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

Notes of the meeting held at 4pm on Tuesday 28th October 2025 in the Town Hall Chamber

Present

Nicky Nicholls	NN	ETC Councillor (Chair)
Aurora Bailey	AB	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Brian Bailey	BB	ETC & EDDC Councillor
Louise Venables	LV	ETC Councillor
Dianne Conduit	DC	ETC Councillor (ex-officio)
Graham Deasy	GD	ETC Councillor (ex-officio)
Sue Errington	SE	Devon Development Education
Ricky Croal	RC	Devon Development Education
Lisa Bowman	LB	ETC Town Clerk
Lisa Greenway	LG	ETC notetaker

Apologies

Steve Gazzard	SG	ETC & EDDC Councillor

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

NN welcomed members and apologies were noted.

2. To approve the notes from the meeting on the 30th of September 2025 and matters arising

Members approved the notes from the 30th of September 2025.

NN reviewed the Community Engagement Policy and noted that this TAFF meeting is the second of three scheduled sessions aimed at identifying opportunities to enhance community engagement.

3. Overview of work by DDE

SE and RC began by introducing themselves and outlining the work of Devon Development Education (DDE). SE explained that DDE works closely with schools and communities to help people understand global issues and their role within them. One of their key projects is the Youth Cultural Champions (YCC) programme, which offers training to young people from minority ethnic and dual-heritage backgrounds. The goal is to help them connect with their heritage, develop self-confidence, and share their cultural experiences with their peers. The programme encourages young people to explore identity, diversity, and belonging, and aims to build self-esteem and promote inclusivity in schools.

RC, who is an Adult Cultural Champion, described his role as a Devon resident from another cultural or religious background who visits schools, workplaces, and community groups to give authentic insights into his life and culture. He explained that these visits provide opportunities for local people to learn about other cultures, helping to break down barriers and celebrate Devon's growing diversity. In schools, he engages pupils through conversation, games and

discussions about Guyana including the meanings of symbols on national flags. He emphasised that such activities encourage children to think critically about migration and cultural identity, helping them understand why people come to the UK and the benefits migration brings. RC and other Cultural Champions also visit schools like Beacon Primary during religious education lessons and support initiatives such as the school's fair-trade programme.

SE discussed DDE's broader projects, including Catalysts, which tackles racism and prejudice within schools through workshops, Impact Days, and staff development sessions. Another major initiative is Telling Our Stories – Finding Our Roots, which trains local people to research multicultural histories within their communities. This project has led to the creation of multicultural heritage maps around Exeter, with similar versions developed for Okehampton, Honiton, and Tiverton. SE also mentioned research conducted by University College London (UCL) into Devon's historical links to slavery, identifying local people who were slave owners.

The meeting moved on to the Windrush legacy. SE explained that following the Windrush scandal, the British government introduced Windrush Day in 2018 to recognise and celebrate the contributions of the Windrush generation. The day is held annually on the 22nd of June, marked by events across the country and the raising of the Windrush flag at County Hall. DDE has been instrumental in organising the Windrush Caribbean Cricket Festival at Exmouth Cricket Club for the past three years, most recently held on the 17th of August 2025. The festival has attracted wide community participation and attendance from local dignitaries, including the Mayor of Exmouth and three county councillors who have provided funding support. However, SE noted that DDE did not receive any government funding this year, and the organisation remains uncertain about future financial support.

Members then discussed community relations in Exmouth, particularly concerning asylum seekers and refugee families. NN asked whether the recent rise in asylum seekers had led to increased engagement or outreach requests. SE responded that there had been some tension locally, although anti-immigration sentiment remains a minority view, as shown by a recent march in Exeter. LB recalled how Exmouth had welcomed around 60 mixed Afghan families three years ago, with the Town Council providing a positive public response. The then Mayor, Councillor Steve Gazzard, personally greeted the families on arrival, and the council coordinated social media campaigns to promote inclusion. Local residents and community groups adopted families, donated clothing and school uniforms, and offered financial support. However, when a group of Somali men later arrived, there was noticeable community backlash, highlighting continuing challenges around inclusion and acceptance.

LV thanked DDE for attending and expressed interest in collaboration.

4. Stakeholder Mapping – Identify local organisations, voluntary groups, networks and identifiable communities within wards

LB observed that many Indian workers are now employed in Exmouth's care homes, yet there has been limited engagement with these groups. RC mentioned the Refugee Support Group in Exeter, which has been operating for about 20 years, as an example of how long-term, organised support networks can foster inclusion. LB noted that the Town Council has funds for community engagement but needs practical guidance on how to reach different cultural groups. SE cautioned that engaging minority communities takes time and trust, but suggested starting with community celebration events, such as multicultural food festivals or fairs. These informal gatherings allow councillors to meet residents from diverse backgrounds and could lead to further workshops or cultural events open to all.

SE suggested that the Town Council link to existing community activities, such as making the Windrush Cricket Festival an annual Exmouth event, and proposed collaboration with schools, churches, and care homes to map out the area's cultural diversity. She also recommended using data from the 2021 Census, although noted that this could now be out of date. LB was keen to build partnerships with local organisations such as the Holy Trinity Church, where Rev Steve Jones has supported Afghan families, and East Devon District Council, which worked with Ukrainian refugees.

Members discussed practical ideas for promoting inclusion. SE advised holding United Nations Day or "bring and share" events to encourage residents from all backgrounds to come together, ensuring that activities are inclusive and sensitive to different cultures. LB suggested setting up a marquee in a public space to meet people and start conversations. Members agreed that personal, respectful communication was key to building connections. BB proposed that the Exmouth Festival could include more dedicated cultural nights such as Indian or Chinese evenings to showcase music, food, and traditions from around the world. LB noted that the festival already incorporates some of this through Arts Council funding but agreed there is room to expand its cultural reach.

The overall conclusion was that Exmouth has an increasingly diverse population and a strong base of community spirit, but greater coordination is needed to connect different cultural groups. Members agreed that DDE's experience and educational programmes could be valuable in helping the Town Council develop inclusive events, strengthen community engagement, and celebrate the area's growing cultural diversity.

5. To discuss methods of community engagement in Exmouth (existing and desired)

Members focused discussion on improving engagement with schools and local communities. NN noted that there is a need to expand outreach to secondary schools. Zoey Cooper, the Climate Officer, has started engagement with the community college.

Members discussed ways to gather public opinions, including events, pop-ups, and surveys. LB suggested refreshing the Neighbourhood Plan to include new community initiatives, while SE proposed forming an advisory group using existing contacts, noting that reimbursing participants could encourage quicker input.

SE explained that Cultural Champions run four-day school events, with parental permission, to help children share their cultures and discuss issues such as racism. LB inquired about the funding needed to bring Cultural Champions into the Community College, and SE confirmed it would cost a few thousand pounds. SE also mentioned that "Impact Days" are held for whole year groups to raise awareness about the effects of bullying.

6. Agree on next steps

DC offered to contact the head teacher at Beacon Primary School to map pupil origins and build a local network. It was agreed that schools rather than local businesses would be better for gathering demographic and cultural information, including details about different religions represented. NN emphasised that one of the aims of these TAFF meetings is to identify minority groups and develop effective engagement methods.

GD proposed that a flag, matching the one displayed at County Hall, could also be flown outside the Town Hall to show support and recognition to DDE. LB encouraged DDE to apply

for a grant of up to £1,500 through the council's website to assist with future initiatives, noting that applications would require approval from the Finance Committee.

There was discussion about the potential for Exmouth Town Council to collaborate with DDE and have an active presence at future Windrush Cricket Festivals, strengthening community engagement and partnership.

7. To note the next meeting – 25th of November 2025

The meeting closed at 17:08