

CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Monday 18th November 2024 at 7.30 p.m.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Those present:

Mrs M Butler (Chair)
Mrs G Wills (Vice Chair)
Mr R Bale
Mr D Bracher
Mr S Robinson
Mrs S Osborne (Somerset Councillor)
Mrs S Morley (Clerk)

Apologies

Mr Tony Gray (PPLO)
Mrs V Keitch (Somerset Councillor)

In Attendance

2 Members of the public

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

3. Report by Somerset Councillor

Cllr Osborne spoke about two consultations which are currently ongoing: 1) parishes are asked to confirm what services they have so that a new local plan can be prepared by Somerset Council, to replace the local plans previously prepared by the District Councils and 2) a boundary review consultation.

4. Minutes of the Public Meeting held on Monday 19th August 2024

The minutes were signed by the Chair.

5. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held on Monday 19th August 2024

The minutes were signed by the Chair.

6. Planning Applications

- a) Proposal: Erection of oak framed garage with first floor music room following removal of existing barn

Location: Tolleys Farm Tolleys Lane Chaffcombe Chard Somerset TA20 4AB

Application Type : Householder Application

Application Number: 24/01339/HOU

This application was withdrawn because a bat survey needs to be done.

- b) Proposal: Replacement of existing septic tank

Location: The Old Rectory Main Street Chaffcombe Chard Somerset TA20 4AH

Application Type : Listed Building Consent

Application Number: 24/02080/LBC

This work did not need planning consent so an application was not necessary.

- c) Proposal: Change of use and conversion of an agricultural barn into a dwellinghouse & associated works

Location: Barn At Sunshine Mill House Chaffcombe Road Chard Somerset TA20 1RR

Application Type : Full Application

Application Number: 24/02359/FUL

This application was considered by councillors and there were no objections to the proposal.

7. Highway matters

7.1 Temporary barrier at the bridge

The Clerk was asked to chase Highways again to see when the work will be done.

ACTION – The Clerk

7.2 Potholes

There are large potholes in the middle of the road by the Pound, another one by the corner entrance to Greenway Farm and a third by the entrance to the anglers car park at the Reservoir. The Clerk to email Highways.

ACTION - The Clerk

7.3 Railway Bridge

There is a large split in the bridge that you can see from the cycle path.

ACTION - The Clerk

8. **Footpaths**

Chaffcombe's PPLO reported as follows:

"I have restarted the monthly parish footpath walks after a break in September whilst I was recovering from an operation, so we did a walk in both October and November over some very muddy and wet ground.

I have been notified recently by the new Rights of Way Ranger Daniel Gorden that due to Somerset County cutbacks the number of Rangers covering the county will be reduced from 7 to 5 with each Ranger remaining having to cover the equivalent of the old local District Council boundaries.

I also attended a Somerset Local Access Forum meeting (SLAF) on the 17th October when it was confirmed that Rights of Way budgets are to be cut and accordingly County are asking Parish Councils to take more responsibilities for maintaining parish footpaths. Our current monthly walks already largely fulfil this but there are limits to how much cutting back we can do.

I have also looked at the document issued to Parish Councils (Public Rights of Way Maintenance - Guidance for Parish Councils) and there are some serious concerns.

1 Parish Councils are advised to have £10 million-pound Public Liability insurance cover for volunteers working on footpaths.

2 Any contractor working for the Parish should have £10 million-pound Public Liability insurance cover and should be checked for competence to carry out the work.

3 Risk Assessments need to be carried out and documented for volunteer working. This may not be an issue if we can adopt/adapt Rights of Way or HSE standard documents.

4 Parish Councils are empowered to take legal action for obstructions to public rights of way. However, knowing how few landowners County pursue through the courts because of the high costs involved this may not be an option.

5 Stiles and gates are the responsibility of the landowner to keep in repair or replace and it would appear that Rights of Way have stocks of gates which could be used. Materials for stiles will no longer be supplied as stiles are no longer considered suitable for walkers of all ages.

Even if gates etc are provided, who will install them as it seems that county contractors may no longer be able to do this. It is unlikely that volunteers will be able to do this because of liability for any accidents that may occur afterwards.

Recent walks have identified at least 2 stiles which are difficult or dangerous to use which ideally should be replaced with pedestrian gates, one on Sprays Hill and the other off Knowle Lane so it may be worthwhile approaching the landowners to see if they will make this change. There are others that could be changed for the same reason.

We were successful recently in having one single stile and two double stiles changed to gates on footpaths south of the A30 and gates rather than stiles were used across the diverted footpath on the Avishays Estate.

6 I can still report any footpath issues by means of the Rights of Way Explore Somerset system but what response we might get is difficult to determine in view of the cutbacks."

The Clerk was asked to check insurance provision for volunteers.

ACTION - The Clerk

Paintmoor Lane was recently adopted. It is used by a lot of people. Unfortunately a heavy recycling vehicle drove over the bridge and it collapsed. The Lane can be accessed from the other end but it is inconvenient for people who live there. This has been reported to Rights of Way.

9. **Flooding**

Cllr Bracher reported that the system of clearing the water from the sides of the road by the water wheel is working very well and very little water is now coming down the road. Cllr Bracher clears the drains there regularly. There are grants available between £3,000 to £10,000 for flooding projects. The Ilminster Flood Resilience Group are very interested in the work done in Chaffcombe. Cllr Bracher is the key contact with the group.

10. **LCN Meetings**

The next LCN meeting has been postponed until January although there is not a lot relevant to Chaffcombe at the present time. The Slinky bus network has been discussed. This used to come to

Chaffcombe. The qualifications to use the bus have been eased. The bus won't cross the county line. Cllr Osborne said the Slinky bus is very popular in some areas.

11. Accounts payments and receipts

The following online payments were approved:

Salary & admin expenses	-	£ 160.10
PAYE	-	£ 37.40
Website	-	£ 10.75
Chaffcombe PCC (Churchyard)	-	£ 450.00
War Memorial & Orchard Plot	-	£ 375.00

The Clerk was asked to chase the Village Hall for an invoice for the hire of the Hall for meetings.

ACTION - The Clerk

12. Precept and Budget 2025

Projected expenditure for the current financial year shows a total unrestricted expenditure of approximately £2,534 which comes in under the precept of £3,000. Costs are likely to rise by at least 10% next year, plus Somerset Council have said that emptying dog waste bins will be charged. If these are emptied every two weeks it is likely to cost approximately £500 a year but could be more. It was therefore proposed that the precept be raised by £500. This was agreed by all councillors.

13. Matters and Items to Report

13.1 Orchard Plot Brambles

These are still awaiting the work. The Clerk to contact the contractor.

ACTION – The Clerk

13.2 Seat by Hillview

A motorist has reversed into the seat which is awaiting repair.

13.3 Outdoor mobile classroom at the Reservoir

Tesco have donated £1,500 for an outdoor mobile classroom at the Reservoir.

14. Date of next ordinary meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council

The next Ordinary meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council - Monday 17th February 2025 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall.

The meeting finished at 8.35 p.m.

Mary Butler - Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council