

**EXMOOR PANEL  
MINUTES  
Tuesday 20 January 2015  
Winsford Village Hall, Winsford**

**Those present:**

S Pugsley (Chair)	C Knight, Brushford PC
M Rawle, Dulverton TC	N Thwaites, Dulverton TC
M Ellicott, Exford PC	D Lungley, Exton PC
D Powell, Luxborough PC	A Sparling, Luxborough PC
B Flanagan, Winsford PC	S Hunt, Winsford PC
F Bray, Winsford PC	T Howard, Withypool & Hawkridge PC
P Griffin, Wootton Courtenay PC	J Edwards
PCSOs J Dawson and S Hurley, Avon & Somerset Constabulary	
F Gabb, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue	F Nicholson, SCC
K J Ross, WSC	B Heywood, WSC
B Lang, WSC	
D Peake and K Harwood, SCC Highways	

**1 Have Your Say**

- 1.1 There were no matters raised under this item which could not be discussed under headings later on the agenda.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

- 2.1 Councillor B Foster (Selworthy and Minehead Without PC), West Somerset Councillor K Mills, Councillors R Webber and V White (Cutcombe PC), T Sanders (ENPA) and R Manicom (Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service).

**3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 November 2014 and Matters Arising**

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

3.2 Matters arising:

- In respect of paragraph 3.2, Bruce Lang read out a response sent to Withypool Parish Council by Tony Murray of Magna West Somerset Housing Association explaining that a mistake had occurred in this instance whereby a larger garden had been sold to a particular property due to out of date plans being used in the sale process; an apology was made indicating that more careful checks of boundary fences and gardens on the new future sales will be undertaken.

**4 Election of Chairman**

- 4.1 Agreed that Councillor S Pugsley be elected as Chairman of the Exmoor Panel for the next twelve month period.
- 4.2 At this juncture Councillor Pugsley returned to the Chair and thanked those present for the faith shown in him to continue in this important role.

## **5 Election of Vice Chairman**

- 5.1 Agreed that Councillor M Ellicott be elected as Vice Chairman of the Exmoor Panel for the next twelve month period.

## **6 Police Issues**

- 6.1 PCSOs Jo Dawson and Sue Hurley reported on crimes committed in the Panel area since the last meeting. The largest number of crimes related to non-dwelling burglaries and there had been a higher number of thefts and criminal damage activities and a proportion of which related to the badger cull.
- 6.2 In response to a question it was confirmed that deer poaching was still an issue and the police made a request for the community to provide them with any local intelligence to follow up matters.
- 6.3 There had been a report in the media that Devon Police Service may need to suffer job losses due to funding cuts; at this stage although Avon and Somerset Constabulary were also likely to experience funding cuts there had been no indication as to whether this would result in any job losses.

## **7 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service**

- 7.1 Frank Gabb reported that since the last Panel meeting the Dulverton Station had responded to 10 co-responder calls and 1 fire call. Over the previous twelve month period there had been 137 co-responder calls and 47 fire calls; approximately 6 or 7 of these fire calls related to road traffic accidents. This overall number was a significant reduction on previous years and hopefully was an indication that the fire prevention work was paying dividends. The co-responder calls were, however, on the increase which could be a reflection of the ongoing pressures on the Ambulance and National Health Service. He indicated that a similar pattern was also occurring in the Porlock Fire Station area.
- 7.2 Members of the Panel acknowledged that the co-responder service was still much in use and appreciated by the community.

## **8 SCC Highways**

- 8.1 Karin Harwood and David Peake from Somerset County Council Highways attended for this item.
- 8.2 In response to a question it was confirmed that the fingerpost scheme was still the subject to the Highways Authority obtaining external funding. Nevertheless it was still worth parish councils nominating to the Highways Authority their top five priority fingerposts for renovation.
- 8.3 Exford Parish Council were considering paying for the sandblasting of a key signpost in its village and the Highways Authority agreed to meet with them to see how this could be taken forward. Similar arrangements could potentially be explored if other parish councils wanted to follow the Exford example.
- 8.4 The Highways representatives reported that winter maintenance was now well under way particularly following the lower temperatures in the new year.

- 8.5 There were requests for more such maintenance to be undertaken on the Withypool to Sandyway road and the Highways representatives agreed to review this matter. It was explained that winter maintenance was undertaken if the road surface temperature was expected to be below 1 degree centigrade.
- 8.6 There was considerable debate regarding what to do with maintenance – both winter and general – of the minor road through Wootton Courtenay that was experiencing extremely high levels of traffic given the ongoing Dunster road closure.
- 8.7 Whilst it was confirmed that this was not a route designated for winter maintenance the Highways representatives did agree to review the position including the possible provision of salt bags and liaising with the West Somerset Council in regard to potentially providing more sweeping of roads due to mud and general litter being generated by the increased through flow of traffic. Finally all key drainage outlets would be checked on that route.
- 8.8 It was pointed out that the resurfacing works in Jury Road and Combe Road, Dulverton were appearing to break up and the Highways representatives confirmed that this matter was in hand and would be kept under review.
- 8.9 It was requested that a proposed road closure in the Luxborough area would be reviewed due to the impact arising from the Dunster road closure and Highways confirmed that they would review this.
- 8.10 A point was raised regarding whether one of the new manholes put in place following the Burrow flood alleviation works may be experiencing problems and Highways confirmed that they would check on this.
- 8.11 The Chairman as usual reminded those present that they could raise specific matters relating to their parish on highway issues direct to the Highways Authority.
- 8.12 The Highways representatives then went through their schedule of planned works in the Exmoor Panel area – attached as Appendix A to the notes of this meeting. Of particular note was the Washford Cross roundabout works that were underway – it was pointed out that works were scheduled to minimise any conflict with the Dunster road closure diversion route.
- 8.13 In regard to the Dunster road closure it was stressed that a significant number of works were to be undertaken during the period of the road closure including – Wessex Water piping works in West Street and Church Street; footway work by the Somerset County Council; creating a new entrance for the proposed new Dunster surgery including a “gateway” at the entrance to Dunster subject to funding from the Exmoor National Park; updating the traffic light system; Western Power ducting work; BT covers work, and general resurfacing work to be undertaken if time permits at the end of the proposed road closure period.
- 8.14 It was confirmed that at the end of the Dunster road closure period the Wootton Courtenay “unofficial” diversion route would be fully reviewed in case there was any need to undertake appropriate reinstatement works.
- 8.15 The Chairman thanked the Highways representatives for their presentation and responses to the many detailed questions and issues raised.

## **9 Exmoor National Park Authority**

- 9.1 Tessa Saunders had tendered her apologies for the meeting and indicated that at the March meeting she would provide an update on the local plan timetable.
- 9.2 The Chairman brought to the attention of the meeting the following events:
- 22 January 2015 at 10.30am at Exmoor National Park offices in Dulverton – Parish Consultative meeting
  - 28 January 2015 at 7pm at Exford Memorial Hall – Somerset Association of Local Councils would explain issues relating to the parish council elections to the Exmoor National Park Authority.

## **10 Parish Lengthsman Scheme Update**

- 10.1 Dulverton Town Council representatives reported that they were awaiting confirmation from Exmoor Parish Council as to whether they wished to participate in the scheme for the next twelve month period and the Chairman confirmed that he would check on this so that a response would be provided in due course.
- 10.2 It was also confirmed that invoices in regard to the funding for the 2015/16 financial year would be going out to all the relevant parishes and West Somerset Council in the near future.

## **11 Items brought forward by Parishes**

- 11.1 None

## **12 West Somerset Council Budget Update**

- 12.1 Bruce Lang reported that West Somerset Council continues to face significant financial pressures with ongoing reductions in government funding and increasing costs for services. For example, the Revenue Support Grant had been reduced by some £345,000 (representing a 28% decrease).
- 12.2 The Council had delivered £307,000 savings from its sharing of management and services with Taunton Deane Borough Council and whilst this still left a potential shortfall of just over £300,000 for 2015/16, Officers and Members had drawn up proposals that were to be considered over the next two months which should deliver a balanced budget for 2015/16.
- 12.3 Nevertheless, looking into the future, with further reduction in government funding expected together with cost increases, the Council was likely to continue to face ongoing financial challenges.

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

- 5 March 2015 at 7.00pm – Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross
- 18 June 2015 at 7.00 pm – venue to be confirmed
- 1 September 2015 at 7.00 pm – venue to be confirmed
- 3 November 2015 at 7.00 pm – venue to be confirmed
- 19 January 2016 at 7.00 pm – venue to be confirmed
- 3 March 2016 at 7.00 pm – venue to be confirmed

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm