

**Present from the Parish Council:**

Cllr Sheila Churchward, Cllr Derek Madge, Cllr Charles Nuttall, Mrs Jill Daw (Clerk), Mrs Helen Hibbins (Deputy Clerk)

**Members of the public present: 5**

**1 Welcome**

As the Chairman of the Parish Council was unable to be present, Cllr Madge was elected to chair the meeting.

**2 Apologies**

Cllr Kevin Smith, Cllr Brian Aird, Cllr Lorne Smyth, Devon County Council Alan Connett.

**3 To confirm that the Draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 9 March 2020 are an accurate record**

Resolved.

**4 Matters arising from the minutes of the 2020 Annual Parish Meeting (APM)**

None.

**5 Chairmans report (written by Cllr Smith and read on his behalf by the Parish Clerk)**

Welcome to Exminster Parish Council's Annual Parish Meeting. I am sorry I can't be with you this evening for personal reasons.

At last year's APM, I devoted my piece to volunteering and paid tribute to the many people around the village that volunteered, and I make no excuse to once again do so.

A big thanks to the Trustees of the Victory Hall and the Deepway Centre for keeping the Village's venues open for business. These Trustees volunteer their time for the benefit of the wider community, as do the Trustees of the Feofees. I would also like to thank other volunteers who run organisations in the village including St Martins Football Club, the Pre-school, the leaders of our uniformed groups, the committees which run the Panto and the film club to name just a few. Volunteering is massively rewarding, and I encourage everyone to find what interests them and offer help.

It's been a busy year for your Council. I will talk about a few of the major activities, and my apologies if I steal the thunder from those due to speak after me.

The South West Exeter Urban extension – this is the development of 2000+ houses the other side of the hill – has, as always, kept us busy.

We have now seen most of the detailed planning applications from all the developers. The Parish Council doesn't have any power to refuse these applications, but we are seeking to ensure that the future Exminster Parish residents get the best development they possibly can, by looking at the design and layout, the location of green spaces and play areas, how the actual developments fit together and are served by transport and cycleways. It's for Teignbridge District Council to listen to our comments and hopefully take them into account when granting permission. We have also looked at the design for the new school, seeking to ensure that the all-weather outside facilities can easily be accessed by the public in the evening.

The design for the new Community Centre and GP Surgery to be built in the development is also having close attention, and we are working closely with Devon County Council who have the responsibility to build it. Exminster Parish Council refreshed some work it performed a few years ago to help shape what should be provided in the community centre, and we can now see this in the building designs. However, significant challenges need to be overcome before we start to see this being built.

And lastly on Matford, Councillors had a "sneak peek" at the Ridgetop Park last year. This is Exminster's own country park which you can reach at the very top of Deepway Lane and has some very impressive viewing points. I, for one, am looking forward to enjoying this area when it opens which is hopefully after Easter.

Our village environment has continued to be enhanced by the Green Spaces Group with their plantings and at this time of year you can see the evidence of this all around the Village. My thanks to Jeremy Pyne who you will hear from later for leading this Group. Also, Council owned open spaces such as Spurfield and Crockwells are managed by Mr Henry Fowler. Thanks are extended to Mr Fowler for his dedication.

The Council has endorsed and supported Devon County's climate emergency declaration, and a few weeks ago, the Council were pleased to review and approve the second version of the Environment Working Party's Action Plan to set out activities for the next 18 to 24 months. The Environment Working Party was established two years ago to promote the Council's Environment Policy and has been looking at topics such as electric vehicle charging, transport policy, and recycling. It is made up of both Councillors and interested residents. My thanks to the Chair David Nappin, Cllr Churchward and all members of this group for their tireless work.

We know that speeding cars in the Village are a major concern for Exminster residents. A Speed watch team have been established by Cllr Aird and his wife together with interested residents and this is enforcing the current speed limits. Additionally, the Council has been campaigning for a lower speed limit through Exminster and has recently supported the "20 is Plenty" campaign in Devon. My thanks to Cllr Nuttall for championing this at Devon County.

In the summer of last year, the Council responded to Teignbridge's consultation on Part 2 of their draft Local Plan which is setting the framework for development in Teignbridge for the next twenty years. Undoubtedly, Teignbridge has some challenging housing targets set by the Government which they have to meet, but the Parish Council pointed out that the number of houses targeted for Exminster was not in proportion to our size,

that the infrastructure such as roads, schools, and GPs would struggle to cope, and that the proposals would eat into the green belt between us and Exeter. We know that many Exminster residents agree with us. I am proud of the professional response we submitted and thank my fellow councillors for the work they put in on this.

