

Dunster Panel

Notes of Meeting held on 15 April 2013

at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton

Present

Marilyn Crothers (Chairman); Faye Barringer-Capp (Carhampton PC); Chris Oliver, Biddy Bale (Dunster PC); Ron Buckingham (Elworthy Parish Council); Phil Gannon, Margaret Smith (Old Cleeve Parish Council); Ian Gummer, G C Sparling (Luxborough Parish Council); Insp Shane Carey and PCs Bryan Stevens, David Rowe (Avon & Somerset Constabulary); Doug Hayhoe (Devon and Somerset Fire Service); David Peake (SCC Highways); Keith Turner (Brompton Ralph PC and WSC), Cllr T Taylor, Cllr M Dewdney, Bruce Lang (WSC);

1. “Have Your Say” – Community Issues

Representatives from Old Cleeve Parish Council thanked Somerset County Council for the recent work regarding clearing drains but highlighted that there was still a problem with the drain near the War Memorial at Dragon’s Cross and David Peake of SCC Highways confirmed that he would look into this.

Old Cleeve were also concerned that whilst new bollards had been put in place on the Blue Anchor slipway it was considered important that a warning sign was provided to make it clear to the public that it could be dangerous to walk down onto the beach in this vicinity. Bruce Lang confirmed that the Council were still considering putting up a new sign and where best it should be placed.

Old Cleeve were continuing to monitor accidents on the A39 and made reference to a further incident the previous weekend where a car had left the road at the Bilbrook end of the Carhampton straight.

Reference was made to drainage problems in the centre of Brompton Ralph by the green which appeared to be caused by a pipe under the road needing to be unblocked.

Concern was raised regarding water run-off from fields at Elworthy and that gullies needed clearing especially near the church.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Jean Humber and John Fulwell (Withycombe Parish Council) and Ian Liddell-Grainger MP.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 January 2013 and Matters Arising

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 January 2013 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the final sentence under Item 5 (Highways Report) finishing with the words “...so that local residents could make informed choices of how to get to their destination.”.

Under matters arising Bruce Lang confirmed that West Somerset Council were still working closely with the Environment Agency and the owner of the Blue Anchor Hotel to try and address subsidence and erosion issues. It was recognised that this was a very challenging situation. A further meeting of the main stakeholders was to be held in May 2013.

4. Police Report

Following the departure of Inspector Simpson to a new post within the Force, the meeting welcomed Inspector Shane Carey, the neighbourhood Inspector for West Somerset.

It was reported that over the last two weeks in the Dunster Panel area there had been one theft from a motor vehicle plus two fraud cases and two thefts that were under investigation.

Reference was made to the on-going issue of non-dwelling burglaries and members of the Panel were encouraged to continue to promote the rural watch/marketing scheme to enable people to protect their property in rural areas.

The Inspector alerted the Panel to be aware of three particular trends:

- a) Fraud scam involving £20 and £10 notes which could potentially defraud shops and businesses;
- b) With the advent of the tourism season the on-going issue of thefts from motor vehicles parked in beauty spots; and
- c) Metal thefts of items such as gates.

Statistically the previous twelve month period (up until 19 March 2013) had shown some positive trends in terms of crime reduction with there being 210 less crimes in the local area and 2,000 less crimes in the wider Somerset area.

There was also a 44% detection rate which was very high and the Inspector thanked the public and other agencies for their assistance in making such positive results possible.

In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the mounted volunteer scheme would still be continued.

5. Highways Report

David Peake reported on the current and proposed works in the Dunster Panel area – as set out in the attached Appendix.

David confirmed that some minor amendments were being made to the alternative route scheme following feedback and the experience of using the routes on recent occasions.

The following questions/points were raised by members of the Panel:

- Poor surface conditions of Monks Path and Rocks Hill Lane in the Washford/Old Cleeve area.
- In response to a question of when Dunster High Street was likely to be resurfaced, it was reported that currently the intention was to schedule these works for January-March 2014.
- The problem of fallen trees on the roadside in Elworthy.
- Thanks were given to David and his staff for their excellence efforts to keep roads clear during a very challenging recent inclement winter conditions.

6. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

Doug Hayhoe reported that consultation on proposed fire cuts to the Fire Service budget was soon coming to a close.

On the positive front, following some recent events several new volunteers had come forward expressing an interest in joining the Fire Service.

Generally the situation had been reasonably quiet regarding fires in the local area.

Reference was made to a recent attendance by members of the Fire Service to Old Cleeve Parish Council to talk about road traffic accidents/collisions and the importance of taking steps to minimise such incidents which were not only a risk to public safety but also very costly to attend and deal with.

7. West Somerset Council Report

Bruce Lang confirmed that whilst the Council's financial position was relatively stable for 2013/14, 2014/15 and possibly 2015/16, unless plans were put in place to address the estimated financial profile then the Council could reach the fiscal cliff in three to four years.

With this in mind West Somerset Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council had both agreed to the principle of working together to prepare a business case for the commissioning and sharing of services, management and staff.

The timetable for this work was for an initial proposal of possible joint management and a high level business case for joined up services being considered by both Councils in October 2013. If the outcome from this initial work was positive then joint management proposals could be implemented by April 2014 and a more detailed shared service business case prepared for consideration in October 2014 and possible implementation in April 2015.

Bruce also confirmed that the Red Arrows were hopefully coming again to Minehead on 14 August 2013.

He also reminded the Panel that Somerset County Council elections were due to be held on 2 May 2013 and that there were five candidates standing for the Dunster Division.

Finally, Bruce made reference to the fact that West Somerset Council were reviewing the existing Panel system and that the Corporate Policy Advisory Group were due to discuss the matter on 16 April 2013.

He indicated that the current thinking was that at this stage to retain the Panel system in its existing form in the short/medium term at least particularly pending, and therefore not prejudicing, any discussions with Taunton Deane Borough Council as to closer ways of working.

A discussion then ensued on the Council's approach to the disposal of assets as a means of addressing its current capital loan deficit.

In response to a question regarding the treatment of second homes and the payment of council tax, it was confirmed that the Council was levying the maximum amount of council tax currently permitted under the relevant legislation.

8. Dates of Future Meetings

29 July 2013 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton
14 October 2013 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton
27 January 2014 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton
7 April 2014 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.