

Ermington Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting

Tuesday 23 May 2023 at 7.00 pm

in the

Reading Rooms, Ermington

Present: Cllrs D Onley (Chair), R Owens, I Creese, J Dunlop
District Councillor Alison Dewynter

T Drew – Parish Clerk

3 members of the public

WELCOME

The Chair Cllr Onley welcomed everyone and explained the format for the evening and introduced the guest speaker Nigel Mortimer, Estuaries Officer - South Devon AONB Unit.

TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

County Councillor Dan Thomas and Patricia Hannam.

TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MAY 2022

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting which took place on 24 May 2022 at 7.30 pm were agreed and signed by the Chair.

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF ERMINGTON PARISH COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR DENIS ONLEY

We have had 6 vacancies for Parish Councillor's throughout the year, which has limited the scope of our work, and are grateful to Pat Hannam for responding to our request and joining us, we still have five vacancies to co-opt to, so please consider applying.

The Parish Council have again reduced our portion of the Council Tax, to return surplus reserves to parishioners, this year by 5%. The full accounts can be seen on our website, and if you would like any further details please let us know.

Some examples of our recent work are:

Having raised the issue of sewage discharged into the Rivers Erme & Yealm last year, river pollution has now become a national issue. Many meetings have been held and promises made, and we are now linked with other Parish Councils and interested parties into river catchment forums to identify what needs be done locally and campaign for greater protections to improve river water quality to 'clean river' levels.

If you see several dead fish together in the river please report the location to the Parish Council and the Environment Agency incident hotline (0800 807060), and if you would like to help us protect the rivers please let us know.

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF ERMINGTON PARISH COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR DENIS ONLEY (continued)

We have supported the establishment of a local Community Speedwatch Team and our thanks go to all the volunteers, and invested in two additional fixed vehicle activated speed cameras to collect data & warn motorists of their speed. We have also continued to campaign for improvements to footpaths, safe routes to other villages, and promote active travel options. Please report any footpaths issues to us & Devon County Council, Public Rights of Way Team.

Our campaign to make the A3121, Totnes Road safer for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, by reducing the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph through the village, has resulted in encouraging responses from some SHDC & DCC Councillor's but is yet to be determined.

The unusual dips & cambers in the roads at the new roundabout at Kitterford Cross, although not in our Parish, has given concern to parishioners and we are awaiting a response from Devon County Council (DCC) on making it safer.

Flooding again caused many problems this winter. We sometimes find all that is required is for leaves & detritus to be cleared from the top of drains and culverts for flood water to flow away, and are grateful to those parishioners who monitor & clear drains near their homes. However, often the pipes under the roads are also blocked and need reporting to DCC at:<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>; as they are otherwise only cleared every three years.

We learned that Devon County Council (DCC), no longer routinely treat areas of Japanese Knotweed in the road verge, and the repeated appearance of potholes in the same places is partly due to DCC changing to cold tar filler to save money rather than hot tar which apparently provides a better repair.

We were pleased to continue to support local litter pickers and our thanks go to all the volunteers who give their time to do this.

We have continued to support additional tree planting. Our thanks to Ro our Tree Warden for advice on trees.

Ermington Cricket Club are consulting about installing a Cricket Pavilion in the corner of the park by the Spires, please let us know your views.

We have given grants to The Parish Magazine, Ermington Village Fund, Citizens Advice South Hams, & Ivybridge Ring and Ride towards their costs for support to Ermington residents.

We are working with Ermington Environmental (EE) to complete a Climate & Biodiversity plan for the parish and are awaiting the outcome.

We have continued to campaign for better bus links to nearby towns and villages, but with little success.

We still have a need for allotments in the Parish. If anyone has any suitable land available, or would be interested in sharing their garden, please get in touch.

None of the work undertaken this last year, could have be achieved without the support of the other Parish Councillors: John, Ian & Robert and our Clerk, Teresa. Also, our Devon County Councillor Dan Thomas, and I wish to thank them all, and everyone involved in supporting the work of the Parish Council. I should also like to give a special mention and note of thanks to Tom Holway who stood down as our SHDC Councillor after many years service at the recent election and welcome to Alison Dewynter who we look forward to working with.

If you would like to volunteer to be a Councillor or help us in any way with these or any other Parish issues, please let me know.

ANNUAL REPORT FROM DEVON COUNTY COUNCILLOR DANIEL THOMAS

New Chief Executive

March was Donna Manson's first full month as Devon County Council's new Chief Executive. Donna has set out her first impressions of the county and the council, and her focus on engagement in a message to our staff and Members. As a result of her appointment – and many other changes of personnel at senior levels, the County is now undertaking a comprehensive Governance review. This will deal with the massive Special educational Needs and Disabilities budgetary shortfall as well as the Council's scrutiny functions and how it deals with other partner bodies.

Budget

As a result of the recent budget, in 2023/24 DCC will be spending 18.5 per cent more on children's services, and 8.8 per cent more on adult social care services. Overall, the Council is budgeting to spend 10.5 per cent more on services than last year. The average Band D householder will see the County's proportion of their council tax bill increase by £1.49 a week to pay these increases. Spending this much on priority services to meet growing demand without national support means having to make savings in the region of £47.5 million from elsewhere in order to balance the books.

20mph schemes

4 applications were passed and begun in 22/23, with around £100k allocated. With over 100 parishes having expressed interest, County has given itself a 25 – 30 workbook of jobs before all parishes are satisfied. 6 more Parishes have been selected for 23/24, none in the South Hams.

