

## **MINUTES OF THE EGGESFORD PARISH MEETING**

**Held 22 June 2022 Eggesford All Saints Parish Church**

In attendance: Peter Court, Chairman, Eggesford Parish meeting;

Councillor Margaret Squires, Devon County Council;

Councillor Peter Heal, Mid Devon District Council;

Michael Downward, Church Warden All Saints Church;

12 members of the Parish

1. Minutes of the previous Meeting were approved.

2. Annual Governance and Accountability Return form 1PM 2021/2022.

This form must be completed by Parish Meetings with no income or expenditure and signed by the Parish Meeting Chairman. It will be displayed on the Eggesford Parish website.

3. There have been only two planning applications within Parish bounds during the last year, both relating to a proposed agricultural building on Trenchard Farm. The Parish Meeting had no objection to this application.

The planning application by the Lymington Arms, which had been the subject of comment on the local whatsapp group, is not within Parish boundaries and therefore official comment was not invited. The Chairman noted there were differing views as to whether planning permission should be granted for additional accommodation at the pub; anyone who felt strongly had expressed their opinion on the Mid Devon planning website.

4. The Chairman outlined recent Airband developments. Paul Nethercott, who gave the presentation last year on the Eggesford Airband fibre route, has left Airband. Prior to his departure, he submitted to the Airband Projects Team, our list of both residential and business property owners who would like to use their government vouchers to fund a short extension to the contracted route. We have not been able to find out if the Airband Projects Team actually considered whether this proposal would be commercially viable. We have contacted several Airband members of staff through their General Enquiries email address but have had unhelpful and conflicting replies.

Connecting Devon and Somerset have also been unhelpful; indeed we had an email from them immediately before the meeting, appearing to cast doubt even on fulfilment of the 'contracted' Eggesford route. There was discussion as to whether Airband could be held to their commitment to lay fibre along the road past the church and on to Eggesford Barton. These works were scheduled for August this year.

Cllr Squires will put us in touch with someone more senior at Connecting Devon and Somerset and also with a Devon county councillor specialising in rural fibre connection. She queried whether we could be added to the Wembworthy route. [Peter Green] had attended the recent Wembworthy meeting and they are also having tremendous difficulty. They have been told that vouchers from at least 60 households will be needed and a community company is to be set up.

5. The Chairman read the response from the Neighbourhood Highways Officer to the Parish letter outlining concerns about the speed limit on the A377 at Eggesford Station junction. Cllr Squires said she has taken an interest in this in the past as she agrees there are safety issues. [Margaret Davies] described an accident she witnessed recently which caused major damage to vehicles and may also have caused personal injury but the incident appears not to have been reported to the police. Cllr Squires said we could ask the police to monitor speeds and she explained that communities often think motorists are going much faster than they really are. However it was pointed out that, even if motorists are obeying the speed limit, 60mph is too fast for such a hazardous stretch of road. Cllr Squires explained that reducing speed limits involves a lengthy and expensive process; she doubted even whether the funds for putting up new signs would be available. She wouldn't raise our hopes on making progress but would initiate the[STAR/SPAR??] process.

Similarly, the Council budget on mending potholes is depleted; it has been cut to less than half, from £23m to £10m, in recent years. [Dick Fulcher] mentioned that the awful surface on the road coming up from the station had eventually been improved and he thanked Cllr Squires for her assistance with that. However he had last week seen Council works being undertaken on one small area of A377 road surface while leaving the rest; we queried the efficiency of bringing out manpower and equipment but not doing the entire job.

Cllr Squires urged us to continue to report potholes but again explained the many demands on the Council's limited budget.

6. The importance to the community of keeping footpaths open and maintained was raised. A recent incident was described where a misunderstanding had arisen as to the status of a footpath owned by the Forestry Commission. The Eggesford stretch of the Tarka Trail has not improved. The possibility of a someone in the Parish volunteering to keep an eye on Parish footpaths and keep in touch with landowners to inform of obstructions etc was suggested. It was confirmed that it is the landowner who is responsible for keeping paths clear but the council can enforce this responsibility. The bridlepath past Glebe Farm has been flooded for some time. Cllr Squires will arrange for the Council Footpaths Officer to inspect.

7. There was discussion of the increased number of cars parked outside Eggesford station. There seems to be a Council proposal for additional parking at the station. It is thought that 'section 106 contributions'\* toward improved Eggesford station parking, were imposed by the planning authority as a condition of planning permission for at least one of the recent housing developments in Winkleigh. Cllr Heal said he would need the planning application reference numbers to investigate whether the developer actually paid such a contribution.

\*section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990

8.Cllr Squires gave an interesting presentation on an aspect of her work of which we might not be aware. She is involved in supporting young adults leaving care who may not have access to education, employment or training. They also need with finding accommodation. Devon Council, like many others, is very short of social workers, and agency workers cost much more.

9. Cllr Heal spoke about the forthcoming boundary changes. He thought that Eggesford would be within the Taw Valley ward, with Lapford, Chawleigh, Wembworthy, Nymet Rowland. [Chris Roger] thought that Wembworthy and Eggesford were to be in different wards but Cllr Heal thought this had been decided against. He would double check.

Cllr Heal also confirmed that 3-weekly waste collections are to be introduced. He advised that we can order more recycling bins online, as many as we need.

He spoke about new Council funded property development companies building both private and public sector housing, 'pod' type houses which are quickly constructed and environmentally friendly.

10.AOB:

[Peter Green] questioned the fact that the Devon Police and Crime Commissioner has increased the 'precept', which every household pays toward the policing budget, every year for the last 6-7 years. Both Councillors commented on the Council procedures for agreeing budgets and scrutinising spending.

[Dick Fulcher] explained that he was handing over responsibility for our local Neighbourhood Watch to Lee Berreclough. He asked that we all confirm our agreement to being included on the mailing list. We thanked him for all his hard work on behalf of the Parish.