

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL Town Maintenance Overview Working Party

Notes of the meeting held at 10am on Thursday 6th May 2021 via Zoom.

Present

Councillor Ian Kirvan	IK	Exmouth Town Council (Chair)
Councillor Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Tony Woodward	TW	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Frank Cullis	FC	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Steve Gazzard (ex-officio)	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Brian Bailey*	BB	Exmouth Town Council
*Non-voting member		
Chetna Jones	CJ	Deputy Town Clerk, Exmouth Town Council
Jennifer Wellington	JW	Note Taker, Exmouth Town Council

Apologies

None

1. Welcome, Apologies and Election of Chair

IK welcomed members to the meeting. No apologies were received.

IK requested nominations for the election of the Chairman. FC proposed IK, seconded by TW, to be re-elected as Chair of this working party. No further nominations were received. Members were asked to vote, and IK was duly elected as Chair.

2. To approve the notes of the last meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 8th April 2021 were approved.

3. To review the survey report of the Phear Park Compound and to agree to appoint Simon Allchurch to project manage the proposed works at a fixed price of £1,500

The survey of the compound area produced by Simon Allchurch had been circulated prior to this meeting and was noted.

The survey showed that the site was not in too bad a state overall, but preliminary work would be needed such as removing the tree currently growing in the site and removing items not belonging to the Town Council prior to the lease being signed.

The project management work will include determining the ease and cost of adding services such as electricity, water and waste and investigating the suitability of the ground to install a container and welfare unit. BB suggested propping up any units

on timbers, rather than doing any levelling work to the ground. Any planning permission for the site would form part of the project management work.

BB asked how much the cost would be to carry out the suggested work and if EDDC would give the Town Council any money back after the rental term ceases. CJ explained that there are no estimated costings for the work at this time, but this would be investigated. The survey itself was free.

Installing a water supply was discussed with the possibility of installing a welfare unit for the Town Maintenance Team. CJ explained that EDDC were open to allowing the Town Council to tap into their water supply.

If it turns out that installing a separate welfare unit would be complicated to connect to the waste/sewer system, a chemical toilet could be considered or using the public toilet currently at Phear Park. However, as an employer, members recognised the benefits of providing a welfare unit.

Action: CJ to talk to Nick Christo at EDDC about what mains water services they currently have in Phear Park.

Members were happy with the survey provided by Simon Allchurch and agreed that assistance was required to project manage this work. TW proposed, seconded by OD, that Simon Allchurch be appointed to project manage the proposed works at the Phear Park compound and this was unanimously agreed.

CJ added that she would share the survey with EDDC's Estates Team.

4. To review the amendments to the Heads of Terms for the Phear Park compound lease following the advice from the surveyors and solicitor

Both surveyors had provided similar advice to use when negotiating the heads of terms:

- 6-month break clause – the break clause may be too lenient and may not give the Town Council adequate security in terms of the money that may be invested.

Members discussed this and suggested either a 2-year break clause and/or a sliding scale of compensation covering costs over a 6-year period i.e. EDDC compensate the Town Council of the costs invested, reducing by 20% each year for the first five years then nothing for the sixth year.

Members noted that if EDDC turns into a unitary authority at any point during the contract lease term then the contract will transfer to the authority which takes on EDDC's responsibilities.

- Repair obligations – recording the condition of the site (using the survey and taking photographs) and highlighting all the areas that the Town Council

would be responsible for was agreed by members. It would also be important to check for any outstanding repairs i.e. wall repairs that back onto the Rifle Club.

