

CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Monday 19th February 2024 at 7.30 p.m.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Those present:	Apologies	In Attendance
Mrs M Butler (Chair)	Mr S Robinson	2 Members of the public
Mrs G Wills (Vice Chair)	Mr Tony Gray (PPLO)	
Mr R Bale	Mrs V Keitch (Somerset	
Mr D Bracher	Councillor)	
Mrs S Osborne (Somerset	PCSO Wesley Ashbrook	
Councillor)		
Mrs S Morley (Clerk)		

2. Public Voice - there were no issues raised by the public.

3. Report by Somerset Councillor

Cllr Osborne reported that Somerset Council has proposed some £35 million of savings. Some of the larger parishes will be taking over some of the services including CCTV and in Yeovil the Recreation Ground, the Octagon and the Westlands Centre. There are no further details about smaller parishes. The Ranger scheme will remain but the service will no longer be subsidised and parishes will pay the full cost. There is a Highways LCN Group meeting next week where more information will be available. The budget will be voted on this week.

The Government have not agreed to a rise of 10% in the council tax because Somerset have not issued a s114 declaration, therefore the deficit will be larger than expected. The commercial portfolio will be sold although this can take time and because of the way the purchases were financed it may not generate as much as hoped. It is expected that the Council will reduce a quarter of the workforce, approximately 1,000 jobs. Staff are being offered redundancy and the Government are being asked to help with redundancy payments.

Next year the finances are not looking good.

4. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held on Mon 20/11/23

There was an amendment to minute 14(b) Reservoir. The final sentence of this minute should read: "Mr Bracher has written to several environmentalists on their behalf with a view to having publications in the press in due course."

The minutes were amended and were signed by the Chair.

5. Planning Applications - There were no planning applications.

6. Highway matters.

The old A30

The short section of the old A30 at Lydmars has been cleared and re-opened.

7. Footpaths

The Chaffcombe Parish PPLO Report for February 2024 is as follows:

"There have been a number of recent events to report on the Parish Footpath Network as follows:

(a) Footpath CH4/16 Diversion Avishays Estate

This is now fully open and seems to be well used. The old footpath has now been closed and the stile removed.

(b) Footpaths CH4/20 and CH4/21 (South of the A30)

The high single stile at the top of the timber staircase has now been replaced by a new single metal self-closing gate. The two double stiles to footpath CH4/21 have also been replaced with new metal kissing gates.

These changes to installations that were not easy to use previously have vastly improved access for the least able and the local Rights of Way Ranger has been thanked for arranging these works.

(c) The two sections of Footpath CH5/40 Mill House

This is being watched to see if they are being kept accessible.

(d) Parish Footpaths Generally

The last monthly footpath walk was carried out before Christmas, but I suffered with a Covid attack over the Christmas / New Year period and it is taking time to recover (apparently not an uncommon after-effect) especially as it seems to be affecting how far I can comfortably walk at present.

Fortunately the growing season is only just beginning to start again and I have not received any reports of problems with access over the parish path network to date. Hopefully I will be able to restart the walks shortly, even if at an amble.

At this time of the year I am asked to report to Somerset Rights of Way the number of hours spent on walking and maintaining the parish path network and currently I have about 79 hours logged."

8. Flooding

The road improvements coped well with the recent heavy rain and took the water sideways into the stream and very little water is now running down the road. The clearing below the water-wheel is working well. The attenuation pond plans are in place and work will begin when it is a bit drier. It was also noted that the work outside Woodlands has been very effective.

The temporary structure on the bridge was discussed and it was thought that it could possibly be removed. Now that the work in Knapps Lane has been done there is much less water reaching the bridge and it may no longer be necessary. Highways had suggested re-profiling the road surface to direct the water into the stream.

It was agreed to contact Highways to find out when they would be able to do the work and to leave the temporary structure there until the permanent work is carried out. **ACTION - The Clerk**

Mr Bracher has had contact with FWAG who are coming out to walk Park Wood to look at the catchment area there.

9. Reservoir

The Reservoir Ranger would like a strong relationship with the Parish Council. Mr Bracher has copies of their minutes. The money for the dam is statutory money but the amount has been reduced.

10. LCN Meetings

Mrs Wills reported on the recent LCN meeting as follows:

"LCN meeting 17th January 2024 report:

The majority of this meeting was again concerned with the dire state of Council finances and the effect this will have on parish and town councils and their funding. It would be fair to say that the representatives of these smaller councils have a generally low opinion of Somerset Councillors for allowing the financial situation to deteriorate to the point of insolvency.

The County budget will be set on 20th February, at which point the full impact of Somerset cutbacks will become clear. At this point parish councils who have not already made decisions on their precepts may wish to review their position for this year.

In the meantime large councils such as Ilminster are looking into employing their own people to deal with, for example, maintenance of verges, hedges, and so on and other smaller councils can buy into their scheme if necessary.

In Chaffcombe this is unlikely to be required as we generally deal with these matters locally anyway. However, services such as emptying dog poo bins will probably become chargeable.

Highways matters such as potholes and flooding should currently be reported in the same way as before. As and when the system changes, guidance will be issued.

The next LCN meeting is scheduled for 21st March by which time the financial situation should be clearer."

11. Somerset Council Asset and Service Devolution

There was nothing further to report.

12. Accounts payments and receipts

(a) The balance at the bank as at 31/01/2024 - £9,087

(b) The following cheques were raised:

000427 - £ 240.00 - B E Powell & Sons, Orchard Plot Bank clearing.
000428 - £ 37.60 - HMRC, paye
000429 - £ 156.65 - Salary and admin expenses

(c) Internet Banking

Councillors asked the Clerk to make enquiries about setting up an internet banking facility for the Parish Council.
ACTION - The Clerk

13. Matters and Items to Report

(a) Orchard Plot Brambles

The brambles have been cut. It was agreed to ask the contractor to cut the brambles every year in November or December before the snowdrops flower.
ACTION - The Clerk

(b) The Grass Bank

Mrs Butler thanked Mr and Mrs Miles for raking up the grass clippings on the bank in Main Street.

(c) Dog mess

Dogs have been fouling both greens. It was agreed to put a notice in the Newsletter.
ACTION - The Clerk / Mrs Butler

14. Date of next ordinary meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council

The Annual meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council - Monday 20th May 2024 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall.

The Annual Chaffcombe Parish Meeting - Monday 15th April 2024 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall.

The meeting finished at 8.40 p.m.

Mary Butler - Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council