

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Tuesday 25 February 2020

Present:-

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor Councillor Peter Holland (Lord Mayor)
Councillor Mrs Yolonda Henson (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillors Atkinson, Begley, Bialyk, Branston, Foale, Ghusain, Hannaford, Harvey,
Henson, D, Leadbetter, Lyons, Martin, A, Mitchell, K, Mitchell, M, Moore, D, Morse, Newby,
Oliver, Packham, Pattison, Pearson, Sheldon, Sills, Sparkes, Sutton, Vizard, Wardle,
Warwick, Williams, Wood and Wright

6

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors Buswell, Foggin, Moore J., Owen and Quance.

7

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions from the public were received.

8

BUDGET 2020/21

Minute 10 (2020/21 Council Tax Base and NNDR1) of the meeting of Executive held on 14 January 2020 was taken as read and adopted.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Sutton seconded, the resolution as set out in the agenda and circulated papers in respect of the Council Tax for 2020/21 – budget and fees and charges attached.

- [Budget Book](#)
- [Fees and Charges](#)

The Leader, in presenting his budget speech, highlighted the following:-

- the proposed balanced budget for 2020/21 would protect and maintain services as well as maintaining the City Council's General Fund working balance, although there was a need to find further savings of nearly a third of the budget representing a reduction of £3.7 million over the following three years;
- the Council had been awarded a further £2.490 million in New Homes Bonus (NHB) taking the total earned to over £25 million and had generated £2.5 million more in Business Rates Growth than the Government believed was needed to provide vital services in Exeter. However, the NHB was being withdrawn by the Government and the Business Rates Retention Scheme was being overhauled which would mean a loss in financial benefits from 2021/22 onwards;
- a key goal was managing the climate emergency and delivering a carbon neutral Exeter by 2030. Over 23 energy savings projects had been delivered including the Water Lane Smart Grid and Storage Project supporting electrification of the Council's operational fleet with battery storage located at the Livestock Centre, Mary Arches Street and John Lewis Car Park;
- a significant reduction in the Council's base load energy consumption had been achieved with carbon emissions cut by 29%, energy consumption dropped by

37% and a 34% reduction in the carbon emissions of the Council's fleet after the introduction of electric vehicles and pool cars;

- following an extensive community engagement process, an Exeter Grants Programme had been launched with an annual budget of around £1 million;
- significant progress had been made with Wellbeing Exeter with the Exeter Live Better and Move More Physical Activity Strategy launched in July 2019 and linked to work with Sport England who had provided £2,435,408 to date;
- the Liveable Exeter (Garden City) Programme aimed to deliver 12,000 new homes and neighbourhood's for the city and its residents, while also supporting the need for a more sustainable and active city to assist in meeting the Council's aspirations to make Exeter a carbon neutral city by 2030;
- there were plans for the development of a Community Sports Village at the Exeter Arena and work was being undertaken with Wonford residents and health care providers and other stakeholders to create a new health and wellbeing centre;
- the St Sidwell's Point Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre and Bus Station were progressing well;
- significant progress had been made in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) development programme during 2019 and a firm delivery schedule of 100 properties established as part of a wider 500 programme;
- the HRA medium term financial plan provided for a capital investment of £13.894 million for improvements to the Council's existing housing stock, and £13.895 million towards the provision of new council homes;
- there were pioneering approaches for retrofit energy measures to existing properties. A pilot at Chestnut Avenue was delivering a retrofit Energiesprong solution to six properties with added benefits including a ground source heat pump heating system and photovoltaic roof panels with an ambition to deliver the entire Council housing stock to this standard by 2030;
- an Extra Care Scheme was being constructed to provide 53 affordable homes for residents over 55 with care needs;
- a revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Plan had been launched in September 2019;
- Building Greater Exeter had the support of 30 project partners to reach some 30,000 people to provide the skills needed for the construction industry with a nationally recognised commitment to apprentices and the Council was set to submit a Local Industrial Strategy for Exeter;
- a glass and food waste Kerbside Re-cycling scheme would be introduced in 2021 with newer, lower emission diesel vehicles along with more electric vehicles replacing the old fleet;
- there had been continued investment in Culture, supporting the city's national portfolio organisations with £250,000 a year. UNESCO had awarded City of Literature Status and designated cultural compact status in recognition of the strength and importance of the arts in the city;
- the Council's legal team had secured a landmark ruling at the Royal Courts of Justice regarding the rateable valuation of the RAMM. The case had decided the rateable value of RAMM at £1 from April 2015 bringing it down from the previous rateable value of £445,000. The Valuation Office had until 19 March to challenge the decision; and
- the Exeter Festival 2020 would provide low cost and free entertainment with the work of the Red Coat volunteers acknowledged when awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

