**Exeter Community Forum**

**Terms of Reference**

**Background**

The Forum emerged in 2014 from the co-operation between a number of community-led groups engaged in the planning process. These groups began to meet formally with other similar community associations/fora and alongside local Councillors to address, in particular, the issue of the allocation of the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy, and how we might support and strengthen Exeter’s communities in general.

In February 2015 Exeter City Council agreed to encourage a “bottom- up approach with positive engagement” to develop a community strategy for the City. [See ECC paper: Governance and Prioritisation of Community Infrastructure Levy Funding].

**The Forum exists to:**

1. Give a strong voice for community groups from across the different areas of the City.
2. Inform the allocation of the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy accruing from Development in the City and consider other investment needs and opportunities for communities
3. Give a space for groups to share information and discuss opportunities for collaborative working around the delivery of local services and community assets
4. Support the creation of a community development strategy for the next five years to strengthen communities, and identify programmes that will best address the development needs of new and existing communities.
5. To identify common themes and priorities that will help inform decision making about and with communities in the City.
6. To keep abreast of national policy & initiatives
7. Communicate with and involve wider communities and key statutory and voluntary/community sector partners in the work of developing a community strategy.

**Membership of the Forum**

The Forum is led by volunteer community representatives from area based community organisations. These ‘geographical’ as opposed to ‘community of interest’ (e.g. a city wide play-association) based groups are those most likely to have an interest in planning matters and their local geographical area.

All ECF members shall:

1. Work together to achieve the aims of the Forum;
2. Support and promote the principles of community development set out in the community strategy;
3. Contribute towards the development and promotion of the community strategy for Exeter;
4. Promote the work of Exeter Community Forum to their members and local community,
5. Promote and support community activity and work with other community organisations in their area, especially looking to work with groups supporting communities of interest
6. Engage with other voluntary and public agencies to promote community action/ development in their area.

**Full members:**

Community-led associations that serve a defined geographical area within Exeter [District] are welcome to join as **Full Members.** These groups are those that are most likely to have an interest in community development *and* planning matters.

These groups are ‘umbrella’ organisations and play a role in promoting the interests of their local area, supporting the community and other community groups. Membership will be open to all in their area and they will have members from their community and/or other community groups. They may own and/or run community facilities.

Tenants’ and Residents’ groups may join as full members if there is not a relevant community association covering their area.

The Exeter City Councillor with portfolio responsibility for Communities and Neighbourhoods shall attend as a full member on behalf of Exeter City Council and be entitled to vote. Local Councillors in the ward of a participating community-led association are welcome to join as non-voting associate members. Where Councillors are both a councillor and acting to represent a community association they should declare their duality of interest; councillors in such a position are encouraged to involve other members of their Association’s committee or appropriate community advocate to participate.

Associate members:

 Other community groups, organisations and voluntary organisations that meet one or more of the following criteria are invited to join as associate members:

* have an interest/ specialism in supporting community action and development and community organisations in Exeter
* Have a particular and active interest in planning matters in Exeter;
* Organisations which host community organisers (or similar roles) in Exeter.

Local statutory /public bodies are invited to sign up their organisations to the principles of community-led development outlined in the Community Strategy and work with ECF members and other community organisations to achieve these.

Other organisations may be invited to contribute towards the work of the Forum.

Membership of the Forum will be decided by the Steering Group, unless the applicant does not clearly meet the criteria above then the members of the Forum will decide at the next meeting.

**Administration of the Forum**

Members of the Forum will seek to build and work to consensus. In the event of formal decision being required by a vote, a show of hands with a simple majority of full members voting will be sufficient. Associate members may not vote.

By participating in the Forum community representatives are expected to report back to their community-led group, their members and wider community, and encourage their participation and contribution to the development of the Community Strategy. Community representatives are encouraged to keep their local Councillors engaged in the progress of the work of the Exeter Community Forum.

The Forum will seek to promote equality and respect diversity in its approach and activity. Its members should actively encourage participation in their work from all sections of the community they serve.

**Steering group and grants panel**

The Forum will select from its membership a steering group to act on its behalf between meetings to facilitate the progression of the work. The steering group will have a minimum of three people representing ECF Full Members.

This group will focus on facilitating the process, ensuring participation and overseeing a timetable of work. They will bring recommendations/ key decisions on policy to the main Forum. The Forum may appoint a chairperson[s]. The ECC Councillor with the portfolio for neighbourhoods and communities, Communities’ Programme Manager and a member of the Planning department will also be members. The steering group will publish its minutes on the website and report back on its work to members. The Forum will be supported by Exeter City Council.

A grants panel will be selected from the membership (drawn by lot) each year in line with the terms of reference for the grants panel. Grants panel members may serve for no longer than 3 years in a row.

**How often we will meet:**

The Forum will meet at least 4 times a year including an AGM where steering group members will be selected and the Steering group meet as frequently required between meetings to ensure that work progresses.

These Terms of reference were adopted:

Due for revision 2018

 **ORIGIONAL: Key Red = amended /added green - moved**

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