

EXETER HARBOUR BOARD

Thursday 12 June 2025

Present:-

Councillor Williams, R (Chair)
Councillors Cookson, Read, Snow and Sheridan

Apologies

Councillor Rolstone.

13 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies received from Councillor Rolstone.

14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17 March 2025 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct, subject to the amendment that in Minute 4, the word “three” is changed to “two” external vacancies on the Board.

15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

16 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 1985) - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

17 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A member of the public, Mr Frost submitted the following question, asked by Ms Evans in his place:

- “It is not clear from the accounts that there is any separate reckoning of moorings (a commercial enterprise) costs, fees and wages, compared to other EPA costs. Can the council please separate these streams of finance so that the running of the EPA operations is more transparent?”

The Chair advised that mooring repairs, including all costs associated with the delivery of the commercial service, are separated within the services budgets and have their own budget lines.

Ms Evans, in asking a supplementary question, enquired where these were made available for the public to see?

The Chair passed the question to the Head of Service Operations, who advised that this information is reported through the General Fund Reporting Programme through the Council.

Head of Service Operations provided an answer to the supplementary question; “Councils annual budgets accounts can be found on the following Council Page , [Annual accounts - Exeter City Council](#) in which the actual accounts commence from approximately page 29 onwards. Income & expenditure is broken down but not to a high level of granularity, however, members of the public can request additional detail through the Councils Freedom of Information process.

In comparison to the full Waterways budgets, the General fund mooring budget outturn report shows the budget was balanced for 2024/25-year end with income offsetting additional budget expenses “(See table).

Account description	ANNUAL BUDGET	OUTTURN FORECAST
PAY	126,180	129,078
SUB-CONTRACTORS & WORKS	2,000	0.00
BUOYS	0	0.00
RENTS	0	6,561.40
EQUIPMENT TOOLS AND MATERIALS	4,310	333
VOLUNTEER/STUDENT ESPENSES	0	5
BOAT MAINTENANCE	0	1,146
MOTOR FUEL	1,650	0
CAR MILEAGE ALLOWANCES	0	31
SALES	-3,850	-1,718
FEES	-16,920	-16,228
BUOYAGES	0	-17
MOORING SERVICE	-31,660	-40,331
WATERWAYS CONTRACT SERVICES	-2,450	-30,580
RENT	-42,780	-33,932
F231 Total	36,480	14,348

The Chair offered to direct Ms Evans to the appropriate place.

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CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed the new External Members of the Board, Shelley Rhodes and Harry Temple, as well as the newly appointed Councillor J Cookson. The Chair expressed a wish for proper introductions following the arrival of a late Member. The Chair provided the board with the following announcements: -

- Mr James Hannon, the new DP (designated person), visited Exeter and spent the day with the Waterways Team;
- Anthony Garrett has completed his term as an External Member of the Board, and the Chair would like to send the Boards thanks for all his hard work, enthusiasm, and contributions to the Board; and
- the Chair asked the Harbour Master to update the Board on meetings scheduled for April 2025. He advised that the asset survey of sea defences partly completed, but there had not yet been a meeting to discuss the findings of the survey.

The Chair then welcomed questions from Members, providing the following answers: -

- the emergency action plan had been written, and had been sent to the DP for sign off; and

there had been no further progress with the floating restaurant/bar at the quayside (previous agenda no.7), but the Harbour Master would still be happy to discuss with Members further

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EXETER PORT USER GROUP UPDATE

The Chair of the Exeter Port Users Group (EPUG), Rex Frost was unable to attend this meeting, and sent Jane Evans, in his place. His update (appended) had been circulated to Members and was taken as read, and the following discussion points were made: -

- thanks were given to the Harbour Master for providing another additional

SOUTHEAST DEVON WILDLIFE- JOINT HABITAT MITIGATION STRATEGY **2024**

The Chair welcomed Neil Harris, Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager (East Devon District Council) from Southeast Devon Wildlife to the meeting, who provided a presentation on 'A Joint Approach to Habitat Regulations Mitigation'. The presentation discussed the following points: -

- Channel Marker;
 - it is evident that the weekend patrol boats had been a success, and that boat driving behaviour had seen an improvement; and
 - there is now a date set for the Exmouth and Exeter East MP, David Reed, to view and discuss the river, with the hopes of improving his understanding of the problems and attractions of the river.
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- Our history;
 - the strategy is a joint approach to habitat regulations and mitigation, formally constituted in 2016;
 - habitat regulations are a critical legislative requirement for local plan delivery, placing a legal duty on competent authorities to ensure mitigation is delivered before granting permission for any plan or project likely to affect European sites;
 - Southeast Devon;
 - Our Sites;
 - Devon contains internationally important wildlife sites; the Exe Estuary, Dawlish Warren, and East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, all with the highest environmental designations;
 - Decision Making;
 - Natural England has oversight on delivery of mitigation delivery; and
 - decisions are largely made using visitor strategies, which are then referred to an officer working group, there is an annual business plan, and a 5-year business plan. This goes to committee for ratification, and there is a review of measures each year.
 - Mitigation Delivery; and
 - wildlife wardens;
 - Devon Loves Dogs;
 - public awareness campaigns;
 - visitor access improvements;
 - complete redesign of signage;
 - Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGs)
 - Dawlish Countryside Park- funded through Council partners and is secured with a 999-year lease to The Land Trust.
 - What Next?
 - new local plans;
 - increase housing targets;
 - new strategy;
 - devolution; and
 - Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

The Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager responded to Members questions as follows: -

- there is increasing concern from charities nationally about the Planning and Infrastructure Bill;
- it is a legal requirement for new housing developments to be assessed, and this is carried out extrapolating data from current population access patterns;
- financial contributions are collected by council finance departments through

- planning obligations (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy);
- the mitigation strategy has been developed with careful input from stakeholders and council partners to ensure appropriateness and proportionality;
- The strategy aims to provide certainty that environmental impacts will be addressed; and
- SANGs are classified as a priority infrastructure, which guides related planning and funding decisions, they are required to have 8 hectares per 1000 new population.

HARBOUR MASTER'S REPORT

The Harbour Master updated Members on the following: -

- a brief update into the investigation following the death of Delvin Musakwa;
- a review of canalside and quay signage was being undertaken and additional risk assessments for swimming in the canal;
- the smalt net has been removed;
- a canoe race down the river and the canal will be held next weekend, the canoe club has been asked to introduce another turning mark to reduce congestion during the race;
- there is still an issue with abandoned boats, with the three boats that broke free from their moorings last autumn still in situ. Where the owner of the boat is known efforts are being made to have them removed. The council will have a statutory obligation to do something about them if they become a hazard;
- recruitment of volunteers for the patrol team will begin soon as summer starts to progress;
- the Friends of Exeter Ship Canal were taken out on the water to ensure they were comfortable using the new electric motor in the patrol boat; and
- Ashfords have been in contact and progress will soon be made towards starting the 42-day consultation period for the Harbour Revision Order.

The Harbour Master responded to questions from members as follows: -

- the buoys placed off Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton beaches are reduced speed buoys, however it is local acceptance that these are informal swimming area makers, though not legally defined as such;
- in discussions with the Head of Waterways team regarding the wording that needs to be put on signs;
- supplementary budget has been carried over to enable funding for Turf Lock gates;
- a barge along the canal that was being rented had been recently purchased at a reduced rate and they are in the process of working out a long-term plan for its use. This was supplemented by the Head of Operations, who made it clear a business case can be found in the Council minutes;
- there are numerous risk assessments for the canal, but these will be reviewed as part of the process following an incident in May.

The Chair then asked the Harbour Master to discuss the visit from DP Mr James Hannon. The Harbour Master discussed the following points: -

- James Hannon visited in March and was shown the infrastructure of the canal, and visited Exmouth;
- he was also shown the extent of the Port limits;
- he has been invited to speak at the Executive Committee.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.41 pm)

Chair