

LUXBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Luxborough Parish Council held on 13 Nov 2024 at Luxborough Village Hall at 8.00 pm

Present: Cllrs D Powell (Chair), C Henson, A Sparling, G Tucker, S Pugsley (Somerset Council) Clerk: Mary Andrews

Public Question Time. Three members of the public were present

24/49 The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.04 pm.

24/50 Apologies for absence. Apologies received from Cllr Nicholson, J Waller, R O'Hare, and M Bolland

24/51 Declarations of Interest. No interests were declared.

24/52 Invitation to members of the public to speak. The Chairman invited two members of the public to speak about their submission of Planning Application 6/20/24/003. S and S Harding presented their plans to the group and answered questions put to them by the councillors. Once the councillors had finished their questioning, they took a vote and all present voted in favour of accepting the proposed plans. The Hardings then left the meeting.

24/53 Minutes of the meeting of 25 Sept 2024 Cllrs resolved to accept the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting. (P: Cllr Powell, S: Cllr Henson)¹.

24/54 Chairman's Report. Cllr Powell reported that the defibrillator training night drew 16 members of the community and was a big success. He expressed his gratitude to the Minehead Community Defib Group staff who provided the training and suggested we donate £52.50 to the Trust as a token of our appreciation. It was agreed by a unanimous vote of the councillors to donate this amount.

24/55 Update from Somerset Councillors. Cllr Pugsley reported as of 11 November, we still didn't know what the SC budget will be for the 2025/26 year. He added that there were plans to make 500 council staff redundant later this year, with the highway department losing 60% of their staff. All of the Rights of Way officers will also be made redundant. Additionally, he warned us that the Local Government Boundary Commission was suggesting re-jigging the LCN boundaries in order to reduce the number of county councillors from 110 to 96. This has put Luxborough in the cross hairs for being removed from the Exmoor LCN and placed into another LCN. This information was met with some alarm from our parish councillors and Cllr Pugsley recommended we write to the Local Government Boundary Commission and plead our case for staying within the Exmoor LCN. He also recommended we write to Duncan Sharkey and Bill Revens in Somerset Council to express our alarm at the gutting of the highways department.

24/56 Planning. Planning Application 6/20/24/003 – See item **24/50** above

24/57 Highways Cllr Bolland was absent from this meeting but submitted the following information which was presented by the Chairman:

¹ P- Proposed. S – Seconded

Initial

Dave and I relocated the salt bin and notified Highways. They responded with an acknowledgement of its new location. Salt bags and bin fills are happening now, and the gritters have already done one winter gritting round.

I have reported the warning sign at the bottom of the village that has been knocked over. The response from council: Report submitted. Your reference number is 826192.

I will try to get out in the next couple of weeks to unblock the grips below the junction with Stouts Way Lane and also further down below Druids Combe Farm.

24/58 LCN. Cllr Bolland attended the latest LCN meeting and submitted the following (edited) information which was presented by the Chairman:

Exmoor LCN: Update from meeting of 7 Nov 2024

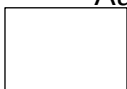
- 1.) 1st issue requiring our attention is the Boundary commission changes which may result in the eastern end (meaning Luxborough Parish) dropping out of LCN area. I think we are v happy in the Dulverton Exmoor area as this better reflects our community and links rather than the coastal strip or parishes to our East... we were informed that the Brendon hills parishes are likely to move so what would be plan B? We need to respond to the boundary commission consultation before 25th of January .*
- 2.) 2nd discussion point of interest was the recent Croydon Hill Rave – the police representative present at the LCN reported car owners present were issued with section 59 orders (Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 gives police officers the power to seize a vehicle if it is being used in a way that causes alarm, distress, or annoyance to the public. This includes driving in a careless, inconsiderate, or anti-social manner. - if vehicle or owner is brought to police attention again within 12 months the vehicle can then be impounded and destroyed.)*
- 3.) 3rd point of interest raised by the police representative was that sheep rustling in the area is on the increase with incidents in both Dunster & Brompton Ralph. The police representative also stated that Game bird poaching reports were received recently too. And he reminded our community that unregistered quad bikes should not be used on public roads.*
- 4.) 4th point which was very depressing to hear is that Highways is in for the lion's share of county budget cuts! ... Somerset Council is under significant pressure to submit a credible budget in April of next year with a service review currently taking place. There is a proposed restructure and highways has been hit hard. The proposal recommends losing one service manager, 6 of the 10 assistant managers, 10 people from RoW, and halving the number of bridge engineers. Andrew Turner has resigned as a result and has been distraught by what is happening as all highways staff now are under notice of redundancy. Currently this is with unions and staff but is in the public arena. The obvious outcome will be Highways standards will be lowered to new reduced standards so they don't fail the standards in April !! In the future Highways probably won't have capacity to have an input into the LCN. Highways staff present at LCN suggested that there will not be enough staff to raise the orders for works and go out reactively.*

Initial

- 5.) *Additionally, there have been some issues and complaints about the road sweeping contract regarding those responsible for the contract. These concerns are going to be escalated as iDVerde are not doing the job properly and LCN officers have become frustrated in the lack of response from council team for this contract.*
- 6.) *Exmoor Active Travel (ENPA), There was a presentation on this by the ENPit covers Human powered travel around the moor! Improve opportunities for active travel and access to the park from nearby settlements - so how will this work in a rural area / NP - it is about infrastructure not behavioural change looking at potential and design and permissions - no money for the actual building of stuff ! It is sponsored by DoT £100k available to all NP to bid for - money has to be spent by next March... work in partnership with local highways and will be inclusive of both visitor and local travel and has been expanded to also include equine travel . There is an online consultation currently. WSP are developing LCWIP local walking and cycling infrastructure plan. LCN input deadline is 22nd Nov . ACTION: Please complete this as individuals - search for Exmoor Active Travel Plan on web .*
- 7.) *Good feedback and report on Dulverton **food bank**. Developments going really well in new location building on the ideas and guidance of our local foodbank.*
- 8.) ***Housing group** - key ideas for change and improvement to housing types on Exmoor. See guide - Parish councillors Guide to Rural Affordable Housing. Available as PDF - the ten steps from recognising the need to people moving in.... https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/rural-housing-alliance/parish_councillors_guide_to_rura.pdf Most important bit for parish councils is to identify a site!!*
- 9.) *There was some discussion of the risk to farming community from farm sales to “carbon offset “ companies... also the impact of this on property prices as land prices increase and some general grumbles about the impact of the budget on landowners.*
- 10.)*Economic development group. Some concern expressed about impact of the budget by Eric from Cutcombe R&BT about min wage, NI etc and the impact on business viability - may result in laying staff off....*

After a lengthy group discussion, it was agreed for the Clerk to action the following:

- 1.) Draft a letter to the Local Government Boundary Commission saying we want to remain within the Exmoor LCN.
- 2.) Write to the Chief Executive of Somerset Council regarding parish thoughts about drastic cuts to the Highways budget since it will increase risk to the LCN approach which is designed to save the council money...
- 3.) Write to Duncan Sharkey and ask for guidance on what will and will not be considered essential works, as we consider this a key function of Somerset Authority.



24/59 ENPA. 1.) Information board in village carpark. The old ENPA information board standing in our carpark for the past decade has perished and been removed. We were approached by the NP asking if we wanted to replace the sign, bearing in mind they have no money in their budget to provide us with a new one. It was suggested by the councillors that we provide a wooden frame and ask the NP to provide us with a map and ENPA information to go onto it. Cllr Tucker offered to build the sign for the village.

2.) Active Travel Plan. The Clerk explained to the councillors what the Active Travel Plan proposal was all about and explained about the online consultation currently underway. It was suggested that perhaps ENPA could use money from this project to help pay for our new information board (see above).

24/60 Police. The Clerk presented to the councillors the opportunity now available to us to purchase a Bleed Kit from the Somerset and Avon police. After discussing the merits of having one to go alongside the defibrillator, it was agreed by all councillors to go ahead and purchase one at a one-off cost of £199.00. All future maintenance and upkeep will be supplied by the police. (P: Cllr Tucker, S: Cllr Henson)

24/61 Finance 1.) To approve purchase of new set of defibrillator pads. Cllrs resolved to accept purchase of new pads at a cost of £81.08 (P: Cllr Sparling, S: Cllr Tucker) 2.) To discuss 2025/26 Budget and Precept. Cllrs resolved to accept proposed budget/precept with proviso to revisit the numbers at our Jan 2025 meeting when we hope to know more about the SC budget. (P: Cllr Tucker, S: Cllr Henson) 3.) Nov 2024 Schedule of Payments. Cllrs resolved to agree the Schedule of Payments (P: Cllr Sparling, S: Cllr Tucker)

24/62 AOB Cllr Bolland has signed up for the One.Network presentation to be held later in November. It was requested this be added to our next meeting's agenda.

Date of next meeting: **Regular Meeting Wednesday, 15 January 2025 at 8.00pm.**

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 9.29 pm.

Schedule of Payments: Function 28 £24.00, Mary Andrews £468.70 (Q3 salary), HMRC £57.80 (tax on Clerk's pay)
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Signed:_____.

Date:_____.