

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 8 November 2018

Present:

Councillor Sills (Chair)

Councillors Wood, D Henson, Mitchell, Owen, Prowse, Begley, Lyons, Pattison and Robson

Also present:

Director (JY), Director (DB), Chief Finance Officer, Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager, Senior Environmental Technical Officer, Economy and Enterprise Manager, Skills Officer and Democratic Services Officer (MD)

In Attendance:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Councillor Philip Bialyk | - Exeter City Council |
| Councillor Peter Edwards | - Exeter City Council |
| Councillor David Harvey | - Exeter City Council |
| Councillor Chris Musgrave | - Exeter City Council |

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee held on 13 September 2018 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

48

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of discloseable pecuniary interest were made.

49

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 19

In accordance with Standing Order 19, five members of the public submitted questions on the closure of Clifton Hill Sports Centre (attached as an appendix to these minutes).

The questions related to:-

- the closure of Clifton Hill Sports Centre and residents' concern regarding the apparent speed of the decision to close;
- green spaces in the area and Clifton Hill Leisure Centre being separate issues and such be treated as such;
- the need to fully establish costs and confirm that public funds for the building were being used correctly;

In addition to responses to the public questions (as included in the appendix to these minutes), the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Sport and the Chair responded to Member enquiries, stating:-

- The decision to close was made based on health and safety issues provided to the Director, following professional advice;
- The toolkits were not available and had not been considered for use or how they would fit into making the decision;

- Public questions to the committee were received up until 10am three working days before the meeting. Member questions could be received up until the day before the meeting. If Members wished to see the questions received from members of the public in advance of the meeting, they should make an appropriate request to the Corporate Manager Democratic & Civic Support;
- All Members were given the opportunity to attend a briefing about the closure when detailed information surrounding the recommendation was presented.

A copy of the questions had been previously circulated to Members, and these, together with the responses from Councillor Bialyk, Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Sport is appended to the minutes.

50 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER**
20

In accordance with Standing Order 20, Councillor Mitchell and Councillor Musgrave submitted respective questions on recycling and air quality.

A copy of the questions had been previously circulated to Members, and these, together with the appropriate responses from Councillor Harvey, Portfolio Holder Place & Commercialisation and Councillor Sills responding on behalf of Councillor Sutton, Portfolio Holder Economy, Culture standing in for Councillor Denham as Portfolio Holder City Transformation, are appended to the minutes.

51 **REVISION OF THE AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN**

Councillor Musgrave attended the meeting under Standing Order 44.

The Director (JY) presented the report of the new Air Quality Action Plan following completion of a public consultation. The plan detailed a range of actions for the Council and partners to take to improve air quality in Exeter between 2019 and 2024, in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy 2018 – 2021 and the emerging Exeter Vision. The Action Plan is a statutory requirement under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. The format of the report and action plan was in a template prescribed by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra).

The draft Action Plan has been subject to a statutory consultation with a great response, with over 3,000 residents completing the online survey, and many others responding in written submission and through participation in targeted focus groups. The appendix in the Final Action Plan sets out how the draft action plan had changed following the feedback from the consultation exercise.

Councillor Musgrave stated that he had no criticism of the officers or their work, however he stated that the report was a year late with no action plan in place since January 2017. He commented that in his opinion, 66% of monitoring stations showed that the air quality was over the legal limit and that Devon County Council and Exeter City Council appeared to be moving in different directions on tackling the issue. He noted a letter he had received from the Director of Public Health, who claimed that all areas of Exeter required improvements to air quality. He further commented that he considered that the figures presented in the report for the workplace parking levy had included the undecided 25% as a part of the 59% figure, which he felt was misleading. The report should read as 39% against the action plan. He hoped that Place Scrutiny Committee would not recommend approval.

The Senior Environmental Technical Officer advised that the introduction of a workplace parking levy was proposed in the draft Air Quality Action Plan. Only 41% of respondents had agreed with the implementation, with 59% either disagreeing or undecided. The measure had not been taken forward in the Action Plan, but would be kept under review with Devon County Council who were the statutory authority for implementing the scheme. An update would be brought back to Scrutiny Place Committee as part of the annual review of the Air Quality Action Plan.

