

## **EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL Town Maintenance Overview Working Party**

Notes of the meeting held at 10am on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021 via Zoom.

### **Present**

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

### **Apologies**

None.

#### **1. Welcome and apologies**

IK welcomed members to the meeting and no apologies were received.

#### **2. To approve the notes of the last meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021 were approved.

#### **3. Matters arising**

To review the grass cutting regime carried out by EDDC and agree whether this or any part of this is to be implemented on the areas requested by Exmouth Town Council

OD updated members that he had been in touch with Councillor Jung which he confirmed that the areas previously highlighted by members as being left unmanaged just had not been cut yet. Councillor Jung confirmed that East Devon District Council (EDDC) will make the Town Council aware of official rewilding areas.

IK added that there are ongoing issues with areas in Bradham Lane and Salterton Road which have been left uncut and unmanaged, especially around the flower towers. These areas look messy, and members felt it was unacceptable of EDDC as the Town Council have been paying towards the maintenance of these areas.

**Action: CJ/ to contact EDDC Street Scene to confirm the cutting and rewilding schedule of these areas.**

IK added that he had tried twice to follow up the meeting he had with Councillor Jung and CJ in the town. However, no email acknowledgment or update has been received.

CJ added that she had recently met with Wildflower Wardens from Exmouth Wildlife group, Mike Waler (Devon County Council, DCC, Ecologist) and Tom Wood from EDDC. Within this meeting, it was confirmed that EDDC are planning on mapping all areas which are to be rewilded and adding signage about what is happening. Additionally, a detailed management plan for the whole district moving forward will also be prepared. The issues with EDDC contract work were raised and will be investigated to resolve issues, especially at Bradham Lane.

It is still the intention to review grass cutting generally in Exmouth for the purpose of bringing it together and provide more control.

Members raised the issue of weeds growing on the traffic islands. CJ explained that DCC should be undertaking this work, EDDC has at Exmouth Town Council's (ETC) request carried out the clearing as part of the winter work when highway grass cutting stopped. CJ advised that such issues should be raised with DCC so that the ongoing and increasing number of problems can be logged and tracked appropriately. DCC will either raise funds to tackle the work or request ETC to help.

#### **4. To receive an update on Town Maintenance work and schedule for September and October including annual grass cutting and winter planting**

CJ thanked all on this Working Party for pursuing plans to carry out the Grounds Maintenance work in-house. The Town Council has received a lot of positive comments from the community on the work that has been undertaken so far. MC and IK added thanks to the Team and that the flower displays look the best they have in years. SG suggested an official thank you letter be written to the Town Maintenance Team to acknowledge their hard work.

CJ added that the Team have been spending one week on grounds maintenance and the second week on road weed clearing over the summer months. Watering has taken place mainly every day. Kings Garden Centre have continued to supply the water and only on a couple of occasions have we needed to fill up from Camperdown. This is because the pump at Kings needed replacing. It transpires that there is a lot of debris in our bowser, and it is likely the filters at Kings are not working properly.

**Action: CJ to speak with Kings Garden Centre regarding the filter on the pipe from the spring to the tank as dirt and debris has accumulated in the bowser from the water.**

The winter planting plan has been completed and sent to the plant supplier, for planting to begin in early November to replace the summer planting (perennials to stay in-situ).

Work has been scheduled in September and October for the Team to undertake annual grass cutting i.e. the Pound Lane bank to ensure these areas are managed and do not grow out of control, and road clearing will continue after and throughout the winter.

Work to obtain quotes for cutting both sides of Marine Way bank has started and CJ will inform members of the cost once all three quotes are received. Japanese Knotweed has only recently been identified in the bank. CJ has reported this to the DCC Neighbourhood Highway Officer. A response has been received from the County Ecologist confirming it is not DCC's policy to treat invasive weeds but will assess any reports which allege that noxious weeds on DCC land have caused growth or have spread onto private land. Members were very concerned by this response and felt action was needed by DCC as the landowner to prevent spreading.

**Proposed by MC and seconded by FC, to recommend that the Town Council writes to Devon County Council and demand that they take the necessary action to remove the Japanese Knotweed from the Marine Way bank.**

#### **5. To receive an update on Phear Park compound area**

CJ gave an update on the Phear Park compound area.

Unfortunately, most of the changes proposed by ETC for the heads of terms were not agreed by EDDC other than extending the break clause from 6 months to 12 months and allowing the condition survey to be added to the lease agreement. They did not agree or acknowledge a sliding scale of costs or break-out clause of two years or any of the other suggestions. No reason or explanation as to why these suggestions had not been agreed was provided.

CJ sought legal advice should the ETC proceed with terms and conditions. The advice received with regards to the review of the Heads of Terms was found to be biased and in favour of EDDC,

CJ has been trying to contact Tim Child to request for a more balanced approach. OD suggested contacting Councillor Haywood as Portfolio Holder.

**Actions: OD to make initial contact with Councillor Haywood and ask that he contact CJ for further information. CJ to email Mark Williams and John Golding to seek assistance.**

#### **6. To receive an update on the set up of special verges in Exmouth to protect wildflowers and promote wildlife**

With the Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Party work in mind, CJ has drafted an Environmental Policy which includes a general verge management plan for grass cutting and planting.

The draft policy is to be reviewed by ETC at its meeting in September.

CJ highlighted that the 'Special Verges and Natural Habitats in Larger Areas' section of the policy will require amending as special verges are identified and more detailed management plans are defined.

The middle of the bank by Dinan Way Trading Estate, where rare wildflowers have been seen growing, has been identified and CJ has been investigating how the Town Council can adopt this bank as a special verge. Other areas are also being identified and this is not being limited to highway verges but to open spaces and cemeteries as well. The Wildflower Wardens expressed a willingness to collect data on wildflowers and wildlife in particular areas of Exmouth. The criteria on what makes a special verge will be discussed and agreed with DCC's Ecologist. The data will be made publicly available once completed.

Members were advised that evidence has shown that it is not always better to leave grass to grow wild as cutting grass back allows other plants to grow better.

*TW left the meeting 11.32am.*

### **7. To receive an update on work vehicles**

Members were updated that the team were managing with the current work vehicles for the time being.

CJ has been receiving regular updates from the lease company for the new vehicles that are on order, and mid-November has been provided as an indication of when the vehicles will be delivered. The company has advised that hire vehicles can be supplied in the interim if needed.

CJ confirmed that liners, plywood, and Chapter 8-essential elements have been added to the new vehicles.

### **8. Any other business**

#### New housing development at the junction of Prince of Wales Drive and Dinan Way

Members discussed that the lawn outside a house on the new development is noticeably dry and brown. It appeared that the new turf planted by the developer has not been looked after properly.

### **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

SG has given his apologies for the next meeting.

The meeting finished at 11.40 am.