

CHEDBURGH PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING Monday 19th May 2025

Clerk: Vacant
Cllr J Jones, stand-in clerk
Tel:
Email: Chedburgh-pc@outlook.com Chedburgh.pc.chair@gmail.com

Attendees: Cllr A Smith, Cllr S Sellars, Cllr M Rickard, Cllr S McGhee, Cllr H Simmons, Cllr C Pettit, Cllr J Jones, S C Cllr K Soons, W S D Cllr M Chester, Dave Paxman and Vanessa Smith (Wildlife Friendly Chedburgh), Mrs C Fitzgerald (Organiser of Chedburgh Coffee Club) and 2 parishioners (Ian Leggett, Liz Williams).

- A. Welcome by the Chair. There were no apologies
- B. The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on the 20th May 2024 were approved and signed. Proposed by: Cllr S Sellars, seconded by Cllr H Simmons.
- C. Reports from the following were received:

Cllr Smith welcomed attendees, clarified that the meeting is not a parish council meeting but for parishioners to discuss affairs, and noted the absence of the Parish Clerk due to resignation. Cllr J Jones will act as clerk for the evening. Recruitment for a new clerk is ongoing.

1. The Chair of Chedburgh Parish Council

- The full Chairman's report will be uploaded to the Parish Council website.
- **Introduction:**
Cllr Smith delivered the Chair's Annual Report, highlighting council activities, community engagement, volunteer support, and ongoing projects. He thanked retiring Clerk Frances Betts, council members, and volunteers.
- **The Committee:**
The current committee has 7 members out of 7, who are:
 - Cllr Andrew Smith, Chair
 - Cllr Shaun Sellars, Vice Chair
 - Cllr Margaret Rickard
 - Cllr Stuart McGhee
 - Cllr Hazel Simmons
 - Cllr Charlotte Pettit
 - Cllr JoJo Jones
- Who left during the year
 - No counsellors left. The Parish Clerk, Frances Betts, resigned and the Chair thanked her for her years of excellent service.
- Who joined during the year
 - Cllr JoJo Jones
- How many times has the Parish Council met
 - The Chedburgh PC met on 7 occasions, plus additional meetings for the village questionnaire and event planning.

Events

- The council supported events such as the RAF Chedburgh 1942-1946 book launch, Christmas Fun Run, and the VE Day 80 celebration.

Key actions/activities

- **General Activities:** Regular maintenance is being carried out on the children's play area, the defibrillator and open spaces within the village. The phone box refurbishment is complete, and the community pantry continues to be supported. Wildlife Friendly Chedburgh is thriving.
- **Village Questionnaire and Planning:** A village questionnaire, supported by CCDRCC and Chedburgh PCC, provided valuable information for the future development of the Village. An open meeting was held and the results from the questionnaire were discussed. All of the information gained will be used to formulate the village plan and how the village may develop in future years.
- **Land Development and Local Plan**
Discussion on parcels of land along Queens Lane for potential development. Two parcels, both owned by the Henry Smith Charity, are currently approved in the West Suffolk District Council plan. One proposal is for nine houses within the building envelope; the other is also within the envelope. Changes in government policy may affect future planning applications.
- **Village Emergency Plan:** An Emergency Plan is being developed, which will provide the necessary information to emergency services and the Parish should we be called upon to support a major incident.
- **Youth Council Formation:** The Parish Council held its first Youth Council meeting in April, with seven young people attending and three more interested. This aims to engage our younger residents to support future village development.
- **Future Plans for Village Facilities:** Plans include developing the playing field for additional facilities and encouraging local business involvement, which responds to feedback from the village questionnaire about the lack of facilities.
- **Quiet Lane/Green Lane Application:** Cllr Simmons raised concerns about the slow progress of a Quiet Lane application for Green Lane. The process has been unclear, with delays and a lack of communication. The estimated cost is £10,000. Hazel seeks clarity on application procedures. Cllr Soons requested that Cllr Simmons email her for an update
- **Invitation for Volunteers:** Residents are encouraged to volunteer for various projects, including faith-based initiatives, youth club development, and combating loneliness.

2. Reports from the Local Community

a. PCC (Church) Report, Liz Williams

- Liz reported on church activities: The congregation is slowly growing, quotas were met last year, but an extra £1,000 is needed this year for running costs. The church tower has been waterproofed after leaks. Parking issues have been partially resolved. There is interest from university students (Exeter) in biodiversity studies at the church and they will work with Wildlife Friendly Chedburgh.
- There was some discussion about the possibility of installing beehives at the church. A local parishioner is interested, but approval from church authorities is pending. Considerations include parishioner safety and location.

b. Chevington, Chedburgh, Depden and Rede Community Council

- Unfortunately, CCDRCC did not receive an invitation in time for the meeting, as a result, they were not able to attend or submit a report. Chedburgh PC wished to apologise for this.

c. West Suffolk District Council, Cllr Mike Chester

- Mike Chester thanked the Parish Council for going from strength to strength and for the number of parishioners who have turned up and contributed to the village.
- Marquess of Cornwallis: The pub remains a concern due to deterioration and safety issues. Mike Chester reported on recent vandalism and ongoing efforts with West Suffolk Council and the Environment Agency to address hazards. Legal complexities with the owner persist.
- Cllr Chester explained the plan to reorganise Suffolk's local government into unitary authorities. The county council prefers one unitary but district councils prefer three. The government will decide, aiming for units of around 500,000 people. The change is expected within two years, with elections postponed to align with new structures.
- Cllr M Chester's full report will be uploaded to the Parish Council website.

d. Suffolk County Councillor, Karen Soons

- **Devolution and Unitary Authority Proposal in Suffolk:** This is the proposal to move Suffolk from a two-tier government system to a unitary authority. Suffolk County Council is in favour of one unitary authority. There are currently four District Councils whose preference is two or three unitary authorities. This month's election has been postponed for a year, but this will likely turn into a year's delay.
- Wiltshire is a well-established and fairly successful unitary council, which can be compared for savings. It is also a similar county to ours.
- Calculations suggest that one unitary authority will deliver significant savings over two or three and one would pull planning, social housing, waste and child protection all under one roof. It is currently split across the District Councils. Consultation will commence later this year. Boundaries are still not sorted, so this also means that there will be a further delay. It was noted that the Boundary Commission took two and a half years for a county council review, making it unlikely to be ready for a unitary election in eight to ten months.
- Clarification that Karen Soons remains in post until the government or the election department decides otherwise. It is also proposed to fast-track a combined Mayoral Authority with Norfolk.
- There is the possibility of increased responsibilities and budgets for Parish and Town Councils if a unitary authority is established, with a potential for greater local influence.
- **Bus Service Funding in Suffolk**
Report on a funding boost for Suffolk's bus services: £3.6 million over two years, with £1.8 million per year, and the first year's £1.2 million allocated via open call for suggestions based on value for money, passenger numbers, and integration.
- **£7.3 Million EV Investment in Suffolk**
Cllr Soons introduced Suffolk's £7.3 million investment in electric vehicle infrastructure, highlighting challenges with current charging costs, installation barriers, and the need for improved infrastructure to meet net-zero targets. Cllr

Soons encourages local community groups to submit applications for EV charging infrastructure.

- **Suffolk Road Mender Trial and Pothole Repairs**

Karen Soons described the road mender elastomat trial started on 11th March, which provides eco-friendly, long-lasting pothole repairs, reducing material waste by 90% and repair time by 80%. Statistics were shared: 60,000 pothole reports last year, 40,000 this year, with a likely 63% increase in repairs if trends continue. M Group Holdings now manages the highways contract with a 40% inspection regime, compared to none previously under Kier.

- Concerns were raised about poor road repairs causing sunken patches, damage from utility contractors, and improper road closure signage. Cllr Soons offered to follow up on issues if provided with photographic evidence.

- **The youth council would like to visit the council offices.** Cllr Simmons to send a request to Cllr Mike Chester. A visit on a full council day would be ideal to observe proceedings and have a tour. Both Cllr Soons and Cllr Chester would be there.

