

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Confidential Report of a Meeting of the Exmouth Regeneration Programme Board held at The Beacon Hotel, Exmouth on Friday 19 March 2010

Present:

Councillors:

Peter Halse (Chairman), EDDC
Steve Gazzard – Exmouth Town Council
Neil Downes, Exe Estuary Management Partnership
Bernard Hughes, DCC
Richard Jacobs, EIC Group
Timothy Wood, EDDC
Eileen Wragg, DCC

John Wokersien – Clerk to Exmouth Town Council

LDA Design:

Carol Tarring
Paul Connelly

Tony Matthews - DCC

EDDC Officers:

Donna Best – Principal Estates Surveyor
Karime Hassan – Corporate Director
Rachel Perram – Democratic Services Officer

Apologies:

Pauline Stott – Exmouth Town Council
Tony Collins – Exmouth Town Centre Manager

The meeting started at 9.15am and finished at 12.20pm.

*82 **Minutes**

The report of the meeting of the Programme Board held on 5 February 2010 was confirmed and signed as a true record.

*83 **Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed Carol Tarring and Paul Connelly from LDA Design to the meeting.

*84 **Matters arising**

Cycle Hire

In response to a request for an update on progress with this project, Donna Best advised Members that she had spoken with [REDACTED] of the Exe Cycle Group, who had contacted a cycle hire business in Victoria Road. Initial discussions had taken place with Planning Officers at East Devon and with the Environment Agency with a view to bringing forward a planning application for the provision of a temporary cycle hire business at Royal Avenue.

Rolle College

The latest situation with regard to the college site had been reported at the last meeting of the Executive Board at EDDC. Officers had been in touch with the college and were trying to arrange a meeting with [REDACTED] Vice Chancellor, Plymouth University. It looked likely however that the whole site would shortly be placed for sale on the open market.

Matters arising (cont'd)

Local Groups in Exmouth were obtaining valuations on the buildings of interest to them. Members believed that this was devastating news and a blow for the people of Exmouth.

Members heard that a Board for the Rolle College Project Promotion Group had been put in place and that a company would be established within the next two weeks.

Members noted that the site lacked a benefactor prepared to take on the asset as a whole. As the building classified as a commercial property, any investor would have to pay business rates on it, even if empty. It was thought that a developer would buy the site if an organisation were prepared to accept the revenue issues for the buildings. Exmouth College might take on the site if an education body would pay for it.

Members agreed that the concept of allowing so many students to travel large distances for their higher education was both detrimental to the students and to the environment.

85 Exmouth Masterplan – LDA Design

Paul Connelly and Carol Tarring from LDA Design introduced themselves to Members. Their company had been employed to carry out work in the latest consultation exercise for the future of Exmouth.

Members heard that the timescale for this project was very tight – running from March to mid July 2010. The website for the process was now live at www.exmouthmasterplan.co.uk This site gave further information on consultation and also had a 'Twitter' section for residents' comments.

Paul Connelly ran through a visual presentation with the Board (circulated to Members after the meeting), which outlined the Masterplan consultation process with time frames. Demographic analysis looked at possible outcomes for Exmouth, with the relationship between the town and Exeter examined. There were 6 identified emerging themes in Exmouth and 6 aims – all for discussion in the consultation process.

The first community event had taken place with 70 people in attendance. Residents saw and then discussed the Masterplan presentation. An interesting discussion took place at this meeting with regard to best use of the space available in and around the town centre. Residents were invited to move scale models of buildings around on a map of the town – this helped to see the connectivity of the town with the surrounding areas. There was a clear desire to improve the transport interchange, to provide an estuary-side walk and that there be deep water access for leisure use.

Members agreed that there needed to be a drastic improvement in the retail offering for the town centre. This would help prevent the flow of shoppers to Exeter. Members felt that a large, good quality retail store would act as a driver for other quality retailers. Most agreed that this needed to be positioned within the Parade for maximum town centre impact.

Opinion was divided over the need for a large quality food retailer in the town centre. Some Members felt that this was a necessary driver to encourage people into the town, as where others felt that the store should be positioned in an out of town location, with a financial contribution being made from the developer to in-town enhancement.

Members also discussed the issue of the route for vehicular traffic into Exmouth (from Exeter) in some depth. Again, opinion was divided as to whether to focus upon the car, pedestrian or public transport. It was clear however that any aspirations needed to be deliverable and that unrealistic plans should not stall the regeneration process.

Exmouth Masterplan – LDA Design (cont'd)

Members were asked to 'think outside the box' – beyond the provision of supermarkets and to consider such options as 'green' landmark buildings and the possibility of harnessing the Exe tidal flow as a generator of renewable energy.

It was noted that the consultation had focussed on the opinions of local residents, whose opinion of the town and its needs would no doubt differ drastically from those of tourists. Exmouth was fortunate in having a long seafront and scenic estuary, which local people might take for granted – and not recognise the tourist need for accompanying accommodation, leisure and dining facilities.

The Chairman reminded Members of the importance in being dispassionate and receptive about the process. This would help to bring about real change for the town as well as focusing on need and deliverability in the short to medium term of a great town for East Devon.

Paul Connelly advised Members that their brief incorporated a programme and implementation plan. This would be accessible to the private sector, so that they would have an understanding of the town's requirements. The consultation process was intentionally brief and focussed heavily on deliverability.

86 Strand Enhancement Update

Tony Matthews, DCC, had circulated a report to Members on the progress and planned construction programme for the Strand in Exmouth. Work had started and Mildren Construction had been selected as contractor. Meetings had been arranged with local business owners to update them on the schedule for works. Information for members of the public was available at the Town Hall.

In order to carry out infrastructure works, work on Rolle Street, Victoria Road and St. Andrew's Road would be started first. This would result in permanent taxi ranks for the Strand being put in place early on in the schedule.

Members heard that the building at the Rolle Street end of the Strand was in the process of design development, with an aim to commence construction in January 2011.

87 Visitor Centre Update

John Wokersien advised Members that a meeting of the Visitor Centre Board had taken place on 18 March. £500,000 had been secured from Devon County Council for the proposed Mamhead Slipway development site. Norfolk Property Services would be carrying out a valuation exercise on behalf of DCC for the building, which would contain a café, and interpretation centre and a booking office for Stuart Line Cruises. A company would be employed for the 'interpretation' element of the building to offer guidance in this area.

Despite concerns over the building being constructed and owned by a private developer, the Board agreed that the position of the building was excellent, affording wide coastal views. It was understood that terms would be agreed between the land owner and DCC, as a considerable sum of money was being invested into the building from the County Council.

Members were advised that interviews for a new Project Manager would be held the following week.

88 **Communications update**

News

- An announcement would be made that Members welcomed the progress made on the Exmouth Masterplan and the comments that had already been made from the local community.
- The Strand – Members were delighted that work was already underway on the Strand and surrounding infrastructure. Members of the public were requested to bear with the Councils whilst this important improvement work was underway.
- Members noted that there would be a greater number of trees in the re-developed Strand than were in situ prior to works taking place.

89 **Any other business**

Access to Deep Water

In response to a question from a Member on progress with this matter, Donna Best advised Members that the matter had been raised in community discussions. Current provision was felt to be inadequate at Belshers Slipway as the slope was a 1:10 gradient, which made it extremely difficult to launch craft. Members heard that Teignbridge Council had a strong engineering team that would be able to carry out an initial assessment exercise to explore possible sites for a new water access route.

RECOMMENDED that EDDC spend £3,000 on an exploratory engineering survey for access to deep water from Exmouth and that the Exe Estuary Partnership be invited to offer their expertise in this matter.

London Inn Square Car Park

In response to a query over progress with this car park, Members heard that this project formed part of the consultation exercise and as such, recommendations would be made later in the Summer 2010. Finance was potentially available for the site, as and when required.

90 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board will be on Friday 30 April at 2.00pm, Exmouth Sailing Club.

Chairman.....

Date.....