DULVERTON
GATEWAY TO EXMOOR

The Clerk
Dulverton Town Council
The Council Office
2A Lady Street, Dulverton
Somerset TA22 9BZ

www.dulvertontowncouncil.co.uk

clerk@dulvertontowncouncil.co.uk
01398 324561

Minutes of the Meeting of Dulverton Town Council

Held on Monday 7th May 2024 at 8.55pm, in the Town Hall,
Fore Street, Dulverton TA22.

Present: Chairman: Mrs Christine Dubery; Councillors: Mr Nick Thwaites; Mr Alan Ottey; Mrs Louise Parrish; Mr John Preston; Mrs Margaret Rawle; Mrs Ann Van Praag and Mrs Alison Crisp. Mr Steven Pugsley and Mrs Frances Nicholson, (Somerset County Council (S.C.)), who left at 9.15pm.

Deferment of Business for Comment by the Public: None

Apologies for absence and acceptance of any reasons offered if agreed:
None

Declarations of Interest: None not already declared.

Chairman's Comments & Meeting Management: None

Presentation – Mrs Naomi Phips, Executive Head Teacher, accompanied by Mr Bill Gash & Mrs Kate Northen. Co-Chairs of the Exmoor Federation:
Adapting our schools to secure their future.
Having been introduced by Mr Gash, Mrs Phips explained her role as an Executive Head Teacher – overseeing eight schools in total, involving policies, finances and structure rather than the day to day running of the schools.
Mrs Phips considers that the problems that the local Junior School are experiencing involve curriculum issues, which have been further compounded by financial constraints.
Dulverton is experiencing a change in population and demographics resulting in a decrease in the number of children in attendance which in turn affects funding. The aim is to make use of the site at All Saints Infants School, closing the Junior School, therefore reducing the cost of running two sites. Staffing costs will also be reduced. The infant and junior sections will not become one school, but will still be funded and undergo Ofsted inspections separately. Mrs Phips is anxious that the special educational needs of the children in Dulverton are met and is passionate that decisions made are right for today's children as well as future children.
Mr Gash stated that in his opinion decisions are now being made that should have been made earlier. The Exmoor Federation has worked with the Moorland Federation, Somerset Council and the Diocese to make some very difficult decisions.

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The following questions were asked by members:
Q1. What will happen to the empty buildings?
A1. The Governing Body will relinquish responsibility for the junior site at the end of August, Somerset County will take over and once options have been determined as to its future use, public consultation will be undertaken; hopefully later this year.
Work has been on-going with regards improving the facilities at All Saints School. Discussion has taken place with regards the transfer of some of the facilities existing in the junior school to All Saints School. The school will be unable to maintain and manage the swimming pool due to financial constraints. At the moment it is inoperable.
Members expressed the opinion that the community would like to retain the swimming pool for general use. This is an issue which is unlikely to be resolved in the near future.
The Food Bank will need to be accommodated elsewhere.

Q2. What was the rational regarding the decision to retain All Saints School in favour of the Junior School?
A2. a) Can more easily recreate the needs of older children.
b) The Junior School is an older building, harder and more costly to heat and maintain.
c) All Saints is a Church school.
d) There are no facilities suitable in the junior site for the Nursery

Q3. Why are parents transferring their children to alternative schools?
A2. The schools have been going through a long period of uncertainty and lacked continuity. Recruitment has been difficult since the pandemic. Conversations are ongoing to try and increase parental confidence in the schools. Talks are also on going with neighbouring schools.

Q4. What are future number projections?
A4. A slight increase is anticipated in 2027/28 following a dropping of numbers in 2025/26. The school will need to be financially robust.
It is hoped that amalgamating the Moorland Federation with the Exmoor Federation, will increase capacity to draw on and will result in increased standards and levels.

Q5. How will pupils deal with the transition from junior to secondary school?
A5. Provided the children are adequately prepared and the transition is handled correctly the move should not prove traumatic.

Members were informed that the staff have worked hard to make the transition as successful and smooth as possible and that all concerned can move forward positively.
The focus and vision need to remain constant and this rural school needs the support of its local community.

It was requested that the Town Council are kept informed of developments.
The Chairman thanked Mrs Phips. Mr Gash and Mrs Northen for their time and for updating members as to the current situation.

Questions for County Councillors:

Cllr. Mr Steven Pugsley and Mrs Frances Nicholson - S.C.C.

Mounsey Hill Gate - Fly Tipping: No further developments.

Dulverton Recycling Centre Proposed Closure – No further developments.

Minutes of the meetings held on 8th April 2024 as circulated:

RESOLVED: To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting dated 8th April 2024: Proposed by Mrs Vann Praag, seconded by Mrs Rawle and carried.

7062 Update of action points resulting from the last meeting:

7051: Barnclose – South West Water Proposals
Members have been informed that there have been no further developments concerning proposals from South West Water regarding the future access. The Clerk was requested to pursue the issue.

7060: Northmoor Road, The Straits – Traffic Issues:
Further correspondence has been received regarding the hazards faced by pedestrians from vehicles travelling at speed through 'the narrows'.
Members were reminded that past discussion with Highways has concerned the lack of passing places along Northmoor Road and a request to implement parking restrictions on the wider part, just along from Pump Cottage, creating a passing place. Somerset Highways did not agree to this proposal however, the 20mph markings and virtual footpath have been refreshed recently. No other complaints of this nature have been received in the past.
Since the receipt of the correspondence, Cllr. Mrs Rawle has taken some photos of the area concerned. Members noted that there is a post that used to have a 20mph limit fixed to it, but was damaged and subsequently removed. Ms Kate Brown (S.C) noticed it during a site meeting held to discuss parking issues etc. but the sign has failed to be replaced.
The photos were forward to Ms Kate Brown (S.C. Traffic Engineer) with a request that she considers a solution to the problem, and a proposal to place extra signage warning motorists of the existence of pedestrians.

The response received from Ms Kate Brown was as follows:
'S.C. considers that there are sufficient 20 roundels in the road so another repeater is not needed and would only add to sign clutter.
Both parties have a responsibility to take care along this stretch of road. The average speeds 18mph and probably much slower during the summer season.

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S.C. cannot identify room to install a sign post at the other end of this stretch of road. Furthermore, there are quite a few stretches of road without a footway where people are walking in the road, not just outside these 4 houses.'

As regards the parking on yellow lines Ms Brown has requested that the parking services team raise the issue of enforcement with their contractor.

Members commented that historically, pedestrians are usually very careful and stop walking or step into the bridge entrance when vehicles, which are unable to travel more than 20mph along 'the narrows', want to pass.

7063 Accounts:

Financial Statement – April 2024: See Appendix A

RESOLVED: That the Financial Statement as per Appendix A is approved. Proposed by Mr Preston, seconded by Mr Ottey and carried.

Payments for approval: See Appendix B

RESOLVED: That the payments as per Appendix B are approved. Proposed by Mrs Crisp, seconded by Mrs Van Praag and carried.

7064 Committees:

Minutes to be approved by the relative Committee members and be adopted as part of this meeting:

Policy & Procedure Committee Meeting – 30th April 2024

RESOLVED: To adopt as part of this meeting the minutes of the Policy & Procedure Committee Meeting held on 30th April 2024. Proposed by Mrs Rawle, seconded by Mr Ottey and carried.

Legal & Finance Committee Meeting – 7th May 2024

RESOLVED: To adopt as part of this meeting the minutes of the Legal & Finance Committee Meeting held on 30th April 2024. Proposed by Mrs Parish, seconded by Mrs Rawle and carried.

Dulverton Partnership meeting – 1st May 2024

RESOLVED: To adopt as part of this meeting the minutes of the Dulverton Partnership Group Meeting held on 1st May 2024. Proposed by Mrs Crisp, seconded by Mr Thwaites and carried.

