

**EXMOOR PANEL
MINUTES
Thursday 8 March 2012
Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross**

Those present:

Chris Nelder, Dulverton TC, Vice-Chairman (In the Chair)	
Roger Webber, Cutcombe PC	Nick Thwaites, Dulverton TC
Rod Coyne, Dulverton TC	J Churchill, Luccombe PC
John Bray, Winsford PC	Chris Giddings, Clatworthy PC
Tessa Saunders, ENPA	David Peake, SCC Highways
Brian Stevens, Avon & Somerset Constabulary	Karen Mills, Cllr WSC
Keith Ross, Cllr WSC	Keith Turner, Cllr WSC
Frances Nicholson, Cllr SCC	Bruce Lang, WSC

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Alan Vigers Exmoor PC, Geoff Mason Timberscombe PC, Steven Pugsley WSC and Frank Gabb Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

2 Have Your Say

- 2.1 There were no specific items raised under this heading.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 January 2012

- 3.1 Subject to paragraph 6.4 being amended to read "It was explained that where public utilities were doing works that required road closures, it was the responsibility of the Somerset County Council to specify the directional diversion signs required and the responsibility of the public utility to erect, maintain and remove these signs. In addition, the public utility would be responsible for consulting with the community in regard to the provision of any additional information signs." the notes be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4 Police Issues

- 4.1 The police representative reported that generally since the last meeting of the Panel crime figures in this part of West Somerset had been relatively low. Nevertheless the day before the meeting a series of burglaries and attempted burglaries relating to eight or nine properties had occurred in the Porlock area and this was causing great concern.
- 4.2 He made reference to the Rural Community Mounted Volunteers Scheme which had recently been formally launched.
- 4.3 He also reported that at the Cutcombe Market to be held on 15 March fire advice was going to be provided to the farming communities. There was some concerns that this initiative had been arranged at relatively short notice and so the attendance might not be as high as would be hoped.

- 4.4 There was also a suggestion from the Panel that the police may wish to consider utilising dog walkers in the same way as they were using horse riders to provide the eyes and ears to assist the police in their work.

5 SCC Highways Report

- 5.1 David Peake reported on works in the Exmoor Panel – see attached Appendix A.
- 5.2 Various detailed questions were raised by members of the Panel relating to issues in the Exmoor Panel area.
- 5.3 In response to a request it was explained that the current “pothole policy” was based on a matrix that matched road category with the severity of the depth of the pothole which determined which potholes were filled and in what priority order. As an indication, any pothole at least 40 mm in depth in a carriageway would be considered worthy of intervention and if the depth exceeded 100 mm then it would become an urgent matter. It was agreed that this policy should be circulated to all parish clerks.
- 5.4 There was also a request to try and provide information to parishes on prospective road works particularly where diversions were involved more regularly and it was agreed that the regular bulletins sent by the County Council to West Somerset Council would then be forwarded to the mailing lists of the four area panels.

6 Consideration of Boundary Commission Review for the Dulverton and Exmoor County Council Division

- 6.1 Somerset County Councillor Frances Nicholson reported that the Boundary Commission’s latest consultation document had indicated that the proposed County Council Exmoor ward was going to be bigger than expected and would cover 24 parishes (18 parish councils) and that despite concerns being expressed at the large geographical area that this would involve it was likely that this proposal would be confirmed given the relatively sparse population in this part of the County. She asked all the parishes to give some consideration as to how the County Councillor for this ward could best interact with the parishes following the next County Council election in May 2013 when the new boundary was likely to come into force.
- 6.2 One suggestion was to take advantage of virtual contact via emails although it was recognised that some parts of Exmoor still did not have broadband.
- 6.3 It was also noted that should these changes be confirmed there may need to be a review of the current structure of area panels within West Somerset.
- 6.4 A breakdown that shows where wards have been proposed to be moved compared to the existing situation is appended to these Minutes as Appendix B.

7 Presentation on behalf of the Alzheimer's Society

- 7.1 A presentation was given by Steve Haigh, Countywide Dementia Awareness Worker. He reported that there were lower than expected levels of Alzheimer's recorded in West Somerset and this could be due to a mixture of the geographical nature of the area in communicating about this issue and/or a reluctance by many older people to approach their GP with their concerns. He made reference to the "memory café" and "singing for the brain" facilities that were both available in Minehead for people suffering from Alzheimer's.
- 7.2 He asked members of the Panel to spread the word regarding the illness and encourage people to approach their GP as there was treatment to help in such circumstances. He left a series of information leaflets with contact details including:
Alzheimer's Society in Somerset - telephone number 01935 473597
www.dementiasomerset.org.uk

8 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service Issues

- 8.1 Apologies had been received from the fire and rescue service representative so there was no presentation on this item. Members of the Panel did make reference to the fact that there were proposals to light bonfires/beacons in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee on 4 June 2012 and that the fire service had a special central number for organisers to contact to confirm what the appropriate arrangements should be.

9 Exmoor National Park Authority Issues

- 9.1 The latest consultation period in respect of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan had been undertaken between November and January and so responses from this process were currently being analysed. The Preferred Strategy was currently being drafted and the National Park would be contacting parishes within the next few months to find out what their main issues, themes and aspirations were.
- 9.2 Members of the Panel then asked some detailed questions about planning related issues.
- 9.3 It was also noted that a consultation process on the governance of the National Parks was currently being undertaken.

10 Parish Lengthsman Scheme and Update

- 10.1 The Chairman reported that the Scheme was facing a particular challenge at the moment due to an unfortunate accident that would mean that the Lengthsman would be unable to carry out his duties until some time in April. He was also still clarifying what the funding position was in regard to 2012/13 financial year.
- 10.2 A representative from Clatworthy Parish Council attended to find out more about the Scheme as Clatworthy and neighbouring parishes were considering either setting up their own scheme or possibly considering joining the Exmoor

Lengthsman Scheme. The Chairman explained the basic principles behind the Scheme and said that much more detailed information could be obtained from the Clerk to Dulverton Town Council.

- 10.3 It was agreed that the Chairman should be supported in his efforts to keep the Scheme progressing and if necessary that he should call a special meeting of participating parishes to help him in this regard.

11 Items brought forward by Parishes

- 11.1 A representative from Winsford Parish Council made reference to the current housing needs survey and encouraged as many people as possible to complete this survey to assist the West Somerset Rural Housing Project.
- 11.2 District Councillor Karen Mills explained an innovative project in Porlock to provide a new apple orchard/wildlife meadow and recommended that if any Panel members were interested they should look at the Pictorial Meadows website.

12 Note taker for Next Meeting

- 12.1 This item prompted a discussion on the nature of future panel meetings and possible approaches to encourage greater attendance. The Panel acknowledged that the arrangements for servicing the panels had changed significantly since they were first set up. It was also noticed that attendance by parishes was disappointing and it was agreed that the opportunity should be made at the next meeting of the Panel to have a fuller discussion on the whole issue of lack of attendance and whether the structure of the meetings could be changed/made more flexible to encourage more parishes to become involved.
- 12.2 It was agreed that the Chairman should be briefed on this matter in advance of the next meeting.

13 Dates and Venues for 2012

- 21 June 2012 at 7.00 pm at the Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross
- 4 September 2012 at 7.30 pm at Winsford Village Hall
- 6 November 2012 at 7.00 pm at Winsford Village Hall