

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 November 2017

Present:

Councillor Sills (Chair)

Councillors Lyons, Foggin, D Henson, Keen, Owen, Prowse, Wardle and Wood

Apologies:

Councillor Mitchell

Also present:

Director of Communications and Marketing, Museums Manager, City Surveyor, Corporate Manager – Executive Support, Cleansing & Fleet Manager, Economy and Enterprise Manager, Principal Accountant (PM), Principal Accountant (MH), Principal Project Manager (Strategic Infrastructure Planning), Scrutiny Programme Officer and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (SLS)

In attendance:

Councillor Philip Bialyk	Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Sport
Councillor Stephen Brimble	Portfolio Holder for Place
Councillor Rosie Denham	Portfolio Holder for City Transformation, Energy and Transport
Councillor Rachel Sutton	Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture/Labour Group Deputy Leader

45 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2017 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct, subject to the amendment of Minute 36, relating to the setting up of a liaison group involving both Exeter City Council and Devon County Council officers and a more effective collaboration over the future surface treatment and action, and the inclusion of the wording and “extend an invitation to Members”.

46 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Prowse declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of the Queens Crescent Gardens Agreement for Lease and Compulsory Purchase item on the agenda (Minute 53), and withdrew from the meeting whilst this matter was discussed.

47 Questions from the Public under Standing Order 19

In accordance with Standing Order No 19, four members of the public submitted a question on issues relating to the bus service in the city and also a question in relation to the Heart of the South West Partnership's Productivity Strategy and congestion. A copy of the questions had been previously circulated to Members, and this, together with the appropriate responses from Councillor Denham, Portfolio Holder City Transformation, Energy & Transport and Councillor Sutton, Economy and Culture is appended to the minutes.

48 Topic Ideas for Task and Finish Groups

The Scrutiny Programme Officer invited Members to suggest Task and Finish Group topics for consideration at the forthcoming Interim Scrutiny Work Programme Meeting which was due to take place on 13 November 2017. The Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees would be invited along with the Portfolio Holders. She would continue to contact Members for suggested topic ideas for Task and Finish Groups to ensure a rolling programme of work.

A Member suggested a task and finish group to consider if there were any issues with the Council's current staffing levels. The Scrutiny Programme Officer stated that she would contact the Member to discuss.

49 Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership Productivity Strategy Plan Consultation

The Economy and Enterprise Manager confirmed that a consultation exercise for the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, (HotSW LEP) had commenced and sought the views of businesses, organisations, academia, groups, individuals, and Exeter City Council to help form a robust productivity plan. The consultation was being hosted on Torbay's Council's web site at www.torbay.gov.uk/devolution

This approach would help to drive productivity and growth across the region and specifically across the Exeter area. The City Council, as well as other Councils in Devon and Somerset, the HotSW LEP, the two national Park Authorities and three Clinical Commissioning groups have been working in partnership to develop the Productivity Plan. She was in the process of contacting Exeter's business community for their views and comments on the draft Productivity Plan for inclusion in a city wide submission back to the HotSW LEP. Members were invited to submit comments by 20 November to enable a submission to the draft Productivity Plan to be made by 30 November. Members were also advised that the wider consultation would be considered by the Joint Committee of the Leaders of the Heart of the South West and the Heart of the South West LEP Board, before a final Productivity Strategy was agreed early in 2018.

50 Car Park Refurbishment and Development

The City Surveyor presented a report on the condition and structural surveys completed on the Council's multi-story car parks portfolio in response to the action plan in the New Strategy for Parking 2016 – 2026. He referred to the approach to deliver a Car Park Investment Strategy, and sought Members' approval for the procurement of consultant services in relation to this project, to deliver a development Potential Feasibility Study of city centre surface car park sites. This would examine whether sites could be brought forward for suitable development of alternative uses, while retaining overall parking space numbers in the city centre. A further piece of work would also explore the implications of the City Council's longer term aspirations to reduce city centre car use. The City Surveyor suggested that any intensification of parking could include temporary decking rather than the construction of new multi-storey car parks.

