

EXTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 7th June 2021 in Bridgetown Village Hall at 7:30pm.

Present: Mr Guy Thomas-Everard (chair), Mr Doug Sherring, Mr Steve Rowe, Mrs Valerie Carveth, Mr Robert Takle, Mr Joshua Thorne, Mr Paul Matthews, Mrs Frances Nicholson, Mr Steven Pugsley and Mr Andrew Moore (Clerk and responsible finance officer).

Apologies: None received

Minutes of the Parish Meeting of 13th May 2019: Having been posted on the Notice Boards and the website after the meeting, all present agreed that they did not need to be read out and were unanimously approved.

Matters Arising: There were no matters arising not otherwise covered in the Chairman's Report.

Chairman's Report: Mr Thomas-Everard reported that due to COVID restrictions there had been no Parish Meeting in 2020 so his Report would cover both 2019-20 and 2020-21.

The year 2019-20 was the first for almost half a century that Fred Rawle was not a member of the Parish Council. He decided to step down in March 2019 after 46 years of dedicated service to the Parish, most of which was as Chairman, and this was recognised by an award from Somerset County Council. His detailed knowledge of the Parish and especially of the farms within it was invaluable.

The Parish Council met five times during the year. Seven planning Applications came before the Parish Council and all were either supported or no objections were raised.

Speeding through Bridgetown was an item discussed at every meeting. He wished to thank Councillor Valerie Carveth for all of the efforts she has made to build a group of volunteers to man the speed indicator device so that offenders can be reported to the Police. More volunteers are always required.

British Telecom sought again to decommission the telephone boxes on Exton Hill and in Bridgetown. This was opposed by the Parish Council because of poor mobile reception locally and the boxes have been retained.

The Parish Council have kept in close touch with the plans to provide a memorial to the crew of the Stirling Bomber that crashed on Exton Hill in 1944. Plans have been finalised but due to COVID no work has been possible on site to date.

Paul Williams has continued to run the Village Volunteers group set up by David Lungley before he moved away. Linking with the Parish Lengthsman, verges and hedges were tidied up, litter picked and flower boxes built and filled at either end of Bridgetown.

Work was begun on the design and building of a Parish Council website. It is a legal requirement for one to be in place and previously West Somerset Council had allowed the Parish Council to place Minutes etc on the Exton page of their website. However, with the merger of West Somerset and Taunton Deane Councils this arrangement could not continue beyond March 2021.

Turning to 2020-21 what a difficult year it had been. The Parish Council has tried to keep residents informed by forwarding guidance received from the District Council to the e-mail group managed by Dick Longman.

The Parish Council was unable to meet face-to-face but did so “virtually” six times. Nine Planning Applications were reviewed, one of which (for a Parish adjoining Exton) was objected to requiring it to be determined by the full Planning Committee of Exmoor National Park.

As in previous years speeding continued to be an issue but due to restrictions less monitoring could take place. The Parish Council supported a successful bid by the Village Hall Committee to the Somerset Climate Emergency Fund for the funding of solar panels. The sum of £13900 has been made available to be spent in this year with the project being managed by Mary Le Coyte.

The Parish Council website became operational in March 2021 and the chairman encouraged everyone to have a look at it. Minutes and Agendas will continue to be placed on the two Village Notice Boards.

Concern was raised in February and March when a site on Exton Hill was proposed for housing development by a Committee set up by Exmoor parishes with representation from the District Council and Exmoor National Park. Residents were asked to comment on the proposals for this and other identified sites on Exmoor, Such was the response from Exton pointing out the difficulties of the site and the potential over-development of the Village that the Committee will no longer pursue this option.

The Chairman closed by thanking the Parish Councillors and Clerk for their work on the Parish’s behalf over the last two years.

Responsible Financial Officer Report:

Mr Moore reported that In 2019-20 the Parish Precept was raised from £3264 to £4064 because of the possibility that the Parish would have to pay for de-icing rather than Highways. This eventually did not happen. The Parish received £500 as a donation to the costs of the Stirling Bomber Memorial and a further £10 VAT Refund and £3 of Interest. Overall the total funds available were £4577. The Parish Council spent £3962 resulting in a surplus of £615 of which £500 was represented by the donation as no costs were incurred. The Parish Council made a donation of £150 to CLOWNS in recognition of the work they did with families in the Parish and a further £150 donation towards the replacement of the Exmoor Medical Centre’s Pharmacy delivery vehicle.

In 2020-21 the Parish Precept remained unchanged. At £4064 and a Vat Refund of £23 and Interest of £1 brought the total income up to £4088. Expenditure totalled £4920 an increase of £958 resulting in a deficit of £832. This was due to the need to have a Parish website costing £770, pruning of the Jubilee Tree £350, District Council fee for the 2018 election £100. Within the increased costs was Vat of £247 which will be recovered next year. The Council made a further donation of £150 to CLOWNS. Despite the deficit for the year the Parish Council left the Precept for 2021-22 unchanged because the costs of developing the Website will not be incurred in this coming year.

Any Other Business:

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7:50pm