

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

3 March 2015

Present

Councillor Norman Shiel (Chair)

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

Apologies:

Councillors Newby and Raybould

Also present:

Chief Executive & Growth Director, Senior Housing Development Officer, Technical Accounting Manager, Principal Accountant Service (PM), Housing Performance And Project Manager, Environmental Health Technician (AB) and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (HB)

In attendance:

Councillor Owen

Portfolio Holder Environment, Health and Wellbeing

Traffic Congestion in Exeter

Trevor Preist : Transition Exeter Transport Group
Chris Lorimer : Exeter sustainable Business Network
Keith Lewis : Exeter Civic Society
Lynn Wetenhall : Cwest

Exeter College

John Laramy : Vive Principal
Rob Bosworth : Assistant Principal of Exeter College

13 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2015 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

14 **Declaration of Interests**

No declarations of interest were declared.

PRESENTATIONS TO COMMITTEE

15 **Traffic Congestion in Exeter**

The Chair introduced the topic of this scrutiny investigation which had been arranged because of concerns raised not just by this Committee but by other groups in the City about traffic congestion in Exeter and what strategies are in place, or should be in

place, to ensure that the City's transport systems can cope with the significant development that is taking place.

The format was one of question and answers with Jamie Hulland, Devon County Council Transportation, Planning and Road Safety Manager and Mike Walker, Managing Director of Stagecoach forming a Panel with support from the City Council's Principal Project Manager.

The following organisations, who had expressed concerns were invited to provide a brief presentation on their principal issues, the first having submitted a paper which had been included in the agenda together with a follow up paper circulated separately to Members:-

Transition Exeter Transport Group - Trevor Preist
Exeter Sustainable Business Network - Chris Lorimer
Exeter Civic Society - Keith Lewis
Cwest - Lynn Wetenhall

The question and answer session took place, focusing on travel modes other than rail. It was recognised that rail had a significant part to play in Exeter's transport strategy; however, the Devon Metro project was progressing well, so the purpose was to explore what more could be done to promote other travel modes.

The report of the Principal Project Manager on the debate is attached to these minutes and will be circulated to the participating groups. It was proposed that a further report be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee in June

The Chair thanked the Panel and interested parties for attending and their contributions.

16 **Exeter College**

The Chair welcomed John Laramy, Vice Principal and Rob Bosworth, Assistant Principal of Exeter College. The following were highlighted:-

- the Sixth Form for Exeter and the Heart of Devon;
- a major provider of Apprenticeships, Higher Education, Adult and ESOL provision with NEET engagement work in Exeter and Exmouth;
- specialist academies - Michael Caines, Flybe, Reach, Enterprise, Journalism, Music, Sport;
- 24% cut for 2015/16 for adult provision and 22% lower funding for post 16;
- a further 17.5% cut for students who turn 18 at the start of the academic year;
- apprenticeships status quo, the 1,371 apprentices earning £14,000,000;
- students spending some £70,000 a week in and around Exeter;
- over £40 million spent on property developments over the last 12 years and plans for more; and
- challenging times ahead with curriculum changes and reduced Government funding.

They thanked the City Council for its significant support over recent years as part of a partnership approach and to innovative projects many of which had received national recognition such as the Exwick Sports Hub. The College was well placed to thrive as it was located in a forward thinking and growing City with outstanding strategic partnerships, built on trust and mutual gain. The "Exeter Factor" was key.

The following responses were given to Members' queries:-

- all College Higher Education courses were complimentary to the University's and did not offer competing or similar courses and were vocationally relevant e.g. aircraft engineering. A recent 10 week programme for Brazilian students was an example of outreach to international students which the College was keen to develop, subject to financial constraints;
- the College took its responsibilities to the local community seriously seeking to develop positive relationships with meetings held recently and new students, especially those from outside Exeter, expected to respect the local community;
- the requirement for youngsters to remain in education until 18 had now been introduced but there was no penalty for non attendance. It was apparent that some students, for whom further education would not have been a choice in the past, were experiencing difficulties in coping which the College was seeking to address through counselling etc. Transitional Co-ordinators visited the five Exeter Secondary Schools to prepare for transfer to further education;
- the three main courses were A Levels, apprenticeships and full time vocational learning. Keen to increase the latter's profile, the College looked to link all courses to industry and for a clear "line of sight" to exist so that all students experienced practical experiences in the work environment;
- all two/three year apprenticeships involved employment and, although a job was not guaranteed at the end of the course, the majority secured employment; and
- all students were encouraged to take up part time jobs to improve employability, time management etc. and an in house transitional team assisted with placements, compiling job opportunities etc.

