

Minutes of the Cutcombe Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 15 June 2021 at the Moorland Hall

Present: Councillors Vivian White (*Chair*), John Anson, John Davis, Roger Foxwell, Eric Norman, Roger Webber (*Vice-Chair*), Claire Rooke, Steven Pugsley (SW&T), Jeanna Grenville (Clerk). One member of the public was in attendance.

21/20 Public Question Time: No matters were raised.

21/21 Apologies for Absence: Cllr Nicholson who has a conflicting meeting.

21/22 Declarations of Interest: Cllr Webber noted an interest, as the applicant, regarding item 8iii which is included on the agenda for information only.

21/23 Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Report on Actions: Cllrs resolved to accept the minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting of 18 May 2021 as a true and accurate record, having amended minute 21/6 to refer to burying telegraph wires, and not poles, on Summerway. The Clerk was awaiting SW&T dog fouling notices via Cllr Pugsley.

21/24 Chairman's Report: the Chairman reported a constructive meeting between the Exmoor Panel and the County Council's Highways department attended also by Cllrs Foxwell and Webber. There had been a number of positive indications regarding closer working in future to resolve areas of concern and Cllrs emphasized the importance of looking ahead to build effective outcomes. [Cllr Pugsley joined the meeting.]

21/25 Report from District Councillor: Cllr Pugsley feedback further from the meeting referenced in 21/24. Senior officers Alyn Jones and David Peak from Somerset County Council were in attendance and also Dr Carlton Brand who will be responsible for overseeing the unitary transition, once the outcome is settled by the Secretary of State. The uniqueness of Exmoor and value of local knowledge in service delivery was recognised by officials. Options for devolved responsibilities will be explored rapidly by One Somerset if the single unitary bid is successful. Cllrs Webber reported that a senior Highways' officer will visit Cutcombe when Covid restrictions permit to observe issues of local concern including access via the crossroads at Wheddon Cross, misleading signage for works, the condition of highways and speed limits. Cllr Pugsley agreed to take this forward in the first instance, in liaison with Cllr Nicholson. Cllr Webber noted that Cllrs from Selworthy and Minehead Without had spoken with great feeling at the meeting about loss of lives on the roads within their parish. The Clerk agreed to contact their parish council with a message of support. Cllr Pugsley further reported that he was still trying to obtain the dog fouling notices (minute 21/23) and that he had been approached by a Cutcombe family in need of affordable housing and was seeking to assist them as far as possible using the available channels.

21/26 Highways and Transport Matters: Positive progress had been made regarding flooding at the market. Two parishioners who live opposite the site have agreed to allow Highways to create a water catchment facility on their land to reduce flooding at the market. The Chairman will send a letter to thank the couple for their generous co-operation in support of the local community. Cllr Webber had contacted the owner of Exmoor House with a view to cutting back vegetation to improve road visibility.

21/27 Planning: i) 6/8/21/105 Lower Cleeve Barns. Cllrs expressed their doubts that this site is suitable for housing given its history as a barn housing livestock and raised concerns about access issues, including the steepness of the driveway. The impact of access on immediate neighbours was raised with Cllrs noting that this was a matter for them to respond to as individuals, albeit that conversion to a residential dwelling would increase volumes of traffic. Councillors resolved unanimously to 'Object' to the application on the grounds that it was considered an unsuitable site

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for a development of the nature proposed and has very poor access. **ii) 6/8/21/106 Cutthorne.** Councillors noted that the proposed greenhouse was reasonably sized and would be appropriately screened at the rear of the property. Councillors resolved unanimously to 'Support' this application. **iii) 6/8/21/107/DC the Croft.** Cllrs noted the application for discharge of Planning conditions.

21/28 Finance: i) Update on bank mandate. The Clerk noted her dissatisfaction that numerous attempts to update the mandate, including a visit in person to the bank, had been in vain. The mandate form had been lost and a separate form was required to change the address for statements. Cllrs Foxwell and Rooke were also required to attend the bank in person with proof of ID. The Clerk pointed out the risk to the Council that, as Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), she had minimal access to timely information about the Council's finances, was unable to discuss the account with the bank and relies on the previous clerk to forward statements. Cllrs were equally concerned and queried whether alternative banking arrangements ought to be sought if this risk cannot be remediated. Cllr Webber offered to assist the Clerk in resolving the problem. **ii) Payments were resolved as follows:** £36 to the Moorland Hall for hire of meetings rooms; £30 to SALC for Year End training; flowers valuing £30 for website maintenance to C. Stevens; £1,090.83 salary and expenses to the Clerk. [The Clerk and member of public left the room whilst a confidential discussion regarding the Clerk's hours took place.] **iii) Feedback from the Finance Working Group (FWG).** Cllr Webber had been selected as Chair for the group in 2021/22. Having met on 10 June, the FWG had reviewed the 2020/21 financial statements drafted by the RFO for the year, along with the variance and reserve reports which form part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The FWG will meet at least three times this year. Key business to be conducted will include reviewing financial outturns, overseeing the production of a Risk Register, in-depth consideration of the 2022/23 budget including a review of reserves, precept and Snowdrop Valley operation. New terms of reference will be drafted and the Council's Financial Regulations will be reviewed in advance of recommendations to full Council for adoption.

21/29 2020/21 Annual Governance Review and Accountability Return: i) Appointment of Internal Auditor. Tammy Weeks of Hillside Business was approved by resolution as the internal auditor for the 2020/21 year. Fees of £125-150 were anticipated and Cllrs were keen to see added value as a result of this appointment. **iv) Arrangements for final sign off of AGAR** [item taken out of turn]. The AGAR will need to be finalised subject to any matters arising from the internal auditor's report with a deadline for approval by 30 June. It was noted that this timescale was pressured this year due to the difficulties in procuring a new internal auditor whose report is not expected until the week commencing 21 June. Cllrs resolved that the Chair could individually sign the final version of the AGAR at a later date once the internal auditors report had been received, unless material matters needed to be brought back to full council **ii) AGAR Section 1 Annual Governance Statement.** Cllrs resolved to accept assertions as drafted, noting the short delay to the exercise of public rights for the 2019/20 financial year. **iii) AGAR Section 2 Accounting Statements.** Cllrs resolved to approve the accounting statements, statement of reserves and variances as prepared by the RFO. **v) Period of public inspection.** Cllrs noted the RFO's proposal of 25 June to 5 August and thanks were offered to her for her work preparing the AGAR.

21/30 20 mile per hour (mph) speed limit in Cutcombe: Cllrs observed that the Annual Parishioners' Meeting had conveyed strong and unequivocal support for a 20 mph limit in Cutcombe. The petition with 60 parishioners' signatures was noted and a parishioner has offered to be part of a group to monitor speed limits. Cllr Norman has received many comments supporting a 20 mph limit from the school and throughout Cutcombe in its entirety. Despite the well-rehearsed issues of fast-moving traffic in Higher Park Lane and impact of parked cars on Lower Park Lane, a wholesale reduction is unlikely to be supported by officials. Cllrs referred to other measures which might assist in reducing traffic speeds or avoiding hazards, such as children being accompanied, as speed humps, roundel signage, cutting back vegetation etc. Ultimately, the express aim is to secure reduced speed limits in the area bounded by Popery Lane and Higher and Lower Park Lanes. Building on the previous dialogue between parishioners and the Highways department, the Chairman and Clerk will collaborate on a formal request to Highways from the Council.

- 21/31 Maintenance of Parish Phone Boxes:** Cllrs agreed that the phone box in Wheddon Cross was looking shabby and in need of refurbishment. Whilst BT Openreach (BT) may wish to decommission the phone box on the basis that it is non-profitable, Cllr Pugsley noted that this required a formal process with agreement from the principal authority. Telephone boxes remained very useful in cases of emergency. Cllrs agreed that the phone boxes, including the one at Luckwell Bridge should be retained and that BT should be pressed to take responsibility for their maintenance. Cllr Rooke agreed to take this forward.
- 21/32 Correspondence and Meetings Attended:** The Clerk noted forthcoming SALC training on Finances and the Code of Conduct, with VAT training to follow in September. Cllr Foxwell fed back from the Exmoor Parish and Consultative Forum when a further presentation was given on the Affordable Housing initiative. Discussions were now taking place with the landowners of the three most popular sites, including sites in Cutcombe. Minutes will be provided when available.
- 21/33 Items for the Next Meeting:** Update on 20mph campaign; Thorne footpath diversion - Cllr Webber has a map showing the definitive line; update on discussion regarding Recreation Ground. Prior to closing the meeting it was noted that public donations of £79.84 had been collected from the public toilets and that Cllr Webber will attend to the improvements to the ground adjacent to the business unit once he has the key.

All business being concluded, the meeting closed at 9.45 pm.