

# EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

## Town Premises Working Party

Notes of the meeting held at 10.00am on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2022 in the Committee Room, Town Hall, First Floor, St Andrews Road, Exmouth, EX8 1AW

### Present

Councillor Cherry Nicholas	CN	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Brian Bailey	BB	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Maddie Chapman	MC	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Brian Toye	BT	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Frank Cullis	FC	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Pauline Stott	PS	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Tim Dumper	TD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Fred Caygill	FCa	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Town Clerk/Officer
Sam Dorman	SD	Admin/note taker

### Apologies

Councillor Alex Sadiq	AS	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Bruce De Saram	BDS	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Angela Boatwright	AB	Exmouth Town Council

#### 1. To elect a chairman

Councillor Tim Dumper proposed, seconded by BT, that Councillor Steve Gazzard be elected as Chair of the Town Premises Working Party. No other nominations were received, and all members agreed that Councillor Steve Gazzard be elected as Chair.

#### 2. Welcome and apologies

SG welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were noted.

LB explained to members that FCa had attended the meeting as a non-voting member to speak to members about Item 5.

### **3. Approval of the notes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

Councillor Brian Bailey proposed, and Councillor Maddy Chapman seconded that the notes be accepted as a true record of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

- 4. To receive an update on the status of discussions with East Devon District Council and note the associated recommendation from Cabinet that “Senior Officers agree to continue to operate the ‘appointment system’ for visitors at Exmouth Town Hall and Blackdown House and the position is formally reviewed again in February 2023 for the reasons highlighted in the report. If however in the interim the Chief Executive is satisfied that there is an adequate staffing resource then the town hall reception will reopen for a recommended period of time.”**

LB updated members regarding the recommendation Libby Jarrett had reported via EDDC Cabinet, that the Town Hall should remain closed until the review in February 2023 as the figures show it does not warrant opening to the public. However, during the mourning period of HM Queen Elizabeth II, the doors to the Town Hall were opened for members of the public to sign the condolence book. This was agreed by EDDC as long as Town Hall staff could oversee this but reception staff from EDDC were happy to help manage the book, with reception staff from the Town Council covering at lunchtime.

Following the Cabinet meeting, Mark Williams had agreed that subject to recruitment, EDDC may look at opening the doors of the Town Hall for three mornings a week before the review period in February 2023 but in the meantime, there will be a canopy installed over the side door of the Town Hall and an intercom system with three buttons, one for the registrar, one for Exmouth Town Council and one for East Devon District Council.

- 5. To discuss and agree any specific skeleton terms for the basis of a lease renewal by the Town Council for offices at Exmouth Town Hall**

LB had been asked by EDDC to discuss the lease renewal as it is due to expire on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023. There was a suggestion from Tim Child and Mark Williams that the Town Council might like to move back downstairs. LB pointed out that this would not be suitable as the IT network would need to be re-configured and that EDDC enquiries would then fall on the Town council to deal with.

LB suggested that the Town Council negotiate a new lease on the existing footprint but not to be tied into a five-year lease. Then have a short lease clause added for one year to 18 months with a condition to the lease for EDDC to cover some reception if the Town Hall was to re-open.

LB added that there are very little commercial premises available to lease in the town and that she had looked at residential properties, but these were not suitable for our purposes.

FCa thanked members for allowing him to speak at the meeting. He explained that he had identified premises that would possibly be coming up for sale, this was following a telephone call with a member of his constituency. The resident is keen for the premises to be used for the community in future. FCa stated that he visited the premises and listed the many advantages for the Town Council as follows.

- On a bus route
- Not a listed building
- Good space for a reception desk, offices for town clerk and other members of staff, room for meetings.
- Potential to install solar panels for energy which would be environmentally friendly.
- Could host community group meetings
- Car park
- Could generate an income for the Town Council
- If looking at buying this is a good opportunity

Members discussed the potential premises and there were questions asked but all were very much in favour of it.

The overall reaction from members was that having our own premises would be the best option as it is essential to have face to face contact with the public and that at present, we are reducing our service as the Town Hall remains closed.

SG thanked FCa for bringing the potential premises to the working party's attention and asked members to keep this discussion confidential.

LB concluded that there would need to be some homework around the many questions posed by members and said that she would work together with FCa to address queries raised. Members agreed to this. As a starting point LB said she would look at obtaining a land registry report.

TD proposed, BB seconded and it was agreed by all that LB should continue to negotiate a new lease for the Town Council to reside in the Town Hall while the potential premises as discussed was considered.

**ACTION: LB to look at obtaining a land registry report for potential premises.**

## **6. To agree the date of the next meeting**

LB to agree the date of next meeting subject to need.

The meeting finished at 11.10am.