EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Party

Notes of the meeting held at 10am on Wednesday 20th November 2024 in the Town Hall Chamber

Present

Councillor Tim Dumper	TD	Exmouth Town Council (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Toye	AT	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Graham Deasy	GD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Louise Venables	LV	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Mike Rosser	MR	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Dan Wilson	DW	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Zoey Cooper	ZC	Exmouth Town Council
Catherine Causley	CC	East Devon District Council
Adrian Toole	AT	Transition Exmouth
Harry Bonnell	HB	ECO Advice (formerly Exeter Community Energy)

Apologies

Councillor Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Andrew Woodward	AW	Exmouth Town Council

1. **Welcome and apologies**

TD welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were noted.

2. **Approval of previous meeting notes held on 20th November 2024 and any matters arising therein**

The notes of the previous meeting were proposed for approval by DW, seconded by LV, and agreed by all.

3. **To receive further information from ZC and Harry Bonnell (Eco Advice) to make a decision on the proposal to partner with Eco Advice (formerly Exeter Community Energy) regarding retrofit audits and subsequent information sharing in Exmouth.**

Harry Bonnell from ECO Advice (formerly Exeter Community Energy) presented an updated proposal for a Whole House Retrofit project in partnership with Exmouth Town Council. The aim is to conduct detailed energy-saving assessments on selected Exmouth properties, focusing on key housing archetypes such as terraced houses and 1950s/1960s homes.

The project proposes creating tailored retrofit plans based on homeowner priorities (e.g., comfort, carbon reduction, or health improvements), which will then be summarized into public-facing materials to benefit the wider community.

Harry outlined that this service targets homes not covered by grants. ECOE will facilitate the selection process via an online application form and conduct site visits to finalize the chosen properties.

The proposal to support this initiative as part of the community's broader energy strategy was proposed by TD, seconded by LV, and approved by the majority of council members.

4. To receive an update from EDDC

CC provided updates on recent environmental initiatives and plans. She shared that the first round of carbon literacy training, delivered in collaboration with Exmouth Town Council, has been completed. Exmouth is one of two trial councils participating in the training, which aims to evaluate its effectiveness before a broader rollout. CC commended LV for being the first to submit pledges as part of the programme.

CC also highlighted ongoing work to decarbonize council-owned properties, mentioning a retrofit survey conducted at the Thelma Hulbert Gallery. Plans are being developed for heat decarbonization across East Devon District Council's 400+ buildings, although funding is yet to be secured. She noted that upcoming meetings will explore options for addressing financial challenges in the housing sector to support long-term decarbonisation efforts.

Additional updates included the progress of Sidmouth's pop-up eco hub, which is opening on January 11th. CC emphasized the importance of sharing resources and ideas across the district to amplify environmental efforts. New communications staff at East Devon District Council will help raise awareness of these initiatives.

Finally, CC provided an update on the climate strategy, which is still under review and awaiting input from councillors. A public consultation is planned, with the strategy expected to be finalised by April 2025. CC thanked everyone for their contributions and will return with further updates in the new year.

5. To receive an update from Transition Exmouth

AT provided an email update to LB to share that Craig Jolly from Mushroom is researching projects to promote healthy eating, with a focus on food accessibility. Craig is interested in hearing any proposals related to this area.

LV is involved with Mushroom and shared that a leaflet outlining where people can access food over Christmas, especially those facing food poverty, is being published on social media to help the community.

TD thanked LV for her work on food issues and her contribution to the food accessibility initiative.

6. To receive a brief update from ZC on:

- **Craft Your Christmas**

ZC provided an update on the Craft Your Christmas event held on 30th November 2024 at the Salvation Army Hall. The event was considered a success, with many attendees participating in activities like sustainable Christmas decoration-making, baking, and jumper

swapping. It was particularly encouraging to see new faces and families, helping to reach a wider audience.

The Salvation Army enjoyed hosting the event and expressed interest in hosting similar activities in the future. ZC mentioned the possibility of organising a full day of events, with staggered activities and potentially including this event in the Magpies Thrifty Festival next spring.

ZC thanked everyone, especially LV and LB, for their contributions and crafting efforts during the event.

- **Cigarette butt ballot bins**

ZC provided an update on the cigarette butt ballot bins project. Two additional bins were recently installed, bringing the total to three, with locations outside the Pavilion and the Bath House. ZC plans to visit these sites to demonstrate how to use the bins and capture photographs of the bins in use, possibly in the New Year, in collaboration with Plastic Free Exmouth.

Additionally, ZC is still in discussions with the Beach to see if they would be interested in receiving a fourth bin.

TD praised the initiative and mentioned seeing a photo of the opening of the first bin in the climate newsletter. He apologised for his absence on that day but expressed interest in future events. ZC offered to coordinate with anyone interested in participating in photos for the remaining bins.

- **AMOC event detail**

ZC provided an update on the AMOC event, initially planned with the Met Office at the Town Hall. The event has been postponed to the New Year, potentially Spring, and will now feature a series of daytime events across various venues. These events will cover a broader range of topics, not just the collapse of the Gulf Stream, but also other climate-related coastal actions. Details are still being worked out, and ZC advised to "watch this space" for further updates.

- **Active Travel Exmouth**

ZC provided an update on Active Travel Exmouth. Following the Chasing the Sun film event, ZC has been in discussion with Chaz Curry from Bike Works about creating a bicycle trail in and around Exmouth. She has also created an online survey to understand how people travel to and from Exmouth, which she plans to finalise and distribute in the new year.

MR raised concerns about the County Council's plans for active travel, particularly the widening of the pavement from Courtlands Cross to Exmouth, which he felt didn't align with the active travel group's goals or the proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan. He emphasised the need for a meeting between the County Councillors and the Active Travel group to ensure their efforts are respected and that any new infrastructure projects comply with the group's plans.

