EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD AT EXMOUTH TOWN HALL ON
MONDAY 10TH MARCH 2025 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:	J Whibley (Mayor)	S Gazzard
	B Bailey	M Hall
	F Caygill	N Hookway
	M Chapman	C Nicholas
	A Colman	P Stott
	D Conduit	L Venables
	O Davey	M Williamson
	G Deasy	A Woodward
	T Dumper	

Lisa Bowman, Town Clerk and approximately fifteen electors of the Town of Exmouth.

APOLOGIES: Councillors A Bailey.

1. Opening and Welcome by the Mayor, Councillor Joe Whibley

Councillor Joe Whibley welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the three guests: Inspector Mat Helm from Exmouth Neighbourhood Police Team and two representatives from Esteem Team; Jenna Grace and Cara Stratford.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 18th March 2024 were proposed as a true record by Councillor Olly Davey, seconded by Councillor Mark Williamson, and approved by all.

3. Mayor's Report

Councillor Whibley thanked everybody for their attendance and extended a warm welcome to all.

He commented that it had been a very strange but important year for the Town Council with the impending Local Government Reorganisation putting us in a an unprecedented and difficult, yet exciting position. Whist the Council does not yet know the details of what is to follow, it is already doing some sterling preparatory work and is well placed to face the challenges and opportunities that lie before it.

Councillor Whibley also noted that it had been an award-winning year for the Council and most importantly, its loyal employees and volunteers. He expressed his congratulations to Veronica Boatman and the Tourist Information volunteers for their success in the Devon Tourism Awards and also to Zoey Cooper, the Council's Climate Officer for her success in the Resource Hot 100 recycling awards and for her contribution to the Town Council's achievement at the NALC Star Council Awards for Climate Response of the Year.
Councillor Whibley concluded by thanking everybody who had made him feel so welcome as he performed his duties as Mayor, citing his favourite event as the Christmas Lantern parade. He commented that he felt honoured to be able to represent the town at such an event.

4. Police Inspector Mat Helm update

Inspector Helm explained that he is the new Neighbourhood Police Inspector for Exmouth and its surrounding area. He had previously served as a police constable in the town from 2003 and fulfilled the role of town centre beat manager for two years until 2010 when he was promoted. He acknowledged that Exmouth is a challenging town to police, particularly in the context of current staffing levels which are considerably less than 2003. The neighbourhood team focuses on community issues, mostly relating to anti-social behaviour. The team comprises Inspector Helm, one Sergeant, eight police officers and two PCSO's at full capacity. Sergeant Richard Stonecliffe has recently retired and will be replaced at the end of April 2025. The neighbourhood policing team works alongside the patrol and 999 response teams and there are other teams based at Exmouth police station, including the modern slavery unit.

Inspector Helm confirmed that Exmouth is currently in receipt of Tier 1 funding for extra patrols to combat some of the anti-social behaviour hotspots and from May 2024 to January 2025, 1203 hours were logged by walking patrols in Exmouth. This resulted in eleven arrests and sixty-eight reported incidents during that time and 5005 conversations.

In recent months, the policing effort has been complemented by Home Office funded street marshals who are CSAS accredited. This extra resource frees up the police for other priorities, but Inspector Helm is aware that balance, in terms of conflicting priorities, is sometimes difficult to achieve.

Looking forward, Inspector Helm noted that Exmouth is very seasonal and has a vastly different profile to its past. In particular, the night-time economy has changed significantly, and this has impacted on the way that the police operate.

Inspector Helm was pleased to report that Exmouth is *not* in the top twenty-five crime neighbourhoods for Devon and Cornwall and in the three months to date, 1579 crimes have been reported, compared to 1559 in the prior year.

It was acknowledged that the current police station is in an extremely poor state. However, the site of the police station is subject to a planning application which will determine what happens in the future. Various options are on the table but there is an aspiration to open a front office to facilitate face to face contact with the public.

Inspector Helm then invited questions from the floor and responded to queries relating to domestic abuse statistics, parking on pavements, police visibility, noisy cars, and the distribution of police officers across the policing area.

Councillor Whibley thanked Inspector Helm for attending and for his informative update.

5. Presentation from Mayor's chosen charity for 2024/25 – Esteem Team CIC.

Councillor Whibley confirmed that Esteem Team is his chosen charity for 2024/25 and introduced Jenna Grace and Cara Stratford to explain more about the organisation. Esteem Team was originally set up by Jenna in 2019 and it has since evolved into a CIC (community interest company). It now operates from a permanent base at Bastin Hall which has transformed the support and the services that it can offer, with different spaces for different uses.

Esteem Team provides 1 to 1 support and group support, largely in response to the lack of SENDS support at school which is resulting in a significant increase in children who are unable to attend school.

There is also a community and family support aspect to the work, including a parent carer peer support group, a newsletter and information sessions for neurodivergent families.

The organisation also provides a one-to-one bespoke service with approximately seventy-five families being supported.

The service has assisted 110 families to access financial support and represents Devon families at a strategic level on the Devon Information Advisory Service.

Esteem Team regularly links with other organisations and by way of example, there is currently a neuro-divergent art project in hand with Exeter University.

Jenna and Cara then responded to questions from the floor in relation to funding needs and scope for the Town Council to help with publicity and signposting.

6. Public Forum

During the public forum, which provides an opportunity for registered electors to raise issues of concern, a member of the public asked about the Town Council's position on housing and specifically whether the new housing developments which are proposed for the Town in the emerging local plan will address the shortfall in affordable and social housing. The Chairman and the Town Clerk responded by explaining that whilst the Town Council is only a statutory consultee on these matters, it is seeking to influence the type of housing through which comes forward via the housing needs assessment which it has commissioned for the Town. This corroborates the need for more affordable and socially rented starter homes for young people and young families. It was also noted that there are several dual hatted (town and district) Councillors who sit on the Strategic Planning and Planning Committees at East Devon District Council who are also trying to influence outcomes.

The meeting concluded at 8.45pm.

Signed …… Date …….
(Chairman)