

ERMINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Tuesday 16 April 2019 at 7.30pm – Reading Rooms, Ermington

Present: Cllrs J Kerlake, D Webley, P Holman, R Cross, D Onley, J Allis, S Martin, J Dunlop and A Heaton

County Councillor R Hosking
PCSO A Potter
District Councillor T Holway
T Drew – Parish Clerk

2 members of the public

Chairman: Cllr J Kerlake

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone, explained the format for the evening and introduced Tony Cannon of Devon Air Ambulance as the guest speaker.

2. Apologies

Cllr R Midgley.

3. Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting which took place on 3 April 2018 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Chairman's Annual Report – Cllr John Kerlake

Cllr Kerlake presented his annual report the text of which is attached to these minutes.

5. County Councillor's Annual Report – Cllr Richard Hosking

Budget – increase in precept of 2.99%

Spending - a review will take place in 2019

Care service is working hard to provide facilities at home if possible

Public Health - nursing will no longer be out sourced

Education – average education payment of £304 is still below the national average

Transport – commitment of £80 million for the Dawlish railway line

Infrastructure – Gigaclear Broadband is working hard to catch up as it is behind with its contract. BT had achieved 90% Broadband connections, with a £350 voucher scheme available where speeds were below 2 Mbps

Street Lighting – LED's being installed, a saving of £850k has currently been achieved

Highways - £18.74 million for potholes, drainage repairs and highway maintenance. A3121 improvements to be carried out soon, to include Kittaford Cross

SCOMIS – successfully operates as a not-for-profit, wholly traded service, and is part of Devon County Council. SCOMS is delivering educational services throughout the country. It has provided ICT Support Services, currently to nearly 700 schools, MATs, Federations and educational establishments in 19 Local Authorities from Cornwall to Kent. From secondary schools of over 2,500 pupils to small rural primary schools with 15 pupils.

Riverbank Erosion in Ermington - Environment Agency data has been obtained which will be looked at and another survey will be carried out this year to ascertain how close the river is to the highway.

Speeding: Traffic Calming measures are being investigated for the centre of the Village.



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6. District Councillor's Annual Report – Cllr Tom Holway

Adoption of the Plymouth and SW Devon joint Local Plan.

£6.4 m investment in local leisure centres.

£106 funding secured to improve open space, education and travel.

£2.4 million worth of Disabled Facilities grants.

Third lowest Council Tax in Devon.

Employment units built and a number occupied by local businesses.

432 affordable houses had been built, with a further 690 in the pipeline.

New waste contract from April, with more potential for recycling.

Contract for waste collection and street cleaning will lead to savings of over £300,000 a year.

7. Annual Police Report from 27th March 2018 to 31 March 2019

	Ermington	Lee Mill Ind.Est.
public order	4	2
Theft	5	7
shoplifting	0	24
burglary dwelling	0	0
attempt burglary dwelling	0	1
burglary non-dwelling	0	2
criminal damage	3	1
criminal damage to m/vehicle	1	3
theft of m/vehicle	0	0
theft from m/vehicle	1	4
making off without payment	0	6
Assaults	2	5
drink/driving	0	4
possession of controlled drug	1	3
supply controlled drug	0	1
offensive communication	2	1
Harassment	2	2
possession of an offensive weapon	0	1
Robbery	0	1
distribute indecent photograph/sexual communication[internet offences]	1	
Totals	22	68

Last year Ermington had 20 crimes and Lee Mill had 64 crimes.

8. Questions from Parishioners arising from the Reports

No questions arising from reports.

Cllr S Martin gave a vote of thanks to those Councillors who will be stepping down following the forthcoming local elections. Cllr Martin said that their excellent work provided a great legacy.



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9. Guest Speaker – Tony Cannon from Devon Air Ambulance

Tony explained the history of Devon Air Ambulance and that the first mission took place on 27 August 1992. Devon Air Ambulance have two custom built EC135 helicopters based at Exeter and Burrington. Each aircraft is crewed a pilot and two specialist paramedics. The helicopters can reach 90% of Devon within 10 minutes and the remainder within 15 minutes.

Devon Air Ambulance receives no central funding and is an independent charity. In 2018 it cost £7.5 million to keep the service airborne. In 2018 helicopters assisted 1109 patients.

Tony explained that there was now a wide network of community landing sites and suggested that Ermington consider the possibility of setting one up. Tony briefly outlined the normal financial arrangements for the sites and the availability of matched funding. Cllr Kerlake said that he would ask the Parish Council to look into this in due course in conjunction with the Devon Air Ambulance Community Landing Sites Development Officer.

Cllr Kerlake thanked Tony for his very informative talk.

The meeting finished at 9.30 pm.



Signed:
(Chair – Cllr Denis Onley)

Date: 23/05/2021



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Chairman's Annual Report – April 2019

I have been a parish councillor for almost eight years. I am now in my fifth year as Chairman. This is my fifth and final report. The years have flown by and as I look back over the years I can reflect on the issues we have had to consider as a parish council.

I can list significant ones as:

The Spires Development. This involved negotiations with the developer (BDW), South Hams District Council and Devon County Council.

Wind Turbines In Ermington Parish. This generated a great deal of anxiety and concern among parishioners that needed to be carefully assessed as part of the parish council input into the planning applications.

A Village Hall. This has taken up an immense amount of parish council time and continues to do so.

My previous annual reports pick up a number of recurring issues that continue to cause difficulties. These are:

Speeding: This problem has existed for many years. Some traffic calming measures are in place but they do not solve the problem for the whole village. Are there ways of slowing traffic speeding through the village? **Could I issue a plea to Devon County Council Highways to look at solutions to the problem?** Could more calming measures be put in place? What about a radical solution using the four entrances to the village to create a "Pedestrian Priority" zone? Should the Parish Council think about resurrecting our "Community Speedwatch" initiative that could not be taken forward for good reason at the time we looked into it?

Flooding, Blocked drains and Potholes: These are dealt with on a regular basis by the Highways Department and we appreciate the work done at a time when resources are in short supply.

Erosion of the riverbank in Ermington: This has the potential to cause a great deal of disruption and expense if it is not dealt with in good time. Continuation of the erosion has the potential to cause the collapse of the A3121 and create environmental damage if the sewage pipe installation is also damaged. If that happens the cost of putting matters right will be enormous in comparison to the cost of fixing the problem now. We are pleased that the erosion is being monitored. Notwithstanding the legal opinions put forward on responsibility for maintenance of the riverbank I would urge all the main parties involved to seek a pragmatic solution to the problem which we first suggested in May 2015. In short, common sense and compromise now, involving a relatively small amount of expenditure would solve the problem and save a great deal of time, money and



disruption in the future. I know that Cllr Hosking is keeping a watchful eye on matters but may I urge him to encourage Devon County Council to take the lead on the matter and make a decision to resolve the matter soon.

The Village Hall Project: This is still at the top of the Parish Council's agenda. Parishioners currently rely on the Reading Rooms that do not, for a number of reasons, meet the needs of parishioners. The Council originally looked at refurbishment and extension of the Reading Rooms but it became clear in 2014 that access and parking would severely restrict its potential marketability and use by parishioners. We therefore looked at other site options in conjunction with the planners, highways, the environment agency and so on. The play park area stood out as providing the most suitable site and a working group was put together at the end of 2015 to take the project forward and undertake consultation with parishioners. This triggered a range of consultation meetings and surveys. The need for a village hall was confirmed during the first half 2016 when a survey of households as well as groups and clubs was undertaken. The response was positive. 89% of respondents confirmed that they wanted a village hall as well as 23 of the 24 groups consulted. The working group undertook a full appraisal of site options in the summer of 2016 taking account of suggestions received from parishioners at consultation meetings in January and April 2016. A further site offered by a local landowner was considered following a public meeting in September 2016. The play park area was confirmed as the most suitable site. Following a full feasibility study a series of public consultation events were widely advertised. These were held between July and September 2017 when parishioners were able to attend a manned exhibition of building and site drawings, the feasibility study and costings. Parishioners were asked to complete a questionnaire and 92 households out of 94 said they felt that the proposed new village hall, secure children's playground and parking met their needs and did not object in principle to an increase in the precept to fund the project. We were all very pleased with this outcome and began preparations for the submission of a planning application. We were stopped in our tracks by the presentation of a petition to the Parish Council by a group calling themselves the "Friends of Ermington Park" The petition was headed:

"We the undersigned believe Ermington Park (also known as Ermington Recreation/Playing Field) is important to the community and good for wildlife. We do not want any part of it to be built on and want to protect it in its entirety for generations to come as open green space. We call upon Ermington Parish Council to commit to supporting Ermington Park as open green space at its current size and to protect it for outdoor recreation and wildlife"

The petition contained 191 signatures – but not all from parishioners or local residents. Some resided as far away as Penzance, Bovey Tracey, Newton Abbot, St Germans and Plymouth. There were also some duplicate signatures. I question the integrity of the petition. Did those who signed know what the project was about? Did they know exactly where the hall was going to be built? Did they have an opportunity to look at a site plan and judge where it would fit into the current green area? Did they know that it would provide for new play equipment in a new play area? Did they know that it would provide over 30 parking spaces?



The petition mentions wildlife. What wildlife? It mentions the protection of green space. How much green space will be removed taking account of that taken up by the hard surface for the skate park and the space available under the new proposals? Look at it in perspective against the large area of green space adjacent to the site.

Compare all that with the extensive consultations carried out by the working group where parishioners were able to make an informed judgement on what is being offered by looking at site and design plans as well as costings. Consider the positive response received from parishioners. Yes parishioners.

The Parish Council and Working Group organized an Open Day on 29 April in response to the petition. A great deal of effort went into the event. A number of displays were provided with comprehensive information including consultation documents, drawings, financial information and examples of play equipment. Over 100 people signed in to the event and questionnaires inviting suggestions for improvements to the scheme were completed by 68 people. Only 4 people objected to the scheme with 12 saying that it should be sited elsewhere. It is revealing that only 29 of those signing the petition signed in to the Open Day. The response to the Open Day gave the Parish Council every incentive to press ahead with its plans. But wait. The next significant action by the Friends of Ermington Park was to submit an application to Devon County Council to have the recreation ground classified as a Village Green. If successful that application would protect the current status of the recreation ground and, unfortunately, prevent the construction of a village hall on the play park site. Let us ask ourselves the following question: Why has the Friends of Ermington Park who are opposed to the site as a village hall put this application in? Bear in mind that the park/recreation ground is currently owned and managed by South Hams District Council under the auspices of the Physical Training and Recreation Act. The Act is designed to provide for the development of facilities for, and the encouragement of, physical training and recreation. The purchase of the recreation ground, on offer to the Parish Council for £1, would enable us to build a village hall to further the aims of sport and recreation. Ownership and use of the land and building would be in the hands of the parish. That would provide protection for its management and future use. But most importantly it would provide for a potentially vibrant centre which would bring the community together. It would provide facilities that the parish wants and needs. It would enhance the use of the recreation area itself where there is a crying need for facilities to support, for example, cricket and football. It would encourage more clubs and groups to use the recreation ground. It would provide a new secure play area close to the proposed village hall. It would provide new play equipment to be chosen with the assistance of children and young people in the village to replace the old and deteriorating equipment currently on the site. It would provide a source of revenue for the parish.

We will have a new parish council after the local elections on 2 May. I along with four existing council members have not put ourselves forward for election. The list of members of the new council has now been published. It will consist of six members who because they number ten or less will take up their positions



without being elected at the poll. The new council will be dominated by Friends of Ermington Park nominees or supporters. Can I make a plea to the new council to look at a number of points which I would list as follows:

- i. Look carefully at what has gone before and the enormous amount of work that has been put into the project,
- ii. Keep an open mind,
- iii. Look at the results of the detailed consultations that have taken place,
- iv. Recognise that it is your duty to act in the interests of all members of the parish. Do not use your office to pursue your own agenda.
- v. You have shown considerable energy and ingenuity in opposing the project. Direct that resource towards a more positive approach to the needs of parishioners.

The Parish Council has earmarked funds for the project. If we add that to Section 106 money available and the sale of the Reading Rooms the project has a potential starting fund well in excess of £200000. Please don't let this project go back to square one which is what apparently happened many years ago. This is still a live project but is on hold. When and if the legal barriers are cleared sit down with the Working Group and look at the two design options now available following the Open Day. Members of the working group are ready and willing to do this after 2 May.

I am sorry to have gone on at such length about the village hall. Can I wind up by saying a few words of gratitude to a number of people? To:

Richard Hosking our County Councillor
Tom Holway our District Councillor
PCSO Andy Potter

All attend our monthly meetings, provide reports, give advice and deal with issues we raise.

We are also grateful for the work done by the Village Fund who raise money and invest it in the village

Thank you Janet Tempest for keeping the Ermington War memorial in good shape by looking after the shrubs and plants.

Also: Cllr Midgely who manages the parish website. George Jones who has edited the parish magazine magnificently over the past few years and now handed the job over to Andrew Savery the new owner of the First and Last restaurant who is making a welcome contribution to the life of the village. Cllr Di Webley and Teresa Drew who have cleaned the public toilets in Ermington over the winter period due to funding shortfalls at South Hams District Council.

Thank you to Cllrs Sue Martin, Josie Allis and Rob Cross for organizing the Ermington Spring Clean last Sunday and to the 45 volunteers who collected over 35 bags of rubbish in just 2 hrs.



I am grateful for the support provided by the councillors who have served the council tirelessly but who will not be a part of the new council. A special thank you to Teresa Drew our parish clerk for her help and good humour.

Finally, a big thank you to the Village Hall Working group who have given an enormous amount of their time and professional expertise on a voluntary basis to take the project to its present level. Steve Hitch the architect member of the group deserves a special mention. He has been involved in the village hall project for around 9 years and given us a countless number of hours and resources.

I may have failed to mention all who support us. If so my apologies and thank you.

Cllr John Kerlake
16 April 2019

