

## **EXETER HARBOUR BOARD**

Thursday 5 September 2024

### Present:-

Councillor Williams, R (Chair)

Councillors Read, Rolstone, Snow and Williams, M

A Garratt, J Green, Lt Col D Marino, J Prescott and C Seddon

### Apologies

R Eggleton

### Also Present

Harbour Master Exeter Port Authority, Waterways Team Manager, Harbour Patroller and Democratic Services Officer (PMD)

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### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2024 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct, with one minor amendment to Minute No. 82.

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### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

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### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Chair advised that no public question had been received.

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### **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### External Members' Profiles on the Website

The Chair thanked the Board's external members for submitting short biographies and thumbnail pictures as requested at the previous meeting. She advised that she would ensure that no personal information is published on the website.

#### Terms of Reference

The Chair also thanked Board members for their comments on the updated Terms of Reference and informed that she would be discussing these with the Interim Director of Environment, Waste and Operations.

#### Duty Holder Training

The Chair announced that there were still spaces available for the forthcoming Duty Holder training session at the Civic Centre and that, for those unable to make it, online training could be booked.

#### Visioning Day 2025

The Chair suggested the date of 1 February 2025 for the next Visioning Day and gave new Board members a summary of what Visioning Day entailed.

Finally, she advised that more opportunities would be arranged for Councillors to go out on the water.

### **EXETER PORT USER GROUP UPDATE**

The Chair circulated the report of the Chair of the Exeter Port User Group (EPUG) and informed the Board that Mr Frost was unable to attend the present meeting.

The Harbour Master noted a couple of factual inaccuracies in the document, particularly around the delay to the Harbour Revision Order. He clarified that:-

- the delay was not a result of the three informal consultation sessions; and
- the informal consultation sessions had taken place despite legal advice received that there was no requirement for this.

Responding to a query from a Member, he explained that water quality was an issue for the Environment Agency and South West Water.

Members noted the document as well as the aforementioned factual inaccuracies.

### **DESIGNATED PERSON ROLE FOR THE EXETER PORT AUTHORITY**

The Chair thanked Members to their contributions to and comments on the job ad for the position of Designated Person role for Exeter Port Authority. The Harbour Master made particular reference to:-

- the involvement of four consultants and one company in the recruitment process;
- the closing date of 23 September 2024; and
- how, so far, two people had responded positively.

### **HARBOUR REVISION ORDER UPDATE**

The Harbour Master gave Members a Harbour Revision Order (HRO) update as follows:-

- there were four port authorities ahead of Exeter awaiting the HRO;
- he was in regular contact with legal experts on how to speed up the process but their scope was limited;
- work was ongoing with Ashfords regarding rewriting byelaws; and
- formal consultation adverts would have to be prepared for publication in local newspapers and on the website.

He replied to Members' questions as follows:-

- Ashfords could not reasonably apply more pressure on the Department for Transport;
- the "multiple complicated questions" mentioned in the EPUG report discussed earlier were in fact relatively generic and the responses were available on the Exeter Port Authority website;
- the application for the HRO had been submitted before any fee increase could be applied.

### **HARBOUR MASTER'S REPORT**

The Harbour Master introduced his report remarking that local media outlets had been reporting about recent wild swimming incidents and commented that only a fraction that what actually happens on our waterways usually got reported on. As an example, he told Members how, on the morning of the meeting alone, he had

received two phone calls about boats breaking down and floating. The Chair added that, while on the water with the Harbour Master recently, she had witnessed numerous infractions such as speeding or not having life jackets.

During discussion, Members and officers commented on:-

- the possibility of making the RHIB visible;
- how Plymouth had a moorings officer but would not pay for a boat;
- the need for volunteers to be recognised; and
- the need for the figures in the Harbour Master's report to be publicised.

The Harbour Patroller took an action to publicise the figures and salient points from the Harbour Master's report.

On the issue of wild swimming, a Member felt that:-

- people swimming in the canal took water quality at their own risk;
- swimming was always going to happen, and banning it was the wrong mindset; and
- instead, making swimming safe would demonstrate a more positive approach.

The Waterways Team Manager responded to the Member making particular reference to:-

- the numerous cases of anti-social behaviour linked to wild swimming (sometimes necessitating patrols);
- the Double Locks ferry running every half hour along the canal; and
- the Authority's duty of care, especially in absence of a lifeguarded area.

Both the Chair and the Waterways Team Manager agreed, however, that wild swimming would make a good topic for the next visioning day.

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### **PORT MARINE SAFETY CODE AND SAFETY IN DOCKS - UPDATE**

The Harbour Master advised that the Gap Analysis report had come back and that he and the Waterways Team had begun addressing the 27 points identified but added that some relied on Exeter having the Harbour Revision Order. He updated Members on the following:-

- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Dynamic Risk Assessment: work had started on these;
- KPIs: clarity was needed about which indicators merited inclusion;
- Towage Guidelines: this had never been done in the Exe before; and
- Pilotage: it was still being assessed whether Exeter was a Statutory or Competent Harbour Authority.

The Chair called for progress against the 27 points to be monitored and suggested adding a column to the table.

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### **STATUTORY HARBOUR AUTHORITY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT AND 2024-25 FEES & CHARGES**

Addressing a query from a Member about the significant drop in income figures between 2021-22 and 2022-23, the Harbour Master explained that there had been an incorrect accrual which created an anomaly between the two financial years, but there had also been an underlying £69k reduction in income in 2022-23 compared with 2021-22 across sales and rent income streams.

A Member felt that the Board should actively discuss new ways of generating income, such as restaurant boats, rack storage and live-aboards. The Chair thought this, too, would make a good topic for the next visioning day. The Waterways Team Manager, however, warned that, if such a conversation was left until February, the opportunity would be missed to capitalise on good income generation ideas in time for next summer.

The Chair took an action to write to all Members before the end of September to seek their views on income generation.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 6.49 pm)

Chair