



Draft minutes

Present: Rory McNeile (ECF Steering group & Newtown Community Association), Anne Jobson (St James Forum), David Russell (New Court community association), Yvonne Russell (New Court Community Association), Jeff Ridley (Transition Exeter), Peter Phillips (Alphington Forum), Doug Lake (Alphington Forum), Maggie Bonfield (St Thomas Community Association), Cllr Phil Byalik (Exeter City Council), Cllr Duncan Wood (Exeter City Council/Pinhoe Community Association), Elliott Wright (Topsham Community Association), Sue Wright (Topsham community association), Douglas Lake (Alphington Village Forum), Robyn Connett (St James Community Trust), Sue Aves (Newtown Community Association), Hayley Toy (St Thomas' Community Association), Shelly Ingham (Alphington Community Association), Dawn Rivers (Exeter city council), Sue McKenzie (Red Quadrant), Niall MacLeod (St Leonards neighbourhood association and ECF Steering Group), Diana Moore (Alphington Village Forum and previously chair ECF), and Christine Fraser (St David's Neighbourhood Partnership)

Apologies: Nigel Fitzhugh (St Leonards neighbourhood association), Paul Layton (St James), Angela Roberts; and Kate Hannan, Carole Pilley, ECI.

Part 1

- 1- Welcome, Apologies and Introduction was made by Rory McNeile acting chair
- 2- Update on the Grants Review progress and discussion of the role of ECF

Councillor Byalik told the group that the Council was having to deal with a number of issues. He told us that there would be a £3.75 million shortfall from central government next year—quite a challenge! This was with an overall budget of £12.5 million. He told us that the Council had commissioned “Red Quadrant” to engage community groups, sports groups, arts groups and other groups to see if the grants process could be streamlined. He told us that he did not know what the result of the review would be and waited to the report which was due to be presented at the end of September. He told us that he wants engagement between the Council and ECF to continue and the Council also had to deal with other groups e.g. sports groups which he said also represent communities.

Councillor Byalik said that the 15% CIL money could ONLY be used for community provision improvements and replacement NOT for swimming pools or bus stations. He said that Exeter city council needs to work with communities but with a background of serious financial constraints.

Rory McNeile questioned the change in relationship between the Council and ECF and asked where did Asset Based Community Development sit with council since changing the prearranged shared control of community grants. Cllr Byalik said that ABCD was something the Council had to take on board. Dawn Rivers said that the council had supported the expansion of the ABCD Community building program. Councillors Byalik and Wood gave examples of buildings in their area which they

thought would be better utilized and run together with Community partnerships rather than by the council itself.

Sue Mackenzie of Red Quadrant told the group that the community grants consultation process was going to finish this Friday (14th September). She said that they had held three focus groups so far, with the final and fourth focus group being held the next day (Wednesday 12th September). In addition to this there was an online survey the links to which was given for all those who had not already completed. The final date to do so is Friday 14th September 2018.

Sue told us that there had already been 150 responses so far she told us that no group had asked for more money but many had said they do not want their grants taken away. She said that the report would be made available to the Council at the end of September or early October and this would outline the key findings issues and make recommendations.

Terms of reference

Rory McNeile asked at what point and in what timescale, would the outcomes grants review be made clear?

Dawn Rivers said that this was still on known. She pointed out that there were lots changes going on in the council and no decision would be made until the new year. She said that the report would go to the Councillors in October and that there would be a consultation with community organisations in November and December. She said they would be a transition phase and different timescales for different things. In particular the Community Centres' Rents Grants would be ending and there would need to be a transition phase. Councillor Byalik confirmed that, assuming that there was no government change in guidelines, the 15% CIL money WOULD be spent in the communities, but how this was done would depend on the consultation report from Red Quadrant.

There were several questions about why ECF had not been consulted in the council changing the Grants Panel's Terms of Reference and that communities should still have an input into the allocation of grants.

Replies from Councillors Byalik and Wood were that they were facing massive cuts which were making their job very difficult and that they had a duty to review all grants, including the CIL Grants panel money, to be fair to all the various stakeholder groups. He confirmed that the Council still wanted to work with the Exeter Community Forum and he wants to see it continue.

Councillor Byalik insisted that the Red Quadrant review was independent and that he did not know what the result of the consultation would be.

Rory asked if the grants terms of reference would be shared. Dawn explained a background briefing had been sent to all community groups and stakeholders and some groups have been invited in for a one to one discussion about rents grants.

Diana Moore asked why a summary of the Terms of Reference document had not been published with the grants review to give a better background to the issues being looked at in the grants review. Cllr Byalik said that there was no political reason why the TOR hadn't been attached and would find out if there was some operational issue.

