

## Dunster Panel

### Notes of Meeting held on 11 April 2011

#### at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton

#### Present

Marilyn Crothers (Chairman); Jean Humber (Withycombe Parish Council); Inspector Lisa Simpson (Avon & Somerset Constabulary); Ron Buckingham (Elworthy Parish Council); Margaret Smith and Phil Gannon (Old Cleeve Parish Council); Steve Eggar (Roadwater Village Trust); Nigel Stone (Exmoor National Park Authority); Jim Kent (West Somerset Seniors Forum); Christine Lawrence, Keith Turner, Bruce Lang and Claire Richards (WSC).

Marilyn Crothers welcomed everyone and introductions were made.

#### **1. “Have Your Say” – Community Issues**

Margaret Smith raised concerns about the approach to the new Minehead Hospital. She praised the new hospital, but stated that the approach to it was currently letting it down a bit appearance wise with the road looking unfinished and grass long, weeds high etc, and she also felt that the signage could be improved.

In reply, Bruce Lang advised that there was an official opening ceremony on 3 May 2011 and that perhaps NHS Somerset would be tidying up the area beforehand. He also advised that some of the verges and adjoining land were in the Council's ownership and may be an extra special effort could be made to maintain these before the opening ceremony.

Margaret Smith also raised concerns surrounding the recycling centres in Williton and Minehead and advised that a lot of people would now find it difficult as they were to close on two consecutive days, which would lead to traffic jams on the days the centres were open. Ron Buckingham suggested the centres could be open from 12 noon to 8.00 pm. Jean Humber was also concerned about the charges for the disposal of hardcore and other items. Those present also felt there had been a lack of information about the change in opening hours.

Bruce Lang advised that the Somerset Waste Board, on which the Council had two Councillors, monitored the Somerset Waste Partnership contract. He stressed that if members of the public had concerns they should make them known to the Council in order that they could be fed back to the Somerset Waste Board.

#### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Brompton Ralph Parish Council; Dunster Parish Council; Pamela and Frank Scragg, Old Cleeve Parish Council; Devon & Somerset Fire Service; SCC Highways and Loretta Whetlor, WSSP.

#### **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 January 2011 and Matters Arising**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 January 2011 were agreed.

#### **4. Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP**

Unfortunately Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP, was unable to attend the meeting on the night.

## 5. Police Report

Inspector Simpson advised that the crime year was the same as the tax year, 5<sup>th</sup> April 2010 to 4<sup>th</sup> April 2011, and for this period, there had been 173 incidents recorded in the Panel area. This compared with 188 incidents during tax year 2009/10, a reduction of 8% or 15 less victims of crime. Unfortunately, there had been an increase in dwelling and non-dwelling burglaries. The breakdown of crimes was as follows –

6 Dwelling burglaries  
46 Non-dwelling burglaries  
4 Thefts of Motor Vehicles  
7 Thefts from motor vehicles  
33 Criminal Damage  
17 Serious thefts

The detection rate for the Panel area in 2010/11 was 59.50%, an increase of 13.49% from 2009/10.

The Breakdown by Beat was –

Dunster	approx 30% increase
Brompton Ralph & Haddon	approx 16% increase
Carhampton & Withycombe	approx 21% decrease
Old Cleeve	approx 26% decrease

She confirmed the Police were keen to work more closely with the public in the forthcoming year as she did not accept they were visible enough or easily contactable, especially with front offices closing or reducing their hours, and she asked for the Panel's help in getting this message across to members of the public.

Those present stated that a Police presence at Parish Council meetings was appreciated and she advised that it was their intention for at least a PCSO to attend every Parish Council meeting or, at the least, provide a written report.

It was suggested to Inspector Simpson that the Active Living Centres in Alcombe, Withycombe and Porlock would be good places to attend and Inspector Simpson agreed to make a note of this.

Finally, Inspector Simpson confirmed that due to the financial restraints, the Sergeant post at Dulverton was being cut. This would mean that she would only have two Sergeants, which in turn could mean a drop in management in the Panel's area.

## 6. Highways

Bruce Lang read out the email from David Peake as follows –

“The main item of work that will be undertaken in the first quarter of the new financial year in the Dunster panel Area will be the 2011 summer surface dressing programme. David Peake will be writing shortly to parish clerks to let them know which roads will be dressed as part of this programme along with the approximate timing for each of them.

Parishes are also invited to think about the roads in their area and to suggest ones for consideration for possible inclusion in the summer of 2012 programme. Please pass any suggestions onto your usual Somerset County Council Highways contacts, either in person, letter or email, or let us know at the next Dunster Area Panel meeting.”

Keith Turner raised concern that he had received no communication from highways regarding the various issues raised at the last meeting and Bruce Lang agreed to email

these through to David Peake again and ask him, or someone from highways, to contact Keith direct.

Phil Gannon advised that he had held a meeting with David Peake about the surfacing of Huish Lane at Washford and alleged poor work by the contractor concerned and said that he had been told of another example of alleged poor work by the same contractor in West Quantoxhead.

## 7. Exmoor National Park Report

Nigel Stone advised that –

- the Exmoor National Park had now come to the conclusion of the £400,000 Government grant from the Department of Energy and Climate Change, which was to encourage reduction in energy use and use of renewable energy by communities. The money had to be spent by the end of March and, working with community groups, etc, everything was completed on time. The whole process had culminated in a presentation by the tv presenter, Dick Strawbridge, at the Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross. Nigel advised that the programme could be rolled out to other community groups, etc, areas and to let the Park know if they were interested, although it would primarily focus on areas within the Park.

Steve Eggar, Roadwater Village Trust, advised that they had secured a grant for renewable energy works from the project and were very pleased with the work. He said that if anyone was interested in seeing the work undertaken they should contact him or the Chairman of the Trust.

- the Park was supporting a bid by Somerset County Council and Devon County Council central Government funding to roll out a Superfast Broadband infrastructure to cover the County including rural areas. The aim was to provide a coverage of 85% which is substantially more than would be achieved by leaving this to market forces. He advised that a large part of the Park/rural areas were in the hard to reach 15% but they were looking at ways in which that gap might be helped as well. There is a website – [www.connectingsomerset.co.uk](http://www.connectingsomerset.co.uk) - that is asking people to express support for the proposal.
- the sustainable development fund of £200,000 would no longer be ring-fenced and would be placed in one single pot for projects that communities would like to see in their parish/area and he encouraged them to contact the National Park Authority if they wished to develop bids.
- The National Park Authority community and parish forum had increased its meetings from 3 to 5 times a year and changed its format. Parishes receive regular invitations and there was a good level of interest since the format of meetings had changed. He advised the next meeting was on 19 May 2011 at Exford and he encouraged those present to attend if possible.
- the Exmoor Association of Parish Councils was, however, poorly represented, but he advised that after the May elections Parish Councils solely or partly in the Park area would be invited to make nominations to the Association and then an opportunity to vote on those nominations two weeks later. This is an important opportunity to influence the membership of the National Park Authority and parishes were encouraged to plan for sufficient meetings during May to fully participate.

## **8. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service**

No member of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service could be present, therefore Panel members did not receive an update.

## **9. West Somerset Strategic Partnership (WSSP)**

Steve Eggar, the Panel's representative, drew attention to the West Somerset Strategic Partnership's Tri-Annual Report 2007-2010. Bruce Lang advised that the Council have a responsibility to keep the West Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy up to date and that this work had commenced with a view to producing an refreshed draft strategy for wider consultation in the summer.

## **10. West Somerset Council Report**

Bruce Lang advised –

- there were district and parish council elections in some areas on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2011. From the Council's perspective, due to ward boundary changes, the number of Councillors would be reduced from 31 to 28. District Council elections would take place in all wards except one, Greater Exmoor. The only parish council elections would be in Bicknoller, Crowcombe, Dulverton, Dunster and Watchet. Running alongside all these elections would be a national referendum on the parliamentary voting system.
- the Council was facing a challenging time going forward due to finance/financial cuts. Since the last Panel meeting, the Council had agreed their budget and brought in a series of cuts that would hopefully not directly impact on customers too much. Going forward the Council have agreed nine voluntary redundancies and these would occur between now and the end of October. To balance the budget in the next financial year would also be a challenge and the Council was looking at a whole range of options which the new council after the elections would need to consider carefully.
- with regard to devolution/delegation, the Council was intending to start detailed consultations with parish and town councils from June onwards about how and who provides future services. He confirmed that discussions with parishes would take place before next year's precept needed to be set.

Jean Humber asked about the housing issue around increasing rents for affordable social housing and the Portfolio Holder and Bruce Lang gave a brief summary of the current position. The Panel asked that a more detailed presentation on the issue be made to its next meeting.

## **11. Dates of Meetings in 2011**

18 July 2011 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton.

17 October 2011 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton.

Before the meeting closed, the Chairman advised that Claire Richards, meeting administrator, would be leaving the Council in June 2011. She thanked Claire for all her excellent work in supporting the Panel since July 2008 and said she would be greatly missed.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.