

ERMINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2014

Tuesday 1 April 2014 at 7.30pm – Parish Rooms, Ermington

Present: 5 Parish Councillors
District Councillors L Ward and T Holway
PCSO A Potter
5 members of the public

Apologies received from Parish Councillors R Hughes, M Auburn, J Bower, R Hartwell

Chair: Cllr J Kerslake

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone and explained the format of the evening.

2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 2 April 2013

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting which took place on 2 April 2013 were agreed to be a true record and duly signed by the Chair.

3. Police Report

PCSO A Potter presented the following information in his report of policing matters in the Parish over the previous 12 months –

Ermington

Theft x 6
Criminal damage x 6
Dog incidents x 2
Drink driver x 1

15 in total.

All but two of the theft and criminal damage crimes relate to wind turbine signs.

Lee Mill Industrial Estate

Theft x 18
Criminal damage x 1
Public order x 3
Assaults x 7
Drink /driver x 1
Shopliftings x 16
Possession of controlled drug x 3
Harassment x 1
Arson x 1

51 in total

22 of the above 51 crimes were detected

PCSO Potter left the meeting at 7.45pm



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4. South Hams District Council Annual Review

Cllr L Ward gave the following report:-

Key headlines

Austerity measures continue to bite and as you have heard the scale of the financial challenge is unprecedented and will continue for some time to come.

The aim of the budget is to make sure we have a reserve but protect front line services. This does mean that the Council agreed to increase Council Tax by 1.9%.

Part of our response to the financial challenge is to transform the way in which the council works with the T18 programme. This was adopted last October and will use approaches similar to those used in Eastbourne and Wiltshire councils for example. The aim is to manage demand and maximise the use of ICT to help us develop our customer facing work but the bulk of the savings will come from job cuts.

Our proposed new operating model will include a new staff structure for example with two Executive Directors rather than a CEO (subject to review of the current pilot) and an Income Generation Officer. We are also aiming to have mobile locality officers working out in the field.

ICT will play a key role in this process. We have worked to raise awareness of the new website this year and have just in the last week gained three star status for our new website – it contains a wealth of information and the structure makes it easy to navigate but we are looking to improve.

We have just agreed our new housing position statement – and agreed to put this on the website. This sets out our land supply and housing calculations for the future. Future housing levels are being closely aligned with projected economic growth.

Council meeting on 13 February 2014 approved a discretionary Retail Relief Scheme to support local businesses with a £1,000 uplift for local retailers. With about 800 businesses set to benefit this will put a lot of money back in our economy. Although a national initiative the details did not come out until 3rd February – officers worked very quickly to report on this to councillors so that we could vote to decide whether or not to go ahead.

Erme Remind

This is a TAP funded project (Town and Parish Fund to support collaboration across the parishes).

So far we are on track with our plan. We have created a range of publicity materials from leaflets to posters to support awareness raising at events such as our coffee morning at the White Hart. We have held training events to raise awareness and develop understanding – now 68 people across the four parishes and sectors have received this training. We are creating a directory of useful information and contacts. We also have permission to use the purple angel global logo for dementia friendly communities. We will be working with Norman McNamara (who has been diagnosed with dementia) and local groups to develop a deeper level of understanding of what it means to live with dementia and discuss ways of responding to people living with the condition.

Cllr T Holway reemphasised that austere measures are still required to budget for frontline services and to respond to financial challenges ahead.

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5. Devon County Council Report

Following his resignation, Mr Mumford was unable to attend this meeting but submitted the following report:-

We have taken the decision to increase Council tax for the first time in 4 years by 1.9%. In doing so we have foregone the Government Grant which was only guaranteed for a few years and felt it important this time to secure the base budget position to avoid significant hikes in years to come to catch up with inflation pressure.

We are well on the road to setting in train the necessary measures to secure the £100m + savings required over the next 3 years in response to the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The scale of change we are facing is considerable. When I became your County Councillor the budget excluding the schools direct grant was a little over £600m per year. At the end of the first term in control we reduced our budget to about £500m and over the next 3 years will have to reduce that again to about £400m. Simply put that means we can't just do a little less of what we have always done.

Rather, we need to review the activities that we undertake, and see what we can do differently and what we may need to stop doing at all.

To do this we have launched a number of consultations in response to the required budget reductions and which will enable us to change the ways services are delivered in Devon.

1. Youth Service. We are consulting on shifting DCC away from an open access universal provision to just a targeted service focussed on those with greatest need. We will be seeking other parties to deliver the universal provision including where possible other organisations taking over existing DCC assets. We have already had a number of very strong and positive expressions of interest from community based organisations and groups. The targeted activity will work alongside existing statutory services and in support of the new Early Help strategy being deployed county wide from this March.

2. Day Centre Review. Due to cost pressure it has also been necessary to launch a review of the number and location of day service providers. The deployment of personal budgets has meant that service users are now far freer to choose who and what to spend their allowance on and this has put pressure on demand.

3. Residential Homes. As I have mentioned a number of times before the cost to DCC of providing residential homes in house is far more than if procured from the private sector. A number of our homes have been empty for some time pending a review and this has now been set in motion and extended to embrace all of DCC's residential homes. A core component will be the capacity in the private sector to take on any further commissioned activity. In each location a detailed consultation will take place involving residents, their families as well as the broader community and key stakeholders.

4. DCC Children's Homes. In response to changes with Ofsted Guidelines and some specific local issues we are undertaking a consultation on the possible closure of all three of DCC's Children's Homes. Ofsted are adamant that our homes are too large and that home should be no more than 3 residents as against our 6 or 7. Furthermore one home has been closed to new entrants in response to a threat from external sexual predation in the community and another closed to entrants after a very poor Ofsted audit last year. We have invested substantially in our in house Fostering service. I am of the firm belief that a child's best interests are catered for in a setting as close to normal family life and as such would far prefer to see care taking place within a fostering or adoptive setting with additional support for both the young person and the carer to cater for any challenging needs. The decision to close these three homes has been called in and should be clarified on 11th March at a special scrutiny meeting.

These are significant changes. You will be only too aware of the extent of damage caused during the recent floods. This resulted in widespread structural damage and a massive increase in the number of pot holes and deterioration of highway surfaces.

Flooding in our area was quite limited. The teams are working flat out to catch up with the backlog of maintenance and it will be a little while before routine activity can be resumed.

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6. Chairman's Annual Report

The Chairpersons report was read out by Cllr Kerlake:-

At the end of last year's report, Jon Morley foretold that this year would be both busy and full of challenges; he was certainly right with both predictions!

2013 was dominated by discussions surrounding the new housing development, which we now see nearing completion and are now welcoming new residents and families to Ermington. The welcome pack, which Jon mentioned last year will shortly be produced and distributed to all new residents, full of information on all the vibrant activities this parish boasts.

Inevitably the development has brought some disruption and issues which have had to be ironed out along the way. It has also brought recognition to two old family names through the naming of the new streets – Gransmore Walk and Pinwill Crescent. We look forward to a new integrated Ermington, with all the benefits that that will bring.

The increase of severe and extreme weather has also continued to dominate, with flooding becoming an ever present reality. The efforts of DCC are to be commended in their efforts to keep the highways clear. In addition the vigilance and self – help from members of the community have been invaluable.

There have been controversial issues relating to renewable energy schemes, which will no doubt continue to play a significant part as we move further towards coping with the challenges of climate change.

This year has seen a considerable shift towards community groups rising to challenges and providing solutions.

In this respect, I am pleased to report that the frequency of complaints concerning dog fouling has significantly reduced, for which we can only thank people for their continued determination to keep Ermington clean. I look forward to the new self –help action with the Ermington Spring Clean project and hope that this might become an annual event.

Public Toilets and the proposed winter closures have also been a frequent topic on our agendas. Despite consultation and the strong desire of the parishioners to maintain this vital service, even by volunteer action, SHDC seem bound towards closure. It will be interesting to see how the self – help will of the community can be balanced with the financial pressures facing the district council.

Steady progress has been made towards the provision of a fully functional and accessible village centre. Whilst it may be slow, with the purchase of Honey's field certainly the slowest part, it has been important to take time to consider all the issues surrounding the demands and needs of this growing community. Funding for the outdoor space has been secured, research into potential funding for the building has been carried out with the proposal that the bulk of the cost be met by a Big Lottery application. There will be a great deal of work to be done in this respect over the forthcoming year.

We have also had the proposed sale of the village pub to contend with, which prompted quick action by the Parish Council to safeguard this important feature and acquire the listing as an Asset of Community Value. The action group which has since arisen has been fast and efficient with community consultation and progress towards a potential solution.

The parish council itself has seen major changes, both in terms of personnel and in the volume of work to be dealt with. I would like to thank all my colleagues both past and present for their constant hard work, and in particular to acknowledge the efforts of Jon Morley and Dawn Trower, and to welcome Teresa Drew as our new clerk.



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I would like especially to thank Will Mumford for his commitment and support to the parish over the years and to wish him well in his future career. Special thanks also to Lindsay Ward and Tom Holway for their ever present support and hard work. Also to PCSO Andy Potter for his sensible and practical approach to policing our area, to Rob Batchelor, and welcome to Caroline Mathers in her new role as Neighbourhood Beat Officer.

I have no doubt that this year will be no less challenging in many ways, but look forward to grasping the great opportunities that will arise and to continuing to work towards a better future with such a great team.

Many thanks, Ro Hughes.

A short refreshment break took place at 8.25pm.

7. Guest Speaker

Mr Andy Barron - District Council's Recycling Officer gave an informative presentation on "Waste to Resource.

8. Question Time

A parishioner enquired why the new recycling bags did not have a handles. As the handles were used to tie the bag to ensure the contents remained in the bag whilst awaiting collection.

Mr Barron replied this was due to costs but would look into the situation.

The Chairman thanked Mr Barron for such an interesting presentation.

The meeting finished at 9.30pm.

Signed:



(Presiding Chair)

Date:

7/04/15

