

## **STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date: Thursday 19 November 2020

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Legislation has been passed that allows Council's to conduct Committee meetings remotely.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting.

If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Sharon Sissons, Democratic Services Officer (Committees) on 01392 265115.

During the Corona Virus outbreak, Strategic Scrutiny Committee meetings will be held by virtual means. The [live stream can be viewed here](#) at the meeting start time.

### *Membership -*

Sills (Chair), Newby (Deputy Chair), Atkinson, Branston, Buswell, Hannaford, Henson, D, Lamb, Moore, D, Moore, J, Owen and Packham

## **Agenda**

### **1 Apologies**

### **2 Minutes**

(Pages 3 -  
14)

To approve and sign the minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee held on 24 September 2020.

### **3 Declaration of Interest**

Councillors are reminded of the need to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests that relate to business on the agenda and which have not already been included in the register of interests, before any discussion takes place on the item. Unless the interest is sensitive, you must also disclose the nature of the interest. In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, you must then leave the room and must not participate in any further discussion of the item.

Councillors requiring clarification should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer prior to the day of the meeting.

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

It is considered that the Committee would be unlikely to exclude the press and public during the consideration of the items on this agenda, but if it should wish to do so, then the following resolution should be passed:

"**RESOLVED** that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the particular items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act."

## 5 **Questions from Members of the Public Under Standing Order 19**

To receive questions relating to items on the Agenda from members of the public and responses thereto.

Details of questions should be notified to the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support by 10.00am at least three working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, questions must be submitted by 10am by Monday 16 November 2020.

Further information about speaking at a committee can be found here: [Speaking at a Committee](#)

## 6 **Presentation on Covid-19 by Portfolio Holders and Questions from Members and Answers on Covid Recovery**

(Pages 15  
- 42)

Briefing notes attached from the respective Portfolio Holders.

Leader – Councillor Bialyk

Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder – Net Zero Exeter 2030 Councillor Rachel Sutton

Portfolio Holder - Transformation & Environment Councillor Bob Foale

Portfolio Holder - City Development – Councillor Emma Morse

Details of questions from Members relating to the Portfolios above on Covid-19 issues only, with a particular emphasis on the focus on recovery should be notified to the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support by 10.00am the Monday before the meeting – 16 November 2020.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee will be held on 14 January 2021 at 5.30pm by virtual means.

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## **STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** **HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING**

24 September 2020

### Present:

Councillor Sills (Chair)

Councillors Atkinson, Buswell, Henson, D, Moore, D, Moore, J, and Owen

### Apologies:

Councillors Newby and Pattison

### Also present:

Director Corporate Services, Director Transformation, Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management, Director Finance, Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, Democratic Services Officer (SLS) and Democratic Services Officer (MD)

### In attendance:

Councillor Ollie Pearson

- Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Physical Activity

Councillor Duncan Wood

- Portfolio Holder for Support Services & Procurement

Councillor Michael Mitchell

Councillor Trish Oliver

## 18 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Newby and Pattison.

## 19 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee held on 23 July 2020 were taken as read, approved as correct, for signing by the Chair at the earliest possible convenience.

A Member sought to raise a matter in relation to an invitation to Devon County Council to discuss the Transport Strategy before it was considered by them on 11 November and before the next Strategic Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Chair although stating there was only the opportunity to approve the minutes as a correct record or amend, he would, on this occasion, pass on the question to the Portfolio Holder Net Zero Exeter 2030.

## 20 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

## 21 **Questions from Members of the Public Under Standing Order 19**

The Chair confirmed that no public questions had been received.

## 22 **Presentation on Covid-19 by Portfolio Holders and Questions from Members and Answers**

The Chair referred to the recent change in Portfolio Holders and he introduced Councillor Ollie Pearson as the Portfolio Holder for City Centre and Corporate Services and Councillor Duncan Wood as Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Physical Activity. He invited them to provide a report on their respective area with a focus on the on the Council's Covid-19 recovery stage.

The Portfolio Holder for City Centre & Corporate Services in presenting his briefing note highlighted the following:-

- with appreciation to those officers who were facilitating the democratic process to enable the Council to continue to function and engage with the public, as well as the Human Resources team who, alongside their other duties, have been also been tasked with completing the TUPE arrangements to bring the Leisure Services team back in house. The Council's Legal Team have been particularly busy and along with Internal Audit have provided assistance for Covid related support schemes for various businesses. Strata have continued to support staff remotely and their work will continue to ensure that customers can access the Council's services seamlessly as well as developing opportunities for greater access for all, and
- the efforts made to ensure that the message that the city centre remained open with the help of local businesses, the Business Improvement District (BID), and the City Centre Recovery Group to support businesses and also to help those in the city who face unemployment and other challenges due to the pandemic, which included pulling a number of external services together under the banner of Exeter works.

The Director Corporate Services took the opportunity to reflect on the variety and volume undertaken by her team in the context of the additional challenges brought about, in part by Covid. She also paid tribute to the massive dedication and care by the Guildhall staff who were able to support a socially distanced wedding ceremony which had recently taken place there.

The Portfolio Holder, for City Centre & Corporate Services responded to the following questions from Members submitted in advance of the meeting, together with supplementary questions and responses as set out below:-

### Questions from Committee Members

1. **Councillor Keith Owen** - The document circulated to members on the City Centre recovery plan refers to restoring confidence for residents to return to the city centre. From my experience on the morning of Thursday 17 September, this has already been a success. The High Street was extremely busy and personally I would not like to have seen it any busier. One area which has not been successful in my view, based on personal experience, has been signs (including stencils and banners) to encourage social distancing and the use of pedestrian one way systems. Both in the High Street and Longbrook Street for example, approximately 50% of pedestrians (if not more) walk in contravention of the one way signs. Please can the Council consider alternative ways of dealing with this particular problem?

Whilst we have adhered closely to the guidance issued by Government for safer high streets, there are a percentage of people who are not following the signs and directions. We have plans to reinforce the signage at eye level which will help. The

circulation of pedestrians was only guidance and whilst there was no legislation regarding following a one way system with regard to social distancing. The police have some enforcement powers over gatherings of six, which is their focus at the moment. He also briefly clarified that the signage would be at eye level to help avoid any tripping hazards.

The Director for Net Zero Exeter and City Management added that Government's communication around social distancing has not been particularly clear. The change from two metres to one metre plus has caused confusion. One metre plus actually means keep two metres apart unless you have a secondary measure in place such as a mask. We plan to add more eye level signs in the City Centre to help people to follow the one way systems and our signs will continue to state the two metre rule to try and help to make this clear. The signage is advisory and we rely on the good sense of the public to follow them but there are currently no powers of enforcement.

- 2. Councillor Diana Moore** - Is a review of the suitability of polling stations to assess their suitability for social distancing being undertaken and will alternative locations to schools be sought to prevent closure of the school or bringing the public on site?

The Corporate Manager Democratic & Civic Support provided the response to ensure that political neutrality was observed.

Planning for the local elections in May 2021 would continue to be based on advice from the Electoral Commission and the Cabinet Office. Their comments including risk assessments would continue to be followed as well as seeking any early advice, also from the Council's Environmental Health Department. In the meantime, contact has been made with all the 57 polling stations, to assess their availability next May. They will also be asked for a copy of the individual venue's Covid-19 risk assessment. Contact has also been made with all of the 13 schools which are currently used, and the policy continues to be not to use schools when there was a suitable and viable alternative. Where schools are used, every effort was made to ensure that both uses as the school and polling station would be able to work alongside each other. On occasion this can lead to the school to decide to close for the day. This situation may well change in 2021, particularly if Covid restrictions are in place. The team would continue to work with schools to make that work, as best as possible, in the circumstances we may find ourselves in.

Supplementary question and response.

If there was an increase in registration for postal votes and would registration for postal voting be encouraged as part of the annual canvass now taking place? There was some concern that people may be put off going out to vote.

The Corporate Manager Democratic & Civic Support stated that the Election team were experiencing an uptake in postal voter registration and they expected that to continue. They would follow the Electoral Commission's guidance to encourage individuals to apply for postal votes and every effort was also being made to encourage early registration so as to avoid a rush at the last minute.

- 3. Councillor Diana Moore** - Will the Council be offering to provide any opportunities for young people to work for the council as part of the Kickstart programme that the Government announced?

The opportunities provided by the Kickstart programme were still under consideration and a briefing was being prepared for the Council's Strategic Management Board,

but this would still need to be considered in light of the Council's significant budgetary challenges as well as providing services to the residents of Exeter. He added that he was looking forward to seeing what the opportunities were for this programme.

Supplementary question and response.

It would be a great opportunity to provide work experience for young people, the Government was covering salaries and national insurance costs as part of this programme, and the Council was a good career option so she would strongly encourage and support participation in that programme as well.

It was important to support young people through the Covid crisis.

- 4. Councillor Diana Moore** - What consideration is the Council giving to meanwhile uses for its vacant offices/retail units to encourage start-ups, especially for creative industries and social enterprises?

The number of vacant units owned by Exeter City Council was extremely low so there was not the opportunity to offer meanwhile uses for vacant property. There had been discussion on the opportunities available on non-council owned property across the city with the BID and the Chamber of Commerce. The Portfolio Holder was aware there were some good examples cross city of other meanwhile uses happening now, but not in Council properties.

Supplementary question and response.

What were the opportunities for such organisations to access those properties and would the Council be open to approaches for the low number of voids that it has.

There were few voids in a competitive market. It was really important to understand that the income derived from the leases for units went towards supporting the Council's services that people rely upon, including those services that have supported the community through the pandemic. Meanwhile use was important and the Council would look at providing whatever information they could, as part of making sure we can support people and organisations in taking those opportunities when they arise. Organisations such as the BID or the Chamber of Commerce would be good organisations to approach, but the Council would be doing everything possible to support uses of properties across the city.

Question from a Non-Committee Member

- 1. Councillor Michael Mitchell** - To what extent has or will the council conduct internal audits in regard to the additional spending, grant and loan allocations made specifically related to the Covid 19 pandemic?

The Internal Audit team had provided the following response of their work which included:-

Additional spending - there was no intention at this point in time for Internal Audit to conduct a specific audit on the additional spending incurred by the Council as a result of the Covid19 pandemic. However, internal controls relating to the additional spending would be covered as part of the creditors and main accounts audits.

Local Government Income Compensation Scheme for lost sales, fees and charges - Internal Audit review and challenge the appropriateness of the claims submitted by the Council under this scheme, in line with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) guidance. They have confirmed that they will consider relevant internal auditor reviews as appropriate evidence in the assurance process.

Business of Business Grants - the Audit Managers were involved in setting up the process for the business grants to provide assistance with the requirements of government guidance and to ensure that appropriate controls were in place to minimise the risk of fraudulent applications. This process included a number of pre-award checks including running all applications through the Government's counter fraud system known as 'Spotlight' to identify any applications that did not meet the eligibility criteria or were potentially fraudulent. All applications identified by 'spotlight' were then subject to rigorous additional checks prior to processing including asking for additional supporting documentation. Where an application was considered ineligible or potentially fraudulent it was rejected prior to processing. The Audit Managers also assisted in the processing of all types of business grants, mainly undertaking the review of applications where other officers processing the applications had concerns over the eligibility of the applicant.

Internal Audit were in the process of undertaking post award assurance checking on a sample of all business grants awarded, this work had been undertaken by an auditor that had no involvement in the processing of the grant applications, with arrangements in place for any issues arising to be reported to the Director Finance and or to the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee to ensure a level of independence. The Council will also be participating as normal in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) which is an exercise that matches electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud, which this year will also include business grants. The output from this exercise will then be subject to further investigation by Internal Audit with the intention of reclaiming any monies found to have been claimed fraudulently. The Council had also signed up to the UK Finance and Anti-Fraud scheme and were awaiting further guidance on how this scheme will work.

Covid19 Community Action Fund - Internal Audit will be auditing grants awarded under this scheme.

Loan Allocations – Internal Audit had confirmed they were not aware of any loans made by the Council.

Supplementary question and response.

Whether the external funding received in relation to the pandemic crisis would sit inside or outside the City Council's annual accounts and, if it sat within the accounts whether it would be subject to our own external auditors.

It was important to ensure transparency and that this money went to the right people. The Director Finance said that he would clarify the matter with the Deputy Chief Finance Officer, as this also included whether the Council were acting as an agent facilitating payment and he would report back to Members. In any case, External Audit may be given direction to look at this matter. He was pleased to advise that that no fraud had been identified by the Internal Audit team, They had taken on a significant amount of work and had worked closely with the Business Rates team to carry out all necessary checks before any money was paid out.

The Portfolio Holder also responded to points of clarifications from other Committee Members.

It was noted that a question from Councillor Henson on the Playing Pitches Strategy would be answered later in the meeting. However, a question on where Strata staff were working was answered with Strata staff in keeping with other Council staff were mostly working from home. He also confirmed that the former Parkwood leisure staff have been Tupted to the Council and would be City Council employees in the first instance. There were currently no precise details of the staffing structure or positions held in the Leisure Services at this time, but the senior officer with responsibility within the Council for Leisure Services was the Director Communications, Culture and Leisure Facilities. The Portfolio Holder also advised that as aspects of the question also crossed the Portfolio of Leisure & Physical Activity, and as he was also at the meeting, he was able to advise that the leisure centres had a timetable for opening safely under the control of the Council. The staffing structure was still being finalised, but he would continue to work with the Director to oversee the early stages of the adoption and then implementation of the Leisure Services.

Councillor Diana Moore asked about what consideration had been given to Safer Streets, to enable safer circulation of people and cyclists during Covid -19, and if the Council was working with Devon County Council to bring forward a coherent plan for safer pavements in the city centre. The Portfolio Holder advised that he was due to meet with Devon County Council and the Director Net Zero and City Management to discuss this matter. The Director also referred to joint networking with Devon County Council, to facilitate social distancing on streets in the city centre and other district centres with information prepared by the City's Engineers, on the basis of the Safer Streets Government guidance.

The Portfolio Holder Leisure & Physical Activity, Councillor Duncan Wood in presenting his briefing note, and with the Chair's permission introduced a short flythrough animation of St Sidwell's Point and the part it would play in the city's recovery from Covid-19. Other areas he wished to draw attention to, were the return of the city's leisure services to an in-house team, the significant and continuing impact of Covid meant that the Sport England Pilot Project, and engagement with the Wonford community all had to be continue to be flexible. It had been impressive how both our own staff and the partners had responded to the challenges. He also paid tribute to Sport England who had accepted the delays and he thanked them for the encouragement given to the Council to repurpose the Pilot funds to enable the Council in their support of the community and mutual support groups during the Covid crisis. He also wished to commend the staff in this area for all of the work they have achieved.

The Portfolio Holder Leisure & Physical Activity responded to the following questions from Members submitted in advance of the meeting, together with supplementary questions and responses as set out below:-

#### Questions from Committee Members

1. It was noted that a response to a question by Councillor Diana Moore relating to a Council response to the report presented by the mutual aid groups, would be made by the Portfolio Holder Communities & Culture, at the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee.

**2. Councillor Diana Moore** - How long is the membership only access for all leisure services requirement expected to be in place for and does this apply to swimming?

Yes, at this point in time it was likely to remain in place until the end of the year and it does also apply to swimming.

Supplementary Question and Response.

Whether the end of the year was December 2020 or March 2021, and she was concerned that the current membership policy would exclude poorer individuals and families with children who could not afford a subscription, and what measures would be put in place to help those who cannot afford a subscription.

The situation was very fluid with regard to Covid 19, in terms of the restrictions that apply and the impact of the current rule of six on what people may have planned to do is significant. Family swimming sessions would present a challenge as to how that will fit in with current and future restrictions that may occur. There were currently no plans to introduce family play sessions at the moment. In respect of the question on price being a barrier, current members were able to use all facilities at no extra cost with their membership cost frozen. New members can join for £15 and a price comparison for sport memberships and swim sessions for facilities in the adjacent local authority area was presented. It was noted that in those instances the City Council were offering a cheaper offer than our neighbouring authorities, but it was not clear how much of a barrier this will be. It was important to get the service up and running in a Covid safe way and that had to include some ability to control the increase in usage. At this stage, the subscription membership was being offered and the cost was not prohibitive if the facilities were used with any real frequency. This approach would enable the service to come back safely and adapt to any new regulations as they come into place and allow the expansion to be people centred.

District	Membership	Family Swim	Adult Swim	Child Swim
East Devon	£39.75	Not Available	£5.20	£4.30
Mid Devon*	No data	£11.00	£4.30	£3.00
North Devon	£37.95	Not Available	£4.80	£3.70
South Hams	£40.00	Not Available	£8.00	None
Teignbridge	£37.80	£13.80	£5.10	£2.80
Torridge	£40.00	Not Available	£8.00	None
West Devon	£40.00	Not Available	£8.00	None

*\*Not currently offering memberships.*

Councillor Moore asked a point of clarification and whether the £15 was a one off fee or paid every month.

Members of the scheme have not been able to enjoy the benefits of their membership and so their monthly subscriptions are currently frozen. New Members could join for £15 per month.

**3. Councillor Diana Moore** - Riverside Pool and Leisure Centre Refurbishment -What was the energy performance certificate rating for the Riverside before the Council works and what will it be once work is completed?

It was important to recognise that whilst this was not specifically a Covid related question, but as a valid technical question, he suggested it would be more appropriate to seek a response from the relevant officer. In this instance he would

ask the Director Transformation to offer a full technical response separately in writing to Councillor Moore.

Supplementary Question and Response.

Whether a commitment for the Riverside Leisure Centre to be energy neutral by 2022 and carbon neutral by 2023 could be offered.

He was unable to make such a commitment as building works were still ongoing, but there was a commitment to maximise the efficiency of all such work that is undertaken with regard to our leisure construction projects, and those with a potentially large environmental impact.

The Director Transformation contributed to the response and advised that at this point they could not make a commitment on either of the matters raised in the question, but she would forward a detailed email to Councillor Moore and outline the steps being taken in terms of the refurbishment and efforts to improve the energy efficiency of the building.

**4. Councillor Diana Moore** -What measures physical and technical measures are being considered to improve this rating?

The Director Transformation continued to offer the following response and advised that the energy efficiency was relatively poor, in part to do with the fundamental construction, the age of the building and the building regulations and standards complied with at the time of the original construction. Where it has been possible to do so, we have instructed the contractors and designers working with us on the refurbishment to make improvements up to and above current building regulations and standards where it is applicable to the fabric of the building. The building will be more energy efficient than it has ever been, because of the steps that we have been taking, through discussion with the Portfolio Holder and the Leader's instruction through the construction and in the way that we will operate the building. The previous contract was let many years ago and had not provided any operator incentives to consider energy efficiency because the Council directly paid the utility costs as part of the historic contractual agreement. Now in direct management of the building, the Council will be able to focus on this and had already started to work on all of the buildings in terms to assess any energy inefficiency. Training had also been undertaken with staff, who have transferred from the previous leisure operator to make clear the expectations and priorities of the business, including energy, the visitor experience and health and safety as the key priorities. She hoped to be able to give further information and the assurances sought by Councillor Moore as soon as possible.

**5. Councillor Diana Moore** - Playing Pitch Strategy -As well as discussion with the national governing bodies what engagement has there been will there be with professional, and amateur clubs and the wider community in the playing pitch strategy review?

We are following the Sport England methodology which requires authorities to gather a range of views from stakeholders, communities and community sport clubs to inform our 'assessment of need'. We will be surveying formal sports clubs for their views and to gather information about the context of their club such as membership, location and future plans, and then facilitate engagement sessions with other stakeholders such as education providers and wider community groups to seek their views. It is a way that the Council has proven that it works effectively. Although not directly related to the Playing Pitch strategy, he provided an example of a local

football team and users of a pitch in Pinhoe who were successfully consulted over its resurfacing and their and community users contribution to the process. The Council was committed to the consultation process.

Supplementary question and response.

A view on playing pitches was included in the consultation a couple of years ago and in the light of the necessity for this review and additional cost, whether the Portfolio Holder had any thoughts on the approach taken at the time because it encompassed such a broad scope of issues and was very unwieldy.

Although unable to comment on historic consultation, he would be involved with overseeing the consultation, looking at both the practicality and how the consultation would be delivered and use his experience to ensure that the consultation would be meaningful and useful to the process.

- 6. Councillor Diana Moore** - The governance of the Sport England programme has been reviewed and accountabilities set out to other bodies, please can you set out the accountabilities within the Council?

The Sport England Local Delivery Pilot was another effective example of this Council's collaborative working and as such was not directly governed by the Council's constitution. The Delivery Pilot status was awarded to Exeter and Cranbrook as a place, with the Council as the host organisation for the partnership. A formal contract was in place with Sport England and the Council. The Director of the Pilot was accountable for ensuring that the funding is deployed as set out in the various submissions and delivery plans agreed with Sport England. Within the partnership governance the political oversight sits within his role as the Portfolio for Leisure & Physical Activity as well as being a member of the Partnership Oversight Group which included the Leader.

Supplementary question and response.

The Council is acting as the accountable body for the Sport England programme, so in referencing a risk flagged at the Audit & Governance Committee in relation to the delivery of the programme and the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, she felt it was really important that Members understood how the accountability for governance and delivery. She had asked on three occasions for a copy of the Governance review setting out the arrangements and changes to the arrangements but had received no response. She made a formal request for a copy of the review and new governance arrangements, under the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (100F), and suggested that other Members may also wish to see that detail.

An assurance was given that the request would be responded to appropriately.

- 7. Councillor Jemima Moore** -What assessment of the carbon emissions during construction of St Sidwell's Point have been undertaken and can these be published?

Although this was more of a technical question, he was able to provide the detail which included that the principle of the building design was to use technology to provide a healthy building environment. There were reductions in energy usage by 70% and water usage by 50% against industry best practice standards. These combined technologies would have a significant reduction on carbon emissions and running costs year on year.

Passivhaus Certification process was identified as the leading certification and control process, which would ensure that the building design will achieve the exceptional and ambitious outcomes required in energy efficiency of the building.

In high level terms the magnitude of annual energy and carbon savings from implementing the Healthy Building/Passivhaus Strategy when compared to a normal pool will be equivalent to any of the following:

- annual carbon storage of 105 hectare (or 250 football pitches) of managed woodland or
- annual emissions from 750 average UK cars (commuting 40 miles a day) or
- total annual energy consumption of 350 average UK 4 person households or
- enough to make 140 million cups of tea a year

With regard to the construction stage, there were a range of carbon reducing measures being taken, by Kier, due to our requirements in the contract and their own carbon reduction policies. Although the list was not exclusive it included:-

- recycling ground materials to reduce journeys and wastage,
- reusing timber wastage on site,
- only using sustainably sourced timber,
- employing local supply chain where viable, and
- ensuring the use of carbon reducing activities such as video meetings, (before they had to) waste management and ore.

The site hoarding was also a good practical example of this, and the hoarding material was recyclable plastic and as it is hired so it will be reused on another project when removed.

Carbon as a currency is still in development for the industry (and making progress) and in the future we expect to see goods and services having a carbon value, known at that time. That calculation is therefore not fully available for individual tasks during construction but is wrapped into high level calculations for materials and goods. Given the attention that St Sidwell's Point has been attracting from developers and construction providers, we are clearly leading the way with our ambitions to create a state of the art, low energy (and low carbon) public facility.

Councillor Jemima Moore hoped that as the Council was setting a precedent with this building that at some point in the future we would be able to publish the carbon footprint detail as that would set a really good standard for other developments.

#### Questions from Non-Committee Members

1. **Councillor Trish Oliver** - How are the re-opening of leisure centres embracing safety issues during Covid times, and what would trigger any need to close down if rates of infection rise rapidly locally?

He was proud to be overseeing the development of the Council run, Leisure Services and he welcomed the new colleagues transferring into the Council. The new service will have an ethos, which was centre user lead, with people, the primary focus of the service. How it will embrace safety issues though, begins with the same careful thought that has gone into every aspect of the way the service will be run from a safety and a customer perspective.

