

## **EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL Festival and Events Working Party**

Notes of the virtual meeting held at 1400 on Thursday 5 November 2020 via Zoom

### **Present**

Cllr Steve Gazzard (Chair)	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Chetna Jones	CJ	Exmouth Town Council
Carla Hiley	CH	Exmouth Town Council
Natasha Smart	NS	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Frank Cullis	FC	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Cherry Nicholas	CN	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Eileen Beech (Observer)	EB	Exmouth Town Council

### **Apologies**

Cllr Joy Whipps	JW	Exmouth Town Council
Trevor Huggons	TH	Festival Volunteer

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### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1. SG welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted apologies.

### **2. Notes of Last Meeting**

- 2.1. FC proposed, seconded by OD, that the notes of the last meeting on 8 October 2020 be approved. There were no matters arising.

### **3. Christmas 2020 Update**

- 3.1. **Festival of Trees.** CH explained that the Festival of Trees, which had been planned for the start of Advent on Sunday 29 November 2020, would obviously not now be able to go ahead due to the current national lockdown, which is not due to finish until 2 December. However, she wondered whether members would still like to gift Christmas trees to the 8 Exmouth primary schools to decorate. She also wondered whether a remote Christmas tree decorating competition for the schools could still be held, with schools decorating their own tree in situ. To enter into the competition, they could provide photographs of their decorated trees for the Mayor (SG) to decide a winner or, if the judging took place after 2 December, he may be able to visit the schools in a socially distanced manner. She sought members' views on this alternative plan.
- 3.2. Members approved the new plan of gifting the trees to the primary schools and holding a remote Christmas tree decorating competition (proposed by FC, seconded by OD). CH agreed to contact the schools to let them know.

**ACTION: CH to inform the schools about the updated plan for the Christmas Tree event**

- 3.3. **'The Big Christmas Sing'**. CH explained that she has been talking to Reverend Simon Atkinson of Brixington Church about his idea of holding a community doorstep carol singing event. Called 'The Big Christmas Sing', the idea is that the whole community goes outside their homes at 6.30pm on Monday 21 December to sing two Christmas carols together: *Oh Come All Ye Faithful* and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*. It would work rather like the NHS clap on Thursday evenings during the first national lockdown. Other ideas which could coordinate with the event at the same time include: Exmouth Air playing the carols; local choirs singing the carols; and the Town Concert Band playing the music, some or all of which could be live streamed (eg via Zoom to Facebook or YouTube). ETC could help with marketing the event and it might be possible for the Exmouth Journal to print the lyrics.
- 3.4. Members were in favour of this positive event and it was proposed by OD, seconded by CN, for ETC to go ahead with supporting it.

**ACTION: CH to progress the planning with Rev Atkinson & local choirs etc**

- 3.5. **Promotional material for Christmas celebrations and community guidance.** CH explained that she has explored costs for the community Christmas card and calculated that, for all 22,000 households in Exmouth to receive it, it would cost in the region of £10,000 (for designing, printing and distribution). She assumed that this cost was not viable so was looking at alternative ways to convey the community event information and positive Christmas message which had been the card's key purpose. She therefore proposed that an article in the Exmouth Journal, and/or perhaps paying for an advert, might be a better way forward and could also include details of the primary schools' tree decorating competition and The Big Christmas Sing. Members supported this approach. CH also sought members' views on what the Christmas message should be. SG felt that a happy message would suffice. CH therefore stated that she would discuss this further with LB and also check whether EDDC was planning to issue any messaging so as not to conflict with that.

**ACTION: CH to make plans for a Christmas community communication**

- 3.6. **New Year's Eve fireworks.** LB explained that ETC normally organises a short firework display on New Year's Eve to take place from Manor Gardens (where the necessary security of the fireworks can be maintained), with crowds normally gathering in the Strand to watch the display. CH has been in touch with Inspector Antonia Weeks to seek the police view on holding the event this year. Inspector Weeks has given a clear steer that ETC shouldn't be holding any kind of event which would encourage people to congregate. There are other factors to consider such as pubs more recently shutting at 10pm (although it is unclear whether this will also be the case on New Year's Eve) and the environmental impact of fireworks. LB is also mindful of needing to consult with the community about fireworks, having been subject to angry criticism from a member of the public at last year's

event. She therefore sought members' views on holding a fireworks event this year.

- 3.7. There was considerable discussion about this, with a general sense from members of not wanting to encourage any kind of public gathering, whilst at the same time not wanting to disappoint the community or cancel every event which might be perceived as joyful. Holding fireworks at the beach was discussed, but CN pointed out that this has been considered and discounted previously for a number of safety reasons. CH has been unable to find any current guidance about fireworks or find examples of other councils yet committing to putting on a display. OD raised an alternate idea of a 'Festival of Light', which could be a similar event to The Big Christmas Sing, with residents coming out of their houses at midnight and shining upwards the brightest lights they have. Members liked this idea but agreed that the best option would be to reconvene in a month's time, once the current lockdown has ended and the future is a little more certain, and make a final decision about a New Year's Eve event then.

#### **4. Support for Exmouth Pride**

- 4.1. CH explained that she has been approached by several community groups over the last few months who are struggling to fundraise because their usual events have been cancelled due to the current pandemic. One of these is Exmouth Pride, who have found it particularly difficult to find alternative ways of fundraising. She has been speaking to them about fundraising ideas such as installing a rainbow bench in Manor Gardens or holding an LGBT history month. She sought members' views on how it might be possible to assist groups like this.
- 4.2. LB explained that, although this working party has a £10,000 budget set aside for supporting non-Festival related arts activity in Exmouth, there isn't currently a clear remit for how this money should be allocated. She is therefore keen to set up a clear guidance framework for the working party to use to manage and administer this. Members favoured setting up some kind of grants process, similar to that used by Finance Committee, which would enable some checks and balances in the process. LB explained that the reason groups like this are unable to access grants funding is often because they cannot meet the full criteria (eg providing full accounts), so she would favour making the process slightly different to accommodate this. She has suggested CH investigate how other councils manage this. SG concluded the working party's agreement in principle to introducing a new framework/grants process (proposed by CN, seconded by OD), and sought an update from CH at the next meeting.

**ACTION: CH to explore arts grant funding process with other councils**

#### **5. Any Other Business**

- 5.1. None raised.

## **6. Date of Next Meeting**

- 6.1. Members agreed that it was important to meet again in a month to make a final decision about New Year's Eve fireworks and review the Christmas community messaging. The date and time of the next meeting will be **Thursday 3 December at 1400**, held virtually via Zoom.

The meeting finished at 1505.