

Ermington Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting

Tuesday 21 May 2024 at 7.00 pm

in the

Reading Rooms, Ermington

Present: Cllrs D Onley (Chair), R Owens, I Creese, J Dunlop, Patricia Hannam
County Councillor Dan Thomas

T Drew – Parish Clerk

10 members of the public

WELCOME

The Chair Cllr Onley welcomed everyone and explained the format for the evening and introduced the guest speaker Jane Nichols, CEO of Sustainable South Hams (Community Interest Company).

TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies accepted from District Councillor Alison Dewynter.

TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MAY 2023

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting which took place on 24 May 2023 at 7.30 pm were agreed and signed by the Chair.

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF ERMINGTON PARISH COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR DENIS ONLEY

The last year, like so many years before, has brought Ermington Parish Council challenges, but also many achievements, and whatever has been put before the Councillors, has been dealt with thoroughly and diligently.

Your Parish Councillors are all unpaid volunteers, doing our best to ensure that Ermington can withstand the challenges of the ever changing world.

Our key long-term aims have been for the Parish Council to take a lead in tackling the challenges of the climate crisis and improving the safety and accessibility for parishioners to our precious rural environment, so ensuring the sustainability of our environment and community for the benefit of parishioners and visitors alike.

The Council continues to work closely with other local authorities and organisations to achieve common goals, but Ermington Parish Council is autonomous in its decision making.

We have again reduced our portion of the Council Tax, to continue to return surplus reserves to parishioners, this year by a further 6.7%. The full accounts can be seen on our website.

Some examples of our work during this last year are:

We have taken a keen interest in all Planning Applications we have been consulted about and continued to advise of our support for developments to incorporate the highest environmental standards. Also that they

are in keeping with the needs of the Parish, always bearing in mind local resident's views, and the effect any development will have locally, as well as on the wider community, addressing for example; visual impact; traffic concerns; avoidance of overdevelopment; and public safety issues such as more water run off onto our roads, effecting flooding, and future proofing for sustainability.

We continue to do everything within our power to slow traffic through the village, and support the local Community Speedwatch Team. Our thanks go to all involved with their monitoring sessions. We are considering purchasing a more advanced vehicle activated speed camera which will not just collect data & warn motorists, but also inform the Police of the vehicle registration and speed.

We have also continued to campaign for improvements to footpaths, safe routes to other villages, and promote active travel options. Please report any footpaths issues to us & Devon County Council (DCC) Public Rights of Way Team.

Our campaign to make the A3121, Totnes Road safer for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, by reducing the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph through the village, has been approved by DCC subject to local funding of engineering improvements to encourage slower driving, and we are awaiting a costed plan to consult parishioners.

We reported concerns regarding the unusual dips & cambers at the new roundabout at Kitterford Cross. Although not in our Parish, DCC undertook a Road Safety Audit and planted more trees on the approaches to restrict views across the roundabout in the expectation that this will slow traffic down & make it safer.

The increased number, and repeated appearance of potholes in the same places over the winter, has concerned many. We monitor those we are told about, and have regular contact with the local DCC Highways Team, and are finding when parishioners report problems directly on the DCC website & to us at the same time, they are now being fixed more quickly. However, we also learnt that if they are reported too quickly they may not qualify due to being too small to be classified as a 'pothole' !

Flooding again caused many problems this winter, particularly in Westlake & along the A3121. We are grateful to those parishioners who keep drains clear near their property. Any Highways issues can be reporting to DCC at:<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>

We note the Friday bus from The Square to Totnes & Plymouth is becoming more popular, and continue to campaign for improved bus services. One suggestion, is to organise a shuttle bus one morning each week, to either connect with the no.3 bus route and Ivybridge with a return later the same day. It would no doubt need to be heavily subsidised to ensure the fares are reasonable, and we would need to know how many parishioners would be interested in using such a service, so please let us know your views.

River pollution continues to be a national as well as local issue, and will no doubt feature in the forthcoming Parliamentary elections. We are working with other Parish Councils and groups representing the River Erme & River Yealm catchment areas to identify what is needed to return these to 'clean rivers'.

We were pleased to continue to support local litter pickers and our thanks go to Sarah & all the volunteers who give their time to collect litter.

We have monitored Ash die back and continued to support tree planting, our thanks to Ro our Tree Warden for advice on trees.

We have given grants to The Parish Magazine, Ermington Environmental Group, South Hams Community Action, & Four Rivers Dementia, for support to Ermington residents.

We have confirmed the longstanding but previously unwritten process for Co-opting new Councillor's with a written policy document (available on our website), following complaints that the process was unclear. We currently have five vacancies, and welcome applications from all, so please consider applying.

Now more than ever so much in life depends on digital skills, however we have become aware that some parishioners are not using the internet, and are therefore missing out on valuable information & opportunities.

Ivybridge Library can advise on free training courses and one to one support, they also have computers available to use.

All levels of Government are increasingly restricting contact to digital means and are required to promote digital communication. However, the Parish Council are also continuing with our 'single point of contact' for telephone & post enquiries via our clerk; Teresa, so parishioners can be reassured enquiries are properly recorded and responded to.

It is my sincere hope that the Parish Council will continue to go from strength to strength and likewise our community will continue to come together, work in harmony and prosper.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Teresa Drew, our Parish Clerk for her hard work. Her guidance, patience and support are appreciated by both myself and fellow Councillors

Finally, I would like to thank the other Parish Councillors for their commitment and hard work not only on the Parish Council but also in supporting groups within our community.

Also my thanks to our Devon County Councillor Dan Thomas & District Councillor Alison Dewynter for their help in progressing local issues, and to all involved in supporting the work of the Parish Council.

ANNUAL REPORT FROM DEVON COUNTY COUNCILLOR DANIEL THOMAS

The headline event from 2023/24 was our success in finally convincing Cabinet at County Hall to support a new speed limit of 30mph on the current 40mph stretch of the A3121 along the south of the village. This was the result of a great many meetings and conversations, and I am grateful to the Parish Council for their patience and ongoing support.

At County Hall, another tricky year for DCC with Adult and Children's Services under tremendous pressure and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) section of the latter in special measures under OFSTED criteria.

The other core part of the Council's service – Highways – has not fared much better, with numerous issues with damaged roads and blocked gulleys. In the South Brent and Yealmpton Division, of which Ermington is one of 12 parishes, we have generally not done too badly, mainly thanks to Nick Colton, our local highways engineer. As long as potholes are reported, they are generally being mended reasonably quickly, and when that hasn't been the case, Nick and I have put pressure on Milestone, the external contractor in question. Whether this crucial service should be privatised to a third party company is a matter of political debate.

From a Governance point of view, we have the new Combined County Authority to look forward to. It remains to be seen exactly how this will benefit the residents of Devon.

The small piece of good news is that Locality Funding seems to have gone back up to £8k per Cllr. Ermington PCC successfully applied for funding last year but I would be happy to consider match-funding other bids this year from any community organisation which meets the locality fund criteria.

GUEST SPEAKER

Jane Nichols, CEO of Sustainable South Hams (Community Interest Company)

Cllr Onley thanked Jane for her very informative talk. He stated that Ermington Parish Council has declared a climate emergency. When a planning application is discussed, there is an Ermington Parish Council climate emergency statement included in the response.

Parishioners thanked Jane for all her hard work in helping to formalise Ermington Environment Group.

Copy of Janes presentation is attached.

QUESTIONS ARISING FROM ANNUAL REPORTS

Discussion ensued in connection with the speed of the traffic through the village. Cllr Onley pointed out that behaviour of drivers was a key issue.

Cllr Dunlop was investigating the idea of average speed cameras in the village.

The meeting finished at 8.30 pm.

Signed: *Cllr Nicholas Toms*
(Chair)

Date: 6 May 2025