Children's Services

This area, worryingly, continues to have an official rating of 'Requires Improvement'. Parents delivered DCC a strong message during the year in protest over failings within services that support children who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Significant problems and delays are occurring across the County. I would urge parents who feel that they are not receiving a timely or appropriate level of service should contact me for support.

Pot Holes

These remain a huge issue across the County. The good news is that DCC has doubled the number of pothole teams, introduced weekend working and extended working hours across the network. That resulted in up to 2,200 potholes being repaired each week.

Local Issues

I have continued to battle for the Parish on a number of issues this year. The three at the top of my list are:

Ongoing A3121 speed reduction

Improved gateway point onto public footpath opposite Plantation House

Discussions with Cabinet member regarding bus service (specifically rerouting the 3)

Dan Thomas Daniel.thomas@devon.gov.uk

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ANNUAL REPORT RECEIVED FROM TOM HOLWAY PRIOR TO THE LOCAL ELECTIONS 2023

Ukraine

Over the year, the item most reported was on the support for Ukrainian Refugees. The District Council had staff dedicated to assess accommodation and safeguarding, give financial and employment support, and working through the British social support network of health and schooling. A dedicated employee started in July.

There were an initial 22 host sponsors building to 50 host properties & 213 Ukrainian guests with a further 43 visas for those yet to travel. Not all placements lasted to full term and some guests moved out of the area.

Finances

The Council have set a balanced budget with the annual Council Tax Bill set to rise by £5.00 for Band D properties. Since and through the current Covid infections, many staff still work from home.

Climate Change & Biodiversity

The funds for Climate Change & Biodiversity projects are spent up or now restricted due to the coming election. We have some hope the opportunity may be repeated. Along with Ermington Environmental, we have links with Greener Ugborough Parish and are promoting care for the whole Erme Catchment Area. We continue to support the introduction of wildflower meadows and tree planting in the district. The rollout of EV charging facilities is going ahead slowly with the co-operation of Devon County Council and National Grid.

Homelessness and housing

Affordable housing became available in Filham Chase (Bloor Homes) and in Saxon Gate (Wain Homes). They include social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

Generally, affordable housing is for those with a household income at or below the median as rated by a recognised housing affordability index. The UK government standard definition is any property provided at least 20% below market value and relevant for both rentals and properties for sale.

Almost 500 new affordable homes have been provided in the South Hams over the past four years.

Community Land Trusts are making a significant entry to deliver affordable housing. The most relevant locally is South Dartmoor Community Energy's application for 30 affordable homes. See

<https://www.sdce.org.uk/community-housing.html> .

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme has helped over 10% of South Hams Council tax payers during the cost of living crisis and over half of these are working families.

Recycling & Waste Collection

The Council is intending to offer a full waste collection system across the District by the Autumn of this year. The remaining requirement of new vehicles should be ordered in the very near future.

The transition to SHDC operations happened over months. It is planned to tweak a few of the collection rounds. New challenges are still being revealed and it is hoped all existing anomalies and future exposures will be settled by the Autumn.

Fortnightly garden waste collection has resumed with an 11 month service (not mid-December to mid-January). There is no partial payment plan; assisted collections will continue; the service will return for missed collections. Across the South Hams, there are now 12,000 garden waste collections.

ANNUAL REPORT RECEIVED FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR TOM HOLWAY PRIOR TO THE LOCAL ELECTIONS 2023 (continued)

Tree Planting



The image details tree planting in the South Hams through the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund, with support from Devon County Council. This doesn't cover the entirety of planting in the district as there are other projects, but it's great to see in numbers the impact that the tree fund has had here in the South Hams.

New initiatives

Plymouth Freeport is continuing and expansion of MOD work is expected to increase opportunities for well paid jobs and training for young people.

SHDC have agreed a scheme to install PV panels on our leisure centres to reduce heating costs and keep the centres viable.

PL21 have been successful in getting grant funding from SHDC to pay for the Ivybridge/ Bittaford cycleway feasibility study and I was happy to lend my support to the provision of the funding.

Remember:

- Register to vote by 11:59pm on Monday 17 April
- Apply for a postal vote by 5pm on Tuesday 18 April
- Apply for a Voter Authority Certificate by Tuesday 25 April

Tom Holway

GUEST SPEAKER

Mr Nigel Mortimer (Estuaries Officer - South Devon AONB Unit) gave a very informative presentation describing how he tries on behalf of the AONB, to raise awareness about estuaries in the AONB and why they need to be conserved for the future.

GUEST SPEAKER (continued)

The AONB covers the five individual and diverse estuaries in South Devon and its aim is to make it a living landscape and not about preservation. The estuaries are part of a management plan and co-host the South Devon Catchment Partnership. Estuaries are a place, where fresh water of the river meets the saltwater of the sea. The large areas are covered and uncovered by the tide, which has effects on the animals/insects trying to thrive in the area. Estuaries are often dirty and smelly areas and mud settles at the top of the estuaries. Due to the tides, seaweed will settle on the mud flaps and any organic material will be broken down by bacteria.

The most encouraging find is Seagrass which has been seen growing near Mary Rocks in the Erme estuary.

The challenges are for everyone to make small changes in their lifestyle e.g., not to litter, discard cigarette ends (they contain chemicals), conserving water, reducing lighting.

The AONB website link for more information is – <https://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/>

Cllr Onley thanked Nigel for his very educating and inspiring talk.

QUESTIONS ARISING FROM ANNUAL REPORTS

None.

The meeting finished at 8.00 pm.

Signed: *Denis Onley*
(Chair)

Date: 21 May 2024