

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CHEDZOY PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL ON MONDAY 18TH DECEMBER 2023 AT 7.30 PM.

Present: - Cllrs. Graham Bentley, Mary Clothier, Marion Dethier (Chair), Mark Holder, Simon Howes and Rodney Young.

Also present: - Cllr Andy Dingwall (SC).

In attendance: - The Clerk (Chris Fry) and five members of the public.

1. **Apologies:** - Cllr. Russell Harnes. Cllr. Diogo Rodrigues.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting of 20th November and the special planning meeting of 27th November 2023** were taken as read, agreed and signed.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes.**

a. CCCP maintenance within the playing field.

The first maintenance visit from the new contractor has been completed. The cost of £125 will be deducted from the CCCP balance held in the current account.

b. Parish Council vacancy.

The new parish councilor, Mark Holder, signed his Declaration and Acceptance of Office. He was handed the Register of Interest form for completion and asked to return to the Clerk in due course.

c. Localised flooding issues.

A discussion took place about areas of poor drainage in the village, in particular Front Street outside Palfrey House. Andy Dingwall said matters such as collapsed drains would continue to be attended to by Somerset Council (SC), even should a section 114 notice be lodged. Simon Howes said he would try to establish costings should the parish council feel it necessary to fund the cost of investigative work on the drainage in Front Street.

The Clerk was asked to email Somerset Highways and request an inspection of the drainage system in Front Street to establish the extent of any damage there. Andy Dingwall offered to add his support to the approach to Somerset Highways and he asked the Clerk to copy him in to the email. Andy went on to say that he would email some Rivers Authority contacts of his to establish the general level of preparedness in the event of any future flooding emergency.

It is felt the localised flooding events are becoming more frequent and worsening. Simon Howes asked Cllr Dingwall if the recent raising of the banks of the KSD was having an adverse effect on the water table surrounding Chedzoy. He noted that we in Chedzoy had taken no part in discussions about this and how it would affect the local area. He also asked why the pumps had not been turned on to lower the water level. Cllr Dingwall said he would make further enquiries as to the points raised and report back.

4. **County Councilor's report** – Andy Dingwall reported as follows: -

a. Somerset Council finances.

The projected shortfall for the current year has been reduced to £19 million (from £27

million), and for the financial year 2024/2025 the projected deficit has been reduced to £87 million (from £100 million). Additionally, the Central Government grant to local councils of £6 billion for 2024/2025 (up 6.5% on the previous year), announced today, may help improve things a little. The timing of the anticipated lodgment of a section 114 notice is expected to be delayed a little.

b. Somerset Council's waste collection – changes in 2024.

The SC's main contractor, SUEZ, has announced changes to routes in 2024 which should lead to greater efficiency, be more manageable for crews as well as reducing mileage and carbon emissions. The frequency of collections will not be cut and all of the 120,000 affected householders will receive written confirmation before any changes take place.

c. The Willow Man.

National Highways has allocated £35000 (ring fenced funding) for a feasibility into the restoration of the Willow Man, the sculpture alongside the M5 close to J23.

The intention is to replace the existing structure with a larger more resilient statue which in appearance will be a woven structure aimed at extending its longevity.

d. Bridgwater Docks regeneration.

Central Government funding amounting to £23.2 million has been awarded to regenerate the Bridgwater Docks area, in due course.

5. PLANNING – no new applications.

a. Dropped kerb and new entrance in Higher Road.

The Chairman received a report from a parishioner about this matter. The Clerk has established that a license from Somerset highways is required to authorize a dropped kerb, but a full planning application is required before a new entrance is created.

b. Fencing framework in Manor Drive.

The matter of the fencing framework at a Manor Drive property was brought up. The structure is not aesthetically pleasing and itself requires planning permission.

The parish council is in all instances obliged to ensure that the correct procedures are followed.

The Clerk was asked to report these two matters to the Planning North enforcement team.

6. Correspondence.

a. Digitisation of adult social care in Somerset.

Somerset Council and NHS Somerset are teaming up to provide funding to care providers who want to go digital by introducing electronic care records to replace paper-based administration systems.

For more information contact the Press Office on: -

01823 355020 or email: - pressoffice@somerset.gov.uk

b. Somerset Council waste – changes in 2024.

Covered under item 4(b) above.

c. Parish Update – The Willow Man.

Covered under item 4 (c) above.

d. Think outside the box and cut cardboard at Christmas.

Somerset Council have circulated all parishes to urge the public to cut down on the amount of cardboard needing to be recycled at Christmas. Tips include: -

Buying gifts which don't need boxes e.g. vouchers for restaurants, attractions or pampering treatments.

Go offline – shop in the High Street.

