

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Exmouth Queen's Drive Delivery Group held Online via the Zoom App. on 17 November 2020

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 5.04 pm

7 Welcome from the Chair

The Chair welcomed those participating and those watching via the live streaming.

8 Public speaking

There were four members of the public registered to speak and one letter submitted to be read out at the meeting.

Geoff Skinner, for the Exmouth Community Association [ECA], advised that the ECA had long supported the regeneration of Exmouth. The Exmouth Neighbourhood Plan summed up what the town was trying to achieve, with its aspiration to be forward thinking. Mr Skinner was of the view that all of the options should be explored. There needed to be a wider return for the whole town, not just for the businesses on the seafront.

Roy Pryke, a member of the Residents Association for 20 years and Chair of the Exmouth Community Association for 14 years, advised that the Neighbourhood Plan had been approved overwhelmingly and carried equal weight to the Local Plan. Mr Pryke drew the Delivery Group's attention to page 68 of the Neighbourhood Plan and policy statement EE6 relating to Queens Drive Development, phase 3 of the regeneration scheme. Mr Pryke was of the view that the proposed hotel should go out to be tested and should be carefully designed so as to be appropriate to the setting.

Daphne Currier welcomed the current co-operation between Councillors and members of the public and advised that there was a strong case to return the temporary car park to public leisure use. It had been noted previously that signage to car parks was very poor. The Maer and Foxholes car parks could be renamed as the beach car park and swimmers car park respectively. In summary, car parks should be renamed, visitor traffic rerouted and the temporary car park recovered for its original use.

Sally Galsworthy congratulated the new administration on their handling of the issues. Speaking as a business owner and from personal research, it was clear that seaside attractions could not be provided all year round. However, there was a real need for outdoor attractions for children over 10 years old. Ms Galsworthy had tried to obtain financial accounts for Ocean, which had not been possible as the figures were included with the accounts for The Pavilion. There should be clear accounting for each offering in Ocean.

Tim Todd had submitted a letter by email which was read out by a Democratic Services Officer. Mr Todd was pleased to see that further information on the development of the seafront had been provided, however there were missing elements and inaccuracies and he cautioned against accepting the reported history as a sound basis for proceeding. The Delivery Group was urged to retain all existing waterfront related records as primary documents. Mr Todd was of the view that the Exmouth Masterplan was a biased

exercise selling a misleading concept. Any development must respect the unique natural capital and be appropriate and the Delivery Group should take whatever time was needed to get development right.

9 **Notes of the previous meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting held on 15 October 2020 were agreed as a true record.

10 **Declarations of interest**

Minute 11. Review of Terms of Reference.
Councillor Chris Wright, Personal, Member is a former tenant of the Queen's Drive Redevelopment site.

Minute 11. Review of Terms of Reference.
Councillor Joe Whibley, Personal, Member is also an Exmouth Town Councillor.

Minute 11. Review of Terms of Reference.
Councillor Nick Hookway, Personal, Member was very involved with Save Exmouth Seafront prior to election to EDDC, but is no longer involved and confirms he is not biased or predetermined.

Minute 11. Review of Terms of Reference.
Councillor Olly Davey, Personal, Member is also an Exmouth Town Councillor.

11 **Review of Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference were discussed and it was agreed to recommend that the development and management of the Ocean building be included in the Terms of Reference.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Cabinet agrees to include the development and management of the Ocean building in the Terms of Reference for the Exmouth Queen's Drive Delivery Group.

12 **Review of chronology of activities - follow up to item discussed at October Delivery Group**

A chronology of activities had been published with the agenda.

Comments on the chronology of activities received from others were summarised by Cllr Whibley as follows:

- There was a mistrust of the previous process, with perceived pre-determination of the proposed schemes
- There was a perceived sense of unease at the lack of transparency on the part of the developers
- Activities now needed to be forward looking
- Development should be sympathetic to the environmental impact, with honest and open consultation including all sections of the community and beyond

- Those involved were feeling more enfranchised in the process
- Consultation was key to the process

The Delivery Group discussed referring the chronology of activities to the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED

That the Chair would draft a proposal for the Scrutiny Committee to consider the chronology of activities and circulate the proposal to members of the Delivery Group for their comments prior to its submission to the Scrutiny Committee, and that the proposal would include

1. Scrutiny of what had taken place, in the interests of EDDC understanding its own processes
2. Understanding what lessons needed to be learned and what could be done differently moving forward.

