

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Party

Notes of the meeting held at 10am on Tuesday 11th August 2020
held remotely via Zoom

Present

Councillor Andrew Colman*	AC	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Andrew Toye*	AT	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Frank Cullis	FC	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Mike Rosser	MR	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
(Ex-officio)		
Councillor Tim Dumper	TD	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council Officer
Jennifer Wellington	JW	Exmouth Town Council Notetaker
Nicky Nicholls	NN	Transition Exmouth Chair

*Attended after the meeting had begun.

Apologies

Councillor Brian Bailey	BB	Exmouth Town Council
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1. Election of Chair

FC proposed, seconded by OD, that Councillor Tim Dumper be elected as Chair of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Party. Members were asked to vote, and TD was duly elected as Chair.

2. Welcome & Apologies

TD welcomed members as the newly elected Chair and asked for any apologies, which were noted. The late attendance of AC and AT was also noted.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for this meeting were agreed at Full Council and circulated prior to this meeting. Members were reminded that this Working Party will *'Work with existing Town Council Working Groups and Committees to ensure that recommendations are cognisant of any associated climate and environmental impact and that mitigation, reduction or removal is considered in all decisions and ongoing*

operations.'(as stated in the ToR) to ensure work is not duplicated across the Town Council's Working Parties and Committees.

Additionally, members felt that the Climate Emergency should still be at the forefront of people's minds, even with the ongoing threat of Covid-19/Coronavirus.

TD then thanked NN for attending this meeting on behalf of Transition Exmouth.

3. To note the outcome of the environmental audit conducted by Martin Woods and agree associated follow up actions

TD firstly wished to thank Martin Woods for a well written and set-out audit of the Town Council's current carbon footprint.

The key points that stood out from the audit that could be influenced moving forward were:

Energy consumption:

Utility supplies at Exmouth Town Hall are arranged by East Devon District Council (EDDC) with a pro-rata portion of the bill back charged to ETC.

Although a smart meter is installed at Gorfin Hall, because the energy is on a business account the full benefits of the charge back via the smart meter are not being gained. This will change once the accounts are switched.

The audit only applied to those buildings that Exmouth Town Council (ETC) had full responsibility over, for example Gorfin Hall. Gorfin Hall was fitted with solar panels recently and the energy buy-back paperwork is currently being processed.

Actions: OD and SG to pursue the options of installing solar panels on the Town Hall with EDDC via their roles as Councillors and will copy LB into email email/letter.

Travel to work/ meetings by staff and Councillors:

It was recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic had facilitated home working by staff and virtual Council meetings, thereby reducing the requirement for travel. However, in response to a query raised by MR, LB confirmed that legislation introduced to hold remote meetings while in the Covid-19/Coronavirus pandemic had only been introduced on a temporary basis and that this would potentially influence the scope for virtual meetings in future. However, the National Association for Local Councils (NALC) are lobbying Central Government to introduce more permanent legislation, with the issue of ensuring public participation being a key criterium to satisfy.

ETC arranged for new I.T equipment so that staff could work from home but moving forward, there would still be a need for reception staff to be in the office for public-facing duties.

Actions: LB to bring up staff travel at the next HR meeting to suggest a policy or cycle scheme to encourage staff who live more locally to use more environmentally friendly modes of transport when going to/from the office or meetings.

LB to update the home-working policy to accommodate more flexibility and to take forward any other staff matters through the HR Group.

SG to email Tim Childs, Head of Estates at EDDC and/or John Golding at EDDC to see what their stance is currently, and any future plans, with regards to energy usage at the Town Hall.

ETC's Vehicles:

Vehicle emissions from ETC's vans and the scope for changing them to electric vehicles was briefly discussed and LB explained that this is being considered but the issues with regards to the purchase cost of new vehicles and where they would be stored needed to be resolved before moving this idea forward. As there is no space at EDDC's Camperdown Depot, ETC's vehicles are stored in a compound in Phear Park. This compound is owned by EDDC and used by ETC on an informal basis but there is no electric supply. However, if a longer term, formal licence could be obtained for this site then electric charging points could be considered along with the siting of a storage container which would cut emissions created when driving back and forth from the current container in Pound Lane.