A Member welcomed the stance on creating more car parks which could defeat the object of tackling city centre congestion. He understood the issues surrounding the potential development of some of the surface car parking sites and sought additional detail on the issues relating to the Triangle, Howell Road and also Mary Arches Street car parks. He also noted that the Finance Officer would be present later in the

meeting to address comments on the approval of up to £100,000 for the consultant's costs associated with the feasibility and congestion work. The City Surveyor confirmed that the Howell Road car park included a large water attenuation tank, there were shallow foundations near to the Triangle Car Park and archaeological remains under the surface part of the Mary Arches Street Car Park. He detailed how development of those sites might be possible and the challenges they might present.

A Member referred to Electrical Vehicle (EV) and was gratified to note the innovative use of solar panels in some of the City's car parks, but he asked whether the power for the electrical installation was drawn from the grid or was taken from the Council's own solar panels. The City Surveyor advised that, where possible EV charging was delivered through the solar panel system, however, if the EV charging arrangements were extended then further grid reinforcement may be required. A Member commented on the earlier discussion at the meeting relating to public transport and specifically that an improved bus service in the city would alleviate some of the concerns raised about congestion.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the report and requested Executive approval of the following:-

- (1) authorising the City Surveyor to procure a consultant to assist with the production of a Car Park Investment Strategy, subject to further funding approval in due course;
- (2) authorising the City Surveyor to procure a consultant to assist with the production of a Feasibility Study for the future development of city centre surface car park sites;
- (3) authorising the City Surveyor to procure a consultant to assist with work on reducing city centre car usage; and
- (4) approval by Council of a budget of up to £100,000 for the consultant costs associated with the feasibility and congestion work.

51 **New Entertainment Venue Needs Assessment**

The City Surveyor presented the report which updated Members on the outcome of the work of the New Entertainment Venue Advisory Group (NEVAG) which had been set up to discuss the city centre's entertainment venue requirements. The Group included a broad range of representatives from the arts, cultural and entertainment sectors. They had worked with officers to oversee a new venue needs assessment which had been undertaken by consultants, Fourth Street. The assessment included an appraisal of a number of possible sites for any new venue. It was proposed that detailed public consultation and engagement be undertaken to enable a wide group of interested parties and individuals to comment on the findings. The Corporate Manager – Executive Support stated that his team would carry out an in-house consultation exercise and involve the members of NEVAG.

Members offered the following views: -

- lamenting the demise of the former Civic Hall on Queen Street, but welcomed the opportunity to create a functional venue that could cater for all.
- the importance of a full and robust consultation, and the additional facility would offer a further platform for entertainment in the city. The Member was pleased that the consultation was being carried out in-house and he acknowledged that NEVAG had been very proactive so far.
- the need to ensure the consultation would include not only Exeter residents but those in the wider catchment of Devon. The Corporate Manager – Executive Support advised that the consultation would not be limited to within

Exeter's boundary. The Director of Marketing and Communications referred to the comprehensive and wide reaching data base already held by the Corn Exchange which would be used.

- that consideration for a theatre or event hotel package be explored.

In response to Members' comments the City Surveyor stated that the request for funding to carry out consultation did not extend to the issue of viability at this stage, but that would be fully explored when all of the necessary information was obtained. He confirmed that the consultation would commence after the report had been considered by the Executive and Council and after the busy Christmas period.

Place Scrutiny Committee supported the report and requested Executive to recommend approval by Council of the following:-

- (1) that the Corn Exchange be the preferred location for any entertainment venue; and
- (2) funding of £5,000 for a public consultation exercise on the findings of the needs assessment.