- EDDC would need to remove all items not belonging to the Town Council.
- An asbestos survey would need to be completed.
- The Town Council's insurance would cover the compound as an asset.
- Option of future purchase – if the opportunity arose and there was an appetite for the Town Council to purchase this site in the future, then the interest would need to be logged via a Full Council meeting, not at this meeting. Members would be made aware of this opportunity as notice would be given as a tenant and the Town Council would be made aware if a third party brought the site.
- TW explained that the line, '*non-required by EDDC as a condition of the lease*' is likely to mean that any work to be done to the site before the Town Council lease the area would need landlord (EDDC) agreement.
- CCTV/alarm system – members felt that installing some sort of security system would be beneficial as this is a vulnerable site, particularly at night. In addition to cameras, motion-sense lights would be useful both from a security point of view and for helping to light the area for the Town Maintenance Team.
Action: CJ to review CCTV options.
- OD queried what conditions would apply in the vehicle lease if the vans were stolen. CJ explained that anything that happens to the vehicles would be the Town Council's responsibility. Security measures, such as cameras and lighting would reduce the premium costs and mitigate risks. BB explained that vandalism would also need to be mitigated against and that insurance may not cover this as default.
- The plan was to install a standpipe at the compound to help to help with the increase in demand in watering the plants. The idea is to continue to work with Kings Garden Centre for filling the bowser and use the standpipe as a back-up water source.
- CJ confirmed that the Town Council had resolved to proceed with hiring a solicitor to assist with Heads of Terms and preparing the lease agreement.
- CJ confirmed that much of the legal work will be done by a junior solicitor (with a senior solicitor having oversight) which will reduce the cost. It is estimated that the solicitor fees for this site would be around £3320 – £3720. CJ added that she would be happy to contact EDDC Estates Team to negotiate amendments and then get the solicitor to review the Heads of Terms once draft terms were agreed.

Action: CJ to contact EDDC to negotiate the Heads of Terms to reflect the advice highlighted by both the solicitor and surveyor.

5. To note the order confirmation of the work vans and expected delivery date

Members noted that CJ has proceeded with ordering the three vans, on a 5-year lease with maintenance cover, as agreed by the Town Council.

No delivery date for the vans is currently known.

6. To note the existing vans will be auctioned and proceeds will be used towards the cost of leasing the new vans

Members noted that the existing vans will be sold through an auction house, with the proceeds going towards the cost of leasing the new vans.

7. To receive an update on Town and Grounds Maintenance work

CJ gave the following update on the work of the Town and Grounds Maintenance work:

- The Town Maintenance Team are currently focussing on road weed clearing. However, this will reduce due as more time is needed for grounds maintenance, watering and grass cutting.
- The Team have been split into groups, and are currently trialling a fortnightly schedule:
 - Two operatives are to work on grounds maintenance
 - One operative to focus on watering 2 – 3 days a week: flower towers twice a week and flowerbeds once a week. This will increase to watering every day when the weather gets warmer and summer planting has taken place.
 - One operative to focus on weed spraying and grass cutting
- In addition to grounds maintenance, the Team are also undertaking odd jobs for example helping with the hire of gazebos, bicycle pick-ups for reuse with Ride On, Exeter, graffiti clearing and other ad-hoc requirements for the Council.
- SG thanked CJ for arranging for the Team to undertake the work on the list he provided.
- OD queried if the compost used by the Town Maintenance Team is peat-free.
Action: CJ to check if the compost already being used is peat-free and to ensure the compost used in the future is peat free. CJ to also check that any fertiliser used is environmentally friendly and organic.

In addition, members raised *No Mow May*, where grass is left uncut to encourage wildflowers to grow which helps wildlife. Members asked if grass could only be cut where it is strictly necessary.

Action: Members were asked to let CJ know of any areas that could be left uncut.

Grass banks, such as the one along Pound Lane and Marine Way, were only cut once a year to allow wildflowers to grow. However, a small strip on the edge of the footway was cut regularly to ensure paths were kept clear.

- Hanging baskets and troughs have built-in reservoirs so that they retain water better. However, the flower towers were an older design and did not retain water as well.
- Summer plants will be delivered and planted week commencing 7th June.
- BB suggested that our Town Maintenance Team and equipment could be hired to other Town and Parish Councils. It was felt that the Town Council was not able to provide this having taken on additional responsibilities. It was important to note that this being the first year there was much to be learnt and that it was better to stick with the existing commitments and do the work well rather than take on too much and not be able to deliver on them all.
- BB raised an idea about creating mini forests in the town.

Action: BB to talk to EDDC about this and possible suitable areas.

8. Any other business

OD thanks CJ and IK for their work so far and added that he was feeling positive and reassured that this working party was making progress in the right direction.

The chairman thanked OD on behalf of the working party adding that the Council was heading in the right direction in taking control of its own affairs.

Plant updates

CJ to keep members updated on plant progress and delivery via email and the next winter planting proposals.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10th June 2021. However, OD explained that there is a Strategic Planning at EDDC also scheduled for this date and IK confirmed he may need to reschedule due to work commitments.

Action: IK to contact CJ with alternative dates for the next meeting.

The meeting finished at 12.06pm.