For more information, please contact the Press Office on 01823 355020
Or email: - pressoffice@somerset.gov.uk

7. Matters arising from the correspondence: - none.

8. Finance.

Balances after due allowance for any outstanding items: -

Lloyds bank current account: - £11041.57 (PC £9720.73 CCCP £1320.84)

“ “ deposit “ : -£2.48.

Cambridge BS EA account: -£10322.17 (earmarked funds).

Five cheques to issue:

No 459 £611.40 payee CN Fry (Dec/Jan net salary).

No 460 £29.15 “ “ (expenses)

No 461 £1580.00 “ Luke Shepherd (enclosure of Whittling Wood – replacing chqs 812 and 835).

No 462 £260.00 “ HMRC (paye Oct/Nov/Dec).

No 463 £125.00 “ Jo's Garden Maintenance (PF CCCP maintenance).

Precept-setting exercise 2024/2025.

The situation of the Somerset Council's on-going financial crisis and the devolution of services down to local councils from SC makes the 2024/2025 precept setting exercise a somewhat haphazard situation. SC continues to drop strong hints that parishes should “build up their war chests”, although costings of any devolved services are pretty much unknown. Regardless of this we are required to lodge our precept request for 2024/2025 at this time.

Following a discussion, it was decided to suspend any commitment on future expenditure details until the financial way forward becomes clearer. It is very likely that the parish council will need to exercise flexibility on its spending commitments for 2024/2025.

Simon Howes proposed a precept of £10,000 for 2024/2025 and this was seconded by Rodney Young with all in favour.

(This level of precept is £1308 more than the current year and represents an increase in council tax for a band D property of just under £8 per year).

9. Any other business.

a. Make the most of your Christmas planning.

Somerset council is urging the public to “save waste and save money” with catering arrangements this Christmas. Tips include: -

Take stock of what you’ve got in cupboards and in the freezer before you shop.
Avoid the temptation to buy too much “just in case”.
Plan your meals and only buy what you need.
Batch cook meals and store in the freezer.

For more ideas head to: -

Love food hate waste

It is estimated that over 100.000 tons of edible poultry, 96,000 tons of carrots and 710,000 tons of potatoes are thrown away each year in the UK.

b. Parish Briefing – Public Consultation on budget setting.

SC have launched this consultation which runs until 22nd January 2024 and gives a chance for people to have their say in light of the financial emergency which was called in November 2023. It is open to all and participation is encouraged.

The link can be found at: -

<https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/comms/budget-consultation-2024-2025/>.

c. Make your Christmas green – recycle your tree.

Somerset Council is reminding everyone to put recycling their Christmas tree on to their list this year. Free collections are offered by St Margarets Hospice and Dorothy House Hospice Care.

Recycling sites will be closed on Bank Holidays but will be open for their usual hours at other times. Check on-line for details.

www.somerset.gov.uk/waste

d. Planning application 18/23/00008 -Temple Farm.

Application Type: Full Planning Permission.

Case Officer: - Pending Officer Allocation.

Applicant: - Mrs J Denning.

Location: - Temple Farm, Chedzoy Lane, Chedzoy Bridgwater TA7 8QR.

Coordinates: - E: 332886.93 N: 138118.38.

Proposal: - Erection of an agricultural general-purpose building.

Comments welcome by 4th January 2024. (an extension to 11th January 2024 has been applied for).

This application was received after the agenda for this meeting was published. A special planning meeting will be held on Monday 11th January 2024 to discuss the matter.

e. **Gate off the Red Track behind Penwood Farm.**

Rodney Young has been approached by a member of the public who complained that the gate was being left open by walkers, thereby letting the sheep escape. This gate is not as popular as the one further on down the track which walkers reach if they walk straight down Frys Lane.

Rodney wondered if a "Devon" side gate might be installed.

The Clerk was asked to liaise with the Footpath Officer.

f. **Chedzoy's "Tier 4 sustainable" planning classification.**

A former Chairman of the parish council reported that he considered the above classification is more preferable than the previous "unsustainable" classification, which he considered allowed too little future development. He spotted in previous minutes what he felt appeared to be some opposition to this on the part of the parish council.

It was pointed out that a discussion was held as an information exercise on the part of the sub-committee charged with looking at future planning issues and how to respond. No decisions would be made until a fresh SC plan (due to be undertaken in the next few years) is published which might provide some clarification on the matter.

g. **Potholes at Fowler's Plot.**

The sorry state of a major pothole here has previously been reported to Somerset Highways. Some three months ago it was the cause of a potentially serious cycling accident involving the air ambulance.

The Clerk was asked to report it again and Andy Dingwall kindly offered to lend his support and asked to be copied in to the email.

Date of next meeting 19th February 2024.

Special planning meeting Monday 8th January 2024.

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.45 pm.

