

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CHEDZOY PARISH COUNCIL HELD BY TELEPHONE
CONFERENCE CALL ON MONDAY 19TH OCTOBER 2020 AT 7.30 PM.**

Present: Cllrs. Marion Dethier, Brian Gale, Nick Griffiths, Simon Howes (Chairman), Pat Lennard, John Paige and Rodney Young.

Also present: Cllrs. Anthony Betty (SDC) and Liz Perry (SDC).

In attendance: The Clerk (Chris Fry) and Jo Smoldon (giving a talk on the badger cull).

1. **Apologies:** Cllr. David Hall (SCC).
2. **Minutes of the previous meeting of 21st September 2020** were taken as read, agreed and signed.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes:**

a. Coronavirus Report – Local:

John Paige reported that there has been little change in demand for assistance. He personally assists several villagers with prescription collections and grocery shopping, and knows of other volunteers who do the same. Should additional restrictions be placed on movements there may be a resultant increase in demand. John said that the volunteer service, which began in the spring (the outset of the pandemic), has been “open-ended” so far, but it his intention to wind activities down in the new year, by which time it is hoped that the virus will be receding. Rodney Young asked if John knew of any villager who had caught the virus and John said he knew of several who, having experienced symptoms, had self-isolated, but he knew of nobody who had had a positive test result.

Simon Howes expressed the grateful thanks of all the councillors to John and his team of volunteers for his unstinting work these past months.

b. Blocked local drainage ditches:

The Clerk said this agenda item was aimed primarily on the severe localised flooding issue outside of Temple Farm in Chedzoy Lane, but first wished to record some information from Ian Medland, footpaths officer, about garden trimmings being placed in drainage ditches. Ian, together with his partner Karen, carry out regular litter picks around the village and they noticed blockages to the ditch opposite the junction of Manor Road with Higher Road/Chedzoy Lane. On 1st October they noticed fresh conifer clippings in the ditch and grass cuttings on the verge along the frontage of Yew Tree Cottage between the wall and the road, and he was able to identify the sources of the garden waste. It was agreed that this situation would be monitored and the responsible homeowner contacted if this persists.

Outside Temple Farm:

The Clerk reported that, as requested at the September meeting, he had emailed Lawrence Hackling (SCC Highways) to propose a site meeting, and Lawrence had replied by telephone to say he thought a site meeting would take up a lot of peoples' time and be fairly unproductive. He was proposing making an offer to rectify matters by, if necessary, employing a JCB to clear the ditch. He asked the parish council to act as go-between between SCC and the landowner, in putting the offer to the landowner and advising SCC of the outcome.

A discussion took place with the Chairman saying that he had spoken with local homeowners and that the actual cause of the problem appeared to be blocked pipes and gullies rather than a blocked ditch, and a JCB might therefore alone may not solve the problem. He still feels in vital for a site meeting between say himself, the Clerk, landowner, affected neighbours and Lawrence might finally clarify the situation and assure everyone that the cause of the problem is clearly understood and that plans are in place to deal with this.

The Clerk was asked to email Lawrence again, with photos of the blocked gratings, and a request for a couple of alternative dates and times so such a meeting can be arranged.

Marion Dethier mentioned a similar local flooding problem in Front Street near to Palfrey House, where a deep area of water almost engulfed the house during the deluge at the beginning of October. The Clerk was asked to include this problem with the email about the Chedzoy Lane issue.

Pat Lennard mentioned another area of periodic flooding along Higher Road where a resident had created a driveway and dropped the kerb perhaps a little too much. The Chairman said this was of a different nature than the others and should be noted and monitored for the time being.

c. Climate Emergency Fund – update:

Since the last meeting an enthusiastic volunteer had kindly offered to try to put a team together to manage the process, consider various suitable projects with a view to applying for funding under this scheme. Her name is Stephanie Bryan and she is planning to canvass local people regarding potential ideas, and would like to have six in the team to take a good deal of time to develop ideas and make the project manageable and sustaining.

A comprehensive update has been sent to the Clerk and Chairman, stating that she is aiming to apply during the second window for applying which opens on 1st December for six weeks.

Suggested projects: -

High input:

1. Aquaponic farm on the vacant allotment space.
2. Water management project, routing surface water to water butts/soak away systems.

Medium input

3. Solar PV with battery store system for the village hall (this has not yet been discussed with the village hall committee).
4. Replace the original village tree-line that was destroyed by Dutch Elm disease with trees more able to survive the intense agricultural systems now in place.
5. Tap into the Somerset Pollinator Action plan by creating a pollinator running along Front Street and Higher Road to the churchyard and plot to the NE owned by the parish council. Over the last 10 years the set-a-side and pollinator alleys have been lost or greatly reduced due to the pressure to produce maize, by bringing the alley into the suburbs, it can be protected long term by the community.

These alleys can be crested using the small areas of verge between house

boundaries and footpaths, and with careful selection of plants suitable to the position so as not to restrict visibility and pollinating insects, we can create a biodiverse landscape to be proud of.

Low input:

6. Purchase apple juicing equipment to utilise the local apples and turn them into a usable product.
7. Purchase a stall to be positioned centrally in the village so that residents can gift fruit and vegetables for local use.

Some of these projects can possibly be combined.

Next steps id to have gentle discussions with any stakeholders of the above and then ask the community to vote on the top 3 most likely to go ahead.

Other ideas not related to the fund raising but are part of the overall remit:

Hold an Energy Awareness event in the village hall (Covid permitting) with information on grants and technology available.

Dog Walkers litter picking Team.

Horse Riders Fly Tipping Team.

