

Minutes of the Exmoor Area Panel Meeting

Held on Thursday 12 January 2023,

At the Moorland Hall, Cutcombe

The meeting commenced at 7:04pm

Present: Jan Aldridge & Howard Albery (Brushford), Roger Foxwell (Cutcombe), Mike Ellicott & Jeremy Hickman (Exford), Ann Sparling & Dave Powell (Luxborough), Duncan & Susanne McCarlis (Porlock) Fran A' Brook (Upton), Colin Wilkins (Winsford) , Tony Howard and Alan Collins (Withypool & Hawkridge).

Tony Brooks from Crowcombe Parish Council.

Also Present:

SWT/SCC Cllr Steven Pugsley, SCC Cllr Frances Nicholson (arrived at 8pm)

Officers:

Sam Murrell (SWT)

PCSO Michelle Haines

Avon and Somerset Police Crime Commissioner, Mark Shelford

1. Election of the Chairperson

The meeting was opened by the Clerk, who invited nominations from the floor for the position of the Chairperson. The decision was unanimous, and Cllr Steven Pugsley was returned unopposed for another year.

2. Election of the Vice-Chairperson

From the Chair, Cllr Steven Pugsley proposed Cllr Mike Ellicott, which was seconded by Cllr Roger Foxwell. No other nominations were received so Cllr Mike Ellicott was returned for another year.

3. Apologies

Apologies were received from John Elliott and Patricia Bainbridge (Brompton Ralph PC), Sarah Buchanan (Brompton Regis), Sally Moran (Clatworthy), John Anson (Cutcombe), Margaret Rawle, Christine Dubery & Nick Thwaites (Dulverton and SWT), Andrew Bray (Wootton Courtenay), Ruth McArthur (ENP), Andrew Turner (SCC), Kevin Bridgwater (SCC), Nicola Dawson (SCC Prepared), Phil Collings (DSFRS).

4. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Exmoor Area Panel held on 24 November 2022, and matters arising.

(Minutes of the meeting of the Exmoor Area Panel meeting held on 24 November 2022 were circulated with the agenda)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Exmoor Area Panel meeting held on 24 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

5. Avon & Somerset Police, Crime Commissioner (PCC) – Mark Shelford

The Chair welcomed back Mark Shelford who had agreed to return annually and provide an update on his work.

Mark had attended a conference on the previous day (Wednesday 11 January), which had been facilitated by the Avon and Somerset Policing Team working with Women's Aid and was hosted at Butlins. The aims of the conference were to raise awareness on: -

- Drugs – dealing, and spotting the signs of drug misuse;
- Domestic Abuse,
- Child Protection and safeguarding.

It was well attended by statutory agencies and Butlins staff and was a good networking opportunity.

The PCC's main areas of focus and priorities are:-

- **Cybercrime** – 50% of all reported crime in Avon and Somerset has an element of computer fraud/scamming and is carried out online. The PCC is taking steps to address this by encouraging more graduate recruitment and sponsorship of learning through the private sector, to enable the employment of Cyber-Police. He advised that the police are doing all they can to alert people of the pitfalls and the STOP – THINK – BE AWARE campaign. Less than 1.5% of resource is currently allocated to this type of crime, and he is doing what he can to address this. 75% of all cyber crime has a foreign criminal element.
- **Child Sexploitation** – 15% of all reported crime in Avon and Somerset centred around vulnerable children, county lines and other child exploitation. His office was working with SCC to establish safer networks for those children who found themselves on the wrong side of the law.
- **Recruiting to the Police Volunteer Panels.** The deadline to volunteer to be part of these panels has been extended to **31 January 2023**. The PCC is very keen that representatives from all parts of the County are encouraged to participate. He handed out some leaflets at the meeting but further information can be found on the [website](#).
- **ASP Precept Survey Online.** The precept accounts for 41% of police funding and the rest is from central Government grants. The Government also determines the maximum amount by which PCCs can increase the precept each year. For next year, the Government has allowed PCCs to increase the precept by £15 for a band D household (equivalent to 6%). The Government assume that PCCs will ask for the maximum allowed and use this assumption in their budget setting. [Complete this survey](#) to let the PCC know your

thoughts on increasing the amount of money which goes towards policing through your council tax.

Questions from the Panel

What is being done to tackle Rural Crime?

The Rural Affairs Policing team has had more resource implemented in the form of vehicles and two designated police drones. It is anticipated that more officers will be deployed here to double the size of the existing team.

493 extra police officers have been recruited across the Force Area.

In addition a special Task Force, under Operation Remedy can be targeted at specific crime areas and share intelligence in order to try and tackle crime hot-spots.

Catalytic Converter Crime – how is this being addressed?

Owners of such vehicles are being given preventative advice. Police are targeting scrap dealers who will ultimately be sold the stolen catalytic converters in an attempt to reduce the market on precious metals. Theft of this type has become rarer in recent months, which gives the PCC reason to believe that the crime prevention methods and deterrents are working.

Scamming – what can we do to prevent this?

ASP have a team of 2 ladies who can give talks on raising awareness of Cybercrime. They have responded positively to invitations from parish councils. Any parish council wishing to book their services can email fraudprotect@avonandsomerset.police.uk.

If someone is the victim of a cyber-crime it needs to be reported in the first instance to Action Fraud who will refer it to the relevant organisation. (This could be either the police or the regional crime squad). The police have also produced a booklet called the Little Book of Big Scams.

<https://media.aspolice.net/uploads/production/20220520100335/The-little-book-of-big-scams.pdf>.

Can Parish Councillors attend the PCC Forum being held in Taunton on 24 January?

Yes – absolutely. Invitations should have been distributed to parish clerks as well as the district and county councillors. Participation is actively encouraged. There will hopefully be further dates added in the calendar.

6. Avon and Somerset Police Report – PCSO 8913 Michelle Haines

Reported crime in the Exmoor area remains low, but the following incidents have occurred since November: -

- Chainsaws were taken from an outbuilding in Brompton Ralph;
- A vehicle was stolen from Skilgate;
- A trailer was stolen from Luccombe, but was recovered attached to the stolen vehicle above. Investigations are ongoing into the perpetrators.

- A rogue trader has been apprehended in respect of overcharging for some gardening work. This took place in Dulverton, where the relatives of an elderly vulnerable resident reported the trader to the police.
- All victims have been visited and crime reduction advice passed on.
- In partnership with Devon and Cornwall Police colleagues, Operation Tonic was run over the festive season to target drink/drug drivers and take appropriate measures.

In addition, the following community events have been happening: -

- Various bike marking events around the district. These will be advertised in the ASP newsletter and on social media. Bikes will be marked for free and registered on the national computer database.
- Funded trailer marking at Cutcombe market was a success.
- Promotion of Farm Watch and Horse Watch to rural communities. There are currently 96 members of FarmWatch on the Exmoor list. 16 new members signed up in 2022, and the hope is to increase on this number going forward. (2 have already signed up in January). It is a voluntary scheme, and nobody can be forced to join, but the police are very keen to promote its benefits.

Post Minute Note:

Drink driving leaflet supplied by PCSO Michelle Haines

7. SCC Highways Update – Cllrs Steven Pugsley and Frances Nicholson

Due to the various emergencies that had occurred around the county on the Somerset Levels and Cleve Hill, both Andrew Turner and Kevin Bridgwater had tendered their apologies for the evening's meeting.

Winter Maintenance Programme

A meeting had been held with the SCC Highways Team to check on the frequency of gritting on green routes. This has been bottomed out and it was agreed that if the temperature was going to be consistently below freezing for more than 24hours then the green routes needed to be done. (Previous thinking was 72hours or longer). It was agreed that connecting communities should be a priority.

Highway Wardens – Emergency Salting Telephone number

Can an emergency telephone number please be supplied to the Highways Wardens. This was previously available on the website but has since been removed.

Salt bins/bags

Parishes that had placed their salt orders were now having these filled. If there were problems with the locations of the grit bags (dropped in the wrong place!) can this please be reported to the Highway office as a matter of urgency at <https://services.somerset.gov.uk/contact-somerset-highways>.

14 Grit bins are awaiting delivery as a result of the devolved funding requests. Bins are 220L capacity and fastened via a hasp and staple. (6 black bins as requested have been allocated to Withypool and Hawkridge, whilst the remainder

will be yellow). They needed to be sited 450mm from the edge of the road and SCC highways will need to approve the location of any new bins. The bulk delivery will be made to the Milestone depot in Minehead, and then the Highway Steward will drop them at a designated rendezvous point. Sam will be contacting those parishes shortly who placed an order to determine the best place to deliver. It will also provide an opportunity for the new Highway Steward to meet the parish highway wardens.

Parishes needed to let SCC know when their salt stocks needed replenishing, so that they can meet the demands of the winter weather.

Blocked drains/gullies

Where water was coming off the highway and there was a threat to life and or property it needed to be reported as a matter of urgency. Less urgent drainage issues should be reported via the defects portal so that the highways maintenance team could respond accordingly.

Kevin Bridgwater had liaised with Roger Foxwell before the meeting, because he was unable to find the report on the long-standing issue of the Shearwells drains. It was clarified that Sam Murrell would have a conversation with Roger on the following day to tackle the issue once and for all.

Post Minute Note:

Using google maps Roger Foxwell clearly identified the stretch of road and 5 drains that were affected. This was transposed into Parish Online, and Sam reported it on the SCC Defects portal with the map attached. The SCC defects number for future reference is 666419. Once the site has been inspected, an assessment can be made on the work required.

Winsford – Halse Lane

It was reported that a utilities trench that had been backfilled and made good incorrectly had now sunk. Winsford PC had reported it via the portal which normally elicited a prompt remedy, but on this occasion SCC had stated it was not their responsibility. Sam agreed to follow up with the streetworks team, who could liaise with the contractor about rectifying the poor workmanship.

Exford Landslip

An up to date report on the current situation had been circulated to the parishes in recent weeks. It was likely that the remedial work to be undertaken would be carried out in the spring (May?) to take advantage of the longer daylight hours. Once the scale of the work was fully costed and the pattern of working was established, Andrew Turner had agreed that a public meeting could be held to apprise everyone of the situation.

Exford Bridge

During the recent rain a tree had washed down-river and was now resting against the central arch. This had been reported to both SCC Bridges (as owner of the bridge) and the Environment Agency who have responsibility for the river. Both organisations stated they would task work teams to attend to the situation, when it was safe to do so. An interesting point to note is that the tree has changed the

river flow, and as such the current was removing some of the problematic silt build up in this location.

Withypool Bridge

Tony Howard reported that a tree was now resting against one of the arches at Withypool Bridge. He was requested to report this via the portal to the Bridges and Structures team.

Highway Steward Update

The new Highway Steward, Tim Williams took up his employment at the start of January. His main area of focus for the moment will be picking up the outstanding work from late November and December. He will be using the online job request form so please continue to report your work requests via this method.

Please [click here](#) to access the Exmoor LCN – Highway Steward Job Request.

Urgent works such as blocked drains should be reported via the defects portal to ensure a swift response. General repairs such as potholes, road damage and other problems outside of your parish boundary should continue to be reported via the SCC online portal. www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem-on-the-road/.

He will be active around the district in his truck which is a Milestone vehicle.

Exmoor Pilot – Satisfaction Survey

Can parishes please complete the Qtr3 Satisfaction survey, so that the team can determine what is working and what needs to be done? This is for the period from October until the end of December. Thank you to those who have already done this.

8. Somerset Prepared – Nicola Dawson, *Civil Contingencies Manager*

Due to being on standby to attend the emergency on the Somerset Levels, Nicola Dawson sent apologies and re-arranged to attend the March meeting of the Exmoor Area Panel.

9. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service Issues (DSFRS)

No representative in attendance. Apologies tendered due to Emergency response.

10. Exmoor National Park Authority Issues (ENPA)

No representative in attendance.

11. Parish Lengthsman Scheme

Despite reminders being issued at the beginning of December, Dulverton Town Council is still waiting to hear from Exton, Selworthy and Minehead Without and Wootton Courtenay parishes about their requirements for the coming financial year. Can the clerks please make contact with Dulverton Town Council ASAP.

12. Items brought forward by parishes / AOB

Exmoor Local Community Network (LCN) Pilot – Cllr Steven Pugsley Establishment of the LCN boundaries

Councillor Pugsley made the panel aware of the publication of the [SCC Executive agenda which will take place on Wednesday 18 January 2023](#). The long awaited report on the proposed boundaries for the new LCNs had been released, together with a breakdown of how the parishes were to be distributed. The report also included the proposed terms of reference to be adopted and outlined an administrative budget proposal of £300K.

The Exmoor Area Panel was very pleased with the outcome of the consultation and the fact that the Exmoor pilot had been recognised as a working entity. There would not need to be many amendments to the current ways of working going forward. General comments from the floor included praise for the Highways Steward scheme, and the fact that a devolved budget meant that the parishes could prioritise which projects needed to be done most urgently. It was also felt that communications had vastly improved.

Other LCNS may have different priorities, but for the moment the Highways model should continue into the new financial year for the Exmoor LCN.

Further information about Local Community Networks can be found on the [New Somerset Council website](#).

13. Dates and Venues for meetings going forward.

Exmoor Panel Date	Proposed Highways Sub-Group Date
16 March 2023	10 February 2023

It is hoped that Nicola Dawson, Civil Contingencies Manager (Somerset Prepared) will be attending the March meeting

(The Meeting ended at 9.05pm)