Members and the Chair thanked Messrs Laramy and Bosworth for their interesting and impressive presentation.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

17 Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring to December 2014

The Technical Accounting Manager advised Members of any major differences by management unit to the revised budget. The total budget variances indicated that there would be a net surplus of £1,255,026 in 2014-15, representing an increase of £2,629,576 compared to the revised budgeted deficit of £1,374,550 for 2014-15; the main deviations from budget being set in the report.

The forecast HRA Working Balance as at 31 March 2015 was £4,218,245 and the current HRA Capital Programme showed a total forecast spend of £9,772,349 compared to the £12,723,080 approved programme, a decrease of £2,950,731.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report.

18 Community Budget Monitoring to December 2014

The Principal Accountant advised Members of any major differences by management unit to the outturn forecast for the first nine months of the financial year up to 31 December 2014. The current forecast suggested that net expenditure would increase from the approved budget by a total of £189,240 after transfers from reserves and revenue contributions to capital. This represented a variation of 1.94% from the approved budget and included a supplementary budgets of £10,130.

The current Community Capital Programme showed a total spend of £896,360 in 2014/15 with £546,830 of the programme potentially deferred to 2015/16.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report.

ITEMS FOR EXECUTIVE

19 Support for Residents in Older Persons' Accommodation

The Service Lead Performance, Strategy and Resources presented the report explaining the continuation of the current arrangements for supporting residents in the Council's older persons' accommodation following withdrawal of Devon County Council's 'Supporting People' funding after 31 March 2015. The Council would continue to fund these services from the Housing Revenue Account for a period of 12 months.

He responded as follows to Members' queries:-

- discussions were on going with the voluntary sector regarding potential support. The Estuary League of Friends was particularly active in Topsham and Age UK were being consulted on possible areas where they could support; and
- the potential for consulting with the City's Housing Associations, who presently accounted for 7% of the City's housing, to adopt a common position on this issue would be explored.

A Member remarked that this initiative was one example of the Council responding positively to the Government's re-wiring of public services drive.

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

- (1) the continuation of funding for the warden service (one Senior Warden and four Wardens) plus the Home Call alarm service to residents in the Council's older persons' accommodation from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for a period of up to 12 months in the first instance from 1 April 2015. The estimated cost of making up the shortfall following the withdrawal of DCC funding would be £182,000 (£131,000 for the wardens plus £51,000 for Home Call);
- (2) additional funding of up to £40,000 from the HRA to be used to fund community development/engagement worker(s) to build capacity among residents of older persons' accommodation and develop partnerships with the voluntary and community sector to reduce dependency on state provision; and
- (3) the investigation of different models of service delivery and funding arrangements to meet customer demand in the future.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

20 Adoption of the Low Emissions Strategy

The Environmental Health Technician presented the report advising Members about the development of a Low Emissions Strategy for Exeter, and requesting adoption of the strategy.

The Low Emissions Strategy had been developed to achieve further reductions in emissions of local and global air pollutants from traffic in the city, within the context of sustainable development of the city, by a range of proposed measures, as set out in the document. The Council had taken the lead in developing the Low Emissions Strategy but was just one partner involved in reducing emission of local air pollutants and their health impacts. The Strategy emphasised that, with vision and commitment, a step change in emissions in the city could be achieved, with benefits to the local population and economy.

Responding to questions from Members submitted prior to the meeting, she confirmed that:-

- any Devon County Council planning application for the Alphington Road Park and Ride and bus corridor would include an air quality assessment which she would review; and
- the emission rates shown for the City's road network and illustrated in the maps within the report did not relate specifically to peak hours but showed the average grammes per km per second emitted over a 12 month period.

Scrutiny Committee - Community supported the report and requested Executive to recommend that Council adopt the Low Emissions Strategy for Exeter for the period 2015-18.

21 **Empty Homes Strategy 2014 Review**

The Senior Housing Development Officer presented the report detailing progress with the Empty Homes Strategy approved in February 2014. It provided a clear strategic approach to returning empty homes back into use and outlined the key housing issues faced by Exeter and the tools at the City Council's disposal to deal with long-term empty properties. The current housing market pressures made it vital for the Council to maximise use of existing housing stock, in particular empty homes.

It outlined what had been achieved for empty homes in Exeter and provided an update on five objectives set out in the strategy to ensure that all priorities and commitments made by the Council towards empty homes were being met.

She encouraged Members to notify officers of empty homes encountered through their ward work.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the progress in taking forward the Empty Homes Strategy.

22 **Re-cycling Plan Annual Review**

The Cleansing and Fleet Manager presented the report updating Members on progress with the Re-cycling Plan since its approval in 2011 and seeking ongoing support for re-cycling initiatives.

With regard to the discussions on the potential for a shared waste management service with the County Council, Teignbridge and East Devon Districts, the latter had advised that it wished to retain independence but possible collaboration with the former was still being examined.

Excellent collaborative working continued with the University and its Community Liaison Officer in the development of more tailored information for students about refuse and recycling collection. The Green Team initiative would cease beyond July with schools seeking to focus increasingly on the national curriculum. The County Council however were funding a Resources Futures school visits, which were featured in the schools' curriculum. Seven Exeter schools had been provided with equipment enabling them to compost their own organic waste on-site, and one school now took part in food waste collections through the City Council.

Adding a separate food waste collection would increase Exeter's re-cycling rate. However, there was also a need to engage with residents on how to reduce unnecessary food waste. Home composting of unavoidable food waste, such as fruit and vegetable peelings, was a practical option for many residents and should be encouraged.

There had been a reduction in paper collection reflecting a national plateau but there was increased emphasis on collecting textiles and glass.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the Council's progress in implementing the Re-cycling Plan 2011-16 and supported the ongoing actions planned for 2015 as set out in the report.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.48 pm

Chair

TRANSPORT STRATEGY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

EXETER CITY COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMUNITY COMMITTEE, 3RD MARCH 2015

These questions focus on travel modes other than rail. It is recognised that rail has a significant part to play in Exeter's transport strategy; however, the Devon Metro project is progressing well, so the purpose of this session is to explore what more can be done to promote other travel modes.

Respondents:-

JH = Jamie Hulland, Transportation, Planning and Road Safety Manager, Devon County Council;

MW = Mike Watson, Managing Director of Stagecoach South West;

RH = Ross Hussey, Principal Project Manager (Infrastructure Management & Delivery), Exeter City Council.

Question	Answer
Park & ride	
Could park and ride be promoted more, to reduce parking and congestion in residential areas, and does the existing P&R network have sufficient capacity for this?	MW: Carries 2m passengers pa, including contra-peak journeys to employment sites. Yes, could be promoted more; looking at possible relaunch.
Could rail park and ride be promoted?	JH: Yes, Cranbrook stn will have large car park to serve those living away from the station, including neighbouring villages. Plans for enhanced parking at Pinhoe. Scope at stations along the Tarka line to Barnstaple, e.g. Copplestone.
Could vacant sites around the city be used for park and change, or additional parking for local centres?	JH: P&C suitable for edge of city where P&R not viable, such as Crediton and Tiverton corridors. Also looking at A3052. Need car parks with capacity during weekdays.
Could park and ride be extended later into the evenings, and to additional sites on Sundays?	MW: Extended Christmas services not intensively used, nor is comprehensive evening service on city buses. Scope to use other services which pass P&R sites, but DCC lock at 7pm.

	JH: Could explore.
How would a park and ride at Alphington fit with the overall strategy?	JH: Strategy is current (LTP runs between 2011 and 2026), having been developed to relate directly to growth plans for city (linked to the Core Strategy). P&R is one of a number of measures which include Devon Metro and cycling. It needs a range of solutions. JH noted that 22% travel to work on foot. Considerable synergy with aims of groups represented here – i.e. more people getting into the city by other modes.
How would it attract people out of cars, when the bus would be caught in the same congestion on Alphington Road?	JH: Alphington Road needs regular service; and P&R needs direct route, although stops could be included without adding undue delay. Looking at bus priority corridors. Some priority options; Grace Road link has changed movements. The journey time of bus vs car should be offset against comparative benefits of cheaper cost of parking all day and distance to walk to destination at end of journey (i.e. walking from car park will add to overall journey time).
Could it use Tan Lane?	JH: Tan Lane restricted to single deckers so depends on type of vehicle.
What about unauthorised parking in P&R sites?	JH: Difficult to enforce – may need to be more flexible in the future to allow people to park and cycle – still avoids cars driving into the city but recognise problem of walking to neighbouring businesses. RH: Charging for parking liable to VAT; more cost effective to charge for bus.
How can we tackle parking by RD&E staff? Parking causes problems in residential areas. P&R not suitable for 8-8 shifts.	See below for subsequent answer by JH.

Bus	
Could and should Water Lane Link be constructed, as a bus-only link?	JH: Would require £10m bridge and divert buses away from passenger destinations in Marsh Barton – unlikely to represent good value for money.
Bus lanes generally - could they be made more effective (wider, more continuous), and if not, are they worthwhile?	MW: Worth having. Increasing congestion requires us to add two vehicles each year, costing £200k. Would like lanes to be wider and operate consistently from 7am-7pm. JH: We're looking at Heavitree generally. Complicated, because road serves lots of functions. See below for subsequent detail provided by JH on enforcement of yellow boxes and bus lanes.
Can there be a strategic review of residents' parking across the city?	See below for subsequent answer by JH.
Are there any other measures available to improve bus timekeeping, and are there plans to introduce any of them?	MW: Just turned on vehicle location system across Devon which will enhance service control. Can feed in to real time system; working with DCC on this. JH: DCC in Punctuality Improvement Partnership with Stagecoach.
Which elements of the Exeter Bus Growth Strategy are still to be implemented?	JH: The strategy was produced because we needed a plan to cater for new developments, and provide evidence base for section 106 contributions. £5m has been secured towards extending existing services, particularly to serve growth on the east of Exeter.
Could the Strategy be updated? Should it be more ambitious?	JH: Could be updated to take into account technological opportunities.
How are the proposed cuts to supported bus services to be reconciled with the Strategy?	JH: Long lead time to enable responses to be considered. See subsequent details supplied below.

<p>Could bus fares be reduced, as they deter and even prevent people from travelling?</p>	<p>MW: Yes and no. Have reduced day ticket from £4.10 to £3.60, and extended Exeter and Exeter Plus zones giving up to a 35% reduction. Can't do it across the board, as costs increase 3-4%pa due to congestion, wage demands. Fuel costs are hedged so haven't benefited from reduction.</p>
<p>What are the current figures for the daily passenger journeys on each of the Exeter City Buses, Exeter P&R and the Country Services arriving in Exeter?</p>	<p>MW: 16m pa for Exeter, comprising 4.5m on rural services, 9.5m on city services and 2m on P&R. Roughly 48k journeys per day, and 290k per week.</p>
<p>How would these numbers be expected to grow by 2030 and how might such growth be achieved?</p>	<p>MW: Numbers have doubled in Devon in ten years. In some cases can double capacity by changing the vehicle; eg Cranbrook can grow to double decker every 10 mins. Highest loads on some services aren't at peak times.</p>
<p>The figure for Exeter City Buses in 2009/10 of 20,200 implies that the number of passenger journeys per bus per day was about 400. At what corresponding value would it be considered that the vehicle was working at its full capacity?</p>	<p>MW: Maximum is 80 for double deck, 60 or 50 for single deck. Aim below those in interests of comfort.</p>
<p>Public transport generally</p>	
<p>Trevor Preist calculates 15,000 extra people will need to get to work using car or public transport by 2030.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is DCCs target for the fraction of these who will use public transport? • What elements of the current infrastructure plan will yield enhancement in the public capacity to support this? • If these enhancements take place, how many extra users of public transport are they estimated to generate? 	<p>JH: Not clear whether these figures are all assumed in the peak, or where these trips are going. The County tends to look at trends. We're predicting limited growth in demand to the city centre with significant jobs growth on the eastern edge. Need to look at past trends; rail up 100%, bus 50%. Traffic reduced but a 1% reduction in speeds – it is a far more complicated calculation as new interventions (e.g. a new rail halt) will affect how new residents will travel but may encourage mode shift amongst existing people travelling in Exeter. This may explain why traffic volumes have continued</p>

	<p>to reduce on all corridors over the past 10 years despite significant growth in housing.</p> <p>Also, households with internet has increased by double in the last 10 years and the number of trips made for a range of purposes (commuting, leisure, business) are reducing substantially, which needs factoring in to future projections – increased home working for instance.</p> <p>Need to build on past success and do more of the same. Numerous big LTP schemes coming to fruition – Cranbrook & Newcourt stations, Bridge Road widening, Tithebarn Lane link, £5m of bus services, further extension of cycle routes and only 4 years into LTP.</p> <p>Also people time shift to avoid congestion. Contributions made by working at home, less shopping.</p>
Other modes	
What more could be done to improve facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, to encourage travel by these modes?	JH: DCC is developing a cycling and multi use trail strategy and planning to market some of the good scheme work (Exe Estuary) using funds from last year of LSTF.
Are there plans for any more major cycle corridors?	JH: Developing two new high quality primary routes from Monkerton & Newcourt to city centre. May need bold decisions eg closure of minor roads to motor traffic in order to achieve priority for cyclists.
Is there guaranteed funding for the cycle network?	JH: Budget down from £8.9m in 2008/9 to £3.6m. More reliance on growth fund; can't guarantee funding as down to the LEP and Community Infrastructure Levy. MPs want us to continue investing in cycling; we're urging them to put pressure on the LEP.

<p>Are there any plans to ease congestion at Countess Wear roundabout, in addition to Bridge Road widening (which won't address all the problems), especially in view of the large number of new dwellings along Topsham Road?</p>	<p>JH: Scheme will remove bottleneck on Bridge Road, which currently results in blocking back through the roundabout, causing queuing on all approaches. Modelling shows high value for money. Will review roundabout afterwards.</p>
<p>General</p>	
<p>How do you see non-car modes being promoted, following the end of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and responsibility for major scheme funding passing to the LEP?</p>	<p>JH: Following Zsolt Schuller's voluntary departure, Sustainable Travel now part of single Transportation Planning team. Still have dedicated staff and a plan for future investment.</p>
<p>What efforts have been made to devise an overarching transport strategy that is supported by partners including businesses and other stakeholders, and which can underpin funding discussions?</p>	<p>JH: The LTP is the overarching strategy that had buy in from a range of businesses and stakeholders. Within the financial context, we have needed to prioritise our critical schemes that are going to the LEP/LTB for funding. In the past couple of years, the county council has been delivering approximately £50m of infrastructure to support growth, directly linked to our Local Transport Plan. Unprecedented growth is a success story; congestion as a result so we need to keep planning, and being proactive to get the remaining schemes developed and shovel-ready for future delivery.</p>
<p>What efforts have been made to consider technological solutions, eg in relation to parking?</p>	<p>MW: Lots more we can do. Moving towards rechargeable smart card; also credit cards and mobile ticketing. Hoping to get some buses with wifi for Exeter this year.</p> <p>JH: Can transform bus travel using improvements to info systems, e.g. smartcard technology will allow people to see exactly where their bus is and can use their time more efficiently to create a more demand responsive system. Being able to do things on public transport (check emails/read) is far more productive than sitting in traffic – selling these benefits</p>

	is an important part of making travel by bus more attractive.
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Subsequent answers and more detailed information provided by JH.

Clarification on the residents' parking review, and whether it could be expanded to include parking restrictions around the RD&E hospital

A parking working group of County Councillors has been set up recently with the approval of the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee. The main remit of this group is to explore the possible expansion of residents' parking permit schemes to areas in the city that do not currently have a scheme and suffer from parking availability issues from non-residential parking. This review includes areas that may not have a current parking availability issue but could suffer in the future or could be affected by displacement parking from any new parking schemes.

The group has had its second meeting and has set the extents and areas of the main focus of the study, which include the areas around the RD&E. It has also had a preliminary review of the parking survey that has recently been undertaken to establish current parking patterns.

The next step is to begin a consultation with a small catchment area of the overall areas being considered, in order to get some early views and feedback to help inform the consultation to the much larger area under consideration. This is with a view to begin delivering County Council approved schemes within the coming financial year.

With reference to the specific query regarding parking around the RD&E for staff, with any proposals for parking schemes we need to consider the effects it would have on displaced vehicle users. With local members' input and with help from the rest of the County Councillors on the working groups, it is hoped that we will be able to strike the right balance between parking availability for residents and utilising available space for workers.

Views on enforcement cameras and which body is responsible for yellow box and bus lane enforcement – particular issues around parking in bus lanes and cars blocking yellow boxes at First and Last junction and Exe Bridges

The use of enforcement cameras is currently being considered as part of Parliament's proposed Deregulation Bill that is at its latter stages of approval. Once this bill is passed the County Council will be able to take a more informed view as to what options it has available to enforce regulatory markings such as box junctions and bus lanes. Until this time it is still within the remit of the police to enforce markings of this nature.

The surfacing of the bus lane between Waitrose and Barrack Road keeps failing; what is being done about it?

The County Council spent £70k last summer doing deep recon patches between Waitrose and Barrack Road, so this issue should now be resolved. There is an action for the Neighbourhood Team officer to monitor the issues.

Consultation on proposed bus service reductions

The proposals to reduce DCC-funded bus services is currently being consulted upon within a public consultation process that ends on 20th April 2015. The context of the proposed reduction in the public transport budget is the Government's Spending Review, which is reducing council funding year on year. With a shrinking budget, some very difficult decisions on priorities are having to be made across county council services.

We are therefore consulting on a set of proposals that aims to minimise the impact – accepting that it is inevitable that the impact of a cut of this magnitude will be significant to many people. This is based on analysis of cost per passenger for different services. Given the high cost per passenger of many current council-funded bus services, with less funding available it is considered appropriate to consider whether there should be an upper limit to the amount spent per passenger journey.

As this is currently out to consultation, it is recommended that any comments / thoughts / feedback on the proposals are articulated through the consultation process (<https://new.devon.gov.uk/publictransportbudget>).