

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Exmouth Queen's Drive Delivery Group held at Online via the Zoom App. on 15 October 2020

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.50 pm

1 Public speaking

There were 7 members of the public wishing to speak.

1. Julia Gash reported that she had moved down from Sheffield to Exmouth 5 years ago for the gentler climate and beautiful coastline. The drawback she experienced was the town was tired in terms of its offer. She wished to express her support for the development work that had been undertaken on the seafront so far. She thought this would improve the tourism offer for the town, the economy and creating a contemporary space that is attractive to both visitors and residents. As an Exmouth business owner she wished to express her support for the Hemingway vision.
2. Laura Woodward-Drake introduced herself as the new Chair of the Exmouth Chamber of Commerce whose motto was 'Grow Stronger Together'. She wished to echo the previous speaker's comments on the Hemingway plan in regenerating the seafront. She was the manager of a local language school with 4,000 visitors and who regularly brought, many of them to the seafront. She considered the Hemingway Design to be a good one and ticked many boxes. She hoped that development on the seafront could move forward now.
3. Justin Moore reported that the Queens Drive development was a fantastic opportunity for Exmouth. The Hemingway Design was well presented and would complement other developments. It would make Exmouth an all year round destination and improve the economy. He saw the changes made as positive.
4. Ivor Jones thanked the Panel for the opportunity to speak. He was the Station Manager for NCI Exmouth who have operated from the tower adjacent to the Harbour View Café. Part of the national network of NCI stations and consistently the 3rd/4th busiest station. The ability for them to operate properly in Exmouth depended upon them having a new facility. They needed 25m of look out space in the new development to include training and storage facilities. He hoped that a Coast Watch Visitors Centre could be incorporated in the new facility, as this would be a great benefit for Exmouth. An inspirational new building would be to everyone's benefit. To compromise with unsuitable and inadequate coast watch facilities would impact upon NCI's ability to provide an effective and efficient coast watch service for this area both now and in the future.
5. Gordon Hodgson reported that he had lived in Exmouth for 48 years. He had been part of a group in Exmouth that had been working to unburden the Seafront site from the unrealistic expectations of a commercial return. He wished to widen the range of ideas and improve public consultation. Balance the need to have confidential commercial information to provide the public with information. He wished to see the idea of a hotel removed from the proposed developments. The

site was expected to provide too much of a commercial return. This had artificially increased to pay for the cost of road alignment.

6. Sally Galsworthy, local Exmouth resident agreed with most of what the first two speakers had said. However, there was a history of a sorry saga of the seafront and democracy had been by-passed. A businesses on the seafront had spent up to £10k of their own money on plans to develop their business. She was pleased that the new administration had taken over and were pursuing a more open regime.

The plans for the new hotel were misguided and 6 years of soft marketing for the site had not provided any success. By contrast there had been 6 bids for the Harbour View site. The purchase of the Ocean building had proved, so far, to be a wasted opportunity and was losing money for the council. Why did the council pay full price for this building and she felt that councillors had been fed misinformation. Why not put business spaces in the Ocean building to let by tender?

7. Daphne Currier, local Exmouth resident was a member of Save Exmouth Seafront and felt that the public's concern over developments along the seafront had been ignored. The Constitution of Save Exmouth Seafront had three key objectives which were to support local businesses, to demand independent consultation and to stand against inappropriate development. It was noted that support for businesses included water sports. With regard to public consultation, the option of a hotel had been the least popular in EDDC's own consultation and a Town Poll had shown that 95% of respondents had asked for further independent public consultation. Inappropriate development was considered to be development which placed excessive demands on local infrastructure.

2 **Welcome from Chairman**

Cllr Paul Arnott, Chairman of the Delivery Group wished to welcome all the public and Councillors to the first meeting of the Queens Drive Delivery Group. He reported that he had visited Exmouth seafront on many occasions when a student at Exeter University. He had been upset to hear that despite best efforts there was conflict over what was best for Exmouth seafront. There was the need to: 1. Look to the future and the need to make peace with the past. With this in mind he would be happy for public speakers to contact him via email with their questions .2. The need to get on with development at the seafront.

He felt it was appropriate as Leader of the District Council to take the chairmanship of the Panel for the first few meetings and then hand over to an Exmouth member when the future was clearer.

3 **Declarations of interest**

Minute 5. Current Position.

Councillor Olly Davey, Personal, is a member of Exmouth Town Council

Minute 5. Current Position.

Councillor Nick Hookway, Personal, former Chairman of Save Exmouth Seafront, author of the Exmouth Egg proposal

Minute 5. Current Position.

Councillor Joe Whibley, Personal, is a member of Exmouth Town Council

Minute 5. Current Position.

Councillor Chris Wright, Personal, is Littleham Ward Member, former tenant of the Queen's Drive redevelopment site

4 **Terms of reference (see attached document)**

Members of the Delivery Group received details of the Terms of Reference.

Cllr Paul Millar suggested that a clause be added to facilitate public engagement with Queens Drive Phase 3. It was also suggested that the words 'invites to individuals' in paragraph 4 of the Terms of Reference be removed.

RESOLVED: that a full review of the Terms of Reference for the Delivery Group be undertaken at the next meeting of the Delivery Group.

5 **Current position (see attached Briefing Note & Chronology of Activities)**

Members received a presentation by Tim Child, Service Lead - Place, Assets & Commercialisation, who reported that the Queen's Drive development site had been a key project for the council for over 8 years. It was first identified in the Exmouth Seafront and Town Centre Masterplan: Exmouth Vision. The first part of the report set out the current position for phase 3 of the site with information on the recent work undertaken by Hemmingway Design and Lambert Smith Hampton. It also set out the position regarding the temporary uses on the phase 3 site. The second part set out a brief summary of the background to the Water Sports Centre project – how and why this was pursued and details of the various activities that were necessary to facilitate its delivery and covered other contextual information that was helpful for members to be aware of.

He reported that he was coming to the development with a fresh pair of eyes as he had not been involved in the early stages. Achievements so far were:

1. Newly aligned road
2. New car park.
3. Temporary uses on the Phase 3 site.
4. The new Water Sports Centre.

The current position was that progress on Phase 3 was on hold. The Council could progress the site by marketing it, which was a two stage process and which was provided for by a Cabinet decision earlier this year. A commercial element on a part of the site was important to pay for the free play and public realm on the remainder as per earlier decisions by Members. He reported that Officers were ready to support Members. The Officer's role was to take forward proposals agreed by Cabinet or Council. This was a great opportunity to complete the final stage of the Queens Drive Development and provide a sustainable legacy.

During the lengthy discussions the following points were noted:

- Temporary uses on the Phase 3 site had been successful.
- It was the intention of the new administration for members and officers to work together to get a successful seafront development done.
- Importance of providing a high quality outdoor attraction that was commercially viable, but also to listen to the views of the public.

- The vision was to provide a project/facility directed at the young and not so young, both local people and visitors. A landmark building on the Harbour View site was needed providing excellent facilities.
- The hotel site would provide a capital receipt.
- Need to see what has been spent on developments so far and what income had been received. The current position of Ocean Blue, including cost and revenue.
- Impressed with what has happened on the site and the free play area was superb. Businesses had been pleased to be there but would like longer leases for their businesses.
- Importance to the rest of East Devon that we get this development right.
- Need to focus more on a staycation and environmental concerns. People appreciated the natural environment of Exmouth. Importance of the development for future of the seafront.
- Whatever was to be provided for on the site had to be paid for and needed to be cost neutral. Development should not be entirely down to what visitors want.
- This was a very complex issue and we need to focus on what we do going forward. The need to invite the public to contribute in as simple a way as possible.
- Crucial we need to get this right. Exmouth has one of the UK's finest beaches. The development has not taken full advantage of the natural capital of Exmouth seafront. There was the need to listen to the public and move forward.
- The loss of income to the Council for businesses that had been closed was £178,000 lost in rent and rates.
- Appropriate development was needed on the site and felt that a hotel was not appropriate. There was a need for something that was commercially viable and generate income for the council and be self-financing. Encourage people to come to the seafront in sustainable ways.
- Who pays for the Coast Watch tower?
- Need to move forward with accurate evidenced information. Businesses that had been moved on from the seafront had spent a lot of their own money on plans to upgrade their offer and this had been wasted. Felt that the project had been ill thought out from the beginning with poor management and little effective public consultation. The site was OK before the development and just needed updating.
- Was the proposal to include a hotel in the development pre-determined?
- Exmouth was critically important to East Devon and the council need to do the right thing. The project should not be taken forward on an artificially tight deadline, which will result in poor decisions being made. Would like full disclosure of what happened in the past. The Council seemed to have been hoodwinked by private developers and the public of Exmouth have suffered as a result. Concerned about the effect of Brexit. Need to obtain a consensus view of the way forward.
- Would like to see the Dinosaur Park extended into the car park and get older children involved.
- Many residents of Exmouth feel that the Harbour View building should be retained
- Look at alternative routes for funding the developments.
- Any proposals going forward should have a free or affordable element within it.
- Importance of provision of indoor facilities to make Exmouth an all year round destination. Some of which could be provided in the Ocean Building.

Tim Child, Service Lead – Place, Assets & Commercialisation in response to questions raised above reported that the decision to include a hotel in the design brief had not been pre-determined. The 2012 permissions had we understand been implemented. The road and car park had cost £1.6M and the total cost of the development so far had been circa £3M. Full details would be provided at the next meeting, including income and rent lost

on existing leases. Coast Watch did not pay any rent based on a historical arrangement. A new tower for them had already been agreed in the Phase 3 development. Extending the play park was a possibility and was ultimately a Members' decision.

6 **Way forward**

That the following be agreed as a way forward for the Delivery Group:

Cllr Joe Whibley proposed that the development of the Ocean building be included within the remit of the Delivery Group and that Cabinet be requested to make the change to include this within the Terms of Reference. This was seconded by Cllr Megan Armstrong and was **RESOLVED**.

It was also agreed that the chronology of activities be brought back to the next meeting of the Delivery Group to enable further detail to be included if necessary to provide a comprehensive record. A report would also be presented outlining considerations for temporary uses for 2021.

The next meeting would be held on either 10th or 12th November 2020.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Cabinet be requested to include the development of the Ocean building within the remit of the Exmouth Queen's Drive Delivery Group and that the Terms of Reference be amended accordingly.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Arnott (Chairman)
P Hayward
M Armstrong
O Davey
N Hookway
D Ledger
J Whibley
C Wright
S Gazzard

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

F Caygill
P Millar
A Moulding
T Woodward
E Wragg
J Bailey
G Jung
J Loudoun

G Pook
G Pratt
K Blakey
S Jackson
M Rixson
P Faithfull
E Rylance

Officers in attendance:

Tim Child, Service Lead - Place, Assets & Commercialisation
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Christopher Lane, Democratic Services Officer
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

A Colman
B Taylor

Chairman

Date: