

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL Festival and Events Working Party

Notes of the meeting held at 1400 on Thursday 8th September 2022 in the Committee Room

Present

Cllr Joy Whipps (Chair)	JW	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Frank Cullis	FC	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Trevor Huggons	TH	Festival Volunteer
Charlie Tapp	CT	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Greenway	LG	Exmouth Town Council

Apologies

Cllr Eileen Beech	EB	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Alex Sadiq	AS	Exmouth Town Council
Chetna Jones	CJ	Exmouth Town Council

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies (JW)

JW welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted apologies.

2. To approve the notes from the 21st of July 2022 and matters arising (JW)

The notes from the previous meeting were approved.

FC updated members that he is looking into the possibility of a laser display in The Strand with 10 minutes of music for New Year's Eve but did not have costs at the time of meeting. CT confirmed that she has investigated projection lighting but has not got as far to enquire about prices. After further discussion CT and FC agreed that there was not enough time to organise an event for this year.

LB confirmed that EDDC has not made a decision as to whether fireworks will be permitted on their land, so arrangements for New Year's Eve fireworks remain uncertain.

3. To discuss the results of light survey and future Exmouth Festivals (CT)

CT had circulated the results of a light touch survey regarding the future of the festival and an outline of two possible options for how we could proceed, prior to the meeting.

JW asked each member for their view on the results of the light survey and the options for future festivals:

- TH stated that although the survey resulted in most people wanting a free festival this would not be feasible due to the size of the 2022 festival. TH did not think the prices

suggested in the survey were enough, he believes smaller events in the town would be better and could include outside organisations and businesses.

- OD confirmed that this year's festival was a great success, but funds are not available for it to stay the same in the future. OD agreed that although the survey resulted in people wanting bigger named acts this would not be possible as they do not want to pay the price. OD suggested spreading the festival throughout the town possibly the same weekend as Devon Live to include bands playing in local pubs and holding the festival in the Manor Gardens.
- FC was keen to keep the festival the same or make it bigger but realises that this is not feasible. FC suggested holding a smaller festival in the Manor Gardens but expects locals will give backlash.
- SG was hoping to keep the festival the same but realises that the lack of resources and funding would not make this possible in the future. SG was keen to use the Manor Gardens with local bands but also suggested The Strand, Seafront, Beach Gardens and Phear Park as possible venues. SG agreed with FC that changes may result in a backlash from residents but stated that the land at the Imperial Rec is deteriorating and will only get worse so this is another reason why the venue should be moved. SG advised members that as the elections are in May it would not be a good time and suggested the August bank holiday as an alternative date.
- JW reminded members that when the festival started, it was held in The Strand and provided children's entertainment. JW agrees the 2022 festival is not sustainable which is partly due to the lack of external grant sources. JW suggested spreading the festival throughout the town with lots of other activities (not just music), including potentially a family day on Sunday in the Manor Gardens.
- AS provided the following response via email - AS supports the survey proposal to move to a multi-site festival as she believes it would provide more flexibility to offer different activities and events which would make it a more unique style festival. AS believes that by using a multi-site set up, certain elements can be free, but it may allow us to trial charging for certain activities/events. AS is also keen to move the festival to the Manor Gardens as although the Rec ground has been very successful, the costs are getting large and Exmouth Festival should be a local festival supporting local acts. This format may also deter some of the troublemakers. AS urged members to bear in mind that if the decision is made to move to the Manor Gardens, we should engage the local businesses who hold events on this site ahead of anything being made public.
- FC was keen to keep the festival in May. However, LB advised that due to accounting/audit pressures and the timing of the elections in 2023, it really wasn't feasible to host a Festival in May next year.
- OD advised that a press release should be issued to let people know how much the 2022 festival cost to explain the context of any decision to change the format and timing.
- CT updated members that 30,000 people attended over the festival weekend. FC queried this as security were not always counting people in and out and groups of youths were going in and out the whole time, but it was felt that this was fairly reflective for the festival's popularity.

- CT explained that she is keen to work in partnership with businesses and community groups and to use the available budget more wisely. She confirmed that she would favour a more modular festival and LB advised members that in 2015, the festival had included several fringe events over the course of one week, including art exhibitions and theatre all over the town. This format catered for and engaged a broader range of people and the festival worked with outside organisations.
- TH asked if the dates could be spread, and CT advised that we keep to certain dates and if module is successful, we could look to spread festival over a longer period.
- FC queried how security would work with multiple event locations and LB advised that security requirements would need to be assessed based on a site-specific risk assessment to see what level of security would be required.

Members then discussed previous festivals and potential dates going forward with CT asking members to confirm which dates they would prefer. After discussion it was agreed that the last weekend in July 2023 would be the best date for the festival and that this should form the basis of a recommendation to the next Full Council meeting.

SG queried costs and the scope to increase the budget of the festival was briefly discussed. LB advised the working party would need to put forward a suggested budget as part of the annual budgeting process, but that Members should be mindful that the level of earmarked reserves for the event were diminishing.

LB suggested the need to secure site bookings with EDDC as early as possible and Queens Drive Space, Manor Gardens, The Strand and Phear Park were all identified as potential venues for a fringe style Festival taking place over the last weekend in July. CT was also advised to have an informal discussion with the Rugby Club regarding the temporary use of the Rugby Club site by the Caravan and Camping Club every year to coincide with the festival.

LB confirmed that a press release would need to be issued to coincide with any recommendations being taken to Full Council and it was agreed that CT will send a press release via email for approval.

Recommendation:

That in terms of future festivals, Members adopt Option 2 from the accompanying report

- **A cross-town arts festival**
- **Various locations around Exmouth, utilising existing infrastructure as well as parks and public spaces**
- **A move away from the predominantly music festival model towards a focus on family-friendly, mixed arts**
- **Programming with music, theatre, film, visual arts & community activities.**
- **Free (with potential for some paid activities)**
- **Can be scaled up or down depending on funding**

It was also recommended that the 2023 budget should be reviewed and considered in the context of the ongoing budget discussions for the Council but that a minimum level of funding at the existing amount of £38,000 should be agreed for CT to start planning for 2023 now.

Christmas 2022

CT provided a brief description of the programme for the winter festival and discussed the light up windows trail that is planned for December which could be for each individual ward, it includes a digital map so people can view all the windows and pictures are uploaded onto the website.

4. Date of next meeting

13th October 2022

The meeting ended at 15:50