

CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Monday 17th November 2025 at 7.30 p.m.

1. Attendance and Apologies

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

2. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held on Mon 18/08/25

The minutes were approved and were signed by the Chair.

3. Public Voice

A question was asked about whether it is OK to cut down brambles on the corner of Paintmoor Lane in order to improve visibility at the junction. Councillors did not think the land at the corner was privately owned and said that if the brambles are causing a problem then it would be fine to trim them back.

A second question was asked about the route of a by-pass which has been proposed to run on the Chaffcombe side of the anglers car park. It is part of the Chard Eastern Development Area and falls under Chard Council. Councillors said this had been discussed for a long time and Chaffcombe has had no information on the current situation. Decisions should be on the Chard Town Council website.

4. Report by Somerset Councillor

Cllr Osborne reported that the LCNs have set up a focus group project to look at the wider picture of community engagement and to decide how the LCNs should continue. The two working groups people have found to be of most value are the Active Travel Group and the Highways Group.

The Active Travel are working with the Friends of the Stop Line Way to look at maintenance of the cycle way / footpath because Sustrans are pulling out due to lack of funding. Chard Town Council have agreed to do several cuts a year along the path.

A report on the future of the LCNs will be published soon.

The Boundary Commission will report before Christmas.

The Council must set its budget in December.

Cllr Butler thanked Cllr Osborne for her report.

5. Planning Applications

There were no new planning applications.

6. Footpaths

Chaffcombe Parish Council Footpaths PPLO Report November 2025 is as follows:

" Since my last report further parish footpath walks have been carried out as the weather has allowed with no major issues to report. The Rights of Way Ranger has advised that work is planned to the footpath between Paintmoor Lane and Touches Lane but a recent walk has confirmed that no progress has been made to date.

Ranger Hannah has given an update on the footpath along the length of the dam at Chard LNR Nature Reserve.

I plan to walk the 2 footpaths between the A30 and Fosse Way once cows are back in the barn.

Otherwise mention must be made of the work that has been carried to the footpath from Gaylards Lane to Paintmoor Lane with the final section from Little Paintmoor to Paintmoor Lane mowed and hedges trimmed so that what was once a wet and boggy path in the winter is now in good order.

There appears to be the prospect of further ditching being carried out. It is worth walking this path to view the alpacas now in Little Paintmoor fields

Anthony Gray Chaffcombe Parish PPLO "

Cllr Butler thanked Mr Gray for his report.

7. Reservoir

Hannah Stanton, the Ranger at Chard Reservoir sent the following report:

"Volunteer work:

- carrying out path maintenance works around the stream to further repair flood damage caused in early 2025
- introducing new drainage networks around the meadow in the stream to get off surface water into the newly dug ditch by the ranger team to hopefully protect the path a bit more against flooding and help accessibility around site during these periods
- rotational willow 'bashing' has occurred within our reed beds adjacent to the conservation area to allow for more expansion of the reed beds - a great habitat that provides sought after resources for insects, birds and other wildlife alike
- using the willow to repair 'gaps' in willow fencing around site - this will continue on in the winter
- clearing Poplar growth around the edge of Buttercup meadow to help regain parts of the meadow to encourage wildflower growth
- starting the modelling of a new playzone structure (all to be revealed in good time) as part of Project Playzone, that has or will be helped by the fundraising efforts of Inspire Adult Learning Service
- installing a new rope walk in the play area to carry on the balance trail

Wildlife:

- various winter birds are starting to be seen on the water: Teal, Shoveler, Tufted Ducks - hopefully with more to come as we draw closer to the season
- lots of berries on the trees currently - a lot of fruit may mean it may be a harsh winter to come!
- really good year for butterflies in the sense of variety of species - not necessarily numbers, although there was the highest amount of Common Blues recorded on site this year, as well as previously unrecorded species - the Wall Brown
- wildlife surveyors will be carrying out some egg walks (for butterflies and moths) during the winter season (this is how we have previously kept track of Brown Hairstreak populations)
- not the best year for reptiles - had recordings of slow worms and grass snakes as usual, but we have found higher numbers in previous years (subject to survey times and days)
- great amount of fungi in the woodlands at the moment

Other general updates

- pedestrian gate was installed by Anglers Car Park gate to allow 24/7 access seeing as this was no longer completely viable with the wall now being built
- funding has been spoken about to allocate to reinstalling the basic footpath that stood before the wall was built along the dam embankment - likely to hear back in early 2026
- Friends group is starting to get off the ground - if anyone is interested in helping with fundraising opportunities, then please come along to the Waffle House on Wednesday 19th November at 18:30, or if anyone is interested in being a treasurer for the group, please contact Claire Richter - claireerichter@gmail.com
- had a really successful year of drop in events - we had our last event (Autumnfest) in the October half term and we went out with a bang! Looking forward to seeing what 2026 brings for us!

And just to add on as well we have had help throughout the summer/autumn from Xylem Waterworks Solutions and Doncasters Chard as external volunteer days - they have both been fantastic! It has been a real pleasure to support them on their organisation's allocated volunteering schemes."

8. Highway matters.

(a) Temporary barrier at the bridge

The barrier to divert water into the stream below has been completed by Highways although not as successfully as hoped. A gap has been left between the barrier and the bridge so water can pass through. A sandbag will be put in the gap to close it. There is also a step which sticks out too far creating a potential hazard, particularly to cyclists. The work however is finished and although it is not as effective as hoped, it will divert most of the water.

(b) Crack in the railway bridge

Somerset Council have replied that it is Highways England who are responsible for the bridge. The Clerk will continue with the correspondence.

ACTION - The Clerk

(c) Removal of loose stones between the bridge and the telephone box

This may be considered a parking area as it is at the side of the road.

(d) Meeting at Eagle Tavern to discuss crossroad on A303

Cllr Wills attended a recent meeting at the Eagle Tavern to discuss what local people consider to be a very dangerous crossroads on the road from Chard via Combe St Nicholas to Taunton. Cllr Wills report was as follows:

"In attendance - Adam Dance MP plus his aide and his PA taking minutes. A representative from National Highways, and two from Somerset Highways, myself [Cllr Wills] plus two parish councillors from Combe St Nicholas plus one interested party from Combe.

The National Highways representative said the junction had only got three accidents logged against it, none fatal, so it is not a top priority. He agreed that there were actually very frequent accidents but they don't get reported because only injuries / deaths got as far as being reported to the Police and members of the public would not know how to report accidents to Highways.

There is no money at present but the next funding tranche in the National Highways budget will be considered during the 2026-2031 period. This period may well see the whole stretch from Ilminster to Honiton being considered anyway in the light of the A358 north not being dualled, along with the A303 not being dualled.

Discussing the options:

(a) A full lights intersection would be the "best" solution but this would be expensive and would cause delays and tailbacks on the A303. Even on-demand lights would have this effect.

(b) For a roundabout, there is not enough room, and this would also cause tailbacks.

(c) Reinstating the crossroads but as a turn left / turn right stagger instead of the present turn right and then left, would be safer but there is not sufficient width or distance between the two elements to have proper filter lanes.

(d) Putting a turn left filter into each side road to allow outcoming traffic to filter left into the A303 traffic without everyone getting stuck behind someone waiting to turn right, but this would not be within the current safety guidelines appropriate to the width of the side roads.

(e) Making the junction exits turn left only, this would not be popular with locals who need to be able to go in both directions.

(f) Putting traffic mini islands with lit bollards in the middle of the road with the central filter lanes between them. This would avoid oncoming through traffic impinging on the centre of the road which is where many accidents happen. This might be a good interim measure and will be investigated further.

Adam Dance will keep us informed (timescale is two weeks).

Also it is important that ALL accidents are logged as this is the ONLY metric upon which decisions as to priority for funding is considered. The methodology for this will be circulated as well."

9. Flooding

(a) Blocked Drains - the drains have been cleared by the telephone box. Highways have no more money. Mike Otterbeck has suggested digging out the drains ourselves and clearing the bank by the Church.

(b) Attenuation Pond in Summer Lane - following a meeting with FWAG and the landowner, the plan for the proposed attenuation pond has been turned down by the landowner.

10. Orchard Plot Brambles

The brambles have been cut back. They will be done again at the same time next year.

11. LCN Meeting

Cllr Wills reported as follows:

"I attended a meeting of the LCN group on Tuesday 21st October 2025. It had been called to discuss the way forward for the group. There was a feeling that the reason for the creation of the LCN system had got somewhat lost among the noise of the change to the unitary authority, the lack of a liaison person on Somerset for the past year, and the difficulty of making the group equally relevant to both small parish councils such as ours and large town councils.

It was apparent that there was much disappointment which I voiced myself, that the group did not seem to have a coherent focus and was pretty irrelevant to many. It had proved to be a disappointment.

The way forward is hopefully going to address the issues such as the disparate size and needs of different councils, and the need for a new co-ordinator (one to be appointed in November).

There was discussion of the need for a known contact point / person on Somerset Council where issues could be referred to for assistance and advice. There was talk about the usefulness of the regular clerks' briefings which are well-attended, and which could perhaps be disseminated more widely, and / or used as a template.

The LCN movement is three years old now but seems to have lost its way. It will be interesting to see if it can be revived into relevance again."

12. Dog Bins

The Clerk has received a quote to empty the bin at the Village Hall once every two weeks. The charge for this will be £169.00 per year. However on reflexion Councillors thought it would be better to have the bin emptied once a week because it has been reported that it is full after a week. The charge for that will be £338.00 per year. The Clerk to accept the quote for emptying every week. **ACTION - The Clerk**

13. Speeding in the Village

A reply was received from Traffic Management to the request for a 20 mph speed limit in the village. The reply cited speed data records held for Chaffcombe which show that the mean speeds recorded for the roads within the parish range between 11.1 mph and 24.7mph. The conclusion of the reply was that as existing mean speeds are low, with no history of injury collisions, as well as being in a conservation area, and not meeting Department for Transport criteria, the introduction of a 20mph would not be appropriate.

An inspection will be undertaken of the existing highway signage and road markings within the parish to ensure they are clearly visible by all highway users. Any defects identified, will be added to maintenance programmes.

Residents in the village are encouraged to ring 101 to report any dangerous driving or near misses.

14. Website and new email address

It was with great sadness that Cllr Butler reported to the meeting that Lewis Bates who has been the webmaster for the Chaffcombe website for many years died very suddenly recently. He had been in the process of setting up the required email address for the Clerk which we have, although we cannot access it at the moment.

Councillors will ask around to see if anyone can take over as webmaster for the website.

ACTION - Cllr Butler and Cllr Bracher

15. Banking - new account

The Clerk report that she has completed an application on line for an account with HSBC. Cllrs Butler and Bale are signatories and should receive an email to complete the application.

16. Budget and Precept

The Clerk presented expenditure and income to date. Projected expenditure to year end shows a probable underspend of £500. Emptying the dog bin had been budgeted for but so far has not been charged this year. There has been no unexpected expenditure this year.

After discussion it was agreed to raise the precept by £500 because we can expect to pay for emptying the dog bin next year. At the moment we are only being charged for one bin but we may be charged for all three in the future.

It was agreed to request a precept of £4,000 next year. If there are any unexpected changes between now and January an extraordinary meeting can be called in January to re-consider the precept.

17. Payments and receipts

The following online payments were made:

17/11/25	S Morley	Clerk	£ 160.10
17/11/25	HMRC	Paye	£ 37.40

17/11/25	I Butler	Website	£ 23.68
17/11/25	B E Powell	Orchard Plot bank	£ 192.00
17/11/25	J Puddock	Orchard Plot	£ 375.00
17/11/25	Chaffcombe PCC	Churchyard	£ 450.00

18. Matters and Items to Report

Damage to verge in Knapps Lane near Knapps Cottage

Cllr Wills reported that considerable damage has been done to the verge of Knapps Lane just below Knapps Cottage. This was caused by a Philip Trim Contractors tanker on the morning of Monday 27th October. At about 10.30 a.m. that morning the tanker was stationary with hazard warning lights on and could be passed with difficulty. It was facing up the hill so must have passed through the village to get to that point. One could see when it had squeezed through with wheels right up to the bank on either side. Fortunately it seems to have avoided hitting any hard structures on the way.

Later in the day it had gone but left a real mess behind it, where it had apparently driven, or rolled, back onto the verge and got stuck. There is a metre deep trench left by its offside rear wheel. There were tractor tyre marks where it had obviously needed assistance to get out onto the road again. A lot of mud has been displaced towards the tarmac road surface. Driving past in the heavy rain last Friday the trench was full of water and mud was washing down the road.

Cllr Wills reported that she rang Philip Trim Contractors at the time to report the matter and ask them to repair the damage to the verge as soon as possible. She also sent an email with full details and photos and pointed out that the tanker would have passed a NO HGV sign to get to that point.

In spite of many follow up calls both to their office and to Mr Trim's personal mobile, no-one has replied. They were informed this morning that the matter would be made public with their lack of response this evening at the Parish Council meeting if no response was received.

No response has been received. and the matter will be made public.

15. Date of next ordinary meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council

The next Ordinary meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council will be on Monday 16th February 2026 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall.

The meeting finished at 9.20 p.m.

Mary Butler - Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council-