EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Festival and Events Working Party

Notes of the virtual meeting held at 1000 on Thursday 24th April 2025 via zoom

Present

Cllr Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Nick Hookway	NH	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Cherry Nicholas	CN	Exmouth Town Council
Jess Magill	JM	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Greenway	LG	Exmouth Town Council

Apologies:

Cllr Graham Deasy	GD	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Chetna Jones	CJ	Exmouth Town Council

1. To elect a new chair

Due to JW standing down as a councillor a temporary chair needed to be elected before the elections.

OD proposed NH but unfortunately NH was not able to accept due to being over committed.

NH proposed OD, SG seconded, and OD was elected as temporary chair.

2. Welcome, introductions and apologies

OD welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were noted.

3. To approve the notes from the meeting on the 19th of March 2025 & matters arising

SG proposed and NH seconded the accuracy of the notes from the meeting on the 19th of March 2025, all members agreed that the notes were a true record and there were no matters arising.

4. To discuss VE Day celebrations for the 8th of May 2025

JM reported that the VE Day event planning is progressing well and emphasised that it has been a collaborative effort involving herself, MC, CJ, and LB. The afternoon activities at Manor Gardens are now fully organised and will include live entertainment from the Liberty Sisters, various craft activities for attendees, and will be followed by a commemorative service held on the Strand. The day's events will conclude with a beacon lighting ceremony at the Imperial Recreation Ground. During this final segment, the Exmouth Town Concert Band is scheduled to perform a selection of pieces, and a bagpiper will also play as part of the ceremony.

JM highlighted the need to replace the existing information tent, which had become unusable due to it collecting water. A new branded gazebo for the Exmouth Town Council has been ordered and is expected to arrive in time for use during the VE Day event. This upgrade is intended to improve the presentation and functionality of the council's information point on the day.

5. Dinosaur Day wash up for the 19th of April 2025

The event began at 10am despite concerns about the weather, which turned out to be better than expected with no rain and even some sunshine. Located in the sheltered Bath Road area, the event attracted over 700 attendees throughout the day. Children dressed as dinosaurs took part in trails, quizzes, and various activities that were met with enthusiastic feedback. JM highlighted the success of the day and noted that donation buckets collected over £300, which will go towards maintaining the dinosaur trail. JM, initially unsure about the location, agreed it worked very well and suggested it could be a good spot for future Summer Festival stalls. The event was well supported, with appearances from the Deputy Mayor SG, the Town Crier, and local MP David Reed. SG thanked JM for her key role in organising the event alongside LO the dinosaur trail coordinator and noted that children expressed a strong interest in making it an annual tradition. While originally a one-off, there is now consideration of holding it every other year, pending future discussion.

6. To discuss the Summer Festival 2025

JM confirmed that Arts Council funding had been secured, allowing several delayed elements to move forward, including a third stage at Queen's Drive Space featuring young musicians and bands. JM also discussed potential sponsorship from Salt Rock, who would contribute a mountain bike show in that location. Two tenders were received for the Manor Gardens bar; after review, the previous year's vendor was selected again despite some criticism over soft drink pricing, which they have now agreed to lower slightly. Members felt that a further discussion should take place with the vendor to see if soft drink prices could be lowered more.

There was also discussion around logistical issues at Queen's Drive Space, particularly a narrow gate that can only serve as an exit, prompting the consideration of placing a drinks vendor inside the area. NH confirmed that plans are underway to widen the gate. Concerns were raised by NH about the poor condition of the access road behind Queens Drive Space and the general untidiness of the area, which JM agreed to investigate further.

An inflatable whale theatre is planned for Sideshore, themed around ocean plastic pollution, although may need to be relocated depending on the condition of the Mallow, which is currently in poor shape although this would cause conflict with space usage as it may displace the plastic-free market.

The event app has not yet been updated due to the need to finalise all program elements before uploading. Most lineups for the main stages are nearly complete, with Queen's Drive space still being finalised. Walkabout acts and circus theatre are confirmed, coordinated by Ben Cornish. A beach performance by 4 of Swords is set to tie into Sideshore's Sea Safety Fortnight for school children, culminating in a puppet parade that will serve as an end of festival celebration instead of the traditional opening event. A smaller theatre performance is planned for the Thursday night.

Finally, there has been strong interest from stallholders, particularly for the Strand and Manor Gardens, JM is now working out how to accommodate all applicants across available spaces.

7. Any other business

CJ and LB reached out to JW to ask if she would be interested in being involved in the working party after her resignation. JW expressed her willingness to help and assist wherever possible.

Members voted to include JW in festival meetings and operations as a volunteer, given her experience and enthusiasm. Members unanimously voted in favour.

8. Date of next meeting 22nd of May 2025

The meeting ended at 14:45