52 **Mitigating the Impacts of Development on Protected Habitats**

The Principal Project Manager (Strategic Infrastructure Planning) presented the report on mitigating the impacts of development in its area on protected habitats such as Exe Estuary, Dawlish Warren, and the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths. In catering to population growth, new dwellings increase the pressure on protected habitats, and measures must be taken to mitigate these impacts. These included on-site measures to reduce visitor pressures, as well as the implementation of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs), the purpose of which was to provide potential visitors to the protected habitats with an alternative greenspace to visit, thus reducing the pressure on the protected habitats. If the impacts of development on protected habitats were not mitigated, Exeter City Council would not be fulfilling its legal obligations, and Natural England may decide to intervene to place a block on development. The mitigation measures relating to the Exe Estuary, Dawlish Warren, and the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths were contained in the South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy (SEDESMS), which was published in June 2014, and subsequently endorsed by the South East Devon Habitats Regulations Executive Committee (SEDHREC) on 29 June 2016, subject to further work being undertaken to re-evaluate costs, and to confirm overall SANGs requirements and delivery approaches. This work had now been completed.

Mitigation measures and associated costs had also now been finalised. Overall SEDESMS implementation costs had been refined and reduced from £23,553,767 to £15,456,264, a considerable overall cost saving. However, these costs must be apportioned between fewer dwellings as a result of the aforementioned revisit of a number of the assumptions underpinning the SEDESMS. There was consequently a need to revisit and increase the amount that was top-sliced from the Community Infrastructure Levy receipts from each dwelling in each of the three partner authorities' areas, (Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District and East Devon District Councils) and each of the partner authorities also needed to revisit any high level CIL commitment to habitats mitigation. Each of the partner authorities also needed to approve the implementation of these revised per dwelling contributions, as endorsed by the SEDHREC at its meeting on 27 July 2017, and as detailed in Appendix 1 to this report. These revised contributions would be top-sliced from CIL receipts from dwellings which do not yet have planning permission. The revised contributions

would not be retrospectively top-sliced from dwellings which already had planning permission.

The Principal Project Manager (Strategic Infrastructure Planning) responded to comments made by a Member on the amount and where the receipts were held, and declared that the development money was administered by East Devon District Council. He also clarified that the annual and accumulative figures were set out in an appendix to the report.

Place Scrutiny Committee supported the report and requested Executive to recommend approval by Council of the following:-

- (1) welcome the significant reduction in the overall cost of habitats mitigation measures referenced in Table 26 of the South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy;
- (2) revised per dwelling charges for habitats mitigation detailed in Appendix 1, circulated with the report, to be implemented from 1 January 2018, and index linked in accordance with the recommendation made by the South East Devon Habitats Regulations Executive Committee on 27 July 2017; and
- (3) the revised per dwelling charges would have the effect of increasing Exeter's contribution to overall habitats mitigation costs from the £2,000,000 committed for this purpose to 2026 (by Exeter City Council's Executive on 10 February 2015) to approximately £4,000,000 of the £15,456,264 total cost of implementing the Strategy to 2026.

Place Scrutiny Committee also noted that:-

- (4) while no Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) would be delivered in Exeter to 2026, the South East Devon Habitats Regulations Executive Committee (SEDHREC) had approved an appraisal being undertaken of SANGs capacity and likely delivery costs, including in Exeter's Valley Parks, to inform the development of the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan and any future iteration of the South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy

53 **Queen's Crescent Gardens - Agreement for Lease and Compulsory Purchase**

The Principal Project Manager (Strategic Infrastructure Planning) presented the report on seeking Members' approval to allocate a relatively modest amount of unallocated New Homes Bonus receipts towards the (primarily waste management related) costs that the St. James Community Trust Ltd would incur. The Trust would assume the 125 year lease of Queen's Crescent Garden from the City Council, subsequent to the impending completion of the compulsory purchase of the Garden by the Council. The Garden had been neglected for decades, but had the potential to become a valued local resource. The grant would also allow initial work to deal with a number of urgent tree works as a priority task. Improving Queen's Crescent Garden was also identified as a priority in the St. James Neighbourhood Plan. The approach by the Trust had the potential to offer a future model for other communities who wished to manage their own open spaces.

