

Dunster Panel

Notes of Meeting held on 28 January 2013

at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton

Present

Marilyn Crothers (Chairman); Ron Buckingham (Elworthy Parish Council); Phil Gannon, Margaret Smith (Old Cleeve Parish Council); Ian Gummer (Luxborough Parish Council); Steve Eggar (Roadwater Village Trust); Dave Walker (Skilgate Parish Meeting); Insp Lisa Simpson and PC Peter Bean (Avon & Somerset Constabulary); Doug Hayhoe (Devon and Somerset Fire Service); David Peake (SCC Highways); Jim Kent (West Somerset Seniors Forum); Keith Turner (Brompton Ralph PC and WSC), Bruce Lang (WSC); Christine Lawrence (SCC)

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

Representatives from Old Cleeve Parish Council reiterated their concerns regarding road safety on the A39 through Washford. They had kept a log of accidents and had recorded eight further incidents since October 2012 which had been quite serious but as there had been no personal injury would not be recorded in the official highways statistics. They were still therefore of the view that it was worth pushing for a 20mph speed limit.

They were also still concerned about the signage for the speed limit around the Dragon's Cross junction and whilst had been told that current County Council policy would not permit changes, the Parish Council pointed to signage for 30mph on the A39 approaching Carhampton which appeared to be inconsistent.

David Peake from the County Council explained that guidance on these matters changed over time and the County Council's policy reflected this change in guidance which did sometimes lead to apparent inconsistencies.

Christine Lawrence, the County Councillor for the Panel area, offered to help facilitate a meeting between the Old Cleeve Parish Council and Highways officers to discuss these issues further.

Certain detailed comments were made regarding salt and gritting during the recent bad weather and overall Panel members felt that the Highways Authority had done a good job in difficult circumstances.

As part of the impact of the bad weather 3,500 – 4,000 potholes had been filled in during the previous seven weeks.

David Peake encouraged members of the public to report potholes either by telephoning 0845 3459155 or emailing countyroads-westsom@somerset.gov.uk.

The Old Cleeve Parish Council representatives also raised the issue of mud on Bilbrook Lane and asked who was responsible.

David Peake explained that ideally in such circumstances if it was known that a particular individual/firm had caused the mud then it would be that individual/firm's responsibility to tidy it up.

If this was not possible, the cleaning would usually be down to the District Council as part of its street cleaning/sweeping responsibility unless the debris was of such a nature

to be considered as an obstruction in which case it would be the County Council's responsibility as highway authority.

There was also a plea that when gully clearance was undertaken that care should be taken with disposal of the debris as there were occasions when it fell back onto the road causing more mess. David Peake made the point that if the debris had to be taken away from the site it would increase the cost and reduce the amount of work that could be undertaken overall.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Jean Humber and John Fulwell (Withycombe Parish Council); David Powell (Luxborough Parish Council); Loretta Whetlor (West Somerset Seniors Forum); Martin Dewdney and Tim Taylor (WSC) and Ian Liddell-Grainger MP.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 October 2012 and Matters Arising

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 October 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

Under matters arising it was confirmed that the new lifebuoys on Blue Anchor seafront should be installed by the end of February 2013 and that discussions regarding erosion and subsidence of the cliff face in the vicinity of the Blue Anchor Hotel were still ongoing.

Representatives from Old Cleeve Parish Council reiterated their concerns regarding public safety in respect of people still using the slipway at the Blue Anchor Hotel end of Blue Anchor beach to access the area which was getting worse in terms of the unstable cliff in that vicinity.

They were of the view that improved signage was required.

Bruce Lang undertook to take this matter back to the District Council for further consideration.

4. Police Report

Inspector Simpson reported that statistically there was very good news in that crime is down in the area and the detection rate is up.

She drew the Panel's attention to the fact that the new Police and Crime Commissioner, Sue Mountstevens, would be visiting the West Somerset Council's Customer Contact Centre in Minehead on Wednesday 30 January 2013 between 10 am and 12 noon. This was an opportunity for people to raise any issues with the new Commissioner which would help her develop her police and crime plan. As many people as possible were encouraged to attend.

Inspector Simpson also informed the Panel that focussed work was ongoing to try and tackle anti-social behaviour with a small funding pot being available to help address such issues and she encouraged anyone with ideas for how this money could best be spent to contact her.

In response to the question Inspector Simpson confirmed that the volunteer neighbourhood watch on horseback scheme had been a great success and should be able to be continued as it could be undertaken at a relatively low cost.

5. Highways Report

David Peake reported on a current project that the Highways Authority were undertaking with the Police to develop A39/A358 emergency alternative routes and circulated copies of plans illustrating the proposals. The project involved looking at the Bridgwater to Minehead road and the Taunton to Minehead road and the Minehead to Lynmouth road and breaking the routes down into sections/phases. If an accident occurred on a particular section then a particular diversion route would be put in place. The Police would be in location and Highways would be installing and modifying road signs which would be self explanatory including, ideally, giving an indication of where the road was actually blocked so that local residents could make informed choices of how to get to their destination.

David invited anyone to make comments on the proposals and said he would try to see whether or not the plans could be made available on the County Council's website. Any comments to be submitted to the following email address: countyroads-westsom@somerset.gov.uk.

David then referred to flooding issues that had occurred (and were continuing to occur) across West Somerset. This had resulted in a public meeting being called by Williton Parish Council the previous week which had proved very useful in obtaining feedback. The Highways Authority were identifying the hotspots where problems were occurring particularly along the A358/A39 with a view to developing solutions where possible. It was noted that there was a county wide joint scrutiny process in relation to issues around flooding being undertaken.

One of the problems was that the drainage records for the highways were not always very comprehensive.

David confirmed that gully emptying and gutter cleaning works were ongoing. It was also recognised that West Somerset Council and Somerset County Council would need to agree who was responsible for clearing debris from the highway after flooding had occurred.

6. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

Doug Hayhoe reported that significant cuts to the Fire Service had been announced. Hopefully for the next two years at least, these cuts were unlikely to have a large impact on the services provided within West Somerset as the area already relied on an on-call duty system and most of the cuts were targeted at the whole time service provision.

Members of the Panel underlined how important and valuable the co-responders service provided by Fire and Rescue was to public safety in the area.

7. West Somerset Council Report

Bruce Lang reported that the government funding settlement in respect of West Somerset Council for 2013/14 had been received and was about as had been expected. The Council should be in a position to set a balanced budget for the next financial year subject to making some savings but hopefully without having a significant impact on the public.

Local Government Association report regarding the future of the Council had warned that the authority may not be viable in the longer term. In a response to this the Council had agreed to the principle of working with Taunton Deane Borough Council to draft a business case for the commissioning or sharing of services, management and staff.

Final confirmation on undertaking this project was subject to reports going to the respective Councils at the end of February/beginning of March.

Bruce confirmed that all parish and town councils in the area would be getting letters confirming that the Council had agreed to pass on a government council tax support grant to parish and town councils to minimise the impact on their precepts for 2013/14.

Bruce apologised for the delay in getting this information which had been due to a relatively late confirmation of the government grant settlement.

8. Somerset Minerals Plan : Preferred Options

It was noted that a consultation process was currently being undertaken on the above – details on www.somersetconsults.org.uk - and comments should be submitted to the Somerset County Council by no later than 8 March 2013.

9. Dates of Future Meetings

15 April 2013 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton
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 8.55 pm.