

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Exmouth Queen's Drive Delivery Group held Online via the Zoom app on 11 March 2021**

#### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.35 pm

#### **24 Welcome from the Chair**

The Chair welcomed those participating and those watching via the live stream. Councillor Arnott had been the Chair of the Group, however, Councillor Nick Hookway had recently been invited to become the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism, Leisure and Sport at EDDC, and it felt fitting that he become Chair of the Group. This had been agreed at the February full Council meeting. Councillor Arnott was pleased to hand over to Councillor Hookway to chair the meeting and Group, which continued to make considerable progress for both residents and visitors. He thanked all the officers for all their work and gave particular thanks to the Service Lead – Place, Asset and Commercialisation and the Events Officer.

Councillor Hookway stated that he was delighted to become Chair of the Group, which was at the heart of changes to Exmouth and would continue to welcome views of local residents as plans in the area were progressed. He went on to welcome those participating and watching via the live stream.

#### **25 Public speaking**

There was one member of the public registered to speak. Geoff Skinner was the Chair of the Exmouth Community Association. He welcomed the new Chair of the Group, Councillor Hookway, and thanked Councillor Arnott for all he had achieved so far. He stated that he was disappointed with the Government's budget and that levelling up funding did not appear to be available. He would be lobbying to close the shared pavement as it he felt that it should be for pedestrian use only, particularly around the pinch point by the arcade. He asked for confirmation that additional car parking would be provided once the arcade had closed.

#### **26 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 January 2021**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 January 2021 were confirmed as a true record.

It was requested that the cycle path in front of Side Shore water sports centre be added as an agenda item to a subsequent Delivery Group meeting. There was concern it was potentially dangerous as people walked directly onto the cycle path carrying hot takeaway food and drinks. It was noted that this matter would also involve Devon County Council.

#### **27 Declarations of interest**

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Aurora Bailey, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Bruce De Saram, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor and had met Adrian Toole in the past.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Chris Wright, Personal, former tenant of the Queen's Drive site.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Joe Whibley, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Nick Hookway, Personal, He was involved with the Save Exmouth Seafront campaign prior to being elected to the district council in 2019 and he had met Adrian Toole in the past.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Olly Davey, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor, member of Transition Exmouth and had known Adrian Toole for a number of years.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Steve Gazzard, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor, trustee of Exmouth Museum and he knew Adrian Toole.

28

## **Presentation by Exmouth Beach Volleyball Club**

The Chair welcomed Mark Myerson to present on behalf of Exmouth Beach Volleyball Club. Mr Myerson thanked the Chair for the invitation to attend the meeting.

He stated that he had great ambitions for the both the Exmouth Beach Volleyball Club and sport in Exmouth. Beach volleyball had been played in Exmouth since the 1980s, with tournaments starting in 1994 and permanent nets on the beach from 2007-2014. The club had about 20-30 players per session during the summer season.

Mr Myerson explained the current problems for the club. The beach levels were reducing, with low sand levels and sticks and other debris being exposed. The temporary nets that were used had to be stored and brought to the beach and set up for every session, which restricted who could use them. For a permanent court area, clean level sand was necessary. If the club had a site it would allow more regular playing opportunities and free up space on the beach. The pitch and nets could also be used for beach tennis, badminton, netball, foot-volly, beach football and beach rugby. The benefits of this would be wider than the club itself – engaging local people of all ages in sport and well-being and attracting players to the region for tournaments, who would require overnight stays and use the local hospitality. It was noted that Exmouth was one of only two beach volleyball teams in Devon.

The advantages of the site that the club wished to locate to was that the area was flat and somewhat sheltered. It was near to key facilities such as parking and toilets, it was surrounded by refreshments and was opposite the outdoor sports area. Equipment for hire could be kept at Side Shore. The space could hold 3 courts and other potential activities on the same area, for use by the public.

The Group noted that the area could be adapted for different sports. A decision had already been made to grass over the area. The vision for the area was to create a public

area for various traders to be hiring the space. If a volleyball court was fenced off this could potentially be exclusive and prevent public accessibility and availability. There was some concern that if the whole site was used for volleyball courts/sports area it could defeat the objective of the space being available for public attractions. The area also needed to provide a financial return for EDDC.

On behalf of the Group the Chair thanked Mr Myerson for his interesting presentation.

## 29 **Presentation from Transition Exmouth**

Adrian Toole, from Transition Exmouth was welcomed to the meeting and gave the Group a presentation on the proposal for an interpretation centre. Transition Exmouth felt that there was a clear need in Exmouth to expand on the traditional concept of a visitor centre by explaining through a 21<sup>st</sup> century experience, the place of Exmouth in the world. The proposal was being made in the context of fulfilling the Exmouth Neighbourhood Plan. Community action NEA7 in the Neighbourhood Plan stated: 'For the Neighbourhood Plan to support organisations in assessing the need, viability and most effective siting of an Interpretation Information Centre and ask the EDDC Countryside Team and relevant voluntary bodies to address the need for a more comprehensive approach to environmental education/public awareness. Responsibility: DCC, EDDC, ETC'.

An interpretation centre was defined as an institution for the dissemination of knowledge of natural or cultural heritage. Interpretation centres were a kind of new-style museum, often associated with visitor centres or eco-museums, and located in connection to cultural, historic or natural sites.

It was proposed that the operation of the interpretation centre would rely largely on information technology. It was envisaged that the physical exhibition area would be relatively modest and could be combined in location and for staffing purposes with a visitor centre. Through the use of IT the interpretation centre would have an existence outside of the walls of the building. Through the use of QR codes users could bring up a fuller story on a suitable display device outside the interpretation centre, at any time. Consoles could be installed in locations around the town and the online presence would make them more accessible anywhere in the town, or the world. This offered a contemporary way of telling Exmouth's great story. Transition Exmouth's proposal acknowledged that further research was needed and it hoped that it could be moved forward by EDDC.

Members agreed that an interpretation centre was a very interesting concept that had been put forward many years ago and should be explored further. There was a great deal of heritage in Exmouth, it was on the Exe Estuary and was the gateway to the Jurassic Coast, a World Heritage Site. A scoping study was vital. An interpretation centre must be economically viable in the long term. It was suggested that the Coastal Communities Fund be investigated.

On behalf of the Group the Chair thanked Adrian for his interesting presentation.

30 **Temporary uses update**

The Events Officer updated the Group on work with three event organisers who had expressed an interest in hiring the Queen's Drive Event Space for the forthcoming season. The three companies were proposing to operate together, sharing the space. Work would be undertaken on creating entrance and exit accesses to enable social distancing.

Initial contact had been made with the five traders (four plus bar) to provide an update. Following Cabinet, the proposed heads of term would be run through with them and details agreed for the next season, before instructing legal services to formalise. One trader did not want to renew and the opportunity would be marketed with the Estates Team. The renewal of furniture at Queens Drive Space (QDS) was underway, along with the boardwalk (within previously agreed budget). The Events Officer reported that in accordance with Government Covid guidance the earliest date QDS would be opened with seating was 12 April 2021.

Concern was expressed over the QDS opening date of 12 April. This meant that traders would miss out on the Easter holiday. It was asked whether traders could open sooner without the furniture being in place. Officers replied that there were a number of issues to consider including the replacement of the furniture/fencing off of the area, government social distancing guidelines, the licenses and legal paperwork necessary before the traders could commence operating, and how the area, which was in the Council's control could be managed to ensure covid compliance.

Once there was a clearer indication on timescales officers would work on marketing details for the QDS former car park. Advice had indicated that one operator should manage and 'sublet' the space.

31 **Car park site to rear of former lifeboat station - verbal update**

The Service Lead – Place, Asset and Commercialisation advised the Group that the temporary planning consent for the car park site to the rear of the former lifeboat station would expire in mid-June 2021. Gross income for the car park was circa £7,000 per annum, with around 4,000 transactions. The car park produced a profit of circa £3,500 per annum.

Members were asked whether or not they wished officers to seek to renew the temporary planning consent. The Group agreed that until an alternative use for the site which generated more revenue was identified, it should remain as car park site. It was suggested that the site could be used for an interpretation centre as it was in a busy area of the seafront.

**RECOMMENDED:** that Cabinet approve to continue with the use of the land as car parking, with delegated authority being given to the Service Lead – Place, Asset and Commercialisation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets and the Chair of the Exmouth Queens Drive Delivery Group to submit an appropriate planning application in this regard.

## 32 **Resourcing**

The Queen's Drive Delivery Group had previously debated for two posts to be appointed on fixed term contracts to focus on property and place interventions in Exmouth generally. This would include Queen's Drive, which would take priority and it was envisaged that it would consume 50% of the resource which would include a Development Project Surveyor and an Engagement Officer. On 3 March 2021 Cabinet agreed the recommendation that up to £200,000 be made available from the Business Rates Pilot Reserve for a Development Surveyor and an Engagement / Project Officer for a term of 2 years, dedicated to moving forward a suite of place & prosperity based projects in Exmouth and to include Queen's Drive.

Once approvals were in place, job descriptions and person specifications would be finalised and recruitment would commence. To inform this work, the Service Lead – Place, Assets and Commercialisation sought guidance from the Queen's Drive Delivery Group on:

1. The roles are about Place & Prosperity interventions, capitalising on the breadth of Council assets and linked to supporting economic recovery through direct interventions. What are the initial identified key opportunities/ untapped potential for Place & Prosperity based interventions in Exmouth?
2. How much reliance is to be placed on previous consultation and visioning work? Thoughts on further consultation and visioning work needed.
3. The funding for resource is for a maximum of 2 years. What will success look like after 6 months, 1 year and 2 years of those posts being filled? In some instances this will be about direct delivery, but in other instances will be about identifying projects and developing into credible business cases to secure 3d party engagement and / or funding including from Government.

Subsequent discussion included:

- The outcomes the Group were looking for would guide the skill set, capacity and timing of the posts.
- The roles should be commercially viable and sustainable.
- Applicants should have a commercial background and experience of commercial lettings and uses.
- Consider using closed shops and redundant buildings for pop up shops and events.
- There should be an arts centre, to utilise the wealth of talent in Exmouth.
- There should be consultation with the public.
- There was the issue of ownership in the town centre. Most of the redundant buildings were not within the Council's control.
- Many of the issues in the town centre related to retail and it was likely that the Council had limited options.
- Two years was a short period of time – there was the need to be very clear on what was to be achieved in the limited amount, with the limited amount of resources. It was important to identify things that were achievable in two years.
- It was important to focus on Council owned assets and consider how the assets could be used through place and prosperity interventions to support economic recovery. Projects should be used to get traction on and relate to the use of Council assets, such as the leisure centre, car parks, Imperial Recreation ground and the seafront.
- Identify the opportunities to do things differently and make better use of the Council's assets.
- It would be helpful to list all the Council's assets in Exmouth.

- The emphasis should be on economic recovery.
- Exmouth was the largest town in East Devon, with the largest amount of assets and therefore huge untapped potential.
- A list of all the projects previously identified in the master plan and neighbourhood plan would be useful. Some of these had been delivered, but others had not. This could be a starting point for the new officers when appointed.
- Hemingway had raised aspects along the seafront to be considered.
- The first three months in post should be spent gathering information, considering what had already been achieved, projects which had not been delivered, and speaking to people. After three months the officers should have a full understanding and awareness of what the Group and the community wanted.
- The vision of councillors, the Queen's Drive Delivery Group and the public should be joined up.
- Queen's Drive should not be looked at in isolation to the town.
- Engage with Exmouth Town Council.
- Partnership working offered huge potential and the opportunity to draw additional funding.
- What is Exmouth? Who decided what it should be/become? There was a massive opportunity to do something positive but people needed to be asked what they wanted in order for them to accept it.
- Public consultation was essential.
- The role of the Delivery Group was to influence through the two new posts. Facilitating places and influencing how people could use the town. Encompassing people to use places and using Council assets to address behaviours and influence outside bodies.
- Often one project acted as a catalyst for others.
- Two or three things needed to be seen to be achieved over the next couple of years.

### **Attendance List**

#### **Councillors present:**

P Arnott (Vice-Chair)  
M Armstrong  
O Davey  
N Hookway (Chair)  
D Ledger  
B Taylor  
J Whibley  
C Wright  
S Gazzard  
B De Saram  
P Hayward  
A Bailey

#### **Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)**

F Caygill  
M Howe  
G Jung  
M Chapman  
P Skinner

A Moulding  
E Wragg

**Officers in attendance:**

Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer  
Tim Child, Service Lead - Place, Assets & Commercialisation  
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance  
Angela Gordon Lennox, Events Officer  
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)  
Lisa Bowman, Clerk to Exmouth Town Council  
Peter Gilpin, Chief Executive, LED

**Councillor apologies:**

A Colman

Chairman .....

Date: .....