

CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Monday 19th May 2025 at 7.30 p.m.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Those present:

Mrs M Butler (Chair)
Mr D Bracher
Mr S Robinson
Mrs S Osborne (Somerset Councillor)
Mrs S Morley (Clerk)

Apologies

Mrs G Wills (Vice Chair)
Mr R Bale
Mr Tony Gray (PPLO)
Mrs V Keitch (Somerset Councillor)

In Attendance

0 Members of the public

2. Election of the Chair of the Parish Council

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

3. Declaration of acceptance of office by the Chair

Cllr Butler signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

4. Election of the Vice Chair of the Parish Council

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

5. Report by Somerset Councillor

Cllr Osborne reported that there will be a public consultation on parking. Somerset Council will not be charging for overnight parking as previously suggested.

The Boundary Commission report should be available in June. The new boundaries will apply to future elections.

There is a National Scheme of Delegation being proposed for planning.

Somerset Council have implemented the planned redundancies. There will be more information regarding devolution to towns and parishes.

Questions have been raised regarding the closure of Yeovil Maternity Unit. A rally outside the Unit was organised by Adam Dance MP.

A question was asked whether the large number of new housing estates in Chard have put services in place as part of their plans. Cllr Osborne said that yes they work with the developers to ensure services are sufficient. Somerset Council ask for evidence of service provision and ensure developers provide capital to extend services. However developers can challenge the viability of their development and can drop the percentage of the affordable housing element if they deem that they can no longer afford that level of affordable housing.

Cllr Butler thanked Cllr Osborne for her report.

6. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held on Mon 17/02/25

The minutes were approved and were signed by the Chair.

7. Review Insurance cover and inventory of land and assets.

Insurance cover is with Clear Councils Insurance, There have been no changes to the assets held by the Parish Council.

8. Review Financial Regulations and Risk Assessment - No changes were proposed.

9. Review Membership of external organisations.

Currently the Parish Council is a member of SALC and also pays an annual fee to the Information Commissioner (ICO) by direct debit. SALC have increased the annual subscription significantly this year. They sent a letter explaining that this is mainly because they have taken on extra staff to deal with the greater demands on their support services following the transformation of local government in Somerset. It was agreed that membership of SALC is essential and the Parish Council will continue its subscription.

10. 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:

- 18th August 2025
- 15th November 2025
- 16th February 2026
- 18th May 2026
- Parish Meeting on Monday 20th April 2026.

11. Planning Applications

There were no new planning applications.

12. Footpaths

(a) Chaffcombe Parish Council Footpaths PPLO Report May 2025 is as follows:

"Monthly walks on the Chaffcombe Parish Council footpath network have continued and I have made contact with the new Rights of Way Ranger for this area, Clare Haskins.

I have just reported to Somerset Rights of Way that 84 hours have been spent in the last 12 months carrying out walks when light clearance works were carried, as well as time spent on dealing with footpath issues. We will continue these walks especially as foliage is now beginning to grow in abundance.

As a result of representations from the new owners of Little Paintmore it appears likely that 2 existing timber stiles on their land will be replaced with metal mesh kissing gates to ensure that their dogs do not escape onto adjoining fields and I am waiting to hear from the Ranger when these can be supplied.

I have also written to the Ranger about also changing the very tall timber stile on the Sprays Hill track with a self closing metal gate or kissing gate which I know that some parishioners would appreciate changing on this well used track. The owner of Chaffcombe House is supporting this change.

At the present moment there are no known obstructions to the parish network."

13. Reservoir

Report summary from Hannah Stanton, Countryside Ranger at the Reservoir:

- Things with the wall project are progressing and timescales are being met. Kier have been very co-operative in allowing local HGV/agricultural traffic through where possible to avoid as much disruption as possible.

Although there is limited access to the cycle path as there normally is from the Chaffcombe end of site, this does not mean that the no cycling rules have been lifted on the reserve (There are reports that a cyclist refused to dismount when requested by one of the volunteers) - the rules still stand, so they should be treated that way.

Other things to note about the reservoir - everything has grown so quickly over the past month, with glorious sunny days all around! Lots of various birds have been sighted of late - the usual suspects, but we have also heard more from a Cetti's Warbler, had another visit from an Osprey, and have had Little Gulls on site too... not to mention a sparrowhawk as well! Orchids and wildflowers are blooming in the meadows, and there are many insects to be seen - although butterfly numbers for some reason still seem to be low...

Volunteers are happy, wildlife surveyors are happy and our students are happy too! They've all been working really hard to keep things ticking along for all to enjoy.

There is a meeting of the Friends of the Reservoir this Wednesday at the Boden Centre for those already involved as a volunteer and for new people who might like to become volunteers.