e. Little Teapots Pre-School

- Unfortunately, Little Teapots Pre-School did not receive an invitation in time for the meeting, Chedburgh PC wished to apologise for this. However, an email report has now been received.
- Little Teapots Pre-school is a self-contained setting that is accessible to children whose ages range from 24 months to 60 months. We are a registered charity and are run by a voluntary committee.
- The end of our last financial year, 2023, ended with a loss, major factors including min wage increase, a member of staff on maternity and increasing costs of utilities and resources.
- The year 2024 looked more positive, the number of children attending each session increased due to the 2-year funding increasing to £7.38 and we have had to employ another member of staff. But not being complacent, when children turn 3, the funding decreases to £5.21, which is a drop of £2.17 per child per hour. As we are at full capacity, we cannot take any more children to make up for the loss.
- We had a successful Santa's Grotto in December, raising over £800. We did a sponsored jump raising £ 1300 and a coffee and craft mornings, which raised another £330.00.
- We initially had a new, higher, more secure garden fence and gate replaced at a cost of £3300 and then replaced the remainder of the fencing this year at an extra cost of £4620. We also replaced all our outdoor safety flooring with artificial grass at a cost of £6100, all paid for by the pre-school.
- We had the outdoor learning hub fixed and painted.
- We ended the year making a profit to carry us forward for the year ahead.
- In September, we will have over 80 children on our books, losing 33 this summer to schools.
- Looking forward to the year 2024 – 2025 and the introduction of more funding for families and the change in the way we are allowed to charge for our services as implemented in April by the government we look to make a large loss for the

end of the year, as with previous years we try to budget for a two year cycle to cover this.

- We would like to thank Andrew and the Parish Council for their support, as always, throughout the year.

f. Wildlife Friendly Village Chedburgh, Dave Paxman

- **Update on changes to the project:** They want to change Chestnut Crescent to a more perennial planting rather than a meadow for faster results and greater biodiversity. Supported by West Suffolk Council.
- **Bee hive vs bug hotel:** The Church would like a bee hive however, WFV suggested that a bug hotel may be more ecologically beneficial than a bee hive to support a wider range of pollinators. Could consider both.
- **Butterfly Conservation Survey:** Announcement that Butterfly Conservation will conduct a survey in July to assess local biodiversity. We had a rare tiger moth here last year.
- **Paddock Way Project Update:** reduced size for manageability, unexpected plants are appearing but the poppies have not done well this year. There are ongoing efforts to manage and monitor the area.
- **Species Mapping and App Usage:** Confirmation that an app is being used to map species, with a note about unrecorded wild orchids and a mysterious creature to be discussed privately.
- **Tree Maintenance Permission:** Cllr Rickard requested permission to prune a tree planted for the Queen's Jubilee to maintain its form. Permission was granted.
- **Ownership of Land at Stirling Way:** Clarification that the land at the bottom of Stirling Way with walkways is now owned by the Crown and is not a public amenity space. The Parish Council maintains this space.

g. Chedburgh Coffee Club, Christine Fitzgerald

- Numbers are going down from 20 to 17/18, which is sufficient to keep going and cover costs; however, attracting new members is proving challenging. Suggestions to increase participation included offering to accompany people who don't currently attend and may find it daunting to start, flyers and volunteer support.
- There has been a £60 profit over the years it has been going. There are several events throughout the year to raise funds for select charities.

h. Ickworth cum Horringer Primary School

- Unfortunately, Ickworth cum Horringer Primary School did not receive an invitation in time for the meeting, as a result, they were not able to attend or submit a report. Chedburgh PC wished to apologise for this.

i. Chedburgh Youth Council formation and activities: Cllr Simmons reported on the formation of a youth council, initial attendance, age and gender breakdown, and plans for their first meeting with a £500 budget.

Commented [JJ1]: All updated

- 3. Communication of parish meeting agendas and minutes:** Concerns were raised by Ian Leggett about the lack of physical agendas and minutes on notice boards and in newsletters, and the preference for paper over digital formats. The Clerk's report goes

into Suffolk Heights. Cllr Smith confirmed that there was a requirement to post both these items on the PC notice board and will ensure that this is done.

4. **Use of notice boards for community information:** Discussion about which notice boards can be used for PCC and other community group information, and the need for better public information dissemination. There are three notice boards – the bus stop on the green, the parish council noticeboard next to Majors Close bus stop and the CCDRCC notice board outside the Erskine Centre. Vanessa will check with Gary if the PCC can use the CCDRCC board.
5. **Annual Parish Meeting invitations:** Issue raised about insufficient invitations to groups like Teapots and PCC for the Annual Parish meeting. All the groups should have been invited to this meeting. Chedburgh PC wished to apologise for this. The meeting will be much more widely advertised next year.
6. Date of next meeting – Monday, May 18th 2026 at 7.00 pm

The meeting ended at 20.45

Signed by Chair _____ Date _____