

**Exmoor Area Panel Meeting**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2019 at The Moorland Hall Wheddon Cross**

**Attendees**

John Bray	Winsford PC	Cllr Nick Thwaites	SWaT
Tony Howard	Withypool and Hawkridge PC	Cllr Andy Milne	SWaT
PCSO Brian Stevens	Avon and Somerset Constabulary	Roger Foxwell	Cutcombe PC
Heather Harley	ENP	John Anson	Cutcombe PC
Ruth McArthur	ENP	Vivian White	Cutcombe PC
Francis Nicholson	SCC	Val Carveth	Exton PC
Cllr Steven Pugsley	SWAT	Beccy Brown	SWaT

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Andy Bray	David Peake SCC Highways
Penny Webber	Phil Bauvis
David Powell	Margaret Rawle
Ann Sparling	Malcolm McCoy
David Garth	

**2. Minutes of last meeting**

Action: BB to make corrections to surnames  
No matters arising

**3. Talk on Smart Communities form Jane Birch – Community Council for Somerset (SCC).**

The organisation started in 1926 with the aim to improve the quality of life in communities. Jane talked about 3 strands to SCC work

*Smart Communities* work with organisations and groups on village hall projects, community building (sports halls etc) and village shops. They also provide community engagement and consultation support, project planning and support and funding advice, bid writing and strategy.

*Village Agents* support individuals throughout Somerset in our communities. Another 10 Village Agents have just been recruited to support the growing need. Mainly funding through Adult Social Care and the Care Quality Commission.

*Good Neighbour Scheme* – Lottery funded. Aimed to set up communities so people can help one another in their own and neighbouring communities. 27 groups have expressed an interest. Further information and a setting up guide is available on the website.

Full information on all the services and advice SCC provide are available on the website:

[www.somersetccc.org.uk](http://www.somersetccc.org.uk). Tel nos:01823 331222

**4. Police Issues**

PCSO Brian Stevens gave an over view of the main issue in the area – theft from farms. Items worth over £20k have been stolen from a farm near Brompton Ralph on 2 different occasions and just over the border towards North Devon 2 quad bikes have been taken. PCSO appealed to Panel to encourage farmers to register to Farm Watch.

Through the scheme signage is available warning people that the farm is part of Farm Watch and acts as a deterrent.

The Police will come to farms and provide advice on preventative measures available – CCTV, locks etc. Trackers on farm vehicles are an excellent method of tracing stolen items. In North Yorkshire the same quad bike has been stolen on 5 separate occasions and tracked and returned to the owner.

PCSO Stevens asked people to remain vigilant to any suspicious vehicles. Requests where possible to take number plate registration and report any suspicions so police can make a check.

Internet and phone scams are on the increase. PCSO Stevens requested that people look out for their vulnerable neighbours and relatives so they don't fall foul of the fraudsters.

## **5. SCC Highways**

5.1 Davis Peake sent his apologies and sent the following update:

*'As regards highways winter service, the review is still on-going. Once it has been completed, we will be communicating with all parish and town councils regarding the arrangements for the winter of 2019/2020.'*

5.2 FN informed the Panel that despite making many representations, SCC haven't made up their minds on the policy for salt bins and salt bags for the forthcoming winter.

SP confirmed that a large piece of work had been completed by the Parish Councils to establish where the placement for the bags/bins should be in relation to areas of road most seriously affected by ice and snow.

FN raised concern about bins that have been brought by some PCs and that are not suitable to store salt. They should be of a certain quality and clearly recognisable.

VC said that Upton PC was investigating cost.

Jl thought that the Panel was looking into bulk buying the correct bins but SP said that this referred to the purchase of salt and setting up a salt cooperative could be looked into.

Panel are concerned that some PC won't take part in salt purchase and roads will not be consistently safe.

5.3 SP asked if there was anything the Panel could do to move things forward and he was mindful of the short window available with reference to the organisation of delivery and bad weather that could be experienced by November. In reality a decision needs to be made by August (6 weeks)

5.4 FN asked that a letter be written to the Leader, Deputy Leader and Mandy Chilcott (SCC councillor responsible for budget).

5.5 Action: SP agreed to draft a letter on behalf of the Panel.

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

6.1 Proposed changes to the Fire Service

A representative from the Service was unavailable. AM gave an update to the Panel

On Wednesday the Service announced that it had to cut £8m and put forward 6 proposals. Out of Porlock, Dulverton and Minehead, it has been proposed that Porlock will close. Porlock is recognised as being one of the best stations and it is possible to be manned 90% of the time (volunteer crew have to be able to access the station within 7 minutes or the call goes to another station). AM said

that many people in Porlock are very concerned – 50% of population are over 60 and many have mobility issues – closure of station in the town increases risk to life. Importantly Porlock station is a first responder

6.2 Action: AM is drafting a letter and will send to SP and all PC

6.3 Action: Everyone was asked to respond to consultation.

6.4 FN and RMcA both very concerned that their organisations hadn't been alerted or consulted about the proposed changes. RMcA said that the NPA would need to consider its role / statutory purposes in any consultation response. This could include consideration of the impact of a closure on the response time for moorland fires.

The following link provides direct access to the proposals and consultation page. The consultation should be live from 1 July 2019 until 20 September 2019

<https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/SaferTogether/ServiceDeliveryConsultation/Index.cfm?siteCategoryId=18&T1ID=211>

<https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/ContactUs/MediaEnquiries/Index.cfm?siteCategoryId=6&T1ID=66>

<http://www.dsfire.gov.uk/SaferTogether/Index.cfm?siteCategoryId=18>.

