

**EXMOOR PANEL
MINUTES
Tuesday 2 September 2014
Winsford Village Hall, Winsford**

Those present:

S Pugsley (Chair)	
J Stringer, Brompton Ralph PC	C Knight, Brushford PC
R Webber, Cutcombe PC	L Schofield, Dulverton TC
M Rawle, Dulverton TC	N Thwaites, Dulverton TC
M Ellicott, Exford PC	A Vigars, Exmoor PC
F Rawle, Exton PC	D Langley, Exton PC
D Powell, Luxborough PC	A Wright, Porlock PC
K Lindop, Winsford PC	D Godsal, Winsford PC
F Bray, Winsford PC	T Howard, Withypool & Hawkridge PC
P Griffin, Wootton Courtenay PC	
PC S Hurley, Avon and Somerset Constabulary	T Saunders, ENPA
R Manicom and F Gabb, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue	
T Murray, Magna Housing Association	F Nicholson, SCC
D Peake and K Harwood, SCC Highways	K J Ross, WSC
B Heywood, WSC	B Lang, WSC
J Edwards	O Edwards

1 Have Your Say

- 1.1 A request was made as to how the police should be contacted in the event of any problems occurring on the diversion routes during the road closures in Dunster in the period January-March 2015. The police representatives at the Panel meeting agreed to take this issue away and report back.
- 1.2 Concern was raised regarding tombstoning and causing a nuisance on the bridge on the road adjacent to Wimbleball Lake. The police stated that in terms of tombstoning they could only give advice about persons behaving themselves and it would be the responsibility of the landowners to take any action. If a nuisance was being caused on the highway then this would be a police matter to address.

2. Apologies for Absence

- 2.1 Councillor B Foster, Selworthy and Minehead Without PC, Councillor R Coyne, Dulverton TC, Councillor A Sparling, Luxborough PC and West Somerset Councillor K Mills.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 June 2014 and Matters Arising

- 3.1 Agreed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting.
- 3.2 Matters arising:

- It was reported that there had not been much progress in terms of self-help on the parish/town councils in terms of using the Parish Lengthsman to repair finger posts; the main problem being the difficulty of cleaning off the existing paintwork. It was agreed that an e-mail would be sent on behalf of the Panel to

Somerset County Council requesting that consideration be given to the principle of the highways authority arranging for the sand blasting off of the old paint work on finger posts that needed repainted.

4 Police Issues

- 4.1 PC S Hurley reported on crime figures in the Exmoor Panel area since the last meeting. There had been a trend of thefts from motor vehicles across the Panel area which generally occurred on a particular day and was difficult to respond to as the perpetrators were likely to have left the area before reports of a theft were made; nevertheless there was hope that this issue was being resolved.
- 4.2 A general question was asked in regard to how much information the police were prepared to give out in regard to the incident of a crime occurring in a particular parish. For example, was it possible to indicate the time and place of an incident so that the local community could become more vigilant or feedback information? The police representatives undertook to look into this and report back.

5 Magna West Somerset Housing Association

- 5.1 Tony Murray, Magna West Somerset Director, addressed the meeting and drew attention to the annual report which was circulated with the agenda.
- 5.2 He referred to the fact that 41 properties had been let in the Exmoor Panel area in the previous 12 month period. There was a pattern of a higher turnover in rural areas which was probably due to a combination of the age structure of the population and a trend of people moving out of villages to try and access work opportunities etc.
- 5.3 He confirmed that there was an ongoing programme of improving central heating in those areas where there was no gas supply by the introduction of air source heat pump heating; there was generally positive feedback with most tenants saying that this had resulted in lower fuel bills.
- 5.4 A discussion ensued regarding the Homefinder process for people applying for vacant housing association properties. Tony Murray confirmed that they were trying to ensure local people were made aware of vacancies. The parties were encouraged to work together to ensure that people interested in letting housing association properties did come forward at the right time to take advantage of any opportunities.
- 5.5 A specific question was raised in regard to a bungalow in Withypool where it was claimed that the garden had been sold off thereby making the property much less attractive to rent; Tony Murray undertook to look into this matter and to report back to the Withypool Parish Council.
- 5.6 Tony Murray explained why it was now more difficult for housing associations to access monies for new build; nevertheless there were hopes that new developments would occur in Alcombe, Watchet and hopefully Dulverton and would contain some one-bedroom properties as there appeared to be a shortage of supply of such accommodation.

