

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, EXMOUTH ON MONDAY 6TH JANUARY 2014 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors: Mayor J Humphreys (Chairman)
Deputy Mayor B Nash (Vice Chairman)
I Brownbill D Chapman
M Chapman B Cole
T Cope T Dumper
V Duval-Steer L Elson
S Gazzard P Graham
S MacQueen C Nicholas
I Stewart P Stott
B Taylor B Toye
R Turner M Williamson
E Wragg

Officers: Colin Poole, Town Clerk & Sue Cody, Minute Taker.

The Mayor wished all a Happy New Year. He thanked the Town Clerk and his family for organising and overseeing the New Year fireworks within the town centre. The Mayor had received lots of positive comments, in particular from businesses that were very supportive of the event and they were appreciative that the new location had retained customers within the town centre.

C14/001. APOLOGIES

Councillors A Greenhalgh, M Mitchell, J Taylor & S Wragg

**The meeting was adjourned for the Public Forum. Please see Appendix for details.
The meeting was then reconvened.**

C14/002. COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

The minutes of the Town Council held on Monday 16th December 2013 will be considered at the meeting of 17th February 2014

C14/003. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Declarations of pecuniary interest were made in respect of

Item C14/007 Precept: it was noted that under minute C12/089 the Council had resolved in 2012 to give all Members dispensation until the next ordinary elections and therefore all Members were deemed able to take part.

Item C14/008 Permission to use our logo: Councillors V Duval-Steer and L Elson declared a pecuniary interest as they were Governors of Exmouth Community College. Councillor B Nash declared a personal interest as his grandson attended the college & his son-in-law worked there.

C14/004. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items to be dealt with necessitating exclusion of the press and public.

C14/005. URGENT BUSINESS UNDER STANDING ORDER 6.2

There were two items to be dealt with under urgent business.

i) Retirement of the Coxswain of the Exmouth Lifeboat

Tim Mock, after 34 years as Coxswain of Exmouth Lifeboat had recently retired. Councillor P Stott proposed seconded by Councillor S Gazzard that he was presented with a Town Council plaque marking the Council's gratitude for his many years of service on behalf of the town. Members were unanimous in their support. Best wishes were given to the new coxswain, Steve Hocking-Thomson.

RESOLVED to invite Mr Tim Mock to accept a presentation of a Town Council plaque

ii) Exmouth Transport Partnership

A meeting of the Partnership was to be held on Thursday 9th January at 11.00 am and would be attended by Christopher Erwin, Honorary Doctor of Plymouth University, who has expertise on transport interchanges. Andrew Moulding, Chairman of EDDC Regeneration Board, would be attending. This would be a great opportunity as a new transport interchange was planned for Exmouth. All councillors were invited to attend.

NOTED

C14/006. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 10

There were no questions under Standing Order 10.

C14/007. 2014/15 BUDGET AND PRECEPT

Councillor D Chapman, Chairman of Finance, gave an overview of the three options put forward to Members. He noted that inflation over the past few years had taken its toll and option 1, whilst called a standstill budget was in fact a budget reduced in effectiveness by inflation. He described option 2 as a very modest increase of 1.43%, amounting to 3½ pence per month for a Band D Council Tax payer. Option 3 was intended to return the Town Council to have the same buying power on behalf of the town as they had in 2010. This would represent a 15.3% increase equating to 38.4 pence per month.

Cllr Stewart asked if, as the cost implications, if any, of the staff review were unknown would it be better to defer the decision on the precept until the results were known. The Town Clerk advised that the precept return needed to be posted to EDDC by 24th January which would be before the outcome of the staff review. It was unknown if DCC or EDDC would be increasing their Council Tax level.

Following discussion amongst members Councillor D Chapman proposed seconded by Councillor R Turner that Option 2 be adopted. A recorded vote was requested.

Councillor T Cope proposed seconded by Councillor S Gazzard a formal amendment to the proposal to change "Option 2 be adopted" to read "Option 1 be adopted". The Town Clerk advised the meeting that this was not an amendment but a separate motion.