It was proposed to set a District Council tax of £160.05 for a Band D property, an increase of £5 a year for this Band, less than 10p a week. By comparison the Devon County Council precept would rise by £55.17 (£1.06 a week), the Devon and Cornwall Police by £9.36 a year (18 pence a week) and the Devon and Somerset

Fire and Rescue Service by £1.72 (3 pence a week). Therefore the Band D Council Tax would be split as follows:-

Devon County Council	£1,439.46
Devon and Cornwall Police	£ 221.64
Devon and Somerset Fire	£ 88.24
Exeter City Council	£ 160.05

Making a total bill of £1,909.39

The Leader commended the budget and the recommendations set out in the papers in terms of the approval of both the revenue estimates and capital programme for the year 2020/21 and which would result in Exeter City Council setting the fourth lowest council tax in the country.

The Leader's Exeter Budget statement can be found here:-
<https://app.box.com/s/btfu0p64xb24eo2u1lakw0xmgmjuppjg>

Councillor Sutton seconded the proposal.

Amendment to the budget by the Progressive Group

In accordance with Standing Order 10(7) Councillor D. Moore moved and Councillor M. Mitchell seconded the following amendment to the budget:-

Budget proposal 1) Creation of a Planning Officer: Planning Enforcement Officer.

Reason for proposal: Enforcement planning and landscaping conditions to protect the city's built and natural environment.

- One off capital cost: Nil;
- Income source: N/A;
- Ongoing revenue cost: £33,598; and
- Income source: Grade G officer including on costs taken from NHB underspend.

Budget proposal 2) Re-open three city toilets in key shopping areas. Musgrave Row, Heavitree Fore Street and Cowick Street, St Thomas.

Reason for proposal: Protect city centre economy and tourism, address problems identified in Equalities Impact Statement of March 2019 on closure and reduce anti-social behaviour in shopping areas.

- One off capital cost: £285,000;
- Income source: Communications and Tourism budget - delete consultant's £5,000 for one year, remainder from unallocated Community Infrastructure Levy funds;
- Ongoing revenue cost: £53,487; and
- Income source: Re-instate Thursday car parking charges plus rises plus inflation providing ongoing revenue in following years. Delete food for Democratic representation (meetings) £2,000. Remainder from NHB underspend.

Budget proposal 3): Creation of Climate Change Transformation Officer and creation of a standing Climate Change Committee.

Reason for proposal: To co-ordinate rapid transformation across all Council policy and activities and partnerships to ensure rapid and consistent delivery of the carbon neutral 2030 plan. To secure external investment and develop income generation to

continue this from Year 3. To ensure democratic involvement and scrutiny of the Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.

- One off capital cost: Nil;
- Income source: N/A;
- Ongoing revenue cost: £53,975; and
- Income source: Delete budget line ref M314 (£107,950) funding for reserves and reallocate funds to 2020/21 and 2021/22 (from reserves) and thereafter posts continue if funded from external investment for three further years (Exeter City Futures receipt of lottery funds and the bid for £500,000 in Exeter's Industrial Strategy). Oversee budget line T102 to be retained in year 1 2020/21. Climate Change Committee administration costs covered by existing Democratic Services structure. Chaired by Relevant Portfolio Holder and Deputy Chair to be Leader of the Opposition so no additional allowances required.

Councillor D. Moore spoke in support of the amendment, making the following points:-

- a planning enforcement officer would contribute to developers taking planning conditions more seriously;
- the re-opening of toilets would benefit communities by helping to support shopping, culture and tourism, therefore enhancing the local economy as well as benefitting the wider population, particularly the elderly and disabled;
- Network Rail should be asked to contribute to the re-opening of the Cowick Street toilets underneath the railway bridge;
- whilst the involvement of other organisations, including Exeter City Futures, in the challenges being faced as part of the Climate Emergency was welcome, the Council itself had a unique and pivotal role and that the establishment of a Climate Emergency Committee was necessary to effectively scrutinize initiatives being brought forward to ensure that the Council meets its goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030; and
- the Council's approach to climate change should reflect the risks and priorities set out by the National Climate Change Committee.