- 5.7 Reference was made to a report being prepared in regard to future housing needs in the Exmoor area and Tony Murray agreed to arrange for the report's findings to be sent directly to all parish and town councils in the Exmoor Panel area.
- 5.8 Tony Murray was thanked by the Chairman for his presentation and answers to the questions raised.

6 SCC Highways

- 6.1 Karin Harwood and David Peake from Somerset County Council Highways attended for this item. Many of the issues had been covered in the earlier Highway Wardens meeting.
- 6.2 Discussion centred around ongoing concerns relating to the standard of hedge trimming/grass cutting and potholes which were not being repaired in the Exmoor Panel area.
- 6.3 In response to a particular issue about claiming for damages as a result of a vehicle driving through a pothole, it was advised that the correct process was to make a claim through the motorist insurance against the Highways Authority.
- 6.4 Examples were put forward of problems regarding hedge trimming and road surface conditions including Exton Hill and Jury Road, Dulverton.
- 6.5 Karin Harwood requested parishes to email her directly on kiharwood@somerset.gov.uk setting out specific concerns and she undertook to ensure that these matters will be considered and a reply sent giving an indication of what could be done. If any parish/individual felt that a visit from Karin Harwood on site to look at the problems directly then please make this request and Karin would make every effort to attend.
- 6.6 In response to a question about raising the possibility of the provision of signs warning motorists that roads were being used by horses, the advice was to ask the local parish/town council to make a formal request to the Highways Authority who would then arrange for the appropriate consultation process to be undertaken.
- 6.7 Concern was also expressed regarding responsibility for trees adjacent to the highway that were causing a nuisance and it was confirmed that this is likely to be the responsibility of the landowners although people were advised to contact the Highways Authority and let them know of specific examples so these could be appropriately investigated.
- 6.8 The County Councillor made the general point that there could be value in providing as much clarity as possible in advance of the growing season for 2015 of precisely what hedge trimming/grass cutting the County Council would be able to provide so that local landowners could plan to "fill in the gaps" should they wish to.
- 6.9 The Chairman thanked Karin and David for listening to so many issues and undertaking to take action where appropriate.

7 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

- 7.1 Rob Manicom reported that the Porlock Station had responded to 34 calls since the last meeting of the Panel, the majority of which were co-responder calls. The

station currently had nine personnel (with up to twelve being permitted) and were hopeful that two new applicants were potentially about to apply to join the team. A new pager system was about to be introduced which was hoped would speed up response times.

- 7.2 Frank Gabb reported that the Dulverton Station had responded to 38 calls since the last Panel meeting, the majority of which were, once again, co-responder calls. The station was currently manned by ten personnel (with a scope to go up to a maximum of twelve).

8 Exmoor National Park Authority

- 8.1 Tessa Saunders reported on a mobile infrastructure project, which was a government scheme, a total amount of £150 million available nationally, to address the problem of blank spots for mobile phone coverage. There had been good news that morning with planning permission being granted for a mast in the Roadwater parish. It was hoped that other initiatives will also now come forward to benefit from this scheme.

- 8.2 She also advised that there were new updated maps on the website in regard to the Connecting Devon and Somerset Broadband project. It was clear that things were happening for the rollout of broadband in the area but to date no specific dates for when communities would be connected were publically available.

9 Parish Lengthsman Scheme and Update

- 9.1 Dulverton Town Council representatives reported that generally the scheme was progressing well with the Lengthsman having received up-to-date training to enable him to work on the highways. There was an administrative problem in that to date none of the parishes (except Timberscombe and Wootton Courtenay) had been returning worksheets confirming what work had been done as was part of the agreement and so all those parishes were requested to do so as soon as possible.

- 9.2 It was also requested that West Somerset Council will consider making a further annual contribution towards the scheme of £3,000 for the 2015/16 financial year.

10 Items brought forward by Parishes

- 10.1 None

11 Dates and Venues of Future Meetings

- 4 November 2014 at 7.00pm – Winsford Village Hall
- 20 January 2015 at 7.00pm – Winsford Village Hall
- 5 March 2015 at 7.00pm – Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm