

## **PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

8 September 2016

### **Present:**

Councillor Brimble (Chair)

Councillors Lyons, Foggin, Henson, Keen, Prowse, Robson, Wardle and Wood

### **Apologies:**

Councillor Mitchell

### **Also present:**

Assistant Director Public Realm, Assistant Director Environment, Assistant Director Finance, Principal Accountant (MH), Economy and Enterprise Manager, Economy Partnerships and Project Manager, City Arts and Events Manager and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (SLS)

### **In attendance:**

Councillor Rachel Sutton	- Portfolio Holder for City Development
Councillor Rosie Denham	- Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture
Councillor Paul Bull	- Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhood

## **22 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2016 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

## **23 Declaration of Interests**

No declarations of disclosable interest were made.

## **24 Questions from the Public under Standing Order 19**

Three members of the public, Mr Walton of Exeter Cycling Campaign, Ms Wetenhall of Ludwell Life Steering Group and Ms Moor of the Exeter Community Forum, each submitted public questions. A copy of the questions and the responses from Councillor Sutton, Portfolio Holder City Development and Councillor Bull, Portfolio Holder Communities and Neighbourhoods were appended to the minutes.

## **25 Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order 20**

In accordance with Standing Order No 20, a question was put by Councillor Prowse in relation to the business case for the Valley Parks transfer and the important role that the green spaces play in the life of Exeter's citizens. A copy of the question had been previously circulated to Members, and this, together with the reply from Councillor Sutton, Portfolio Holder City Development were appended to the minutes.

## MATTERS FOR EXECUTIVE

### 26 Transfer of Exeter's Valley Parks to Devon Wildlife Trust

The Assistant Director Public Realm presented a report which sought Member's consideration of whether to transfer the City Council's Valley Parks to Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT). The transfer of the valley parks was a transformation plan objective, as the Council's operating costs and risks would be reduced, supported by a financially sustainable plan. There was also the opportunity for greater enhancement of the Valley Parks, which included land owned or leased by the City Council at Riverside, Ludwell, Mincinglake, Belvedere and Duryard, Barley Valley and Withycombe Way to encourage even greater use. This approach would support the delivery of the Exe Valley Parks masterplan and the City Council's responsibility to provide Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) to address the demands that development places on protected habitats.

Harry Barton, Chief Executive of DWT, attended the meeting and made a presentation to Members on the vision of the DWT to enhance the valley parks. He referred to the reach and experience of the Trust and provided examples of their established track record. A study had been made of all of the valley park sites and consideration of the potential to further improve the developed wildlife and fauna. He recognised the importance of a supportive community and welcomed the opportunity for engagement with, and to be held account by, such vital local groups. He also outlined a summary of potential benefits and financial projections for the next five years, including details of the longer term financial sustainability. The development plans could include a Visitor Centre to draw people and develop accessibility, which would help enhance the value for the local community. He responded to a Member's comment on the charitable status and governance arrangements of the DWT.

A Member welcomed the work already taking place in the Valley Parks and particularly in Ludwell Valley Park and, despite the sensitivity of the sites, that adequate car parking to ensure accessibility would be provided. She also hoped that young people and children would be encouraged to use the space and asked if any work with schools had taken place. Peter Burgess, Director of Development, Policy and Research was also in attendance from the DWT and stated that, whilst parking could provide great challenges, he recognised the need for its inclusion along with improvement to walking and cycling routes to increase accessibility. Paul Martin, an education officer with the DWT, had visited schools in the city in an effort to connect pupils with the valley parks. He also responded to a Member's question on the way in which they would promote the benefit of the sites with harder to reach groups.

The Assistant Director Public Realm responded to a number of questions from Members on future development of the valley parks and confirmed that the City Council would retain the freehold of the land.

Place Scrutiny Committee supported and recommended approval by Executive of the following:-

- (1) final business case for the transfer of the City Council's Valley Parks to Devon Wildlife Trust in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy;
- (2) transfer by lease of land owned and leased by the City Council In Exeter's Valley Parks, namely Riverside, Ludwell, Mincinglake, Belvedere and Duryard, Barley Valley and Withycombe Way, to Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) for a period of 30 years, with the detailed terms to be agreed by the Corporate Manager Property in Consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder Support Services;

- (3) Disposal of land be advertised in accordance with the provisions of S.123 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (4) principle of the grant of a development agreement and group lease for a period of 99 years on any land identified between the Council and the Devon Wildlife Trust as suitable for a Visitor Centre;
- (5) provision of a financial contribution of £425,000 to the Devon Wildlife Trust on transfer; and
- (6) the principle of the Council making an additional £100,000 Contribution in 2022, in the exceptional circumstance where additional investment is required that cannot be found within the Trust's existing resources be approved and that an agreement between the Council and the Trust setting out the specific conditions for the additional payment be delegated to the Assistant Director of Public Realm, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place and the Leader of Council.

Councillor Prowse requested that his name be recorded as having abstained from the vote.

## 27 **Delivering the Parking Strategy: Tariffs, Designations and Permits**

The Assistant Director Public Realm presented a report on parking tariffs, designations and permit changes to be introduced in January 2017. She provided the background which included a new strategic approach to off-street parking which was adopted in March 2016, following a detailed parking review by consultants, and a number of Spotlight Reviews during 2014/15. The report outlined the approach to deliver the optimum impact on each of the four City Council's strategic objectives outlined in the 'New Strategy for Parking 2016 – 2026' including economic growth; maximising capacity, reducing congestion and maintaining income. It was noted that the City Council had not made wholesale changes to parking tariffs since January 2012. The Parking Strategy had highlighted that the current tariff structure encouraged high turnover in Premium and short stay car parks. However, stays beyond three hours were discouraged by the sharp increase in price.

The report set out a proposed tariff structure, which should provide a more gradual rise in price with a clearer 'per hour' rationale. A table setting out the projected impact of the linear tariff was attached to the report. Members had previously expressed a wish to ensure that tariffs would be at a level, so as not to encourage car use over other more forms of sustainable transport. It was considered that the linear approach should help to achieve this. Any evidence of a significant adverse change in car parking habits and footfall in the city centre would be monitored. It was hoped that a culture change by making all Premier car parks equally attractive would deter unnecessary movements cross city, thus reducing levels of congestion.

As well as the revised parking tariffs, the report set out the review of season tickets and permits, car parking designation and zonal strategy in relation to gateway routes and key attractions. Proposed changes to the evening parking offer and the extension of the day time linear tariff into the evening would provide more clarity, and additional staff would be needed to support an extension of the opening hours of the Guildhall and John Lewis car parks. A separate business case was due to be presented to Executive to address the additional staffing implications.

A Member commented on the difference between the residents' annual season ticket against the quarterly commuter season tickets, as he was aware that some residents were using that option where parking was not included and he hoped that some parity could be considered. The Assistant Director Public Realm noted the Member's comment on the purchase of commuter season tickets by residents and reassured the Member that she would see if this anomaly could be overcome before the Parking Places Order was confirmed. A Member also suggested that the level of charge for the commuter season ticket was justified and comparable to the public sector season ticket used by commuters travelling in from more rural areas outside of Exeter.

Councillor Denham, as Portfolio Holder Economy and Culture, referred to the work with Exeter City Futures to gather data and create transport modelling for commuter movements as well as other car journeys. That would also offer the opportunity to inform the pricing element in a sophisticated way and build up a picture of car movements. She hoped that this would come to this Scrutiny Committee in the future.

Place Scrutiny Committee supported and recommended approval by Executive of the following:-

- (1) the adoption of a linear approach to parking tariffs in order to simplify the pricing structure and encourage increased visitor dwell time, as set out in the table below:-

Premier Car Parks (Guildhall, Mary Arches, John Lewis)		
Stay	Current Tariff	Proposed Tariff
1 hour	£1.80	£2.00
2 hours	£2.60	£3.00
3 hours	£3.50	£4.00
4 hours	£6.50	£5.00
5 hours	£8.80	£6.00
6 hours	£11.80	£7.00
7 hours	£11.80	£8.00
All day	£11.80	£12.00
Short Stay Car Parks (Bampfylde Street, Bartholomew Terrace, Harlequins, King William Street, Magdalen Road, Magdalen Street, Matthews Hall, Princesshay 2, Princesshay 3, Smythen Street)		
Stay	Current Tariff	Proposed Tariff
1 hour	£1.20	£1.00
2 hours	£2.20	£2.00
3 hours	£3.30	£3.00
4 hours	£5.70	£4.00
5 hours	£7.70	£5.00
6 hours	£10.80	£6.00
7 hours	£10.80	£7.00
All day	£10.80	£10.00

Long Stay Car Parks (Belmont Road, Bystock Terrace, Cathedral & Quay, Haven Road 1, Howell Road, Richmond Road, Parr Street, Topsham Quay)		
Stay	Current Tariff	Proposed Tariff
1 hour	£0.80	£1.00
2 hours	£1.20	£2.00
3 hours	£1.80	£3.00
4 hours	£3.20	£4.00
5 hours	£5.00	£5.00
All day	£6.20	£6.00
Local Car Parks (Gordons Place, Haven Road 2 & 3, Holman Way, Okehampton Street, Tappers Close)		
Stay	Current Tariff	Proposed Tariff
1 hour	£0.60	£0.50
2 hours	£0.80	£1.00
3 hours	£1.00	£1.50
4 hours	£1.20	£2.00
All day	£1.80	£2.50
Coach Parking at Haven Road 3 (per day)	£5.00	£5.00
Quarterly Commuter Season Ticket	£260.00	£300.00
Residents Annual Season Ticket	£125.00	£125.00
Bartholomew Terrace Business Permit	£205.00	£205.00
Cathedral & Quay Business Bays	£565.00	£565.00

- (2) the extension of the new linear tariff to midnight at Mary Arches, Guildhall and John Lewis car parks, replacing the current £2.00 evening parking charge at Mary Arches Street after 6pm, subject to approval of the business case to extend staffed evening parking facilities at these sites;
- (3) the operation of Mary Arches Street and Guildhall car parks until midnight and John Lewis until 9pm, monitoring demand at John Lewis to ensure closing time remains proportionate to demand;
- (4) the re-designation of Topsham Quay as a long stay car park;
- (5) the re-designation of Haven Road car park to offer both long stay and local rate parking options;
- (6) to facilitate, and better advertise, long stay parking (up to 3 days) at Tappers Close car park to encourage rail use at adjacent station;
- (7) to maintain, but not extend, existing resident and business annual season ticket schemes to support city centre living and smaller businesses;
- (8) to increase the cost of an annual season ticket from £260.00 to £300.00 per quarter to help encourage commuter use of public transport;

- (9) to continue to offer free parking support to Blue Badge holders in all Pay & Display car parks and to consult with appropriate groups to better understand why certain disabled parking areas are underused; and
- (10) with the exception of Mary Arches Street, Guildhall and John Lewis, the current charging hours of 8am to 6pm in all Exeter car parks and 9am to 5pm in all Topsham car parks be maintained.

Councillor Keen requested that his name be recorded as having abstained from the vote.

## 28 **Clean Streets Strategy**

The Assistant Director Public Realm presented a report which sought the adoption of the new Clean Streets Strategy, as a new strategic approach to the street cleaning service provided by the City Council, with a focus on resourcing against demand, behaviour change, improving productivity and community engagement. She set out the principles of the new strategic approach to:-

- invest more resource into reactive and high impact activities;
- organise the service based on need rather than frequency;
- target staff resources at the times of highest demand;
- mechanise to improve productivity and standards;
- change public behaviour to reduce demand, particularly in hotspot areas;
- engage and empower communities; and
- measure and publish information on performance.

The Assistant Director Public Realm also referred to the Action Plan and the initial focus to ensure there was a baseline standard for the measurement of performance, establishment of a business case with the aim of increasing productivity through mechanisation and a shift of resources into reactive and deep clean activities. She advised that such an investment of the service would be the subject of a further report at the appropriate time. She also responded to a Member's question, confirming that although agency staff was still used, it was not to the same degree, but a consistency in the service was required due to the nature of the role and need to cover for sickness absence.

