

ERMINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held in the Reading Rooms on 16 January 2024 at 7.30 pm

Present: Cllrs Denis Onley (Chair), Robert Owens, Patricia Hannam and Ian Creese
Teresa Drew (Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer)

Parishioner(s) / Visitor(s): 3

119/2023 TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies accepted from Devon County Councillor Dan Thomas, District Councillor Alison Dewynter and Cllr Dunlop.

120/2023 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST(S) IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA

None.

121/2023 VACANCIES FOR FIVE PARISH COUNCILLORS

To consider applications received for co-option. Cllr Onley clarified that process for applications as there is an interest from two parishioners. Cllr Onley explained the process which had been in place for many years:

The co-option selection process involves being invited to observe one of our monthly Parish Council meetings, following which there is an informal opportunity to ask Councillors questions, and to confirm eligibility. We then ask for a personal statement detailing relevant knowledge and skills, understanding of local affairs, and any special interests, particularly issues candidates wish to help with. This is used to consider whether to interview, after which the Council decide whether to appoint. It is advisable for anyone applying to be aware of the eligibility criteria, including the grounds for disqualification, and current Council policies and priorities (as detailed on our website).

The two parishioners who expressed an interest to be parish councillors were present, one parishioner is to send their personal statement and the other parishioner was asked if they wish to add to his personal statement.

Standing Orders Stood Down 7.35 pm

The parishioner who had submitted their personal statement did not wish to add anything to their statement. They believed unless Ermington Parish Council's Standing Orders say the opposite, the Parish Council are not acting in line with the NALC and DALC guidelines in the co-opting of councillors as the decision on their application should be made immediately on a show of hands at this meeting unless the parish council has otherwise stated in their Standing Orders. Secret ballots are only to be used if Standing Orders allow. Co option should not be considered in a confidential session. Cllr Onley pointed out all decisions are made by all Councillors at our Parish Council meetings which are public meetings and not confidential or secret meetings. The candidate stated he would report the council as it was going against NALC and DALC guidelines and inform the Monitoring Office which will take this matter further. Also on 23 April last year, there were vacancies for 6 parish councillors and at the AGM in May you thanked Cllr Hannam for standing as a councillor and there are no documents for their co option.

The candidate also noted that on 23 April last year, there were vacancies for 6 parish councillors and at the AGM in May Cllr Onley thanked Cllr Hannam for standing as a councillor and there are no documents for their co option.

Cllr Owens pointed out there was a Local Election that took place in May 2023 which the Clerk confirmed.

Cllr Hannam pointed out that she was nominated and elected during the May 2023 Local Elections. This was confirmed by the Clerk. Therefore, Cllr Hannam had not been co-opted, she followed the formal channels in the same way as other parish councillors who were elected during Local Elections. The parishioner stated he would be reporting the parish council as he had no confidence since in his view the NALC and DALC guidelines were not being followed.

Standing Orders Reinstated 7.40 pm

121/2023 VACANCIES FOR FIVE PARISH COUNCILLORS (continued)

Cllr Owens pointed out there was a Local Election that took place in May 2023 which the Clerk confirmed.

The parishioner stated he would be reporting the parish council to South Hams District Council Monitoring Officer as he had no confidence as the NALC and DALC guidelines were not being followed.

Cllr Onley pointed out there is a long-standing process of co-opting candidates and when he applied to be co-opted, he had been interviewed. He also pointed out that Cllr's Creese, Yates, and Owens had each previously been interviewed when co-opted.

The parishioner left the meeting.

122/2023 EMAILED REPORT FROM DEVON COUNTY COUNCILLOR DAN THOMAS INCLUDING ITEMS FROM PAST MEETINGS

There is a special cabinet on 2nd February to discuss the Devon Devolution deal, so we will know more about the detail then.

Bus service - trying to get a meeting with the portfolio holder to discuss Ermington but again, this one will take perseverance.

- *Public footpath gate entrance opposite Plantation House*
- *A3121 Speed limit (variation of DCC policy) – Cllr Thomas has requested an exploratory meeting with senior highways officers to try and move the A3121 on; as suspected, they aren't going to volunteer and I am going to have to chase. **ACTION: Cllr Thomas***
- *Potholes in Westlake and Lusson and flooding in Westlake*

The following information was also provided by Cllr Thomas:

Winter Carriageway Conditions

January 2024

Following the period of extended wet weather that we have experienced over the festive period the Highways and Traffic Management Service has experienced a significant increase in the number of potholes reported by the public and recorded through the Highway Safety Inspection process.