The Clerk suggested that Members simply stated their choice of option during the vote.

Option 1

Councillors I Brownbill, T Cope, S Gazzard & E Wragg. **Total 4.**

Option 2

Councillors D Chapman, M Chapman, B Cole, T Dumper, V Duval-Steer, L Elson, P Graham, J Humphreys, S MacQueen, B Nash, C Nicholas, I Stewart, P Stott, B Taylor, B Toye, R Turner & M Williamson. **Total 17.**

Option 3

Nil vote.

RESOLVED that Option 2, a budget of £490,545 with a total precept of £408,985 including £39,345 Council Tax Support Grant be set for 2014/15.

Note: Councillor B Toye left the meeting at the end of this item.

C14/008. PERMISSION TO USE TOWN COUNCIL LOGO

The Committee had before them a letter, previously circulated, from Mr Tony Alexander, Principal of Exmouth Community College, who asked permission to use the Town Council “logo” on their website to ensure that the public were aware of the Town Council’s engagement with the college. Councillor T Cope wished members to note that the logo was not a logo but the Town Arms. Members noted other establishments such as the Rugby Club, Rowing Club and Football Club already show the Town Arms on their paperwork. Councillor M Williamson proposed seconded by Councillor I Stewart that the request be granted. Councillor I Brownbill abstained; all other Members voted in favour.

RESOLVED that permission be granted to Exmouth Community College to display the Town Council Town Arms on their website.

Note: Councillor V Duval-Steer declared a pecuniary interest and left the room for this item. Councillor Pat Graham declared a pecuniary interest and left the meeting.

C14/009. PLANNING COMMITTEE

Councillor L Elson proposed, seconded by Councillor S MacQueen that the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 16th December 2013 (as previously circulated) be received.

Matters arising from the Planning Committee meeting held that evening related to two licensing applications both of which asked for a late night extension to opening hours of take-away establishments in different areas of The Strand, from 3.00am until 4.00am. The committee wished a cut off point to be a blanket time of 3.00 am throughout the town and a statement to be contained within the Local Plan to that effect. One of the applications for 40 The Strand brought to the notice of the committee the dilapidated state of the listed building that contained the takeaway. It was understood that EDDC’s Conservation Officer had tried to explain the need for repair to the building’s current owner but no progress had been made to date. A request was made for the Town Council to send a letter to EDDC’s Conservation Officer to ask if contact could again be made with the owner to ask if the building could be put into good repair.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on the 16th December 2013 (as previously circulated) be received and a letter be sent to EDDC's Conservation Officer in respect of the bad state of 40 The Strand.

C14/010. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Town Council would be held on Monday 17th February 2014.

The meeting concluded at 8.28 pm.

Signed..... Date.....
(Chairman)

APPENDIX

PUBLIC FORUM

Mr Ron Roberts, spoke on behalf of East Devon Alliance. He wished everyone a Happy New Year and hoped the year would be happier than some previous years. He referred Members to agenda item 7, Budget and Precept Setting for 2014/15. Mr Roberts described Option 1 which kept the council tax precept unchanged as “barely acceptable” as some people were currently struggling to afford food and heating. He stated that there were “no grounds whatsoever” to justify the increases under Option 2 or Option 3.

Mr Roberts said the precept had been increased several times since 2007 and claimed that the Town Clerk had told him that the background data which informed the budget “did not exist” and the precept was being increased without any evidence of why it needed to be increased.

Written Response by the Town Clerk:

The claim that there is no background data is completely false. There is a very detailed budget underpinning the figures. Mr Roberts made a FOI request on 27th October that the Council issue the draft budget and financial forecasts for the next Council year to include all anticipated expenditure in detail rather than ball park figures. He was told on 12th November “The information you request is not held by the Town Council, as it does not yet exist.”

Working documents are subject to constant change prior to consideration by Council and it would be quite impossible and very misleading to declare any working document “the official draft budget” until elected Members have decided that is what it is.

The working documents that comprise the budget and financial forecasts were not approved as official drafts until December 2nd, at which point the document requested came into existence and was available.