EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Community Engagement Task & Finish Forum (TAFF)

Notes of the meeting held at 4pm on Tuesday 30th September 2025 in the

Town Hall ETC Meeting Room

Present

Aurora Bailey	AB	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Brian Bailey	BB	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Nicky Nicholls	NN	ETC Councillor
Steve Gazzard	SG	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Dianne Conduit	DC	ETC Councillor (ex-officio)
Graham Deasy	GD	ETC Councillor (ex-officio)
Lisa Bowman	LB	ETC Town Clerk
Lisa Greenway	LG	ETC notetaker

Apologies

Louise Venables	LV	ETC Councillor

1. Election of Chair

LB requested nominations for chair of this TAFF. SG nominated NN and AB seconded that NN be elected as chair. No further nominations were made.

Members were asked to vote, and NN was duly elected as chair.

2. Overview of ETC's existing Community Engagement Policy

A copy of the Community Engagement Policy was shared with the agenda.

LB met with external COLP members last week and agreed to hold monthly meetings going forward to provide updates and allow members to ask questions. During the meeting, LB explained the original purpose of COLP, which was formed in 2009 to represent the community's voice in the masterplan process. However, it was acknowledged that COLP is currently not fulfilling its intended objectives.

LB emphasised that the council's community engagement strategy should be focused on informing and empowering residents. While there has been success in informing the public, LB expressed concern that the council is not doing enough to empower people or engage people to get involved in decision-making processes. There is a perception among residents that changes are made without sufficient community input.

NN and others agreed that a community mapping exercise is needed to identify which groups the council is engaging with and where there are gaps. LB supported the idea and suggested councillor representatives could attend meetings of community organisations to improve engagement. NN listed the number of organisations in Exmouth, including 44 arts organisations, 25 sports clubs, and 16 churches. SG added that there is a need for more

diversity in outreach. It was agreed that the council should seek new and creative ways to reach underrepresented groups.

In terms of youth engagement, DC highlighted the importance of personal contact and suggested finding better ways to involve younger people. BB mentioned a former youth council at the Community College, and although LB noted past engagement attempts had failed, Zoey Cooper the Exmouth Town Council Climate Officer is currently in contact with the college on climate-related issues.

Structural challenges were also discussed. LB pointed out that Exmouth Town Council does not have a dedicated Community Engagement Officer, and previous efforts such as ward surgeries had low public attendance. AB raised the issue that residents often do not understand the roles and responsibilities of the 3 councils (DCC, EDDC, and ETC) which contributes to confusion about who does what.

LB brought attention to the upcoming renewal of Exmouth's NALC Silver Quality Council status and noted that achieving gold status would require a strong focus on community engagement as a core criterion. GD highlighted the success of the "Littleham Together" initiative, suggesting it could be replicated in other wards as a model for community cohesion and feedback. NN also praised the Tiny Forest project as an example of effective community collaboration.

LB encouraged members to reflect on the Quality Council criteria and consider how to meet all the required elements, particularly around community engagement.

3. Brief overview of relevant standards for community engagement in context of "community leadership", "representation" and "convening"

A copy of the Locality report was shared with the agenda.

A link to the Community engagement – Local Government Association was shared with the agenda.

LB discussed the need for the community engagement strategy to incorporate community leadership, representation, and convening. LB encouraged members to review the Local Government Association's guidance on community engagement. Emphasis was placed on the use of social media to communicate how ETC engages with organisations such as EDDC and the Police. Additionally, LB shared an excerpt from the NAC webinar that demonstrated how councils can facilitate conversations with communities and encouraged members to consider new ways to enhance community engagement.

4. Identify key areas for review

NN raised the need to consider which community groups are not currently being heard and highlighted that ethnic minority groups, care workers, and younger people are among those missing voices. NN also emphasised the importance of identifying key areas for review to prepare for future discussions and suggested that outreach should be tied to local issues like sewerage and EXMO 20.

BB proposed setting up a Town Council marquee at events to improve engagement and later suggested placing it once a month in the Strand as a regular point of contact for residents to learn about council matters and share concerns.

LB noted that there is difficulty in getting councillor volunteers to staff marquees at events. LB also mentioned current engagement with schools on specific topics, involvement with cadet forces on occasions like Remembrance Sunday, and youth groups on issues such as anti-social behaviour. LB mentioned additional outreach methods, including a councillor networking, the information kiosk in the Magnolia Centre, and using the recently purchased Tuk Tuk for visibility.

LB added that Devon Development Education had been invited to the next meeting to discuss how the council could better engage with diverse community groups.

5. Stakeholder Mapping – identify local organisations, schools, and voluntary groups to engage with

This matter will be revisited in a future meeting, following further investigation by members.

6. Agree on next steps

NN and LB will decide on topics to include in future meetings.

LB encouraged members to review the 2021 census data for Exmouth, noting significant changes. SG requested a list of potential organisations for engagement, and NN highlighted the importance of knowing where and when these groups meet. LB raised the need for proactive public engagement and suggested the possibility of appointing a Community Engagement Officer to communicate effectively with residents and community groups.

The importance of prioritising public information was emphasised, and it was noted that with the upcoming local government reorganisation and a potential increase in the precept, additional staffing might be necessary.

Members also discussed the prospect of moving towards a Unitary Council model.

7. To note the next meetings – 28th of October and 25th of November

Members noted the upcoming meeting dates.

The meeting closed at 17:21