EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group (formerly Exmouth Queen's Drive Delivery Group) held at Online via Zoom app on 14 March 2023

Attendance list at end of document
The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.01 am

15 Public speaking

One member of the public had registered to speak at the meeting.

Mr Graham Deasy spoke in his capacity as vice-chair of Exmouth Community Association, concerning the provision of public toilets on Exmouth seafront. He stated that toilet provision is a key factor on which visitor destinations are judged and he was of the view that the provision in Exmouth is inadequate. Mr Deasy added that the 2021 EDDC Public Toilets Review did not identify what provision might be needed five to ten years down the line. He implored the Council and the Placemaking Consultants to identify how best to finance investment in toilets and shower facilities for beach users and visitors.

The Portfolio Holder Coast, Country & Environment responded that the Public Toilet Review is about putting the right toilets in the right place, and is not a cost-cutting exercise; the Council is preparing to spend £3 million on modifying or rebuilding most toilets and ensuring toilets are suitable for disabled people.

The Assistant Director Place, Assets & Commercialisation added that subject to conclusion of contracts, new tenants would be providing public toilet provision at Orcombe Point and The Maer, with repurposing of the remainder of the buildings. It is unlikely that the new tenants will be in a position to open the sites for the 2023 summer season but the Council have agreed to keep these toilets open for the season, funded from an existing budget, together with other sites that have been open during winter.

16 Minutes of the previous meetings held on 10 October 2022 and 13 December 2022

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 10 October and 13 December 2022 were noted as a true and accurate record.

17 Declarations of interest

Cllr B De Saram – Minute 18; Affects Non-Registerable Interest: Exmouth Town Councillor.

18 Progress update on Placemaking in Exmouth

The Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth) introduced the progress update report, highlighting the following points:

- Leases are being progressed for the pitches at Queen’s Drive; three have been returned and the Estates and Legal Services teams are chasing the remaining two.

- The planning consent for the fitness area at Queen's Drive (which expires in July 2023) has now been submitted. Legal Services are progressing the lease with LED.
- There has been little interest in the Events Space at Queen's Drive despite extensive marketing to attract a reliable operator for the whole season or for the summer holidays.
- The planning application for The Strand's tables and chairs has been submitted (the current permission expires in September 2023). Legal Services forwarded the leases to the stakeholders on 30th January; two are now completed.
- The mural on the rear wall of the Pavilion will now not commence until April 2023.
- The Levelling up Fund Bid, led by DCC, was successful and has secured £15,765,899 for the road at Dinan Way and the Destination Exmouth/Gateway project. For Dinan Way, DCC are commencing the land assembly, and have instructed their land agents. For Exmouth Gateway, the initial task will be to confirm the designs before commencing a public consultation.
- Following a desktop exercise using the Crown Commercial Framework, supported by colleagues in Devon County Council (DCC), it is intended to appoint WSP to take forward the placemaking plan for Exmouth Town and Seafront, subject to contract and a pre-commencement meeting.
- The Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth) introduced WSP's Ashley Dunseath to the PETS Group members; Ashley was pleased to meet the Members, albeit virtually, and looked forward to meeting them all in due course.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- If all leases are returned, all five pitches at the Queen's Drive Space will be let, as well as the fitness space. Both the Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth) and the Chair expressed confidence that LED will make a success of the fitness space. The Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth) will provide further information from the Streetscene Events Officer concerning efforts to find an operator for the events space.
- The Placemaking in Exmouth Town & Seafront (PETS) Group had a pitch some time ago from the beach volleyball team who were keen to have provision on the seafront for their sport. For a number of reasons it had not been appropriate to take discussions forward; the volleyball group were looking for a long-term solution in order to access funding opportunities through various sports bodies, but the Council could not offer anything more than an interim provision because to do so would be pre-emptive of the work of the Placemaking consultants.
- One of the storage huts in the Queen's Park Space currently has tarpaulin over it; a roof repair is scheduled for this month. The Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth) will liaise with Streetscene about the site inspection programme for the dinosaur park and forward this information to PETS Group members.
- The Levelling Up Fund Bid was three-way with match funding from Exmouth Town Council, EDDC and DCC, but in this instance DCC were the lead body; the lead has to make submissions and go to consultation, so there is ample opportunity for engagement.
- A Member commented on the need to be very clear on where we are with the two separate Levelling Up Fund projects; planning permission is in place for Dinan Way, whereas the gateway area in front of the train station has got to have planning permission, and there will be a consultation on that.
- The RAG rated key milestones information will be updated to make clear that feedback on consultation was delayed but is now completed.
- The budget for Placemaking consultancy work is just under £150k, within an wider budget of £160k to allow for any unforeseen expenditure. The purpose of appointing the consultants is to get to an aligned position where the PETS Group and the aims of the Council coalesce to become common goals, where previously there was not an agreed position.
- The Placemaking consultants, WSP, have been provided with all relevant Council-commissioned reports dating back to the 2011 master plan. Cllr Armstrong was disappointed that the results of a survey which she carried out in 2015 had not been provided to WSP; Cllr Armstrong was of the view that some of the content is still relevant,

and stated that members of the public had contributed to it. The survey was neither commissioned nor adopted by the Council and the Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth) explained that for this reason, as a Council Officer, he could not provide the survey documentation to the consultants. The Chair commented that the focus is on how to help the town move forward, post-pandemic; a consultation has taken place which was completely open and transparent, and this Council is acting upon what the people have said.

- Some Members were keen to see the dinosaur park retained, recognising that it might be appropriate to move it to another part of the Queen's Drive site. One Member remarked that when the equipment was put in, it had been agreed at that time that if a better permanent use for that area was identified, the equipment would be used at other locations in Exmouth.
- Members also commented on the importance for beach and coastal safety of keeping a coastwatch tower on the seafront; it was recognised that the current tower has been outgrown and there is need to provide something that is better.

Members noted the progress since the last meeting.

19 Placemaking Consultants appointment

The Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth) outlined next steps following appointment of the Placemaking Consultants. It is hoped to be in contract with WSP in the next week.

The Chair was pleased to welcome WSP's Ashley Dunseath to the PETS Group, and to Exmouth.

Attendance List

Councillors present:
M Armstrong
O Davey
N Hookway (Chair)
A Colman
C Wright
B De Saram
J Rowland
S Gazzard (Exmouth Town Council)
A Bailey (Exmouth Town Council)

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)
M Chapman
G Jung
E Rylance

Officers in attendance:
Nicola Cooper, Solicitor
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Tim Child, Assistant Director Place, Assets & Commercialisation
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Gerry Mills, Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth)

Also in attendance:
Lisa Bowman, Town Clerk, Exmouth Town Council
Ashley Dunseath, WSP

Councillor apologies:
P Arnott
D Ledger
B Taylor

Chair: ..... Date: .....