

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CHEDZOY PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL ON MONDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024 AT 7.30 PM.**

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

**Also present:** - Cllr Diogo Rodrigues (SC).

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

1. **Apologies:** - Cllrs. Russell Harmes and Mark Holder.
2. **Minutes of the last regular meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and the special planning meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 were taken as read, agreed and signed.**
3. **Matters arising from the minutes.**

**a. Localised flooding issues.**

The Chair opened the meeting up to allow public participation.

A Ward Lane resident complained about the localised flooding in Ward Lane which has meant the permanent accumulation of surface water outside “Sunnyside” which, to a significant extent is caused by three highway surface water drains being blocked solid. Rodney Young has reported the problem to Somerset council only to receive a response that did not appear to appreciate the seriousness of the problem.

Diogo Rodrigues kindly said that he would refer the matter to the SC Lead member for transport, in an endeavour to help overcome the problem. The Clerk was asked to email Lawrence Hackling on the flooding issue both in Ward Lane and at West End Farm.

Simon Howes outlined his fear concerning the wider drainage issues of what he sees as the deterioration (rising) of the local water table possibly being caused by the KSD taking water from the levels, its banks being raised and at the same time the pumps at Dunball not being activated.

The Clerk was asked to draft a letter to the appropriate drainage board and the Environment Agency outlining this theory, which the parish council supports.

**b. Footpath issues – 3<sup>rd</sup> Party insurance cover for volunteer strimmers.**

At the request of the footpaths officer, the Clerk wrote to the parish council's insurers (Zurich) to ask about 3<sup>rd</sup> party insurance cover for a volunteer strimmer who has offered to assist with keeping the eleven miles of footpaths in the parish clear, using his own strimmer (cover for the footpath officer and his assistant is provided by Somerset Council).

Zurich has advised that volunteers using their own equipment would not be covered if the equipment or its use caused injury or damage due to malfunction or improper use.

This month's report details that Ian continues to be very busy. He has secured a petrol hedge trimmer for his use tackling field-edge path overgrowth. He has obtained a new metal gate to replace a broken-down stile first reported in 2016. The Somerset Ramblers Association supplied volunteers to install a new gate on the footpath behind Front Street running to Three Oaks Farm. A rotted finger post at Ruggs Drove was replaced as well as a new one being installed at Fishers Farm.

Wood chippings donated from a local tree surgeon have been laid by Ian and Karen on the footpath between the church clapper gate and the whittling wood gate, alleviating a very muddy and uneven situation. Karen has arranged a working party to mulch the chippings around the trees at the village playing field.

Ian is progressing the matter of the footpath currently submerged in the KSD, and he has established (through a freedom of information request) that the Environment Agency owns all the land adjacent to the KSD on which the footpath in question should be sited.

Additionally, Ian has asked about 3<sup>rd</sup> party insurance cover for volunteer strimmers (see above).

The Clerk was asked to write letters of thanks to Somerset Ramblers, the Triggol family ( for storing and transporting the heavy equipment) and both Karen and Ian, as well as advising Ian about his insurance enquiry.

#### **4. County Councilor's report – Diogo reported as follows: -**

##### **The Somerset Council's financial crisis.**

The current year's (2024/2025) budget deficit now stands at £36.6 million. The SC has applied to central government for a Capitalisation Directive which, together with raiding reserves might balance the budget (full SC meeting due Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February) thereby enabling the Financial Officer to declare a balanced budget for the year thereby delaying any section 114 lodgment. However, the deficit for the following year is projected to be £46 million. The devolution of services (mainly to larger Town and City councils) will help. The costs of up to 1200 redundancies (25% of the total SC workforce) will be significant and it remains highly likely that a section 114 notice will need to be lodged, sooner or later.

Simon Howes said he felt the matter of additional business rates should be revisited – particularly in respect of the Hinkley Point project.

#### **5. Planning.**

- a. Application number: - 18/24/00001.  
Applicant: - Harris Bros and Collard.  
Location: - Church View, Front Street, Chedzoy Bridgwater TA7 8RB.  
Coordinates: - E:334076.60 N: 137543.73.  
Proposal: - Retention of solar panels.

Upon receipt of this application, the Clerk requested an extension of comments until 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024, which was granted. Permitted development rights were taken away from the developer following completion. The developer omitted to apply for permission for the solar panels on the second dwelling which is currently being marketed. The application therefore represents a retrospective request to regularise the solar panels that are already in place.

Regardless of the extension granted to the parish council for comments, the Clerk noticed permission has now been granted.