Following further clarification by the City Solicitor and Head of Human Resources, a revised recommendation was presented which reiterated that the grant was to be a one off payment, and investment evidence would be required before any finance was released to the Trust. The Principal Project Manager (Strategic Infrastructure

Planning) stated that the process included a thorough check of the documentation, and he would continue to ensure that the right procedures were in place. The investment was likely to be implemented through the Church, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA), which was a dedicated financial institution used by those sectors.

One of the Ward Members for Duryard and St James was pleased that the Trust had pursued the commitment to take on the space. He confirmed that he was not a trustee of the St James Community Trust and was able to speak at City Council meetings on this issue. He was grateful to the Principal Project Manager (Strategic Infrastructure Planning) who had facilitated this work and helped the project to come to fruition. A Member championing community development also wished to support the project, but mentioned the need for a holistic approach to any transfer of community assets going forward. He hoped that the project would continue to be well thought through, including support for the governance and financial arrangements, whilst still allowing for an element of initiative. He noted that the New Homes Bonus funding would be used as intended to enhance the city and was not taken from service delivery budgets.

Place Scrutiny Committee supported the report and requested Executive to recommend approval by Council of the following:-

- (1) £50,000 of unallocated New Homes Bonus receipts be allocated to Exeter St. James Community Trust Ltd as a grant, (as a one-off payment, and subject to satisfactory confirmation that the monies would be appropriately invested) to address immediate and ongoing liabilities associated with the Trust taking on the lease of Queen's Crescent Garden, and
- (2) £5,000 of unallocated New Homes Bonus receipts be allocated for the purchase and installation (by Exeter City Council's Public Realm) of three new rubbish bins outside the Queen's Crescent Garden walls.

54 **Budget Monitoring (2nd Quarter)**

Following an earlier request, the Principal Accountant (PM) responded to a Member's enquiry about the funding for the Car Park Consultation and Feasibility Study. He stated that the Council had set aside an earmarked reserve to support one-off funding opportunities such as this. He would ensure that a more comprehensive reply was forthcoming.

The Principal Accountant (PM) presented the report which advised Members of any major differences, by management unit between the approved revenue budget and the estimated outturn as part of a quarterly financial update in respect of Place Scrutiny Committee. The current forecast suggested that net expenditure for the Committee would increase from the approved budget by a total of £188,220 after transfers from reserves and revenue contributions to capital. This represented a variation of 2.86% from the revised budget and included a supplementary budget of £574,297, already agreed by Council. The Principal Accountant (MH) stated that the report also included a predicted outturn update in respect of the Place Capital Programme, and she confirmed a total current spend of £1,121,576 in 2017/18 with £4,666,810 of the programme potentially deferred until 2018/19.

The Principal Accountant (PM) responded to a Member's comment on the expenditure for external advice relating to appealed planning decisions. He stated that the Council employed a planning solicitor, but on occasions it had been necessary to seek additional legal advice. The expenditure was a reduction on the previous year and he would respond to the Member and confirm the figures. Another

Member agreed that it would be more desirable to have an additional in-house staff rather than seek external advice. A Member had also spoken with the Events, Facilities & Markets Manager about his disappointment over the reduced scale of the Sunday Market and Car Boot Sale at Matford and he hoped that the income stream could be improved. The Member also referred to the efforts made by the Exeter Tidy Group working with Exeter University and others to raise the level of recycling. He felt that Exeter's recycling rate did not compare with neighbouring local authorities, and accepted that the income for recycling fluctuated. The Director Communications and Marketing stated that the Director Place had reset the targets for the Council's Recycling teams and it should be noted that even a 1% increase could see revenues increase by £55,000. The Chair invited the Portfolio Holder for Place to speak on this matter and he welcomed any opportunity to work with the Member and others, in an effort to continue to drive up recycling rates through education as well as spread the message of the Council's commitment. A Member referred to the difficulty of making a direct comparison with neighbouring Councils, particularly as Devon County Council were able to include the material from the Recycling Centres at Exton Road and Pinhoe. The Member Champion for Food Waste also referred to the work of the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee and added that as food waste was also included by some authorities, Exeter did quite well in comparison. He also paid tribute to the hard working staff at the Materials Recycling Centre (MRF), a sentiment that was echoed by the rest of the Scrutiny Committee.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

55 Legacy Leisure Working Group - Minutes

The minutes of the Legacy Leisure Working Group held on 12 September 2017 were noted.

56 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 items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 3 and 4 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

57 RAMM's Business Plan for 2018-22

The Museums Manager presented the Royal Albert Memorial Museum's (RAMM's) Business Plan 2018-22, for endorsement by Members, which had been prepared as part of their successful application to Arts Council England (ACE) in their bid to recognise as a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO). This was part of a national funding programme which runs from April 2018 until March 2022 and details of the timetable were presented. It was acknowledged that securing external funding through other grant making bodies was of growing importance to the future operation of the Museum.

Place Scrutiny Committee endorsed the RAMM's Business Plan and requested Executive approval of the following:-

- (1) final submission to the Arts Council England to support RAMM's case for investment;
- (2) authorise the Portfolio Holder, Economy & Culture agree any adjustments to the Business Plan that do not affect its overall priorities or direction of travel;

- (3) authorise the Director, and Museums Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Economy & Culture to submit applications for grant funding less than £100,000 in value, where there was no requirement for match funding; and
- (4) authorise the Museums Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Economy & Culture to submit applications for grant funding less than £50,000 in value, where there was no requirement for match funding.
(Grant applications above £100,000 would continue to come to Place Scrutiny Committee or one specially convened for approval).

58 **Place Services Operational Depots**

The Cleansing and Fleet Manager presented the report which examined the welfare facilities, health and safety and general suitability of the Belle Isle site as a working depot for the City Council's Public and Green Spaces team. The report also examined spare capacity at the Exton Road site and the potential to amalgamate Place based services there. He referred to the need for suitable and sufficient sanitary conveniences and washing facilities to be provided and the potential impact on morale and health and well-being for employees. He would respond to a request from a Member for information on health and safety data for the last two years.

A brief presentation showing the facilities at both locations was made. It was agreed that an invitation would be extended to Members for an accompanied visit to both sites at the earliest opportunity.

Place Scrutiny Committee supported and requested Executive to recommend approval by Council of the allocation of £40,000 to complete a detailed study to examine the feasibility of amalgamating all Place operational services at the current Exton Road sites.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.40 pm

Chair

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 9 November 2017 from Ms Maggie Emery

To Cllr Rosie Denham, as Portfolio Holder for City Transformation, Energy and Transport.

Stagecoach recently made changes to its H bus service in Exeter, as a result of which it no longer travels as far as Cowley Bridge. This has caused great inconvenience to residents in Duryard including those wishing to travel to the RD&E Hospital in Barrack Road.

Stagecoach insist that they undertook effective consultation, prior to withdrawing the H bus service to Cowley Bridge and West Garth Road. This is disputed by a large number of residents who have signed a petition against the changes with over 550 names on it. Everyone was dismayed at the loss of this important service.

We believe that Stagecoach must now undertake a proper and transparent consultation with all the affected residents, in a way which also allows the elderly residents to meaningfully take part. A door to door questionnaire, with proper lead in time and published results, must be undertaken. The results of this should then be openly discussed at a meeting or with the Local Transport Authority.

Will Exeter City Council use all the powers and influence at its disposal to support residents on this?

The Chair, Councillor Sills read out the question from Ms Emery relating to the bus service in Exeter. She was unable to attend the meeting. The Portfolio Holder City Transformation Energy and Transport, Councillor Rosie Denham responded to the question. She had been engaged in correspondence with a number of residents over recent months, had met locally with councillors and had an initial meeting with Stagecoach after the changes were announced, but before they were rolled out. Unfortunately the contact did not result in any changes to the proposals and the service was now in place. Residents had continued to feedback more effectively on the impact that was having on them.