Enquiries by Year & Month

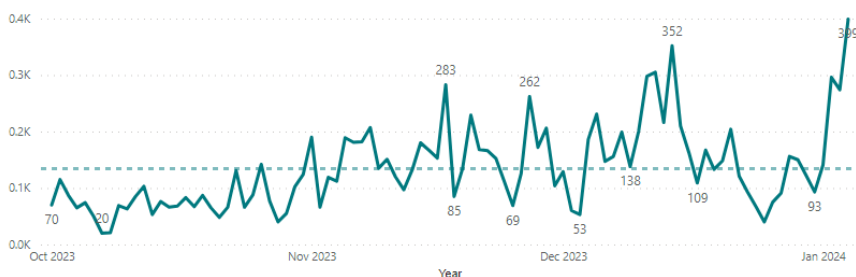


Figure 1 Table of Public Pothole Reports from Oct 2023

This increase in numbers highlights the fragile nature of our carriageways due to the long term lack of capital funding, leading to under investment.

This situation is undoubtedly going to get worse over the next couple of weeks as the current cold spell leads to further deteriorations due to freeze thaw effects.

If you receive direct contact by members of the public regarding potholes it would help if they are encouraged to use the 'report a problem' webpages.

www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/

Once a defect has been reported by the public the Service aims to visit and triage the report within 3 working days on our higher category road network, and 7 days in our lower category network. The Triage Officer will then arrange the appropriate response based on the Council's [Highway Safety Policy](#).

Should members of the public contact you regarding the late repair of defects or suggestions that defects have been closed down without action, please ask for the reference number (it starts with a D) that they will receive when they made the report. With this number it is much easier to follow up on these enquiries.

In addition to the increase in defect repairs the additional task of gritting the network is likely to stretch resources, particularly if this cold snap continues for any length of time. Currently the road surface temperatures are rising above zero in the daytime. When they remain freezing all day we enter a cycle of continuing to grit the roads throughout the day. This draws heavily on resources. The potential impact will be the need to focus on the safety critical operations over the planned improvement works such as patching and drainage improvements. While this is frustrating for our communities, the safe operation of the network has to be prioritised.

- The Network Response Team are in daily communication with our contractor, Milestone, to assess the current demand, adequacy of resources and priorities. This includes identifying non-safety or 'serviceability' defects that do not meet safety defect criteria, but that may represent sufficient deterioration to be considered a nuisance or are likely to continue to deteriorate further. Where defects are situated in close proximity to one another, inspectors can specify larger patch repairs to encompass those defects.

- In addition to identification and repair of non-safety defects we are continually innovating and trialling new products and processes to improve the efficiencies associated with defect repairs. For example, the recent trial of a product called 'Elastomac' which we demonstrated at County Hall back in the summer (a mastic asphalt that utilises around 70%-80% recycled materials). This is in parallel to now established processes like the dragon patchers we operate in Devon. Whilst pothole numbers may be higher than we'd like in the weeks ahead, it's worth reflecting on where we might be if it wasn't for a combination of these combined efforts.

To give you an understanding of the current level of resources, at present there are up to 26 defect gangs across the County undertaking pothole repairs, supported by 2 additional sub-contractor gangs. With regards to serviceability repairs, we currently have around 8 internally resourced Milestone gangs carrying out larger scale repairs across the County. In addition to this they are being supported by two externally resourced gangs and further work is underway as we speak in potentially bringing in one or two further sub-contractor gangs. Lastly, all four dragon patching gangs are on programmed work this week and will continue whilst the weather remains favourable.

As I reported before Christmas, the additional £6.663m is already being invested into the carriageway with additional serviceability patching and local planned works brought forward in the programme. Again, I would encourage you to continue liaising with your local Neighbourhood Officer to agree future priorities.

Stay Safe

Stuart Hughes
Cabinet member for Highway Management

123/2023 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR ALISON DEWYNTER REPORT FROM DECEMBER 2023

- Enforcement of hedge height "The Spires" Church Road - Hedge - Enforcement ref. 028091

The enforcement office visited in November week to see if any works had been done to the frontage hedgerow now that the bird nesting season is finished and noted that nothing had changed. The hedgerow that is not being maintained is to the front of No's 1 to 7 Gransmore Walk. An inspection of the Land Registry reveals that each of these properties are responsible for the area to the front of each address.