In response to questions from Members, the Director (JY), the Senior Environmental Technical Officer and the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager responded:-

- The issue of whether the locations of bus stops at road junctions contributed to poor air quality in certain locations was one that could be raised with Exeter City Futures for them to consider including in their action plan.
- The report which came to the previous Place Scrutiny Committee was the Annual Status Report, which is a statutory return to Defra who require data from the previous five years. The Annual Status Report had been considered by both Place Scrutiny Committee and Executive. The reports showed that 11.9% of monitoring locations showed an exceedance of the objective level (40 micrograms per cubic meter) in 2017. There had been a clear reduction in the number of locations which were above this objective in the past 15 years.
- The data tables in Appendix C were very technical and could be difficult for the lay person to interpret. They essentially showed the methodology used for calculating the impacts of actions. They had been included for transparency and for Defra, but were not essential in understanding the overall report.
- Filtered Permeability was the name given to the way access could be restricted to make travel by active and sustainable mode relatively more attractive.
- Bonfires had not been included in the action plan which focussed on the statutory responsibilities. The Secretary of State had confirmed that there was no intention to change the current legislation on bonfires. The Council's approach was to encourage gardeners to use the garden waste service or composting.
- In relation to the taxi fleet: the Council already had one of the highest emission standards in the UK for Hackney Carriages and had introduced a new policy in 2015 for new ultra-low emission vehicles to be introduced by 2020.
- Drivers were encouraged to turn engines off at prolonged stopping sites e.g. level crossings, however new technology in cars includes start/stop systems to help reduce emissions.
- The action plan would be reviewed annually through the Place Scrutiny Committee.
- Members were welcome to speak to the City Solicitor and Head of HR about introducing bylaws on the use of bonfires.

A Member commented that, although transparency was vital for an authority, it was disingenuous to repeat questions, which had been responded to at a previous committee meeting and thanked the officers for their hard work.

Place Scrutiny Committee agreed to the recommendations in the report and requested that the Executive recommend approval by Council of the adoption of the Air Quality Action Plan, and that the feasibility of a work place parking levy be kept under review with an update being brought back to Scrutiny Place Committee as part of the annual review of the Air Quality Action Plan.

52

IKEA PRESENTATION - NICK EARLE

Nick Earle, IKEA Exeter Store Manager attended the meeting and provided a PowerPoint presentation about the arrival of IKEA in Exeter.

He explained that the Exeter IKEA store was the most sustainable IKEA store in the UK and that since opening in May 2018, the store had received more than one million visitors and recruited over 75,000 new IKEA family members. It was the intention of IKEA to provide a better everyday life to residents to help have a better home at affordable prices while protecting the environment. He explained why Exeter had been selected as a viable city to open a store.

The store paid all co-workers according to the UK Real Living Wage levels and offered generous benefits to ensure they were an employer of choice. 85% of employees lived locally. The store offered a variety of sustainability options including electric delivery vehicles, rainwater harvesting and would be introducing solar panels soon. Since opening in May 2018, the store had welcomed more than one million customers.

The IKEA Exeter Store Manager responded to Member questions on the following:-

- All feedback was appreciated, and noted the suggestion for adding seating around the store to support elderly customers;
- The Green Travel Plans survey results would be shared when they were available;
- IKEA made every effort to draw people in to the store and encouraged a good guest ethos;
- Averaging four people per car at a million customers, would be around quarter million cars visiting the store since it opened.

A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the presentation and thanked Nick Earle for his attendance.

53

EXETER CITY CENTRE

The Economy and Enterprise Manager presented the report to update Members on footfall within the city centre and factors affecting the High Street. The report also determined trends within Exeter, to enable officers to plan and mitigate against any negative impact. She commented on the Grimsey Review 2, which was discussed by officers from City Council officers. There were recommendations in the report which would be suitable for Exeter and would be included in the City Centre Strategy Review. She referred Members to the findings of the CACI Ltd report, which highlighted that Exeter city centre had a very strong national ranking and was ranked 2nd in the South West, just behind Bristol as a dominant retail centre in the South West.

Exeter had a comparison goods market potential of £665.3 million, and had the opportunity to gain market share in surrounding towns in the region. The Economy and Enterprise Manager stated that any targeted marketing and promotional campaigns should be developed in conjunction within InExeter to promote the city centre to increase market share.

Members were informed that the Growth & Enterprise team had been collating information on the reasoning for shop closures, and could not identify any trends, but confirmed there was still a demand for retail in the city centre. The Economy and Enterprise Manager commented on online shopping, and how this also had an impact on high street stores and referred Members to the footfall information in the report, detailing trends within the city centre and annual comparisons. She also noted that the fire at the Royal Clarence Hotel in 2016 had a significant impact on footfall within Cathedral Green, as did external events to the city such as the World Cup, the Royal Wedding and adverse weather.

The Economy and Enterprise Manager discussed how people travel into Exeter, indicating that 19,000 commuters travelled to the City Centre on a daily basis. Commuters by car had reduced by 18.3%, whereas commuting by alternative means had risen by 21.5% but the number using Park and Ride had declined. She commented on the various commuter options and where improvements had been made. She considered having a 21st century city centre that was fit for purpose and agile enough to cope with change was vital. The report would be used to develop the new City Centre Strategy, and the initial findings would be presented to Place Scrutiny Committee in January 2019.

In response to questions from Members, the Economy and Enterprise Manager and the Director responded that:-

- Devon County Council were involved with City Centre Strategy and were regularly consulted;
- Congestion was an issue and impacted on the experience of visiting Exeter;
- The Car Parking team would be involved with resolving the wider city centre issues and would be meeting with Devon County Council;
- Devon County Council and Stagecoach, had provided information which indicated that the number concession passengers had declined;
- The footfall had increased in Fore Street, which could be explained by the range of shops and premises at the location.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the report and

- (1) supported the stance for closely monitoring footfall, car park and park & ride data, as well as the closure and opening of shops and restaurants within the city centre; and
- (2) that the Grimsey Review 2 continues to inform the review of the Exeter City Centre Strategy and the work of InExeter.

The Skills Officer presented the report which covered the development of a Skills Strategy for Exeter, including the progress made to date, an overview of required actions and required timescales. The report aimed to ensure Members were kept up to date with progress and future plans, in relation to this area of work, and understood the planned process and initial priorities to develop and deliver a skills strategy for Exeter.

She explained to Members that the city was performing well in relation to key employment and skills indicators, and that the graduate retention levels in Exeter were 7.4% and 50% across the South West region. Exeter University were continuing to engage with local businesses for graduate work placements in Exeter.

Members were referred to the feedback results from a short business survey, with local businesses which highlighted the key areas of concern from employers as; the low unemployment rate causing recruitment challenges, a mixed response to apprenticeships from employers and also that some responders were not offering work experience or engaging with schools. To date, a number of priority areas have been identified, and further robust research was required to confirm these as part of the preparing the strategy. The Skills Officer advised that a Skills Advisory Group for Exeter would be formed to support the delivery of the Skills Strategy and the projects for development.

In response to questions from Members, the Skills Officer responded as follows:-

- Members would receive quarterly update briefings on the progress of the work;
- The requirement for funding priorities was medium risk, due to the uncertainty of future European Funding and what would replace it, this could be re-assessed once more is known;
- The post of the Skills Officer was a permanent full time role;
- Exeter University managed several schemes to retain graduates locally, including internships, but there were not enough businesses engaging with them to utilise these schemes. Raising the profile of these schemes was a priority;
- The budget would be large enough to support the development of the strategy and associated research;
- There were a number of employers in Exeter offering the National Living Wage to employees;
- The report was for the local economy and a part of the remit of the Place Scrutiny Committee;
- The 7.4% retention figure covered graduates who remained in Exeter only. The number of graduates retained across Devon was around 12%, the figures for this year would need to be clarified and reported back at a future meeting.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the progress made to date in relation to the development of a Skills Strategy for Exeter, and supported approval by the Executive of the following:-

- (1) to plan for the next stages of development, leading to the publication of a strategy and associated action plans,
- (2) the formation of a Skills Advisory Group for Exeter that will support strategy development and provide ongoing support, direction and challenge to the delivery of identified priorities, and
- (3) Members continued support for the priorities identified in Section 10 of the circulated report.

The Chief Finance Officer presented the Budget Monitoring report for Quarter 2 which advised Members of the material differences, by management unit, between the 2018/19 approved budget and the current outturn forecast in respect of Place Scrutiny Committee revenue and capital budgets. At the last Place Scrutiny Committee meeting in September, the Chief Finance Officer had issued a warning

about the Councils' reserves dropping below the recommended level. He explained that following the work by the Strategic Management Board, working with their Service Leads, the reserves were now at £3.015 Million. This amount equated to just over £15,000 above the reserve level, with vigilance on spending to continue.

He referred Members to the report, highlighting that the current forecast had suggested that the net expenditure for the Committee would increase from the revised budget by a total of £246,718, after transfers from reserves, which included supplementary budgets of £755,800 which had already been agreed by Council.

In response to questions from Members, the Chief Finance Officer and Director explained:-

- Reserves were there to manage finance over several years, as a Local Authority, the Council could manage finances over a number of years, with the reserves in place for unforeseen issues and it was usual practice for Councils to use their reserves when needed. The warning issued by the Chief Finance Officer at previous Scrutiny meetings was not an indication of financial trouble for the Council, but to ensure a level of financial discipline and to ensure a sensible financial buffer.
- Business recycling was an expanding market. The City Council took mixed recyclables from neighbouring authorities, however the income generated by the Council varied, but he could provide an exact figure if requested.
- There was an £80,500 underspend for the Public Realm Development team, following the deletion of three posts under one management area with new posts created under another management unit.
- The officer employed for tree preservations was shared with another authority and was for planning purposes only. The general Public and Green Spaces posts were for Exeter City Council use only.
- The Leisure Complex budget was approved by Full Council and would be coming forward into 2019/20. The specific costs for decontamination were not known, but the Chief Finance Officer would report the costs back to Members.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2017/18

The Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support presented the report providing an annual update on the Scrutiny work achieved during the Municipal Year 2017/18. The report provided the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to:-

- a) track the progress of the Scrutiny function and process at Exeter City Council,
- b) comment upon the progress and direction of Scrutiny over the past year and into the future,
- c) ensure that the Scrutiny Committees were kept fully up to date in relation to the Task and Finish Groups and what they had achieved, and
- d) illustrate how effective Scrutiny could contribute towards an accountable, transparent and democratic process.

The Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support discussed the various Task and Finish Group Priority topics identified during the Scrutiny Work Programme

meetings that were held between November 2017 and July 2018. He expressed his thanks for the hard work undertaken by the former Scrutiny Programme Officer, who had now taken up another post within the Council.

In response to questions from Members, the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support stated that the Scrutiny Programme Officer post would be reviewed ahead of the 2019/20 budget process prior to submission to Council. The decision had been taken not to fill the vacant post, although the decision to delete the post had to be decided by Full Council. Future Task and Finish Groups would be led by respective service leads.

The Chair commented on the loss of Task and Finish groups and its impact on the Scrutiny process. He suggested duplicating the recommendation from People Scrutiny Committee, to review the decision to not fill the Scrutiny Programme Officer post, in two years' time. The Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support advised that there was no suggestion to stop using Task and Finish Groups as and when appropriate, but that they would be dealt with differently than they had previously.

Members asked that their appreciation for the comprehensive and hard work undertaken by Anne-Marie Hawley in her role as the Scrutiny Programme Officer be recorded and their thanks passed on.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted and approved the Annual Scrutiny report and recommended that the decision to not fill the Scrutiny Programme Officer post be reviewed in two years.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.25 pm)

Chair

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 8 November 2018 from Dr E Westland

To Councillor Bialyk Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport

Question

The Council will shortly be considering the fate of the Clifton Hill site. Can this committee give an assurance that the Victorian Brickworks Office on the edge of the site will be specifically considered in the City Surveyor's report to the Council, and excluded from any area of land put up for sale?

Response

Councillor Bialyk Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport, responded to the question. He stated that this property was in a conservation area and was the in the schedule of locally listed buildings.

The future of the site and any building on it would be considered when a full report on all the options would be presented to Council, which was currently scheduled for 12th February 2019.

Dr Westland was invited to respond, stating that she was disappointed that the location of the Victorian Brickworks wasn't known, confirming that the location was near the Labour Party Headquarters. The site was important for locals and historians and was the only remaining evidence of the city's industrial heritage. She highlighted that the Council needed to be aware for when it made its decision on Clifton Hill, that the building had a local designation and wasn't nationally listed with no formal protection.

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PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 8 November 2018 from Ms Emily McIvor

To Councillor Bialyk Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport

Question 1

The Clifton Hill Sports Centre building was adversely affected by snow in March of this year, and the Council carried out a survey to assess and report on the damage.

Please give the following dates:

- 1) The date that the survey detailing snow damage to the Clifton Hill Sports Centre building was received by councillors and/or the Portfolio Holder;
- 2) The date on which the decision to temporarily close the sports centre to members of the public was taken,
- 3) The date on which permanent closure of the sports centre was recommended.

