

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

Notes of the virtual meeting held at 1400 on Thursday 21 January 2021 via Zoom

### **Present**

Cllr Joy Whipps (Chair)	JW	Exmouth Town Council
Chetna Jones	CJ	Exmouth Town Council
Carla Hiley	CH	Exmouth Town Council
Natasha Smart	NS	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Eileen Beech	EB	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Frank Cullis	FC	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Cherry Nicholas	CN	Exmouth Town Council
Trevor Huggons	TH	Festival Volunteer

### **Apologies**

Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
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### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

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

### **2. Notes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

- 2.1. SG proposed, seconded by OD, that the notes of the last meeting on 3 December 2020 be approved. There were no matters arising.

### **3. Exmouth Festival 2021**

- 3.1. CH explained that LB had asked her to make a recommendation about whether to go ahead with this year's Exmouth Festival. Unfortunately, after considering all aspects of what would be involved, her recommendation was not to proceed with Exmouth Festival 2021. Major considerations in reaching this conclusion included: not knowing what the national situation will be by May and whether a mass gathering like the Festival would be able to go ahead; under the current national lockdown, not being able to book the land or a premises licence; not being able to obtain insurance (due to the UK government not underwriting insurance for events); the difficulty of obtaining sponsorship; and not being able to guarantee visitor safety.
- 3.2. In response to a suggestion about postponing the Festival until later in the year, CH explained that she has considered this and been looking at advice within the events sector. It looks likely that mass gatherings will not be permitted until September, and the stage company we work with were already booked then. As the Festival needs to be held during summer months, the options for rescheduling in 2021 are limited. CH further

mentioned that it looks likely that similar events such as the Devon County Show and Brighton Festival are also going to cancel their 2021 events.

- 3.3. However, CH has been considering options for a different sort of music event or series of smaller pop-up events in late summer, which might coincide with possible national celebrations over reaching the end of the pandemic. She suggested having a temporary stage in the Strand with music acts, which would help support Strand businesses. There could also be walkabout acts over the summer, which would not encourage mass gatherings. Working party members supported this idea of smaller events and were keen to reduce costs by having a stage for several weeks, perhaps for a series of events rather than keep erecting and taking down a stage. It was also suggested that EDDC might be able to help provide a temporary stage. In response to a suggestion about using the stage in Manor Garden, CH explained that this was less desirable because of the issue of needing to limit numbers in a smaller, more enclosed area.
- 3.4. Even for smaller events later in the summer, members were concerned about potentially losing money if acts were booked but then the events had to be cancelled. CH felt that there would be a lot of goodwill from acts, who have not been able to work since the pandemic started and who would appreciate the need to be flexible over events being postponed or cancelled. Booking smaller, local acts would also avoid losing large deposit payments etc. Members supported the idea of sticking with smaller more local acts for these events. TH also made the point that it was important not to brand this as the Exmouth Festival but to retain the Festival brand for a 2022 return.
- 3.5. Members agreed to make a recommendation to Full Council at its next meeting on 22 February about the cancellation of this year's Festival. SG therefore proposed, seconded by FC, that the working party recommend to Full Council that, in light of the latest information relating to the current national pandemic situation, the Exmouth Festival 2021 should be cancelled, with a view to holding a series of smaller music events in the Strand in late summer 2021 instead. CH agreed to organise a press release ready to issue after this has been considered at Full Council, and to share this with the working party. In the meantime, she asked that the cancellation remain confidential in order for her to contact some of her key Festival contacts first to let them know. She would also try and reschedule any acts/resources which had required a deposit, to avoid losing any money, as well as try and roll over the Arts Council funding to next year.

#### **4. Any Other Business**

- 4.1. None raised.

#### **5. Date of Next Meeting**

- 5.1. Members agreed to postpone the date of the next meeting from 4 March until **Thursday 8 April 2021 at 1400**, which was better timing to review possible summer pop-up music events in the Strand. The meeting finished at approximately 1425.