A Member commented on the growing incidents of graffiti in the city, and of the professional way in which the cleansing teams tackled the removal. He felt the weight of the law should be brought to bear on the perpetrators and he wondered if Place Scrutiny Committee could offer any support, in view of the apparent lack of police action. He appreciated the costs associated with graffiti removal and he wished to pay tribute to the efforts of the graffiti team. The Assistant Director Public Realm referred to the good work by the Assistant Director Environment and his teams in trying to bring forward prosecutions. She felt that the improved enforcement, referred to in the Strategy, could have some beneficial effect and welcomed any opportunity to strengthen the police approach. The Chair requested contact be made with Alison Hernandez, the Police and Crime Commissioner, to discuss the likely effects of a more rigorous enforcement regime by both the City Council and the Police.

Place Scrutiny Committee recommended approval by Executive of the adoption of the Clean Streets Strategy 2016, and that work should commence towards the delivery of the actions set out in the Strategy's Action Plan.

## 29 Annual Arts and Events Review

The Arts and Events Manager reviewed the performance of the Arts and Events portfolio for 2015/17 and set out a proposed programme for 2017/18. She referred to the success of the new Arts Projects Grants funding scheme which had provided the opportunity to open up arts to the wider community.

There were two updates to the report namely that an application for £38,000 from the National Lottery via Arts Council England for the Unexpected Festival 2016 had been successful. The Festival would also include a celebration of the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Exeter Ship Canal, on 4 November. This would be a significant, free outdoor event on the Quay, involving performance, music and pyrotechnics display with local artists, college and school students working with a Scottish based performance company, Oceanallover. She also confirmed that a Creative Industry event, would be hosted by Radio One on 1 November, which was testament to the operational success of the Big Weekend event. A Member commented on the authority's underestimation of the final cost for the event and the reporting of the additional expenditure. The Assistant Director Finance stated that the sum was reported in the Budget Monitoring report for this Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Brimble also congratulated the team for all of the work done and achievements made for the city in the last few years.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the review of the performance of the Arts and Events portfolio for 2016/17, and recommended approval by Executive of the following proposals to deliver a new festival of performance in 2017 working in partnership with Exeter Bikeshed Theatre, Exeter Phoenix and Exeter Northcott pending successful application to Arts Council England's Ambitions for Excellence fund by BikeShed Theatre, and

- (1) pending the successful application to Arts Council England and confirmation of Council budgets, the use of the £50,000 arts budget in 2017 as match funding for the delivery of a new festival of performance;
- (2) in the event that external funding support for a new festival was not forthcoming, the continuation of the Unexpected Festival in 2017; and
- (3) the budgets for project grants and other project support as outlined in paragraph 4.1, of the report pending confirmation of Council budgets for 2017/18 be noted.

### ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

## 30 Budget Monitoring (1st Quarter)

The Assistant Director Finance introduced a new member of staff, Marie Holt, Principal Accountant, as her work included Place Scrutiny Committee. She presented a report which advised Members of any major differences, by management unit, between the approved budget and the outturn for the financial year up to 30 June 2016 in respect of Place Scrutiny Committee. The current forecast had suggested that the net expenditure for the Committee would increase from the revised budget by a total of £81,450 after transfers from reserves and revenue contributions to capital, representing a variation of 0.87% from the revised budget. This included supplementary budgets already agreed by Council. The report included an outturn update in respect of the Place Capital Programme,

significant variations by management and any material differences to the revised budget in respect of the Place Scrutiny Committee revenue and capital budgets.

The Assistant Director Finance responded to a Member's question in relation to Heavitree Environmental improvements and confirmed that the allocation of the remaining sum from a Section 106 agreement had yet to be agreed. He also responded to a comment relating to a sum of £50,000 in respect of the Arts and Events budget. The Principal Accountant also responded to a Member who sought detail of the car boot income at Matford and confirmed that she would reply directly to the Member.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

### 31 **Local Air Quality Management**

The Assistant Director Environment updated Members on the Council's duties and activities relating to local air quality management, and part of that duty was to monitor local air quality, and formulate an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) as placed upon the Council by Part IV of the Environment Act 1985. He also referred to the submission of an Annual Status report to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) which detailed the Council's actions and progress in achieving reductions. He would forward the detail to Members of the Scrutiny Committee. One of the other main duties was for the City Council to produce an Air Quality Action Plan to identify measures that would work towards resolving the exceedances of the air quality objectives within the Air Quality Management Area. A Steering Group, set up to cover the Greater Exeter District and partner organisations had been set up to help produce the new Action Plan from 2016, met in June.

The Assistant Director Environment responded to a Member's enquiry on the involvement of local residents in relation to the work on community engagement, and he would ask the Senior Environmental Technical Officer, who was leading on this to update the Member.

A Member questioned why the emission data for the Energy from Waste Plant was not included in the report and further, that such emission data should be published by the plant operator for citizens to view. The Assistant Director Environment explained that the EfW Plant had no significant contribution to make in terms of air pollution when compared to traffic generated emissions, the plant having sophisticated emission control measures in place and were ahead of the field in terms of their continuous sampling of emissions through an AMESA system. In response to the question of the publication of emission data, it was agreed that the Chair of Scrutiny Place would write to the Plant operator and Devon County Council to seek the publication of emission monitoring data, including that from the AMESA system.

He also responded to a Member's comment on recent reports in the national press of the growing impact on human health caused by rising air and traffic pollution levels. In response to a comment about the suitability of current air monitoring equipment, he confirmed that if the PM10 measure was exceeded, that Defra would most likely require us to have more modern measuring equipment. A Member enquired if there was a variety of locations for measuring pollution; the Assistant Director Environment confirmed that a number of the traffic hotspots were targeted as well as the main arterial routes.

Councillor Denham, Portfolio Holder Economy and Culture referred to future analysis within the Exeter City Futures initiative which, would inform future behaviour and



planning. The Assistant Director Environment referred to the multi-lateral action proposed by Exeter City Futures to look at ways to encourage smarter ways of travel.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods wished to thank the Assistant Director Environment and his team for the informative report.

Place Scrutiny Committee supported the following:-

- (1) most recent measurements of air quality data and actions to reduce traffic emissions;
- (2) development of an updated Air Quality Action Plan covering the Greater Exeter area to fulfil air quality objectives, to reduce health effects of poor air quality and to inform the development control process;
- (3) wider community engagement in air quality matters; and
- (4) acknowledged that alteration or expansion of the current monitoring network might be required in future, particularly to include measurements of PM<sub>2.5</sub> or a proxy substance.

## **32 Annual Update of the Exeter and Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board**

The Partnership and Projects Manager updated Members on the activities and progress of the Exeter and the Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board (ESB) in promoting the value of skills development, supporting business growth and getting local people into work. The report explored some of the skill issues affecting the local economy, the ESB's priorities and plans, and provided examples of where the Board had made a difference over the last 12 months.

She confirmed that the purpose of the Board was to develop a local world class workforce where every individual matters, through an employer-led group with facilitators, funders and training providers. She outlined the work of the Exeter Skills Board over the last 12 months including:-

- the work of the Rugby/Business Empowering Employment Programme (REEP to BEEP) and development of the transition from education to employment, with 87% of participants managing to make a positive transition;
- Innovation Exeter close working with Science Technology Engineering Mathematics themes (STEM) to develop a centre of excellence;
- National Apprenticeship Week and the emphasis on another route for young people;
- Local employment in respect of Skills in Construction and because of the uncertainty of Hinckley Point, the development of a client based approach;
- piloting a digital apprenticeship, learning with more than one employer;
- Untapped Talent which promotes the business benefits and creation of real jobs that benefit both those with learning disabilities and also the employer; and
- a world-class work experience for pupils and programme validated through a national certification programme

The Partnership and Projects Manager also responded to Members' comments confirming that she was based in the Civic Centre, within the Economic Development team in Exeter. She also referred to the issue raised of an aging labouring workforce, and ways of improving the image of labouring to young people, as well as more

occupation guidance for schools. She also commented on the possible loss of benefits for those individuals in a work placement, and the work with representatives of the Department of Work and Pensions to understand the complexities of benefits and the value of work.

Members congratulated the Partnership and Projects Manager for all of her work and the difference that was being made.

Place Scrutiny Committee supported the following:-

- (1) progress made and priorities set by the Employment and Skills Board (ESB) in prioritising, planning and implementing interventions designed to better skill a more productive workforce in support of a sustainable and thriving economy; and
- (2) Exeter City Council's financial contribution of £15,000 to extend the post of ESB Partnerships and Projects Manager's role for a further 12 months.

### **33 Exeter Business Improvement District Progress Report**

The Economy and Enterprise Manager updated Members on the first year of trading for the Exeter Business Improvement District (BID). In March 2015, businesses within a defined area of the city centre, and with a rateable value in excess of £7,500, voted to introduce a BID for five years. The Exeter BID was funded by a 1% levy on the rateable value of business, which would generate £2.25 million over the five year period of the BID.

The Chair invited Councillor Denham, as Portfolio Holder Economy and Culture, to respond to a Member's question on the two vacancies for the North/South Street and Cathedral Green areas of the Exeter BID Board membership. She advised that there may be a future discussion on amalgamating the representation for that area.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

### **34 Tourism Facilities - Performance Review**

The report of the Events, Facilities and Markets Manager was presented to Members, and included an update on the performance of the tourism facilities - Exeter Visitor Information & Tickets (EVIT), Underground Passages, and Custom House Visitor Centre & Red Coat Guided Tours.

A Member referred to an increase in the establishment of the economic development staffing and the overall desire to increase tourism by a significant degree. He also referred to past comments on identifying those visitors who arrived in the city by coach. He was concerned about the arrangements for coach parking both in South Street and Haven Banks and reiterated his request for a baseline figure of tourists arriving by coach, seeking brief information such as the purpose of visit, length of stay and spend. The Economy and Enterprise Manager confirmed that when this had been last raised, she had considered the most appropriate way to capture the data. She acknowledged that it was more difficult to target the group market and track the duration of their stay, but confirmed that she had discussed holding an exercise to gather such information using students studying tourism from Exeter College.

The Economy and Enterprise Manager advised that she would supply information on the number of coaches using Exeter Bus Station for parking and the recent passenger numbers through Exeter Airport.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

### **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**35 South East Devon Joint Habitat Regulations Executive Committee Minutes**

The minutes of the South East Devon Joint Habitat Regulations Executive Committee held on Wednesday 29 June 2016 were noted by Members.

**36 Legacy Leisure Working Group Minutes**

The minutes of Legacy Leisure Working Group held on Tuesday 14 June 2016 were noted by Members.

A request for more information would be made from the Leisure Facilities Manager seeking more information on the National Age Group championship.

**37 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

**38 Transfer of Exeter's Valley Parks to Devon Wildlife Trust - Implications for Staff**

The Assistant Director Public Realm presented a report, referring to the earlier report (Minute 26) considered by Members on the transfer of the valley parks to the Devon Wildlife Trust and detailed the implications for staff who currently manage the Valley Parks.

Place Scrutiny Committee supported the report and noted the recommendations to be considered by Executive on 13 September 2016.

**39 Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board Minutes**

The minutes of the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board held on 28 June 2016 were circulated for Members' information, and referred to a number of issues that the City Council may need to consider and take forward as appropriate.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board minutes.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.25 pm

Chair

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## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 8 September 2016**

### **Question for Place Scrutiny Committee From Mike Walton - Exeter Cycling Campaign**

"Given the importance of Exeter's open spaces to the health and wellbeing of our citizens and the imperative of getting more people to cycle across the city as a means of addressing our challenges of pollution, congestion & unhealthy lifestyles,

- 1. will the Council guarantee that in their plans for the future of Exeter's green spaces they will ensure continued and improving access for people, particularly people on bicycles, scooters and wheelchairs**
- 2. and will mandate an annual, public, report to the Council on how greater access for people using bicycles is being delivered"**

*Response by Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for City Development on behalf of Councillor Philip Bialyk Portfolio Holder Sport and Health and Well Being*

*Councillor Rachel Sutton as Portfolio Holder for City Development responded to the question as Councillor Philp Bialyk was unable to attend the meeting as he had already agreed to attend another Council engagement. She confirmed that the Council valued its public green spaces for the enjoyment of all citizens, ensuring that these green spaces remained safe and accessible for a wide variety of users of all ages was of paramount importance, and something that the Council would safeguard.*

*The importance of green spaces as venues to visit and enjoy for leisure, exercise and social activities was fully recognised, as is their importance in providing transport links for cycling. The Portfolio Holder for Sport and Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Bialyk, had prioritised the following actions for 2016:-*

- Improve cycle routes and provide more cycle parking*
- Continue working with partners to make Exeter the most active city in the South West by 2018*

*Details of how this would be delivered and measured were being developed across the city, including Exeter's greenspaces, by the City Council and its partners. Councillor Bialyk would be reporting on the progress and programming of these linked priorities for 2016/17, which would be published. The Exeter Cycle Campaign would also be kept informed.*

A Member reminded the Scrutiny Committee about the excellent contribution already made by the established Exeter cycling route.

### **Question for Place Scrutiny Committee From Lynn Wetenhall, for Ludwell Life Steering Group**

The proposed transfer of the Valley Parks to DWT, whilst having many attractions which Ludwell Life is supportive of, also inevitably means a loss of public control and a 'democratic deficit', through the handing over of a large and significant public asset to a charity, away from a democratically accountable local authority. Exeter City

Council has approved a Community Strategy which underlines "the importance of the views and actions of communities, when making policy and delivering actions".

We therefore ask:

**"Will the council ensure that as part of the negotiated deal and conditions that DWT is obliged to provide a transparent, accessible and standing means by which members of the public and interest groups can input their views and have a dialogue and influence, about valley park issues on a regular basis? This would be over and above the general talk of 'engagement' in the report before you, and would be a specific, named process with appropriate structures, (eg User Group, Forum of interest groups etc) that would give groups like ours, and the many other interested stakeholder groups and members of the public who care passionately about the valley parks, reassurance that the publically accountable aspect of the current management regime would not be entirely lost.**

We believe that any such process and associated structures, as well as going some way to reduce the loss of public accountability and control (via voting, council policy etc), and complying with the spirit of the Community Strategy, could only be of benefit to DWT, given both the considerable changes to the parks which will have to be explained and managed, and the huge amount of experience, expertise and good will that stakeholders have in relation to the valley parks.

We hope that the committee will agree that such a requirement makes sense and will recommend to the Executive Committee."

*Response Response by Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for City Development on behalf of Councillor Rob Hannaford, Portfolio Holder Place*

*Councillor Rachel Sutton as Portfolio Holder for City Development responded to the question as Councillor Rob Hannaford was unable to attend the meeting as he had already agreed to attend another Council engagement. She welcomed the support of Ludwell Life and the proposals to transfer Exeter's Valley Parks to the Devon Wildlife Trust, as well as their enthusiasm and passion and hoped that their contribution would continue long into the future to help keep the city's open spaces special.*

*She acknowledged that leasehold transfer was a fairly blunt instrument with which to mitigate the loss of public accountability. The City Council would do its best to ensure that as part of the negotiated deal and conditions that the Devon Wildlife Trust provided a conduit by which the community, including organisations and groups such as Ludwell Life could input their views and have a regular dialogue about valley park issues. She was certain that local councillors would keep a close eye and also regularly review as part of their ward.*

A Member commented on the work of the Devon Wild life Trust in helping to preserve the wildlife and fauna in the Ludwell valley Park.

A Member commented on the process for making this proposal known to the public.

Ms Wetenhall responded to the reply and understood there would be accountability through the local Members of the City Council, but still made a plea to ensure there was the opportunity for dialogue with members of the public and interest groups.

## **Question for Place Scrutiny Committee**

**Diana Moore**

**Chair, Exeter Community Forum**

Experience from councils across the UK, supported by work and evidence from the Treasury, LGA and community sector, has shown the role of transfer of ownership of land or buildings from a statutory body to a community organisation at 'less than best consideration' can achieve a public benefit for social, environmental and economic benefit. One of the key lessons learned from this work is that a "strategic approach within the local authority provides for transparency, ensures consistency, and enhances the authority's asset management Capability". Section 7 of the report to this committee suggests that Exeter City Council's approach to asset transfer would be enhanced by such a clear approach to policy on asset transfer. The Council signed up to the principles of community development in the Community Development Strategy in April this year, this strategy also highlights that 'it would be useful to increase clarity' on this matter of asset transfer.

**Would the Committee recommend to the Executive to work as a matter of priority to progress the action point in that agreed strategy to "work with community and voluntary organisations to agree and implement a single policy and process for transferring land, buildings and other assets to community ownership or management or both and access to appropriate support and training to officers and organisations going through the process"?**

**Response by Councillor Paul Bull, Portfolio Holder Communities and Neighbourhoods**

*Councillor Paul Bull, as Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods, responded to the question. He referred to a widely attended public engagement event at the Corn Exchange in February 2014, asking community groups and other stakeholder to help us review how we looked at using our Parks and Open Spaces. As a result, Devon Wildlife Trust came forward with an 'in principle' expression of interest on taking on the Valley Parks, and this approach was considered in a report that went through the Committee cycle, including Executive in 2014, where the principle of asset transfer to community organisations was endorsed.*

*The Council recognised that successful, sustainable asset transfer was dependent upon timing and opportunity, with the pace driven by the community, not the Council. At that time it was anticipated that the transfers referred to in the report, including that to Devon Wildlife Trust, could take place relatively swiftly, without the need to develop policies and procedures. However, since then the Community Development Strategy has been developed which highlighted the need for clarity on asset transfer.*

*Councillor Bull stated that he would be very pleased to recommend to Executive that a policy on transferring land, buildings and other assets to community ownership or management be developed. The timing of this piece of work would need to be considered amongst other priorities for the council but he would meet will meet with the relevant Officers to discuss a realistic timescale to develop it.*

Ms Moore thanked Councillor Bull for the reply and referred to their work as part of the Exeter Community Forum Steering Group. The action plan in the community strategy recommend training and support for both community organisations and officers to support both thorough the asset transfer process and she advised that the Exeter Community Forum would look forward to working with the Council to develop this work.

A Member commented on the process for making this issue known to the public.



## **MEMBER QUESTION TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER for Place Scrutiny Committee – 8 September 2016**

### **From Councillor Prowse (Business Case for Valley Parks Transfer)**

At the Executive meeting of the 12 July 2016, a Business case for Valley Parks Transfer appeared on the agenda. This City's green spaces play a very important role in the well-being and health of Exeter Citizens.

- a) What views does the Portfolio have regarding the continued accessibility for people, particularly on bicycles, scooters and wheelchairs through the parks?**
- b) If it is the case that the Devon Wildlife Trust does take on the role of the transfer does the Portfolio Holder agree that an annual report is commendable to this committee?**

*Response by Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for City Development on behalf of Councillor Philip Bialyk Portfolio Holder Sport and Health and Well Being*

- (a) Councillor Rachel Sutton as Portfolio Holder for City Development responded to the question as Councillor Philp Bialyk was unable to attend the meeting as he had already agreed to attend another Council engagement. She referred to the reply giving to a public question and was very supportive of preserving accessibility to park for as many residents and visitors as possible. Again she reiterated that the Council valued its public green spaces for the enjoyment of all citizens, ensuring that these green spaces remained safe and accessible for a wide variety of users of all ages was of paramount importance, and something that the Council would safeguard. The importance of green spaces as venues to visit and enjoy for leisure, exercise and social activities was fully recognised, as was their importance in providing transport links for cycling.*

*The Portfolio Holder for Sport and Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Bialyk, had prioritised the following actions for 2016:-*

- Improve cycle routes and provide more cycle parking*
- Continue working with partners to make Exeter the most active city in the South West by 2018*

*Details of how this would be delivered and measured were being developed across the city, including Exeter's greenspaces, by the City Council and its partners. Councillor Bialyk would report on the progress and programming of these linked priorities for 2016/17, which would be published.*

- (2) Councillor Sutton also stated that she was not minded to recommend that the Council required an annual report from the Devon Wildlife Trust on the basis that it would require a level of reporting and committee attendance that had not featured in our negotiations to date.*

*She referred Councillor Prowse to the answer given to the public question from Ms Wetenhall's question which also sought to address the issues which may arise from the loss of public control or 'democratic deficit' in the spirit of the new Community Strategy by engaging users and stakeholders on a regular basis, so that contacts can*

*be established. There was a precedent for this approach in the transfer of Exwick Flowerpot Playing Fields to Exeter College.*

*It was important to take the opportunity to get this right, as there had been a great deal of interest and she was certain that members of the public would continue to remain engaged through the Community Forum process as well as the Devon Wildlife Trust.*