Councillor Bialyk Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport, responded to the questions:-

Response 1)

The Council did not “carry out a survey to assess and report on the damage”. An assessment was made utilising information from a range of sources.

Response 2)

The decision to temporarily close the Clifton Hill Sports Centre to the public was made on 14th March 2018.

Response 3)

The recommendation to permanently close Clifton Hill Sports Centre was made in the report considered by the Council Executive on 12th June 2018.

Ms Emily McIvor was invited to respond, thanking the Portfolio Holder for providing the dates which were of interest because so much had been said about the decision to sell the Clifton Hill green space and demolish the sports centre having been “rushed through”.

The sports centre was damaged by snow in early March, and the decision to sell the site was announced in June. So from March to June there was silence, and then – within a single week – an unpopular policy was announced, discussed and voted through by the Executive. She considered that announcing bad news immediately after an election – rather than before – was somewhat unfair on voters. The pre-election “purdah” period had been used to explain the lack of an earlier announcement, but that only began on 27th March.

The date of the formal recommendation to close the sports centre was 12th June – which we all knew already – but it seems the relevant date was 14th March, after receiving officers' recommendations and that Councilors knew on 3rd June that the sports centre would not reopen. Claiming a democratic mandate to take unpopular decisions – especially those agreed before an election but not announced until after the poll – seems unfortunate, and some of this should be set against the fact that in the Newtown and St. Leonard's Ward, in 2018, only 36% of those eligible to vote, actually did so.

The low voter turnout could be attributed to confidence among Exeter residents in the Council ability to run the city with minimum scrutiny, but the decision to sell the Clifton Hill site without consulting is crying out for scrutiny.

The Executive and Full council signed away publicly owned community assets in the space of days, without consultation, on the basis of papers that failed to provide information on the size of the Green Space, or its current use, and inaccurately described the duration of leases. There was still time to reverse this undemocratic and unpopular decision. Please keep the Clifton Hill green space in public ownership, and keep it green. It's not yours to sell.

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 8 November 2018 from Ms Ginny Russell

To Councillor Bialyk Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport

Question

Given the Newtown and Clifton Hill community overwhelmingly wants to preserve the green space at Clifton Hill as a publicly owned green site, has the Council been in contact with any potential buyers of all or part of the site, and will be how to buy the site become public knowledge so the community might attempt to buy it back?

Response

Councillor Bialyk Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport, responded that the Council had not approached potential buyers and that any sale would be on the open market.

Ms Ginny Russell was invited to respond stating that the closure would impact the Urban green space, which were disappearing all over the country and outdoor spaces needed to be saved. The community wanted to keep them for activity, wellbeing and mental health. The Council strategy was also short term, once these spaces go they would be gone forever impacting future generations. There was also a variety of wildlife species and plant life in the area and the removal of the spaces would damage the local eco system. The Council needed to think twice before making this decision.

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PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 8 November 2018 from Mr Alexander Keen

To Councillor Bialyk Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport

Question

Given that the council is planning to hold a public consultation in 2019 concerning the development of Physical Activity and Built Facilities strategies, and given factual inaccuracies and omissions in the report presented to the Executive on 12 June and Extraordinary council meeting on 13 June, the decision to close the Clifton Hill Sports Centre and sell the entire site without any consultation feels particularly inappropriate and undemocratic.

Would you clarify, please, whether it is legally possible for the council to reverse the decision to close the Clifton Hill Sports Centre and sell the whole site, including the Clifton Hill Green Space?

If you believe it is not possible to reverse the decision, please explain precisely why this is the case.

Response

Councillor Bialyk Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport, responded that he did not agree that the report had material factual inaccuracies and omissions, but apologised that a formal consultation had not been undertaken. However the general public were made aware of the problems at Clifton Hill Sports Centre and had been able to put their case forward prior to the Council decision.

A decision made by Full Council could be reconsidered following a recommendation to do so from a Committee, or the Executive, or by way of Notice of Motion in accordance with Standing Order No.6.

Mr Keen was invited to respond, informing that he was a local resident with a background in design. He considered that the Clifton Hill building was basic and that replacing the roof would provide a further 25 year to life to the building life expectancy. There had been no structural survey undertaken, and highlighted that he unsure where the view that building was unsafe had come from or that a vote to close had been held.

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PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 8 November 2018 from Ms Aimee Beckett

To Councillor Bialyk Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport

Question

Vivid Economics worked in partnership with the Greater London Authority, National Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund to produce a natural capital account for London's public green spaces. It revealed that for every £1 spent by local authorities on public green space, Londoners enjoyed at least £27 in value. We now have evidence that reducing funding for green spaces is a false economy. Natural capital accounting is rapidly gaining acceptance as a necessary requirement to inform decision-making. Vivid Economics has teamed up with researchers at the University of Exeter to create an easy-to-use toolkit to calculate location-specific economic values of the health, social and environmental benefits of urban green infrastructure.

Will the council consider using the toolkit when it is released to reveal the true value of the nine acres behind Clifton Hill Sports Centre before allowing it to be sold?

Response

Councillor Bialyk Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport, responded that there were a wide range of tools available to support decision making and that the toolkit was not one used or had considered using.

Ms Beckett was invited to respond, stating that the finalised toolkit would be released in 2019 and that Exeter University were looking for Local Authorities to work with them. The Clifton Hill Green space had a high pollution level, which impacted on air quality and had been linked to health issues. Keeping the greenspace would make more sense, but she understood the impacts from austerity.

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MEMBER QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER at Place Scrutiny Committee – 8 November 2018 - Questions from Councillor Mitchell

Response to be made by Councillor David Harvey Portfolio Holder Place & Commercialisation

Question 1

It was recently revealed Exeter's recycling rate has now fallen by over 6% since the current administration took back control of the Council in 2010 and now sits just above 30%. Can the Portfolio Holder explain why there has been such a drop?

Response

This has been due to several factors:

The Controlled Waste Regulations 2012 clarified the types of waste that should be included in our domestic waste figures that are used to calculate the recycling rate. In accordance with statutory guidance, the non-recycled waste from schools, charity shops and residential homes is now included in our figures; this wasn't the case in 2010. As a result, the reported amount of non-recycled waste has increased in relation to the tonnage recycled, which reduces our recycling rate. This is something we had no control over.

'Lightweighting' of packaging materials such as glass and metal, and the ongoing decline in newsprint and magazine consumption, mean there is less material available for capture. This affects Exeter more than neighbouring authorities because we rely mainly on 'dry' recycling rather than organic waste collection for our recycling rate.

As the machinery at our MRF has become older, the plant is less efficient at sorting materials to the standard required by reprocessors. At the same time, these reprocessors are becoming more demanding about quality standards so the proportion of rejected material has increased. There has always been a proportion of input material that was too fine for us to sort cost-effectively. We were able to send this material to commercial MRFs to process for us. However, this option is becoming more expensive due to the wider changes in market conditions.

The many new purpose-built student blocks are a challenge for our recycling system. Bin stores are often built too small to accommodate enough green and grey bins, and the building managers can opt to pay for extra rubbish collections rather than require their tenants to recycle. This increases the amount of non-recycled waste collected.

Paper, textiles and other materials collected by local community groups counts towards our recycling rate. These groups have seen the value per tonne of their materials drop so they are collecting less for recycling.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Mitchell asked a supplementary question about recycling rates in other authorities, and what they did that was different to Exeter City Council.

Supplementary Response

Councillor Harvey, Portfolio Holder Place & Commercialisation responded that he didn't know what other authorities did to increase their recycling rates.

Question 2

Over the same period neighbouring authorities recycling rates have risen. What lessons can we learn from those authorities?

Response -

Exeter's recycling rate for 'dry' materials (paper, glass, card, plastics and metal) is comparable with most of our neighbours. The higher recycling rates achieved by our neighbours are largely due to the provision of separate food waste collection and greater participation in garden waste collections in districts where more people have gardens.

Question 3

How does the Portfolio Holder intend to reverse the decline in our recycling rate?

Response -

The business case for investment in the MRF was due to be presented to Executive and full Council in Quarter 4 of this financial year. This will address the issues that have led to our higher rejection rate. We have removed the charge for new or replacement recycling bins Through the DASWC-support Recycling Advisors contract we have paid particular emphasis on visiting flats and areas of low participation to ensure those residents have adequate access to recycling containers.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Mitchell asked a supplementary question about seeing what other authorities do with recycling and see if there was anything the City council could adopt to help the authorities recycling rate?

Supplementary Response

Councillor Harvey, Portfolio Holder Place & Commercialisation responded that they could look at what other authorities do.

Question 4

Will this administration urgently review its decision not to imminently introduce a food waste collection service for the City?

Response -

The decision not to proceed with introducing food waste recycling was made on cost grounds.

In March 2018 Executive Committee agreed "That officers provide an annual update on the food waste business case in the Recycling Plan that is submitted to Place Scrutiny Committee". This update will take place as part of the business case for MRF investment currently being carried out.

**MEMBER QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER at Place Scrutiny Committee –
8 November 2018 - Questions from Councillor Musgrave**

Response to be made by Councillor Luke Sills, Chairman of Place Scrutiny Committee, responding on behalf of Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture/Labour Group Deputy Leader

Question 1

Why is it that ECC and DCC are pulling in different directions on Exeter's air quality problem?

Response

Exeter City Council and Devon County Council were not pulling in different directions. Communication between officers at the two authorities was excellent and had taken place throughout the development of the Action Plan. Further discussions were taking place at a strategic level through the Exeter and Devon Transport Steering Group.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Musgrave asked a supplementary question requesting an explanation about the differing opinion of Devon County Council on parking levy, to that of Exeter City Council.

Supplementary Response

Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture/Labour Group Deputy Leader would provide a written response to Councillor Musgrave and Members.

Question 2

Why is this report not recommending implementation a workplace parking levy given that Cllr Foggin recommend the same on behalf of a recent cross party task and finish group?

Response

The introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy would have to be done by Devon County Council rather than by Exeter City Council as the legislation had been devolved to tier 1 authorities (i.e. county council not district council).

The Action Plan did not, at this time, contain a request to Devon County Council to undertake a feasibility study for a Work Place Parking Levy. This was because many respondents to the consultation said that businesses should not face additional financial burdens. There was a feeling that alternative modes of transport should be provided first. This has been reflected in the final Action Plan.

However there was a mechanism through the annual review process of the of air quality action plan where additional measures could be introduced. The scrutiny committee report included a recommendation that 'That the feasibility of a work place parking levy be kept under review and an update be brought back to Scrutiny Place as part of the annual review of the Air Quality Action Plan.'

Supplementary Question

Councillor Musgrave asked a supplementary question on why the report figures had been presented in a misleading way.

Supplementary Response

Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture/Labour Group Deputy Leader would provide a written response to Councillor Musgrave and Members.

Question 3

Isn't it true that the proposed focus on the Heavitree corridor condemns the rest of the city including thousands of residents, children and workers to many more years of exposure and health risks?

Response

The legal duty of the Air Quality Action Plan as set out under the Environment Act 1995, was for a local authority to reduce concentrations of nitrogen dioxide below the objective. This plan aimed to reduce concentrations of nitrogen dioxide below the objective. However the Council recognised that this may not be the complete extent of the health impacts of air pollution, because the objective level may not be the lower limit of health impacts for nitrogen dioxide, and because particulate matter could also have health impacts below the relevant objectives. The Council therefore aspired to reduce harm to health from air pollution further than this in the future

It should be made clear that levels of air pollution were reducing in Exeter. In 2011 there were 20 monitoring locations in the city where nitrogen dioxide levels were above the objective. In 2017 there were eight. According to data from the Centre for Cities Exeter was the top performing city in the UK for reductions in CO2 emissions down by over 4% between 2005 and 2015. This was really good news for public health and showed that we had achieved over this period, although we recognise there was still much to do.

The number of people living in the locations where concentrations of nitrogen dioxide were above the objective may be small, but the pollution levels to which they were exposed to were far higher than in the majority of the city. For example nitrogen dioxide levels at East Wonford Hill were 59 micrograms per cubic meter, which compared to between 13 and 25 micrograms per cubic meter in a typical suburban Exeter street. A change in priority to focus on other areas instead would leave this small number of most significantly affected people with no benefit.

As Cllr Denham stated at the Scrutiny committee in September 2018, we had been working with partners in the public and private sector to cut congestion and the resulting air pollution as part of the city-wide transformation programme, Exeter City Futures. It focused on addressing some of the big challenges facing the city, in particular traffic congestion and energy efficiency. It was establishing a clear delivery plan, objectives and deliverables to create sustainable change, and to help address the problems of congestion within the city.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Musgrave asked a supplementary question, stating that there was requirement for focus and action for the parts of the city that had exceeded the legal limits. What actions are planned for bad areas such as East Wonford Hill?

Supplementary Response

Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture/Labour Group Deputy Leader would provide a written response to Councillor Musgrave and Members.

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