

Dunster Panel

Notes of Meeting held on 23 January 2012

at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton

Present

County Councillor Christine Lawrence (Chairman); Inspector Lisa Simpson and S Hurley (Avon & Somerset Constabulary); Faye Barringer-Capp (Carhampton Parish Council); Tony Murray (Magna Housing Association); David Peake (SCC); Jim Kent (West Somerset Seniors Forum); Keith Turner, Martin Dewdney, Tim Taylor, Bruce Lang (WSC); Ron Buckingham (Elworthy Parish Council); B Bale, Chris Oliver, Paul Toogood (Dunster Parish Council); Loretta Whetlor (West Somerset Seniors Forum); John Fulwell (Withycombe Parish Council); Mary Coles (Roadwater Village Trust); Ian Gummer (Luxborough Parish Council)

1. “Have Your Say” – Community Issues

Mary Coles, on behalf of Roadwater Parish Council, made reference to the problems that had occurred in Roadwater due to road closures that had been implemented without sufficient consultation in respect of works undertaken by Wessex Water.

Various members of the Panel acknowledged the problems that had occurred and were surprised especially as from their own experiences Wessex Water had been very thorough in their consultation with local communities and giving plenty of notice before undertaking works and implementing road closures.

It was agreed that a letter should be sent on behalf of the Panel to Wessex Water requesting that lessons be learnt from the unfortunate occurrence at Roadwater and receiving an assurance that in future there would be plenty of notice given for consultation with local communities before such works and any associated road closures were undertaken.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Marilyn Crothers (Chairman of the Panel); Jean Humber (Withycombe Parish Council); Phil Gannon and Pam Scragg (Old Cleeve Parish Council); and Steve Edgar (Roadwater Parish Council).

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 October 2011 and Matters Arising

Subject to the final sentence of the “Have Your Say” – Community Issues item being rewritten to state ‘In an answer to a question about the cost of green waste bags, Bruce Lang advised that the current charge was £25 for 10 bags.’, the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 October 2011 were agreed.

4. Magna West Somerset Housing Association

Tony Murray, Director of Magna West Somerset Housing Association Ltd, attended and presented his annual report to the Dunster Panel which had been circulated with the agenda.

In addition to highlighting the key points from his report, Tony made reference to a new policy whereby the Association was able to sell one current property to help build three new affordable houses. In response to a specific question he advised that the current average weekly rental for Magna properties was around £80.

In response to questions he confirmed that currently Magna did not have problems with sub-letting and the effect of Magna achieving charitable status would be to avoid the necessity of paying tax on any surplus and it would also enable Magna to apply for funding from certain sources. Once the decision was made there would be no going back from having charitable status.

There was also reference made to the very close and effective working relationship between Magna and the police particularly in dealing with any anti-social behaviour issues.

5. Police Report

Inspector Lisa Simpson reported that overall crime was down in the area and more offenders were being brought to justice. There was still, however, concern over the number of thefts from outbuildings.

The Neighbourhood Watch Annual General Meeting was due to be held on 18 April 2012.

Mention was made of the mounted volunteers (Neighbourhood Watch on four legs) initiative that was being successfully set up in the area.

Sue Hurley emphasised the importance of the public immediately reporting to the police the details of any suspicious vehicles – please phone 101 and advise of the registration number and any other distinguishing factors.

6. Highways Report

David Peake reported on the current and proposed works – as attached at Appendix A.

The relatively mild winter had seen Somerset County Council sending its gritting fleet out just a fraction of the times that it needed to 12 months ago. They had been out 13 times by Monday 23 January compared to 92 by the same date last winter. The amount of salt used is around 1,100 tonnes compared to 10,000 tonnes, and Somerset Highways' salt barns are close to capacity if bad weather does arrive. To stay up to date with the Council's winter road maintenance service, follow @somesetgritter on Twitter.

David noted down questions from Panel members including confirming that there had been no further developments in respect of the Carhampton/Blue Anchor junction.

David made special mention of proposed drainage works at Bilbrook which would necessitate road closures of the A39. The current thinking was to undertake the works on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday on two consecutive weeks at some stage between half term and Easter with road closures running from 9.30 am until 4.00 pm.

7. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

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

8. West Somerset Strategic Partnership (WSSP)

It was reported that the Partnership had held its last meeting when it had agreed to disband and that therefore this would be the last such report to the Panel.

9. West Somerset Council Report

Bruce Lang advised that following a point raised at the last meeting of the Panel, he had received clarification that the bus stop to be provided as part of the Morrisons development at Minehead had needed to be situated outside MacDonalds on Seaward Way for highway reasons. He was asked to find out who was responsible for the maintenance of the bus stop and shelter.

He also advised that one of the parties had still not agreed to sign the Section 106 Agreement in respect of the site preparation works at Hinkley Point and that it was hoped that this matter would be resolved one way or the other within the next few weeks.

He also confirmed that as part of the District Council's budget process for 2012/13 it was intended to target approximately £150,000 worth of savings to minimise the impact on direct Council services. The longer term financial position of the Council was however still very uncertain and discussions with central Government had already begun with a view to identifying the most appropriate way forward.

In terms of devolution of services to parishes, the budget strategy approach meant that there should not be any significant changes to the nature of District Council services being provided over the next 12 months.

The Leader of the Council, Tim Taylor, stressed that it was extremely important that the Section 106 Agreement for the Hinkley Point site preparation works was signed as soon as possible.

10. Minerals Options Paper for Consultation

The Panel received an information document on the Minerals Options Paper for consultation which was running until 12 February 2012 which had been circulated by the Somerset County Council and all members of the Panel were encouraged to contribute.

11. Dates of Meetings in 2012

Old Cleeve Parish Council had requested the Panel consider changing the date of its next meeting from 23 April 2012 as it would clash with one of their parish council meetings and it was agreed that subject to consultation with the Chairman of the Panel the next meeting would be held on 30 April 2012.

Administrator's Note: Following the meeting it was confirmed that the Council Chamber was booked on 30 April, therefore the date of the next Dunster Panel meeting would not change and it would be held on 23 April 2012 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.