The officer shall therefore be writing to the landowners of these 7 properties to advise them of the requirements of the 2012 planning permission for this development (application ref: 21/1425/12/F) and their evident ongoing individual breach of the hedge maintenance (required by Condition 10).

124/2023 PUBLIC OPEN FORUM - Questions and Comments from Members of the Public to Parish Councillors, County and District Councillors

A parishioner raised the speed issue through the village, particularly near The Store and More. Two speed cameras are not working warning drivers they are driving over the speed limit. Cllr Creese pointed out that the cameras need the sun to charge the battery. A speed watch has been carried in the area near The Store and More, but due to vegetation in the area it does not help with speed readings. A parishioner suggested carrying out speed readings at the bottom of their drive. RESOLVED to explore this idea. The speed camera on the A3121 could be moved, an assessment of sites to be carried out. **ACTION: Cllr Creese**

RESOLVED the Clerk to contact Cllr Thomas and ask if the No.3 bus, which is temporarily using A3121 to by pass Modbury, could stop in Ermington. **ACTION: Clerk**

125/2023 APPROVAL OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve the Parish Council Meeting minutes of 18 December 2023 (as previously circulated).

126/2023 PLANNING

Reference: 3863/23/FUL

Site Address: Cleeve, Garden Cottage, Ivybridge, PL21 0LP

Proposal: Replacement residential dwelling

Recommendation: Support but suggested confirmation required that solar panels are fitted. In demolishing the current structure, there will be a need to protect the bats.

Ermington Parish Council have declared a climate emergency and under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 we are obligated to encourage biodiversity and enhancements for nature. As such we welcome any action that can be taken to help the natural environment and wildlife in this time of climate crisis. Any new planning development offers an opportunity for parishioners to help the Parish Council with this requirement.

We will always assess any proposed planning application in terms of the contribution to climate change.

Steps we wish applicants to take include the following, although this is not an exhaustive list and we would also welcome other solutions: Incorporating energy efficiency, high standards of insulation, and low carbon systems for heating, cooking and lighting, together with renewable energy generation including PV solar, wind turbines, and electric vehicle charging points.

The use of locally sourced low carbon building materials and the use of building locations and designs to minimise carbon use and include the recovery and reuse of water and building materials.

Ensuring adequate drainage to reduce the risk of flooding and the use of permeable surfacing materials to hard landscape areas. N.B. The use of traditional soakaways in areas of known flooding risk will not normally be supported.

Mitigating carbon use by actions to support wildlife, such as; planting berry and fruit-bearing trees, planting hedgerows instead of fencing, maintaining hedgehog highways, installing bat and bird boxes.

RESOLVED to ratify the following planning application:

Reference: 2620/23/FUL

Site Address: Bandvulc Remoulds Ltd, Gillard Way, Lee Mill Industrial Estate, Lee Mill, PL21 9LN

Proposal: READVERTISEMENT (amended plans) Erection of Solar Photovoltaics system and additional security fencing

Recommendation: Support

Planning Decision

Reference: 3810/23/HHO Site Address: 1 Parsonage Cottages, Town Hill, Ermington, PL21 9LX

Description: Householder application for garden room to replace existing conservatory

Decision: Conditional Approval

127/2023 FINANCE

RESOLVED to agree the following:

Bank balances:- Treasurers Account on 13 December 2023 = £67,944.69
Business Bank Account 11 December 2023 = £46,352.01

- (i)
(ii) Receipt(s):- Bank Interest (Business Account) 09/11/2023 = £51.06
Bank Interest (Business Account) 11/12/2023 = £52.77

(iii) Payments:- RESOLVED to make the following payments

| Description | Gross | VAT | Net |
|--|---------|--------|---------|
| Parish Clerk – December 2023 salary and working at home allowance | £781.73 | - | - |
| DB Computer Repairs – December 2023 maintenance charge for parish council website | £45.00 | - | - |
| Source for Business – water usage at the Reading Rooms | £43.09 | - | - |
| Dart Fire Protection – servicing of fire extinguishers in Ermington Reading Rooms | £204.70 | £34.11 | £170.59 |
| Reimbursement to Cllr Creese for the purchase of Aico Ei146e Optical Smoke Alarm AC mains power supply and 9V alkaline battery back-up from Amazon for lower room in the Reading Rooms | £29.44 | - | |

(iv) Grant Request(s)

- Four Rivers Dementia councillors aware there are parishioners using the service – RESOLVED to grant £100. **ACTION: Clerk**
- South Hams Community Action – RESOLVED to grant £300. **ACTION Clerk**

(v) RESOLVED to approve the Financial Statement and Earmarked Reserves

| Financial Statement | |
|---|--------------------|
| Lloyds Bank Business Account bank statement as at 11 December 2023: | £46,352.01 |
| Lloyds Bank Treasurers Account bank statement as at 13 December 2023: | £67,944.69 |
| Less: any unrepresented cheques | £0.00 |
| Total Funds = | £114,296.70 |
| Earmarked Reserves | |
| Repairs to Reading Rooms, Ermington | -£20,000 |
| Total uncommitted Funds = | £94,296.70 |

(vi) Parish Councillors reviewed spend and income to date, against budget 2023/2024 - no issues raised.

RESOLVED to place on February 2024 agenda – redecoration of interior of the Reading Rooms. Cllr Creese to obtain three quotes. **ACTION: Cllr Creese**

128/23 PENINSULA TRANSPORT CONSULTATION ON REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY – Cllr Owens Report on the Document

Cllr Owens has looked at the strategy and attended a webinar this morning with Andrea Davies of the transport partnership which covers Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. There does not seem to be an opportunity as a parish to make an impact on the strategy but will look at the bus connection for the village. **ACTION: Cllr Owens**

129/2023 REPORTS ON ALLOCATED AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- (a) Ermington Parish Church Liaison = **Cllr Owens** – match funding will hopefully help with the raising of money for the underfloor heating in the church. The handrail has been installed on the pathway to the church.
- (b) Community Speed Watch (CSW) report = **Cllr Owens** – following the verbal abuse with the waste disposal person there has only been one speed watch since the last meeting. Six vehicles exceeded the speed limit. A parishioner was thanked for their help with the speed watch. A new parishioner has volunteered to help.

129/2023 REPORTS ON ALLOCATED AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY (continued)

(c) Ermington Environmental Group, Climate Change and Biodiversity Plan = **Cllr Hannam** – The plan is still being drafted. The AGM took place on 10 January 2024. Series talks planned throughout the year. There is a link to an interesting website called Wild About The Erme River. The website link is <https://ermeriver.org/> which has been placed on the homepage of the parish council website. EE has a thermal imaging camera available in the parish for parishioners, which has been borrowed from Ugborough parish council.

Cllr Onley was thanked for organising a Wassail in the village. Cllr Onley thanked the owners of the orchard for undertaking most of the organising and allowing the Wassail to take place, also the many volunteer musicians, singers and readers who supported the event.

(d) Road Warden Scheme and maintenance of the speed cameras = **Cllr Creese** circulated the recent speed camera data which is available to view on the website. Discussion ensued on other sites in the village to place the speed cameras, and the possibility of purchasing an additional speed camera.

(e) Assessment of Parish footpaths = Cllr Owens – an order has been received for £200 from Devon County Council. Parishioners have reported a tree has fallen on Ermington footpath No. 4 from Cole Lane eventually emerging from the lane at East Worthele Farm blocking the route for walkers and horse and Cllr Owens will explore improving the path to the Church from the Square. **ACTION: Cllr Owens**

130/2023 CORRESPONDENCE TO NOTE

Some of the correspondence listed below can be viewed on the parish website: -

Email SHDC - Sport and Community Development Officer Swimming Lessons
Email - South Devon AONB - Parish Council representative

131/2023 TO CONFIRM DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING AND VENUE

Due to the Clerk and Cllr Owens availability, and the next scheduled meeting would be only two weeks away, it was RESOLVED the next Parish Council Meeting will be held in the Reading Rooms, on Tuesday 5 March 2024.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Denis Onley

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(Ermington Parish Council Chair)

Date: 5 March 2024

Agenda and minutes can be viewed on the Ermington Parish website
<http://www.ermingtonparish.com/parish-council>

To report highway issues - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>

SHDC website to report issues - <https://apps.southhams.gov.uk/webreportit>