

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CHEDZOY PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL ON MONDAY 17TH JULY 2023 AT 7.30 PM.

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

Also present: - None.

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

1. **Apologies:** - Cllrs. Russell Harmes and Diogo Rodrigues (SC).
2. **Minutes of the last regular meeting of 20th June 2023.** The Clerk explained that he had amended the June 2023 minutes following an inaccuracy which was pointed out to him by Diogo Rodrigues.

The minutes of the June 2023 meeting were taken as read, agreed and signed.

The Clerk was asked to sent the corrected minutes to each councillor.

3. Matters arising from the minutes.

a. Footpath Officer's activity.

Ian Medland reports that recent weather conditions have hampered his path clearing activities. He spent 7 hours last week clearing 480m of footpaths behind the church towards Ward Lane and Frys Lane and behind the houses in Front Street.

He has made a Facebook request for walkers to take secateurs with them to cut brambles and intruding growth from the hedge, from the church towards the playing field as Ian's priority needs to be path clearance at ground level.

Ian has assisted the CCCP in clearing giant nettles swamping the juniper bushes at Frys Lane and he has additionally cleared around the trees and bench on Nut Alley.

The second volunteer has been strimming close to Mount Close Batch.

The Clerk will confirm the PC's agreement not to accept the offer of an additional strimmer from Somerset Council, for the reasons set out in the minutes of the PC's meeting of 22nd May 2023 – item 3 (a).

b. CCCP project update.

The Clerk reported on his telephone conversation with the Northfield landowner of 10th July, in which he passed on the grateful thanks of the parish council for the landowner allowing trees to be planted on his land leading towards the pond, and for the sympathetic way the contractor left a wide margin around the trees when last cultivating the field.

The landowner agreed to widen the footpath passing the temporary mobile home behind Rose Cottage, when next cultivating.

A short general discussion on footpaths took place.

c. Chedzoy Village Design Statement – update.

The inaugural meeting of the Village Design Statement (VDS) sub-committee took place on 3rd July 2023 with Marion Dethier taking the Chair. It was generally felt that completion of a VDS would necessarily take a number of years (going by Othery's experience). It was noted that a design statement in itself would not provide powers to limit the density of housing on any future development in the village.

The sub-committee felt it important not to encourage unreasonable expectations that a VDS may be used to halt or restrict future development in the village, a subject which, in any event, the parish council holds an open-minded approach towards.

Back when Martin Allen chaired the PC, Chedzoy was re-classified (from a development standpoint) from "unsustainable" to a "teir 4" sustainable settlement (along with 10 other parishes). The possibility of a re-clarification back to the "unsustainable" category was discussed.

Much has changed since then, not least the creation of the Unitary Authority. It was noted that any new Local Plan would entail a compulsory public consultation period.

The Chair said she was awaiting further information from Andy Dingwall (SC) and Ms Devries (SC) via email.

It was felt imperative that the open-minded approach of the parish council to future development in the village should always be emphasised, and to take on board the views of all parishioners, as much as possible.

d. Allotment tour 12th July 2023.

Three councillors, the Clerk, together with the majority of allotment holders met and enjoyed an informative tour of the allotment field. The hard work involved in keeping the plots (all of which looked to be maintained well) and the variety of plants including pollinators was pleasing to see.

Following a discussion, it was felt the allotment facility should be more widely brought to the attention of villagers. Although there are no vacant plots or anyone on the waiting list at present, parishioners should be invited to join a waiting list so that when any future plot becomes available, perhaps more compact and manageable sized plots could be created to accommodate more tenants.

Please would residents of the village interested in joining the allotment waiting list (noting there are no plots available at present), please notify the Clerk (Chris Fry) on: -

Mobile 07796794037 on email cnfry@talktalk.net

e. Grass verge cutting (frequency).

Lawrence Hackling of Somerset Council Highways department advises that A and B road verges are cut twice per year, with C roads and unclassified ones cut once per year, and it aims to: -

Preserve visibility sight lines at junctions and bends.

Provide a safe area for pedestrians if there is no footway.

Protect wildlife on roadside verges, where this does not conflict with safety requirements.

For more information:- <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/grass-cutting/>

4. County Councillors' report – none.

5. Planning –

Application No: 18/23/00001.

Applicant: Mr H Meadows.

Location: Parchey View, Ward Lane, Chedzoy Bridgwater TA7 8RW.

Coordinates: E: 334983.02 N: 137715.08.

Proposal: Erection of triple fronted garage with external staircase to hobbies room over, on site of existing (to be demolished).

A full discussion took place. Some unease was felt about the need for this number of garages on a site of this size, together with possible future change of use of the hobbies room. It was noted that the immediate neighbours to the north are fully supportive of the application.

The Clerk was asked to convey the following comments to the Somerset Planning North Team: -

“Although the Parish Council of Chedzoy supports this application, it does question the need for this number of garages on a site of this size. We are also slightly uneasy about any future change of use of the hobbies room”.

6. Correspondence.

a. Somerset Wildlife Trust – Climate Adaption Toolkit.

This booklet has been sent to all Town and Parish Councils.

Mary Clothier kindly agreed to have a look and complete any questionnaire requested.

b. Parish Council Vacancy.

Following the resignation of Karen Medland, the Clerk reported the vacancy to Somerset Council electoral department and received a “Notice of Vacancy”, which has been posted around the village, on the parish council notice board and on the PC website.

The Returning Officer will advise the Clerk if any request for an election is forthcoming by the closing date of 1st August 2023. If no such request is received then it will be open to the PC to fill the vacancy by cooption.

c. Community Funded 20 mph speed limits.

This scheme has been introduced by Somerset Council road safety department and details have been received. Any request to introduce a 20 mph speed limit would need to be funded by local communities at a total estimated cost of £15000.

Following a discussion it was felt that the cost involved could not be justified, and that it might not be the answer to Chedzoy's speeding vehicle problem. We are in the process of setting up a Speed watch team, we already have a 30 mph speed limit as well as the SID.

It was felt that the parish council should continue its efforts on encouragement to achieve a moderation in traffic speeds through the steps already being taken.

d. Clerks' and Councils' Direct magazine.

The July 2023 issue has been received.

7. Matters arising from the correspondence: - none.

8. Finance.

Balances after due allowance for any outstanding items: -

Lloyds bank current account: - £15804.03 (PC £14483.18 CCCP £1320.84)

“ “ deposit “ : -£2.48.

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

Three cheques to issue: -

No 839 £213.60 payee HMRC (paye Apr/May/Jun 2023).

No 840 £569.80 “ CN Fry (July/August net salary).

No 841 £45.26 “ Mary Clothier (craft materials – Coronation weekend).

Amenity Grant discussion.

a. Chedzoy churchyard.

Graham Bentley declared an interest and said he would not be voting.

A request has been received for an uplift to £1200 from the £877 awarded last year. The church treasurer was present at the meeting and explained that the continuing maintenance of the churchyard was heavily dependent on an increase in the PC amenity grant. She pointed out that, should the churchyard become “closed” (as is the case in Westonzoyland), the cost of maintenance would be far higher than the part paid/voluntary arrangement in place in Chedzoy. The frequency of grass cutting would be less, and the standard of maintenance would fall dramatically. There are no reserves available and a survey of churchyard trees is now needed (costing £510) which could lead to more expense.

This and other requirements cannot be met without the uplift in support now being sought. She went on to say the churchyard, being situated so centrally in the village, represented the main recreational facility which is enjoyed by all parishioners.

All church fund raising has to be directed at the running costs of the church building itself (eg Diocesan financial demands as well as insurance costs and maintenance).

Following a discussion councillors were keen to preserve PC reserves for possible use should vital services provided by the County Council fall short in the future. The grass cutting cost was noted to be £1274 this year.

Rodney Young proposed the grant be increased to £1000 this year, this was seconded by Simon Howes and agreed by all.

b. Chedzoy Playing Field Committee.

Although no specific figure has been applied for, the Chair of the playing field committee has provided full details of running costs. Annual fixed costs amount to approximately £700 (land rental £351 with an increase expected when the lease is renewed in 2024, health and safety inspections £175 and third-party insurance £168).

It was agreed that grant aid this year at the same level as last year - £270. A formal motion will be passed at the September meeting, before the cheque is issued.

c. Chedzoy Village Hall Committee.

An application has been received for grant aid of £293 – 17% up on last years grant of £2350. This is the same proportionate rise as the hall is facing in its electricity cost.

The councillors fully appreciate the high level of the hall facilities and the request was agreed at £293 for the coming year. A formal motion will be passed at the September meeting before the funds are released.

For the future it was felt highly desirable that timings of these grant aid applications should be brought into line with the precept-setting exercise, to allow for the agreed grant aid to be budgeted for at that time.

The Clerk was asked to place this matter on the agenda of the September meeting.

9. Any other business.

a. Hacking and Cloning.

Cloning was suffered recently by the Clerk. In order to reduce the risk of councillors' email addresses being hacked in the future, Simon Howes suggested all councillor email addresses should be deleted from public view both on the web and on the notice board. He pointed out that hardly any emails are sent directly to councillors, and any relevant information received by the Clerk, could be forwarded with any relevant information to the councillors as necessary.

This was agreed and the Clerk was asked to take appropriate action.

b. Local Addiction Helpline.

The Clerk has been advised of a newly launched and free 24 hour helpline for individuals suffering from addiction in the area. On receipt of this information the Clerk liaised with the webmaster and jointly agreed to post details on the web.

For more information go to:

<https://www.addictionadvocates.com/locations/drug-and-alcohol-rehab-somerset/>

c. Playing field grass cutting arrangements.

The playing field chair has given an update on endeavours to put a satisfactory new grass cutting regime in place.

d. Request to attend a PC meeting.

The Deputy Manager of the Headway childrens' Home in Chedzoy Lane requested dates of remaining PC meetings for the rest of this year, so that he could attend. He has said he will attend the October meeting.

e. Recent PC resignation.

Graham Bentley suggested that the PC should mark the contribution made by Karen Medland during the time she served as a parish councillor.

The Clerk was asked to arrange an appropriate card to be signed by all councillors.

Date of next meeting Monday 18th September 2023.

There being no other business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.13 pm.