

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

21 January 2015

Present:

Councillor Norman Shiel (Chair)

Councillors Branston, Brimble, Bull, Clark, Foggin, George, Holland, Mitchell, Raybould and Robson

Apologies:

Councillor Morris

Also Present

Chief Executive & Growth Director, Assistant Director Environment, Service Lead Housing Customers, Principal Project Manager, Cleansing & Fleet Manager, Housing Needs Manager, Audit Manager (HP), Technical Accounting Manager, Principal Accountant and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (HB)

In attendance:

Jane Shooter and Elizabeth Deasy of Exeter Primary Care Ltd.

Councillor Rob Hannaford	- Portfolio Holder for Housing and Customer Access
Councillor Keith Owen	- Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and wellbeing

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2014 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Raybould declared a disclosable pecuniary interest and withdrew from the meeting whilst Minute Number 10 was discussed.

Councillor Mitchell expressed an interest in respect of Minute Number 4.

3 Fraud awareness

The Chair welcomed Helen Putt, the Audit Manger, to the meeting who, in response to the Government's papers "Protecting the Public Purse" and "Fighting Fraud Locally", was seeking to increase knowledge of the background to, and implications of, the fraud, bribery and corruption awareness polices. She defined these elements and set out the circumstances in which they occurred.

She also detailed what the Council was doing to counter fraud, bribery and corruption and what action to take if these elements were suspected.

Highlighted were:-

- 85% of fraud is perpetrated by employees or former employees; and
- bribery and corruption was focused around procurement, planning, licensing and parking fees and charges.

4 **Overview of Exeter Primary Care Ltd**

Councillor Mitchell expressed an interest in this matter.

The Chair welcomed Jane Shooter, Practice Manager of the Heavitree Practice and Marketing Director of EPC Ltd. and Elizabeth Deasy, Practice Manager of the Barnfield Hill Practice and Chief Executive Officer of EPC Ltd. who spoke on the work of Exeter Primary Care Ltd.

Exeter Primary Care Ltd, comprising 5 GP's and 6 Practice Managers, had been created in response to the commissioning system. In April 2013 commissioning and procurement had passed from the PCT to Clinical Commissioning Groups, local authorities and NHS England. Commissioners were required to place services out to tender as there was no longer General Practice or NHS exclusivity. Individual practices would find it difficult and costly to comply with the supplier accreditation requirements and Exeter Primary Care Ltd. had been created as a confederation of Exeter GP practices.

The Federation provided a vehicle and skills to successfully bid for services, provided economies of scale in provision and enabled practices to act and work together. Exeter offered a discrete healthcare market with 148,000 patients living within 5 miles of the city centre with 16 practices possessing a history of working together. There was a wide array of potential competitors to provide services including Virgin, Boots, Lloyds, Superdrug, Sainsbury's, Tesco, GP Provider Companies and Foundation Trusts (RD&E). She outlined types of service to be provided including flu vaccinations, smoking cessation and well person health checks.

The following responses were given to Members queries:-

- the current GP weekend opening was being funded centrally by the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund until the end of April and, subject to the availability of support from the NHS England's Sustainability Fund, might be continued beyond April;
- each GP's Practice is an independent business entity comprising the partners, doctors, nurses and community nurses from the North Devon Health Care Trust. Midwives and Healthcare visitors were employed by the RD&E and Virgin Health Care respectively;
- two different IT systems are used in the City and the consent of patients is obtained for across the board access to their records;
- all GP surgeries must have a contract with NHS England and consideration is being given, as part of the Integrated Care Exeter initiative, which comprises a number of partners including the local authorities, RD&E Hospital Trust and the voluntary sector etc., for bidding to run the Exeter Walk In Centre;
- there are no plans to incorporate social care into existing work but EPC Ltd. do and will work with other social care providers; and
- the Ide lane Surgery, Westbank and the Clinical Commissioning Group were looking at existing services in preparation for additional residential development in the area.

The Chair thanked Jane Shooter and Elizabeth Deasy for their presentation. They assured Members that EPC Ltd. was keen to work in collaboration with the City Council wherever possible.

5 **Traffic Congestion and Highway Management in Exeter**

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor, Councillor Prowse attended the meeting and spoke on this item having given notice under Standing Order No. 44.

He referred to a number of reports on the subject of congestion by both the City Council and the County Council as well as the Local Transport Plan seeking to develop coherent transport strategies for the City. In spite of these and because of continued growth in car usage, traffic congestion remained a problem in the City. He pointed out that many of the City's bus lanes were discontinuous and not wide enough to be effective. He also felt that insufficient facilities were provided for people cycling to work. Referring to specific arterial routes into the City which, he suggested, were becoming traffic black spots, he sought Members views and ideas for raising these matters with relevant Devon County Council officers.

The Chair thanked the Lord Mayor for his input, advising that the purpose of the report was for Members to agree on questions to be put to both the County Council's Head of Highways, Capital Development and Waste Management and the Head of Planning and Transport (or their representatives) who were being invited to a meeting of this Committee.

The Principal Project Manager spoke to a presentation setting out the main issues around transport in the City under the following headings:-

Traffic Congestion in Exeter

- too much traffic and too little road space; and
- impact on the economy.

Travel to work by Exeter residents

- driving: 47%, walking: 22.9%, bus: 9.2%, cycling: 6.3%, car passenger: 5.3%, train: 2.1% and motorbike: 1.2%

Rail

- Devon Metro - new stations, better rolling stock and added capacity;
- rail improvements are popular with the public although trains are often full but improvements are heavily dependent on Government and rail operators and the network does not serve the whole City.

Roads

- improvements proposed include Bridge Road widening, Tithebarn Lane link, Exhibition Way link (subject to village green litigation) and Alphington Park and Ride (subject to planning permission).

Buses

- good network so lots of potential but short lead in time for change and congestion itself is an obstacle.

Walk/Cycle

- 28% combined;
- legacy of cycling demonstration town 2005-11;
- resistance from other road users; and
- all the easy sections have been completed but bold solutions needed for the rest.

Smart Solutions

- electric vehicles - does not address congestion but does reduce pollution;
- gateway to funding for smart technology; and
- bid being worked up for money to work up a Smart travel management project for the Rugby World Cup.

Members discussed the problems and it was agreed that, as well as inviting County Council officers to a future meeting, it would be helpful for Mike Watson, Managing Director of Stagecoach as well as representatives of Sustrans and, possibly, other transport providers to attend also. Members raised the following issues for putting to the attendees:-

- how would a Park and Ride at Alphington attract people out of cars when the bus would be caught in the same congestion on Alphington Road. Could the Park and Ride bus use Tan Lane ?;
- could and should Water Lane be implemented as a bus only link?;
- bus lanes generally - could they be made more effective (wider, more continuous) and, if not, are they worthwhile ?;
- can there be a strategic look at residents' parking across the City? - a Member referred to problems experienced by commuters parking in Mincinglake, Stoke Hill and Pennsylvania;
- can Park and Ride be promoted more to reduce parking in residential areas and does Park and Ride have sufficient capacity for this ?;
- could rail Park and Ride be promoted ?;
- could vacant sites be used for Park and Change or additional parking for local centres - a Member suggested smaller scale Park and Ride sites in the Pinhoe and Whipton areas, for example, an area of land to the rear of the Beacon Heath shops;
- could Park and Ride be extended later into the evenings and to additional sites on Sunday ?;
- could bus fares be reduced as they deter and even prevent people from travelling ?;
- can the Stagecoach bus timetable to Plymouth, especially on Saturdays, be reviewed ?;
- what more could be done to improve facilities for cyclists and pedestrians to encourage travel by these modes ?; and
- what are the preparations for the Rugby World Cup ?

With regard to the last point, the Principal Project Manager explained that a Transport Group was meeting regularly comprising representatives of the City and County Councils, Exeter Chiefs, England Rugby, transport operators and emergency services and they were considering all transport issues. He also agreed to enquire about the prospect of using the suggested vacant land at Beacon Heath for local parking.

6 **Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order 20**

In accordance with Standing Order 20, Councillor Mitchell put a question on fly tipping in the St James Ward to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Wellbeing. The Portfolio Holder replied. A copy of the questions had previously been circulated to Members. The questions and the replies from the Portfolio Holder (in italics) are appended to the minutes.

7 **Reports of Portfolio Holders**

Councillors Owen and Hannaford presented progress reports on priorities within the Environment, Health and Well Being Portfolio and the Housing and Customer Access Portfolio respectively. Responses to Members' queries are set out below:-

Environment, Health and Well Being

The Portfolio Holder advised that the next meeting of the Licensing Committee on 3 February 2015 would consider reports on a revised Licensing Policy and a Policy of Restriction and Quality Standards for Hackney Carriages. The latter would present a number of options for consideration by Members on the way forward for taxi provision in the City.

Housing and Customer Access

The Portfolio Holder highlighted:-

- the continued requirement that all new housing developments include 35% social and housing and affordable housing;
- the construction of 20 new council houses on council-owned land and continued search for funding to increase this number; and
- the introduction of schemes to improve the quality of private rented accommodation with research being undertaken to identify policy interventions in other cities, especially Oxford, and their applicability for Exeter and Exeter CVS establishing a multi-agency Private Rented Sector Forum.

He referred to the University of Exeter's survey of the City's housing stock, including the private sector, which he suggested could be the topic for a future presentation to this Committee.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the reports.

ESTIMATES, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND FEES AND CHARGES

8 **Community - General Fund - Estimates/New Capital Bids/Fees and Charges**

The Principal Accountant presented the report on the Community Revenue Account Estimates and Fees and Charges, which outlined the strategic framework within which the estimates had been prepared; changes in accounting practices which affected all budgets and gave detailed reasons for major changes in the Management Unit estimates. A detailed schedule of the capital programme for Community was also attached to the report.

The Accountant reported budget reductions in temporary accommodation and the homelessness budget. Improvements in first line advice and processes had resulted in a reduced need for the former and, in respect of the latter, a review of services

provided had found that there was scope to re-design current funding arrangements with partners.

The Portfolio Holder agreed to respond after the meeting to a question in respect of public conveniences and undertook to report to a future meeting of this Committee on CCTV provision in the City where budget savings were being proposed as part of the Council's wider savings targets.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the draft Revenue Estimates for 2015/16, the proposed Capital Programme and Fees and Charges for further consideration by Executive.

9 Community - Housing Revenue Account - Estimates/New Capital Bids/Fees

The Technical Accounting Manager presented the report on the Housing Revenue Account Estimates and Fees and Charges, which outlined the strategic framework within which the estimates had been prepared, changes in accounting practices which affected all budgets and gave detailed reasons for major changes in the Management Unit estimates. A detailed schedule of the capital programme for Housing was also attached to the report together with details of the Council Own Build programme.

Scrutiny Committee – Community noted the draft Revenue Estimates for 2015/16, the proposed Capital Programme, Fees and Charges and Council Own Build for further consideration by Executive.

10 Housing Rents and Service Charges 2015/16

Councillor Raybould declared a disclosable pecuniary interest and withdrew from the meeting whilst this matter was discussed.

The Technical Accounting Manager presented the report recommending a rent increase for council dwellings from 1 April 2015.

The Government had announced a new social housing rent policy to apply for ten years from 2015-16 to 2024-25. Under the new policy, rents in the social sector should increase by Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation by + 1% annually. Social rents would continue to be set on the current basis, whereby rent per property was calculated using a national formula reflecting the value of the property, number of bedrooms and local earnings. The main change was the move from an annual limit on weekly rents of Retail Price Index + 0.5% + up to £2, to a limit of Consumer Price Index + 1%, following the Office for National Statistics announcement that the Retail Price Index no longer met international standards for an inflation-index.

Therefore, in accordance with the Government's policy, it was necessary to implement an increase of 2.2% (CPI + 1%). For 2015-16 this would result in an average increase £1.65 per week, over 52 weeks, per property.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report and recommended Executive to approve:-

- (1) a rent increase for Council dwellings of 2.2% from 1 April 2015;
- (2) an increase in garage rents of 2.2% from 1 April 2015;
- (3) an increase of service charges by 2.2%, with the exception of the charges specified below from 1 April 2015:-

- (a) 2.8% increase in respect of cleaning communal areas in line with anticipated rises in cleaning contract costs;
 - (b) 0% increase in respect of communal electricity at Weirfield House;
 - (c) 0% increase in respect of water at Magdalen Gardens;
 - (d) 3.1% increase in respect of fire alarm testing in line with rises in maintenance and monitoring contract costs; and
 - (e) 5% increase in respect of repair costs in line with Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) rates.
- (5) the charging, in principle, of full market rent to tenants with a household income of at least £60,000; and
- (6) the flexibility to let new-build council housing at “affordable rents”, that is, up to 80% of local market rent where considered appropriate.

ITEMS FOR EXECUTIVE

11 Clinical Waste Collections

The Cleansing and Fleet Manager presented the report seeking approval for the re-design of the clinical waste collection service. The proposals, if implemented fully, would enable costs to be reduced by approximately £30,000, offer alternative and preferred provision for some clients and ensure that relevant legislation is complied with.

He responded as follows to Members’ queries:-

- a trade clinical waste service already operated for care homes, etc. In terms of residents being treated at home by a health care worker, the Council would seek a service level agreement with the relevant health provider to collect the clinical waste generated from treatment; and
- at present, clinical waste was disposed of on a daily basis by vans transporting the waste to Liskeard, with East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils operating similar systems. From the end of January, a central collection point would operate from Exton Road with a larger vehicle transporting this waste to Liskeard.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report and recommended Executive to:-

- (1) agree a separate clinical waste collection being offered only for hazardous or infectious clinical waste, meaning that offensive waste, such as sanitary protection products (Sanpro waste), would be collected and disposed of via the domestic rubbish collection and disposal at the Energy from Waste plant;
- (2) where required, agree to additional rubbish capacity being provided to households generating Sanpro waste at no charge;
- (3) approve the City Council working with healthcare providers to ensure they make their own arrangements to remove clinical waste that they generate in clients’ homes, or that they pay the Council to collect this waste; and
- (4) approve the Council working with pharmacies and others to explore the potential for a network of sharps-box depositories and exchanges.

12 **Domestic Waste Containers - Charges and Policies**

The Cleansing and Fleet Manager presented the report seeking to consolidate into one document a number of existing policies relating to domestic waste collection and the supply of waste containers. It also sought approval for a revised policy on charging for domestic waste containers to provide a simpler and harmonised charging structure.

Members were advised that there was no charge placed on the provision of seagull resistant sacks and that, although previous legal advice given was that it was not possible to require developers to provide bins with new houses as part of legal agreements with planning approval, there was scope to work collaboratively with developers to assist new home-owners in making arrangements for bin provision.

It was also noted that charges for bins reflected the cost of supply and provision and that waste operation Supervisors had the capacity to issue enforcement notices under Section 46 of the Environmental Health Act 1990.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report and recommended Executive to:-

- (1) approve the consolidated waste collection policies, as set out in Appendix 4 of the report;
- (2) approve the proposed list of exemptions of charges for domestic waste containers, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report, to be adopted with effect from 1 February 2015; and
- (3) agree that the City Council follow more robustly an escalation process leading to the use of Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requiring residents to purchase or provide domestic waste containers to the required specification.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.50 pm

Chair

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY
21 JANUARY 2015

MEMBER QUESTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 20

Fly-tipping

As the Portfolio Holder will be aware persistent fly tipping has been an issue within St James. Indeed this weekend another episode opposite 'The Tannery' in Well Street occurred and was reported by local residents and myself.

The Street Scene team, as always, reacted quickly to remove the items. However, I was informed that due to staff being moved to other teams and seconded into other posts that currently no investigative enforcement action could occur because the team currently has no enforcement officers - the team was once four strong. As he will be aware enforcement is a vital part of maintaining a clean environment.

Does the Portfolio Holder agree with me that this is a concerning situation, was he aware of the staffing issues facing this service and what steps will he take to resolve the situation?

Answer

I appreciate Cllr Mitchell and residents reporting this instance of fly-tipping to the City Council. I also reported it to the Council myself at the weekend, having noticed it myself when I was in Well Street on Saturday morning.

In terms of issues such as litter and fly-tipping enforcement, environmental health staff, Supervisors/Officers from Waste and Civil Enforcement Officers all have powers to tackle such issues and they carry this out along with other duties.

Unfortunately, it has become apparent from practical experience in the field that the opportunity to connect fly-tipped waste with an address is becoming more difficult as many people are mindful about data theft and placing their address details in their waste – this means that officer resources spent investigating such complaints are not successful in identifying the culprit, in the main. Therefore, it is more expedient to remove fly-tipped waste swiftly in 'one-off' situations and instead concentrate any investigation where there is a chronic problem.

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