

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**  
**EXECUTIVE**

**Statement of Decisions**

Tuesday 3 April 2012

**Present:-**

Councillor Peter Edwards (Chair)  
Councillors Denham, Fullam, Hannaford, Mrs Henson, Martin, Mrs Morrish, Sheldon and Sutton

**Also Present**

Chief Executive, Strategic Director (KH), Strategic Director (MP), Assistant Director Finance, Assistant Director Public Realm and Member Services Manager

**Strategic Director**

(Minute 40)

The Chair welcomed Mark Parkinson, who had recently joined the Council as Strategic Director, to his first meeting of the Executive.

**Declarations of Interest**

(Minute 41)

The following declaration of interest was made:-

Councillor	Interest
Hannaford	50 (Vice-Chair of Devon County Council's Exeter Locality Committee).

**Capital Monitoring Statement to December 2011**

(Minute 42)

The report of the Assistant Director Finance was submitted, setting out the current position in respect of the Council's annual capital programme and advising Members of the anticipated variations.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at their meeting of 21 March 2012 and members' comments and support were noted.

In response to a query regarding Cowick Street Environmental Works, the Portfolio Holder Sustainable Development and Transport reported her understanding that the cleaning and lighting of the underside of the bridge were due to take place in the next few months and that a public meeting was to be held in respect of the street furniture.

Executive recommended that Council approve the current position in respect of the annual capital programme.

## **Overview of General Fund Revenue Budget 2011/12**

(Minute 43)

The report of the Assistant Director Finance was submitted, advising Members of the overall projected financial position of the General Fund Revenue Budget and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) after nine months, for the 2011/12 financial year.

Members noted the main variances in the General Fund budgets and the net surplus in the Housing Revenue Account that would be transferred to the HRA working balance.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at their meeting of 21 March 2012 and members' comments and support were noted.

Executive recommended that Council approves:

- (1) the General Fund forecast financial position for the 2011/12 financial year;
- (2) the HRA forecast financial position for 2011/12 financial year;
- (3) the outstanding Sundry Debt position as at December 2011; and
- (4) the creditors' payments performance.

## **Corporate Governance Risk Register Annual Review 2012**

(Minute 44)

The report of the former Head of Audit was submitted, updating Executive on the Council's risk management progress and seeking approval to the updated corporate risk register.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at their meeting of 21 March 2012 and their comments and support were noted.

Executive resolved that the annual corporate risk register and the revised risk management policy be approved.

## **St Katherine's Priory Re-roofing Financial Provisions**

(Minute 45)

The joint report of the Assistant Director Public Realm and the Assistant Director Economy was submitted, seeking approval to increase the financial provision previously approved for the necessary re-roofing works at St Katherine's Priory, Polsloe.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at their meeting of 21 March 2012 and their comments and support were noted.

In response to the Chair's concern regarding the inaccuracy of the original estimate, the Assistant Director Public Realm reported that it was always extremely difficult to estimate the cost of such specialist works. The original estimate had been a "ball park figure" and the higher more realistic figure had been presented through the tender exercise.

Members endorsed the importance of conserving the Priory as part of the City's heritage and supported the additional funding for the re-roofing works.

Executive recommended Council to approve the proposals as outlined in this report to carry forward the existing capital budget of £47,000 from financial year 2011/12 into 2012/13 and to provide additional funding of £28,000 from capital to enable the St Katherine's Priory re-roofing works to be undertaken.

### **Localised Council Tax Support Scheme**

(Minute 46)

The report of the Assistant Director Finance was submitted, briefing Members on the localised council tax support scheme, and highlighting the issues that will need to be considered, and the decisions that will need to be made, during the next nine months.

The Assistant Director Finance presented the report, informing members of the Government's proposals to replace Council Tax Benefit with a local council tax rebate scheme. Local authorities would receive a budget for the new system based on 10% less than current spending on Council Tax Benefit. He drew Executive's attention to the practical problems and issues associated with the introduction of the new scheme, including the very tight timescale and the delay in the software. He reported that that the Devon Benefit Officers Group was working on the proposals and that there was a collective agreement between all Devon authorities to have a single shared scheme.

Members were concerned to note that failure to deliver a scheme by December 2012 would trigger a default scheme imposed by the Government and that the Council could face a deficit of £80,000. They were particularly concerned about the impact that the measure would have on low-income families who were already financially stretched and the potential effect on vulnerable children.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the contents of the report, and the key points on which decisions would need to be made this year be noted; and
- (2) a letter be sent to the City's MPs seeking clarification of the timescale and drawing attention to the difficulties and that other Devon authorities be encouraged to contact their own MPs similarly.

### **Report of the Car Parks Task and Finish Group**

(Minute 47)

The report of the Assistant Director Public Realm was submitted, informing Members of the deliberations, conclusions and recommendations of the Car Parks Task and Finish Group. He reported that Scrutiny Committee – Economy had considered the Group's report at their meeting of 8 March 2012. Whilst individual elements of the proposals would come forward to Executive in due course and as appropriate, the Committee was impressed by and appreciative of the work of the group and had requested that the report be submitted to Executive in its entirety.

Councillor Margaret Baldwin attended the meeting and spoke on the item under Standing Order 44. Whilst welcoming the report overall, Councillor Baldwin felt that the Group's recommendation to place Topsham Quay Car Park into Tariff Band 2 (Short Stay Shoppers' Car Parks) was wrong and hoped that this would be re-considered. She referred to a letter from 50 businesses supporting the need for a welcoming, long-stay car park in Topsham. The difficulty of parking in the town was generally acknowledged and this was exacerbated by the current temporary use of part of the Tappers Close car park by Network Rail and two-thirds of the Quay car park being used for boat storage for a large part of the year.

The Chair responded with reference to the significant support formerly expressed for a higher turnover in the car parks, in order to increase visitors to the town and reminded members that Holman Way provided a long stay facility.

The Portfolio Holder Sustainable Development and Transport added her thanks to the working group for their comprehensive report and assured members that all the recommendations would be considered in due course. She emphasised that the increased charges at the Quay aimed to deter workers from using the spaces to the detriment of visitors. She reported that monthly usage figures for the Topsham car parks were compiled and requested officers to send these to the Topsham ward Councillors on a regular basis.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the Car Parks Task and Finish Group be congratulated on their comprehensive review of the issue; and
- (2) the conclusions of the report be noted and that further reports on individual proposals would come forward to Executive in due course.

### **Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge**

(Minute 48)

The report of the Assistant Director Public Realm was submitted, seeking a decision from Members on a proposal to participate in a national initiative to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, and to rename Wonford Playing Fields (or part of it) accordingly.

Councillor Choules attended the meeting and spoke on this item under Standing Order 44. He welcomed the proposal to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee through the re-naming of part of Wonford Fields and also requested that zones C and D of the Fields be renamed in memory of former Mayor and Councillor Ivy Johns who had given the City long and dedicated service. Members of Executive were happy to support the request, in recognition of the hard work and huge contribution made by Ivy Johns both to the community and the City.

Executive also welcomed the proposal to participate in the national initiative and to rename zones A and B of Wonford Playing Field in commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the Council participate in the Queen Elizabeth II Field Challenge; and designate zones A and B of Wonford Playing Fields, shown on the plan attached to the report, in commemoration;
- (2) zones C and D of the Fields be named in memory of former Mayor and Councillor Ivy Johns; and
- (3) the Council enters into a formal Deed of Dedication that will impose a restrictive covenant on the chosen sites.

### **Voluntary Redundancy Procedure**

(Minute 49)

The joint report of the Chief Executive and Head of Human Resources was submitted, proposing a procedure to put in place a more formalised, time-limited, process for voluntary redundancy applications to come forward across the organisation.

The Chief Executive reported that the proposal was presented in response to the continuing budgetary pressures which the Council faced and in the context of the opportunities presented by the ongoing transformational change. He emphasised the Council's

commitment to minimise compulsory redundancies so far as possible through the use of natural wastage, redeployment and voluntary redundancy.

Executive supported the proposal to offer all staff the opportunity to apply for voluntary redundancy for a limited period and supported the criteria set out in the report for the acceptance of applications.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the policy and procedure set out in the report for voluntary redundancy to be offered to all staff be approved; and
- (2) subject to the criteria described in the report, the determination of any requests for voluntary redundancy, made in response to this time-limited programme, be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the three group leaders.

### **Localism in the Exeter Context**

(Minute 50)

Councillor Hannaford declared an interest in this item as Vice-Chair of Devon County Council's Exeter Locality Committee.

The report of the Strategic Director was submitted, seeking approval for funding towards the work of the proposed Exeter Board to be established by Devon County Council.

Members welcomed the proposal in principle and the opportunity it presented for communities to access a wider pool of funding. They supported Exeter City Council's proposed financial contribution and the appointment in due course of five Exeter City members to serve on the Board. They hoped that the range of neighbourhood funding schemes available would complement each other and work for the benefit of communities at a local level.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the establishment of a joint County Council and City Council Exeter Board be supported; and
- (2) a financial contribution of £8,600 towards the work of the Exeter Board be approved.

### **Councillor Joan Morrish**

(Minute 51)

On the occasion of her last Executive meeting, the Chair and members of Exeter placed on record their great appreciation for the outstanding work of Councillor Joan Morrish and her husband, former Councillor David Morrish, for the enormous contribution they had made to the City. They wished her good health and happiness for the future.

Councillor Joan Morrish returned her thanks for the help and support of fellow members throughout the long and enjoyable period in which she had served on the Council.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.55 pm)

**The decisions indicated will normally come into force 5 working days after publication of the Statement of Decisions unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. Decisions regarding the policy framework or corporate objectives or otherwise outside the remit of the Executive will be considered by Council on 24 April 2012.**