

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Festival and Events Working Party

Notes of the virtual meeting held at 1400 on Thursday 14th September 2023 via zoom

Present

Cllr Joy Whipps (Chair)	JW	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Cherry Nicholas	CN	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Chetna Jones	CJ	Exmouth Town Council
Jess Magill	JM	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Greenway	LG	Exmouth Town Council

Apologies:

Cllr Aurora Bailey	AB	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Nick Hookway	NH	Exmouth Town Council

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

JW welcomed attendees to the meeting, noted apologies and requested more councillors become members of the WP.

2. To approve the notes from the meeting on 13th July 2023 and matters arising

OD proposed, CN seconded, the accuracy of the notes from the 13th of July 2023 which were approved with no matters arising.

3. Exmouth Festival 2023 wash up

JM has received overall positive feedback from members of the public about the festival being held over 3 sites, although Sideshore felt slightly detached so will take this into consideration next year. JM advised members that ETC ended up in a slight deficit for the festival and has a meeting next week to review this.

JW thanked JM for all her hard work and agreed that the festival format worked better over three sites rather than one although some complaints were received from people who were not able to use the Manor Gardens as a through fare. OD confirmed that everyone he has spoken to have come back with positive feedback expressing that this year had more of a family feel. OD received one complaint from a resident about noise in the Manor Gardens but got the impression that it was aimed at previous events that had been held and not an ETC event. OD advised members that the Strand stage was not ideal for his band and would have been happier in the Manor Gardens suggesting next year bigger group bands are sited in the Strand and smaller ones in the Manor Gardens.

JM advised members that she would be looking into more diversify on music genre for next year and possibly holding the events on Thursday through to Sunday. LB confirmed that an in-house review will take place to see if the budget can stretch for casual labour to be brought in next year to ease the workload as we were stretched this year over the 3 sites.

SG was pleased with the trader location on the Strand as footfall was high and agrees with JM that although the Artists were excellent, we should diversify more next year.

OD held a workshop but raised concerns that not all the workshops were well attended and suggested they be publicised more next year. JM agreed that attendance was low for some and will work to improve this next year however the workshop held on Sunday at Holy Trinity was popular. CJ has received feedback that Glenorchy Hall was too far away and difficult to find, and the Art Trail was hard to follow, OD confirmed that a map was available on the programme and in the APP for all locations. SG thanked JM for a fantastic event.

4. To agree a date for the Exmouth Festival 2024

Members discussed possible dates for the festival and school term times as preferable dates would not be in the school holidays when residents often go on holiday. SG made members aware that he has put in an application to EDDC to hold a charity event in the Strand on Saturday the 27th of July 2024 so the location would not be available.

OD thought that bank holidays should be avoided as so many other events take place and historically when Active Travel have held an event on the bank holiday the Strand has been very quiet. JM was not keen on a bank holiday in August as it gets darker, and LB confirmed that May is a busy time within the office so there would not be the capacity available.

JM suggested the first 2 weeks of July or the end of June, JW advised that she would not be available the first two weeks of July and would be disappointed if she was unable to take part. CN queried when the judging for Exmouth in Bloom would take place in the Manor Gardens, LB advised that the dates would not be out yet hence the urgency to put in our application to EDDC so that we can secure the spaces we want to use.

JM was considering launching on a Thursday and holding a bigger event on the Friday as Monday this year was not as popular as anticipated. Members discussed possible dates and it was agreed that the festival 2024 would take place from Thursday the 18th of July to Sunday the 21st of July 2024.

5. To discuss Winter Festival/Christmas Cracker

JW was concerned about where the Christmas tree would be placed this year as a local landlord is running a Christmas market during the run up to Christmas in the Strand and the stage covers the tree's fixing point. OD contacted EDDC to express his disappointment that they did not investigate this in more detail before providing permissions although EDDC did agree to put it on their mapping so that it would not cause an issue in future. LB confirmed that EDDC did not provide us with any supporting paperwork that would have alerted us to this conflict prior to permissions being given.

JW suggested putting the tree in the Magnolia Centre where the clock used to be or sharing the Rotary Club tree at the further end of the Magnolia Centre, LB confirmed that there is no fixing point pit where the clock used to be, and the Rotary tree does not have an on/off switch which we would need for the Christmas tree light turn on. LB advised members that there is limited scope within the town centre to meet our requirements for the event.

LB updated members that EDDC have offered to provide a new pit fixing point in the Manor Gardens but feels this is not focal enough as the gardens are closed at night and have been prone to vandalism. LB believes Kings Garden Centre have already sourced a tree for ETC, so it is imperative that we find a location to accommodate it.

LB has looked at alternative focal points that do not need to be sunk into a pit such as artificial trees or building a tree out of recycled material but nothing suitable within budget could be sourced. LB and CJ discussed other areas in Exmouth with members, but it was decided that the locations were not suitable to accommodate a tree of that size.

LB and JM have looked at the EDDC maps for the Strand to see if the tree could be moved to another spot but unfortunately there was not enough space. Members were concerned about the public's reaction if ETC did not display a Christmas tree this year so JM thought that as EDDC have offered to provide a pit/fixing point in the Manor Gardens maybe we should accept the offer. Although CN was not keen on this location members felt that no other option was available at this time.

SG agreed that Manor Gardens seems to be the only option available as EDDC will supply the fixing point, the stage can be used for a choir or town band to play during the switch on and the electric supply is located at the band stand. OD agreed with SG's points and stated that the lights will stand out more as the gardens are much darker than the Strand.

JM stated that we must take into consideration the local businesses on the Strand as historically they stayed open later during the festival so maybe the event could be spread across the two sites with an early event in the Strand followed by the Christmas tree switch on in the Manor Gardens. CJ raised concerns over the work involved in holding the event over two sites but suggested inviting the local businesses to have a stall in the Manor Gardens and providing them with the reason for the change. JM reminded members that the weather is unpredictable at that time of year and worried that if we invited people to gather there the ground may become muddy which EDDC would not appreciate.

Members discussed where the Christmas tree should be displayed in the Manor Gardens, and it was decided that the best position would be near the band stand as it has a power supply.

OD suggested that the lantern parade could go through the Strand where a choir could be provided then people could follow to the Manor Gardens for the light switch on. CJ was happy with this if it did not involve a whole set up as we would not have the capacity for a full event over two sites.

CJ reminded members that after the tree lighting last year people did not stay for the stage acts so it was decided that the tree lighting should be the last event of the evening. In the circumstances JW suggested holding the main event in the Strand then follow the lantern parade to the Manor Gardens where a choir will sing for the switch on, members agreed.

CJ will reply to EDDC to accept the offer and request a position as close to the stage as possible or meet with them to agree a position as a one off for this year.

JM shared outline plans for the entertainment which include a walkabout giant snow globe and the Street Heat Samba Band who are a light up performance and would be part of the lantern parade. LB stated that the samba band have performed before, but issues arose with the pavement width being too restrictive and they would have preferred a different parade route. JM will speak to the band to ascertain what space they require and possibly re-route the parade to accommodate the band. CJ suggested starting the parade in the Magnolia Centre which members were in favour of.

JM was keen for a fire show and asked members for their thoughts, members agreed that this would be a good idea, JM will check that it comes within our insurance. LB will investigate what licences are required for both events on each site.

6. Any other business

SG queried if ETC would provide fireworks for New Years Eve, LB confirmed that based on environmental grounds EDDC probably would not give permission and given previous complaints from residents about animals being scared it would not be pursued.

7. Date of next meeting 12th October 2023

CJ and LB sent their apologies for the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 15:52