

CHILBOLTON PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the 2024 ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY held on
Monday 22 April 2024, Chilbolton Village Hall, 18:30

PRESENT: Cllr Tony Ewer (TE) (Chairman), David Griffiths (DG) (Vice-Chairman), Geoff Cockram (GC), Julian Hudson (JH), Sue Larcombe (SL), George Marits (GM), HHC/TVBC Cllr David Drew (DD), Mandy Denyer (MD) (Clerk)
Members of public: 31
Apologies: Cllrs David Hall (DH) and Rick Franke (RF)

TE welcomed everybody to the meeting. The Annual Parish Assembly is held once a year and we decided to use this meeting to inform residents on what is going on in our village.

1. To sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2023: These were agreed and signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. To engage with residents of Chilbolton regarding the future aspirations of the village:

TE introduced Mrs Carole Marits (CM) (a member of the Strategy Working Group) who has compiled and analysed the latest village aspirations survey.

The slides used by CM can be found by clicking [here](#)

CM informed that 135 surveys were received and all comments were taken into consideration. By far the biggest priority at present is the water situation in the village. That is probably because it is current and if not it would likely be further down the list of priorities.

Because people applied different priorities on the form as to how we asked for the survey to be completed, in order to keep things fair and equitable, wherever there was a comment, a tick or a yes or anything from 1-5 they were given equal weighting as a priority.

On pages 2, and 4 3 of the presentation slides (attached above) you will see the priority count for the sections and categorising them as high, medium and low priorities.

Priorities that we consider to be high are where 50 or more people considered the matter to be a priority (i.e. c. 50% of those who responded). Those high priorities include more affordable homes, Maintaining or improving transport facilities, more properties available for downsizing, Support solar technology for the Parish and better mobile phone service.

On the lower end of the priority list (30 – 50 responses), there is a feeling that there sufficient retail facilities and that new businesses are not required, but those businesses that we have now in the village need continued support from residents to help then thrive.

Responses that received between 0 – 30 are not considered a priority at present for the CPC to consider taking forward.

On pages 5 and 6 of the presentation slides are comparisons between the survey taken in 2018 and the latest survey; the responses this time are not dissimilar. So on the whole the priorities have not changed for the village.

The full report gives a short summary for each section containing comments that relate to those sections, and there was a lot of commonality between the comments.

As a point of interest there were comments received regarding group purchase schemes. There are schemes available but not everyone knows about them, so perhaps those who run the schemes need to do some advertising to make people aware.

There are a lot of comments regarding mobile phone service. However, we asked that if someone does have a poor network service to let us know where the poor service is and who their network provider is. But unfortunately most people didn't provide this information. In order for the Parish Council to do anything about this we need more information and therefore another survey will have to be completed in order to get this information.

The next steps are for the Strategy Group to work through these priorities and present the findings to the Parish Council and work towards implementation as and when possible.

The full report can be found by clicking [here](#).

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TE asked those present if there were any questions regarding the survey.

One member of the public asked if the full report will be available to read. TE informed that the full report would be on the website in the next couple of days.

TE explained that the Aspiration survey results will be used as a guide in setting the priorities of the Parish Council.

Many thanks were given to CM for all her hard work in putting together such a detailed analysis of the survey.

3. To consult on Chilbolton Parish Council's project to install Village Gateways: GC gave a presentation using the [attached slides](#).

CPC have been investigating the possibility of installing village gateways at the three main entrances to the village as a speed mitigation measure. Studies have shown that village gateways can reduce speeds by up to 5mph, which could be the difference between life and death.

Village Gateways give the impression of the road narrowing. They also enhance the environment in that it shows the presence of a settlement. Chilbolton doesn't appear that much on road signs but when you get to the village we want to make an impression that you are moving from a rural environment into a settlement area.

There are numerous options available on the market which come in all shapes and sizes. As the verges into Chilbolton are narrow we would have to go for the narrowest options which are just less than 1 metre in width. (We are not sure if we can make and install our own as we have not had a response to our queries from HCC Highways). The guide price is c. £1500 per gateway.

The reason why we are discussing this matter with you at this meeting is that any grant funding would need to show community support.

GC showed those present some examples of Village Gateways (pg 2 of the slides above). CPC would like to have 20 (mph) / Chilbolton / Please Drive Carefully on the gateways.

The three potential locations would be Coley Lane at the Test Way/Coronation Green crossing to West Down, Martins Lane/Winchester Street near the allotments and Winchester Road coming from Wherwell (pg 3 of above slides).

Other considerations are painted road markings such as '20' or 'slow' or a coloured road surface (pg 4 of above slides).

GC asked those present if they agreed that installing 3 village gateways would enhance the village and perhaps improve safety in the village. C. 20 of those present raised their hand.

A member of the public suggested that 'sleeping policeman' would be better. After a brief discussion, GC asked for a show of hand to support this idea. 2 people raised their hands in support and 10 people raised their hands against the idea.

A member of public asked if CPC had considered speed indicator signs/cameras. GC responded that he had investigated this and briefly went through the implications of having such signs/cameras (pgs 6, 7 and 8 of the above slides). CPC, having discussed the matter, felt that the actions/effort required far exceeds any benefits.

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A member of the public suggested a narrowing of the road in places throughout the village (i.e. chicanes). As most people would have noticed speeds on Village Street near the pub and shop have reduced because of the SW tankers are taking up half of the road. GC responded that he would have to speak with HCC Highways to get options and plans from them.

A member of the public asked if there was any way of getting police enforcement. DD responded that unfortunately the police may be called away for matters that are of a higher priority.

In summary, GC said that the view at this meeting is that gateways are attractive from the point of view of a settlement demarcation and not so much as addressing speed. To address the matter of speed through the village CPC will investigate the options discussed this evening (i.e. sleeping policeman and chicanes) with HCC Highways and report back to the village at a later date.

4. Open discussion on volunteer opportunities for Chilbolton residents – how can you benefit?:

JH gave the following presentation: -

‘It is great to see so many people here tonight taking an interest in planning for the future of this special village where we live.

As you may be aware, so much of the work we do with and on behalf of local residents is done primarily by volunteers.

We would like to support and encourage more of you and other people you know to come and see what we do, and get involved with the activities that help to keep this place special.

We are a friendly bunch who are very happy to talk and to show you how we try to serve the community in constructive and positive ways.

In particular, the Open Spaces Committee will always welcome more people to help with conserving and maintaining our special Open Spaces, the Common, West Down and a number of other smaller spaces. You can find friendship and shared purpose in “gardening the village” and best of all, the more people who can lend us a hand on an occasional (or regular?!) basis, the easier the overall work becomes. If you love gardening and being outdoors, why not help gardening for Chilbolton as a whole?! We can also offer training and support to learn new skills or use equipment which is new to you.

As you have done tonight, coming along to Planning meetings allows you to understand better how we seek to conserve and enhance our beautiful village. You can bring your professional skills and knowledge to the table, and also learn from others new skills and how the village may be supported to develop.

We are keen to hear from you, both if you have ideas which you would like to bring forward or if you are curious about what we do, how you could help, and how to get more involved. Our contact details are published in every edition of the Parish magazine, as well as on the website at: Chilboltonparishcouncil.org.uk’.

A member of the public said that the demographic of those attending this evening are of the older generation and/or already volunteers. How do we get the younger demographic to help and volunteer. JH responded that word of mouth is key. Speak to your neighbours especially if they are of the younger generation. Also we would like to implement an outreach campaign whereby we have ‘champions’ to promote volunteering in our village.

A member of the public asked if there was a list of tasks that CPC need help with? JH responded that a list of tasks on a poster would not be the most eye-catching or engaging. But we do use the parish magazine and notice boards to advertise specific events, such as the West Down ragwort pull and Common ditch clearing.

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For example, if there are say 20 volunteers doing an hour each of ragwort pulling (which is not particularly strenuous work) we could cover a vast area and make a huge impact in a short time.

Largely the tasks of the Open Spaces Committee are physical tasks on West Down, the Common and footpaths/bridleways, such as clearing vegetation.

Footpaths/bridleways are highways that HCC are responsible for, but as everyone is aware they have no funds to maintain these. Therefore in order to keep our paths in a usable state we have to do the work ourselves. This was done by volunteers, but those volunteers are now ageing and ailing. New younger, fitter, more able bodied volunteers are required. The alternative is to use contractors to do the work and this will mean that the council tax/precept will need to be increased to cover these costs (as it has been this year).

You can help by being the 'eyes and ears' of the parish and report to us any concerns with footpaths or other matters. If you walk the footpaths on a regular basis, perhaps carry a pair of secateurs with you and trim back any bramble or vegetation that is encroaching onto the paths. Small tasks like this one all add up.

