

Date of Meeting 25th January 2021

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Exmouth Queen's Drive Space – Temporary Uses for 2021

Report summary:

A report was presented to the Delivery Group meeting of 17th November 2020 and a general steer given by Members as to thoughts for the 2021 season, namely around provision of seating, food and beverage offerings, play equipment, events, repair and / or replacement of seating area and the bar on QDS.

Discussions also included the issue of the temporary car park site and on this issue there were 2 recommendations to Cabinet as follows:

1. Not to proceed with the temporary car park and to provide clearer signage to other car parks on Exmouth seafront.
2. To instruct Tim Child to research and report back on alternative options for use of the temporary car park land, in consultation with Cllr Chris Wright and Cllr Nick Hookway.

On 6th January Cabinet resolved that these recommendations be agreed.

This report takes forward both the proposals for 2021 on QDS and recommendation 2 above.

Recommendation:

That the Delivery Group recommend to Cabinet:

- a) That a temporary planning application be submitted for up to 2 years on the temporary car park site to enable the area to be grassed (seed or turf) and used for fitness uses as per this report.

Note: it would be for the Delivery Group to recommend to Cabinet whether or not to proceed with the expense of grassing this site prior to the grant of planning consent. Officers would remind Members both of the risk of incurring unnecessary cost and in respect of public perception.

- b) That the temporary use on the main Queen's Drive Space for the 2021 season progress as detailed in report (paragraphs 3.1-3.8) in respect of arrangements for the bar, the traders, events and replacement of the seating areas.

Reason for recommendation:

A request was specially made for this information to be presented.

Officer: Tim Child, Service Lead – Place, Assets & Commercialisation tchild@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action
- Corporate Services and COVID-19 Response and Recovery
- Democracy and Transparency
- Economy and Assets
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Financial implications:

The report highlights the financial implications of the proposals following the direction given by the Delivery Group. The loss of the car park income is in the order of £20k - £30k (how much of this lost income will be recovered from car park users parking in other EDDC car parks is unknown). To provide a grassed surface to the temporary car park is £18k to £38k (capital costs) with additional maintenance costs of £10k per annum. It is expected activities on the site could generate up to £6k. A budget is also being requested of £20k to £35k (capital) to replace existing seating and infrastructure on Queen's Drive Space. It was envisaged that additional budgets would be required, subject to Council approval, and although not included currently in the draft budget for 2021/22 the possibility of costs arising were highlighted. If proposals are adopted at the highest budgeted sums, with car park income assuming a 50% loss, then an increase is requested in the capital budget of total of £73k and net revenue implications of £19k.

Legal implications:

There are no specific legal implications requiring comment.

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#):

Priorities (check which apply)

- Outstanding Place and Environment
- Outstanding Homes and Communities
- Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
- Outstanding Council and Council Services

Report in full

1.0 Background

- 1.1 A site meeting took place on 10th December with Cllr Nick Hookway and Cllr Chris Wright as per the recommendation from the November Delivery Group meeting. Cllr Arnott as Chair of the QD Delivery Group also attended. Officers in attendance were Tim Child, Service Lead – Place, Assets & Commercialisation and Angela Gordon - Lennox, Events Officer for StreetScene.
- 1.2 There were two main agenda items which I will address below in order:
- a) Temporary car park site – future temporary uses following QD recommendation to Cabinet not to proceed with the temporary car park
 - b) Temporary ‘meanwhile’ uses on main Queen’s Drive Space site for 2021 season

2.0 Temporary car park site

- 2.1 At the last Queen’s Drive Delivery Group meeting Members were informed that the temporary planning consent of this land for parking had now expired. The Delivery Group recommended to Cabinet not to proceed with a new temporary application for car parking but to look at alternative future temporary uses. The temporary car park generated £20,000 - £30,000 income per annum, with some of those to be displaced using other EDDC car parks and others using DCC spaces.
- 2.2 The Service Lead – Place, Assets & Commercialisation met with colleagues from StreetScene, the Events Team, Planning, Car Parks and Place & Prosperity to start scoping out what was possible/ feasible. A number of suggestions were put forward at the Delivery Group meeting and through subsequent emails received and these were all considered, along with pro’s / con’s of each. The options considered were as follows:
- a. Pop-Up events
 - b. Beach volleyball
 - c. Bungee Jumping
 - d. Extending Dinosaur Play Park
 - e. Crazy Golf
 - f. Go Ape
 - g. Food Traders
 - h. Table Tennis
 - i. Adventure playground for older children
 - j. Maize maze like at Darts Farm
 - k. Rockreef.co.uk type climbing walls / ropes
 - l. Skate / cycling – possibly learn to cycle safely course
 - m. Activities for older children (10 yrs plus)
 - n. Fitness type uses – by hire for sessions
- 2.3 See appendix A for completed matrix outlining pro’s and con’s for each.

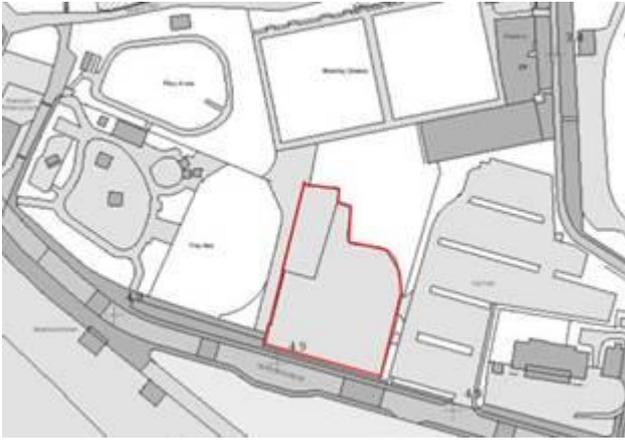
- 2.4 A number of these proposals were ones that had already been considered in the past and have real potential on the main QDS site itself, but on the temporary car park site are perhaps less suitable due to the location and the surface condition which itself would require quite significant investment (even more than for the grass specified in this report) before a number of these types of uses could be considered even on a temporary basis. Some of these uses are also provided elsewhere in the immediate vicinity (beach volleyball, food traders and crazy golf). The loss of parking revenue and the capital costs involved, to likely generate a lesser commercial return directed Officers towards looking at these types of uses, but either on the temporary car park site or the QDS site itself.
- 2.5 Officers were very mindful that we have significant space at the rear of the main site (the events space) and it is possible that some of these types of uses considered above, might best be suited to this space instead, where the surface condition is already better, and the space is currently not generating an income. This space could be made available to the types of uses listed above instead of events, or dependant on use, possibly a variety of pop up type uses and the more traditional events we've had in recent years. Better utilisation of this space would also enhance footfall on the front part of the site providing improved revenue for the traders and bar, improve overall financial performance and with less cost to EDDC.
- 2.6 When considering alternative uses, Members need to be mindful of the planning position. In respect of the main Queen's Drive Space site this is as follows:

Queens Drive space permission 18/2842/FUL. This is a temporary consent and ceases on 31 March 2022. Once the use has ceased all structures shall be permanently removed. The heights of any structure in the event space shall not exceed 10 metres and no structure exceeding 4 metres in height shall be located within 5 metres of any boundary of the site.

Other than that already existing, details of any additional movable or permanent structures or features (such as seating areas, children's play equipment, event space facilities or food and drink retail facilities) proposed on the site for a period in excess of 28 days, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the installation of such equipment.

As for the temporary car park site, as the temporary consent for car parking expired in September 2020 and the proposed use as an area for outdoor exercise would not benefit from the lawful historic use, the Planning Service has therefore advised that a new planning consent would be required, whether for a temporary or permanent use.

- 2.7 Advice has been received from the Project Engineering Team as to costs of making the temporary car park site suitable for other uses. For bitmac surfacing the cost is estimated as £58,000 and would include all that land forward of the trip rail i.e. not the rear grassed part of site nor the protected grasses site. The land is shown outlined in red on the plan below. To turf this same area the cost would be circa £38,000 and with seeding with preparation at circa £30,000 which includes for top soiling due to the current compacted stone surface. Assumes a minimum topsoil depth of 100mm. Circa £10,000 per annum would then be needed to instruct StreetScene to maintain.



- 2.8 The Members and Officers met on site and discussed all these issues and the preferred option by Members was considered to be as follows:
- a) The car park be laid to grass with any fencing being minimal to encourage the feeling of openness.
 - b) In terms of temporary uses for the car park land, for next season or two, the favoured uses related to low key fitness type uses. The rationale for this being:
 - Would fit well with the Council's Health & Wellbeing Agenda and is consistent with themes in the Council Plan and Statement of Intent.
 - Supports Covid recovery for small businesses and would provide much needed wellbeing opportunities for the community.
 - Would complement both aesthetically and practically the current offerings in the locality.
 - Would not compete with businesses in the vicinity.
 - Contributes to the Tourism agenda and Exmouth as a destination in providing additional activities.
 - Would provide a range of activities across the age bands.
 - We know through the Events Team that there's ample demand.
 - Whilst the costs of laying to grass and any fencing (if needed) are not insignificant – est £30K - £40K, the costs will be less compared to those that would be incurred for many other types of surfaces / uses. We need to factor in circa £10,000 annual costs for StreetScene to maintain.
- 2.9 The Events Team received an increasing number of requests to use Council Land for health and wellbeing activities in 2020. These requests included dance fitness classes, boot camps, general fitness and outdoor yoga. Some of these requests specified a beach front location and we feel that this location would be of great interest to a number of organisers.
- 2.10 We have also received a small number of requests from 'branded' operators looking to set up regular military style boot camps on our land. One of these companies is actively seeking a location close to the sea front. They are looking to provide daily classes across the age range to encourage health and fitness. They have also suggested providing classes at no cost to certain groups, where this would add value to the community and also managing the whole area and providing smaller companies the opportunity to use parts of the site in parallel with their own activities.

