

**EXMOOR PANEL  
MINUTES  
Thursday 7 November 2013  
Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross**

**Those present:**

S Pugsley (Chair)	
J Davies, Cutcombe PC	R Coyne, Dulverton TC
M Rawle, Dulverton TC	M Ellicott, Exford PC
A Sparling, Luxborough PC	G C Sparling, Luxborough PC
D Walker, Skilgate Parish	B Flanagan, Winsford PC
P Griffin, Wootton Courtenay PC	L Whetlor, Watchet TC
S Wilson, Dulverton Patient Group	F Nicholson, SCC
D Peake and K Harwood, SCC Highways	T Saunders, ENPA
K Mills, WSC	B Lang, WSC
PCSOs B Stevens and K Williams, Avon and Somerset Constabulary	
F Gabb, M Andrews and M Carnell, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue	

**1 Apologies for Absence**

- 1.1 M Washington-Smith, Huish Champflower PC; T Staples Winsford PC; J Hickman, Exford PC; N Thwaites, Dulverton TC; District Councillor K Turner, District Councillor K Ross, District Councillor B Heywood and John Edwards.

**2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 September 2013 and Matters Arising**

- 2.1 Agreed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting, subject to under the list of those present F Staples be amended to T Staples, Winsford PC.
- 2.2 There were no matters arising.

**3 Police Issues**

- 3.1 PCSO Bryan Stevens and PCSO Katherine Williams attended. Apologies were given for the absence of the Exmoor Panel police representatives as they had been called away at short notice to an incident and the two PCSO's who attended had stepped in to cover them. Crime figures for the Exmoor Panel area were not therefore available and would be emailed in due course for circulation to parishes.
- 3.2 It was reported that it was hoped within the very near future that Exmoor would have a new dedicated beat officer recruited. In general terms, crime figures for the Panel area were quite low although they had been distorted over the past few months due to the carrying out of the badger cull. The crime figures for the Exmoor Panel area provided after the meeting are attached as an appendix to these minutes.
- 3.3 In response to a request from Exford Parish Council to receive the traffic training for volunteers, the police representatives undertook to liaise directly with the parish council and get the arrangements finalised.

## 4 SCC Highways

- 4.1 In response to a question, in regard to the reporting of falling trees on the highways, the public were recommended to call 0845 345 9155 between 8am and 6pm on Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm on Saturday morning to report any incidents through Somerset Direct. Out of hours it would be best to call the police using the 101 number.
- 4.2 Concern was raised regarding the issue in the winter of cars getting stuck on ungritted roads and whether it was possible for road closure signs to be erected. Whilst this was a difficult issue to tackle at the moment due to the various rules and regulations, reference was made to a Community Resilience in Somerset project where agencies were working together initially to focus on flooding problems whereby the power to close roads was being permitted. The next stage would be to consider extending this initiative to cover winter conditions as well and this was generally welcomed by the Panel.
- 4.3 David Peake reported that the highways authority were issuing winter information leaflets to all parishes which would include confirming that supplies of salt could be collected from the Minehead highways depot on 23 November 2013 between 9am and 1pm.
- 4.4 Road and drainage plans were handed out to those parishes who had asked for them with a request that local people let him know if they had any information that was currently missing. The offer was also made for other parishes who had not requested plans to do so.
- 4.5 Concern was raised by two members of the public in regard to the inconvenience caused by recent road closures in Dulverton and particularly the detrimental impact it was having on local traders.
- 4.6 Karin Harwood reported that this problem was being exacerbated by some of the directional signs being stolen and that this was only serving to prolong the works and inconvenience to all concerned.
- 4.7 There was a specific request for clear signage at the beginning of any works requiring road closures that set out the precise times of when particular roads were to be closed.
- 4.8 There was also a request for when the road closures were not in operation during a period of works that all signs both instructional and advisory be knocked over to avoid any confusion and frustration.
- 4.9 The highways representatives agreed that they would go back and talk with the private contractor to try and minimise disruption to local people, traders and holiday makers during the current works and urged the local community to do all it could to spread the word that stealing of signs was counterproductive.
- 4.10 Reference was also made to similar problems being experienced relating to Wessex Water works in Porlock.
- 4.11 Roger Webber suggested that perhaps what Lady Street in Dulverton needed was a flyover! In response to a question it was confirmed that any damage to

directional signs could be reported to the highways authority either online or by phone.

