

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, EXMOUTH ON MONDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 2009 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors: D Nicholas (Mayor)
D Chapman M Chapman
T Cope I Stewart
V Duval-Steer P Stott
L Elson S Sutton
S Gazzard J Humphreys
B Taylor P Graham
J Taylor J Whipps
M Williamson K Harper
E Wragg S Wragg

Around 60 members of the public were in attendance.

APOLOGIES

Councillors

Councillors: M Ackland, M Hardy, J Mitchell, M Mitchell, I Stewart, R Turner, B Walker, M Williamson (Part only of the meeting)

Other

Councillor Bernard Hughes and Diane Hill, Exmouth Citizens' Forum

55. ROLLE COLLEGE – REPORT ON CURRENT SITUATION

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Alderman Ken Turner to report on the history of the Rolle Site from the moment he was invited by the Principal of the Community College to chair a committee to investigate Further Education options for the site.

Alderman Turner explained how a consortium of Exmouth Community College, Exeter College, Devon County Council and the Learning and Skills Council had been formed with a view to purchasing the campus for further education. A company limited by guarantee had been formed for the purpose. A detailed report had been commissioned and an independent firm 'Tribal' had provided a detailed report which had identified the credibility of the Further Education use of the site. Exeter College, Bicton College and the Community College under this proposal would have been able to work together to provide a wide range of facilities for young people from the area. Exmouth was the only town in Devon of its size not to have further education provision for its young people. He explained how negotiations had been pursued with the University of Plymouth and how they had worked with the MP to lobby the Government on funding issues.

The Town Clerk then outlined the current position and the Town Council's concerns:-

- (a) The County Council policy on Further Education taking into account emerging legislation;
- (b) The Position of other Schools within the area relating to implications for their sixth forms and pupils;
- (c) The affect on Exmouth pupils and Exmouth Community College and its needs;
- (d) The potential for other services such as libraries and plans for Exmouth;
- (e) The community wishes or desires had not been canvassed so possible community uses of the site had not been explored;
- (f) Whether there was any other solution such as relocation of a primary school to the site?
- (g) Nobody could say hand on heart that they knew the options or that a proper widely based study had been carried out.

The process all the way through had not been all that had been hoped for and it had become clear that the Town was on its own to seek a solution which would provide community benefit from the site.

Questions remained:-

- Is there still an education use that could be found for the site?
- Is there still a community use which could be found for the site?
- Could the 7 year old Owen building be saved for community use?
- Could the money be raised for a solution?

There was a need to establish the facts and to make informed decisions for the future.

Note:- Personal interests were declared as follows in respect of all aspects of this meeting:-

Councillors

Stott as an employee of DCC

Lynne Elson as a school governor

Joy Whipps as an employee of DCC

P Graham as a School Governor

T Cope as an employee of DCC

E Wragg as a school governor and County Councillor

B Taylor as a County Councillor

56. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Councillor Lynne Elson Seconded by Councillor Gazzard then proposed that the meeting be adjourned to enable the public to speak. On a vote being taken the Motion was declared CARRIED.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor then allowed members of the public to speak.

Points raised by members of the public were as follows:-

- Community Organisation Liaison Panel is helping town to come together on a whole host of issues including this Rolle College issue;
- Criticism of County Policy not to purchase the site for Further Education/Community Use;
- Support Town lead initiatives to pursue a solution;
- Support complaint to Ombudsman about process at Devon County Council;
- We will find a way forward;
- European funding needs to be explored;
- Funding for Rolle should be the highest priority of DCC;
- Questions about Rolle family bequest to the town;
- We have a strong case;
- Post 16 education opportunities are great at Community College but now being overstretched and need to move forward to next phase to widen opportunities available to young people in Exmouth and hinterland;
- The choices to travel out of Exmouth to other establishments excludes the choice to be educated within Exmouth;
- With the raised school leaving age becoming mandatory DCC were misleading people if it thought that it would not have to take on costs of travel;
- Could provide some library resources on the site;
- Mentally stimulating courses for the adults including the elderly could be provided on site;
- Halls could be available for concerts and drama;
- Private purchaser could secure site for renting out for education purposes;
- Market and Coastal Town's Forum possibilities;
- Local fund raising campaign could be pursued;
- Could Compulsory Purchase be envisaged;
- Setting up of a Community Interest Company might be worth pursuing and this may be able to source funding and grants not available to Local Authorities;
- Need to protect the site for Education and Sporting purposes;
- Rooms could be provided for therapy purposes, conferences and meetings,
- Rolle is important to the town's future and economic wellbeing and development;
- Adult Education Courses are not up to standard nor is the Kennaway Centre and this site could rectify this;
- Everyone in town has an interest in this whether young or old;
- Figures presented at DCC Scrutiny Committee need to be challenged;
- Do we need the whole site? Are there options to be explored?
- Need to enlist support of MEPs to secure funding;
- Could language schools be included in future use of site;
- Zero prospect of DCC changing its current direction;

- Private investor possibilities need to be pursued;
- Obvious that a town the size of Exmouth should have further education provision;
- National Lottery grant might be available;
- The Higher Education Authority were lobbied to not require the University to seek highest selling price for the site if community benefit could be achieved;
- Need to cover costs of purchase, renovation and running costs;
- We have been let down by the Government, Learning and Skills Council and DCC;

Note:- The Meeting was then reconvened.

57. Rolle College – Way Forward

The Mayor invited Tony Alexander, Deputy Chair of Governors ECC Ray Davison and Roy Pryke to speak.

The School Governors had decided to hold an Extraordinary meeting to look at options for the Community College now that the County Council had withdrawn its support for a way forward. This could include looking at Foundation School status which would give the college a direct funding relationship leaving out Devon County Council. This would not be pursued without a fully costed case being considered and would take some time if accepted as a way forward.

There was a clear disparity between the figures provided by the Leader of the County Council and those available from the Community College with the County figures being unattributable.

The speakers explained their dissatisfaction with the way the whole matter had been handled by Devon County Council and the need now to move on from this and create our own business plan. There was a need to get this right with Exmouth Community College, Exmouth Town Council, Community Organisations, Businesses and The Great and the Good. Capital funding and refurbishment costs were the main issue and per capita funding would follow if the model was right.

A discussion ensued and in particular it was noted that this was a time for vision and that there were other education needs in the town such as a new site for the Beacon School which were desperately needed. Refurbishment Costs of Rolle had, it was considered, been vastly overstated and Rolle could become a hub for teacher training for the University of Plymouth which still had to resource teaching opportunities for its students.

Councillor Lynne Elson proposed, seconded by Councillor Stott:-

- (a) That the Town Council Task and Finish Forum on Rolle be requested to urgently meet with key community representatives and the Property Director of the University of Plymouth to find out the key facts concerning the possible purchase of land and property on the Rolle College site;**

- (b) That the TAFF be requested to seek clarification on the facts surrounding the issue;**
- (c) That subject to (a) further meetings be held with all necessary interested parties including businesses to explore all opportunities with a view to seeking a positive solution for Exmouth;**
- (d) To keep progress in the public domain except where detailed negotiations on price may need to be conducted in confidence to achieve the best terms.**

On a vote being taken the motion was declared CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Councillors then added their comments

The meeting concluded at 9.20 pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....