

DRAFT MINUTES EGGESFORD PARISH MEETING 2023

HELD AT ALL SAINTS CHURCH EGGESFORD

MONDAY 26 JUNE 2023 6.30pm

In attendance:

Peter Court, Chairman Eggesford Parish Meeting

Councillor Margaret Squires, Devon County Council

Councillor Natalia Letch, Upper Yeo and Taw Ward

Councillor Frank Letch MBE, Chairman of Mid Devon District Council

Joanne Court, Clerk EPM

Chris Rogers, Website EPM

14 local residents

1. The Minutes of the 2022 Meeting, which had been circulated by email to parishioners in advance, were approved.
2. No objections were raised to names of residents (initials) being used in the Minutes.
3. Peter Court (PC) confirmed the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for a Parish Meeting with no financial activity 2022/23 would be completed immediately following the Annual Parish Meeting and submitted to pkf auditors before the 1 July deadline.
4. PC had been asked to comment on behalf of the Parish Meeting on two planning applications during the year and had expressed no objection to either. (Erection of holiday let at The Challices and a detached annexe at Crofters).
An application to instal 40 ground mounted solar panels at Nethercott along the A377 is under consideration and, although outside parish boundaries, anybody who would like to comment can contact Cllr Letch – see below.
5. The condition of the A377 in Eggesford was discussed. Cllr Squires said there are ‘schemes afoot’ between Network Rail and Devon County Council to solve the drainage problem outside the station but gave no further details or timescale. The damage to the road surface is now so severe that motorists veer onto the wrong side of the road to avoid it, risking headlong collision on the bend. Cllr Squires advised that we should measure the depth of the potholes and report them online. The dangers of measuring/photographing on such a busy stretch of road were raised. Potholes are only ‘reportable’ if at least 4cm deep and 30cm wide. Chris Rose has received a

Devon County Council survey form, requesting a response on local highways and transport issues, such as lighting, pavements, bus services, road conditions, safety and speed and quality of road/pothole repairs following a pothole incident causing damage to his car. Cllr Squires and Cllr F Letch noted that the budget for highways maintenance is only 40% of what it has been in previous years. We were told that Devon has more miles of highway to maintain than any other county, indeed more than Belgium! [Note: Devon County Council website stated in March 2023: 'Devon to receive an extra £9.4 million from Chancellor's budget to help fund vital highway's maintenance'. Devon's share of the additional capital funding is the largest among county authorities.] SP noted that roads in West Devon were much better maintained.

6. AM made the case for the parish to have a defibrillator. We are 25 miles from the two main hospitals. MF said ambulance arrival times for two recent local emergencies have actually been good, under 9 mins. The Chulmleigh Devon Ambulance Response Team was mentioned. However British Heart Foundation statistics show that fewer than one in ten people survive an out of hospital cardiac arrest. The BHF website says we need more people trained to perform CPR and more defibrillators to save lives. The nearest defibrillators are currently Wembworthy Village Hall, the pub in Chawleigh or the Eggesford Country Park service road. There are four in Chulmleigh apparently but these are even further away. Eggesford Barton have a private defibrillator and have very kindly offered to make this available to local residents but this is still a bit out of the way. It was generally agreed that a centrally located community defibrillator would be a very good idea, the specific location and power source to be determined. [Note: JC to find out exactly where nearest defibrillators are and what their codes are and circulate note]. Cllr Squires said we could apply for £250 towards the cost, for up to two, from her Locality Budget [Note: These grants can only be paid to Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Sector groups with their own bank account ie not the Parish Meeting. JC to investigate acceptable 'sponsor or guarantor' group and complete online application] . AM will do further research on a BHF scheme to provide communities with defibrillators and think about fundraising.
7. PG outlined the 12 year history of his efforts to get Airband to bring broadband to the parish. In November 2022, after so many delays, the engineers at last came out and surveyed the site and approved the works. The question of how to connect Fourways seems now also to have been decided following a meeting with an Airband representative on 12 June when all the Fourways residents attended and confirmed their interest and agreed to the fibre being laid in a trench under the road surface. This will involve closure of the road for the works and a consequent 3 month delay but the closure has been applied for and everything looks promising for the works to be done in September? PC and CR both thanked PG for all of his hard work and persistence on behalf of the parish.
8. PC asked if there were any nominations for a new Parish Meeting chairperson. It was agreed that PC would continue in the role for now, ably assisted by JC and CR, but that if anyone wished to take over, they would get in touch.

9. Cllr Squires explained that maintaining roads is not the council's only responsibility and she described some of the work that is done by the council to support young people leaving care at the age of 16, to make sure they are in education, employment or training, to provide them with social workers and 'personal assistants' and local housing.

PC made the point that unless the council ensures there is appropriate basic infrastructure eg transport and broadband, then businesses and individuals can't create the wealth and pay taxes that will fund vital social projects. PG added that broadband should be considered a basic utility of similar importance as water and electricity.

Cllrs Squires and Letch noted this but said there are more than 8000 miles of highway to maintain in Devon, more than any other county. Cllr Squires maintained that rural broadband rollout is one of her priorities.

10. Apologies had been received from one of our new Ward councillors, Stuart Penny. Cllr Letch introduced herself as our new Lib Dem Ward councillor, recently elected. She has lived in the UK for 16 years and has a background in volunteer work with the Citizens Advice Bureau. Her particular political interests are planning matters, social housing and helping the least well off. She said that even when funds are available it is difficult to make sure people know what they are entitled to. For example the recent Alternative Fuel Payment £200 grant was only taken up by a small proportion of those entitled to it.

11. AOB:

Some improvement in the frequency of our Royal Mail deliveries had been generally noticed; thanks were expressed to SP for writing to our local MP.

Closure of a much used local path was mentioned; Cllr Squires will ask the Footpaths Officer to inspect and see if it can be argued that this has become a public footpath by long usage.