EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Festival and Events Working Party

Notes of the virtual meeting held at 1400 on Friday 19th September 2025 via zoom

Present

Cllr Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Alex Sadiq	AS	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Jess Magill	JM	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Greenway	LG	Exmouth Town Council

Apologies:

Cllr Nick Hookway	NH	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Nicky Nicholls	NN	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Cherry Nicholas	CN	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Dianne Conduit	DC	Exmouth Town Council
Cllr Graham Deasy	GD	Exmouth Town Council

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

SG welcomed members to the meeting.

2. To approve the notes from the meeting on the 19th of June 2025 & matters arising

SG proposed and OD seconded the accuracy of the notes from the meeting on the 19th of June 2025 with no matters arising.

3. Summer festival wash up

JM highlighted the overwhelmingly positive feedback received and noted that even long-time supporters of the previous format at the Imperial Rec had embraced the new direction. Many attendees felt a strong sense of community and pride in how well the event represented Exmouth, enjoying both the atmosphere and variety. JM emphasised that those involved took pride in their contribution, which she felt was the core purpose of the festival.

JM made members aware of the major challenge that arose involving the security company. The firm had been sold without JM's knowledge just before the event, and the new owner was unaware of the staffing requirements previously agreed upon. This led to last-minute shortages of security staff, though experienced staff managed to cover essential positions. The Town Council paid the company only for the hours actually worked which equated to about £2,000 less than the original quote however, the firm failed to pay a subcontracted security team. Some of the subcontractors contacted Exmouth Town Council demanding payment and even threatened protest, despite the council having no contractual agreement with them. JM attempted to resolve the situation by pressuring the original owner, who claimed he was no longer legally responsible, although his name remained listed on Companies House.

Despite the issues, members praised the security team's performance during the festival weekend.

OD commended the sound team for their excellent work and stage management but pointed out a scheduling conflict between his band Alive and Kicking for which he declared an interest and the Morris dancers who were double-booked for the same space, this led to some awkward overlap and required negotiation between groups. OD suggested this be avoided in future planning.

AS suggested an improvement for future events by establishing a separate line for attendees with bags, noting that this had helped streamline the entrance queue to Manor Gardens once implemented.

SG, speaking as a stallholder, expressed gratitude to volunteers and staff who contributed to its success.

JM confirmed that the 2026 Summer Festival would take place between the 10th and 12th of July 2026. The date had been chosen to align with the Deaf Academy's 200th anniversary celebrations, and to avoid clashing with one of their home weekends. Members unanimously agreed this was a good date.

4. To discuss the winter festival 2025

The Winter Festival is scheduled for Saturday, November 29th, with a more relaxed theme this year, simply called "Festive Feeling." Entertainment has been arranged, including a returning hula hoop performer offering workshops, walkabouts, and a stage show, as well as elves with "naughty or nice" detectors and stilt walkers who will join the parade.

LG is reaching out to schools to confirm participation in the Lantern Parade, while JM is bringing back the same musicians from last year due to their popularity in the lantern parade.

JM and CJ had previously reviewed road closure options for the parade but found them impractical, so they plan to proceed as in previous years, using pavements and pedestrian areas to avoid disruption to bus services and maintain visibility for local businesses.

Various singing and children's performance groups are confirmed, along with Christmas and sustainable crafts for attendees to participate in. Additionally, The Hive will join the Lantern Parade this year, contributing to lantern-making efforts alongside primary schools and other groups like Live to Learn who participated last year.

5. Any other business

JM made members aware of a complaint received regarding smoking at the summer festival. The complainant was unhappy about people smoking near families in both the Strand and Manor Gardens and suggested designated smoking areas. JM noted this would be difficult to enforce due to staffing and the festival's inclusive nature. SG and AS echoed the enforcement challenges, particularly in the Strand, which isn't under festival control and is in a public space. Instead, it was agreed that small, polite signs would be trialled in 2026 around stage areas, asking smokers to refrain from smoking and be considerate to non-smokers.

LG will email the complainant with the solution agreed by members.

JM reflected on site layout, noting continued feedback about the distance between Queen's Drive and other venues, especially for families. Recently JM attended a meeting with the Imperial Hotel who kindly offered their gardens as a third, quieter site in 2026 for non-amplified

performances and workshops. The location would bridge Manor Gardens and the seafront while being easier to access. All members supported this idea.

JM suggested an alternating stage setup in Manor Gardens, inspired by another festival she attended. This would allow performances to switch between the main stage and a smaller stage nearby the bar tent, while moving quieter activities elsewhere to avoid sound conflicts. This proposal also received full support.

Regarding the Art Trail organised by Anna Fitzgerald, JM noted it was successful but suffered from lower footfall due to coinciding with the festival weekend. JM proposed holding it separately in May to increase participation and potentially attract visiting artists. OD supported the idea and suggested involving local arts organisations like the Thelma Hulbert Gallery. All members agreed.

Lastly, Bar Nova, the recurring festival bar operator for the past two years, requested a three-year contract for future festivals. JM supported this due to their good performance and lack of other applicants in previous tenders. A motion to grant a two year contract with the option to renew for a third year if both parties agreed was proposed by OD, seconded by AS, and passed unanimously.

6. Date of next meeting 23rd of October 2025

AS gave apologies for this meeting.

The meeting ended at 14:36