LB clarified that the County's funding for active travel projects is limited, with much of it tied to specific schemes like the Dinan Way extension. She suggested that the Active Travel

group works with the County Council to support bids for future funding opportunities. TD acknowledged the concerns and supported the idea of bringing County Councillors to a future meeting with the Active Travel group. ZC agreed, suggesting the meeting might take place in February or March after gathering more data.

- **Trees**

ZC shared that the Town Maintenance Team successfully dug out two tree pits and planted two trees in Cranford Avenue. One tree is located near the bus stop, and the other is further down the avenue. Councillor Mark Williamson and local residents will care for the trees, ensuring they are watered and well-maintained. ZC also mentioned that a third landmark tree is on its way, though it may be smaller and will be planted after Christmas once the tree pit is prepared.

7. To receive an update on other relevant matters from Town Council working parties and outside body representatives

GD provided updates on flooding and water quality. He shared that a forum meeting was scheduled in the afternoon to discuss water testing, including the locations and frequency of testing for pollution samples. He also reported that the bathing season will be extended year-round, and there will be increased testing points to measure pollution, not just for swimmers but also for other water users like paddleboarders and kayakers. This is seen as a positive move. Additionally, ongoing work on the pipe network to the Maer treatment centre is expected to help mitigate water quality issues, with further work planned between Christmas and Easter to improve conditions ahead of next season.

TD discussed several sustainability-related initiatives:

Tourism: He highlighted the work on tourism information, mentioning that the Town had won a bronze award from Devon Tourism. This award recognises efforts in promoting sustainability.

Fair Trade: TD reported that the Fair-Trade group in Exmouth has incorporated a stronger focus on the climate and ecological crisis. The criteria to remain a Fair-Trade town now include sustainability-related goals.

Community Resilience: He mentioned the Community Resilience group and the upcoming "Jingle and Mingle" event, where an ETC team will discuss climate adaptation, particularly focusing on flooding risks in Exmouth.

Transport: TD acknowledged challenges in transportation, noting some successes and setbacks. He emphasised the importance of promoting sustainability in cycling, walking, and public transport. He mentioned ongoing efforts to improve public transport facilities but also pointed out complaints from the community regarding bus and train services.

Community Engagement: TD emphasised the importance of involving the community in sustainability efforts while being mindful of legal and political implications. He expressed gratitude for the work being done by the group, recognising the passion and commitment of those involved.

In conclusion, he expressed thanks to everyone for their contributions to these initiatives.

8. Any other business

DW shared that during the summer elections, many young people expressed frustration with politics, feeling that it ignored their issues, especially regarding the environment. He proposed creating a platform for students to voice their concerns by inviting representatives from local schools, like Exmouth Community College, to participate in meetings.

ZC suggested that while a regular attendance might be challenging, a more dynamic meeting format, possibly during the day or via Zoom, could be a good starting point. She also mentioned existing contacts with the school and their environmental group, the Exmouth Ecos, who might be interested. LV recommended involving the Deaf Academy, which recently earned a green flag award, as they may also be engaged in environmental issues.

TD agreed with the idea but emphasised the importance of a child-friendly format for meetings to ensure that young people would be engaged. ZC volunteered to reach out to both the Deaf Academy and Exmouth Community College to discuss potential involvement and will update the group on her progress. Everyone expressed support for the initiative, with some members offering to assist in the outreach process.

Members discussed the idea of appointing an assistant to support ZC in her role. MR expressed concern that the idea might be abandoned and emphasised that it aligns with the council's responsibility to address climate change. He proposed working with the HR group to ensure the appointment aligns with HR policies.

TD acknowledged the importance of supporting ZC work but stated that the proposal should be addressed within the HR framework due to staffing and budget constraints. He assured that ZC would receive the necessary support but emphasised the need to consider staffing needs holistically, as other staff members are also under pressure.

LV echoed MR concerns, wanting to ensure that progress is made and that the issue isn't forgotten. LB, although recognising the need for support for ZC, highlighted the broader staffing pressures within the council and the financial implications of any additional hires. She stressed that HR should evaluate the staffing needs of the entire council and balance these with the impact on the budget and residents.

The discussion concluded with an agreement to have the HR group review the situation and consider the broader staffing needs, including the potential for a budget proposal. Both TD and LB reassured members that the council remains committed to supporting climate initiatives while addressing overall staffing pressures.

ZC expressed appreciation for the support offered and although it would be very welcome, she expressed discomfort with the conversation, acknowledging the strain felt by other colleagues. TD assured her that the team’s support would not be overlooked, and LB added that the HR group would look at the broader organisational pressures, balancing resources for both statutory duties and aspirational goals like the climate emergency. LB also raised concerns about affordability, especially considering the cost-of-living crisis, and emphasized the need for a careful, holistic review.

ZC mentioned a proposal the WP had heard in the previous meeting for ‘What’s so funny?’ climate change workshop by Maggie Irving. Maggie had failed to secure funding from Arts and Culture East Devon and was looking to the Town Council to fund a pilot workshop. The proposed costs were £650 for the workshop, including Maggie’s time and set-up, plus venue hire. ZC asked for opinions on funding the pilot workshop. Members showed mixed

reactions. TD supported the proposal, believing in its innovation and Maggie's ability to deliver it well. However, some members, raised concerns about affordability, especially given the limited budget. The discussion concluded with an agreement to fund the project, with ZC checking in with Maggie to potentially reduce some of the set-up costs. GD supported the idea, stressing the importance of promoting sustainability and the relatively modest cost considering the council's climate emergency budget.

9. **Dates of next meeting: 14th January 2025, 6pm to 8pm, in the Town Hall Chamber**