A number of Members responded as follows to issues and concerns raised within the three elements of the amendment:-

- whilst supporting the sentiment behind the amendment, it was considered to be neither affordable nor sustainable;
- technical engineering difficulties prohibited the re-opening of the Cowick Street toilets and the Police had been supportive of their closure because of significant problems of anti-social behaviour and drug related issues. Working with the local community and Libraries Unlimited, the Council was exploring the potential of providing toilets in the St. Thomas Library for wider community use;
- alternative toilet provision was also available in Heavitree Park and alternative facilities adjacent to Musgrave Row include the Phoenix, RAMM and the Guildhall shopping centre;
- the City Council, for a number of years, had implemented solutions to address climate change but it was essential to work externally with partners through Exeter City Futures to encourage all the City's major players to be as equally committed to the carbon neutral goal as the Council. Initiatives within the Sport England project also reflected carbon neutral goals as did the Kerbside Recycling scheme which included investment in electric and low emission vehicles;
- scrutinisation of climate change initiatives could also be effectively undertaken through the new Scrutiny Committees established following the governance review; and

- discussions could be progressed with planning case officers in respect of breaches such as advertisement controls.

Other Members raised the following points on the amendment:-

- welcomed many of the initiatives within the budget put forward by the Leader but emphasised that the proposed amendment had been fully costed and was the first time for a number of years that an alternative budget had been presented to Members;
- Article 4 Direction areas and the St. James Neighbourhood Plan area, both created to achieve greater control, also suffered from breaches in planning conditions;
- adequate toilet provision was necessary to support shopping districts and health and community safety hubs. Re-opening would help reduce problems of anti-social behaviour and also address Equality Impact Assessment issues. There was also an absence of public toilets across much of the north of Exeter;
- the Council should lead on climate change initiatives through the creation of a Climate Change Committee; and
- there was insufficient time to fully scrutinise the budget papers following publication which should therefore be made available earlier in future.

A number of Members welcomed and commended the budget proposals as an ambitious and balanced approach to the serious challenges faced by the Council, referring to some of the many achievements. The following points were referred to:-

- the City Council is the city's leader in tackling climate change with some 23 initiatives already introduced, but the challenge was one everyone had to face;
- the Council embraces the partnership approach in, for example, the cultural, education and business fields and, notably, had recently been recognised by UNESCO as a City of Literature;
- the budget was a positive response to many years of austerity which had contributed to the current housing crisis and homelessness. The Council had retained its own housing stock with an ambitious house building programme through the delivery of 100 properties as part of the wider 500 programme. They would be delivered to Passivhaus standard and there was a retrofit Energiesprong solution to six properties as a response to climate change, and to help address problems of fuel poverty;
- the Council had retained public open space at both Clifton Hill and Bull Meadow Park and, as part of its commitment to a green agenda, was working proactively with the Devon Wildlife Trust to further improve the Valley Parks including linking the Northbrook Approach Golf Course to the Riverside Valley Park and sought to increase tree coverage in the city from 24.5% to 30%; and
- secured the waste collection contract for the University campus.

The Opposition Leader also welcomed the budget, referring to a good settlement by the Government and to the extra resources the Government had made available. Whilst acknowledging the uncertainty in respect of the NHB, he referred to the Government's commitment to supporting improved service provision going forward.

In exercising her right of reply, Councillor D. Moore:-

- referred to reductions in the open space, grounds maintenance, children's play areas, estate management, canal and allotments budgets;
- asked for care to be taken on ensuring funding investments with banking institutions reflected the Council's Climate Change agenda;

- urged the re-opening of toilets as a means of combating anti-social behaviour particularly around areas where the public engaged in leisure and cultural activities; and
- re-iterated the need for a Climate Change Committee and sought clarification on the policy framework required to enable partners to deliver this agenda.

In conclusion, the Leader:-

- emphasised his desire to maintain a collaborative approach, which was recognised by partner agencies, in delivering the Council's agenda and that he was available to discuss issues of concern raised by Members and would discuss these with the relevant Portfolio Holders;
- reminded Members that a briefing had been arranged on the Council's budget proposals;
- referred to the extensive consultation process undertaken in the review of the grants process, detailing the grants made to date in the various categories and stating that it would be inappropriate to cut the community grants budget; and
- affirmed that the Council was recognised as a low spend and efficient authority that had responded effectively to the Public Works Loan Board changed interest rate.

The Leader commended the budget to Council.

In accordance with Standing Order 30, a named vote on the amendment was recorded, as follows:-

Voting for:-

Councillors K. Mitchell, M. Mitchell and D. Moore

(3 Members)

Voting against:-

Councillors Atkinson, Begley, Bialyk, Branston, Foale, Ghusain, Hannaford, Harvey, Henson, D. Deputy Lord Mayor, Leadbetter, Lyons, Martin, Morse, Newby, Oliver, Packham, Pattison, Pearson, Sheldon, Sills, Sparkes, Sutton, Vizard, Wardle, Warwick, Williams, Wood and Wright.

(29 Members)

Abstain:-

The Lord Mayor

(1 Member)

Absent:-

Councillors Buswell, Foggin, Lamb, J. Moore, Owen and Quance

(6 Members)

The vote was lost and the amendment fell.

In accordance with Standing Order 30, a named vote on the Resolution as set out in the agenda papers was recorded, as follows:-

Voting for:-

Councillors Atkinson, Begley, Bialyk, Branston, Foale, Ghusain, Hannaford, Harvey, Henson, D. Deputy Lord Mayor, Leadbetter, Lyons, Martin, Morse, Newby, Oliver, Packham, Pattison, Pearson, Sheldon, Sills, Sparkes, Sutton, Vizard, Wardle, Warwick, Williams, Wood and Wright.

(29 Members)

Voting against:-

Councillors K. Mitchell, M. Mitchell and D. Moore

(3 Members)

Abstain:-

The Lord Mayor

(1 Member)

Absent:-

Councillors Buswell, Foggin, Lamb, J. Moore, Owen and Quance

(6 Members)

The Resolution was carried:-

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the following, as submitted in the Estimates Book, be approved:-
 - (a) the Revenue estimates for 2020-2021;
 - (b) the Capital programme for 2020-2021;
 - (c) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2020-2021
 - (d) the Prudential indicators for 2020-2021 (incorporating the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement
 - (e) the Capital Strategy for 2020-2021
- (2) that it be noted that, at the meeting of the Executive on the 14 January 2020, the Council calculated the figure of 37,348, as its council tax base for the year 2020-2021 in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;
- (3) that the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2020-2021 in accordance with Sections 31A of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992:-
 - (a) £113,195,600 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2)(a) to (f) of the Act;

- (b) £107,218,053 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)(a) to (d) of the Act;
- (c) £5,977,547 being the amount by which the aggregate at (3)(a) above exceeds the aggregate at (3)(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year;
- (d) £160.05 being the amount at (3) (c) above divided by the amount at (2) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year;
- (e) Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D
£106.70	£124.48	£142.27	£160.05
E	F	G	H
£195.62	£231.18	£266.75	£320.10

Being the amount given by multiplying the amount at (3)(d) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;

- (4) That it will be noted that, for the year 2020-2021, Devon County Council, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall and the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority have stated the following amounts on precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 83 of the Local Government Act 2003, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:-

Devon County Council

A	B	C	D
£875.82	£1,021.79	£1,167.76	£1,313.73
E	F	G	H
£1,605.67	£1,897.61	£2,189.55	£2,627.46

Devon County Council - Adult Social Care

A	B	C	D
£83.82	£97.79	£111.76	£125.73
E	F	G	H
£153.67	£181.61	£209.55	£251.46

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall

A	B	C	D
---	---	---	---

£147.76	£172.39	£197.01	£221.64
E	F	G	H
£270.89	£320.15	£369.40	£443.28

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D
£58.83	£68.63	£78.44	£88.24
E	F	G	H
£107.85	£127.46	£147.07	£176.48

- (5) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (3)(e) and (4) above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby set the following amounts as the amounts of council tax for the year 2020-2021 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D
£1,272.93	£1,485.08	£1,697.24	£1,909.39
E	F	G	H
£2,333.70	£2,758.01	£3,182.32	£3,818.78

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 8.31 pm)

Chair