism by groups of youths in the area. Much of this was correlated to the February half term and consequent school strikes – graffiti occurred every day, the bin was ripped apart and there was a fair bit of anti-social behaviour happening within the hide on these occasions. It was a real shame, because as from July last year the decision was taken to leave the hide open 24/7, and until February this year, it had not been abused in any significant way so was far more accessible for the wider public to use at the times in which many more people were visiting site (i.e. weekends).

This is still a matter that we would like to resolve to allow the hide to be more accessible again.

The vandalism also carried over to the playzone, the eco loo and other areas of site, yet since putting up signs of 'CCTV in operation', this seems to have deterred the vandalism to a much smaller scale for the time being.

Going back to more positive things, we now have a regular group of volunteers carrying out butterfly surveys on site which is not only beneficial to the site as it allows us to collect biological data for our wildlife database for future reference, but it also has given the individuals a new opportunity to get involved in their green space, learn a new skill and create a social environment too. Whilst the weather has not necessarily been the best for the surveys, we have had some good recordings of Peacocks, Orange Tips, Brimstone and a Speckled Wood.

Our regular volunteer group have been hard at work too, carrying out surveys and repairs to our bird boxes and dormouse boxes (with the aide of a licensed surveyor), adding to our wildlife database. The team have also bettered the current 'base', building a work unit for storage and other tasks, whilst installing lights as well to make it a safer environment to work in. Willow that was harvested from reed bed management has been used to replace a lot of the old paleen fencing around the site which had become redundant; much of this now encompasses the playzone area (130m of willow fencing was woven), the conservation area and the entrances to the reserve via Touches Lane and Paintmoor Lane. Future projects include bettering the drainage around the site, providing more pond habitats and continued improvements in the play zone area.

Between now and last autumn, we have planted over 500 trees on site with the scope that these will eventually create natural hedgerows along our current fence lines – these were planted by myself, the volunteer team and our work placement students.

Since 2021, the number of events we have hosted on site has increased, and generally seem to go from strength to strength. We have the aim to provide at least 1 event per school holiday, and the odd weekend event where suitable. Our attendance (both adults and children) at the events have been as follows:

- Autumnfest – 88 (double the amount of attendees than the previous year)
- Beauty of Birds – 75
- Chard Countryside Crafts – 102
- CITO (Cache In Trash Out) – 45 (we were also interviewed for BBC Radio Somerset)

From here, we have bat walks aimed at both older and younger audiences coming up, a wildflower walk, and two drop in events during the school holidays for all to attend. Please feel free to have a look on our website for more details of these events:

<https://www.visitsouthsomerset.com/listings/countryside-nature-and-wildlife/chard-reservoir-local-nature-reserve.htm>

And Facebook – Chard Reservoir LNR / Instagram - @chardreservoir

We had a restocking of the reservoir in December last year of tench, roach and perch and the week before last we had 8,000 common European elvers stocked into the reservoir with the scope that the site could be involved in the bigger eel migration project with the Environment Agency. Last week, the EA came to carry out surveys on the reservoir to further understand if they feel the involvement of the reserve in this project will be successful or not.

Generally, we have noticed a bigger presence of visitors on site, and our social media followers have increased a fair bit over the last year, so it feels as though Chard Reservoir is gradually becoming more well-known. For now, thankfully the litter does not seem to have increased, and visitors are being responsible with their rubbish for the most part.

## **7. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held on Mon 20/02/23**

The minutes were approved and were signed by the Chair.

## **8. Review Insurance cover and inventory of land and assets.**

Insurance cover is with BHIB Insurance and it was agreed to continue with BHIB. There have been no changes to the assets held by the Parish Council as listed in the Notes to the Accounts.

## **9. Review Financial Regulations and Risk Assessment.**

No changes were proposed.

## **10. Review Membership of external organisations.**

Currently the Council is a member of SALC and also pays an annual fee to the information Commissioner (ICO) by direct debit. No changes were proposed.

## **11. Dates and times of ordinary Council meetings for year ahead.**

It was agreed to continue with meetings every 3 months on the third Monday of the month, Dates for the year ahead are:

- 21st August 2023
- 20th November 2023
- 19th February 2024
- 20th May 2024
- and the Parish Meeting on Monday 15th April 2024

## **12. Planning Applications**

There were no new 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

This application has been approved.

### **13. Footpaths**

CH4/16 - Avishays Estate - The expiry period for the second public consultation was 15th March but Rights of Way have not been in touch. The owner will follow this up.

There were no other footpath issues.

### **14. Highway matters.**

(a) Knapps Lane - Knapps Lane will be closed on 6/6/23 for Open Reach work.

(b) Kerris Veane ditch - The works have been completed and appear to have been successful. However, a secondary issue has now been caused in so far as the partially excavated drainage ditch has caused ponding of water and given depth differences between the excavated and non-excavated sections of the ditch, water is unable to drain away. There are two possible solutions, either (1) reprofiling of the excavated section to make it shallower or (2) reprofiling of the remaining ditch to make it deeper. Highways could be approached to see whether they would undertake such works but given it is not a public or highway safety issue it may not be given high priority. Alternatively, a landowner with tractor may be willing to do the work.

(c) Bridge - Nothing has been done to the temporary flood prevention barrier by the bridge. It is understood that Highways have this listed as work to be completed.

### **15. Flood Warden Report**

There have been no reports of property flooding and no-one from the parish has made contact with the flood warden regarding flooding, with the exception of the owners of Kerris Veane regarding the ditch (see minute 14(b)). Discussions are ongoing between the flood warden, land and property owners and FWAG to identify options for improved management of surface and fluvial runoff throughout the village. These discussions are at an early stage and subject to the involvement and agreement of various stakeholders. A range of technical options have been muted such as attenuation, stream reprofiling and leaky dams, but no firm plans have been developed as yet. The means by which any works would be managed and funded is also under consideration. With the agreement of affected parties, progress on these discussions will be provided on an ongoing basis.

### **16. Defibrillator**

The invoice has been received. The Parish Council and the Village Hall will pay half of the cost each.

### **17. Coronation Celebrations**

Circulars had been sent to all residents asking for ideas but there were few replies. It was decided to plant a commemoration tree and to hold a BBQ in the Village Hall. The day was warm with no rain or wind so the event was held in the Village Hall car park with lots of tea, coffee and cake. It was agreed that the event was a great success. Councillors thanked Mary Butler who organised the day.

### **18. Approval of Certificate of Exemption from a limited assurance review**

The income and expenditure did not exceed £25,000 so the Council can declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review. Councillors were in agreement and the Certificate of Exemption was signed by the Chair.

### **19. Annual Governance Review**

This was approved by all Councillors and was signed by the Chair.

### **20. Presentation and approval of accounts to year end 31/03/2023 and approval of Annual Accounting Statements**

Accounts to 31/3/2023 were distributed by email and approved by all Councillors and signed by the Chair.

### **21. Internal Audit**

The Internal Audit will be done in the next few weeks.

### **22. Accounts payments and receipts**

(a) The balance at the bank as at 31/04/2023 - £11,776.75

(b) The following cheques were raised:

000412 - £ 189.52 - Salary and admin expenses  
000413 - £ 37.40 - HMRC, paye  
000414 - £ 329.03 - BHIB Insurance  
000415 - £ 127.49 - I Butler reimburse Coronation Tree  
000416 - £ 51.40 - I Butler reimburse Website expenses  
000417 - £1,200.00 - Chard Defibrillator Group

**23. Matters and Items to Report**

Local Community Network (LCN)

The first meeting of the area LCN will be on 15th June at Donyatt Village Hall. Mrs Wills has agreed to represent Chaffcombe Parish Council.

**24. Date of next ordinary meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council**

The next ordinary meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council - Monday 21st August 2023 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall

The meeting finished at 8.25 p.m.

Mary Butler - Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council