

# EXFORD PARISH COUNCIL



## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Exford Parish Council held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024 in Exford Memorial Hall at 19.30.

**In attendance:** Michael Ellicott (Chair), Jeremy Hickman, Serena Colwill, Simon Brown, Joan Atkins  
Sian Tedstone (Clerk)

Councillors: Steven Pugsley

Parishioners: Steve Green

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

<b>Item 1: Apologies:</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
Oliver Edwards, Kathryn Tucker, Frances Nicholson	
<b>Item 2: Declarations of Interest</b>	
None advised.	
<b>Item 3: To approve the Minutes of the previous Council Meeting and address any outstanding actions</b>  Mr Brown proposed approving the minutes and seconded by Mrs Atkins. Noted that First Aid training initiative was postponed due to a similar event run by Exmoor Hill Farming Network and well attended by parishioners and Councillors.  With regard to the records being sought by the disaster planning subgroup Mrs Tedstone noted that any data must be kept confidentially and only used for the purpose for which it had been obtained.  Precept forms had been submitted to Somerset Council.  Mr Ellicott expressed gratitude to the team of volunteers who had assisted in clearing drains recently. Clearance of the footpath to Edgcott would need the use of a small trailer. Mrs Atkins felt this path clearance was an important matter as many people use the path/road. It was acknowledged how busy many were with lambing and calving at present and this impacts resources.  Mr Ellicott expressed his thanks to Johnny Atkins for moving the fallen stump along the road so efficiently.  Village defibrillator is now in situ in the Crown archway.  Regarding the concerns expressed about the pods on the green Mr Ellicott noted that the Flower Show Committee had discussed the possibility of these with several mothers whose children use the play area, and the overwhelming response was positive. Mr Ellicott subsequently spoke to ENPA about planning and noted the pods were placed there under permitted development rights.	

## EXFORD PARISH COUNCIL



<p>Mr Ellicott noted that some will be happy with the parish Council's action and some would not. A similar reaction was noted in respect of the tree pollarding which must be done every 4-5 years and it had been some time since this was last done. The trees will green up in due course, and this is part of tree management and keeping the green safe for users and passers-by. Thanks to Martyn Atkins and Oliver Edwards for their time in assisting with this. Mr Hickman commented that many whose houses bordered the green felt they should have been consulted about the pods. Mr Ellicott responded that the matter had been discussed at a number of previous Parish Council meetings and it was open for parishioners to attend these meetings and review the minutes of these in the event they wished to raise concerns or contribute. Prior to the siting of the pods nothing had been raised by anyone. The Parish Council cannot consult everyone on all parish decisions but are very open to members of the public coming to any Councillor or meeting to voice issues. Mr Ellicott also advised he had spoken with certain individuals about their concerns over anti-social behaviour around the pods. It was noted that the village has not historically had a problem with this.</p>	
<p><b>Item 4: Highways Services Devolution</b></p> <p>Mr Pugsley advised that devolution of the highways had been withdrawn from the county budget. There is some time therefore for parishes to work up proposals. It is not yet clear where responsibility and costing for grit bins will lie.</p> <p>There will be a reduction in drain clearance and cutting of hedges etc in the next financial year. Mr Pugsley advised that proposals to deal with this via the LCN are being reviewed. This will apportion costs between the LCN participants. Mr Ellicott noted that he has consistently been pressing the Council for cost guides as it is key to working out budgets for parishes. Mr Pugsley replied that costs guides may be available in the summer but only if the LCN uses the providers currently used by the council. This is not satisfactory. Mr Pugsley note that Keir are appearing to be more responsive than Milestone as a provider of services.</p> <p>The current Highways steward was costing approx.. £50k per annum and this cost is too much for our LCN to bear and so it may be that we end up sharing one with another LCN. Work is ongoing in this regard.</p>	
<p><b>Item 5: To receive update reports from Somerset Councillors</b></p> <p>Mr Ellicott referred to the recent letter circulated about the school. This item was not on the original agenda as it arose after publication but is considered important to discuss at this meeting. Important to note that the school is a church school and not a council school. The key point is that Exford will likely drop to 15 pupils next season, and this is insufficient to keep the school operating. The initiative is thus to use two sites, Cutcombe and Exford and</p>	

## EXFORD PARISH COUNCIL



split pupils between these. Children will be transported between the two sites via dedicated minibuses and a number of parents are concerned about this. Details are still to be worked out and finalised. Staff of both schools are willing to make this work for the children. Mrs Colwill asked if there was any rule relating to how far children can legally travel – the answer to this was not known.

Exford pre school is currently running at a loss. The travel issue may encourage some Cutcombe families to send children not to Exford but other schools and this may reduce projected numbers further.