Exeter City Council had limited powers to directly influence Stagecoach, but following a meeting with two of the local councillors, the County Council and in consultation with the Chair of the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC) an item has been requested on the agenda of the forthcoming meeting on 20 November. Stagecoach would be in attendance and there would be the opportunity to raise the residents' concerns over the impact that the changes have had on them. Councillor Denham would continue to raise this matter with Stagecoach directly. She encouraged residents to also continue to share their experiences.

Councillor Denham confirmed that she had addressed the specific question about the changes to the H bus route, but there were issues with changes to bus routes across the city and particularly pertinent as the city continued to grow and travel patterns changed. It was important to ensure that all relevant data was used to inform Stagecoach and other transport providers to help with service design and develop more of a strategic approach. She hoped to meet with Stagecoach and Devon County Council to discuss.

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**PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 9
November 2017 from Mr J Sheppard**

To Cllr Rosie Denham, as Portfolio Holder for City Transformation, Energy and Transport.

It is now two months since the the Crediton 5 bus has been re routed around West Garth Road and Wrefords Lane.

As a local resident I am most concerned about the pathway of the bus up and down West Garth Road. It is a quite steep and narrow suburban road (at the top) and not really designed for huge double decker access.

To watch it descend from the top of the road, to me, looks to be quite precarious. It is noisy with excess Diesel fumes on its ascent.

We have had a single decker service replaced by a huge double decker which is causing wear and tear, on a less than adequate route way. If residents were to park, rightfully, on either side of the road in the two pinch points then I doubt the bus would get through. Residents at the lower end of the road often have to park on the pavement.

I am aware that there are other concerns about the replacement of the H bus and that other people are voicing these.

However my particular question is whether Exeter City Council can support a request for a bus service more commensurate and suitable for this context and environment?

The Chair, Councillor Sills read out the question from Mr Sheppard relating to the bus service in Exeter. She was unable to attend the meeting. The Portfolio Holder City Transformation Energy and Transport, Councillor Rosie Denham responded to the question.

The Portfolio Holder City Transformation Energy and Transport, Councillor Rosie Denham responded to the question. She reiterated some of the comments made to the question from Ms Emery and Ms Sheppard and repeated her response which was that although this question had been a specific ask of the Exeter City Council, it was important to bear in mind that the City Council was not the transport authority. Devon County Council commission and subsidise bus services where they consider the need was not being met by the commercial services. It was appropriate to raise such issues through the Exeter Highways and Traffic Order Committee (HATOC). He referred to her previous response that these questions would be put to Stagecoach seeking some redress over any any perceived gaps. The changes had an impact on residents who had a service which had been withdrawn and she was happy to continue to support residents in their efforts to call for an appropriate bus service.

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**PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 9
November 2017 from Ms Lesley Sheppard**

To Cllr Rosie Denham, as Portfolio Holder for City Transformation, Energy and Transport.

As residents of Exeter City, paying council tax to Exeter City Council, the residents of the Wreford Lane/West Garth Road/Cowley Bridge area should surely have the same standard of bus service as other city residents i.e. one that delivers them to the High Street and the interchange for other city buses?

The 5 bus stop at Bury Meadow Park on our side of town requires crossing a busy road and is effectively in the middle of the FE College campus. Often during the day it requires negotiating the pavements with a great many students. It is nearly half a mile (0.4) from the High Street.

To get off at the other end of town also requires crossing a busy road, and walking up a hill to reach the High Street.

Having shopped on the High Street the only easily accessible 5 stop for the return journey is the Paris Street stop. If shopping at the Fore Street end of town it is a disadvantage to have to walk back to Paris Street (0.6 mile round trip) when City buses can be accessed from either end of the High Street as well as the interchange area. These issues are particularly important for elderly or disabled people.

If the contract awarded to Stagecoach allows them to provide our area of the city with a second rate service in this way then will the Council subsidise the service to reinstate the H bus, or similar, to ensure all residents are fairly treated?

The Chair, Councillor Sills read out the question from Ms Sheppard relating to the bus service in Exeter. She was unable to attend the meeting. The Portfolio Holder City Transformation Energy and Transport, Councillor Rosie Denham responded to the question. She reiterated some of the comments made to the question from Ms Emery and the specific ask of Exeter City Council. It was important to bear in mind that the City Council was not the transport authority. Devon County Council commission and subsidise bus services where they consider the need was not being met by the commercial services. It was also appropriate to raise such issues through the Exeter Highways and Traffic Order Committee (HATOC) and she referred to her previous response that these questions would be put to Stagecoach to seek redress over any perceived gaps. This change had an impact on residents who had a service which had been withdrawn. It was important to take a strategic approach and look at the whole city.

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PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 9 November 2017 from Mr Mike Walton

To Cllr Rachel Sutton, as Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture.

Increasing productivity in our region and our city is crucial to growing the economy, strengthening business and increasing employment. It is to be welcomed therefore that the Heart of the South West Partnership is consulting on its Productivity Strategy. There is one major inhibitor to productivity that all citizens of Exeter will be familiar with. It is something that inhibits the free movement of goods and employees across the city and places a drag on our economy and our productivity growth. Exeter is not alone in facing this issue, by some measures this costs the UK economy £21bn a year. This inhibitor is congestion.

It is surprising therefore that the Productivity Strategy appears to make no mention of, and have no plans to address, congestion in the region or the city of Exeter.

There is some value in ‘connecting’ the towns and cities of the South West by investing in rail and road links, as the Productivity Strategy proposes. However, unless the congestion within these towns and cities is addressed then this greater ‘connectivity’ leads only to increased congestion, and with increased congestion comes decreased productivity.

Since this Productivity Strategy is currently undergoing consultation there is an opportunity to shape it. Will the Place Scrutiny Committee therefore request that Heart of the South West Partnership’s Productivity Strategy includes measures for reducing congestion in our region and city?

The Chair, Councillor Sills read out the question from Mr Walton as he was unable to attend the meeting. The Portfolio Holder Economy and Culture, Councillor Sutton responded to the question. She thanked both Mr Walton and the Exeter Cycling Campaign for their question, which had raised an important issue currently affecting the city. Exeter City Council has been consulting with Exeter businesses to contribute to an Exeter wide response on the Heart of South West Productivity Plan. The Exeter Cycling Campaign had been included in this consultation.

The same issue raised by Exeter Cycling Campaign has been highlighted by officers of the City Council and will be included within the Exeter response. She encourage Exeter Cycling Campaign, as well as many other businesses in Exeter, to formally respond to the City Council consultation on the Productivity Plan.

The City Council consultation period closes 20 November, which provides time to compile a formal Exeter response to the Heart of the South West Productivity Plan by their closing date of 30 November 2017.

The consultation was being hosted on Torbay Council’s web site at www.torbay.gov.uk/devolution

Members discussed congestion levels in the city. A Member considered that the levels were unacceptable and he would be raising the issue of congestion with Devon County Council. He also referred to the Exeter Board which could discuss this subject. A Member agreed that whilst the County Council were the Transport Authority, both Councils worked in partnership with all agencies to try and mitigate the impact of any changes to the bus service as well as looking at ways to reduce congestion.

The Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture, Councillor Sutton referred to lengthy correspondence, lobbying and a meeting held last summer, which had been attended by representatives from Exeter City Council and Devon County Council as well as representatives from Exeter Chamber of Commerce, Highways England and the Police. The consensus had been that the current levels of traffic in Exeter were a major problem. She welcomed the comments from the Member and an undertaking to raise some of the issues at the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee. She hoped that it would be possible to set up a Transport Board to help address some of the issues raised more quickly and include partners such as Highways England.