Anyone wishing to volunteer to be part of this team should contact the Clerk and he will forward their details to Stephanie Bryan.

d. Brush cutter training and other Footpath issues:

The Clerk said it seems the Brush cutter training may soon take place, with Ian Medland being happy to cover the cost and reclaim it from the parish council (already authorised).

He went on to read a comprehensive update from Ian about footpaths. Ian and Karen have started a footpath survey and have identified issues, some of which will be reported to SCC via the Explore Somerset website, and some that Ian will sort out. To date they have covered the area from Fisher's Farm towards the motorway and up to Slapes Cross in Chedzoy Lane, making two pages of notes! Some landowners will need to be approached about missing styles and reinstating footpaths in cultivated fields.

Ian will be cutting back vegetation and replacing more missing footpath markers. SCC have sent him a few spare markers and he will be asking them to replace missing fingerposts and other posts to attach route markers to.

Field behind the church – this week the landowners have ploughed and left a field edge footpath. They cut the hedges first so all is good there.

Ian has the landowners contact details (the Clerk having first obtained the necessary permission), but he has not needed to make contact yet.

This is all very useful information. The Clerk will acknowledge the email.

e. Speeding traffic through the village.

The Clerk said that he had not completed his investigations, due to time constraints. He was asked to liaise with other relevant parish clerks where Speed Indicator

Devices have been installed and enquire as to the costs of installation and any running costs involved.

The possibility of reviving the village Speed watch Team was mentioned.

This matter to be placed in the agenda of the November meeting.

4. County Councillor's report.

None.

5. District Councillors' reports:

a. Solar Park:

Anthony Betty reported that he had spoken to a representative of Alpaca Communications (the concern behind the scheme), and he confirmed that the scheme is still active, although it is currently only in the embryonic stage. The initial consultation flyer which will be sent to each household in the affected villages, is on hold but could be circulated by Christmas 2020.

b. Planning White Paper:

Liz Perry reported on a comprehensive examination of the proposals by an SDC committee which has highlighted many areas of concern and requests for clarification, which are currently with the SDC Affordable Housing Team, ahead of being submitted.

She said she would look into the possibility of details being forwarded to the Clerk to share with Parish Councillors, if allowable.

6. Planning:

No new applications.

Planning White Paper - Covered under item 5 above.

7. Correspondence:

a. Badger Cull:

Jo Smoldon attended the meeting and was called by the Chairman to give a talk of approximately three minutes in duration.

Jo has opposed the badger cull ever since its inception some eight years ago. Her address is summarised by the Clerk as follows:

She wishes to highlight the lack of information at parish level about the extent of culling, which she puts down to secrecy of the cull organisers which has led to a lack of awareness in the village. She thinks some people feel unable to speak out through fear of reprisals, some of which she claims to have personally experienced

She says that she has recently observed what she believes to be illegal free shooting of badgers near to her home at night and she has seen bait points, and has reported breaches of health and safety regulations to the authorities. She says there have been incidents of vehicles being driven without lights by men in camouflage carrying guns in lanes. She feels that the NFU has driven the badger cull policy, dividing communities, families and farmers. She thinks that the majority of the population is

against any inhumane aspects of the cull, and deserves to be made aware of the reality of what to expect during the cull.

She went to say that illegal acts have been found following culls, with badger setts claimed to have been driven over, dug out and ploughed over, or have had soil and other rubbish dumped on them.

Jo feels the cull will not sort out the problem of TB in cattle and feels villagers have a right to feel safe and secure in their own homes.

The Chairman thanked Jo for addressing the meeting and said that her concerns would be noted.

8. Matter arising from the correspondence:

None.

9. Finance:

Balances after allowing for items to be cleared:

Lloyds Bank current account	£ 7904.87.
“ “ deposit	“ £ 2.48.
Cambridge BS	“ £ 12372.04 (earmarked funds).

There were three cheques to issue:

No 706 £152.68 payee CN Fry (October net salary).

No 707 £ 50.00 “ Sedgemoor CAB (replacement of cheque lost in banking system).

No 708 spoilt and destroyed.

No 709 £240.00 payee PKF Littlejohn (external audit fee).

The Clerk reported the external audit has now been satisfactorily completed and the necessary notices will now be published.

Notice has been received of an increase in the payroll service to £95 per year from 1st April 2021.

The review of the Clerk's salary will be reviewed at the November meeting.

10. Any other business and date of next meeting.

Any other business:

a. Amenity grants.

The Chairman said he feels the regular annual amenity grants should in future be considered on a case by case basis, with no automatic increase. In dealing with public funds, the parish council should be careful to ensure there is genuine need before agreeing to expenditure.

The Clerk was asked to write to the three bodies currently receiving grants to ask if the support is still needed, at what level and request details of how the money is planned to be spent, and ask for a sight of the relevant accounts of the bodies.

This will now be considered as part of the annual precept setting exercise.

b. Format of future meetings.

The Chairman asked for feedback on the use of telephone conferencing for future meetings. A discussion took place during which several councillors said that they had found it difficult to hold meaningful discussions on the telephone with several asking if it would be possible to return to "live" meetings in the village hall if Covid restrictions allowed on the day. Following this discussion the following motion was put to the meeting:

"Future parish council meetings should be held in the village hall where possible as and with appropriate Covid 19 measures being put in place, so long as there are no tighter restrictions imposed in the meantime by the government."

The vote was taken individually and was 7-0 agreed.

The Clerk's salary request is to increase to five hours paid at £12.50 per hour or £3250 pa (currently £2288 pa). All other expense arrangements to stay frozen. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

The Precept setting exercise 2021/2022 will also take place at the November meeting.

Date of next meeting Monday 16th November 2020 in the village hall at 7.30 pm.

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