6.5 With regards to issues of services on Exmoor, VC raised the issue of response time by ambulances in rural areas. Recently 1 person in Upton waited 6 hours for an ambulance.

## **7. Exmoor National Park Update (ENP) - Ruth McArthur**

7.1 A full report is attached to these minutes

## **8. Headwaters of the River Exe report by Heather Harley**

8.1 An article and brief summary of the project are attached to these minutes

8.2 RF suggested that the officials from the ENP should be invited to a working ENP farm to understand the problems that the farmers are facing.

8.3 Action: RMcA to arrange. *BB Updat: Amendment – this action to be removed. Not RMcA decision as to whether a visit is agreed*

## **9. Council update**

9.1 Since the last Panel meeting, a new Council has been elected. Priorities include climate change, economic growth and housing (new build and existing housing stock). Full list of portfolio holders is listed in the appendices

9.2 BB said she aware that there are more concerns coming forward as to where to signpost people who are at risk of losing their homes in the private rented sector. In the first instance anyone who finds themselves in this position needs to remain in their accommodation and contact the Housing Options department via phone, putting query on the Council website via Firmsteps or email [Housingoptions@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:Housingoptions@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk).

People should be encouraged to register and bid on Homefinder and inform Housing Options of any change in circumstances ASAP as this can time to process.

9.3 Free fire safety checks are available and more information is listed in the appendices

9.4 BB gave a brief overview of the support that West Somerset Advice Bureau can provide to people with regards to a reduction in their monthly Wessex Water bill. Further information is available online and in the appendices of these minutes.

9.5 BB gave an overview of Route 60+ a scheme aimed to help senior drivers drive safely for longer and remain independent. Community groups can apply for a free training and talk session in their area. Further details in the appendices

## **10. Parish Lengthsman**

10.1 No update

## **11. Matters arising**

11.1 No issues arising from the floor

## **12. Dates of forthcoming meetings**

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September at Winsford Village hall commencing at 7.30

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 7.00 pm – Moorland Hall Wheddon Cross

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at 7.00 pm – Moorland Hall Wheddon Cross

The meeting closed at 8.50

## **Appendices**

### **1. Portfolio Holders Chair of the Council – Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey**

Vice-Chair of the Council – Cllr Simon Coles

The Executive are as follows:

Leader of the Council – Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communications and Culture – Cllr Benet Allen

Portfolio Holder for Community – Cllr Christopher Booth

Portfolio Holder for Housing – Cllr Fran Smith

Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources – Cllr Ross Henley

Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport – Cllr Mike Rigby

Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services – Cllr Alan Wedderkopp  
Portfolio Holder for Climate Change – Cllr Peter Pilkington  
Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development – Cllr Marcus Karvis  
Portfolio Holder for Sports, Parks and Leisure – Cllr Richard Lees

The Chair of Scrutiny – Cllr Gwilym Wren

The group leaders are:

Liberal Democrats – Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts  
Independent Group (including the Greens) – Cllr Gwilym Wren  
Conservatives – Cllr Anthony Trollope Bellew  
Labour – Cllr Libby Lisgo

## 2. Fire safety Checks

**FREE** Home Fire Safety Checks and Visits

Did you know you are entitled to a **FREE Home Fire Safety Check** and may also be entitled to a **FREE Home Fire Safety Visit**?

Do you know or care for someone that may benefit from this service?

All residents that live within Devon or Somerset are entitled to call our **FREEPHONE** advice number and receive **FREE home safety advice**.

It will take no more than 5 minutes and you will be asked some simple questions that will help our advisor decide if you need a **FREE Home Fire Safety Visit**.

Home Fire Safety Visits, take around 30 minutes and are bespoke to suit the circumstances of the individuals and homes we visit.

If a Full **FREE Home Fire Safety Visit** is considered appropriate, it may also include fitting **FREE** smoke detectors or other equipment should you require them. You would also be offered all the advice you may need to make you safer in your home.

Visits are arranged to suit your circumstances and at times to suit you.

Calls can also be made on behalf of others that you care for, and arrangements made via a preferred third party contact.

If a visit is not considered appropriate following your telephone call, our team will ensure you are sent all the relevant **FREE advice and literature** to help you carry out the checks in your own home.

To receive the **FREE Home Fire Safety Check** and seek advice about a **FREE Home Fire Safety Visit**, please call **0800 05 02 999**.

**Or Text info line: 078 00 00 2476**

Further details can be found on our website at [www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyInTheHome](http://www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyInTheHome)

**Kevin Mitcham GFireE**

Crew Manager – Prevention Team

t. 01935 382017 [www.dsfire.gov.uk](http://www.dsfire.gov.uk)

## 3. WSAB – Wessex Water fund

WSAB funded to support people with their applications to reduce water payments. 9 out of 10 applications accepted in last 2 months. Criteria:

- Low income
- Use allot of water for health reasons
- 3 or more children
- Wessex Water debt or other debts

WSAB can prepare financial statement showing the amount clients can pay – this can be a little as £5 per month. If there are arrears a payment of £1 per month together with the lower amount can result in write-off of the debt after 24 payments with none missed. Called Assist and Restart (details of these are on Wessex Water website) <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/your-account/help-paying/lower-your-water-bills>

If client receives pension credit and lives alone or a couple both receive pension credit or state pension is the only income an application can be made to reduce the cost of water by 25%. <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/your-account/help-paying/pension-credit-discount>

#### **4. Route 60+**

Route 60+ events aim to help senior drivers drive safely for longer.

Designed to help you keep your licence for as long as possible by addressing key issues such as how vehicles have changed over the years, how our own driving skills and habits have changed, and how we can go about updating our skills.

Tel 01823 423430 [roadsafety@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:roadsafety@somerset.gov.uk)