

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, EXMOUTH ON MONDAY 19TH MARCH 2012 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT: 26 electors plus 22 Town Councillors:
S Sutton (Mayor)
J Humphreys (Deputy Mayor)
B Cole T Cope
M Chapman D Chapman
V Duval-Steer L Elson
S Gazzard P Graham
A Greenhalgh W McConnell
J Mitchell M Mitchell
B Nash C Nicholas
I Stewart P Stott
B Taylor J Taylor
R Turner S Wragg

APOLOGIES: Councillors T Dumper, M Williamson & E Wragg

SPEAKER: Tim Beavon, Devon Renaissance

1. Opening and Welcome by the Mayor

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 21st March 2011 were received and signed as a correct record.

3. Annual Report of the Town Council

The Mayor presented the Annual Report of the Town Council to the meeting (a copy of the Annual Report was distributed to all who attended and is available on the website) which gave an overview of the year in brief. There had been many achievements throughout the year and mention was made to new business openings, in particular Lidl, the commencement of Liverton 2 and the Hamilton Lane Allotment Project designed for people who were wheelchair users. The Mayor had attended over 140 events and 27 Town Council meetings throughout the year. Some events to remember were the Tour of Britain Cycle Race, Rolle Exmouth launch, Phear Park 9/11 Remembrance Service, Rifles and Royal Marine services, South West Brass Band Association Festival, Christmas Cracker, Exmouth Festival, Exmouth in Bloom success and numerous fundraising charity events.

An expression of thanks was given to Members for their Committee work and staff for their commitment, in particular to the recently retired Town Clerk, John Wokersien.

Future events this year would be the Bicton Cycle Ride, the Queen's Jubilee Celebration, the Exmouth Festival and the Jurassic Classic 100km Cycling Ride.

The Mayor invited the Town Clerk, Colin Poole, to address the meeting with further items contained within the Annual Report. The Council's Mission Statement was read out as a reminder of Exmouth's aspiration. An overview was given as to the Committee structure, public question time and the role of Committee Chairman. Councillors in attendance were presented to the electors and contact information is available on the Town Council's website. A thank you was given to the staff of the Town Council and particular thank you to John Wokersien who had been the Town Clerk for 12 years.

The Council Tax precept would remain the same as last year and would generate £400,050 for spending in the town and a table of the budget requirement for 2011/12 was enclosed within the Annual Report.

4. Community Planning

Tim Beavon, from the DR Company (formerly) Devon Renaissance, gave a presentation on Community Planning. Devon Renaissance, formed in 2005, is a non profit organisation working to promote economic and community development. It has successfully run a number of funding programmes in Devon, including the Greater Dartmoor LEAF and the South Devon Coastal Local Action Programmes, which are the best performing such programmes nationally. As a not for profit organisation it is able to work with partners at favourable rates. DR is also expanding its commercial work which includes business support, community broadband and undertaking BREEAM assessments (which includes working with Eurotech).

Community Planning encompassed all local people, local organisations, local strategy, previously gathered information, local agencies such as Health, Education, Councils and Service Providers and many others. Evidence would be collated to support the objectives which would formulate an Action Plan whilst confidence was built amongst the electorate by getting the balance right. Risks would be identified alongside future funding opportunities such as EU funding, costs and any potential barriers. A Community Plan would not be produced behind closed doors, would be thought through and take into account existing plans, policies and information. It could help support the development of new services and projects and would bring together people who could make a difference to the community.

The provision of a Neighbourhood Plan may follow in the future and should not be confused with the Community Plan as it must fit into the Local Development Framework and be agreed by the Local Planning Authority as it would form part of the Statutory Plan for the area. The Neighbourhood plan would take into consideration the Community Plan.

The next stage of the Community Plan would be the creation of a Steering Group initially led by DR who would report back to the Town Council in April. Working with the community to begin developing a Community Plan is likely to start in earnest in May.

Members of the public asked for DR to consider the Strategic document put together by the Community Organisations Liaison Panel and that the Community Plan did not become a political document.

The Mayor thanked Tim Beavon for his presentation and that the Town Council would look forward to continue working with him.

5. Other Matters raised by members and the public

An explanation of the budget requirement table on page 7 of the Annual Report was requested. *This was given by the Town Clerk.*

Mr Ron Roberts asked for assurance that the Council acted in accordance with the Code of Conduct. *This was given.*

Mr Geoff Morris wished the Council to note that all complaints that he had registered were from him and submitted on a personal basis. He also felt that local newspaper coverage had not grasped the content of his correspondence and had in fact shortened one of his letters. The formation of the Town Team last week would create an opportunity to address recent issues within the community and prevent a reoccurrence of recent misunderstandings which had caused stress and anxiety to all concerned.

Mr Richard Benford asked why the TIC overpayment issue had not been mentioned in the Annual Report and no official apology made for the loss of public funds, given the losses sustained by town businesses when the TIC went into administration. *The Mayor did not consider an apology necessary as the funds had lessened the financial impact of closure on other creditors. The matter had been fully investigated and was deemed closed.*

Mr Benford referred to his previous complaint of alleged misconduct dismissed by the Standards Board. He disagreed with the outcome and said an appeal would be lodged against the decisions that had been made by the Standards Board.

Mr Jeff Trail wished to record his thanks to Cllrs. Brenda Taylor and Bernard Hughes for securing grit bins for community use and to the Planning Committee and Cllr. Steve Wragg for the resistance to housing development at St. John's Wood now taken out of the LDF.

Town Council events such as the Christmas Cracker and Tour of Britain had been well received.

A request was made that Chairmanships/Deputy Chairmanships should be shared between political groups to reduce the political tension.

Summing up, the Mayor expressed her wish that everyone worked together for the sake of the town and disputes or complaints be dealt with more informally and amicably rather than immediately resorting to official procedures which had the potential to get out of hand.

The Mayor thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 8.32 pm

Signed
(Chairman)

Date