It was suggested that Members of the Grounds Maintenance Contract TAFF could relay relevant information across the groups to ensure joined up thinking.

Paper Usage:

ETC already uses FSC paper and resists printing out paperwork wherever possible. However, one suggestion for further reduction in paper usage might be for ETC to provide Councillors with devices loaned for the duration of term of office.

NN reminded members that the bigger issue is that through ETC and Transition Exmouth, the opportunity to influence the town is vast and suggested members should not focus on smaller issues, such as paper usage.

4. To review progress against the ten action points received from Transition Exmouth's Our Exmouth, Our Planet meeting

The ten action points received from Transition Exmouth which formed part of the report to Full Council in December 2019 were circulated prior to the meeting and the following updates were provided:

Eco/Community Hub:

Exmouth Town Council has registered an interest in the Meeting Street facility, previously occupied by ReThink but due to be passed back to Devon County Council (DCC). If deemed an appropriate site for an eco HUB, this could be explored further.

Planting trees:

Although there are various pieces of land in Exmouth not attributed to owners on the Land Registry, they may still be owned by someone. It is a considerable amount of work to find out the ownership of these pieces of land through conveyancing and ETC do not have the capacity to undertake this type of work at present.

However, it was agreed that a project/campaign to link in with Tree Charter Day on the 28th November 2020 would be worth investigating.

For example, resurrecting a project similar to that of The Avenues tree project, from around 2013/14, where ETC brought trees and residents applied for them to plant in their gardens was discussed. Also, continuing to work with Wild Exmouth, which ETC has given £12,000 in the past to support their projects round the town, was also suggested.

Actions: LB to apply to NALC for some of the 420 free trees and grants, deadline 14th August 2020, as well as applying for other trees/grants from other organisations.

ETC to put together some publicity and a campaign if successful.

Members to identify patches of land that may be suitable for tree planting and forward these to LB for ownership investigation through ETC's own mapping systems.

The wider issue of ecology within the planning process was then discussed and LB read out an email received from Ed Freeman, EDDC, on the 8th July 2020 with regards to EDDC employing an Ecologist, and ecology matters in the planning process. At present, EDDC are working alongside DCC's Ecology Officer and have no plans to employ an EDDC Ecology Officer due to budgetary constraints, however this will be reviewed if situations change.

The Town Maintenance Contracts Task and Finish Forum (TAFF) is looking at the use of pesticides and herbicides that are used around the town on areas ETC maintain. The Town Maintenance team now use a weed-ripping machine, allowing them to move away from other weed removal techniques, such as chemical weed killers, and this machine appears to be working well.

In addition, the types of planting currently on DCC patches of land that ETC maintain is under review.

Environmental Website:

NN updated members that work on the environmental website is progressing well. Currently in the design stage with Tim Mann, the 'Our Place, Our Planet' website has been designed so that other towns could potentially use this website as a template.

Carol Jay, Transition Exmouth, worked with other members around the town to put together this website which aims to be user friendly and low level. The website has

five main categories: food, nature and gardening, waste, travel and energy and will give tips and direct local links.

The launch, currently planned for late September but subject to change, is hoped to include Rob Hopkins as a key speaker along with invitations for Town and District Councillors and members of the public at Manor Gardens bandstand. Other ideas for the launch included linking in with ETC's one-year anniversary of their Climate Emergency Declaration.

Actions: Transition Exmouth and ETC to liaise to help promote the website launch event.

Transition Exmouth to apply for EDDC event permission as soon as possible for hire of the Manor Gardens bandstand.

Renewable energy:

As stated previously, solar panels have been installed at Gorfin Hall and the paperwork for the energy buy-back is in progress.

