

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 the Zoom app on 10 October 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.36 am

5 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

6 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 July 2022

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 July 2022 were noted as a true and accurate record.

7 Declarations of interest

There were none.

8 Progress Update on Placemaking in Exmouth

The Project Manager – Place & Prosperity (Exmouth) ran through the update report which summarised progress since the Group's last meeting on 19 July 2022, highlighting the following points:

- The fairground provider took up occupancy of the Queen's Drive Space on 7 July 2022 and then departed three weeks later without any notice or contact, impacting negatively on other traders due to the loss of footfall. The Events Team tried to find a replacement but the lack of lead-time proved challenging.
- A debriefing meeting was held with the Queen's Drive Space traders.
- Contact was made with Devon County Council (DCC) Highways concerning signposting for parking along Queen's Drive and the seafront. DCC had responded that there was no current budget for additional signs.
- Led by colleagues in DCC, the Levelling Up Fund bid was submitted and it is hoped the outcome will be known in November 2022.
- In conjunction with Cllr Hayward as Portfolio Holder, officers are negotiating Heads of Terms with McCarthy and Stone to enable the transfer at nil consideration of the freehold of Land to the South of Redgates, Salterton Road, Exmouth, to East Devon DC, with the opportunity to develop four commercial units as part of the Developer's Planning obligation by Unilateral Undertaking under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, subject to a satisfactory build and sign off of same.

Discussion included the following points:

- All Members had been invited to the consultation where a presentation was made concerning the Levelling Up Fund Bid and the Project Manager – Place and Prosperity, Exmouth could forward a copy of the presentation to any Members who had missed it. One Member expressed that she was keen to understand what was included, and how the current bid differs from previous iterations of the proposal.
- Members discussed various ways to move forward with improving signage to car parks in the context of the response from DCC, particularly to direct drivers to lesser used car parks e.g. Maer Road. It was noted that Highways signage was a matter for DCC and outside of the remit of EDDC, but EDDC could look to improve signage within its own car

parks. This Council could approach Devon County Council with an offer to pay for a sign on the highway.

- Some Members suggested lobbying DCC and the MP for East Devon concerning signage, and expressed frustration at the difficulties encountered with DCC.
- Members recognised that for reasons of disability, or for large families where other means of travel could be quite expensive, some people needed to use cars or other vehicles to access the town and seafront.
- It was felt that only one additional sign is needed at the Queen's Drive car park which informs drivers of other car parks they can use.

Cllr De Saram proposed, seconded by Cllr Gazzard, that the Group recommends to Cabinet that an existing budget is made available to Devon County Council to erect one additional sign directing visitors to alternative parking, and to make the offer to erect the sign ourselves. This sign to be nearby to the Queen's Drive and Sideshore car parks.

The Chair proposed a second recommendation to Cabinet to improve signage within the Council's own East Devon car parks to inform members of the public of additional car parking.

Members voted in favour of both recommendations.

RECOMMENDED TO Cabinet:

1. That an existing budget is made available to Devon County Council to erect one additional sign directing visitors to alternative parking, and to make the offer to erect the sign ourselves. This sign to be nearby to the Queen's Drive and Sideshore car parks.
2. To improve signage within the Council's own East Devon car parks to inform members of the public of additional car parking.

9 Proposals for the temporary uses of Queen's Drive Space for the 2023 Season

The Project Manager Place and Prosperity (Exmouth) presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- Significant refurbishment work on the Queen's Drive Space had taken place prior to Easter 2022, supported by the ERDF Welcome Back Fund, to a value of £40k.
- Some difficulties had been encountered particularly with the fairground provider and with the lead in time of getting paperwork out to colleagues in LED to order equipment for the Fitness Space.
- A debrief meeting with traders had been constructive and traders had been enthusiastic to take up opportunities for next year.

Discussion included:

- Members discussed whether traders could open later in the evenings. It was recognised that there were reasons why some could not stay open longer, and it was difficult to predict when demand would be strong, but there were opportunities in the evenings and perhaps traders could operate on a rota basis.
- The new cycle racks were a welcome addition to Queen's Drive but there were only four, and more would be needed to meet demand.
- To attract the right operatives, the Queen's Drive Space is promoted through the Council's website, on social media and through industry bodies, and this had been quite successful to date in getting a good set of traders.

The following recommendations were approved in a vote of Members present:

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet to delegate to the Service Lead – Place, Assets & Commercialisation::

1. To grant leases to current tenants based on their current rents and include a goodwill benefit of a reduction in their rent for the incoming season of 15% below the current market rate. If the current tenants are unable to take up the offer for 2023 season then we would market the pitches in a tender process.
2. The Events Space will be tendered to attract an operator for the season. If one cannot be appointed for the season we will then put out a tender for the 6 weeks school holidays. Out of this time, the events team will hire out the Event Space as per the events Policy, terms and conditions, and Portfolio Holder agreed prices.
3. We consider a proposal from LED for the fitness space for 2 seasons (received in 26th July 2022) ie 2023/2024 subject to Heads of Terms being agreed – noting that we would have to include a break clause (with a pre-agreed compensatory payment) should we reach a decision to bring forward a development at Queen's Drive Space.

Reason for recommendations:

- To ensure a vibrant level of activity at Queen's Drive Space.
- To allow tenants to better prepare for the season with leases in place before they take possession, and to save on the costs of protracted negotiations of previous years.
- Appointing a leisure operator to manager the fitness space.
- Hire out the events space when not occupied.
- Seeking a reliable operator for the events space for the 2023 season.

10 **Results of Placemaking in Exmouth Consultation and Next Steps**

The Project Manager Place and Prosperity (Exmouth) introduced the report which summarises the outcome of the consultation exercise to determine the key themes and characteristics for successful placemaking in Exmouth town and seafront as discussed at the workshop held with the Delivery Group on the 6th of April 2022. The report provides the feedback received from the consultations, online questionnaires, independently carried out face-to-face questionnaires by the South West Research Company, and proposes next steps.

Discussion included:

- Some Members commented that the dinosaur park is very popular and they would like to see it maintained and extended, perhaps using CIL money. The park is free to use and important for the community particularly in the context of the cost of living crisis, and needs to be maintained well for reasons of health and safety. Other Members recognised the appeal of the dinosaur park but noted that Members were not here to pitch for what they want on Queen's Drive, but were voting on the process. The Project Manager Place and Prosperity (Exmouth) commented that it was important to look to the whole of Exmouth at what the Council can deliver, based on evidence from the consultation and taking account of the pressures for the whole town, and it was not appropriate to look to develop areas of the area in isolation to others.
- Members felt it was important to have accessible play equipment for children and young adults, to make Exmouth a welcoming family-friendly destination for all.
- One Member commented that workshops and consultations had taken place before for over ten years, and people were losing faith. Another Member remarked that a huge amount of work had taken place over the past two years to get to a good place; Exmouth is a major town in the south west and there was a huge amount of work still to do to fulfil and deliver a proper vision for the town and seafront.
- The Finance Director would be asked to set out to Cabinet where £100k of the proposed £160k budget will come from. It was noted that £60k is available from the original £200k allocated by Members for staffing resources to support Exmouth Placemaking.

- The suggested £160k budget is based on previous work that the Project Manager Place and Prosperity (Exmouth) has done on the size and scale of this nature. There is likely to be a cocktail of ways of financing delivery of the placemaking plan.
- One Member suggested allocating a further £50k in the budget to facilitate full delivery of what is required. Another Member felt it was not appropriate to allocate additional funding, without knowing what it is for.
- Cllr Armstrong stated that she gave her apologies for the 20 June 2022 Stakeholder Consultation meeting but this was not recorded in the minutes that had been published as appendix. The Project Manager Place and Prosperity (Exmouth) stated he would make a correction to the minutes accordingly.
- The Project Manager Place and Prosperity (Exmouth) confirmed a procurement exercise would take place for the professional consultants to develop terms of reference, taking account of a range of skill sets including experience with placemaking, design and engineering, and a demonstrable track record.
- Individual traders had been identified and consulted, or invited to engage in consultation, to provide their views for development of the site at Queen's Drive. This included the tenants of the Harbour View café, the current tenants of the former play park, and the amusements.
- Some Members would like to see a space on Queen's Drive for Exmouth's very talented musicians and buskers.

Members of the Group accepted the results of the consultations (noting that not all the suggestions fall within East Devon District Council's statutory remit and those that do will have to be prioritised in terms of deliverability and budget availability).

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

1. That the results of the consultation are accepted and that they be used to appoint a professional team to develop a terms of reference and a plan for a Placemaking Strategy for Exmouth Town and Seafront.
1. To request a budget of £160k from Full Council to develop the Placemaking Strategy which will include a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

Reason for recommendations:

- To agree with the results of the public consultation and the next steps before a further report back to the Delivery Group and Cabinet setting out Terms of Reference for Placemaking in Exmouth in the first half of 2023.
- To progress placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

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

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

M Howe
G Jung
E Rylance
E Wragg

Officers in attendance:

Tim Child, Service Lead - Place, Assets & Commercialisation
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Gerry Mills, Project Manager Place & Prosperity (Exmouth)
Caitlin Davey, Streetscene Events Officer

Also in attendance:

Lisa Bowman, Town Clerk, Exmouth Town Council
Peter Gilpin, LED CEO

Councillor apologies:

C Wright
J Rowland

Chair:

Date: