

Southern Link

West Devon Southern Parish Link Committee

Notes of the meeting held on Thursday, 4 December 2014 In the Coronation Hall, Mary Tavy at 1900

Present:

Cllr David Butland Chair

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Parish</u>	<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Parish</u>
Cllr Brian Lamb	Bere Ferres	Cllr Andrew Harrop	Lewdown Grouped
Cllr Mike Benson	Bere Ferres	<i>Not represented</i>	Lifton
<i>Not represented</i>	Bradstone	Cllr Lesley Fowler	Lydford
Cllr John Drury	Brentor	Cllr Terry Pearce	Mary Tavy & WDBC MT
Cllr Susan	Buckland Monachorum	Cllr Howard Asbridge	Milton Abbot Grouped
Woollacott			
Cllr Lucy Wood	Buckland Monachorum	Cllr Ray Brewer	Milton Abbot Grouped
Cllr Ric Cheadle	Buckland Monachorum	Cllr Bill Lane	Peter Tavy
<i>Not represented</i>	Burrator Grouped	Cllr Graham Antcliffe	Plasterdown Grouped
Cllr Paul Turnbull	Dartmoor Forest	<i>Not represented</i>	Stowford
Cllr Robin Pike	Gulworthy	<i>Not represented</i>	Sydenham Damerel
Cllr Bill Mullery	Horrabridge	Cllr Anne Johnson	Tavistock
<i>Not represented</i>	Kelly		
Cllr John Sheldon	Lamerton & WDBC Tav N		

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Mr Alan Robinson	WDBC	PC Ian Baggott	Devon & Cornwall Police
Mr Simon Kitchen	DCC	Ms Kate Royston	T&D LEB
Ms Jo Rumble	DNPA	Mrs Liz Whitwell	T&D LEB
Mr Peter Brunt	DCC Highways	Mr Christopher Kirwin	TavNet/GDrLEAF/TVAONB
Mr Chris Watkins	DCC Highways	Mr Nigel Tigwell	Clerk

1. Apologies

Cllr Jim Chalcraft	Gulworthy	Cllr Harry Smith	Tavistock
Cllr Jessica Evans	Lamerton	Cllr Philip Sanders	DCC, WDBC, MDNPA
Cllr Chris Edmonds	Lifton	Cllr Mandy Ewing	WDBC Tavistock South
Cllr Ruth Tainsh	Lydford	Cllr David Cloke	WDBC Walkham Ward
Cllr Anita Prosser	Mary Tavy	Cllr Debo Sellis	WDBC Walkham Ward
Cllr Lorraine Beeley	Mary Tavy		

2. Notes of the Last Meeting

The notes of the meeting of 18 September 2014 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. **Referral points from previously circulated Policing Issues**

(The neighbourhood policing team were not in attendance by prior agreement)

The police are trialling a new common report format for use with all three West Devon Parish Link Committees. It comprises a table detailing crime figures provided by PS David Anning and a narrative report by PC Cathy Veale, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Beat Manager.

Councillors welcomed the level of information provided in the narrative report. However, concerns were raised about the veracity of the statistical report:

Councillors were concerned that the figures, demonstrating a reduction in crime in most areas, may be as a result of underreporting, as has been seen in some National statistics.

Councillors were also concerned that criminal offences were incorrectly being recorded as antisocial behaviour (ASB). Parishes quoted instances of vandalism, obscene graffiti and damage to vehicles being recorded as ASB.

In summary, Councillors were not convinced there was an appropriate level of transparency in the reports. After some discussion it was agreed that each Parish should take forward its concerns with their local neighbourhood policing team or write to the Chief Constable as the Parish Council deems appropriate.

5. Tavistock & District Local Economic Blueprint

Kate Royston supported by Liz Whitwell gave a presentation on the work to date by the Tavistock and District Local Economic Blueprint and their intentions for the conclusion of this work by the end of March 2015. This initiative is designed to establish networks and connections to retain a larger proportion of money spent in Tavistock and District within the local economy, rather than being lost to national or international business concerns. The areas of the economy being targeted are: food; domestic retrofit (energy efficiency); and local energy generation. The projects draws on the success of similar projects in Totnes, Wadebridge and Buckinghamshire; and to some extent, Devon County Council's restructuring of social care delivery to favour local suppliers.

The presentation was hampered by the lack of a projector for the PowerPoint presentation, but a copy of the intended presentation is attached. Currently members of three Parish Councils are members of the LEB Stakeholder Forum, and membership is open to other Parish Councils who wish to contribute.

In debate after the presentation, some councillors briefed on the success of small collectives that deliver a significant benefit to businesses within the Parishes, for example Brentor, although they might not be particularly significant in terms of the wider Borough's economy. Other councillors were sceptical whether the Local Economic Blueprint could achieve its stated aims and queried the lack of formal investment appraisal. There was also a degree of confusion over the number of apparently similar projects that seem to have overlapping scopes in trying to benefit the local economy.

Alan Robinson reminded the committee that the purpose was to generate a framework for action and then propose projects to be taken forward by action groups that would be able to apply for funding from the EU and Greater Dartmoor LEAF schemes among others. The LEB was an investment equivalent of a feasibility study that would provide the information needed to be able to apply for future grant funding. It was also noted that the Greater Dartmoor LEAF has a very good track record.

6. TAP Fund

a. Project Updates

Village Hall Wi-Fi (£1500). Councillor Sheldon briefed the meeting that this project was ongoing. It had been very successful in Bellstone and Burrator, but there were three village halls that were encountering difficulty in installing Wi-Fi. He envisaged these problems would be overcome within the next few months.

VAS in Lifton & Chillaton (£7,300). Councillor Asbridge stated that it had taken time to evaluate suppliers and different models; and the Parish Councils were waiting for detailed

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assessments on the exact position to site the devices. By agreeing to act as a reference site for the supplier the Parishes have been provided with two free tablets, negating the need to buy a laptop. With other savings he anticipated an underspend of approximately £2000, which would be returned to the TAP Fund.

West Devon Parish Development & Training Programme (£2,000). Councillor Lamb announced that 274 councillors had attended training in the last 18 months. No further training would take place until after the May elections, when it was expected to focus on training new councillors.

Ward & Chowen Digital Archive (£6,310). Councillor Pike said that other fundraising has now reached the required target and the preferred copier has been selected and demonstrated. Volunteers were not available over Christmas and New Year period. Purchase is expected to complete in the New Year and archive scanning and publishing will commence.

b. New Applications to be considered

Shared asset projector & laptop for Parish Council & Southern Link meetings (£2085). This project was presented by Dartmoor Forest, supported by Buckland Monachorum and Bere Ferres. The proposal is to provide appropriate quality portable audio visual equipment to enable PowerPoint and other presentations at the Southern Parish Link Committee, Parish Council Meetings and other related meetings.

Councillors challenged the proposed business model, insisting that all Parishes should pay the same hire fee. It was also noted that VAT had been incorrectly applied. [Post Meeting Note: with all amendments, the revised cost is £1775]. The amended project was unanimously approved.

Tavistock & District Local Economic Blueprint (£2000). TAD-LEB (see item 5 above) has raised £14000 elsewhere but is £3000 short of its required total of £17000. The application was rejected by 6 votes to 2, with 4 abstentions.

Provision of musical instruments (drums & chimes) in Tavistock Meadows play area (£4253). This project was presented by Tavistock, supported by Lamerton, to enhance and improve the infrastructure of the Meadows playground and other areas of the park by introducing musical instruments for children and adults with special needs. A recent bid by Tavistock Town Council to Biffa for £187,000 had failed and the council was seeking other sources of funding.

Councillors suggested the National Lottery as an alternative, as Buckland Monachorum play area had recently received a £10,000 grant. It was noted that although the project spend was solely in Tavistock, residents of surrounding Parishes regularly visited the Meadows and would thus receive benefit. The application was approved by 6 votes to 4, with 2 abstentions.

To help Parishes purchase Lengthsman services from DCC Highways (£4500). This project was presented by Buckland Monachorum, supported by Dartmoor Forest, Plasterdown and Lifton. The proposal is to help Parishes purchase Parish Lengthsman services from Devon County Council (DCC) Highways to undertake additional works which are not included or now scaled back in the existing County Council schedule but would be of great benefit to the Parishes.

Councillors challenged whether this project was value for money. Highways charge £25 per hour whereas much of the work required unskilled labour that could be hired within the Parishes at considerably less cost. It was also noted that by using the TAP Fund the committee would be using a DCC grant to cover DCC underfunding. Councillors considered

this project should be reconsidered, with all Parishes involved, to seek the most cost effective solution. An amendment proposed by Milton Abbot and seconded by Lamerton to defer this project until the next meeting was passed by 11 votes in favour, with one abstention.

On completion of this debate, several councillors expressed dissatisfaction with the way that the TAP Fund was being administered. The late deadline for the submission of applications (two weeks before the committee meeting) meant that many councillors were unable to canvas the views of their Parish Council. Also the criterion used to justify the Tavistock Meadows play area musical instruments was considered by some councillors to be an uncomfortable precedent that detracted from the aim of Parishes working in collaboration.

Alan Robinson reminded the committee that the TAP Fund rules were intentionally flexible to enable bottom-up creativity, and that councillors were expected to attend the meeting with delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of their Parish or Town Council, having listened to the debate at the meeting. However, he agreed the debate had taken longer than necessary and encouraged Parishes to develop their relationships to work together to understand and contribute ideas to TAP Fund proposals before the committee meetings.

The Clerk reminded councillors that the process for TAP Fund applications would be modified for the next meeting to avoid the complications of purdah. The deadline for applications will be 14 February 2015 and applications will be considered by Ward Members before being considered by the committee.

7. Sharing Parish Experience of Developing Neighbourhood Plans

This item was deferred to a future meeting owing to the late running of the agenda.

8. Highways

This agenda item was to consider the DCC Highways Consultation proposals; the Road Warden Scheme; precept planning for 'devolved responsibilities'; and Parish involvement in rural speed limit policy.

Peter Brunt conducted a brief survey on how many Parishes were aware of the: Highways Safety Awareness Course; Parish Paths Partnership; Road Warden Scheme; and Snow Warden Scheme. It was apparent that many Parish Councils were not aware of some of these Highways initiatives. This led to a brief discussion on the need to improve communications between Highways and the Parishes.

Peter Brunt then gave a presentation on the Road Warden Scheme (which was hampered by the lack of a projector for the PowerPoint presentation, but a copy of the intended presentation is attached). The Road Warden Scheme was developed in response to a desire by Parishes to use volunteers to complete work formerly undertaken by Highways on rural roads and is based on the Snow Warden Scheme. The main concern is to safeguard the safety of volunteers, particularly as an HSE investigation into a road-worker fatal accident in Devon is ongoing. To meet legal requirements the Road Warden and a proportion of other workers that varies depending on where the work is being undertaken, must be qualified to "Chapter 8". Highways will provide and fund this training, but it is time intensive with 5 and 2 day courses mainly during the working week, although the option of some weekend courses was being investigated. Highways also require Parish Councils to provide insurance to cover the volunteers (and their vehicles), as it will be the Parish Council through the Road Warden, who will be directing the work. Highways will loan basic hand equipment to Road Wardens for specific tasks. Around 12-18 of Devon Parishes (2½-4%) had expressed an interest in the scheme.

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There followed a lengthy debate on the adequacy and appropriateness of the arrangements proposed by Highways. Councillors considered that the process was overly bureaucratic and the training burden was too onerous for part-time volunteers. The requirement for Parishes to fund insurance for volunteers and their vehicles angered Councillors, as they were effectively delivering Highways outputs using Highways regulations and undertaking work that had to be approved by the Highways Authority. In summary, Councillors considered the road warden scheme to be a case of top-down bureaucracy strangling a promising bottom-up creative proposal.

An alternative was suggested of returning to the proven model of qualified Lengthsmen employed by Highways to cover a group of Parishes, which would be low cost in comparison with the current practice of using large contractors.

Alan Robinson and Simon Kitchen both spoke of the benefits accrued through effective dialogue between DCC and the Parishes in developing solutions to Tough Choice challenges for Youth Services, Social Services and Libraries among others; and contrasted this to the conflict and confrontation that appeared to be developing over Highways. Alan Robinson suggested it had been unfortunate that detailed proposals had been presented for challenge and defence; rather than Highways consulting earlier in the process with strawman papers to be developed through effective dialogue with the Parishes.

The debate lacking any conclusion, and recognising time constraints, the Chair moved the meeting on.

The Clerk read out a submission from Dartmoor Forest pointing out that too many of the suggested measures in the Highways consultation involve cost transfer and not the intended efficiencies or cost savings. An example quoted was the proposal that Parishes assume responsibility for refilling salt bins: salt bins will need refilling come what may, but the economy of scale is lost if Highways no longer operate bulk purchase and distribution, leading to an overall increase in cost to the Council Tax payer rather than the required saving. The Chair acknowledged the point and, due to time constraints, moved the meeting on.

Chris Watkins introduced the rural speed limits stating that the standard speed limits were 60 miles an hour for rural roads, reduced to 50 mph or 40 mph where the history of road traffic accidents indicated this was needed or as a buffer before a 30 mph. 20 mph limits were only used in 30 mph zones and must be self-enforcing, for example with speed bumps. This was reiterated by Ian Baggott. It was emphasised that speed limits must be consistent, compliant and achievable. However, he stated he knew Parishes wanted a greater input and was willing to listen.

Councillors raised the Department for Transport Circular 01/2013, "Setting Local Speed Limits" which states 66% of all road deaths including 82% of car occupant deaths occur on rural roads; and reminded the committee local knowledge rather than formal accident statistics could be most effective in preventing accidents. An example given was sections of the National cycle network that follow unclassified roads in West Devon but no 40 mph limit has been imposed to reflect these vulnerable road users (para 128 of the Transport Circular) and too few warning signs. Councillors considered it unconscionable that a speed limit should wait until after accidents have occurred. It was also suggested insufficient attention was being paid to fear of traffic and the quality-of-life in villages, hamlets and small settlements in West Devon in setting appropriate speed limits (Section 7.3 of the Transport Circular).

Councillors suggested a more effective dialogue was needed with an established process to enable Parishes to propose changes to speed limits, and to understand Highways decisions in setting limits. The Chair acknowledged the point as needing consideration and moved the meeting on due to time constraints.

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9. West Devon Borough Council Update

This item was deferred to a future meeting owing to the late running of the agenda.

10. Devon County Council Update

This item was deferred to a future meeting owing to the late running of the agenda.

11. Dartmoor National Park Authority Update

This item was deferred to a future meeting owing to the late running of the agenda.

12. Any Other Business

Owing to the inability to complete the agenda, as had been the case in recent meetings, it was proposed by Gulworthy and seconded by Mary Tavy that future Southern Link meetings should be held bimonthly. The Chair acknowledged the concern but stated there were other factors to be considered. These would need to be addressed by the Chair, the Clerk, WDBC, DCC and the other Link Committee Chairs before any formal proposals on the way forward could be considered. The proposal was not put to the vote.

Post Meeting Note: As a trial, the Clerk will develop a basic website for the Southern Link Committee and its constituent Parishes to provide a central repository for information and hyperlinks. This should help overcome some of the difficulties encountered in sharing information and help achieve a common understanding on key issues. Details will be forwarded in due course.

13. Date of the Next Meeting.

The next meeting will be Thursday 26 March 2015 at the Coronation Hall, Mary Tavy.

Subsequent confirmed dates for the Southern Link are 9 July and 3 December 2015. A Super Link will be held at Meldon Hall near Okehampton on 24 September 2015.

The meeting was declared closed at 2150.

Nigel Tigwell
Clerk to the West Devon
Southern Parish Link Committee

Enclosures:

Police Statistical Report
Neighbourhood Police Narrative Report
TAD LEB Presentstion
Highways Presentation
Guidance Notes for Road Warden Scheme
Guidance Notes for Community Self Help Scheme