DEPUTY Mayor's BLOG

People, Precipitation and Public toilets!

July 2025

It's been a busy couple of months since my election to the role of Vice Chair of Exmouth Town Council and Deputy Mayor on 19 May.

The Mayor and I had a full diary of events - people to meet, places to see.

People

It has been an absolute joy to meet so many people, residents and visitors, of all ages across Exmouth. From formal engagements to sitting chatting in a café or at one point unexpectedly handing out spare courgettes in the Strand, from my allotment, that I was trying to find a home for!

There was photo op while donating blood at the Pavilion for a social media reminder ahead of blood donation team returning on 6 September.

The Mayor and I visited key stage 1 students at Beacon School as part of their learning about Exmouth. The Mayor talked about our role, robes and chains and at the end we had a question and answer session with some great questions including, did we have a golden carriage to get around in?

- I also asked the students what makes Exmouth a great place to live.

Answers: The people are very friendly, the beach, the parks, soft play and the wildlife.

- I also asked what would make Exmouth an even better place to live.

Answers: A zoo, a trampoline park and more bio-diversity …… yes this from 7-8 year old.
A gem of a visit. Thank you, Beacon School for the invitation.

Precipitation

Nobody could have failed to notice the long hot dry spells of weather we have enjoyed since April. I can now share with you that you can set your calendars and clocks for when it will rain this year……

I have performed a number of deputy mayor duties; they are as follows:

7 June - National Coastwatch Institute (NCI) - Opening the newly repaired and refurbished tower by the Harbour View Cafe, with Patron, Judy Spiers. The tower opening was combined with an open day. It was great to see the work the NCI volunteers do to keep everyone safe and to be able to say thank you. As we proceeded to cut the ribbon, the heavens opened, the open day was sadly abandoned as we dashed for cover and Exmouth was on the receiving end of 5 hours of torrential rain!





21 June - Exmouth Pride – a blustery day with sunny periods. A colourful, lively and joyous event that brought a lot of people and business into our town. However, as we posed for photographs following the formal opening……it rained.

Rotary Club Vintage Car Rally in Aid of Hospiscare – rain remained in the air, but some sunny spells. Met Hospiscare, Exmouth Museum and Rotary Club volunteers as well as meeting many of the vintage car owners. One big complaint from many people – the lack of public toilets at the Imperial Ground.



24 June – Harbour View Café - photo opportunity to promote the cigarette butt disposal voting box, As we waited for everyone involved to arrive…… it rained.

5 July – Armed Forces Day – a dull day with some sunny periods. As the parade, including, cadets, standard bearers, David Read MP. Councillor Jeff Trail and I started to walk from the Town Hall steps to the Strand..... it rained.



It was a good day, although the weather could have been kinder – lovely to listen to and meet the Military Wives Choir and meet with various contributors including the Armed Forces Bikers charity.





8 July – Sporting Memories Group – A delightful visit to this group run by Age Concern at the Great Western Railway Social Club. I love sport so this quiz was right up my street! The visit made even more special when one of the men said he used to wear the deputy mayor's chain – so we looked and found Ron's name on the chain. News Flash.....it didn't rain!



17 July – Exmouth Museum 40th anniversary – a joint visit with the Mayor. What a treat with an initial tour of the museum with one of the volunteers and an opportunity to buy some cake and participate in a treasure hunt to raise funds. A wonderful story of our town with totally dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers. Thank you. It rained.....

19 July – 50th anniversary of Women's Morris Dancing Federation – what a colourful, energetic treat! Tag teaming with the Mayor to see over 300 Morris dancers at multiple venues across the sea front and town. The event culminated in a mass dance in the Strand. The Mayor must be back in charge after his holiday… it didn't rain.





Public Toilets

To say I was already raising concerns with East Devon District Council (EDDC) regarding the public toilets (or lack of them) across Exmouth, particularly Foxholes and the Maer, is an understatement. EDDC are responsible for public toilets, although there is no legal requirement for any council to provide public loo facilities… that surprised me!

When the new Foxholes toilets didn't open for Easter and remained closed over the two May bank holidays and the half term holidays, I started close monitoring and photographing the impact of these closures. Padlocked porta loos, with the disabled/ accessible porta loo almost permanently locked. I also photographed the regular, unacceptable state of the women's toilets in Manor Gardens.

Coincidentally, once I was elected as Deputy Mayor, I was inundated with complaints from individuals, groups, and organisations. I was stopped in the streets, at events and received written complaints too. All age groups, people with physical and mental health conditions, local residents and visitors.

It was clear there was a growing public health problem. No more details are required here!

I am pleased to say with persistence, evidence and ideas for a potential solution for the summer period, the Maer toilets are now open. This was achieved with the help and support of Councillor Anne Hall, EDDC and Lisa Bowman, Exmouth Council's Town Clerk.

There are still problems with accessibility of toilets around the Imperial Grounds and the condition of existing toilets within the town. However, Exmouth Town Council is working closely with EDDC to find medium and long term solutions alongside the existing refurbishment programme currently in progress

And finally

Back to people:

Volunteers - I want to say a huge THANK YOU to each and every volunteer working across the wide range of organisations in Exmouth. You do a huge amount to create our fabulous Exmouth community**.**

Businesses – THANK YOU to all the businesses in Exmouth, to those individuals, commercial and charitable organisations who put their faith in the people of Exmouth and our visitors.

It is notable that there have been long term empty premises, particularly the Thomas Tucker building and the old post office, as well as businesses closing recently. However, I have counted at least 8 new businesses that have opened in the town or are preparing to open including those two long term empty buildings – not charity shops, not more barbers or nail bars.

This is very different to many other towns across the country, especially coastal towns. Please SUPPORT our local businesses, including hospitality, retail and services.

Feedback -THANK YOU to everyone that has raised their concerns about the toilets, areas across the town that could do with some attention and anything else. As Councillors, if we don't know about it, we can't try and do something about it.

Also THANK YOU for all of the positive feedback people have given me about Exmouth and what a lovely town we have. Of particular note, is how friendly and helpful everyone is, how clean, tidy, happy and vibrant the town is. This also includes what beautiful gardens, parks and flower displays we have. To all concerned GOOD LUCK for the Britain in Bloom judging.

There will always be people who do not feel like this about our town and make their views known but there are far more who think we are very lucky to live in such a great place.

Until next time.

Dianne

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Exmouth Town Ward Councillor