7065 Standing Orders, Code of Conduct. Financial Regulations & Statement of Control:

RESOLVED: To adopt the amended Standing Orders, Code of Conduct. Financial Regulations & Statement of Control as recommended by the Policy & Procedure Committee. Proposed by Mr Ottey, seconded by Mr Preston and carried.

Members were advised that in order to comply with the Financial Regulations a member, other than the Chairman or existing signatories will be required to check the monthly bank reconciliations.

7066 Annual Insurance Renewals:

DTC Annual Insurance:
Further investigation concerning the current value of various assets is to be undertaken before considering acceptance of the renewal premium.

Vehicle Insurance:

RESOLVED: To accept the insurance renewal quote from Lloyd & Whyte Community Broking Ltd. @ £346.80. Proposed by Mrs Crisp, seconded by Mrs Dubery and carried.

7067 Planning:
There were no planning applications submitted. Members noted the final approvals and withdrawals.

7068 Councillor Co- Option:
Members were informed that as Somerset Council had failed to receive any requests for an election they were able to co-opt to fill the recent vacancy.
The Clerk was requested to create and publish new adverts publicizing the vacancies.

7069 Somerset Council – Devolution Proposals:
No further developments.

7070 Exmoor Society Annual Membership Renewal:

RESOLVED: To renew the annual membership of DTC at £25.00. Proposed by Mr Thwaites, seconded by Mrs Crisp and carried.

7071 ENPA – Caremoor Annual Knotweed Donation:

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £50 to the Exmoor Non-Native Invasive Species (ENNIS) project. Proposed by Mr Thwaites, seconded by Mrs Crisp and carried.

7072 Refuse Bag Issues:

An email from Steven Beauchamp, Working Supervisor, Idverde had been received, informing members that refuse bags had been left in a shop door way for collection.

Member acknowledged that this was a recurring problem particularly during the holiday season.

Example of other incidences was provided by Cllr. Mrs Rawle:

- Holiday let refuse bins and recycling were left for weeks on Andrews Hill Corner at entrance to part of Battleton House last year. It was reported to the South West Partnership and was eventually picked up. It is now collected at the correct time.

- Northmoor Road, Pump Cottage, a stack of black bags awaiting collection has been identified.

Members commented that the problem will probably worsen unless the property owners, holiday renters and the cleaners abide by the procedures and only put out rubbish on the correct days.

Members have approached several of those concerned and highlighted the problem for their attention but it was suggested that a targeted response is made via the DTC Facebook page.

7073 Correspondence:

Correspondence noted by members.

Avon and Somerset Police, Chief Inspector Mike Vass, Force Knife Crime Lead - Community Bleed Kit: The consensus of opinion was that at present the need for a 'bleed kit' was not identified. However, members will review the situation in six months.

7074 Questions for Members who have attended additional meetings:

None

7075 Issues to be raised with permission of the Chairman:

Winsford Hill/Varle Hill Exmoor Pony Signage:

Emma Wallace (Anchor Exmoor Pony herd) asked Cllr, Mrs Rawle to pass on the sad news to the Highways Dept. that a foal had to be put to sleep today as it was hit by a car yesterday at Varle Hill on the Tarr Steps Road. The incident happened along the piece of road which Kate Brown (S.C.), Cllr Rawle and Emma Wallace videoed last year to help make a case for 'Slow Pony' signs to be placed on the reverse of signs already in situe nearby. Members agreed that this was very sad news that no-one wants to hear. Kate Brown was requested to pursue Highways and ENP to get this work done as fast as possible especially considering that there will be a number of rare bloodline foals grazing along this part of the moor this summer and on Winsford Hill.

Monmouth Terrace:
Cllr Margaret Rawle has reported to ENPA, Sue Applegate, that some of the flagstones/slabs along Monmouth Terrace are becoming loose and that the path will become a hazard particularly for the elderly who use this route to access the car parks and Hanover Court. A request for them to be inspected was made and for action to be taken to resolve the issue.

Chairman .....

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