

Exford Parish Council
Draft Minutes of Parish Council meeting

Held on: 23rd January 2018 at Exford Memorial Hall 7.30pm

Attendance: Mike Ellicott, Kathryn Tucker, Joan Atkins, Jeremy Hickman, Derek Lloyd, Brian Martin, Judy Skinner, Cllr. Steven Pugsley, Cllr Frances Nicholson. Clerk: Jane Laycock.

Members of Public: Oliver Edwards, David Garbett-Edwards, Michael Johnson, Bruce Laurens, Claire Jenner-Laurens, Beryl Wrapson.

Apologies for Absence: James Edwards.

Declarations of Interest: None

Minutes of Previous Meetings held on 17th October 2017 and 28th November 2017.

Minutes of meeting held on 17th October 2017:

ME stated that on advice from Bruce Lang (WSDC Monitoring Officer), this meeting will be declared null and void as decisions were made which did not comply with Exford Parish Council's Standing Orders.

Minutes of meeting held on 28th November 2017:

Minutes were signed off as a true record (proposed DL, seconded JA).

Matters Arising

Actions from minutes of meeting held on 28th November:

1. Meeting 17th October 2017. See above.
2. Speed Limit Sign. Response received from Highways stating that this section of road does not meet Department for Transport criteria for a 30mph limit.
Road Markings at Bottom of Coombe Lane. Highways advise that the current 'extended H-Bar' road marking which replaced the former 'Keep Clear' marking is in line with current policy and they are not able to make any changes to this.
3. Village Green Memorial Bench. Clerk has written letter.
4. Precept. This has been confirmed and acknowledged by WSDC.
5. Diversion Signage. ME commented that it is unfortunate that the proposed roadworks on the approach to Luckwell Bridge were apparently cancelled by Highways without any advice to the bus company who service Exford. FN agreed that this was unsatisfactory. ME suggested that perhaps Highways should not undertake further new drainage works if they did not have the resources to keep the present drains adequately cleared. JH stated that he had recently emailed Highways regarding the blocked drains past Monkham towards Chibbet Post and had been informed that these have been inspected and none appeared to be blocked.
6. BM made the following personal statement: see overleaf

Personal Statement from Brian Martin:

“I want to respond to accusations which concern my personal integrity and ability to make unbiased decisions as a Parish Councillor. I also want to comment on the degree of confidence and certainty with which these accusations are made. In any such matters, many declarations of interest are subjective, but in his email dated January 4th, 2018, Mr Garbett-Edwards states that my membership of The Exmoor Holiday Group is “*clearly*” a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, and he uses phrase like “*clearly improper*” behaviour. This is not so. I have consulted an expert in the area and I have a strong case for correctly not declaring my membership of this Group as I do not stand to gain or lose financially based on the success or otherwise of the other members. Also, I have heard gossip in the village that those involved in this action are claiming that the Exmoor Holiday Group has closed in response to their accusations. I want to state categorically that there is not one iota of truth in this. Anyone who has seen the minutes of the Group’s AGMs over the past few years will know that, after 42 years, it had to undergo major change, and this is what happened at the AGM last November.

There was also an accusation that two of the Parish Councillors (including me) “*failed to declare a Prejudicial Interest arising from their personal relationships with the objector to the warning sign, Mr Oliver Edwards.*” Again, such claims are subjective and not definitive. I know many people very well in our small parish, and Oliver Edwards is particularly well known because he has always been involved in the community, and has served on the Parish Council as well as many other committees. I do not employ Mr Edwards, and I do not stand to gain or lose anything in this matter of signage. A major concern I have here is that this has developed into a case of the those proposing restrictions on the use of the lane VERSUS Oliver Edwards, which has cost him a lot of time and money. This should not be happening. It is a matter of due consideration of the livelihoods of ALL those who live up the valley who either have their own large vehicles or have deliveries. One near neighbour of Mr Garbett-Edwards has already complained of intimidating behaviour by him towards delivery drivers, which has resulted in their reluctance to deliver in future.

Of course, we should be held up to scrutiny, but the main point I want to make is that in a small community such as ours, this can be done in a less strident way, and involve statements and actions which allow for uncertainty and avoid threats of legal action. We all give our time voluntarily, and whilst this comes with serious responsibilities, it is important that integrity and trust within the community is not unnecessarily undermined. This can cause lasting damage, and may lead to good people stepping down from roles where they have contributed a lot to the well-being and improvement of this parish and beyond.”

ME asked if anyone wanted to respond to BM’s statement. There were no further comments.

Highways

JH reported that the sweep of the village by IDVerde was postponed due to the recent flooding. Chibbet Post junction was badly flooded and JH spent several hours over the weekend attempting to clear this. The road towards White Cross was similarly affected. Whilst trying to clear the road at Chibbet Post, JH located the arm from the broken finger post which he will deliver to Pete Henson to be re-welded. DL will contact ENPA Historic Signposts Officer to advise her. The signpost which was knocked over has now been up righted and concreted in by Pete Henson.

JH commented that SCC regularly put out warning signs but do not take action to clear the blocked drains. This affects the ability of villagers to go about their usual business. FN agreed with frustration over this issue but stated that as a County Councillor she is not legally allowed to instruct County Highways but confirmed that she raises the issue with them regularly.

JH suggested taking a proactive approach and asked for assistance with clearing the drains near Monkham and OE offered to help. OE also confirmed that he and Ricky Atkins had cleared all the drains from the bottom of Wellshead Lane to Silly Bridge and beyond. They have also cleared a tree from the river and advised Highways.

JH stated that in October 2017, the road markings at Coombe Lane and also by the bus shelter and outside the village shop were repainted. These are already coming off. FN confirmed that she queried the quality of the materials used by Highways following an earlier issue raised by Exford PC and was assured that the paint has not been changed. FN requested that specific details are forwarded.

Action 1. Clerk to liaise with JH and forward specific details to Highways under copy to FN.

Village Green/Play Area

Play Area

BM again reported that there are a number of items that require attention on the play equipment. None of these are urgent but it makes sense to attend to them all in one go to reduce costs. The platforms on the toddler and junior slides need replacing, the zip wire tensioning mechanism has seized and numerous small bolts etc. need replacing or adjusting. At the last meeting, it was questioned whether the quote of £939.89 for all this work could be negotiated down. BM stated that he had got the price as low as possible and thought the quote not unreasonable. Two of the larger items are the platforms which have not been replaced since 1999. He recommended that the PC support his recommendation to agree to this quote. Proposed DL, seconded JS. Agreed unanimously. The work can be expected to be done within 6 to 8 weeks.

Action 2. Clerk to accept quote and instruct Playdale.

Village Green Entrance

ME introduced the new owners of Exford Bridge Tea Rooms, Bruce Laurens and Claire Jenner-Laurens. The issue of the village green entrance has been discussed by the PC on a number of previous occasions and ME distributed a copy of a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Laurens with their proposals regarding improving disability access to the Tea Rooms. This would involve extending and improving the present pedestrian access via the side entrance and fixing the existing gate. The village green is owned under the auspices of the PC. ME commented that getting the village green entrance improved would be a win/win situation for everyone. He suggested getting several quotes for having hardcore supplied and rolled in. ME asked if the Tea Rooms would be willing to contribute to the cost of this and they agreed that they would if possible.

ME confirmed that the paperwork will be passed to the PC's solicitors in order that any agreement regarding access over the village green entrance is legally dealt with.

ME commented on behalf of the PC how pleased we are to see the Tea Rooms back in business.

Action 3. ME to obtain quotes for repairing entrance and liaise with solicitors re access.

Mowing Contract 2018

Clerk confirmed that the present contractors, Countrywide, have submitted their quote of £1792 (ex VAT) for 2018. This is a small increase of £2.20 per cut. ME confirmed that we have been very happy with their service and MJ commented how good the village green is looking since they took over the maintenance. It was agreed unanimously to renew the contract (JH proposed, JS seconded).

Action 4. Clerk to accept quote and instruct Countrywide.

QE II Field

BM reported that a meeting of the QEII Management Committee was held on January 22nd. The main points raised were:

Paul Jones and Will Lock of the Cricket Club, together with BM, have produced a design proposal for the enclosing structure for the shipping container, which can then be discussed and agreed ahead of submitting a planning application. It is wider than the container to enable additional storage room. It comprises wood cladding with a black monocline roof and two sets of double wood doors. It was approved by the QEII committee. BM showed drawings of the design to Councillors and asked for approval to go ahead and produce a planning application. Agreed unanimously.

The floodlight facing the entrance gate has been replaced under warranty. Also, an override switch was installed for safety so that the light can remain on when children are arriving and leaving the Youth Club.

The annual insurance quote for the buildings has been received from the insurance brokers. This is £577.89 which is an increase in the premium of nearly 10%. This is partly due to an increase in IPT and also due to a shortage of companies providing this service. This has been paid by the Clerk. BM has completed the application forms seeking to continue the maximum Business Rate Relief on the premises. He thanked SP (Councillor for Exmoor Ward) for his letter of support.

Finance

The bank reconciliation for 23rd January was produced showing current account funds available of £12740.53. £7589.41 is held in reserves. The toilet block maintenance account is £13318.29. List of cheques issued for payment 28/11/17-22/01/18 produced.

Planning

KT reported on the following planning applications:

Planning meeting 8 December 2017

6/13/17/111 Melcombe Barn, Exford. Proposed erection of an agricultural building (18.3x22.9m/418sq mtrs) for the purposes of livestock and storage of fodder, implements and agricultural machinery. Advice concerning this meeting was subsequently sought from the Monitoring Officer, Bruce Lang and the meeting was declared null and void as it was compromised by a councillor attending (wife of applicant) who also took part in discussion during the meeting.

Planning meeting 8 January 2018

6/13/17/112 Ashott Barton, Newlands Lane, Exford. To convert building for private use for succession farming. All councillors present supported the application for the means of succession farming as per the planning application.

ME confirmed that in view of recent issues, he has arranged for Bruce Lang to undertake extra training for all councillors. He stated that it is very important that we work by the book so that the people of Exford can have full confidence in their council.

Clerk's Report

List of email correspondence received to date provided.

ME commented on the recent advice from Highways that the Speed Indicator Devices which have been installed at regular intervals on the approaches to the village have now been discontinued due to budgetary issues. He stated that he has been in contact with Cutcombe PC to discuss if the villages could acquire a unit. FN confirmed that the Highways units are worn out or damaged and will not be replaced. She stated that parishes should be aware of the options should they wish to share. Further information will be sent by SCC and she suggested that this is discussed at the next Exmoor Panel meeting.

Public Forum

None.

Meeting closed 8.25 pm.

ACTION POINT SUMMARY

- 1. Road Markings.** Clerk to liaise with JH and forward details to Highways.
- 2. Play Equipment.** Clerk to accept quote and instruct Playdale.
- 3. Village Green Entrance.** ME to obtain quotes and liaise with solicitors.
- 4. Mowing Contract 2018.** Clerk to accept quote and instruct Countrywide.

Next meeting will be held on Tuesday 27th March 2018 at Exford Memorial Hall 7.30pm

FURTHER COPIES OF THESE MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE TO VIEW AT EXMOOR STORES AND ONLINE AT www.exfordparishcouncil.org

