

Upton Parish Council
Minutes of Meeting at Upton Village Hall
Tuesday 29th November 2022 at 18.30

Present: Councillor Fran A'Brook (in the Chair), Councillor Innes Davies, Councillor David Williams, Councillor Karen Telling, Councillor Libby Warden, Councillor Howard Shaw, Councillor/Parish Clerk Val Thompstone, County Councillor Frances Nicholson, District Councillor Steven Pugsley.

1 Apologies for Absence Received from District Councillor Dave Mansell on 30th November who was prevented from attending by traffic and road conditions

2 Declarations of Interest None

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th September 2022 were approved and signed by the Chairman

4 Parish Land

Councillor A'Brook reported that there had been no response from Mel regarding the land and it was agreed to leave things as they are currently. Chris Govier is to erect boundary fence between parish land and the houses and to reinstate gate.

5 Planning Matters

Mr David Wood has put in planning permission for conversion of existing building into 5 bedroom dwelling. The site was visited by Cllr F A'Brook, Cllr H Shaw, and Cllr V Thompstone. The site itself is not visible from the road and it has been agreed that no representation from the Parish Council is required. It was noted that the planning application does not include an agricultural tie. The dwelling, if built, will be for Mr Wood's son who is a partner in his farming business.

6 Highways

Cllr Davies reported that she had again contacted Kate Brown to arrange a visit to see the area where we would like to have signage, and also to look at the possibility of a pathway from the Lowtrow Cross to the main village.

There was a general consensus that the Highways Steward has been doing an excellent job. However, he has now been appointed to another post and a replacement is to be interviewed.

Regarding the potholes in the village, the Highways Steward has been out and inspected the problems and he has done all he could. However, he did say that it appeared the brick chamber under the road is collapsing and that the drains need proper jetting. Cllr Davies passed this information on to Highways, as advised by the Highways Steward, and an acknowledgement was received on 8th November confirming that the work is planned.

7 Update on Special Exmoor Panel Meeting held on 13/10/22 to discuss local Community Network (LCN) divisions

Cllr A'Brook and Cllr Thompstone attended the above meeting. Various maps were on show illustrating the various options for the LCNs. The options available were not felt to be appropriate for Upton as they variously put either Skilgate or Brompton Regis under separate LCNs. An alternative suggestion was for an Option D which kept all three villages in the same LCN.

At the meeting it was requested that attendees return to their Parishes and request all Councillors to study the available information and to respond with their thoughts on the proposals. Upton Councillors were contacted and asked to respond.

The proposals received over 600 responses, and because of this and the need to study the responses, no decisions are expected until January 2023 at the earliest.

However, it was pointed out by Cllr Pugsley that given the fact that the exact roles and responsibilities of the LCNs had yet to be decided, and as the Unitary authority takes over in March, it is quite likely that it could take up to 12 months to get the LCNs up and running.

8 Update on Exmoor Panel Meeting held at Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross on 24/11/22

Cllr Thompstone attended and reported that:

LCN response not expected until January at the earliest due to the number of comments and suggestions received.

After March DC will cease to exist. Meeting felt that the Exmoor Panel should continue to exist so they may be asking for membership to support any request for this.

Also, because of this, dates for meetings after March 2023 are subject to change.

If continues looking for villages to host meetings, need to email Sam Murrell with costs, etc. However, particularly interested in 'central' locations to encourage as many members as possible to attend.

Police report as per newsletter sent out.

Most of meeting was taken up with highways issues – drains being the main issue following the heavy recent rainfall causing problems with water flow and drainage.

Devolved funding – Update on spreadsheet (Appendix 1)

New IT System coming in which will enable identification of all drains in the area, plus all history of servicing, cleaning, repair and jetting. Will also enable accurate reporting of any drains causing problems.

Parish Online discussion – encouraged to join. This is basically a mapping software programme with layering, (rivers, highways, etc.).

Presentation by Colin McLelland, Community Housing Enabler, basically explaining his job, which is to enable Exmoor parishes to apply to create social housing on appropriate land. Tied in with Exmoor Rural Housing Network/Somerset Community Land Trust.

9 Village Hall

Harvest Supper was held on 2nd October.

Craft afternoon on 4th October when Innes Davies held a drawing class for beginners.

Coffee Morning held on 15th November included crafts and cakes for sale. A total of £135 was raised for the hall.

The annual wreath making afternoon will be held on Wednesday 14th December.

The annual Christmas lunch will take place, the first since the Covid era, on 11th December at a cost of £15 per head. **NB: since the meeting is has been decided to cancel the lunch due to lack of participation.**

10 Finances

A cheque for £10 was signed as payment for hire of hall for the meeting
Cllrs Shaw and A'Brook signed paperwork regarding adding new Parish Clerk as bank signatory.

11 Wimbleball Lake

It was noted that the lake is now filling up following the very dry summer. Cllr David Williams pointed out the Bessom Bridge was becoming very muddy and potentially dangerous. Cllr Davies will either report this herself or ask a Councillor from Brompton Regis to do so.

12 Updates from District and County Councillors

With the new Unitary Authority due to take over from the district councils of Somerset, and the County Council of Somerset, on 1st April 2023, there are obviously many budgetary, legal and administrative questions which will need to be addressed once the Unitary Authority is in place.

It is hoped that the current Exmoor Panel pilot will be able to continue although this has yet to be confirmed.

Points raised in Section 8 of these minutes were also clarified and confirmed.

13 Any Other Business

Cllr Telling asked if there was any information surrounding the proposed 5% maximum rise in Council Tax. Cllrs Nicholson and Pugsley stated that they thought it was highly likely that the maximum increase (5%) would in fact be applied. It was generally agreed that whilst Council Tax may be rising, the number of services provided in rural Upton was becoming smaller and smaller.

However, Cllr Pugsley pointed out that the District Councils within the current Somerset Council had diverse needs and it would be necessary to ensure that any extra income derived from the rise in Council Tax be spent wisely, and preferable where needed most, i.e. Adult Social Care, Child Protection.

Cllr Pugsley stated that the council tax was due to double on second homes and that this was generally believed to be a good thing as long as the finance raised was used to assist with the provision of affordable housing within the areas where second homes were situated.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 19.20 hrs.

Next meeting dates: (Subject to change after 1st April 2023 under any new Unitary Authority)

Tuesday 28th February 2023

Tuesday 16th May 2023

Tuesday 12th September 2023