

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF CHARMOUTH
HELD ON TUESDAY 1 APRIL 2025 AT THE VILLAGE HALL, WESLEY CLOSE

9 electors, 8 Councillors, Dorset Councillor Belinda Bawden, guest speakers were present.

1. The Chair, Cllr Jane Bremner, welcomed Charmouth parishioners to the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting.
 2. Apologies were received from Cllr Judith Sheppard, Cllr Matt Smith and Phil Tritton (on behalf of Charmouth Traders Association).
 3. The Chair explained that the meeting had been advertised in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 using the Statutory Notice.
 4. The Minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting had been displayed on the website and were also available around the room. The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.
 5. Matters arising from the minutes – There were no matters arising from the minutes.
 6. Jane Bremner introduced the 8 Councillors present (Jane Bremner, Melanie Harvey, Julie Leah, Katie Moore, Peter Noel, Sally Roberts, Martin Sayers and Mike Smith).
 7. Guest Speakers gave presentations:
 - Toni Powell of Dorset Coast Forum introduced the officers present who would be dealing with the Future Coast Charmouth Project (previously known as Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme), Elliott Saloman-Carter (DC Project Officer) and Matthew Smith (Dorset Coast Forum). Elliott went on to explain that the project is progressing into Phase 1 which is still mainly community engagement and research into the 9 items identified from previous engagement. He stated that it is understood that continued access to west beach is very important to the village. He encouraged attendees to come and look at the display stand at the end of the meeting.
 - Julie Leah spoke on behalf of the River Char Action Group and that their main focus for the past year has been increasing public awareness about the state of the river through the release of an extensive report, continued testing of the water quality, cleaning up of nurdles, increased engagement with the school and community focusing on wildlife and the upcoming 2nd River Dragon Festival on 31 May 2025. The Festival involves some upcoming costume making workshops, Misty the Dragon coming out of hiding at the Heritage Coast Centre, a scavenger hunt, display of local art and a display from Future Coast Dorset.
 - Dorset Councillor Belinda Bawden, spoke about Dorset Council in the National context, the impact of the change in administration in Dorset Council as well as the new Government, listening to views through audits/consultations/surveys and she encouraged people to share their views on up coming items (Adult Day Services; Housing Needs Survey; Local Plan and Local Transport Plan; Road Safety and 20mph questionnaire). Belinda reported that she holds regular surgeries at the Library and Bank House Café. Jane Bremner thanked Belinda for her ongoing support.
 8. Reports from Chairs of Parish Council Committees:
 - Foreshore Committee (Katie Moore, Vice Chair) – Katie updated the meeting on the following items from the Foreshore Committee:
 - The VE Day 80th Anniversary will be marked by a Beacon Lighting on West Green at 9.30pm on Thursday 8 May together with a bugler and singing of the hymn, “I vow to thee my Country”. The new High Sherrif of Dorset, Callum Bremner, will say a few words;
 - 12 new sturdier beach huts will be in place by the end of April to replace the existing blue huts;
 - New fencing will be constructed around the reed bed and the Council staff have been making bird boxes for the reed bed;
 - The Environment Working Group and the Council staff will be undertaking some planting behind the green beach huts to tidy up the area.
- Katie thanked all the maintenance staff for their ongoing hard work in keeping Charmouth as we like it.
- Playing Field, Cemetery and Street Management Committee (Martin Sayers, Vice Chair) – Martin talked about the different areas of responsibility of the Committee:
 - Cemetery: Refurbishment of the bridge between the existing burial ground and the newer extension; pruning of a number of potentially dangerous trees; new heaters for the chapel;
 - Playing Field: Refurbishment of the climbing frame as requested by the insurance company; redecoration of the pavilion; purchase of plaques commemorating the gift of oak trees from Lyme Regis Rotary Club and the Lottery Grant for last year’s new play area equipment; planning of a new

information board at the entrance to the playing field; use of the junior football pitch by Lyme Regis Youth Football Club for practice and matches; limited resurfacing of Barr's Lane with a contribution from the Lane's owner; following the disbandment of the Bowling Club, holding of the green for a further year in case there is re-newed interest in continued use for bowling.

- Street Management: upgrading of the SW coast path signing through the village by Dorset Council; application to DC for parking restrictions in Double Common, following complaints about road safety and a survey of residents.

- Planning Committee (Julie Leah, Chair) – Julie explained that no members of the current committee are experts in Planning and therefore the Neighbourhood Plan is critical as a reference document and is key to the comments made. She explained how the process worked and that special meetings are held if necessary to deal with contentious issues in between scheduled meetings. 20 planning applications and 13 tree surgery applications had been received during 2024/25. The Committee is also aiming to work more closely with Dorset Council to understand its processes. In response to the awareness of the lack of affordable accommodation, the Council is arranging a Housing Needs Survey in conjunction with Dorset Community Action's Rural Housing Enabler. Eden Thomson asked about the registration of the medieval wall as a Heritage Asset and Julie confirmed that this is still being chased up.

Belinda mentioned that she used to comment on applications as the ward member but she is now a member of Dorset Council's Planning Committee and feels that channel is a better way to use her voice.

- Finance and General Purposes Committee (Peter Noel, Chair) – Peter reported that all the Council owned properties are currently occupied and the car park income has met the budgeted figure for 2024/25. He explained that the Council undergoes two audits, one internal which is actually conducted by external auditors and then a further audit when figures are submitted at the end of the year. Both audits were completed successfully for 2023/24. Fortunately, the Clerk copes with this and all the paperwork coming down from Government. The budgets for the coming year take into account the increase in employers National Insurance Contributions for which no Government help is received, as well as the gradual replacement of beach huts with better quality products which, although more expensive, should last longer. Reserves are held as it is never known what is round the corner.

9. Report from the Chair of the Parish Council – Jane Bremner spoke about:

- The Council's entry for South West in Bloom 2025 which is the third year of entering and builds on the Silver Gilt Awarded last year. Led by the Environment Working Group, tidy up working parties will be held in May/June before the judging in July. Increased planting of bulbs, hedging and trees has been undertaken in various locations and Traders are once again encouraged to take part – the Council are very grateful for their support. Promotion of nature and wildlife is very much a focus, with management of the reedbed, protection of the anthills and wildlife friendly mowing regimes where possible.
- The upcoming Housing Needs Survey for which posters will be displayed imminently followed by a leaflet drop to all households when the survey goes live in mid April. The survey will be available for one month and help will be available if required to complete it. Jane explained that it is hoped to follow the model of Buckland Newton who are uniquely managing their own development of affordable housing to ensure that this remains occupied by local people and has ultimately helped to save several facilities in the village from closing. To qualify, people must be on the Housing Register. This could be a very exciting project for Charmouth but to manage expectation, it will probably be at least three years before completion.

Belinda asked if the Council planned to set up a Community Land Trust and hoped that the Lyme Regis group could help with this.

10. Q&A Session – for residents to address the meeting in respect of any matter relevant to the Parish as a whole:

Q. Chris Lakeman-Fraser asked Elliott Saloman-Carter what the division of funds between Charmouth and Swanage would be – it was confirmed that this hadn't been decided at this stage although there is a high priority to deliver tangible results rather than just research.

Q. Eden Thomson asked how any new development would impact second homes – it was confirmed that through a Community Land Trust, any new homes would be protected.

Matt Smith from Dorset Coast Forum stated that he is looking forward to getting to know Charmouth in the coming months.

Jane Bremner thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm. Coffee was served.