14. Highway matters.

(a) Road closure and works at the Reservoir

Kier provided the following update on the work at the Reservoir

- The works to block the two high level culvert is complete – although counterintuitive, this will improve the flow out of the reservoir by reducing turbulence in the stilling basin.
- The draw down culvert brickwork has been repaired and repointed inside the tunnel

- Work to the stilling basin to strengthen and raise the walls is ongoing, the foundations are in, the concrete walls will be poured and then brick work completed over the next month or so.
- The Concrete revetment blocks (armor loc) will be laid to protect the back of the embankment from run off
- The precast concrete wave wall is in production and the first 12 units delivered and placed – this will continue for the next month or so with brickwork cladding having started this week and will follow the placing of the precast.

It was noted that Kier have been very helpful letting through lorries by arrangement and emergency vehicles.

(b) One-way system

Somerset Council have responded to the request for a one-way system in and out of the village by saying that "any temporary changes made to the existing highway routes in terms of a 'One Way Order' would need a TTRO, which takes 3 months to process. Unofficially drivers could agree amongst themselves to use it in one direction, but there would be no legal grounds to enforce it in any way without a TTRO in place. Signage could not be used in an unofficial capacity."

At the moment there does not appear to be a problem with traffic in and out of the village and there have been no blockages.

(c) New walkway at the Reservoir

Kier have said that unfortunately it will not be possible to re-instate the pedestrian walkway due to the width of road required for traffic. The pedestrian walkway was put in 3 years ago but regrettably it will not be replaced due to lack of space.

(d) Temporary barrier at the bridge

This has been done but the contractor was not sure exactly what to do and it is not working so will need to be re-done.

(e) Drains at Chaffcombe Gate

These have been cleared.

(f) Crack in the railway bridge

We have not heard anything further since it was referred to Bridges.

15. Flooding

There was a visit from FWAG following the meeting in Chaffcombe with Highways. Highways looked at the top of Knapps Lane where the water is coming off the field which is higher than the road and running down the road very fast. The suggestion is to block the water off and move the gate in order to hold the water up the hill. It was agreed with the landowner to dig a temporary shallow scrape on the other side of the hedge which will be a recess in the field. It will not take away the growing capacity of the field. If this works to hold the water the scrape will be dug deeper in effect providing a long pond so that the water will not flow onto the road. FWAG will organise the work.

The shape of the road has changed during the past 20 - 30 years and Highways will install more drains on the corner where the water is flowing. Highways had good ideas and were very helpful.

Cllr Bracher reported that the attenuation pond at the top of Knapps Lane is working well.

(b) Flood Warden

Two years the Flood Warden for Chaffcombe had to resign because his work took him away from the village for too long. Mike Otterbeck has offered to take over this role and to work with Cllr Bracher on flooding issues. All Councillors were in favour of appointment Mr Otterbeck as Flood Warden.

Cllr Bracher noted that the job of Flood Warden is one which is best shared because it can be tricky because of the different places at which flooding can occur.

(c) Sandbags

Chaffcombe Gate do not want a grit bin but they would like 12 sandbags. It floods in this area because the bridge is too low to take the run-off from the fields. Cllr Butler to order the sandbags.

ACTION - Cllr Butler

16. LCN Meetings

There was nothing to report from the recent LCN meetings.

17. Dog Bins

The Clerk has not had a response to emails requesting a quote to empty the bins every two weeks rather than every week, and also to add the bin which was missing from the quote.

18. Presentation and approval of accounts to year end 31/03/2025

Accounts to 31/3/2025 were distributed by email and approved by Councillors and signed by the Chair

19. Payments and receipts

- (a) The precept of £3,500 has been received.
- (c) The following online payments were made:

19/05/2025	I Butler	Website hosting	£ 46.51
19/05/2025	I Butler	Waterwheel	£ 14.27
19/05/2025	SALC	Subscription	£ 107.80
19/05/2025	Clear Councils	Insurance	£ 496.41
19/05/2025	S Morley	Clerk	£ 170.10
19/05/2025	HMRC	Paye	£ 37.40

20. Internet Banking

Lloyds will charge £4.25 per month for community accounts from February this year. It was agreed that the Clerk will investigate Nationwide accounts. **ACTION - The Clerk**

21. 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.

22. Annual Governance Review - This was approved and signed by the Chair.

23. Approval of Annual Accounting Statements to year end 31/03/2025

This was approved and signed by the Chair.

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

25. Matters and Items to Report

Cllr Bracher said there is a problem with dog faeces on the road and on the green by the telephone box. It was agreed to look at getting a camera to find out who is not picking up after their dog.

ACTION - Cllr Bracher

26. Date of next ordinary meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council

The next Ordinary meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council will be on Monday 18th August 2025 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall.

The meeting finished at 9.20 p.m.

Mary Butler - Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council-