- 4.12 The highway representatives advised that an opportunity to fund a significant drainage improvement scheme to the highway between Wheddon Cross and Exford had occurred. To do this effectively it would require a road closure possibly for up to nine weeks from 20 January to 28 March 2014 between 9am and 3.30pm Monday to Friday. The representatives stressed that this was only a suggestion and they would welcome the views of the local community before making a final decision.
- 4.13 Panel members were concerned at the inconvenience but generally felt this opportunity to have the works should not be lost and it was agreed that representatives from Exford and Cutcombe Parish Council would meet with Somerset County Council highway representatives as soon as possible to agree an appropriate way forward.
- 4.14 Representatives from Dulverton Town Council thanked the highway representatives for all their prompt response to remove blockages in the river at Dulverton.

## **5 Exmoor National Park Authority Issues**

- 5.1 Tessa Saunders confirmed that the draft local plan for Exmoor is out for consultation from 4 November 2013 to 13 December 2013.
- 5.2 All parish and town councils in the Park area had been sent a copy and consultation meetings were scheduled to be held on 11, 13, 18, 21 and 26 November. If parishes were struggling to make the closing date of the consultation period could they please let the National Park know as soon as possible so individual arrangements could be agreed.
- 5.3 All parishes and local communities were encouraged to participate in this process as it was important as it would shape policies that would affect the lives of local communities in the future.

## **6 Parish Lengthsman Scheme**

- 6.1 A request was made to the relevant district councillors whose parishes were participating in the scheme to urge their parishes to comply with the various administrative requirements to ensure that the scheme could run smoothly.
- 6.2 At this stage the intention was to continue with the scheme into the 2014/15 financial year.

## **7 Dulverton Patient Group**

- 7.1 A presentation was made by Sandra Wilson, Chair of the Dulverton Patient Group for the Exmoor Medical Centre. She explained that the group had been set up in January 2004 and currently had 20 unpaid volunteers whose main role was to support the local doctor's practice and help to improve services and facilities for the local patients.

- 7.2 The Group were active on particular projects such as fund raising for a car to deliver prescriptions and tried to work with the practice to meet the needs of patients with such difficult issues as the introduction of new appointment systems.
- 7.3 The Group participated in the West Somerset Health Forum and linked with other nearby patient groups from other surgery practices.
- 7.4 The County Councillor explained the wider context of the Clinical Commissioning Group for Somerset which covered nine GP federations and it was confirmed that a key role for patient groups was to influence medical services at the county wide level.
- 7.5 Sandra was keen to encourage new people to join the Group and was happy to come and make further presentations to the Panel in the future.

## **8 Fire Service Update**

- 8.1 Concerns had been raised by Dulverton Town Council regarding the loss of experienced fire fighters and the future of the co-respondent system.
- 8.2 Representatives from the fire service reassured the Panel that steps were being taken to recruit new fire fighters and a recruitment evening was planned for 3 December 2013.
- 8.3 In addition it was recognised that the new rules regarding co-responders and being expected to respond on their own did cause particular challenges for rural areas and that the service was being proactive to support co-responders to find a compromise that would enable this vital service to be continued.
- 8.4 The fire representatives also stressed that a lot of emphasis was being placed on preventative work and this should have a positive impact on fire figures.
- 8.5 The fire service was developing community plans and encouraged people to go onto the website to contribute – [www.dsfire.gov.uk](http://www.dsfire.gov.uk)
- 8.6 If Panel members had any issues or concerns then the best contact was Mark Andrews, Station Manager Tel. 01823 365351 / 07880 735265 Email [mandrews@dsfire.gov.uk](mailto:mandrews@dsfire.gov.uk)
- 8.7 In response to a question it was confirmed that recruitment for fire fighters at Porlock was proving a challenge given the local demographics.

## **9 Items to be brought forward by Parishes**

- 9.1 A paper was circulated regarding issues relating to the provision of broadband in rural areas which is appended to the minutes of this meeting.

## **10 Dates and Venues of Future Meetings**

- 23 January 2014 at 7pm at Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross
- 6 March 2014 at 7pm at Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm