

**EXMOOR PANEL
MINUTES
Tuesday 19 January 2016
Winsford Village Hall, Winsford**

Those present:

S Pugsley (Chair)	C Knight, Brushford PC Clerk
V White, Cutcombe PC	J Anson, Cutcombe PC
M Rawle, Dulverton TC	M Willison, Dulverton TC
J Ernest, Dulverton TC	K Tucker, Exford PC
J Hickman, Exford PC	M Ellicott, Exford PC
A Vigars, Exmoor PC	A Sparling, Luxborough PC
D Powell, Luxborough PC	F Bray, Winsford PC
B Flanagan, Winsford PC	M Mileham, Winsford PC
T Howard, Withypool & Hawkridge PC	T Saunders, ENPA
R Manicom, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue	Tony Murray, Magna HA
F Nicholson, SCC	D Peake & K Harwood, SCC Highways
K Mills, WSC; Porlock PC; Selworthy & Minehead Without PC	B Lang, WSC
B Heywood, WSC	
J Birch, Community Council for Somerset	

1 Election of Chairman

- 1.1 Agreed that Councillor S Pugsley be elected Chairman of the Exmoor Panel for the ensuing year.

2. Election of Vice-Chairman

- 2.1 Agreed that Councillor M Ellicott be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Exmoor Panel for the ensuing year.

3. Apologies for Absence

- 3.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor N Thwaites (WSC and Dulverton TC).

4. Have Your Say

- 4.1 No issues were raised under this item.

5 Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 November 2015 and Matters Arising

- 5.1 Agreed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

- 5.2 Matters arising:

(a) Paragraph 3.2 – County Councillor F Nicholson to provide an update on the historic signpost project during the Exmoor National Park item later on the agenda.

(b) Paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9 – the Chairman made reference to the fact that Cutcombe Parish Council was still having issues regarding the CCTV bid and it was agreed to keep this matter under review and reiterate the Panel's support for this initiative.

(c) Paragraph 5.9 – it was reported that the issue of undertaking street cleaning at Mill Lane, Exford was being progressed between the West Somerset Council's contractor and the parish council.

(d) Paragraph 6.1 – reference was made to the fact that Frank Gabb had retired from the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service after 33 years and the Panel placed on record its appreciation for all the work and dedication that had been undertaken by Frank in his role.

(e) Paragraph 11.2 – it was reported that the Panel had lent its support to the Dulverton Town Council in its ongoing discussions with the NatWest Bank.

6 Magna West Somerset Housing Association

6.1 Tony Murray, Director of Magna West Somerset Housing Association presented his annual report to the Panel – attached at Appendix A to the minutes of this meeting.

6.2 Specific questions were then asked and responded to as follows:

(a) There was a concern that there would be a challenge to replacing housing stock that was sold in the Exmoor National Park area as it may be difficult to find suitable sites for development – this concern was acknowledged but the extent of the challenge would not be known until all the detailed rules of the Right to Buy process were known.

(b) A series of concerns were raised by Panel members regarding the Homefinder process particularly in relation to the website not being user friendly – Tony Murray confirmed that he was chairing a working group that was addressing this issue and that he would raise those concerns voiced at the Panel as part of this work.

(c) Concern was raised that some Magna properties were being used as second homes – Tony Murray acknowledged this and said that as soon as such matters were reported to the Association, steps were taken to rectify the position although there were legal processes to be followed that would sometimes result in delays before matters could be properly rectified.

(d) Tony Murray confirmed that tenants at a sheltered housing scheme in Dulverton would be advised of the identity of a new warden who had recently started on the site.

6.3 The Chairman thanked Tony for his extensive presentation and responses to the questions and reassured him that the Panel and local partner organisations would continue to support the Housing Association in their future efforts to provide affordable housing in the Exmoor Panel area.

7 Community Council for Somerset

- 7.1 Jane Birch, the Community Involvement Officer from the Community Council for Somerset, attended the meeting to advise the Panel of activities being undertaken by the Community Council – a summary of which is attached at Appendix B to the minutes of this meeting.
- 7.2 Specific mention was made of a free digital workshop that was being held on 10 March 2016 at Dunster Tithe Barn.
- 7.3 During the subsequent discussion, it was mentioned that parish councils could apply to the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) for a grant to help become more digitalised.
- 7.4 The Chairman thanked Jane for her presentation.

8 Police Issues

- 8.1 No police representatives were present at the meeting and the Clerk was requested to subsequently contact the police to check that they had received their invitation and advise of ongoing concerns regarding the Cutcombe CCTV project and of a somewhat surprising reference in promotional literature to Amory Road, Dulverton being a “hot bed of crime”!

9 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service Issues

- 9.1 Rob Manicom, the Watch Manager of Porlock Fire Station, attended the meeting and reported that Porlock Fire Station had received 33 calls during the previous three months period including for five fires. He made reference that the rapid response unit had been in place for nearly six months. This was a smaller tailor-made vehicle similar in size to smaller delivery vehicles of well-known supermarkets and by enabling a vehicle to be dispatched with a minimum of two personnel had greatly reduced the number of hours when cover was not available. He was, therefore, hopeful that not only would this pilot be extended in Porlock but that similar initiatives would be rolled out elsewhere.
- 9.2 There were currently nine personnel at the Porlock Station with a new recruit due to start shortly. Winter community safety leaflets were being distributed and copies can be downloaded from the Fire Service website. Work was being undertaken to identify the most vulnerable individuals in the community so help could be targeted for them.
- 9.3 Rob also reported that there had been 25 calls in respect of the Dulverton Fire Station over the previous three months. There were eight personnel currently at Dulverton with hopefully two new recruits in the pipeline.
- 9.4 In response to a question as to were there any limitations to what the smaller vehicles could do, Rob confirmed that if only two personnel were on the vehicle they were not permitted to enter a burning building but they could still take steps to mitigate the danger until reinforcements arrived. It was also acknowledged that the co-responder element of the Fire Service was part of the Ambulance Trust’s means of delivering its target of responding within eight minutes of an emergency call.

10 SCC Highways

- 10.1 Karin Harwood and David Peake from Somerset County Council Highways attended for this item and went through planned works for the Exmoor Panel area as set out in Appendix C to the minutes of this meeting.
- 10.2 Significant discussion ensued regarding proposed road closures including one on the A396 in Devon, and a copy of an associated press release is attached at Appendix D to the minutes of this meeting.
- 10.3 Various detailed questions were raised by members of the Panel which were duly noted for consideration and/or action by Karin and David.
- 10.4 Councillor M Rawle raised the issue that following the death of an Exmoor pony on Winsford Hill last autumn, Dulverton Town Council had been lobbying the Highways Authority to improve the official signage to assist with livestock safety and that this issue was to be discussed at the forthcoming Exmoor National Park Parish Forum meeting. It was agreed that the Panel would place on record its support for making efforts to address this problem.
- 10.5 The Chairman thanked the County Council highway representatives for their attendance.

11 Exmoor National Park Authority Issues

- 11.1 Tessa Saunders attended the meeting and reported that the National Park Local Plan was being prepared for submission for examination later in the spring.
- 11.2 Phase one of the Broadband project was still ongoing with several parishes in the Exmoor Panel area having recently gone online.
- 11.3 The National Park was still in discussions in regard to a proposed mobile phone mast at Haddon Hill and were hopeful that something would still progress within the next six to nine months.
- 11.4 County Councillor Nicholson reported that discussions were still ongoing between the County Council Highways, the Exmoor National Park and West Somerset Council to try and coordinate funding for the historic signpost project.

12 Parish Lengthsman Scheme Update

- 12.1 Councillor M Rawle confirmed that letters had been sent out to all parish clerks requesting confirmation as to whether parishes wish to continue to participate in the scheme for the 2016/17 financial year. To date responses were still awaited from Cutcombe Parish Council, Exmoor Parish Council and Timberscombe Parish Council who were all asked to respond as soon as possible.

13 The Future of Public Toilet Provision in West Somerset

- 13.1 This item had been placed on the agenda at the request of Councillor White of Cutcombe Parish Council who had been concerned at a recent report in the West Somerset Free Press that indicated that West Somerset Council may not continue to provide public toilets in the future.
- 13.2 To provide the context to this issue, the West Somerset Council representatives present at the meeting explained that whilst no decision had been taken as yet, in recognition that given the increasing financial challenges being faced by the Council and the fact that the provision of public conveniences was not a statutory function, the Council may not be in a position to continue to fund this service long-term.
- 13.3 The Council was therefore considering, as part of the current budget deliberations, agreeing a policy that the Council would be no longer financially able to support the provision of public toilets from 1 April 2017. Should this be agreed, this would effectively give twelve months for discussions to be held with relevant parish/town councils and any other interested parties to see if toilets could not be transferred to other organisations/authorities to run.
- 13.4 The views of those parish councils present which had toilets in their areas were sought and were as follows:
- Exford had already taken action to provide toilets by other means.
 - Minehead and Selworthy Without – they may be prepared to see one set of toilets closed as there was alternative provision via a Tea Room.
 - Porlock – the parish council already runs one set of toilets and would therefore need to discuss the issue of the other set of public conveniences in the light of developments.
 - Dulverton Town Council – this issue had already been discussed with options such as encouraging local businesses to provide access to their own toilets having been raised but to date with no success.
 - Cutcombe – having raised the issue they were obviously concerned for the future of the set of public conveniences in their village.
- 13.5 It was recognised that this is a strategic issue that potentially affected the whole of the Exmoor area in regard to the provision of toilets which was seen by many as essential to underpin and support the tourism industry.
- 13.6 The Exmoor National Park Parish Forum was due to be held within the next few days and there was a consensus in the room that this item should be raised at that meeting with a view to exploring whether the Exmoor National Park Authority could play a role in facilitating a solution to this whole issue.

14 Items brought forward by Parishes – Rubbish/Litter Picking

- 14.1 This item was placed on the agenda at the request of Councillor Hickman of Exford who enquired whether there would be any merit in the parishes within the Exmoor Panel area coordinating their individual efforts for tidying up their parishes.
- 14.2 During the discussion reference was made to the forthcoming 90th birthday of Her Majesty the Queen and that many parishes were already making plans to tidy up their

villages as part of the celebrations. A suggestion had already been circulated that carrying out something on Mother's Day – 6 March 2016 – may be appropriate.

14.3 It was therefore considered that this matter was already in hand.

15 Dates and Venues of Future Meetings

- 3 March 2016 at 7.00 pm – Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross
- 16 June 2016 at 7.00 pm – Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross
- 6 September 2016 at 7.30 pm (Highway Warden's meeting at 6.30 pm) – to be confirmed
- 8 November 2016 at 7.00 pm – to be confirmed
- 17 January 2017 at 7.00 pm – to be confirmed
- 2 March 2017 at 7.00 pm – Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm