

CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Monday 16th February 2026 at 7.30 p.m.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Those present:

Mrs M Butler (Chair)
Mr S Robinson (Vice Chair)
Mr R Bale
Mr D Bracher
Mrs G Wills
Mrs S Morley (Clerk)

Apologies

Mr Mike Otterbeck
Mr Tony Gray (PPLO)
Mrs V Keitch (Somerset Councillor)
Mrs S Osborne (Somerset Councillor)

In Attendance

5 Members of the public

2. Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council held on Mon 17/11/25

The minutes were approved and were signed by the Chair.

3. Public Voice

There were no questions raised by the public which were not on the agenda.

4. Report by Somerset Councillor

Cllr Osborne has been granted leave of absence for ill health.

5. Planning Applications

There were no new planning applications.

6. Footpaths

Chaffcombe PPLO has reported that the paths are too wet and muddy to walk at the moment. Walks will continue when it stops raining.

7. Reservoir

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

"In my time here, and I believe potentially for a fair number of years, this has been the most amount of rain that has hit the reservoir - and Somerset for that matter - and I personally have never seen floods like it. It is fair to say the reservoir was put under a lot of pressure with the floods, and some of you will have seen it rise to unprecedented levels only once seen before many years ago. The water did indeed flow through the culverts. However, the reservoir was originally designed to be a storage facility of water for the Chard Canal as many of you may know, and today, whilst we enjoy the beauty of the nature reserve, Chard Reservoir is still essentially designed as a storage facility for water in line with flooding mitigation procedures. Hence why the levels rose so much in this time, to help prevent any exacerbation of flooding downstream, particularly into Donyatt and Ilminster. Much of the site was inaccessible due to flooded paths, and the hide was half submerged under water - something that has been unheard of. But thankfully, we have got through the worst of that period - the paths are usable again, as is the hide, and with not much damage as a result of these events.

What I would like to point out - as there has definitely been misleading information given out by the media and well, members of the public - is that the flooding that we have seen around the reserve (on pathways, the hide, etc) is all due to the weather that occurred. The flooding around site has nothing to do with the dam improvement works that went on in 2025. Despite what information may be out there, the levels of the reservoir have not been altered in any shape or form due to these works. The capacity remains the same as it has been for near 200 years. Even more interestingly, and what has been in our thoughts within the Council as well as local parish members of Donyatt and Ilminster for some time, is that much of the flooding around these areas in particular is caused more by other factors than what water is released from the reservoir. Residents and councillors of these areas believe that a lot of the flooding is a result of modern agricultural practices - compaction of fields due to heavier machinery being used means that the surrounding land of these areas has lost a lot of the ability to absorb water, which therefore leads eventually to flooding events. We also have telemetry data that can contribute to these theories...

Anyways, the volunteers and I since the start of this year in between the rainy days (which has not been many!) have wrapped up the bird box surveys - a very successful season with roughly 80% of the boxes being used - mainly by Blue or Great Tits, but occasionally by wood mice or dormice too! And we have continued to improve our paths around the meadow area, to try to ensure we keep an accessible route all year around of visitors of all abilities...

The winter wildlife on the reservoir has still been thriving - lots of woodland birds have been seen on walks, and a fair few winter migrants have been sighted on the waters, including Shelduck, Wigeon, Goldeneye, Shoveler, Teal and a Greylag Goose (not a usual inhabitant of our waters here in Chard)! Water Rails have also been heard throughout January and February, and a few birds of prey, including a peregrine falcon was recorded in January over the meadows. For a more comprehensive list of daily sightings, please log on to Kevin's website - Google Chard Reservoir Birds then it's usually the first result that comes up.

We have a few events happening between now and the end of March - hopefully there is an events poster in your local noticeboard. A photography walk is a new addition to our event programme here at Chard Reservoir - this will be hosted by Edd our Community Ranger and Caroline Lefley, a local photographer who has hosted walks of this nature on our other green estates! She is brilliant, so I would highly recommend booking on to this - doesn't matter if you are a complete amateur or more experienced photographer - all are welcome! This will be on Friday 20th March at 12:30. The plan is to do a couple more of these a year if all goes well on our pilot walk!

Finally, our new Friends of Chard Reservoir are hosting another Quiz night and raffle after the great success of the first one, on Friday 27th February."

8. Highway matters.

(a) Potholes

A lot of people have reported pot holes and Highways have said they will be done. Cllr Bracher reported that he had a puncture from a pothole and claims can be made against Somerset Council insurance. There is a large pothole opposite the Village Hall and it was agreed to place a traffic cone in it to ensure people can see to avoid it.

(b) Crack in the railway bridge

This is still ongoing. Somerset Council know about it. It has been inspected and the report is that the crack is not of concern at the moment.

9. Flooding

Mike Otterbeck sent his report as follows:

"With reference to any flooding we have fared much better than a lot of places locally.

The drains have been kept clear of leaf debris up Summer Lane and down from the Woods.

The holding pond at the top of Knapps Lane seems to be doing an excellent job as there is little or no water flow down past the telephone box. We're still getting some from the church, but the barrier they've put up in place is diverting it into the stream. As long as the drains are kept clear on Summer Lane flooding doesn't seem to be an issue at the moment.

But the proof will be in the pudding when we have some of those really heavy 1 or 2 hour deluges of rain.

I have reported all the potholes - ones within the Village and ones heading out past the Woods through to the golf course. They have been marked out by the council in the form of a white line drawn on the undergrowth beside the holes. Totally inadequate as they have all washed away. I am hearing rumours that pothole repairs have been suspended as there is no money."

There has been no report regarding flooding at Chaffcombe Gate.

Cllr Bale reported that Lydmarsh is OK.

The drain outside Kerris Vean is still blocked. Cllr Bracher will go to have a look with Mike Otterbeck when he is back.

10. LCN Meeting

Cllr Wills reported that not much is happening at the moment. She now has a checklist of people to contact if necessary.

11. Banking and new account

The Clerk reported that HSBC have discontinued our application because the signature cards were not received despite an assurance from the AI chat facility that physical cards would be sent to those not able to print at home. The Clerk said that the application to HSBC had been extremely difficult because contact for new applications is now only possible via a webchat facility which takes up to 5 or 10 minutes to respond to a question, and then does not answer the question asked.

The well known high street banks are all charging, or about to start charging, for business accounts. Several suggestions were made of online banks who operate business accounts for no charge. The Clerk will look into these alternatives.

ACTION - The Clerk

12. Website and new email address

Cllr Butler introduce Emma Thomas who has agreed to take over as webmaster.

Cllr Butler and the Clerk will meet with Emma next week to talk about the email address and also the web accessibility rules (WCAG 2.2AA) for which the Clerk had recently attended a workshop.

ACTION - Cllr Butler and The Clerk

13. IT Policy

Under the new Assertion 10 parish councils are required to have an IT Policy which must be on the website. The IT Policy was presented to the Council and agreed by all present and signed by the Chair.

14. Payments and receipts

The following online payments were made:

25/11/2025	ICO (DD)	Subscription	47.00
8/12/2025	Village Hall	Rent	75.00
22/12/2025	Somerset Council	Dog Bins April - August	202.80
15/2/2026	SALC	Training	25.00
15/2/2026	Somerset Council	Dog Bins October - December	101.40
15/2/2026	S Morley	Clerk	164.90

15. Matters and Items to Report

Bright Lights from Football Stadium

Cllr Bracher has been approached by a resident in Gaylards Lane about the extremely bright lights from the football stadium. It was suggested that the resident contact the football club to ask them if there is anything they can do to reduce the glare. Cllr Bracher to follow this up.

ACTION - Cllr Bracher

16. Date of next Annual Meeting of Chaffcombe Parish Council - Monday 18th May 2026 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall.

17. Date of the Annual Chaffcombe Parish Meeting - Monday 20th April 2026 at 7.30 p.m. at Chaffcombe Village Hall.

The meeting finished at 8.25 p.m.

Mary Butler - Chair Chaffcombe Parish Council-