Whilst there are a lot of physical tasks, there are also administrative tasks that you could assist with. For example, helping GC investigate speed mitigation measures, find funding sources for specific projects, helping to bring projects to fruition, become a Strategy Working group member and assist in setting up a Community Land Trust which will be required to achieve the building of 20 new homes.

A member of the public asked if CPC could get the Duke of Edinburgh awards involved? JH – that is something we can look into.

A member of the public said that the Church also needs volunteers to assist with the annual fete. TE added that the Village Hall is also looking for a volunteer to run the film nights.

5. Southern Water (SW) pump house and pipe works in Chilbolton -
Introduction and recap on CPC action to date and how can residents help to increase Chilbolton as a SW priority?

GM informed those present that the issue of the flooding of the pump house is not a new thing. It happened in 2014. We have also been shown a letter from the Chairman of SW to resident of Chilbolton dated 1995 (attached [here](#)). So the same issue was happening nearly 30 years ago.

The main issue is ground water. As we all know it hasn't stopped raining and the latest information from the Environment Agency is that this is the highest amount of groundwater and river levels since 1890 then they started keeping records.

There are 2 distinct problems within our village. The first is that an awful lot of water gets onto the roads and then into the sewerage system. The 2nd issue is that there is a spring directly behind the pump house.

GM assumes that all sewage below Branksome Avenue comes to the pump house. Also all sewage from Wherwell is directed along passed Room Cottages to the pump house. It is then pumped up to Branksome Avenue and then gravity force fed down into the sewage works. The spring behind the pump house is pumping out water at a great weight and the pump can't cope.

The same issue was had in 2014 and SW increased the 'pumpage' of the pump. What they also did back in 2014 was to initiate the Infiltration Reduction Plan (IRP) in conjunction with the Environment Agency. (A generic Infiltration Reduction Plan/over- pumping arrangements can be viewed [here](#) and the Chilbolton plan can be viewed [here](#)).

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They have now put in a 'whisper pump' that pumps the water into the tankers which has helped to reduce the noise nuisance.

CPC have sent a letter to the CEO of SW and Head of Customer Services and a copy to Caroline Nokes MP to complain about the situation (attached [here](#)). The telephone response we got was basically 'sorry, we don't have any money'.

We have been asked many times what are CPC doing about the situation? GM informed that CPC have no statutory powers to make SW do anything or stop them implanting the IRP. We can write to them again highlighting that this is not a new issue and that they were aware of the problem and said they would fix the issue nearly 30 years ago.

GM introduced Mr Bunyan.

Mr Bunyan gave his view of SW by giving the attached [presentation](#).

What every individual can do is to write a letter of complaint. But not to write once, you need to write every time you are inconvenienced in some way (whether that is noise or disruption in the village eg). Every letter has to be responded to. If they do not respond within 10 working days you are entitled to £25.

Individuals that are eligible should also register on the Priority Services list.

There was a lengthy debate including one member of public, although not condoning SW's lack of action to address the issue in Chilbolton, said that we don't pay enough for our water and we don't historically value it as much as we do the petrol in our cars for example. The mention of millions of pounds of profit that these water companies makes are not actually a good return on their capital for the billions of pounds of investment that these companies put in. The issue is that the companies have not been set up properly, are terribly run and are not given the correct amount of investment by OfWat.

In addition, the problem is that the planning cycle and capital expenditure cycles for water companies is 5 to 10 years. What they are trying to deal with now is what has been historically been a once in a decade event. But with climate change these events are happening more often. They need to shorten their planning cycle and have emergency contingency plans in place and not just tankers which are horrendously expensive and disruptive in communities.

In summary each individual needs to complain to SW CEO and Head of Customer Services, not just once but often. There is a General Election approaching, residents should ask the specific question as to what the candidates plan to do about the situation and vote accordingly. And those that are eligible should register on the Priority Services list.

A member of the public asked if Chilbolton should join forces with other affected parishes to address the matter. TE informed that there already is a Pan Parish group that GM is a member of.

A member of the public asked if we could stop new developments within the parish to prevent further overloading of the infrastructure? TE informed that TVBC Planning do not take matters of infrastructure into account when giving planning permission. This is something that CPC has raised in response to the latest TVBC Local Plan consultation.

A member of the public asked if SW have ever been to any CPC meeting? GM responded that yes, they have but that was to discuss how to stop 'fat bergs'.

A member of the public asked if Chilbolton are doing enough to capture water? TE - this is something that we could look into.

TE thanked everyone for attending and participating in discussions.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was closed at 20:15.

Agreed and Signed (Chair)