Diana also asked if the £150k New Homes Bonus Monies agreed last year by the Council was still available to discuss with ECF about investing in supporting communities, in particular to build capacity to apply for grants? Cllr Byalik that as far as he was aware it was still available and that there had been no decision made for it not to be available.

Diana then asked if there was still a commitment by the council to continue the community strategy as drafted and agreed. Cllr Byalik confirmed- “yes there is, we need to”. He then stated that the Council was “not changing anything in the community strategy”.

Sue Aves, commented that she had been on the grants panel and said that those who came forward with grant applications were those who knew how to apply for a grant. She said that there should be help, for those less able, to draw up a grant application. She also pointed out that you can only engage those people who turn up. She said, and others agreed, that community builders had a vital role in helping bring more people forward and help with the grant application process.

Rory McNeile brought Part 1 of the AGM to a close at 7.36pm, thanking Cllrs Byalik and Wood, Dawn Rivers and Sue Mackenzie (Red Quadrant) for coming along to answer questions. Cllr Byalik, Dawn Rivers and Sue MacKenzie then left the meeting.

Break for coffee

Part 2

ECF Business

Diana Moore introduced her report (see <http://exetercommunityforum.net/exeter-community-strategy-update-report-september-2018/>) Diana expressed her concerns about the Council’s handling of the unilateral change in TOR without consultation with ECF and why she felt she had to resign from the chair. She stated that she hoped that things can, and will, progress.

She described the core three pillars underpinning the - Community Building, Community Action and Community Planning.

Community Building: pleased with progress to roll out the programme, but there needs to be ongoing communication with the Wellbeing Exeter program- at board level as well as at the community builder-community level. We need to develop a “rich ecology” of community organisations. Buildings, she stated, were fundamental to community building.

Community Action: the unilateral change of the grants panel; TOR by the Council needs to be discussed by the Forum and it’s view expressed to the Council. As a partnership; it is a process of ongoing negotiation.

Community Planning: this is the most challenging part of the strategy, but has the potential to be hugely beneficial to communities and the council so needs needs clarity of process and a programme of support and funding needs to be agreed and rolled out. Diana outlined the draft discussions with the Council and gave examples round the City where communities had worked on this.

Diana also spoke about the important of the role of the forum – a meeting space for the Council and communities to discuss difficult issues, especially around planning matters and also for communities to be able to engage in council policy/strategy matters. It currently isn’t clear how they can. The emerging Green Space network has been set up in Exeter and is keen to engage Councillors in these issues and have an input into Council decisions regarding green space. Diana said that the strategy is an important document to help make things easier for the Council and Communities to work together and put in place the things that would do this such as a council asset transfer policy (that 75% of councils elsewhere already have) and should be developed with input from ECF. Diana concluded that it was clear the community organisations had really valued the events especially the ECF conference, the last one of which was well attended and very successful, and as well as many other good reasons to continue the networking and learning from one another was vital

Rory McNeile then thanked Diana on behalf of ECF, for her huge contribution to the Forum over the years and indeed helping draw up the Community Strategy. Her attention to detail and clarity of thinking and purpose will be missed. Flowers and a card of thanks were then presented. Thank you Diana.....!

It was decided that the business of reviewing the Terms of Reference, Electing a Steering Group, and Selecting of Grants panel would take more than the 16 minutes remaining, and so it was agreed to arrange a meeting within the next month to discuss these, rather than try to rush it through.

Rory McNeile and Niall MacLeod were reappointed to the steering group in the interim.

There was a unanimous show to hands in support of ECF continuing to exist- with no against and the only abstention was from Transition Exeter who as an associate member, cannot vote.

It was agreed that a date be set up in the next few weeks with an invitation to all community forum members to attend as vital decisions need to be made.

Questions for every one to take away and discuss with their committees:

1. Anyone like to join the steering group/co-chair?
This is not an onerous role but is vital for ECF functioning. Steering Group meet approximately 4 x annually between ECF meetings at a mutually agreeable day and time
2. Anyone like join the Grants Panel? see <http://exetercommunityforum.net/get-involved/>
3. Response to changes to Grants Panel Terms of reference made by Council:
http://exetercommunityforum.net/council_decisions/
4. Should we involve Community Builders and Councillors in each ECF quarterly meeting?
5. Should ECF carry on... ?!(already voted on but can check at next meeting!)
<http://exetercommunityforum.net/ecf-tor/>
6. Discuss the ECF report with committee <http://exetercommunityforum.net/exeter-community-strategy-update-report-september-2018/>
7. Should we invite coordinator of Community Builders to come and present to the Forum?
8. Rory and Niall to continue for interim
9. Think about other things Forum can do/share/support

Next Exeter Community Forum meeting date:

Tuesday 23rd October 2018 7-9pm Exeter Community Centre **Important as many groups as possible are present.**