All councillors stated it was vital to keep the school going, otherwise it may be lost entirely, and it was therefore hoped parents would support this initiative. Noted that some parents in Exford do not have vehicles and this could cause issues. Mrs Colwill commented that she is aware some parents are already looking at other schools.

Mrs Atkins also commented that Exford School will need exterior maintenance over the next few years.

The school governors are very happy to have a meeting for Exford to discuss the options.

Mr Pugsley advised there was nothing else significant to report from the County.

### **Item 6: Highways**

Church Hill has been marked up for resurfacing / patching.

Roundwaters is on schedule and some chance it may be opened ahead of schedule. Mr Ellicott noted the contractor had not been able to reduce the pinch point so there will be extra signage for this noting that the road narrows and users need to be cautious. It was advised the average speed at this point is just too low for implementation of any further safety measures.

As an aside that the average speed in Winsford has not increased during the diversion period. The SIID belonging to Exford has been loaned to Winsford for a period. Damage to verges around the entire route was raised as an issue. County are aware and may undertake some work following the road being opened.

Village litter pick was set for 21 April. The clerk to advise people via Facebook page. Meet at the triangle at 2pm. Mr Hickman to organise.

Mr Ellicott has been discussing the car park with ENPA and agreed that EPC can take it over for payment to ENPA of £2k per annum. We can put up a donation box. ENPA will still proceed with building EV charging points. The toilets had been subject to two lots of vandalism and this has been reported

## EXFORD PARISH COUNCIL



<p>to the police. A post will be put up to prevent the door being pushed back and we are waiting for the builder to do this.</p> <p>Mr Green expressed his concern again about the siting of the EV points as being too near his boundary. He asked for help from EPC in lobbying ENPA to resite them as he feels they make too much noise and have a fire risk. Mrs Colwill stated the village does need some EV points as this will support visitors, more and more of whom use electric vehicles. EPC were in agreement with assisting and supporting Mr Green to resite the points way from his house.</p> <p>Mr Hickman advised that the road to Chibbett will receive attention next year and the pothole by the bridge will also be filled.</p> <p>County have agreed where the white lines at the end of Combe Lane are to go and this is on a work order for the next financial year. Mrs Colwill asked for prior notice of this to ensure people moved their cars in time. Mr Ellicott has suggested a 2 week notification period. In addition, the village will have an extended 20mph area.</p> <p>Mrs Atkins noted that debris in the river was still an issue. Mr Pugsley suggested we keep liaising with the flood group, Highways and the Environment agency and perhaps an early meeting would be useful.</p> <p>All Councillors agreed to the expense of renting the car park from the ENPA. Clerk to draft a notice to be publicised.</p> <p>EPC to liaise with Mr Green re supporting his points (NB: following the meeting Mr Green advised this was not needed as ENPA agreed to resite the points).</p>	
<p><b>Item 7: Finance</b></p> <p>The clerk noted the parish finances and circulated a written report.</p>	
<p><b>Item 8: Disaster / Emergency Planning</b></p> <p>Already covered earlier in the meeting.</p>	
<p><b>Item 9: QE II Field Update</b></p> <p>No update.</p>	
<p><b>Item 10: Planning</b></p> <p>Newland Farm application – no update</p> <p>Monks Cleeve – approved with conditions</p> <p>Lower Thorne aerial – no approval needed</p> <p>Exmoor Lodge – no update</p>	

## EXFORD PARISH COUNCIL



Antenna in Wellshead Lane - refused	
<b>Item 11: Village Hall report</b> Mr Ellicott has raised the report with the Chairman of the Memorial Hall. Notec the hall is a village amenity. Mr Ellicott proposes a meeting be scheduled with the Hall Committee to agree a way forward. Some grants may be available, and we would definitely need grant funding for any option. Mrs Colwill noted a DEFRA grant for halls of up to £5k being available. She recommended a public meeting. Comments that the site would probably not raise more than £50 if sold for affordable housing should a new site be the preferred option. All agreed to proceed with meetings.	
<b>Item 12: Village Green</b> Parish thanks to Brian Retallick for refurbishing the board. The clerk was approved to make payment. The green will be maintained by the same contractor as last year. Mr Ellicott is waiting for the new contract. The roundabout has a pit developing. Mr Hickman and Mr Brown to review and fix if possible. The play area will also need new rubber shortly. Mr Edwards to check for details of supplier form last time. A key criteria I s that it needs to be clean product.	<b>ME</b>  <b>JH / SB</b>  <b>OE</b>
<b>Item 13: Public Forum</b> None	
<b>Item 14: Next Meeting</b> May 28 <sup>th</sup> including the AGM	

The meeting closed at 21.20

Signed: Mike Ellicott

Date: 28.5.2024