

Chebsey Parish Council

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**Minutes of**

**The Annual Meeting of Chebsey Parish Council held on**

**Monday 22nd May 2023 at 7pm**

**In Chebsey Parish Hall**

Cllr’s Present: Cllr M Ainsworth-Hickman (Chair) Cllr R Hopley (Vice Chair) Cllr B Jones Cllr J Lawson

Cllr S Edge, Cllr D Foster-Birks. (All Declarations of Acceptance of Office signed prior to the meeting)

In Attendance: S Stokes (Clerk) Cllr P Jones (SBC)

Members of the public One

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| **23/61** | **Welcome and Public Participation. (Please refer to the Chebsey Parish Council Public Participation Policy which can be found on** [**www.chebseyparishcouncil.co.uk**](http://www.chebseyparishcouncil.co.uk) **).**  The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked or any participation from the public**.** A member of the public said he had attended the meeting to represent Izaak Walton Fisherires. He spoke of the need for a house on the site due to the amount of the fish that were being stolen. He said that he felt letters written by the Parish Council to the Planning Department were unjust.  The Chair explained that the Parish Council were only following guidelines, and it is the Planning Department that make the final decision on applications. |
| **23/62** | **Apologies.**  Cllr B Samra (Working away). Cllr J Pert (SCC SBC) |
| **23/63** | **To receive a report from the Chair of Chebsey Parish Council.**  On behalf of Chebsey Parish Council may I offer a very warm welcome to you all. -The format of the evening is as follows: Firstly we have the The AM of the Chebsey Parish Council, followed by the Ordinary Monthly Meeting. -I should like to thank all my fellow Parish Councillors, and Sue our Parish Clerk, for all you have done to support me and the hard work you have done over the year, we continually keep being told we ‘ punch above our weight’ as a Parish Council as we get work completed. Chairman’s Report May 2022 to April 2023 -It would be remiss of me at the start of this report not to acknowledge the impact Covid 19 still has on our Parish and the work we attempt to do within it. Firstly however, our sympathy goes out to all those who are suffering from long term side effects of Covid 19 and the continued impact on businesses within the parish. As a Parish Council we have seen how many meetings have been held via zoom with some continuing to do so. We have also lost the sending out of ‘hardcopy’ for planning applications, which was sent out by the Borough Council, this has caused a great deal more work and makes applications far more difficult for Councillors to consider. Obviously the other area which is extremely worrying is the cost of living crisis and the impact this continues to have on individuals and families within the parish. To this end we were instrumental in setting up a Warm Spaces weekly session supported by Stafford Borough Council at the end of November until the end of March. This was extremely well supported and free hot soup and rolls were provided to all those that attended. We are indebted to Shallowford House for both their hospitality and generosity in providing fresh soup and rolls each week. The weekly Drop In was also accommodated at Shallowford House and has since moved to Chebsey Parish Hall. Once again we are extremely grateful to both these organisations for helping organisers out by offering their venues for these important weekly meeting places for local residents. With the cost of living crisis, Councillor were very aware when it came to agreeing the precept for 2023/2024 that any increase remained as low as possible. -During 2023 we lost the services due to retirement of both Cllr John Green and Cllr. Dave Davis, who between them achieved 68 years on the Parish Council. We are indebted to them both for the work they did on behalf of the local parishioners. In September Donna FosterBirks and Bob Samra were co-opted onto the Parish Council and have proved a great asset. We have had a very busy year, some positives some negatives. Overall however I feel we have made many achievements. The workload certainly seems to have been far greater during this year with outcomes far more difficult to achieve due to protracted consultation times and processes; along with new working practices by outside bodies. With all this being taken into consideration we might only be a small parish council but we do achieve results and some of our results are the envy of much larger parishes. -During the year we have held 10 ordinary meetings and 1 extra ordinary meeting. Three meetings were held at St Luke’s prior to the fire, this was followed by some meetings at All Saints Church before we moved to Chebsey Parish Hall. We are grateful to Chebsey PCC and Chebsey Parish Hall for accommodating us in what can only be described as tragic circumstances. It is not envisaged that St. Luke’s will not re-open until at least late 2023 The extra ordinary meeting was to held to discuss the Parish Councils response to the Meecebrook proposals. A great deal of time and energy was used by attending meetings and keeping the residents of the parish up to date with info on the proposal. As a Parish Council we worked in collaboration with both Eccleshall and Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Councils by sharing info, attending joint meetings and considering a united response to issues which affected all or several of the parishes. -Due to the increased workload this year, the Parish Clerk role has had an increase in hours from 20 to 24 hours per month. - With the issue of local community leaders and safety continually being on the agenda, the PC decided to implement several new policies. Policies to help protect the safety of Councillors and parishioners alike, policies which many other PC have. This follows on from the Public Participation policy which we adopted last year. We continue to review our working practices and endeavour to implement policies where we feel they are needed. -It is anticipated that other policies and risk assessments will need to be considered in the coming year. This year we have implemented a lead and assistant role for key services/issues within the Parish Council to which all Councillors hold one of these positions. This has worked well and it gives all Councillors a level of responsibility for a key area eg. planning; highways etc. -Our highways still cause us great concern, with remaining potholes, blocked gullies, lanes in such a poor condition that they cannot be resurfaced. I can report that the issue that has been present on Parsons Bank for many years will hopefully be rectified when work commences on 15th May! The state of the roads, gullies etc. have been a constant issue for the Parish Council during this and previous years. A large ditch on Shallowford Bank was a real safety issue and we are grateful to Cllr. Pert for arranging to get this repaired as a matter of urgency. -Increased traffic particularly when major A and motorway links are temporarily closed due to accidents or planned maintenance, the latter causing a major increase in traffic numbers but also increase in speed, the overall result being a nightmare for local residents. -An application has been made under the HS2 Highways Improvement Fund for road improvements in the parish. -On numerous occasions we have requested the mobile speed camera to come to the parish and monitor speeds of vehicles at key times of the day - the beginning and end of the working day. We have finally got a response and have requested the timetable from Staffordshire Safer Roads. -Gulley emptying has become a major issue, with some lanes continually wet for the whole yearly cycle of weather due from blocked gullies and something that has been going on for several years now. The state of the verges has also become a major problem, an example being, Shallowford Bank., Scamnel etc. -Fly tipping has continued to be a major issue within the parish, particularly along Worston Lane and several of the lanes around Chebsey. We ask that you be observant when you are in the lanes of individuals dumping rubbish. -Informal litter picks have continued throughout the parish and we are indebted to all who participate in collecting the litter off the roads verges etc. within our parish. Street scene have continued to support us with bags, litter pickers etc. -Concerns have been raised at the state of some of the footpaths in the Parish and this has been taken up with the appropriate department, however they are classed as low priority and therefore it is impossible to say when work will be done to clear them. -Work has been done by volunteers and co-ordinated by Friends of Norton Bridge on Tommys Trail and this is now in very good order. Once again we are indebted to all the volunteers who have given up there time to do this work, also thanks to FONB for organising the working parties that have done this work along with work on the Recreation Area in Norton Bridge. As a Parish Council we have continued to work with local organisations for the benefit of the parish. Friends of Norton Bridge have been particularly active including collating a bus survey for the residents of Norton Bridge. The response was excellent and the responses presented to the Parish Council, from which we have written to the County Council with the findings asking for a re-instatement of a bus service. We are still in correspondence on this matter as I speak. Communications and collaboration has also taken place with the Residents Associations at Cold Norton and Chebsey Parish Hall. We are also indebted to the work created by Chebsey Parish History Society who continue to document local history for the benefit of the parish and wrote the ‘Brief History of Chebsey Parish’ for the PC website - I am pleased to report that we continue to have the Civil Amenities Lorry on 7 occasions per year. Whilst this is a major expense to the PC we believe that it is a vital resource as it is greatly used by local parishioners. -Planning matters have taken up a great deal of our time this year and it’s not been easy with several being very complex. 5 have been permitted, 3 refused and 1 withdrawn. Three applications which are still pending outcome have been on-going since early 2021 and therefore a letter was sent by the Parish Council to the Chief Executive at SBC raising our grave concerns with lack of progress. 1 application has been approved through LDC which as a PC we felt should have required a full planning application due to it change of use. We fought hard with the Planning Dept. but to no avail. One application was withdrawn by the applicant due to the length of time it was taking to determine and also due to the repeated need to duplicate paperwork previously forwarded to the planning dept. A local landowner came to the PC early in the year with a proposal to build social housing at Lakesedge in Cold Norton. He commissioned a questionnaire which the PC felt was deeply flawed and the findings from it were as follows: 2 affordable rental properties, 2 shared ownership properties, 1 self build and 2 open market properties required. As a PC we did not feel the questionnaire results warranted any social housing in that particular area. The residents at Lakesdge were incensed by the proposals and came to the presentation and voiced their concerns loudly. Numerous amendments to planning applications have also received with one being retrospective. -Several enforcement actions have been reported however we have had no feedback from the Planners re any of the outcomes. -Viewing of Planning Applications has been far more difficult for the Parish Council as previously mentioned due to the Borough Councils Planning Dept. deciding not to send out a full sized hard copy to the PC, thus we have to rely on each and every Parish Councillor to access at home on small screens and therefore not being able to view the complete application at one time, a far from satisfactory situation. -Grave concerns have also been raised about the lack of consistency shown by planners in the decision making process as well as the length of time it is taking to determine the outcome of applications, something which is unacceptable. -As a Parish Council we do not feel supported appropriately by the Planning Dept. and have deep concerns with its lack of co-operation in dealing with our concerns and requests. On a positive note and with much relief, we are pleased to report that the Railway Inn in Norton Bridge is thriving as a business and we are grateful to the owners for all they do for the parish. - The defibrillators at Norton Bridge and Chebsey were recalled due to software problems. On the return of the defibrillators it was found that the one at NB wasn’t working properly as the battery wasn’t fully charging, hence a new battery had to be purchased. Once again we are grateful to FONB for their contributions towards this as well as their contribution towards the grass cutting at the recreation area. New pads have continued to be purchased by the parish council at all 3 sites. -Obviously, we have lots of challenges ahead of us eg. HS2 and Meecebrook.. The impact of the railhead near Cold Norton for example, HS2 is a severe threat to our community, whether it is light pollution at Cold Norton, major increase in traffic using our lanes as rat-runs or the noise impact at Norton Bridge on residents and their homes. We wait to see how the slowing down process announced by the government will impact on the development of HS2 within the parish. Obviously the future of HS2 will also impact on the Meecebrook proposals. Network Rail has been contacted re graffiti on bridges, ragwort and horses on their land by the side of the railway at Norton Bridge. The Parish Council are just in the process of transferring its bank account so that on-line banking can be done more efficiently. During the year we held two social events, one a Cream Tea for the Queen’s Jubilee to which 173 attended and the donations from this event went to the Alzheimer’s Society and secondly a Christmas Afternoon Tea to which 133 attended. The profit from this was given to the local Bright and Beautiful Project fund which will hopefully continue to raise money so the project will be viable. Finally, I have to report on the recent elections held on 4th May. The parish council were hopeful that an election would not be necessary due to the cost on the parish, the cost to the parish being potentially 2-4 thousand. As a parish we could ill afford this and therefore several councillors were prepared to withdraw their nomination papers if they were aware of any potential additional candidates. Unfortunately we were not aware of any additional candidates until after the closing date for applications and also the deadline for withdrawals, hence a full election had to take place.  Summing Up -What has been achieved during this last year simply couldn’t have been achieved without the support of individuals within the community e.g. litter picking, help at events, weekly checks of defibs and Recreation Area, etc. etc. – the list is endless. -I would also like to thank organisations within the community FONB, Parochial Church Council, Chebsey Parish Local History Society and Chebsey Parish Hall for their help and assistance in our endeavour to improve the facilities for individuals within the parish. -Without community groups working together to achieve goals and activities etc, things just couldn’t and wouldn’t happen. Thank You each and every one of you who have helped in some way over the last year -your contribution is invaluable and it really does make a difference. With budget cuts at borough and Council levels we will need to rely on local parishioners more and more, so please consider helping out in some way if you don’t already. -Finally, as this is the last meeting of the calendar year, as Chairman I appreciate and acknowledge the support from fellow Councillors and our Parish Clerk. I would also once again request this support for whoever is appointed chairman for the coming year.  Thank You that concludes my 2022/23 report. |
| **23/64** | **Declarations of interest, to consider written requests from Cllr’s for the Council to grant a dispensation (S33 of the Localism Act 2011.)**  Cllr S Edge Meecebrook. Cllr M Ainsworth-Hickman Old Mill Farmhouse |
| **23/65** | **Election of Chair.**  Cllr R Hopley nominated Cllr M Ainsworth-Hickman seconded by Cllr S Edge. All Cllr’s in agreement. Cllr M Ainsworth-Hickman will continue as Chair. Declaration of Acceptance of Office signed and witnessed by the clerk. |
| **23/66** | **Election of Vice Chair.**  Cllr J Lawson nominated Cllr R Hopley seconded by Cllr B Jones. All Cllr’s in agreement. Cllr R Hopley will continue as Vice Chair. |
| **23/67** | **To accept and sign Terms of Reference.**  All Cllr’s present agreed and signed The Terms ofReference. |
| **23/68** | **To agree Lead and Deputy roles.**  All Cllr’s present agreed to continue with their lead and deputy roles |
| **23/69** | **Minutes and matters arising from the Parish Annual Meeting held on 9th May 2022.**  The minutes from the Annual Parish meeting held on 9th May 2022 were agreed as a true record of the meeting. |
| **23/70** | **Close of meeting.**  The meeting closed at 7.31pm |

*Sue Stokes*

Clerk to Chebsey Parish Council

25th May 2023

Signature.............................................................Chair Date.................................................................