



Exmouth Town Council –Newsletter

Newsletter 1

January 2010

Rolle College Site

Since Christmas, much work has been carried out on ensuring that the Owen Building, Daw Building and Accommodation Block at Rolle College can be retained for Community Use. A Company is being set up which will be for the benefit of the Community. We expect the University of Plymouth to put the site on the open market very soon. It will be the intention of the Company to negotiate with potential developers for the part of the site we need, to be preserved for uses which will provide social and employment benefit to the town. There are many possibilities for uses which include working with the Community College for Post 16 Education, Small Business Units, arts and entertainment purposes. Capital will have to be raised and in the expectation that an agreement can be reached with the successful purchasers of the whole site, the new company will set about offering shares. It will be a chance for Exmouth People to invest in their own community enterprise seeking to help secure the future prosperity of the town as a matter of individual choice.

The Local MP is pursuing a proposal independently for a hospitality college which will educate people in the tourism, catering and the hospitality industry and this is but one possible use for the site and could be one solution with independent funding attracted to it. We are open to a variety of opportunities at this stage and are pursuing a number of routes available.

A facebook page has been opened 'Rolle College Site – Campaign'. There are currently 396 members many of whom are of College age. Whilst we should not draw too clear conclusions from this, it would indicate that the young people of Exmouth do care about this subject and are alarmed that this opportunity to improve the town will be lost with the site if our work does not succeed. A future for young people and families to live and work in the town really does depend on initiatives like this succeeding. Go on the page and become a friend as this provides us with another way to keep you updated on what is happening.

Public Funding Budget Crises

Exmouth Town Council has taken the decision to raise the Local Precept (The Council Tax it raises from the people of Exmouth) by an average of £6 per person per year. Out of that it has confirmed its commitment to provide £30,000 to support the Rolle College initiative should this be necessary and to provide at least £45,000 to cover services which might be stopped by East

Devon District Council where these are important to the town or its economy. A clear indication of where the cuts will fall is still awaited so that the Council can consider where it needs to plug gaps in funding. East Devon District Council is considering drastic budget cuts through splitting some of its staffing with South Somerset District Council. About 40 smaller District Council's in the country have already done this and in Devon, South Hams and West Devon already share their Chief Executive. Drastic measures are being made necessary by drastic public funding pressures and whilst Local Government Re-organisation imposed by the Government is one thing it is clear that budget cuts are creating locally negotiated solutions which would not have been countenanced even 5 years ago.

Local Government Review

Government works in mysterious ways. Over the last few years the Boundary Committee has been reviewing Local Government structures in Devon because Exeter City Council asked it too. This was under a system set up by the Government whereby it said it would respond to local requests. In this case it was only Exeter City Council which thought this would be a good idea. There was no evidence that we were aware of, that any of the other Districts or indeed the County, thought it would be a good idea to reorganize Local Government in Devon. Notwithstanding the 'common sense position of leave well alone', the review process had been activated and then had to follow its relentless, if futile path.

The Boundary Committee decided that an Exeter City Council Unitary Authority within its own boundaries would not be viable and came up with recommendations which it thought would be based on a Unitary County Council for Devon excluding Torbay and Plymouth (already unitaries created at the last Review). Devon County Council was very pleased with this and the Districts were 'Spitting feathers'. So much so that East Devon together with Districts in East Anglia (which were in the same boat) mounted a legal challenge. Clever really, because this delayed the process which could inevitably see their demise. Some of their case was upheld but eventually lost on appeal – another delay. The Boundary Committee then looked at a possible Exeter/Exmouth Unitary with the rest of Devon as a unitary, saying this would be financially viable. Surprise surprise, the Exeter/Exmouth Unitary was found to be unpopular with local people. So it looked like the only viable solution left on the table, if reorganisation was to take place was to create a Unitary County. The Boundary Committee referred its advice to the Government and, would you believe it, the Government totally ignored the advice and said that it would accede to the initial request of Exeter to create a Unitary Exeter within its own boundaries even though the advice it had sought was clear that this would not be financially viable.

One wonders how many millions of pounds of Tax Payers money have been spent on this elaborate process which could have been spent on services directly benefiting people. A legal challenge can now be expected from Devon County Council as it seeks to defend its sovereignty from attack. One can only expect the whole thing to be timed out as a General Election approaches and for structures to continue as they are.

Changes will not go away though. Budget pressures, explained above, will inevitably create strange partnerships and amalgamations which will just happen under the radar without any public consultation at all. One is left wondering if Central Government understands at all what Local Government and community empowerment really is all about. We are left at Town Council level with inadequate funding and lack of understanding about how Towns could

become really effective units of Government where accountability at community level is strongest.

Community Organisations Liaison Panel

Our local organizations continue to engage with the Town Council through this panel and are making great strides towards developing a local Community Plan. All involved in the process are learning a great deal about how community engagement needs to work and instead of employing expensive consultants are working together to realize the many skills which exist within our community. It is a matter of gaining confidence to recognize that no one knows better how our town works than the people who live here. The answers, as to how to make sure that Exmouth grows in self confidence as a place to live and work for all age groups and social groups, are here within our community. We need to understand the statutory framework and national/world context within which the town functions and to make sure that we are fully active in drawing up future plans which are within that context and where necessary push the boundaries.

Exe Estuary Partnership

Exmouth Town Council continues to support the partnership both financially and in kind. It has therefore been very disappointing that Teignbridge District Council has threatened to remove its contribution altogether from the Partnership. East Devon District Council has said if Teignbridge withdraws then it will too. Exeter City Council continues to contribute not a penny to the partnership but still wishes to attend management meetings. The City say's that it has costs to bear as Port Authority and that until that responsibility is taken up by a new Port Authority it will not contribute. The contributions have been at the level of about £12,000pa from Districts. It is a cost effective way for Districts to discharge their environmental and other responsibilities for managing the Exe Estuary, one of the great natural assets of the West Country and of international importance. Both Exmouth and Dawlish Town Council with Devon County Council have continued as staunch supporters of the partnership and continue to keep pressure on the Districts and the City to participate fully. All this is another example of public sector budget pressures causing service loss.

Mayors Charity Ball

17th April is the date for this prestigious black tie ball held annually at the Pavilion. Tickets will be on sale soon and the best way to enjoy this event is to book a table with friends or with your club or organization. It is a fun event with excellent live dance band Limited Company. It is open to the public, it is not an exclusive 'Council' function so please feel welcome and enjoy the night with us.

Exmouth at the County Show

Exmouth Town Management with Exmouth Chamber of Trade and Commerce is booking a site at County Show to promote Exmouth and what it has to offer. 'Exmouth – Be Inspired.....' is the strap line, so book up your stand and be a part of showing off our town. 20 tons of sand will create an artificial beach and there will be entertainment and fun to attract people in their droves. Contact Town Manager Tony Collins or Suzanne Birkett at the Town Hall for more details.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service – Home Alone Campaign

Do you have a member of your family, neighbour or friend who lives alone? If so Devon Fire and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service would like to hear from you.

Since April last year five people have died from fires in their homes and they all had one thing in common – they lived alone. The majority of fires in the home are preventable and the fire service are urging members of the public and staff from other agencies to help them in identifying those most at risk.

Often people are not aware of the risk of fire in their home and as part of the Home Alone Campaign, a free home safety visit is offered where advice and guidance is given and, where necessary, a smoke detector will be fitted free of charge.

All that the Fire Service ask is that if you have any concerns about someone or about yourself, that you contact them on 0800 7311 822 quoting ‘Home Alone’ before giving your details, or by emailing firekills@dsfire.gov.uk

For more information – contact the Town Clerk on 01395 276167, visit the Town Hall, contact your Local Councillor or visit **www.exmouth.gov.uk**

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