

# EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

## Town Maintenance Overview Working Party

Notes of the meeting held on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 10am via Zoom

### Present

Councillor Ian Kirvan	IK	Exmouth Town Council (Chair)
Councillor Maddy Chapman	MC	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Matt Hall (left 11.00)	MH	Exmouth Town Council
Chetna Jones	CJ	Exmouth Town Council
Sam Dorman (notetaker)	SD	Exmouth Town Council

### Apologies

Councillor Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Joy Whipps	JW	Exmouth Town Council

### 1. Welcome and apologies

IK welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted as above.

### 2. To approve the notes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2023 and any matters arising therein

The notes of the previous meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2023 were proposed for approval by MC, seconded by OD, and agreed by all.

Matters arising from previous meeting notes.

Item 2 – IK and DP reported the overgrown footpath near Lidl and Prince of Wales Drive to Devon County Council. Both received the same reply from DCC saying “The area was reported last month, and a request went to Exmouth Town Council to cut back overgrown vegetation if they had the resources available. Customer may wish to contact them direct on this matter. “

CJ confirmed that the Town Maintenance team have cleared the walkway to allow pedestrians to pass by but unfortunately the whole hedge was so overgrown as it has not been maintained by DCC for several years. CJ had taken photographs of the hedge.

Members discussed how ETC shouldn't be expected to maintain this hedge and other land that belong to DCC and agreed this needs highlighting to Devon County Councillors.

**ACTION: CJ to contact Devon County Councillors regarding the work ETC are being asked to complete on DCC land and raise the concern that residents are being asked to contact ETC directly.**

### **3. To receive an update on the graffiti within Exmouth**

Members discussed the graffiti tags around the town in particular bus shelters. IK will email CJ with the locations of the graffiti. IK flagged up how he has tried to report graffiti on benches and litter bins on EDDC land through the EDDC app but so far nothing has been done.

MH has emailed EDDC regarding the graffiti reports and will feedback to members once he has received a reply.

### **4. To receive an update on grass cutting**

Members discussed the grass cutting and strimming that EDDC complete on ETC's behalf. CJ said areas are looking better and they seem to be catching up with the work. IK added that the strimming has been done properly in most places and it is better than it was.

However concerns were raised by members about the supervision of Streetscene staff and completion of work. Members commented that staff are often seen by members of the public standing around and not working. OD will email Streetscene about staff supervision.

**ACTION: OD to email Streetscene about staff supervision.**

### **5. To discuss the grass cutting report and to agree recommendations to the Town Council**

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the grass cutting contract with EDDC and whether ETC wanted to keep this going. Members discussed the contract and OD said that long term the work should be taken in house but recognises the difficulty with insufficient resources and so alternative contractors should be considered.

It was agreed that a recommendation be put to the Town Council to provide some history as to why we ETC were cutting grass on the Highway and why it should consider alternative contractors.

OD proposed, MC seconded, and it was agreed that the working party recommends to the Town Council **to proceed with inviting quotes for the grass cutting contract to commence April 2024 and that it prepares to take the work in-house within the next five years.**

### **6. To discuss a long-term solution for weed clearing which will fit in with ETC's Climate Plan and agree any recommendations to the Town Council**

The road weed clearing has become a much harder task because we are not weed spraying like we did before. Generally, the team are only getting around the whole of Exmouth once in a year.

CJ was asked to look at ways to make this job faster. After speaking with the maintenance team, they suggested that a mini road sweeper would be the best option as the sweeping and bagging up the weeds take the time and they said that this would make a huge difference.

Member discussed the team's suggestion and the different options which could help make this task not so resource intensive. Concerns were raised about the cost and who would pay for new equipment and resources. CJ suggested that members get a steer from the Town Council and agree a recommendation to get this discussion as an item on the next Town Council meeting.

MC suggested the recommendation to the Town Council be "Due to the pressures put onto the Town Maintenance team to carry out more and more work on behalf of Devon County Council and East Devon District Council, the Town Maintenance Overview working party are looking to the Town Council to give a way it would like the Town Maintenance team to go forward."

Due to the lack of regular road sweeping, minimal grass and hedge cutting for safety purposes only, gullies only being cleared on a 3-year cycle and no weed spraying there are more and more requests to clear weeds, cut overgrowth and unblock gullies. The Town Maintenance team are only equipped with basic tools, so work is resource intensive.

Basically a steer was needed on whether the Town Council wants to:

1. Take on more work no longer carried out by DCC and EDDC , which would mean investing in better equipment and/or more staff (a financial commitment from ETC by raising its proportion of the Council Tax) or
2. Say no and continue with the existing decision to carry on the work of the Brixington Tidy Group and focus on the outlying areas of Exmouth.

MC proposed, seconded by IK and it was agreed that the **Town Council reviews the work to be carried out by the Town Maintenance Team and whether it wants to take on more of the work no longer carried out by DCC and EDDC to ensure the town remains clean and tidy.**

## **7. To receive an update on general Town Maintenance work**

Since the festival the Town Maintenance team have been out road weed clearing and continuing with the watering and grounds maintenance in the town.

The weed ripper has taken a bit of a hit, the plates, brushes and wheels have worn, and CJ is looking to have it re-conditioned but failing that we might need to think about purchasing a second one.

Work on winter planting is being carried out and again more perennials will be considered to reduce the need to purchase the number of annuals we buy each year. CJ is looking at alternatives to Pansies and Violas as they attract bugs and struggled to survive.

## **8. Any other business**

IK raised the future of the EDDC Winter work. He said we need a very targeted list of what we would like done by the season worker for two days a week once the grass cutting stops until February 2024.

Any suggestions to be emailed to CJ for discussion at the next meeting.

## **9. To note the date of the next meeting**

5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Meeting finished at 11:55