- b. Reference number: - 18/24/00002 (previously 18/23/00007).  
Application Type: - Listed building consent - alterations.  
Applicants: - Mr and Mrs Bentley.  
Location: - Westfield Farm, Front Street, Chedzoy Bridgwater TA7 8RE.  
Coordinates: - E: 333757.44 N: 137424.98.  
Proposal: - Renewal of existing driveway, extension and renewal of rear patio including

formation of dwarf walls and steps, replacement of side gate, renewal of rainwater goods to rear and side only.

Graham Bentley (applicant) confirmed that the details are, for the most part the same.

The Clerk was asked to submit the following comments to the planning department: -

“The parish council of Chedzoy continues to strongly support this application”.

The Clerk reported receipt of a new application – reference number 18/24/00003 – for which he has requested an extension on comments until 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

The Chair reported she has received an enquiry from a non-resident of the parish about what appears to be the increasing industrial activity at Parchey, even though the two outstanding planning applications for the site are still “under consideration” by the SC Planning North department.

The Clerk was asked to write to the planners to enquire the position regarding the outstanding applications.

The Clerk gave an update on the seven planning applications for 2023 and Simon Howes formally proposed that similar updates on all pending planning applications at all future meetings. This was seconded by Graham Bentley and agreed by all.

#### **Enforcement issues.**

The Clerk has been advised by the planning enforcement department that it is in touch with the appropriate residents regarding: -  
The new fence in Manor Drive and the dropped kerb and new entrance in Higher Road.

### **6. Correspondence.**

#### **a. Parish councillor contact details.**

It has previously been suggested that certain contact details of the councillors might be deleted from certain public platforms – as a means of restricting the risk of hacking. The Clerk said he required a motion giving details of the proposal to be proposed, seconded and voted upon by the full parish council.

It was agreed that this matter could be resolved in tandem with the restructuring of the PC’s website, which is being investigated by Mark Holder who plans to set things out at the March meeting.

#### **b. LCN meeting – highway issues and the Highway Steward scheme.**

The matter of the Highway Steward scheme, successfully piloted in the Exmoor area last year, was discussed at the last LCN meeting. Each Highway Steward involves a trained technician, a vehicle and tools being charged with repairing minor potholes, other issues and grass trimming etc at a cost of £50,000 pa. It is envisaged that either LCN areas or smaller parish groupings might employ a steward and share the cost. The stewards are not permitted to work on main roads.

The LCN has set up a sub-committee to consider the matter more fully. No commitment has been given at this stage.

**c. Polden Environmental Network (PEN).**

This newly formed body seeks to provide positive action for the climate, whilst connecting wild spaces and encouraging everyone to protect nature.

The inaugural seminar of the group is being held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 at Cossington village hall at 7 pm.

Mark Holder and Marion Dethier have kindly agreed to attend.

**d. Somerset's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.**

The consultation on this continues until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024. For more information go to: -

[www.SomersetCouncilWebsite](http://www.SomersetCouncilWebsite)

**e. Frys Lane- letter from resident.**

The Chair reported that she received a letter from a Frys Lane resident concerning a recent escape of (frisky) cattle and the continuing problems of general poor maintenance by the local council.

The Clerk visited the relevant landowner to discuss the letter, and he agreed to meet with the resident appropriately and try to address matters.

**f. Ditch the disposables and discover disposable personal care products.**

A series of drop-in events have recently been held for anyone interested in reusable feminine hygiene products, nappies and adult continence items. Switching to reusables cuts rubbish and can save money. For more information go to: -

[www.somerset.gov.uk/waste](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/waste)

**g. Hedgehog Highway Project.**

With hedgehog numbers in decline and hedgehog awareness on the rise, the public are being encouraged to get involved with hedgehog conservation. For more information go to: -

[HedgehogsRus@mail.com](mailto:HedgehogsRus@mail.com)

**7. Matters arising from the correspondence.**

**8. Finance.**

Balances after due allowance for outstanding items: -

Lloyds bank current account: - £10019.22 (PC £8823.38 CCCP £1195.84).

“ “ deposit “ : - £2.48.

Cambridge BS account: - £10520.31 (£198.14 interest added 21/12/2023).

Two cheques to sign: -

No 864 £305.80 payee CN Fry (February net salary).

No 865 £95.70 “ “ (expenses).

**9. Any other business.**

**a. PC website re-configuration.**

A brief slide presentation to follow this meeting.

**b. 2024 Somerset Exmoor Coast Festival.**

This year's festival will take place 21<sup>st</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

**c. Speed watch formation progress.**

The Clerk confirmed that the up grading of highway signage in Chedzoy Lane is still outstanding.

**d. Village Facebook page.**

Mary Clothier reported that she had recently taken down a couple of "inappropriate" posts.

**Date of next meeting Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024.**

**There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.40 pm.**

