

Dartmoor Forest Parish

MINUTES OF THE
ANNUAL DARTMOOR FOREST PARISH MEETING
HELD AT 1900 16 APRIL 2014 IN THE
PRINCETOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE

Rules:

The Annual Parish Meeting consists of all electors registered in Dartmoor Forest. The meeting will be chaired by the Chair of the Dartmoor Forest Parish Council. Decisions are taken by a simple majority vote of electors attending. In the event of a tie the Chair has a second, casting vote. Members of the public and press may attend the meeting but may not vote unless they are also electors registered in Dartmoor Forest.

Registered electors of the Parish present:

Alison Geen	Jackie Gee	Wendy Stones
Cliff Palmer	Nigel Tigwell	Wendy Watson
David Worth (Chair)	Val Greatrex	

Non-Parishioners present:

Alex Rehaag

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming all present.

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting.

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 9 April 2013 were accepted as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

2. Affordable Housing.

2.1. Alex Rehagg is the Strategy and Enabling Officer for affordable housing. She outlined the WDBC perspective that the existing Princetown housing stock had not been allocated to local people, many tenants coming from towns where there was a housing shortage. This had led to a youth drain from the Parish and a lack of suitable properties into which the elderly could downsize. WDBC were keen to understand the actual housing needs of the Parish and parishioners.

2.2. Affordable housing is defined as 80% of the open market rate; social housing is 60%. Young people under 25 cannot receive Housing Benefit, although discretionary top-up payments are possible in some circumstances.

2.3. The new housing benefit rules were designed to encourage people to downsize their home but at the same time market forces are encouraging developers to build larger rentals for greater returns. The main tool available to WDBC to require new affordable rentals is the S106 regulation to force developers to either build 40% of the development as affordable housing (50% within the Dartmoor National Park) or provide equivalent funds for WDBC to do so.

2.4. Parishioners cited several examples of local people being unable to find suitable housing within the Parish and being 'forced' to move to one of the towns. Local employers also described the difficulties in recruiting lower paid unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the Parish, as workers have a long and expensive daily commute from affordable housing outside the Parish.

2.5. The possibility of utilising the Community Assets scheme to purchase a property such as the Forest Inn was discussed. This scheme gives local communities time to raise funds to buy a business to preserve it in the Parish, but the business must be a going concern and Alex advised such schemes often ran into difficulties if the vendor was unwilling to sell to the community.

2.6. A Housing Needs Survey has not been conducted in the Parish this century. WDBC has experience undertaking these surveys in-house, gathering information using social media, internet and paper copies of forms. The survey for Milton About is about to be released and may be used as a framework for Dartmoor Forest, with specific factors tailored in. It would be viable to launch a 2-3 weeks Housing Needs Survey for Dartmoor Forest starting mid June, with the analysis results available by late July.

2.7. The electors present unanimously supported conducting a Housing Needs Survey in the Parish. This will be for the Dartmoor Forest Parish Council to organise with WDBC.

3. The Chair's Report.

3.1. On behalf of my co-chair and myself, we would like to start by thanking all the members of the Parish Council who volunteer to give their valuable time and effort to the Council. All your efforts should be appreciated and valued across the whole Parish. Also, we would like to extend our thanks to those members of the wider community who help run so many of the facilities that we all benefit from. From the WI members, the Charity Shop staff, the volunteers of the Community Centre and Postbridge Village Hall, those who help out with the football club, Phyll's Follies and so many others - you are all making a real difference to the lives of the residents of the Parish.

3.2. This year has seen several changes to the Parish Council, and the wider community as well. The Parish Council is sad to have lost John Steele as a Councillor, his enthusiasm will be truly missed. In his place we are delighted to welcome Jackie Gee whose long term knowledge of Princetown will be very useful in our decision making. Our indefatigable Parish Clerk Ann Inman also took her well-earned retirement this year. In her place we are proud to have selected Nigel Tigwell as our new Clerk. We are sure his deep level of expertise will prove essential as we navigate through these difficult times.

3.3. In common with recent years, this year will be a difficult one on many levels for everybody involved in local Government. The pressure for Councils to do more with less is a constant. As a Parish Council we are acutely aware of the pressures on both family and Government budgets and are always looking to achieve all we can to keep your Council taxes down yet provide you with better quality services.

3.4. This year we have delivered another phase of improvements to the play park in Princetown, and we are looking to improve facilities even more over the coming year. We now have a new Council web-site at www.dartmoorforestpc.net. We are planning to install defibrillators at Postbridge and Hexworthy. We were even able to provide new lights for the Princetown Christmas tree, but we were saddened when some of them were vandalised. We have also been involved in the discussions concerning the new look for Princetown's Duchy Square and we are excited to see how that will improve that area of the village. As always, there is much to do and little money to do it with.

3.5. Once again we would like to thank everyone for their ongoing support and look forward to another successful year for everyone in the Parish.

Alison Geen & David Worth, Co-Chairs, Dartmoor Forest Parish Council.

4. Postbridge Village Hall report

4.1. Val Greatrex reported that some of the refurbishment has taken place such as new toilets, including a disabled one.

4.2. The kitchen has been updated with new sink, electrics and floor.

4.3. The Hall has been cleaned and repainted using a supervised team of ex-offenders.

- 4.4. A feasibility study is being undertaken by Carrie Jost and Paul Hammett to assist the Community Council of Devon with their bid for funding for the village hall entrance and kitchen extension, improvements to heating and lighting.
- 4.5. The hall committee is working hard to increase bookings for the hall and have interest from cycling organisations and a lichen workshop.
- 4.6. An event on March 2nd was held to celebrate the refurbishment and to encourage new bookings.
- 4.7. The car park is almost finished but the recent wet weather has caused some drainage problems which will be dealt with.
- 4.8. The accounts were not currently available.

5. Matters raised by the electorate

- 5.1. Nigel Tigwell reported difficulties putting together the agenda because the custom and practice no longer followed a sensible logic, for example it was customary to call for a report with accounts from Postbridge Village Hall but not Princetown Community Centre. He suggested all community organisations should be invited to voluntarily forward a summary report of their activities to future Annual Parish Meetings. The electors present unanimously supported this proposal.
 - 5.2. The dog waste bin in Woodville Avenue was reported as overflowing. The Parish Council pay to have these emptied fortnightly during winter and weekly during summer. The Parish Clerk agreed to investigate whether this was being complied with.
6. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1928.