

## **Dunster Panel**

### **Notes of Meeting held on 27 January 2014**

#### **at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton**

#### **Present**

Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew (Chairman); Michael Anderson (Bicknoller Parish Council); Faye Barringer-Capp and Cllr Brenda Maitland-Walker (Carhampton Parish Council); Chris Oliver (Dunster Parish Council); Ron Buckingham (Elworthy Parish Council); Phil Gannon and Margaret Smith (Old Cleeve Parish Council); Marilyn Crothers (Nettlecombe Parish Council); PCSOs Bryan Stevens and Dave Rowe (Avon & Somerset Constabulary); David Peake (SCC Highways); Jim Kent, Loretta Whetlor (West Somerset Seniors Forum); Cllr Christine Lawrence (SCC); Cllr K Turner (Brompton Ralph PC and WSC), Cllr M Dewdney, Cllr T Taylor, Bruce Lang (WSC/TDBC); Shirlene Adam (WSC/TDBC)

#### **Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed Shirlene Adam to the meeting. Shirlene who was the Director for Operations and Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer under the new joint management structure for West Somerset and Taunton Deane Councils would be replacing Bruce Lang as the lead officer for representing West Somerset Council with effect from the next meeting of the Panel.

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

An email from a local resident that had been addressed to the Monitoring Officer of West Somerset Council that afternoon was read out in full as follows:

“I myself may be unable to attend but wished the following question to be tabled as a question to be recorded as raised by a local resident to which a minuted response will follow.

I have asked you why the Council is not displaying standard building regulation charges, as has been done since the Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010. I have been advised that publication of ‘standard charges’ is not a requirement. I have also been advised that the legal requirement is to produce a ‘scheme of charges’.

As this is a legal requirement to produce this 7 days before any amendment to the charging scheme, will you please indicate why this is not freely available, I have requested sight of it and it has not been forthcoming.

I content that the Local Authority are in breach of UK legislation.

As this is a direct responsibility of the Monitoring Officer, you are the right person to respond.

It would also seem that as every other Local Authority I am aware of actually publish the standard charges, you may yet be proved to be in breach by withdrawing these standard charges from the public domain.

If every application now has to be established as an individually determined fee, perhaps you will explain how this is going to reduce the financial burden on a department that is supposed to break even.

I trust this request will be read out to all in attendance in my absence, and the response will be made public at the meeting as you have already been forewarned of this issue

but have failed to give a satisfactory account to date. I will expect to see the response minuted in full.”

It was explained to the Panel that this issue was currently being dealt with under the Council’s Corporate Complaints procedure. The appropriate Assistant Director had advised that the regulation allows a choice for local authorities to publish their scheme of charges, which is not the same as publishing the charging schedule; alternatively it allows the Council not to publish where charges are individually determined as they are for West Somerset Council. The Council does have a scheme of charges that identifies how charges are created and this information had been provided to the enquirer. The Council genuinely believes that its reading of the regulations and national advice supports the position that it is taking but acknowledges that the enquirer has a difference of opinion on this matter and has suggested that the enquirer seeks an independent view if not satisfied.

Councillor Margaret Smith of Old Cleeve produced photographs that demonstrated that a chain that should be preventing access onto council property at the Blue Anchor slipway was not being effective and it was agreed that the Council would look at addressing this issue.

Councillor Phil Gannon of Old Cleeve explained that the parish council had agreed to make a financial contribution towards the proposed sea defence scheme at Blue Anchor and wanted to know to whom should the contribution be forwarded to. He was advised to liaise with Chris Hall, the Assistant Director for Operational Delivery at the Council on this matter.

Councillor Gannon of Old Cleeve thanked West Somerset Council for providing sand bags during the recent floods.

Councillor Gannon of Old Cleeve expressed concern that during the high tides at Watchet the foul sewer was unable to operate properly which was causing a threat to public health. He was concerned that any significant new developments at Watchet could make this situation deteriorate. It was suggested that this matter was raised and taken into account during the consideration of future planning applications at Watchet.

An issue was raised by Councillor Crothers as to a road closure that had been advertised on 16 December 2013 but had not been implemented. David Peake advised that this particular issue had been dealt with by BT and so he was not aware of the details.

## **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Ian Liddell-Grainger MP; John Fulwell (Withycombe Parish Council) and Chris Jones (Devon and Somerset Fire Service).

## **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 October 2013 and Matters Arising**

Subject to the addition of Councillor M Andersen of Bicknoller Parish Council to the list of those present, the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 October 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

It was reported that Matt Ballard would be invited to the next meeting of the Dunster Panel to be held on 7 April 2014 to provide an update on the provision of broadband in rural areas in West Somerset.

Bruce Lang reported that a report updating the arrangements regarding staff undertaking private work was to be considered at a meeting of the West Somerset Council in February.