- 2.11 The tangible benefits of allowing these types of activities are clearly great. However, the revenue opportunities for the Council are minimal. Many of the companies looking to use Council land are 'one man band' with limited scope (and sometimes desire) for profit. The proposal for fitness licences in our latest Events Team Portfolio Holder report, having carried out research with event organisers and other Local Authorities, ranges from £250-£600 per annum, depending on number of classes/clients per week. If there were 10 companies wishing to use the land (perhaps each on a half day basis) then income would equate to £2500 - £6000 per annum but at this stage this is very indicative and should not be relied on.
- 2.12 This low key fitness type use would be managed through the Council's Events Team, consistent with how they manage other sites.
- 2.13 If low key fitness type uses on this land are to happen then the following actions are needed (timescales still indicative):
- a) A decision by Cabinet for this change of use. Assume decision on 3rd February
 - b) A submission of an application for temporary planning consent during February. The Planning Service have indicated a period of 4 months from submission to determination.
 - c) Determination of planning during June.
 - d) Marketing of site for fitness uses during intervening period but uses not to commence until July.

*Note – This assumes that ground works and seeding can take place prior to planning consent and 'at risk'. **To be seeding this site during June / July during a busy summer season and in dry weather would be extremely problematic and delay uses commencing until September. Seeding / turfing can take place prior to a planning consent but would be at risk in relation to both costs and public perception. The decision on whether this could happen would be a Member decision but practically would be best done in March.**

3.0 Proposals for QDS in 2021 – Temporary / Worthwhile Uses

- 3.1 With an Events Team now in place and Angela in post we discussed the merits of managing the site in a similar way to other sites already managed by that Team. The Team have the skillsets, contacts and market knowledge, procedures and capacity ideally suited to this type of work. The recommendation is that Angela Gordon-Lennox and her Team oversee temporary uses for the 2021 season, reporting back through this Delivery Group and with arrangements overseen by Tim Child who's Service remain responsible for the site and wider place-making project. An Events Team did not exist in previous years but is now a valuable resource that can be utilised to manage the temporary uses on this site.
- 3.2 Food & Beverage – The traders from 2020 had been told in 2019 that if the site were to be operational again in 2021, the trader offer would be retendered. Now, in light of the challenging market conditions in 2020 and no doubt again in 2021, these traders to be given the opportunity of returning for 2021. The Events Team to assess charging to ensure consistent with rates and approach used elsewhere in District and to consider whether additional traders could be managed on this site. QDS has now become established as a visitor destination therefore the value of the trading opportunity may have increased.

Discussions to take place with previous operators to explore appetite for returning and when. Consultation would follow the Events Team procedures.

- 3.3 Events on land at rear of site – Previously the Council had managed some of the events on the site in-house, such as the film and live opera screenings, and some music and theatre events in the first year of operating, and whilst the product delivered was generally considered to be very good, there was a net cost to the Council which was accepted. The Events Space then gained its own momentum with the local community wanting to use the space for their own events which was successfully achieved by a number of organisations in the 2nd year. With the Events Team now managing this space, the proposal is now to focus on the latter approach, enabling the community and other organisations to deliver their events rather than the council manage any events in-house. This will be done by taking a different approach by marketing the site.
- 3.4 The site will be marketed as an events space like other sites across the District and operators will come forward with propositions which will then be consulted on as per the Council's procedures. This process requires the organiser to complete an application form and a risk assessment and provide a copy of their Public Liability Insurance. These are reviewed by the Events Team in accordance with the Events Policy and fees and charges structure, as well as by the Council's EH and Licensing teams. Before any permissions to use the land are granted, any EH comments must be complied with and Licences must be applied for and the distribution list for Queen's Drive (which includes Ward Members, the Property & FM Team and Emergency Services) will be consulted.
- 3.5 The prevalence of coronavirus and whether events can take place will be assessed as per the Council's wider approach across the District. At this stage, events on Council land have not restarted. The proposal would be for the event space at Queen's Drive to be made available at the same time as restarting events on other Council land.
- 3.6 Bar – With this having been tendered in March 2020, to allow this arrangement to be renewed and to continue through 2021. The bar did not open until July and therefore LED have not benefitted from a full season.
- 3.7 Repair and / or replacement of seating area – For the Property & FM Team to manage the removal of those items requiring repair and to replace with picnic style benches made from sustainable materials and securely attached. Members have already forwarded to Officers some ideas on specifications and suppliers and these will be considered alongside discussions with StreetScene. Initial work by the Property & FM Team suggests that to remove the existing furniture and replace with sustainable timber picnic benches would cost circa £15,000, similarly if sustainable plastic. If we were also to remove the boardwalk and replace with hard surfacing then the total cost for this and the picnic benches would be circa £20,000 - £35,000 dependant on finish.
- 3.8 Budgetary management of both income and costs attached to temporary uses will not change and will remain with the Queen's Drive budget. Service Lead- Place, Assets & Commercialisation will oversee.