

**Exford Parish Council**  
**Draft Minutes of Parish Council meeting**

**Held on: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 at Exford Memorial Hall 7.30pm**

**Attendance:** Brian Martin, Joan Atkins, Kathryn Tucker, Cllr Frances Nicholson (left 8.35pm), Cllr Steven Pugsley.

Clerk: Jane Laycock.

**Members of Public:** Anna Connell, Peter Hendrie, Linda Hendrie, Roger Hoey.

**Apologies for Absence:** Mike Ellicott, Jeremy Hickman, Oliver Edwards.

**Declarations of Interest:** None

BM, as Vice Chair, chaired the meeting in the absence of ME.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 7th May 2019.**

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

**Matters Arising**

Actions from minutes of meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> May:

1. Water Mains Replacement. BM reported that the area of the village green appears to have been made good following the works. The photographic survey is held by ME and the sign off against this will be made on ME's return.
2. Wellshead Verges. FN reported that she has spoken to the Director of Operations (Highways) and confirmed that the dumping of arisings is illegal. The message has gone out to contractors that this is not acceptable. FN asked that photographic evidence is forwarded immediately if this happens again.
3. Sweetlands Property. Clerk confirmed that a letter was sent to the owners advising that the state of the buildings have become a matter of possible danger to the public and requesting their confirmation that urgent action be taken. No response received to date.
4. Slow signs at White Cross. FN reported that Highways confirm that road markings are only done on safety grounds where there is an adjacent warning sign. This is regarded as necessary at White Cross and an order has been made. FN will chase if this work has not yet been done.
5. PC Insurance. Premium has been paid by Clerk.
6. Dog Waste Bins. Clerk has responded to letter from parishioner following discussion at previous PC meeting.
7. Letters of Thanks. Clerk has sent.

**Highways**

**Raised Path:** FN confirmed that she has been speaking to Highways and that she had originally been given misleading information stating that perennial weeds had been dug out before the new surface was laid. This did not happen and neither has spraying taken place before or after the tarmac was put down. A spraying order has apparently now been put in and FN is awaiting a response as to when the path will be made good. JA mentioned the saplings growing out of the path wall. FN confirmed that it is Highways responsibility to cut to the top of the wall. BM and JA commented that the hedge has now grown out again making the path difficult to use. BM stated that we need a long-term solution, as this matter comes up regularly. Maybe paying for it to be cut and maintained is the solution.

FN stated that this is the landowner's responsibility and they should bear the cost. BM suggested that Martin Atkins is asked to cut the hedge back. Councillors agreed to ask OE/JA to make a formal approach to Martin to do the work.

**Action 1.** OE/JA to follow up.

BM reported that JH has advised, in advance of the meeting, that there is nothing else significant to report on Highways.

**Salt Bins** FN reported that SCC have agreed to revert to the previous situation of providing winter highways salt. Parishes who have put additional money aside to purchase salt are being encouraged to use this for the purchase of salt bins which are longer lasting and more effective than dumpy bags. She suggested that Exford and Luccombe agree on provision of a bin or bag at Chetsford Bridge. The next Highways Wardens meeting is on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September (Exmoor Panel Meeting).

SP reported that he has been contacted by a resident of Highermill Farm Lane regarding concerns about water running off fields on to their property. He has requested David Peake to respond directly. FN commented generally that it is the farmer's responsibility to manage the run off from their fields.

**Action 2:** Clerk to contact Luccombe PC to request a salt bin at Chetsford Bridge.

### **Village Shop Update**

BM reported that following the sad loss of Sally, Trevor has decided not to re-open Exmoor Stores and the property is due to go to auction in London on July 25<sup>th</sup> with a guide price of £275000 unless an acceptable prior offer is received. However, the property will not be able to go to auction if there is no pre-bid registered.

A public meeting hosted by ME and BM was held in the main hall on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. This was well attended by 60 people. ME communicated all the actions he has taken over recent weeks including talking to Trevor and key potential purchasers in the parish as well as visiting local community run shops. The potential outcomes are:

- i) The shop and accommodation sell to someone who wants to run it and live at the property.
- ii) The premises sell to someone who wants it as wholly accommodation. However, this would require a long period of justifying change of use and gaining planning approval.
- iii) The premises sell to someone or a collective, with the intent of using the accommodation and opening a community run shop.

BM has spoken to Trevor this week and there have been no pre-bids so it may have to be withdrawn from auction. There may be interested local buyers. All the PC can do is to assist with the process wherever possible.

Huge thanks must go to Claire and Bruce at the Exford Bridge Tea Rooms who are hosting a pop-up post office open every Friday 2-4pm.

A way forward is needed. BM proposed that if no offer comes forward this week, we will facilitate an investigation into options that will result in a village general store, whether privately or community run. This may be in the existing location or some alternative solution such as a shipping container.

FN commented that there are 2 large potential projects on the agenda both requiring enormous energy and funds – the village store and a new village hall. BM confirmed that the village shop should take priority at present, but, as the village hall project is at a very early stage, it will still be possible to keep this project moving along. SP commented that it would have been useful to take a poll of how many villagers would actually be willing to get involved with running a community shop. This needs to be established at an early stage. A paid manager would also be necessary.

AC stated that a nucleus of people willing to fund the project is needed. BM reiterated that the funds required to buy, renovate and stock the existing shop or an alternative would be considerable.

LH stated that she was concerned about the level of strength of feeling to support the shop at the meeting and also the lack of young people attending. A huge amount of work and sustainable commitment would be needed by the community. A number of people have good intentions but don't want these to be misconstrued. She feels that the shop should stay in its present location, however any move to split the property would be difficult. PH suggested that an initial enquiry is made with ENPA Planning re the feasibility of creating self-contained accommodation upstairs.

FN commented that a Community Interest Company was set up in Porlock to progress a similar project. This put out a prospectus to the parish to successfully raise loans. LH suggested crowd funding to reach people from outside the area.

SP stated that people would need to commit to use the shop more. He quoted the success of the approach taken by Withypool shop to provide the needs of their customers.

BM stated that a further village meeting will be set up to assess the level of support to take this forward, unless there are positive developments before this. SP suggested that this should be in early September.

**Action 3.** Clerk to contact ENPA Planning Department re feasibility of separating shop and living accommodation.

**Action 4.** Clerk and BM to arrange further public meeting following outcome of auction.

### **New Village Hall Update**

BM reported that on 22 May he and Maddy Harrison-Hall held a further meeting with Kieran Reeves (ENPA Planning Officer) and Dean Kinsella (Head of Planning & Sustainable Development ENPA) at the car park in Exford which is the potential site of a new village hall. The principal point of discussion was the need for ENPA to allow part of the car park to be given to the project whilst not losing the number of parking spaces. On 11 July Dean Kinsella responded following a meeting with the ENPA Leadership Team. He said “With regards to ENPA gifting the land to enable the development to take place, we felt that we would, in principle, be interested in exploring options for the new village hall on land owned by the Park. However, it was considered that further discussions with the relevant stakeholders were necessary to establish what the constraints may be for the development. Once this has taken place then we will be in an informed position to commence discussions with you regarding what area of land may be needed to facilitate the development.” With this in mind a meeting is now being arranged involving the PC, ENPA, Environment Agency, Exford First School and Chris Jones who owns much of the access road to the car park. BM stated that we need to clarify the location and access first before even looking at fundraising requirements.

### **Fire & Rescue Consultation**

BM reported that this consultation is reviewing the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service in the region. This may result in “closures of a number of fire stations where risk and activity is low and the removal of fire engines that are underused.” Porlock station is on the list for closure and Lynton station is to lose an appliance. With our narrow lanes and long travel times, this is not only a serious loss for Porlock but also for the Exford area. A public consultation is running for 12 weeks from 3 July. There are 23 consultation sessions, the nearest being at Porlock village hall on 25 July from 1pm and at Minehead library from 3pm on 22 August.

A ‘Save Our Station (SOS)’ crisis meeting was called by Andy Milne (Porlock District Councillor) on 24 June. This was attended by BM and OE to represent Exford PC. Over 180 people attended. An SOS steering committee has been set up and will report progress and 2 meetings have been held so far. Actions include TV interviews, press articles, local events, social media, banners and signs. Also contact with local MP and a collation of fire and rescue statistics for the local area. An outreach representative from the committee (Ruth Walker-Wootton Courtney) is responsible for contact with other villages. There is a village protest on 25 July outside Porlock Fire Station ahead of the consultative meeting.

BM stated that we must support this campaign and asked that people complete the online questionnaire.

FN reported that the Chief Fire Officer spoke to SCC Cabinet members on 22 July. She said that there may be other options rather than full closure and constructive solutions are needed.

SP confirmed that constructive opposition to the proposals is required and an attempt to work with the fire authority to find a solution.

### **Village Green/Play Area**

BM reiterated that Wessex Water have completed the work on the village green and this will be signed off in due course. BM has dealt with some of the edging of the play area which has come loose – and awaits to replace one piece of boarding. KT noted that a pole has come away from the perimeter fence. **Action 4.** BM to resolve.

### **QE II Field**

BM confirmed that he met with Pete Henson (Exmoor Welding) and Paul Jones on the cricket field on 19 July to finalise details of the site preparation and construction of the wood structure which will enclose the shipping container. It is hoped that work will start next week, weather permitting, and should take about 2 days. Paul Jones is organizing volunteers to help which will keep costs down.

### **Finance**

The bank reconciliation for 23<sup>rd</sup> July was produced showing current account funds available of £13022.69. £8604.94 is held in reserves. The toilet block maintenance account is £12637.35. List of cheques issued for payment 08/05/19-22/07/19 produced. RFO commented that we are still awaiting an invoice for the toilet cleaning despite reminders being sent. This has now been 18 months however the toilets continue to be cleaned regularly.

### **Planning**

KT stated that prior to this PC meeting, councillors held a planning meeting. Four applications were considered: Stockleigh Lodge, Steephorne, Yealscombe and land north of Room Hill Road. There was no objection to any of them.

### **Clerk's Report**

List of email correspondence received to date provided.

Clerk advised that she will be resigning her post as Clerk and Finance Officer to the PC with effect from end of August 2019 after 6 years. She thanked councillors both past and present for their support and wished to record her admiration for the time and effort which they put in to make our village a better place to live. BM thanked her on behalf of the PC, saying that she had done an excellent job and was a pleasure to work with. BM stated that adverts for a replacement have been placed in Across Exmoor, in the West Somerset Free Press, on social media and posters in the village.

### **Public Forum**

KT commented that as a safeguarding requirement, railings have now been placed around the school playground.

### **Meeting closed 8.45pm**

### **ACTION POINT SUMMARY**

- 1. Raised Path.** OE/JA to follow up.
- 2. Salt bin at Chetsford Bridge.** Clerk to contact Luccombe PC.
- 3. Village Shop.** Clerk to contact ENPA Planning.
- 4. Village Shop.** BM/Clerk to arrange further village meeting.
- 5. Village Green.** BM to attend to perimeter fence.

**Next meeting will be held on Tuesday 24th September 2019 at Exford Memorial Hall 7.30pm.**

**FURTHER COPIES OF THESE MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE TO VIEW ON THE PARISH NOTICEBOARD AND ONLINE AT [www.exfordparishcouncil.org](http://www.exfordparishcouncil.org)**