

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL Festival and Events Working Party

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

Present

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

Apologies: None

1. Welcome, introduction, and apologies

JW welcomed attendees to the meeting and confirmed that no apologies had been received.

2. To approve the notes from the meeting on 9th November 2023 and matters arising

NH proposed, SG seconded, the accuracy of the notes from the 9th of November 2023 which were approved with no matters arising.

3. Christmas tree school competition wash up

JM updated members that although the trees came out of the festival budget MC did most of the liaising with Holy Trinity and OD judged the trees. OD confirmed that six primary schools and the Deaf Academy took part, the winner will be notified in January 2024 although all schools will be given a prize for taking part. OD used a list of criteria to judge which focused on recycling/upcycling and interactive ideas.

OD hoped more primary schools would take part next year and suggested setting a Christmas tree decoration theme. JM thought that Live to Learn home education families might like to take part next year.

4. Winter Festival wash up

JW expressed thanks to JM for all her hard work and thought this year's winter festival was the best so far with families staying later than usual. CJ confirmed that the lantern parade was well attended with Open Door, the Deaf Academy and Live to Learn taking part with the five primary schools. CJ made members aware that as the young people taking part from the Deaf Academy need to feel the music vibrations, in future they may want to position themselves closer to the band. JM received feedback from the primary schools that the Holy Trinity was a better place to start than the Pavilion as it was better lit and felt safer. CJ added her thanks to Holy Trinity for being so accommodating.

JW queried if road closures would be put in place next year and LB advised that there would be scope for a potential road closure. It was noted that some families with young children felt the

route was too long. Members discussed the route and agreed that a 30-minute parade was reasonable. It might be that some families turned up early or it felt slow because the parade had to stop for longer in some places, so it did not arrive at the Strand before the allocated time. However, the parade did not take any longer than 30 minutes.

Putting road closures in place next year was discussed and there were pros and cons for both. However, it was felt the pavement route worked well especially through the Magnolia Centre and there was some reluctance to close roads as this would affect bus routes.

Both LB and CJ informed members that people in the back could not hear some of the community choirs on the Strand stage. JM was aware of this as one of the choirs did not use microphones. JM thought the fire show was brilliant but unfortunately it was not always visible when not on the stage so will take this into consideration next year.

JW made members aware that the Christmas tree has been vandalised and the new lights have been destroyed, CJ confirmed that people attempted to climb the tree in the early hours of Sunday morning and damaged the tree, ripped the new lights, and broke the new star topper. JW queried if the new tree position in the Strand had any bearing over the vandalism. LB could not be sure and there has not been any vandalism in previous years. It was thought the new position was more hidden than the original location. The marquee erected for the Christmas Village also blocked the tree and could not be seen from Rolle Street. SG was keen for the tree to be put back in the original position next year. LB advised that in a recent meeting with EDDC they agreed to map the original tree pit on their asset register so that any potential conflict is flagged up in future years.

LB confirmed that EDDC now require us to apply for permission and complete a risk assessment for the tree which has never been required historically, Members agreed it would be worth applying as soon as possible for the tree to be in the original position. CJ was asked to submit the request to events in a same way as this year but for the original location.

NH urged members to respond to the event consultation notices and contact EDDC events team with their concerns if an application is put in next year for the same event and it was felt that it would block the Christmas tree. OD made NH aware that the EDDC events team did not provide any plans for the event taking place on the Strand so ETC was not aware that the marquee position would affect the Christmas tree location. CJ added it is not easy to comment when you do not have all the information. NH will pass all feedback back to the EDDC events team. He suggested that a meeting is held to enable EDDC and ETC to work together to make sure the issues incurred this year are not repeated. LB added that ETC used to receive a full pack of paperwork on events taking place in Exmouth, but this no longer happens.

LB reminded NH that there was a historical agreement between ETC and EDDC events team to ensure that any event hosted in the Strand did not disenfranchise the fixed traders around the Strand who pay business rates and to make sure certain parameters were maintained such as the density of the offering and optimum layout to ensure shop frontages were not obscured. LB believes this has been lost over the years. ETC now receives minimal information as part of event consultation notices from EDDC. NH said he would investigate this.

5. To discuss the proposal from EDDC for an Exmouth food festival

JM has been contacted by Robert Murray the Economic Development Manager from EDDC who discussed the Gate to Plate festivals that have been successful in other East Devon areas. He is keen for this event to be delivered other areas. JM explained that EDDC pay for the cost of launching and delivering the festival in the first year and thereafter ETC would be liable for the

cost, 5k in the first year, 3.5k in the second. JM confirmed that Eat Festivals who run food festivals across Devon run the event and deal with all aspects of the festival including booking the stalls, entertainment, road closures, land permissions and licences etc, and ETC's involvement would just be a flat cost from the second year onwards.

JM thought the proposal was a good low-cost way of bringing a food festival to Exmouth and asked for members thoughts. JW queried where and when the festival would take place, JM did not have the information to hand as it would be Eat Festivals decision on location and dates.

NH was keen on the event being held in Exmouth as it would be good for local food producers who are currently having tough times and the event would bring tourists to the town. OD liked the idea of someone else organising the event but queried if they were a commercial company. JM confirmed that the event is a one-day event usually held on a Saturday and they are a grass root company who deal with local producers and are competitively priced.

LB confirmed there would be no budgetary issues for 2024 as EDDC would pay the cost, all members agreed that the proposal was an innovative idea, JM will contact EDDC.

6. To discuss the Summer Festival 2024 budget

JM has been working on the 2024 budget for the Town Council Budget meeting and for the Arts Council funding application. She confirmed to deliver a Festival in 2024, like 2023 would require a budget of approximately £40K, which was a slight increase for the current year. However, if members agree to increase this amount JM would have more flexibility and attract a broad selection of artists.

Members discussed this further and agreed that the festival budget should be increased. It was agreed that JW will put this proposal forward on behalf of the Festival and Events WP at the next Budget Briefing meeting in January. JM will provide an outline of different event add-ons that could be offered if the festival budget was increased, and JW will present this at the Budget Briefing meeting.

7. Any other business

JM asked members if they had a preference as to whether to hold the 2024 Winter Festival on the 30th of November or the 7th of December. JW advised that it is usually held on the first weekend of advent. Members agreed that the Winter Festival should be held on the 30th of November 2024.

LB received feedback during the Winter Festival about the lack of food and beverage stalls. LB suggested having some mobile stalls which do not conflict with the local businesses such as roasted chestnuts or mulled wine. JM thought this was a good idea and will investigate further.

8. Date of next meeting 25th January 2024

The meeting ended at 15:28