#### **4. Police Report**

PCSO B Stevens and D Rowe outlined the crime figures for the Dunster Panel area since the last meeting. Other than criminal activity related to the badger cull general trends have not been causing any significant concern.

In response to a question it was confirmed that after taking into account the impact of the badger cull, detection rates were still at good levels and the occurrence of rural crimes in the area had gone down by 20%.

Councillor Tim Taylor reported that he had just had a very positive meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens regarding crime and safety issues in the district. The Commissioner was very keen that the police should remain active in the area panels as a means of providing information and receiving feedback from the local community. There was positive news to the extent that the budget for policing in Somerset was proposed to be increased by £40,000 for the next financial year.

#### **5. Highways Report**

David Peake reported on the current and proposed works in the Dunster Panel area – as set out in the attached Appendix A. He made particular reference to highway water management schemes that had been undertaken and were in the pipeline given the very heavy rainfall that had occurred in recent times.

In response to a question concerning a piece of land outside the front of the Luttrell Arms in Dunster being used for parking, it was confirmed that this area was in private ownership and therefore was difficult to control unless it could be proved that an obstruction was being caused.

Councillor Tim Taylor made reference to a meeting to be held on 14 February 2014 in Carhampton with the Highways Authority to discuss flooding matters.

In response to a question it was confirmed that it was intended to undertake works on Dunster High Street by the end of March 2014.

In response to a question regarding progress on highways works relating to the proposed new doctor's surgery in Dunster, the County Councillor indicated that she would email the surgery to provide an update.

Concerns were expressed regarding flooding issues at Bilbrook river and the need to clear two drains by the War Memorial at Old Cleeve.

Finally thanks were given from Nettlecombe Parish Council for the grant that had been received in respect of the drainage scheme at Woodford which had proved to be very successful.

#### **6. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service**

In his absence the Watch Manager Chris Jones had forwarded an update which was read to the Panel as follows:

“ Operational news for community information relevant to the Dunster Panel area:

- Minehead - Crews have attended over 40 operational calls during the last quarter. These have included 20 property related fires, a vehicle fire, 10 RTCs and a special service call to a large heating oil leak. Crews also attended a small number of Automatic Fire Alarms.

- Chimney fires are the rise throughout the service, and we continue to urge occupiers to have their chimneys swept on a regular basis.
- There have been no cases of deliberately ignited fires during the last quarter in the Dunster Panel area.

Community Safety news and activities within the Dunster Panel area:

- Free testing has been carried out in West Somerset for anyone wishing to have the electric blankets safety checked. That resulted in 8 blankets failing and considered dangerous out of nearly 40 tested.
- Free home fire safety visits continue in the area for those vulnerable and higher risk members of the community.
- With the recent bad weather, DSFRS would like to urge and remind people not to drive through or enter flood water. There is no way of telling what is going on under the water along with the potential for contamination and health risks.

DSFRS news and public information concerning items such as the budget announcements etc:

- Following budget cuts of the initial £5.5 million for 2013/14, the Fire Authority are currently looking at the next rounds of cuts for 2014/15 which will run in excess of £5 million. Indications are that cuts are likely to continue up until 2018.
- Information can continue to be found on our service website [dsfrs.gov.uk](http://dsfrs.gov.uk) “

Loretta Whetlor advised that a resident of Periton Lane wished her thanks to be passed on to the Fire Service for their swift response to flooding issues that had occurred on 23 December 2013.

## **7. West Somerset Council Report**

Bruce Lang confirmed that the business case for joint management and shared services between West Somerset Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council had been approved at meetings of the respective full Councils in November 2013.

In accordance with this, a Joint Management Team have been in post since 1 January 2014 (with one Assistant Director post still to be appointed) and details were circulated to the meeting regarding the postholders giving their main responsibilities and contact details.

The next stage would be for the remaining members of the workforce to be bought together and as this process is progressed information would be provided as soon as it is available.

In the meantime parishes were encouraged to make contact with the relevant Managers on any matters of concern and to let the Council know if there were any teething problems relating to the new arrangements so that they could be addressed promptly.

In response to a question regarding progress on the Local Plan, it was agreed that a progress note would be produced and circulated to members of the Panel.

In the light of changes to how the Panel was to be supported, the Chairman once again raised the issue of providing a note taker for the meetings. It was agreed that at the commencement of the next meeting a volunteer would be asked to provide the notes for the meeting. The District Council would continue to arrange for any such notes actually taken at the meeting to be typed up and circulated in the normal way.

## **8. Dates of Future Meetings**

7 April 2014 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton  
 28 July 2014 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton

13 October 2014 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton  
26 January 2015 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton  
13 April 2015 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Williton

**NOTE:** The Chairman mentioned that he would not be present at the next meeting to be held on 7 April 2014 and Councillor Marilyn Crothers kindly agreed to Chair the meeting in his absence.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.