Close on the heels of Part 2 of the Plan came an unexpected Part 3! This part of the Plan covered wind and solar power, and small housing developments. So once again and just before Christmas Council worked on a response and thanks to members of the Environment Working Party for their assistance in this. Again, I believe we again made a credible and professional response in the time available.

We now have to wait until the middle of this year before we see the results of the consultation and a new draft Plan to see whether Exminster's voice has been heard at Newton Abbott. The Council are also considering how we need to revise our Exminster Neighbourhood Development Plan.

At the centre of our minds now is a Planning application for a landfill site at Lower Brenton farm. We have just learned, prior to this meeting, that the application has been withdrawn for the time being.

This application was astonishing in that it intended to operate for ten years bringing in vast amounts of inert waste – that's construction waste such as bricks and mortar to you and me - process it on site and then either to transport it out or put it into landfill.

Exminster Parish Council has worked in collaboration with Kenn/Kennford and Shillingford St George, and all submitted very detailed objections. Exminster's objections centre around the possible harmful effects on the Berrybrook since its source is very near the Farm, and the effect on traffic on the A379 from all the lorries travelling to and from the farm. We were hoping that this application would be thrown out by Devon County Council prior to learning that it had been withdrawn.

These are just some highlights of the year and are in addition to the normal activities of the Council. The Council could not do what it does without its Clerk and Deputy Clerk, and I would like to thank them for all their hard work and support this past year.

And finally, I would like to return to the subject of volunteering. Your Parish Councillors are all volunteers and, although elected, are not party affiliated, and all perform the role because they want to make a difference to people's lives in Exminster.

We currently have five vacancies on the Council. We have the power to co-opt people without an election so if you are interested why not volunteer as a Councillor? If you are interested, then come along to an informal session with councillors to talk about what we do. It's to be held here at the Victory Hall on Saturday 14 May, or please send me an email if you can't make it and are interested.

The next Elections are in May 2023, so co-option would be an ideal opportunity to see whether you enjoy the role, before putting yourself up for election. There are some big important topics that require attention in the next few years: The Community centre at Matford. The TDC Local Plan. The Exminster Neighbourhood Development Plan. Environmental actions. Are these things you can help with? Without an Exminster Parish Council, there will be no voice for Exminster residents so please do volunteer.

Parish Councillors also sit on the trusts of the Deepway Centre and Victory Hall.

I hope you enjoy listening to the reports from the Council's working groups, and I very much to see you at next year's Annual Parish Meeting in the Victory Hall, or perhaps earlier in a Parish Council meeting.

**Comments:**

*A member of the public asked whether it was known why the landfill planning application had been withdrawn.*

*There was currently no information on this.*

**6 Reports from the following Parish Council Working Parties**

**6.1 Green Spaces Group – Jeremy Pyne**

**Exminster Green Spaces** is a group of volunteers who form a working party of the Parish Council which relies entirely on volunteers to carry out its work around the village. It was formed in 2014 following a request made in the Community Plan survey to enhance green spaces. The Parish Council makes a grant to Green Spaces each year which is used to purchase trees, bulbs and other materials in support of the work. New volunteers are always welcome.

This has been another busy year despite Covid 19 restrictions. Volunteers undertook some **200 hours of work across 15 working parties** over the year.

We began, in early April, with the planting of a '**Landmark ' tree** in Spurfield – donated by the Devon Wildlife Trust as part of their 'Saving Devon Treescapes Project'. The hornbeam should make a fine tree and a genuine legacy for future generations.

We have continued to maintain and develop the **village orchard**. In the summer, a partnership project with the NHS team at New Leaf in the village we commissioned and installed a new orchard gate. Over this winter we have been practicing our hedgelaying skills, while back in November we added three new apple trees with the help of children from the primary school who helped raise the funds.

In October we attended the **Exminster Environment Fair** and had a busy morning of lively conversations with village residents. We were also able to complete and post our **Greenspaces Film** on You Tube and Facebook.

Work at **Crockwells Meadow** included work to establish more wildflowers by preparing areas and applying a mix of meadow flower seed provided by Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT), linked to work aimed at improving bat habitats in Devon.

In October, volunteers planted some 3000 purple crocus on a bank in Dryfield. The bulbs were beginning to sprout as we planted them which may have impacted on success, but these and previous plantings have been a welcome sign of spring. We also gave the planters at the village entrance a makeover by the introduction of some new plants.

In February, in further collaboration with DWT's treescapes project, the group hosted a very successful 'Community Hub' at Deepway Green, distributing some 200 native tree saplings. The event was enthusiastically supported, and all trees handed out in a little over an hour!

**Looking ahead** to 2022/2023, options for planting further trees would be considered, hedge work is proposed and it is hoped that a Wassail can take place early in 2023.

**Comments:**

*How was the orchard progressing?*

*Ongoing maintenance (strimming) continued. Hedge-laying had recently taken place.*

## 6.2 **Environment Working Party – David Nappin**

The Environment Working Party was set up by the Parish Council in 2019 and consists of a small number of Councillors and volunteers from the community who were tasked with producing an Environment Plan for the Parish, designed to combat the climate change and ecological emergencies. More recently, we have made a start on putting as many actions as possible from the Plan into effect.

At the start of 2022, we reviewed and updated the Plan and have recently submitted a revised version to the Parish Council for approval. It consists of 17 actions in these six areas:

**Communications** - We recognise that the task ahead has to be tackled on a broad front by all sectors of society in and around the Parish – councils, businesses and the general public - and so we try to communicate our messages through the Council website and Facebook account, the Scene magazine, together with our own email address and Facebook account.

**Carbon Footprints** – We are trying to encourage residents to check their individual carbon footprints and to find ways of reducing them. We are also looking for ways to establish the footprint of the Council's assets and that of the whole village.

**Biodiversity** – We are building a record of the natural flora and fauna in the village to help focus work on their protection. Working in co-operation with the Green Spaces Group, we advise the Council on the management of public grassed areas. We promote public involvement in environmental campaigns to support wildlife and nature and are co-operating with the Wildlife Trust, RSPB and local land managers to improve biodiversity in the broader landscape.

**Reduce, Re-use, Recycle** - We encourage the community to recycle as much packaging and products as possible, reduce food waste, repair and reuse clothing and other items, all as part of a circular economy.

**Sustainable Energy** – We aim to ensure that planning developments in the Parish comply with the latest energy efficiency standards. We encourage residents to reduce their energy consumption at home through improved insulation and modern heating systems and point them to professional advice from specialist organisations to lift them out of fuel poverty. We also promote the generation of wind and solar energy in the Parish.

**Transport** – We are trying to ensure the provision of a bus service to the Matford development at the earliest possible stage. We are lobbying for the provision of electric vehicle charging points in the village, together with community cars and bikes. We are encouraging residents to walk, cycle or make use of the local bus service rather than drive everywhere.

**Comments:**

*Thanks were extended to David Nappin for all the work that he has done, for the Working Party and Parish Council.*

**6.3 Matford Working Party – Helen Hibbins, Deputy Clerk**

The Matford Working Party has continued to meet on a regular basis.

Over the last 12 months, the Parish Council has responded to several planning applications for the South West Exeter development. Predominantly, these have been “Reserved Matters” applications which are very detailed and largely concerned with the appearance of the houses. As the Parish Council has no architectural or design expertise, it has concentrated on matters that are within its remit, such as environmental matters (solar panels, grey water systems and electric vehicle charging points), the ease of moving safely around the development and beyond, ensuring adequate parking, and suitable bin storage.

More recently, there has been a focus on community facilities, working together with the NHS and Devon County Council (who secured Housing Infrastructure Funding to bring forward provision of facilities earlier in the development than they may otherwise have been). Monthly meetings, facilitated by Devon County Council, are taking place. To date, no conclusion on the way forward has been determined, but the Parish Council continues to emphasise the importance of adequate facilities for the new residents.

**Comments:**

*A member of the public offered to assist with the ecological/landscape/biodiversity element planning applications.*

*This was welcomed by the Parish Council.*

**7 Public Forum**

The Parish Council was thanked for its work.

The commitment of Councillors was appreciated and village was very lucky to have the councillors that it currently does.

New Councillors are required, otherwise the work of the Working Parties cannot be taken forward and the parish would be “managed” by Teignbridge District Council and lose local input and influence.

Could Councillors photographs and contact information be displayed on the notice board?

The meeting closed at: 19:50

Date and time of next meeting: To be arranged between 1 March and 1 June 2023

Signed:..... Date:.....