



Exmouth Town Council –Newsletter

Newsletter 3

July 2010

Rolle College Site

Tenders have now been submitted to the University of Plymouth for the purchase of Rolle College Site and the University's decision on how it intends to proceed is awaited. Rolle Exmouth Ltd has been created as a company in the Community Interest to work alongside a potential developer to retain the Owen and adjacent Buildings for educational, community and small business unit purposes. Hopes are high that a good outcome will emerge from months of hard work. There are so many indicators from on high that communities have to 'Do it for themselves'. If a locally driven solution can be found this would be an excellent example of how Exmouth can pull together to achieve a long term and sustainable outcome. All we can do at present is plan for what will happen if the right decision is made by the University of Plymouth – to some extent it is still a waiting game but everything that can be done to plan ahead is being done.

Public Funding Budget Crises

In January's edition of the newsletter effects on Exmouth of the then public funding problems were reported. An election has since happened and we have all been given a stark warning of just how tough things are going to get. This year Exmouth Town Council took on the Festoon Lights on the seafront from East Devon District Council which have now been brought up to standard. It is likely that it will also take on the Clock Tower on the seafront subject to some immediate repairs being completed first. Also it has paid this year for the seasonal operatives to maintain the hanging baskets and flower beds in the town and to provide for the additional summer street sweeping.

It is clear from a talk given at the last Town Council meeting by EDDC Chief Executive Mark Williams and Corporate Director of Economy Diccon Pearse that the squeeze on East Devon is going to be tighter than ever and this squeeze is likely to continue for at least the next 5 or more years. The Council does not know whether the capping regime on Council Tax by the last Government will continue to apply. If East Devon and Devon County Council do decide to increase Council Tax they will not know until after setting their budgets whether the Government will come back and say 'Too much you will have to reset your budget at a lower level'. In these circumstances it is extraordinarily difficult to judge what the right decision should be. Principal Councils are being advised by the Government that if they set a zero Council Tax increase then

they will receive a 2.5% incentive payment from the Government to compensate in 2011/12 only. That might sound fine for that year but if no such incentive is paid in the following year and capping applies then the District Council's income will effectively be held static and will in real terms be reduced. The net effect will be cuts in staffing and service or finding new ways where Councils can join together to share staff/systems and costs.

The Town Council will now have to prioritise further what it thinks is important and should be funded from the local precept. It will have to judge whether discretionary services being dropped by EDDC should be funded through the local Council Tax to keep them going or allow services to disappear. We receive lots of requests already for more dog bins, more dog byelaws enforcement, better litter collection, improved toilet cleaning, all things that matter a lot to people. So some people already do not think that services are good enough and yet the money and resources available for delivery are reducing drastically. It would be possible for the Council to withdraw funding from other areas such as the Festival and Town Management to concentrate on basic services but the economic benefit as well as the cultural benefit which these achieve would disappear at a time when the Town is fighting hard to ensure that it is not one of the places worst affected by the recession.

These are difficult times and Councillors more than ever are facing tough choices in the months to come.

Local Government Review

How times change. Local Government review was for a few years very high in the consciousness of Local Authorities. Now it is history. Exeter has failed to achieve its dream of Unitary powers and Devon County Council continues as the main strategic authority for the City. It seems now that for the foreseeable future Devon County Council will continue as will East Devon District Council. Town and Parish Councils continue and are being considered nationally as more important delivery vehicles for services that can be provided more locally. With public expenditure cuts being the current obsession the agenda's have shifted considerably and we are all faced with adjusting to the new order.

Exmouth Town January to June 2010

The last 6 months must rank as one of the busiest and most active in the recent history of Exmouth. The Exmouth Festival was undoubtedly the most successful on record attracting thousands of people to take part and show how a community can work together. The Exmouth 'Be Inspired' stand made a big splash at Devon County Show. The blue sweat shirts at the show were everywhere and no one can have failed to notice Exmouth's presence, attracting regional media coverage which in terms of putting Exmouth on the map was priceless. Devon Life has as a result recently published a very positive article about Exmouth over several pages which illustrate the good points about living in Exmouth. The Rotary Club of Exmouth put on the Kite Festival which again was the best yet and made over £11,000 for charity on the back of creating a fabulous event which kite flyers from all over the country now clamour to attend.

In the meantime the Strand Exmouth is a building site and everyone's forbearance is sought to see through the current inconvenience to the final scheme which will transform a public space dominated by vehicles to one which will be principally for pedestrians. This investment has been achieved by the skin of our teeth just in advance of public spending cuts biting. We have

seen how the Manor Gardens has been brought to life and the anticipation will be that the Strand becomes a lively vibrant space for everyone to enjoy. The current works should be completed by November and the new building is expected to start in the new year.

Wheelie Bins

East Devon District Council through August and September will be running a roadshow to explain how the new refuse collection systems with recycling will apply. This will be to explain how it will work and to answer questions from residents. The new scheme is intended to be rolled out to Exmouth from 14th October 2010. This will require us all to adapt to new ways of dealing with our domestic refuse which will help to reduce the mountains of waste going to landfill. Another benefit should be an end to plastic sacks being ripped open by seagulls and the resultant litter in the streets. Less food for the seagulls which become a nuisance at this time of year when feeding their chicks should mean less seagulls. In Seaton where the wheelie bins have already been provided there has been a noticeable reduction in seagulls.

Seagulls

The main attraction for seagulls in seaside towns is the amount of food available for them to scavenge. Notices are being circulated around the town to ask that anyone who feeds them not to do so. It is actually anti-social to feed seagulls and encourages them away from their natural habit which is the best place for them. They are clever creatures and it is our behavior of giving them an inch which encourages them to take a mile.

Litter and Dogs Mess

Again it is people and their pets who create litter and dogs mess and not the Councils. Councils do their best to clean up behind the nuisance behavior by those people who have no thought about how their actions impact on others. It costs a lot to deal with these issues. As shown above there are limits which are being set by the Government as to how much is available for services. The ability of Councils to deliver is being modified daily and expectations will have to change. The stark message facing us all is that every member of our community has a role to play in looking after our town and will have to do more in future to keep up the standards we have all become used to.

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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