

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, EXMOUTH ON MONDAY 12 JANUARY 2015 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors: Mayor B Nash (Chairman)
Deputy Mayor M Chapman (Vice Chairman)
I Brownbill B Cole
T Cope T Dumper
V Duval-Steer L Elson
S Gazzard P Graham
A Greenhalgh S MacQueen
M Mitchell C Nicholas
P Stott I Stewart
B Taylor M Williamson

Officers: Lisa Bowman, Town Clerk & Sue Cody, Minute Taker.

Guest Speakers: Tony Hogg, Devon and Cornwall's Police and Crime Commissioner accompanied by Richard Martin, Strategy Officer, and Inspector Antonia Weekes.

C15/001. APOLOGIES

Councillors D Chapman, J Humphreys, J Taylor, B Toye, R Turner, E Wragg & S Wragg

The Chairman asked that Standing Orders be suspended to allow speaking outside Standing Orders for agenda item 2, the public to be allowed to ask questions. He welcomed Tony Hogg, Richard Martin and Antonia Weekes to the meeting.

C15/002. TONY HOGG, DEVON & CORNWALL POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Tony Hogg gave an overview of his previous career. He had taken up the position of Police Commissioner in November 2012 after being elected. The position was politically impartial and his team of 25 had replaced the previous Police Authority team of 35. The initial start up cost of the Police Crime Commissioner provision had been £1.9million but this had now decreased to an annual expenditure of approximately £1.5 million. Changes within the police force as a result of job evaluation and cultural changes had been made over the previous two years with savings of £50 million plus the retention of almost 3,000 Police Officers initially identified as part of the savings to be made.

A scrutiny body based in Plymouth were in place to audit the work of the Police Crime Commissioner and his team and a recent inspection had resulted in a 'good' assessment being recorded together with crime falling in some areas. The influx of tourists within Devon and Cornwall during the summer months was seen as a challenge each year and cyber crime was on the increase. The Police Commissioner was currently lobbying the 18 Devon and Cornwall MP's to acknowledge the rise in population created by summer visitors and the related

pressure that put on Police Officers on the ground and to look at alcohol policies/ programmes and how mental health currently sits within policing.

The government had made a request for further savings of £30 million to be made over the next 4 years and a strategic plan for year 1 and 2 was already in place with savings of £21million and a possible loss of 780 staff but year 3 and 4 would present a challenge and could result in loss of more manpower. There was a possible collaboration with the Dorset Police Force and identification of land owned by the police which could be put up for sale. CID, 999 and Neighbourhood Policing may have to be merged which could result in police dealing only with high threat as opposed to face to face contact. A rise of 2% precept would cover some of the increased cost of policing. Health & Social Care needed to work in conjunction with the Police and steps would be made to facilitate that.

Questions were put forward to Tony Hogg and his representatives.

Alderman David Scott asked for a breakdown of the current cost of the provision of the Police Commissioner team particularly in light of current cutbacks in policing.

The previous Police Authority had cost £1.7 million with 35 members on allowances of between £10,000 & £26,000. The Police Commissioner service initial start up costs were £1.9 million for the first year followed by £1.5 million the year after. The Police Commissioner's salary was £85,000 and other salaries were available on the website.

Alderman Scott also asked, as did local resident Megan Armstrong, what was to become of the old Courthouse property in Exmouth and who owned the building.

Inspector Antonia Weekes confirmed that the property was owned by the Police and that it would be retained for possible relocation of Exeter staff should it be required once the Exeter facilities and its staff had been reviewed.

Councillor A Greenhalgh gave an overview of her own experience of using 101, the pick-up had been fairly quick (within 4 minutes) but then she had been left on hold once the required department was identified - on one occasion for 25 minutes. How were records being maintained of the time people wait? The initial pick up might have given a false impression of how long callers were waiting to have their concerns addressed.

Tony Hogg confirmed that 101 was not working as it should do and that the connection time had been monitored but not the time taken to connect the caller to the necessary department. A full report had been prepared and the Chief Constable had accepted that the service was not adequate. New personnel were being recruited and the technology used updated.

Councillor I Stewart asked for the Commissioner's view on the recent comments by Mr Dan Rogerson, MP, calling for the abolition of Police Commissioners - to

be replaced by a Board of Local Councillors and with the resulting savings used for front line policing.

Tony Hogg confirmed that he had attended that M.P.'s meeting but wished to add that there was already a board of councillors, The Police and Crime Panel, who were tasked with auditing and scrutinising the Police Commissioners so he felt it would be a retrograde step to go back to the previous system used by the Police Authority.

Councillor S Gazzard asked what savings had been made by the closure of Exmouth's Police Station front desk and what would the savings be used for.

A saving of £52,000 would be made and provide the funding for one Police Officer. A business plan had been put forward which had identified Police Stations that had low footfall which once closed would provide an overall saving of £900,000.

Councillor Gazzard also asked for Tony Hogg's thoughts on legal highs.

Tony Hogg made reference to the new psycho active substances being the scourge of today and causing immense damage to takers. It was not illegal for shops to sell the product and he was pleased that a recent such shop had been closed in Exeter as a result of the new anti-social behaviour law and was hopeful that it would help toward a general ban on the sale of legal highs.

Councillor R Turner stated that since about the year 2011 there had been a loss of about 400 front line police officers in that period. He wished to know how many Senior Officers of Ass Chief Constable rank had been lost, how many Officers of Chief Superintendent rank had been lost, and how many Officers of Superintendent rank have been lost? Have any of those lost have been replaced or had their work been transferred to other existing or non serving police officers?

The Chief Constable had considered a reduction in senior officers. New Police Officers had been recruited, around 200 over the last 2 years, and Tony Hogg was hopeful that recruitment would continue. He would provide a more detailed written response to the question.

Councillor T Dumper asked if the issue of vandalism and graffiti were topics of discussion at higher levels and had Tony Hogg himself been able to raise the subject via the media?

Tony Hogg did have a slot on Radio Devon and Radio Cornwall once a month but had not spoken about problems associated with graffiti and vandalism. The Anti Social & Nuisance Bill, which fell below criminal recording, was the power used for graffiti and acts of vandalism. The issue of restorative justice was currently being surveyed with the public being consulted on how they thought it best to be implemented and monitored. Positive action towards graffiti and vandalism was currently taken by Police Officers but this may lessen as more pressure is put on them through impending cuts.

Councillor M Mitchell asked Inspector Weekes for the public to be able to ask questions of a police nature and respond to any reports that were produced by herself on behalf of the local police.

Members felt that public representations could be channelled through the Local Action Group (LAG) meetings.

Councillor C Nicholas stated that the new Police Commissioner provision had not produced the anticipated saving that had initially been predicted and the cost did not seem proportionate.

Tony Hogg responded that all the costs had been audited and detail was available on the website but would provide a written more detailed response. He added that he was concerned at how the Police Commissioner team would cope with the extra work load that had been requested of them.

Note: Councillor L Elson left the meeting at that point.

Councillor T Cope asked if Tony Hogg felt that the low turn-out when he was elected gave him the mandate to carry out his duties.

The next election would be carried out in 2016 and he was hopeful that there would be a better turn out particularly as young voters had been made aware of the function of the Police Commissioner.

Councillor Cope wished to know the costs associated with redeployment and redundancies.

Job evaluations, overdue by 5 years, had been undertaken as a proper process over the last year. Provision for costs had been made within reserves and had addressed issues such as equal pay.

Councillor P Stott asked if drug related crime and drug misuse locally were going down.

Drug issues were well covered in the Police Commissioners plan but the onus was on the Chief Constable as to the input. Cybercrime, sexual and domestic violence, alcohol programmes and mental health provision were identified as where the greatest current need was. Drug related issues were not an increasing problem on a local level and there was a National Crime Agency in Bristol with a sub office in Exeter that dealt with organised crime that was drug related.

Councillor Stott requested a view on crimes that were being highlighted on social media sites particularly as people responding to incidents were identifying that reporting crime like incidents to the Police was too difficult so were therefore going unreported.

Social media could be a critical part of the future for the Police service but it was felt that the public would not wish to lose contact with face to face policing.

The chairman on behalf of the Town Council thanked the guest speakers for attending and resumed the meeting under standing orders.

Note: Councillor B Taylor left the meeting at that point.

C15/003. COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 22nd December 2014 were proposed by Councillor M Mitchell, seconded by Councillor P Stott, and noted as a true record.

C15/004. MATTERS ARISING FROM THOSE MINUTES

Under minute C14/182 Civic space/bus shelter in the Strand it was noted that the meeting that was to be held on 8th January 2015 had been rescheduled by Devon County Council for 19th January at 10.00am where other designs for the provision of a civic space/bus shelter would be considered. Councillor P Stott asked that all members of the Town Council be offered the opportunity to view the other designs at the next full council meeting.

C15/005. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests or dispensations.

C15/006. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items to be dealt with under urgent business.

C15/007. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

C15/008. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 10

There were no questions under Standing Order 10.

C15/009. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES, OTHER LOCAL BODIES, THE TOWN CLERK / TOWN MANAGER as appropriate (Standing Order 6.2)

- **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Councillor C Nicholas proposed, seconded by Councillor M Williamson, that the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 8th December 2014 be received.

Councillor I Stewart in respect of minute F14/170 asked if a 3rd quote had been received for the tarmacing at Gorfin Hall. It had not been received.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 8th December 2014 be accepted and adopted.

- **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

The report had been previously received by members via email which included a section by the Town Manager. Councillor S Gazzard asked if the cost of repairs had been identified to repair the damage to the Manor Gardens stage. Clarification was being sort as to who was responsible for repairing the stage.

The Town Manager's report included details of a possible attempt at the Guinness World Record for the longest row of cyclists along the seafront. A new town guide was also to be produced.

- **LOCAL ACTION GROUP (LAG) Councillor Gazzard / Councillor Nash**

There was a meeting on Wednesday 14th January 2015 at 10.00am.

- **TOWN AND TOURISM FORUM**

The Forum was working well together and the idea of a table tennis table on the Strand had been well supported. Members were excited about the possibility of life sized fossils and dinosaurs within the town to promote links to the Jurassic Coast.

- **THE FLOODING AND LAND DRAINAGE WORKING PARTY**

The actions from the meeting held on 8th December 2014 had been carried out in respect of provision of sandbags and a supporting leaflet. A.J.'s had reported that over 600 sand bags had been given out over the Christmas period.

A press release would soon be issued to request local volunteers interested in becoming snow, flood and road wardens on behalf of the town to come forward for training.

C15/010. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor had attended a Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee meeting which had focused on Tourism. Their remit was to produce a report on tourism. Tourism generated 50 million per year in the UK. Most of tourism funding had been withdrawn from the south west. Devon Marketing had no funds nor had Visit Devon. Suggestions had been made as to a possible reduction in VAT paid by Bed and Breakfast establishments to encourage visitors as was the case in other countries.

Note: Councillor P Graham left the meeting at that point.

C15/011. TO RATIFY THE 2015/16 BUDGET AND PRECEPT

The 2015-16 draft budget was approved in principle at the last full council meeting. The town clerk reported that the budget before members now encompassed the Council Tax support grant and the tax base. Reserves were at the auditor's recommended level and the proposed budget equated to a 2014/15 comparable Band D rate of £30.43p. Some discussion took place to clarify items within the budget. Councillor S MacQueen proposed, seconded by Councillor C Nicholas that the proposed final budget be agreed. Members unanimously agreed.

C15/012. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Town Council will be held on Monday 23rd February 2015 at 7pm.

The meeting concluded at 9.04 pm.

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