All government and industry guidelines were being followed: each centre has had a detailed risk assessment and mitigation actions are specific to each centre - following

the key themes of ventilation, social distancing, personal hygiene, cleanliness and training and awareness. Expert technical and industry advice has been utilised to ensure that the facilities are opened in the safest possible way. We may need to close a facility or an activity within it if any of the technical mitigation activities fail, for example the new carbon monoxide monitors indicate a deterioration in air flow, or customers do not comply with the required behaviours. We may also have to consider a closure should we identify staff with symptoms requiring a test as well as any formal notification from the NHS Test, Track and Trace service that indicates a potential outbreak, two or more confirmed cases, originating in one of the centres. Should a Local Outbreak Management Plan come into force in Exeter we would anticipate closing centres as part of local restrictions.

- 2. Councillor Alys Martin** (*was not in attendance*) - In relation to the Wonford development, has COVID-19 affected the funding of the Sports England Local Delivery Pilot?

No, Sport England have continued to fund all 12 pilot areas throughout the pandemic and have been extremely supportive of how the Local Delivery Pilot team was deployed to support the community response to lockdown. Sport England have invited us to bid for an extension of core funding (this pays for the LDP team and the evaluation programme) to 2025. Whilst we are awaiting the formal response to our application the feedback so far is very positive and we are anticipating a successful outcome of the bid.

- 3. Councillor Michael Mitchell**- Can the Portfolio Holder elaborate regarding how the initial request from Parkwood for £1m in regard to the termination of its contract for the leisure service was reduced by the council to £355k?

The detail of the negotiating process and outcome remains commercially sensitive and confidential. However, the swift decision-making of the Council in relation to the insourcing of the services and the clear direction provided at a political level to ensure that this happened together with the experience, knowledge and skills of the Director and her team were probably the defining factors in enabling this positive conclusion.

Supplementary question and response.

If there was a view outside of the legal parameters of the contract on the attitude taken by Parkwood Leisure when they had asked for a sum greater than the actual achievement of the contract.

The Portfolio Holder advised that he had not been party to the negotiations made.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holders for commenting on their large areas of work and reminded Members of the brief offered by the Scrutiny Programme Board to focus on Covid-19 related matters and more latterly the recovery period. The Scrutiny Programme Board would continue to discuss how these meetings will go ahead in the future.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.00 pm

Chair

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## Strategic Scrutiny Committee - 19 November 2020 Leader's Update in relation to COVID-19 Recovery.

### Introduction

Members will be aware that I presented the city's Covid-19 recovery plan 'Building Exeter Back Better' to Executive on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020. The plan is to be presented to full Council in December. The plan will work with other plans – including those at a regional and national level – and allow the city to clearly articulate, with one voice, what it intends to do to facilitate recovery and what support (financial or otherwise) the city needs in order to implement and deliver these actions.

In addition the corporate plan has been updated to emphasise the importance of recovery as a strategic priority. Our contribution to the work of the seven recovery groups and initiatives outlined in that plan will be critical for an effective recovery from the ongoing pandemic.

As a council it is imperative that we also recognise the way we operate and all of our services have a direct and indirect impact on the recovery. This will involve us changing the way we do things, re-prioritising, re-allocating resources and ensuring that we do everything possible to facilitate the recovery for our businesses and citizens as they face wide-ranging impacts on their lives and the consequences of a severe recession.

This update focuses on what we have doing on those areas in my remit to ensure that recovery is at the core of what we do. It illustrates how we put recovery at the forefront of our thinking and use our influence and all the powers and tools at our disposal to limit the impact on the city.

<b>Exeter City Living (ECL)</b>	<p>Exeter City Living's (ECL) third year business case received full council approval in July 2020 and the Company has been busy delivering against the ambitions contained within this.</p> <p>As we move into a likely double-dip recession and a potential stall in the development and property markets, the role of ECL has become even more critical in instilling confidence and continuing to deliver the properties that are needed in the city to the highest environmental standards.</p> <p>Since the last Strategic Scrutiny Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020, ECL activity has included:</p> <p><b>Governance Review of Exeter City Group and Board</b></p> <p>An independent review of the governance of the Exeter City Group provided a comprehensive report and recommendations which has been enacted. The Board has been expanded to include new Directors and a new Shareholder Representative has been appointed (Karime Hassan, Exeter City Council)</p>
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**New Build Developments:**

***Anthony Rd***

The completion and sale of this 3-home development to the Housing Revenue Account as new council homes.

***Thornpark Rise (Hockings Green)***

The completion and pending sale of 9 new homes on this site to the Housing Revenue Account as new council homes. New tenants are scheduled to move in next month.

***Bovemoors Lane***

Ongoing progress towards the completion of 10 new council homes for the Housing Revenue Account. Completion of the homes are expected in late December 2020 (dependent on Covid-19 impacts).

***Hamlin Gardens***

ECL are developing this site on behalf of the Housing Revenue Account to deliver 21 new council homes. Works were scheduled to commence in September but have been delayed due to Covid-19 and the need to secure a road closure notice and S278 works. Skinner Construction are due to commence in January 2021 as soon as they have finished building Bovemoors Lane site.

***Vaughan Rd (Whipton Gardens)***

The 92 new homes on this site are scheduled to commence in early 2021. 60% of the homes will be affordable and developed for the Housing Revenue Account. Site Hoardings have been erected and demolition works will commence before the end of 2020.

***Clifton Hill***

ECL have submitted a planning application to redevelop this site for homes, subject to planning permission works on this site will commence in spring 2021.

***Wonford Health & Wellbeing Centre***

Work continues on the community-led design of this facility. Progress has been hampered by Covid-19 but the project is being advanced.

**Pipeline of other Development Sites**

Project planning has been ongoing for a number of new development opportunities and this work continues.

**One Public Estate Funding**

ECL have been working up submissions for funding via One Public Estate (OPE) for Land Release Funding to assist bringing forward sites for development that have viability

	<p>challenges. The results of the submission will not be determined until early 2021.</p> <p><b>Business Plans for new Exeter City Group Subsidiaries</b></p> <p>ECL have been instructed to provide initial Business Plans to examine the feasibility of establishing a Consultancy Company, Retrofit Company and Residential Property Company. This work is underway and the findings will be concluded in May 2021.</p> <p><b>Innovation Funding UK Success</b></p> <p>Working with the Housing Revenue Account and City Science, ECL were successful in securing funding from The Sustainable Innovation Fund – a 2-phase funding opportunity for innovative projects with a focus on decarbonisation. The funding will support a project to use a Smart meter Enabled Thermal Efficiency Rating (SMETER) algorithm to help inform priorities for retrofit and identify how a Heat as a Service Model could provide a sustainable and scalable approach to accelerating energy efficiency improvements.</p>
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<p><b>Liveable Exeter Transformational Housing Programme</b></p>	<p>The Liveable Exeter programme has continued to progress, despite Covid-19, with work progressing on key projects including Water Lane and St David’s and on policy/evidence base required to underpin delivery of the programme. An application for further Garden community funding was submitted to Homes England in September and an outcome on the bid is currently awaited.</p> <p>The Liveable Exeter Place Board have been instrumental in assisting the development and coordination of the city’s recovery plan; “Building Exeter Back Better” and this has now been approved by Executive, with presentation to Council scheduled for December 2020.</p> <p>Liveable Exeter, and associated projects, are included within the recovery plan as key interventions through which the city can recover from the effects of covid-19 and the programme is expected to continue to gather momentum in coming months, supporting the delivery of key corporate objectives and the realisation of the 2040 Vision.</p>
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<p><b>Strategic Finance</b></p>	<p>In July, Council considered and approved an emergency budget to address the impact of Covid-19 on the financial position of the Council. A mixture of additional grant support from Government, in-year reductions in spend, repurposing of earmarked reserves and technical accounting adjustments enabled the Council to offset a reduction of £11.2 million and deliver a balanced budget.</p>
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	<p>Since then, the Government has announced an income compensation scheme in respect of sales, fees and charges income and provided a further £515,000 in emergency grant to support councils. The first compensation claim under the sales, fees and charges scheme totalled £1.5 million.</p> <p>Whilst some of this additional funding will undoubtedly be required to offset further losses of income arising from a second lockdown, as a result of the Council's decisive action in July, the Council is able to use much of the additional funding to protect services in 2021-22. The Medium Term Financial Plan still shows a need to deliver reductions in the region of £6 million, but the extra funding available will support the Council in delivering a balanced budget next year, whilst allowing further time to ensure that the decisions taken to address the reductions are properly evaluated.</p> <p>However, we have started work immediately on identifying options to deliver the required reductions and I have instructed the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Environment to work with the other Portfolio Holders, the Director Finance, Director Transformation and Corporate Manager Executive Support to deliver a presentation to me outlining the options available to me to address the MTFP shortfall of £6m.</p>
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<p><b>Commercial and property assets (includes redevelopment of Paris Street/Sidwell Street, Exeter City Centre)</b></p>	<p>The pandemic has inevitably presented challenges for the management of our property portfolio as we have continued to support businesses and traders in the city:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of rent deferral agreements with business tenants to ease cashflow of closed businesses</li> <li>• Establishment and management of further concessionary terms by negotiation limiting risk of early business closures</li> <li>• Continuing to keep Exeter Business Centre open for its occupants</li> <li>• Working with operational services and building managers to reopen facilities safely</li> <li>• Ongoing management maintenance and compliance contracts to minimise expenditure and wasted attendance</li> <li>• Delivery of in-year savings to minimise current financial year expenditure</li> <li>• Progression of the Smartgrid and solar field project so as not to lose momentum on this crucial carbon saving project</li> <li>• Continuing to liaise with business tenants to assist their recovery plans</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progressing the CityPoint development project</li> <li>• Operating a quick and simple procedure for outdoor tables and chairs licences for food and drink operators in the City.</li> <li>• Working with Exeter City Living to bring forward identified sites for redevelopment</li> <li>• Identification and resourcing of substantial capital investment programme to tackle condition survey backlog and bring city assets back into good condition</li> </ul> <p>We have been managing commercial rental income since the pandemic broke out and can confirm that over that period we have managed to collect around 79% of rental income from the estate. Rent deferrals and concessions have been agreed with tenants by negotiation to seek to secure a sustainable future for businesses struggling in these difficult economic times. The analysis of this work is set out below:-</p>
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Commercial Rent Analysis at 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2020			
	March quarter	June quarter	Sept quarter
Balance of invoice debt for the quarter	£229,000	£185,000	£433,000
Position in relation to 9 <sup>th</sup> October figure	£47,000	£22,000	£267,000
Amount of revenue income received for the quarter	£1,111,000	£1,155,000	£907,000
% of income received for the quarter	83%	86%	68%
Amount that there is a reasonable prospect of recovering	£100-125,000	£65,000	£300,000
Amount at high risk and likely to be bad debt which cannot be recovered	£104,000	£120,000	£130/150,000
Currently anticipated ECC write offs	£100-150,000	£100 – 130,000	£100-150,000

<b>Strategic Communication</b>	<p>Coronavirus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a single reliable source of information during COVID-19</li> <li>• Community campaigns included targeted metrics to banner campaigns on refuse lorries</li> <li>• Relaying key information with partners at Local Resilience Forum, Public Health England and Cabinet Office</li> <li>• Leading on communications for Council service issues around coronavirus</li> <li>• Administrating the Exeter Coronavirus Updates Facebook Group, which has more than 7,0000</li> </ul>
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	<p>member - during the first lockdown it averaged 300,000 post views a month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading on the public promotion of Exeter Community Wellbeing support hub</li> <li>• Highlighting community support activities during the crisis</li> </ul> <p>Recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with the Liveable Exeter Place Board on the promotion of the city's Recovery Plan</li> <li>• Recording a series of videos with recovery programme leads from the public and private sector</li> <li>• Acting as the main source of information and publicity for business grants in partnership with the business community</li> <li>• Acting as the main source of information and publicity for community grants</li> <li>• Leading on the communications around a safe and welcoming city centre, including sponsored content and campaigns</li> <li>• Working through Visit Exeter on national campaigns welcoming people back to the city when it is safe to do so</li> </ul> <p>Strategic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with my portfolio holders in promoting policy</li> <li>• Creating a range of content – media releases, video, pictures, graphics - for our own website, social media channels and for the media</li> <li>• Working with our partners on Exeter City Futures to promote Net Zero Carbon Exeter and a range of workshop/recovery initiatives, such as the city centre</li> <li>• Working with strategic partners including Liveable Exeter, Exeter Live Better the BID, Princesshay, the University of Exeter, Exeter College, Exeter Airport, Premiership Rugby and the Exeter Chiefs, the Cultural sector and Exeter College to promote the wider shared interests of Exeter</li> <li>• Live streaming all Council meetings</li> <li>• Producing a weekly newsletter with key information and updates for around 8,000 subscribers to our news service</li> <li>• Dealing with all media enquiries</li> <li>• Monitoring social media</li> </ul>
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	<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keeping all staff updated on all issues relating to coronavirus</li><li>• Providing all staff with key information on homeworking, health and wellbeing and occupational development</li><li>• Producing the weekly staff newsletter, which has an open-rate of up to 90 per cent</li><li>• Instigating a monthly virtual Exchange</li></ul>
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## STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -19 November 2020

### CLLR RACHEL SUTTON – DEPUTY LEADER & PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR NET ZERO EXETER 2030

#### Update on Portfolio Holder Priorities in relation to COVID-19 Recovery.

<b>Net Zero Exeter</b>	<p>Officers of the City Council and Exeter City Futures (ECF) has participated in a number of the City recovery groups. The Net Zero Exeter 2030 goals were confirmed as a core principle of Exeter's Covid-19 Recovery Plan. Each of the seven recovery groups considered and put forward actions that support the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan and included in the City Recovery Plan.</p> <p>ECF held the Net Zero 2030 Open Conversation online, with 100 people attending, with input from businesses, politicians, community organisations and residents, which confirmed Exeter's positive appetite for the Net Zero Plan early in Covid-19 lockdown. During lockdown ECF also held discussions on issues around local food &amp; logistics, with plans to develop a local food plan for the city.</p> <p>ECF launched an interactive lockdown map in May 2020, inviting residents to highlight positive changes that they have seen, what they would like to keep, and their ideas about how Exeter could be improved for life after lockdown. To-date over 600 responses have been recorded on the interactive map. The data is available for public use and by Exeter City Futures as a tool with Devon County Council about how this can continue to inform their transport and travel measures.</p> <p>Led by the University of Exeter an informal group has been established working on city green recovery. Attended by the Director for Net Zero and City Management, this group aims to map Covid-19 recovery and net zero plans of key city organisations against the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan's goals and tracks building usage data. They will identify how Exeter is moving towards the net zero target, where carbon is being saved, where best practice can be shared, where there are gaps and opportunities to do more to meet net zero, and share calls to actions for other organisations to focus their efforts for greatest return on their investment in reducing carbon emissions. Once time and resources allow, other opportunities will worked on, such as shared travel, building and land use, energy sourcing and other procurement could be possible.</p> <p><u>Skills agenda (including low carbon construction &amp; retrofit skills)</u> Exeter Works</p> <p>As part of the activity for the Business Support strand of the Exeter Recovery Plan, the Exeter Skills Advisory Group, discussed actions required to respond to the pandemic, particularly at the end of the Furlough scheme in late October. An online portal was deemed most appropriate, with all relevant and appropriate local</p>
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offers needed to be brought together to support individuals seeking employment or re-training, and for businesses that want to re/up-skill their staff or want to support people through the redundancy process.

Exeter Works <https://exeterworks.org/> is a joint initiative with Exeter Chamber of Commerce and was launched 22 October 2020, as part of Exeter Chamber's ReFocus virtual seminars.

#### Kickstart

Exeter City Council are acting as a Gateway Organisation for the Government Kickstart scheme.

Kickstart is a 6 month placement for a minimum of 25 hrs per week, for a young person aged 16-24 who is currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Exeter City Council will receive £300 per young person it places into a Kickstart placement, which will fund a New Kickstart co-ordinator post. The business employing the young person must be able to develop the young person's skills and experience, including:

- support to look for long-term work, including career advice and setting goals
- support with CV and interview preparations
- supporting the participant with basic skills, such as attendance, timekeeping and teamwork

The first batch of Kickstart placements were submitted to DWP w/c 26 October, with an expected 4 week turnaround.

#### General

Digital Skills was identified as one of the key asks in the City recovery plan. There is some additional work to do around the 'journey / life cycle' of digital skills – the basics (those needed just for everyday life) through to Digital and Tech careers. This is a piece of work that cuts across every part of the City Council and all of our customers. The City Council are an active partner of the Heart of the South West Digital Skills Partnership.

The Exeter Skills Advisory Group is working the HOSW LEP to ensure that priorities for Exeter in relation to employment and skills are addressed in the LEP Skills Strategy, and the Devon County Council Skills Recovery groups.

#### Building Greater Exeter

Due to Lockdown Building Greater Exeter has created a number of assets to support schools in promoting careers in construction. These include the online 'Education Hub', which offers a wide selection of engaging activities and educational resources for different age groups; video assets to promote different careers in construction and fact sheets. They also launched their own YouTube channel to share videos produced by them and their partners.

Since the spring, they have been attending a number of virtual events including a resettlement fair for military service leavers, a

conference for Career Leads from secondary schools across the SW and an apprenticeship show.

They are in the process of mapping out the major construction projects across Greater Exeter, so they can determine the number of trainee and apprenticeship workplace opportunities in order to help connect employers to the right people.

Devon Wide

Climate Emergency Response Group and Net Zero Task Force  
Both the Climate Emergency Response Group and The Net Zero Task Force have continued to meet. The groups have sought to ensure that the Devon and Exeter Recovery plans have green recovery embedded into them from the start. The Draft Interim Devon Carbon Plan is due to be put out to consultation by DCC in December through to January.

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## STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 19 NOVEMBER 2020

### CLLR FOALE –PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR TRANSFORMATION & ENVIRONMENT

#### Update on Portfolio Holder Priorities in relation to COVID-19 Recovery.

<b>Environmental Health and Community Safety</b>	<p>Environmental Health and Community Safety (EHCS) is a wide ranging service covering a number of statutory functions including food safety, health and safety, pollution control, licensing, private sector housing, financial assistance, nuisance, public health, anti-social behaviour and community safety. In addition there are a number of corporate functions undertaken such as corporate health and safety, equalities and diversity, safeguarding and emergency planning.</p> <p>The focus of this scrutiny update is primarily on Covid-19 recovery, however the City is still in the emergency response phase of the pandemic, at the same time as trying to recover. We have therefore included incident response and the impacts of Covid-19 on service demand, as well as recovery.</p> <p>The EHCS Service has been at the forefront of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, leading on behalf of the Council on a multi-agency basis with respect to Emergency Planning, Outbreak Control, Monitoring, enforcement and compliance. Across the service demand is up by 13% this year so far.</p> <p>The service is working with Devon County Council, the University of Exeter, Exeter College, Public Health England, Exeter City Council and the Police in tracking positive cases constantly to be able to respond quickly, through regular meetings. Staff have worked hard during September and October in response to rising numbers in the city and continue to support local businesses meet the national restrictions. Since April, the service has responded to 300 complaints and requests for advice from business specifically relating to Covid-19 and conducted 250 compliance visits.</p> <p>The food safety inspection programme has been severely disrupted by the pandemic due to businesses being closed, needing to protect vulnerable client groups and officer resource being needed to concentrate on Covid-19 regulation compliance and health and safety enforcement. The service has followed emergency guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency and has prioritised new unrated premises and those business that pose a higher risk for inspection. However it is projected that the service will be approximately 300 food inspections behind schedule at the end of the financial year, which is a position mirrored by all local authorities across the country.</p> <p>Private Sector Housing work is up by 55% year on year, although proactive inspections will be paused again during the second lockdown (between June and End of October, around 230 proactive inspections of Houses in Multiple Occupation were</p>
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undertaken; much of this work taking longer due to controls in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

There has been an increased amount of case work on illegal evictions as a result of restrictions imposed by Coronavirus regulations.

Work around information provision to landlords and tenants has continued throughout, with four Covid-19 specific communications being sent out and the hosting of two live webinars on the subject (each attended by over 100 landlords). Virtual Renting Minefield events have been planned and are taking place the week beginning 16 November 2020, which will consist of ten presentations and a live webinar, all with Covid-19 specific information. At the time of writing this update over 175 private landlords were booked to partake with this number expected rise

Since the first lockdown, and continuing throughout the restrictions, work around noise nuisance has increased significantly and was up 85% on year to the end of October. It is important to note that this increase has been seen in all wards and is not a 'student' problem. In fact, much of the increase was seen over the months when students were not in the city in large numbers.

Partnership work with University of Exeter and the Police has continued involving staff from across the service. We continue the successful model that has been deployed since 2015 by working with our partners for the two-week period in September when students returned to the city. During this period we worked up to 1am every day with two officers on patrol. We visited over 150 active noise complaints out of hours, of which 40% were not student related.

Disabled Facilities Grants work has continued throughout the lockdown and restrictions. This important work adapting properties to prevent hospital and care service admissions has seen over £324,000 spent so far this year, including over 60 stairlifts fitted in 2020 (an increase of 130% on 2019 and 270% on 2018). In addition over £140,000 has been spent on other matters under the financial assistance policy which have seen hazards removed and fuel poverty reduced.

The Licensing Team have continued to issue licence applications and renewals, and following changes in legislation, have been able to hold remote committee hearings. Assisting with small business grants and providing advice to taxi operators to help them continue to operate, the Team continue to look at ways of facilitating businesses and minimising the impact of changes in licensing legislation. In addition changes have been approved by Licensing Committee in response to the revised Statutory Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Standards.

Work has continued in other key areas throughout such as proactive inspections of authorised processes, environmental

monitoring and statutory consultations. The pests control team have been particularly busy with demand upon their professional services currently up 22% this year.

It has been important for the service to support a strong Community Safety Partnership and ensure that the work and meetings of the partnership continue. The service has worked on a multi-agency basis to monitor key community safety data in the city which has included hate crime, domestic and sexual violence and abuse and anti-social behaviour. In response to such trends being identified, work has been conducted with other partners as appropriate.

The Community Safety Partnership held a virtual conference on hate crime and preventing radicalisation coinciding with Hate Crime Awareness Week 2020 on 13 October 2020. The event included two speakers (one ex right wing extremist, one ex Islamic extremist) discussing the methods used by extremist groups to groom vulnerable young people. A wide range of professionals, elected members and voluntary took part in the event.

Following a government award of a £58,516 Compliance and Enforcement Grant, work has been conducted to draw up a plan to deploy Safer City Ambassadors. We will be seeking to deploy 4 such Ambassadors from the start of December to act as a visible presence on the High Street and Neighbourhood Shopping Areas with the aim of providing guidance and support to businesses and the general public through engagement education and encouragement on Covid-19 requirements, with the aim of creating a safe and welcoming city. It is important to highlight that in line with government guidance, the deployment of Safer City Ambassadors in the City will be to engage, educate and encourage and they will not have any enforcement responsibilities. Business related compliance work will continued to be dealt with be experienced Environmental Health personnel.

During lockdown expertise from the Business Regulation Team has been drawn upon to assist with the ongoing need to produce consistent risk assessments for implementation across all council services. Exeter City Council risk assessments have been completed for the following work areas:

- Office workers
- Visiting Officers
- Outdoor Workers
- MRF
- Occupational Therapy
  
- Corn Exchange
- Custom House
- Matford Centre & Sunday Market
- Guildhall
- RAMM
- Topsham Ferry

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourist Information Centre</li> <li>• Red Coat Guides</li> <li>• Underground Passages</li> </ul> <p>The implementation of these risk assessments has also involved the review of a number of existing risk assessments in work areas where there is a risk of transmission of the virus.</p> <p>There has been a high demand for assistance on health and safety related issues across the council during the lockdown and reopening of customer facing services. The Principal Health and Safety Officer post was advertised and interviews were held. The post was offered to a candidate who subsequently withdrew, consequently an existing member of staff from another team has been seconded into the team as a Health &amp; Safety Officer to meet demand and provide resilience.</p> <p>A significant amount of work has been done to support the opening of the Leisure Centres. This has involved health and safety training of Centre Managers, assistance with the production of day to day risk assessments, pre-opening inspection of the facilities and assistance with equipment moves to ensure this was carried out in a safe manner. The COVID-19 risk assessment has been completed and there is supplemental work around consultation and implementation as services reopen. Due to the recent lockdown this gives an opportunity to provide further training to those members of staff who have not been furloughed and to carry out building compliance issues such as the fire and legionella risk assessments.</p> <p>An internal track and trace system was set up to enable the Corporate Health &amp; Safety Team to provide advice and assistance to Managers. We continue to provide advice in conjunction with HR on the issues relating to self-isolation of staff and mitigating measures to ensure that spread of the virus is minimised.</p> <p>The Exeter Safety Advisory Group continues to meet to ensure a consistent multi-agency approach to any planned events. Unfortunately most planned events have been cancelled at a late stage following lockdown announcements, although there has been ongoing support to provide event organisers with clear information on restrictions.</p>
<p><b>Car Parking</b></p>	<p>Car Parks have remained largely open during the COVID period. Social distancing reminders, one way systems at pinch-points such as pay-stations and cashless payment options have all ensured sites remain safe and operational.</p> <p>Mary Arches Street was closed for a number of months as the adjacent Guildhall and Harlequins car parks could easily cope with the number of customers wishing to park. As demand grew then Mary Arches was re-opened.</p>

Income projections were reviewed in the light of the initial lockdown announcement and a revised emergency budget adopted. These projections were based on achieving a reduced percentage of income across the four quarters of the financial year; 5% of original budgeted Q1 income, 30% of Q2, 70% of Q3 and 90% of Qtr4.

Performance was better than predicted as indicated in the table below:-

Month	Original Budget	Emergency Budget	Actual Income	% of Original
April	633,545	31,677	6,747	1%
May	665,000	33,250	21,117	3%
June	678,064	33,903	128,915	19%
Qtr 1 Total	1,976,609	98,830	156,779	8%
July	736,796	221,039	397,700	54%
August	755,362	226,609	479,134	63%
September	708,283	212,485	462,917	65%
Qtr 2 Total	2,200,441	660,133	1,339,751	61%
October	721,048	504,734	517,666	72%

Projections for the remainder of the year are now being reviewed following the second lockdown. In addition, the longer term assumption that car park income will return to 90% once we are out of a pandemic situation may be optimistic given the expected rise in people working from home and our own ambitions to reduce car use in the city. A sustained return to 75% during 2021/22, which might be a reasonable estimate based on the 72% achieved in October, would result in a £2.1M reduction in pre-COVID budgeted annual car park income. Options are currently being worked through to bring income back up towards previous levels.

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## STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -19 November 2020

### CLLR BOB FOALE –PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR TRANSFORMATION & ENVIRONMENT

#### Finance Directorate Services – Work during Covid-19

<b>Medium Term Financial Plan</b>	
<b>MTFP</b>	This is covered in the Leader's Briefing under Strategic Finance.
<b>Exchequer Services</b>	
<b>Payment of suppliers</b>	<p>The prompt payment of suppliers has been critical during COVID-19. Since the outbreak all invoices have been paid on immediate payment terms, in order to support the cash-flow of the Council's suppliers and to help support their service continuity during and after the pandemic.</p> <p>The percentage of invoices paid within 30 days was 97.00% for the first six months of 2020/21, compared with 94.86% for the same period in 2019/20.</p>
<b>Accountancy Services</b>	
<b>COVID-19 Returns</b>	<p>To date, the team have submitted six monthly COVID-19 Returns to central government. The COVID-19 return captures the additional expenditure being incurred by the Council and the significant loss of income due to the pandemic. It is the key mechanism for continuing to draw the financial impact of COVID-19 to the attention of central government, in order to inform their emergency funding allocations and other financial support measures.</p> <p>Emergency funding of £1.895m has been awarded to Exeter. The latest return, submitted to MHCLG on 2 October, reports additional expenditure pressures of £3.166m and income losses of £7.387m (excluding council tax and NDR losses) for the General Fund. We are therefore reporting a significant shortfall and submission of these returns is therefore crucial to highlighting this to the government. The next return is due to be submitted by Friday 6 November.</p>
<b>Emergency budget</b>	<p>On 21 July 2020, Council approved an emergency budget for 2020/21 to help address the financial impact of COVID-19 and to ensure that the Council maintains a balanced budget, whilst maintaining the recommended minimum reserves level.</p> <p>The accountants will be reporting against the revised budget for 2020/21 and have recently completed Quarter 2 budget monitoring, which will be presented to Executive on 1 December 2020. Due to the extraordinary impact of COVID-19, the process of budget monitoring has become critical to understanding whether the assumptions built into the emergency budget have worsened or improved, in order to inform the future savings required or whether spending that has been held back can restart.</p>

<b>Sales, Fees &amp; Charges Compensation Scheme</b>	<p>On 2 July, the Secretary of State announced a new support measure to reimburse councils for income from sales, fees and charges that are irrecoverable due to the pandemic.</p> <p>The team submitted the first claim, covering income losses during April, May, June and July, on 29 September which totalled £1.5m.</p> <p>There are strict criteria for claiming irrecoverable income losses and it involved a significant amount of detailed work for the accountants to analyse; eligible income losses, offsetting savings in expenditure (by the respective income generating area) and whether the net losses are specifically due to Covid-19 restrictions (e.g. closure of facilities in accordance with Government guidance). Submission and accuracy of the claim is critical to payment of grant, which will have a significant positive impact on the financial position of the Council.</p>
<b>Closure of 2019/20 Accounts &amp; Audit</b>	<p>The Council's unaudited Statement of Accounts were published on the 31 July, a full month earlier than the Government's extended statutory deadline of 31 August.</p> <p>The deadline for the final audited accounts has been extended from 31 July to 30 November and the team is now assisting the external auditors with requests for information/evidence required in respect of the 2019/20 accounts. This is the first year that the audit will be undertaken virtually.</p>
<b>In-sourcing of Leisure</b>	<p>The team have assisted with the in-sourcing of leisure services in respect of its insurance arrangements, its new banking and payment facilities and VAT.</p> <p>With regards to VAT, it triggered a review of the Council's partial exemption status (ability to fully recover VAT paid by the Council) and the team have provided an extensive amount of financial data to an external VAT consultant in order to perform the review.</p>
<b>2021/22 Estimates</b>	<p>On the 14 September the Director Finance delivered a budget orientation presentation to Portfolio Holders, which set out the budget reductions required for 2021/22 – 2023/24 and Portfolio Holders are now working with their Directors to discuss opportunities to reduce spend and identify new income.</p>
<b>Procurement</b>	
<b>Background</b>	<p>Since its inception in October 2018, the Procurement Team has been supporting on a broad range of tendering activity supporting all areas of the Council. The work plan has a significant number of live and upcoming procurement projects on it, covering both renewal of existing contracts and new/ project related contracts.</p> <p>Since restrictions have been lifted, we have seen a significant increase in the activity against projects on the work plan with most projects which were previously paused having restarted.</p>

