

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, EXMOUTH ON MONDAY 16TH MARCH 2015 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors: B Nash (Mayor) M Chapman (Deputy Mayor)
 D Chapman B Cole T Cope
 T Dumper V Duval-Steer L Elson
 S Gazzard P Graham A Greenhalgh
 J Humphreys S MacQueen C Nicholas
 I Stewart P Stott M Williamson
 E Wragg

R Bourgein, Town Crier, and approximately 35 electors of the Town of Exmouth

APOLOGIES: Councillors M Mitchell, B Taylor & J Taylor

1. Opening and Welcome by the Mayor

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Centre Stage, the award-winning youth theatre group, with 45 members aged from 11-20 years, who performed 3 numbers, including a number from their forthcoming production Sweeney Todd.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 31st March 2014 were approved, subject to an amendment under Item 3, Annual Report of the Town Council, where hospice charity was amended to Hospiscare and the last sentence changed to "specialist care for patients with life threatening illnesses".

3. Annual Report of the Town Council

The Mayor commenced by highlighting numerous successful events that had taken place in the town during the past year, including the Exmouth Festival, The National Life Surf Championships, the Carnival and Christmas Cracker. He then referred everyone to the supplementary information which had been distributed to all attendees, containing details of the grants awarded by the Town Council and explained that representatives from each organisation had been invited to say a few words, along with representatives from the Community Liaison Panel.

4. Town Crier's Report

Roger Bourgein, Exmouth's Town Crier, reported his positive thoughts and experiences of Exmouth, including its environment, estuary position, retail strength and the growing number of first class restaurants, which in his opinion put Exmouth on a par with London and Oxford.

5 Presentations from local organisations in receipt of grants and support from Exmouth Town Council and members of COLP (Community Organisations Liaison Panel)

The following organisations each gave a 3-4 minute presentation explaining how the grants received from Exmouth Town Council had been used to support their organisation.

Centre Stage	Mark Worsley	Executive Chairman
Exmouth Swimming & Lifesaving	Ian Lang	Vice Chairman
National Coastwatch Institution	Gordon Betteridge	
Exe Sailing Club	Rick Newcombe	Training Principle
Exmouth Musical Theatre	Michelle Chudley	Treasurer
Exmouth Carnival	Justine Payton	
Exmouth Community Transport	Jill Elson	
Exmouth Museum	Alan Arthur	Curator
South West brass Band Association	Gilbert Taylor & Martin Cordy	
Exmouth Community College	Tom	
Exmouth In Bloom	Mike Wheeler	Treasurer
Exmouth Beach Rescue	Nigel Snowshall	
Rolle Exmouth Limited	Deborah Hallett	Chairman
Cyclepath Exmouth	John Petty	
Transition Town Exmouth	Adrian Toole	
Citizens Advice Bureau	Chris Griffiths	

Exmouth Civic Society, Ian Cann, had sent his apologies and a statement was read out by the Mayor on his behalf.

6. Public Forum – Priority was given to those questions notified in advance to the Town Clerk.

Mary Hughes asked what the Council saw as the unique selling point for Exmouth and what word the Council would use to describe Exmouth. *The Mayor responded that he felt that Exmouth's USP was that it had something for everyone and the one word he would use to describe Exmouth was FABULOUS.*

Mr Brian Bird commented that he felt that the Council's communication via its website was inadequate as minutes from working parties were not available. The Mayor explained that the Council met its statutory obligations and actually went one step further than many councils by making recordings of the public meetings available on the BayFM website.

Mr Bird also questioned the Council's reserves and why they were so high. The Mayor responded by explaining that the council had previously been criticised by the auditor for having insufficient reserves and the Council had worked towards reaching the current acceptable level of 52%.

Mr Bird stated more should be done towards promoting the Town and in particular, its connection with the Jurassic Coast. The Mayor answered that he agreed and that

it would indeed be marvellous for Exmouth to, one day, have a Gateway to the Jurassic Coast Centre.

Finally, Brian Bird commented that The Strand was bland and he understood that EDDC had no plans for improvement. The Mayor commented that more events, planting and a shelter were on the horizon.

Geoff Morris asked: "Have we emasculated our Town Council by continually trying to keep our parish rates static? Is not the point of having a Town Council that it will ensure that we have a town we are proud of and the facilities that we want? However we live in a time when EDDC & DCC are feeling forced to cut services. If the Town Council is inadequately funded, it cannot take over these lost services. If it cannot maintain the services we want, should we continue to spend money running our Town Council?"

The Mayor explained that Exmouth had the lowest precept in East Devon with residents in council tax band D paying significantly less than some towns in East Devon. The Town Council still managed to make significant grants to local organisations. He agreed that with the prospect of DCC and EDDC cutting services, times had changed and maybe it was time to review the situation.

Geoff Morris asked attendees of the meeting if they would be willing to pay more Council Tax in return for better services and requested a show of hands, to which the meeting responded that they would prefer to pay for better services.

Councillor T Cope then requested to speak and explained that he personally had supported the Council in keeping the precept down and upheld the belief that the Town Council should only take on extra responsibilities provided funding was received from EDDC.

Geoff Morris replied that he felt that the situation needed to be reviewed as it was extremely unlikely that funding from EDDC would ever be forthcoming. However, he thanked Councillor Trevor Cope and wished him all the best for his retirement from the Council.

The Mayor thanked Mr Morris and suggested that the funding of the Town Council should be reviewed after the election.

Mr John Hunt asked what was happening about the provision of The Strand shelter? Devon County Councillor E Wragg responded that a design had been drawn up which required planning permission but believed that it would be possible for the new shelter to be in place by April.

Roy Pryke, Chairman of Exmouth Residents Association, which had been part of COLP for 5 years asked "How far did the town wish to go ahead with the Neighbourhood Plan?". The Mayor advised that it would give Exmouth a chance to shape its future and give the Town Council an opportunity to increase its income from CIL payments. A resolution would go before the next Full Council meeting on April 20th, to ratify the designation of a Neighbourhood Area for Exmouth and this

would then pave the way for the new Council to take the process onto the next stage.

Mary Nash said she was speaking on behalf of all the Tourist Information Volunteers and asked how the Council could justify spending £16,000 for a one day event when the Tourist Information Service received no funding at all and had no permanent premises? The Mayor explained that it was not simply a case of substituting funding for one thing with another and that the Council was looking towards the future and at different ways of funding the Tourist Information Service.

Mr Alec Huett stated that he felt that the seafront was being spoilt by over-development and that he believed we should enhance what we have already. The Mayor responded that it had not been viable to save The Elizabeth Hall and that EDDC had turned down offers to develop the site into a block of luxury flats and a retirement home which would cut off locals, however by agreeing to the building of Premier Inn this benefitted of the whole town.

Mr Alex Huett disagreed and felt that the Premier Inn could have been located somewhere else and questioned if everyone loved Exmouth so much already why should development continue when we could enhance what we've got already? Michelle Chudley asked to respond to Mr Huett and stated that as a mother of teenage children and someone who had grown up in Exmouth she wished to see the town move forward and work towards a sustainable future for her children so that they too could also continue to live and work in Exmouth.

Megan Armstrong strongly disagreed with the Mayor's earlier comment that the community bid for the Elizabeth Hall building was not economically viable.

There being no more questions, the Mayor thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 21.15 pm.

Signed
(Chairman)

Date