13 **Exmouth Queen's Drive Cost Report**

A cost report had been published with the agenda. The report was introduced by Simon Davey, Strategic Lead for Finance, and the following points highlighted:

- The report was in two parts; capital project costs and Queen's Drive Space revenue costs
- The cost of moving the road and the car park was £1.7 million
- The report linked to the Cabinet paper of November 2016 when the budget had been agreed
- Receipts for the Phase 3 capital programme had been unknown and had not been relied upon
- There were no outstanding financial commitments where receipts were expected
- The breakdown of the cost of £166k for compensation and legal fees was circa £86k for compensation and £80k for litigation

Discussion included the following points:

- The £3 million cost was an investment by EDDC in Exmouth with benefits to residents and businesses
- The £1.7 million cost of moving the road was high for what seemed to be a small amount of work
- The cost of moving the road, and how this would be funded, had been misleading from the outset
- The figures did not include the loss of income from businesses on the seafront
- No business plan had been in place

RESOLVED

That the cost report be noted.

In response to the earlier question from public speaker Sally Galsworthy regarding a breakdown of the costs for Ocean, Peter Gilpin, CEO of LED, advised that

- LED is five years into a 25 year lease on the Ocean building. LED is a commercial tenant of the building and this lease is entirely separate from LED's leisure centre operations for the Council and is therefore accounted for separately
- LED Leisure Management Ltd is a charitable trust, officially a Community Benefit Society. Its subsidiary trading company, LED Leisure Enterprises Ltd, deals with the non-charitable income which has to be accounted for separately, predominantly derived from sales of food and beverages at Ocean and The Pavilion. Surpluses are then transferred to the parent Trust
- LED Leisure Management Ltd produces group accounts showing a total figure for income and expenditure from its sports and leisure activities and the non-charitable income from the trading subsidiary
- LED Leisure Enterprises Ltd currently has five directors; Peter Gilpin together with two trustees from the parent Trust and two non-executive (voluntary) directors from commercial backgrounds. The board is looking to recruit an additional non-executive voluntary director with food and beverage experience

14 **Report outlining considerations for temporary uses for 2021**

The report on considerations for temporary uses of Queen's Drive Space for 2021 had been published with the agenda and was introduced by Tim Child, Service Lead – Place, Assets and Commercialisation.

The Delivery Group discussed various options and suggestions for recreation and leisure and noted that planning permission would need to be extended for continued temporary uses after next year. It was advised that any temporary uses would not influence how the land would be developed ultimately.

Discussion included the following points:

- Temporary uses for 2021 should remain the same as previous years
- Suggestions for temporary uses included pop-up events, beach volleyball, bungee jumping and extending the Dinosaur Play Park
- Seating could be replaced by picnic benches which could be re-used elsewhere
- Attractions should be aimed at children over 10 years old, teenagers and young adults
- The temporary car park should be removed
- It was noted that annual income from the temporary car park was between £20-£30k with the risk that this would be redirected to Devon County Council car parks if the temporary car park was removed
- The market could be tested for alternative operators to mitigate any loss of income from the temporary car park should it be removed
- Vehicle drop-off points near Queen's Drive Space would be helpful

RECOMMENDATION

It was agreed to recommend to Cabinet

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

Regarding recommendation 2 above, it was suggested that the EDDC Events Team should also be involved in discussions on options for temporary use of the car park land.

With regard to other considerations for temporary uses of the remaining land at Queen's Drive Space, as outlined in the report, the following points were discussed:

- The provision of seating which, subsequently, could be used elsewhere
- Food and beverage offering could remain the same with a preference for supporting local traders
- Play equipment to be kept in good order
- Arranging events to be put on hold pending clarity on the situation with the Covid-19 pandemic
- Possible removal of the old decking
- The bar to be retained

Tim Child advised that it would be good practice to re-tender the space as the rates had been set several years previously.

It was agreed that Tim Child would undertake more research and report back on trading options for 2021.

It was also agreed to note the report outlining considerations for temporary uses for 2021.

The agenda for the next meeting would include an item on the traders, the bar and the resulting implications for EDDC of managing the site.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Arnott (Chair)
P Hayward (Vice-Chair)
M Armstrong
O Davey
N Hookway
A Colman
D Ledger
B Taylor
J Whibley
C Wright
A Bailey (Exmouth Town Council)
S Gazzard (for Exmouth Town Council)

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

P Faithfull
M Howe
B Ingham

J Loudoun
K McLauchlan
A Moulding
M Rixson
E Wragg

Officers in attendance:

Tim Child, Service Lead - Place, Assets & Commercialisation
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Mark Williams, Chief Executive

Also in attendance:

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

Councillor apologies:

None

Chair

Date: