EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Community Engagement Working Party

Notes of the meeting held at 4pm on Tuesday 3rd November 2026 in the Town Hall Committee Room

Present

Dianne Conduit	DC	ETC Councillor (Chair)
Aurora Bailey	AB	ETC Councillor
Brian Bailey	BB	ETC Councillor
Graham Deasy	GD	ETC Councillor (ex-officio)
Tim Dumper	TD	ETC Councillor
Steve Gazzard	SG	ETC Councillor
Louise Venables	LV	ETC Councillor
Daniel Wilson	DW	ETC Councillor
Lisa Bowman	LB	ETC Town Clerk
Mark Devin	MD	ETC Deputy Clerk

Apologies

Nicky Nicholls	NN	ETC Councillor

1. **Welcome Introduction and Apologies**
   DC welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted apologies received.

2. **To approve the previous meeting notes from the meeting held on 4 August 2026 and review actions arising**
   Members confirmed that the notes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record. The following matters were discussed:

   Strategic Plan

   - LB highlighted that a draft Strategic Plan had previously been circulated to members on 2 September 2026, following the previous meeting. The majority of the document provided contextual information about the Council, its powers, responsibilities and governance arrangements, with the final sections setting out proposed strategic priorities informed by previous community engagement and the Neighbourhood Plan process.

   - Members considered a quotation from the Local Council Consultancy Team for £4,500 to provide external facilitation support for the strategy. It was agreed that sufficient knowledge, and experience exists within the Council to progress the document without significant external assistance.

   - Discussion took place regarding whether the Strategic Plan should be adopted before the May 2027 elections. Members supported progressing the plan before the elections to provide direction for future councillors whilst recognising that it should remain a living document subject to periodic review.

   - Members noted that the Strategic Plan could be used as a reference point when making decisions, ensuring projects and initiatives aligned with agreed priorities.

- Members discussed the need to ensure the document referenced asset transfer ambitions whilst retaining sufficient flexibility to respond to future developments and changes in policy

  ACTION: LB to recirculate the Strategic Plan and identify the key sections on which member feedback is requested.

Neighbourhood Plan Review

- LB reported that she, together with Exmouth planning representatives, would be attending an upcoming neighbourhood planning forum hosted by East Devon District Council. She also advised that, having sought guidance on the appropriate timing for reviewing the Exmouth Neighbourhood Plan, consistent advice was that significant review work should not begin until the emerging Local Plan has completed examination and been formally adopted, to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan remains in conformity with the Local Plan.

- Members noted that the scale of any changes to the Neighbourhood Plan could determine whether future consultation and potentially a referendum would be required.

- LB advised that she had undertaken a red-line review of the current Neighbourhood Plan against the emerging Local Plan. Initial findings indicate that a significant number of existing Neighbourhood Plan policies are likely to be superseded by more detailed policies contained within the emerging Local Plan.

- Members discussed opportunities for future neighbourhood planning work to focus on design codes and place-based guidance to help shape the appearance and character of future development.

- Discussion took place regarding the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the implications for neighbourhood planning. Members recognised the need to remain informed through planning training and updates. It was noted that aspects of the revised framework, particularly delegation arrangements, are presently being challenged by a number of local authorities.

- Members noted lessons learned from preparing the existing Neighbourhood Plan, including the importance of positively worded policies that support and shape appropriate development.

  ACTION: LB to circulate the red-line review of the Neighbourhood Plan

Youth Engagement

- Members received an update on work to establish an Exmouth Youth Council. Following a meeting involving representatives from ‘Esteem’, Devon County Council, Devon Youth Service Space, Open Door and other youth organisations, it was agreed that two groups would be required:

  - a network group of youth organisations and stakeholders; and
  - a Youth Council made up of young people themselves.

- Concern had been expressed regarding the limited engagement received from Exmouth Community College, and further efforts would be made to encourage participation.

- Members discussed engagement activities planned for the Winter Festival and the need to identify a suitable Town Council-related question to gather young people's views. Suggested topics included:

    - sports facilities;
    - Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spending priorities;
    - green spaces; and
    - community resilience and emergency planning.

- Members received an update on separate work involving young adults aged 16-24, including engagement events, skills development, volunteering opportunities and the potential establishment of a supporting charity or community interest company.

Members noted that approximately £100,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding remains available, with future receipts dependent upon development activity. Potential future projects discussed included sports infrastructure, community safety initiatives and other schemes designed to mitigate the impacts of growth within Exmouth.

ACTION: Members to submit suggestions for a youth engagement question to support activities at the Winter Festival.

Poverty Truth Network

- DC outlined the principles of the Poverty Truth Network model, which focused on engaging individuals with lived experience of poverty and poor health to shape local decision making and services.

- Poverty Truth Network had been used successfully in Ilfracombe and is being explored through the Health and Wellbeing Alliance in Exmouth and was considered a potentially valuable method of engaging harder-to-reach communities and ensuring local priorities are informed by lived experience.

Health and Wellbeing / Community Engagement

- Members received feedback from a recent conference session on Age Friendly Communities and discussed the potential benefits of a dedicated Health and Wellbeing Officer role in the future.

Business Engagement

- Members discussed opportunities to strengthen engagement with the business community.
- Geri Panteva from East Devon District Council had advised that Town Centre Health Checks would shortly commence across the district, including Exmouth and they would examine town centre vitality, resilience, business mix, vacancy levels, accessibility, environmental quality and community safety.
- DW reported positive feedback from local businesses following community safety initiatives undertaken with the police and local businesses. Members noted the increased willingness among businesses to engage with the Town Council.

- Members discussed the role of the Chamber of Commerce, opportunities to strengthen relationships with businesses and potential future business engagement forums.

ACTION: LB to contact Geri Panteva to arrange a meeting regarding the Town Centre Health Check programme and investigate opportunities for councillor involvement.

3. Community Engagement Priorities: To agree priority actions for the next 6 – 12 months

Members received positive feedback from engagement activity at the Gate to Plate event, where the Town Council's tuk-tuk proved effective in encouraging conversations with residents on a range of community issues. Members agreed that the vehicle should continue to be utilised as a community engagement tool at future events and within the town centre.

Updates were also provided on:

- Preparations for the 2027 local elections and councillor recruitment initiatives.
- Participatory budgeting and improving public involvement in Council spending priorities.
- Future community engagement linked to discussions on LGR and asset transfers.
- Increasing community use of the Town Hall through organisations including Open Door, DWP and Propeller.

ACTION: Members to consider future community engagement priorities for discussion at the next meeting.

4. Date of next meeting

The next meeting was provisionally scheduled for 22 December 2026, subject to review because of other Council commitments during December.

The meeting closed at 17.22