Bike Pool:

No further progress has been made on the Bike Pool. However, RideOn are looking to set-up a storage/collection point in Exmouth. ETC could look again at the scope to assist with a collection point for RideOn in Exmouth.

Schools Environment Day:

Any plans to hold a second event were currently on hold due to Covid-19/Coronavirus.

Drinking water fountains:

The Heads of Terms for the licences to install drinking water fountains on DCC and EDDC land have now been received.

Fairtrade:

ETC use Fairtrade in-house. However, for future events such as the Mayor's Ball this will need to be taken into consideration.

Active Travel Day and Bike Day:

Both Transition Exmouth's Active Travel and Bike Days were postponed due to Covid-19/Coronavirus.

For the future Bike Day event, OD planned to enquire about a road closure in Exeter Road/Parade for the duration of the event.

5. To receive an update on other relevant matters from Town Council working parties, outside body representatives and Transition Exmouth

Active Travel funding – tranche 2:

As the Devon Association of Local Council's (DALC) rep on DCC's Active Travel forum, LB provided an update on the Active Travel Fund. Tranche 2 criteria for Active Travel Fund was still related to diverting people from overcrowded public transport and to walking and cycling particularly to work. Exmouth does not have much travel to work in town by public transport.

Therefore, as with tranche 1, it appeared that towns and cities with schemes and projects that were linked to Future High Streets Funding and 'shovel-ready' had been put forward as part of DCC's funding bid. Exmouth did not have any suitable schemes in tranche 1 and would not meet the criteria for tranche 2.

Further information can be found on the DCC website.

Independently, improvements to cycle routes may be able to be implemented through other ETC Working Parties, such as Exmouth Transport Partnership (ETP) and Public Rights of Way. A current example is in the Bapton Valley Park where ETC are working towards getting a specification and scope written for cycle and pathway improvements in this area.

Electric Vehicle / Charging Point Workshop from DCC and Energy Saving Trust: TD updated members of a recent webinar he attended regarding electric vehicles and electric charging points. DCC had a proposal to have a county-wide network for public car charging points in carparks and on-street and Exmouth is being cited as a pilot town.

Action: TD to continue to contact Andrew Ennis at EDDC through ETP to see if he has had any involvement with the county-wide scheme and, any progress with Exmouth's establishment as a pilot town.

With regards to ETC's vans, TD also reported that the Energy Saving Trust run an advisory framework so ETC could contact them for advice on the best energy options for vans.

Additionally, TD had an email discussion with Emily Reed, DCC, regarding the possibility of working with DCC and their net-zero carbon ambitions and had received dates of meetings and ideas moving forward. The consultation period on the interim net-zero carbon strategy will run from December 2020 – February 2021. The Citizens Assembly had been delayed due to Covid-19/Coronavirus and no additional information was provided.

TD also suggested trying to establish a link with EDDC Councillors and the Climate Portfolio Holder.

AOB

Letter from XR:

MR asked that the letter from XR be put on the next Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Party agenda to discuss.

However, as some incorrect planning assumptions had been highlighted on this letter, these would need to be addressed before moving forward.

Plastic Reduction Working Party (PRWP):

MR asked if the PRWP would be formally disbanded and LB confirmed that the PRWP would be wound down when the outstanding projects have been completed, including installing drinking water fountains, obtaining the Surfer's Against Sewage accreditation and trialling new bins in the Magnolia Centre.

Action: LB to talk with Councillor Alex Sadiq, Chair of the PRWP, about outstanding projects.

Environmental Audit Press Release:

Currently, the audit is not in the public domain and it was agreed that a press release should be issued to highlight the positive outcomes of the audit.

Action: LB to liaise with TD regarding a press release for both the audit and other ETC environmental projects.

Next meeting

Members agreed that the frequency of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Party be monthly.

Action: LB to amend the ToR.

Next meeting 8th September at 2pm via Zoom.

The meeting finished at 11.55am.