<p><b>Staff</b></p>	<p>Three members of the team were furloughed during the months of April-October with a mixture of full time and part time furlough arrangements in place as dictated by the workload,</p> <p>From 1<sup>st</sup> November the team are now all now back at work on a full time basis with the exception of the Procurement Apprentice who is on reduced hours due to the fact that many of the tasks associated with that role have ceased as a result of the team moving to full time remote working and the fact that we have changed the processes to accommodate this.</p>
<p><b>PPE</b></p>	<p>The Procurement Team have continued to manage the procurement of all PPE for the Council.</p> <p>The process has now been fine-tuned with a form now available on the intranet for Officers to place their orders.</p> <p>Supply routes have been established ensuring that we are benefitting from our access to the central government issued PPE where possible (via DCC). This PPE is available free of charge so we are accessing this rather than purchasing from other supplier wherever it is possible to do so.</p> <p>We have managed to agree a corporate supplier of reusable face masks from Devon Disability Collective.</p> <p>We continue to ensure that only those items agreed in line with the Corporate Health and Safety team are purchased.</p>
<p><b>Key challenges</b></p>	<p>Remote working – full review systems and processes has now been applied. Challenge remains with managing more junior member of staff who needs a level of support which is harder to manage remotely and the feeling of isolation which has been reported amongst the team. Before the present lockdown we were making the effort to meet in person once per month to retain some feeling of ‘team’ and we endeavour to hold team meetings via video conferencing so at least you are seeing each other.</p> <p>Workload – following the latest pipeline planning a large volume of projects have been identified. Planning is underway as to how we will adequately resource the support for these projects.</p>
<p><b>General</b></p>	<p>The previously reported pipeline planning work has now been embedded into our ongoing processes and we continue to consult Service Leads on a quarterly basis to enable us to prioritise the workload effectively.</p> <p>Following the changes in responsibility at SMB level, with some Service Leads moving into different directorates, we have made the necessary changes to our structure and how we split the areas we each support to align with the corporate changes.</p> <p>We have been keeping abreast of information as it is released with regard to the changes to Public Procurement Regulations which are anticipated post Brexit and will update our internal regulations and all Service Leads as required.</p>



**STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 19 NOVEMBER 2020**  
**CLLR EMMA MORSE - PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Update on Portfolio Holder Priorities in relation to COVID-19 Recovery.**

**Overall Service Position**

The service has continued to be provided during the Covid 19 pandemic with officers largely away from the civic centre although site visits have been taking place where necessary, with appropriate safety considerations. Most staff have continued to work from home but there has been some limited return to civic centre particularly when IT restrictions have necessitated and as agreed with the Director. Post and printing has continued to be needed at Civic centre but has been concentrated to a few staff across the service and done in short bursts and with restricted numbers within the Civic at any one time.

All staff have adapted to new practices using skype and zoom and the operation of Delegation Briefings and committee has continued well. Meetings with other agencies and agents have also been undertaken using available technology for meetings and for Planning Member Working Group (PMWG).

Strategic work on Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP) has ceased following the decision of East Devon District Council (EDDC) to cease their involvement but consideration is underway to look at ways in which non statutory joint working could benefit all authorities. Work is progressing on the development of Exeter's Local Plan with the new assistant service lead post about to be advertised for this team as agreed at Full Council in July, alongside the vacant Service Lead for City Development post.

**Planning Service**

After an initial fall in planning applications, this has now largely recovered to pre-Covid volumes although large applications and pre-apps are fewer than might be expected. Planning applications however do go in peaks and troughs so it is difficult to be clear as to the impact of covid. It is however known that some of the local planning and architectural firms did furlough staff during lockdown which might have had an impact. By comparison in terms of numbers of applications these are as follows compared to 2019.

**2019 & 2020 - pre and post-Covid volumes of applications received**

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Q1	349	327
Q2	312	310
Q3	328	334
Q4	338	

## 2019 & 2020 - pre and post-Covid volumes of applications determined

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	2019	2020
Q1	363	344
Q2	327	256
Q3	340	340
Q4	296	

From the above statistics, the main impact can be seen on determining applications during Q2. There is no obvious reason for this other than adapting to new working arrangements and use of single screen IT initially, which slowed down decision making until additional screens were made available to staff.

There have been no additional new measures introduced following those brought in during the last lockdown and no mass increase in take up of new measures although the health service has used the new options available to them. These allow for development by or on behalf of a local authority or health authority body for the purposes of preventing an emergency; reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of an emergency; and taking other action in connection with an emergency.

There is no application process, and health service bodies and local authorities who are not the planning authority are required only to notify the local planning authority. Thus far change of use of a hospital building for non- Covid use and changes to parking arrangements have been notified through this process.

The increased flexibility for pubs and cafes to operate temporarily as hot food takeaways requires no notification to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and it is known that several outlets have used this new permitted development right to continue trading.

### **Relaxations of existing hours restrictions for supermarket deliveries and working on building sites**

The government has asked local planning authorities to take a more relaxed approach to enforcing time restrictions on supermarket deliveries and construction work on building sites. A few such requests have been received for extending building site hours of operation and these are being considered in line with requirements for flexibility but also mindful of the possible impact on local residents amenity. Two requests have so far been allowed and one refused.

### **Changes in procedures for determining planning applications**

New ways of working for planning committee and delegation briefing are working using virtual methods and generally speaking work well. Planning applications going to committee have risen during

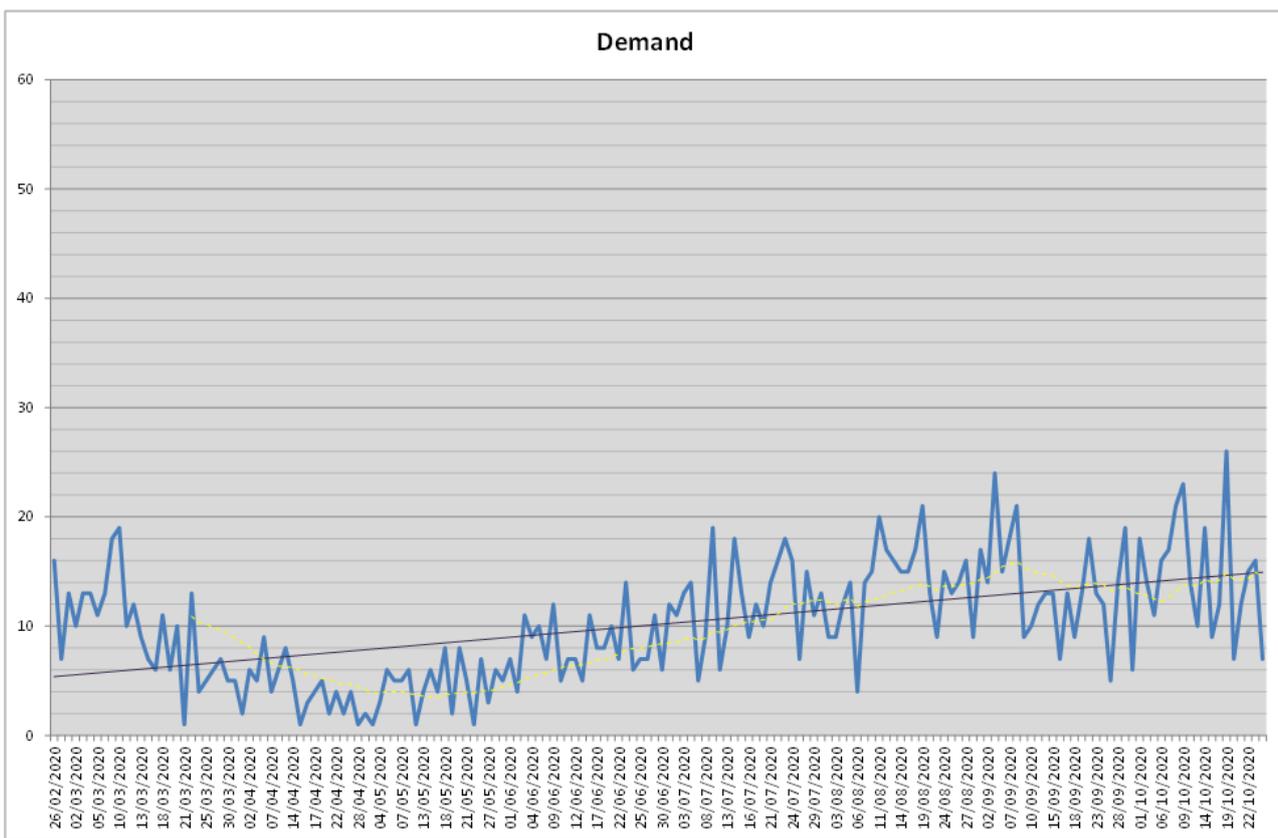
3<sup>rd</sup> quarter but there is no direct correlation to Covid for this.

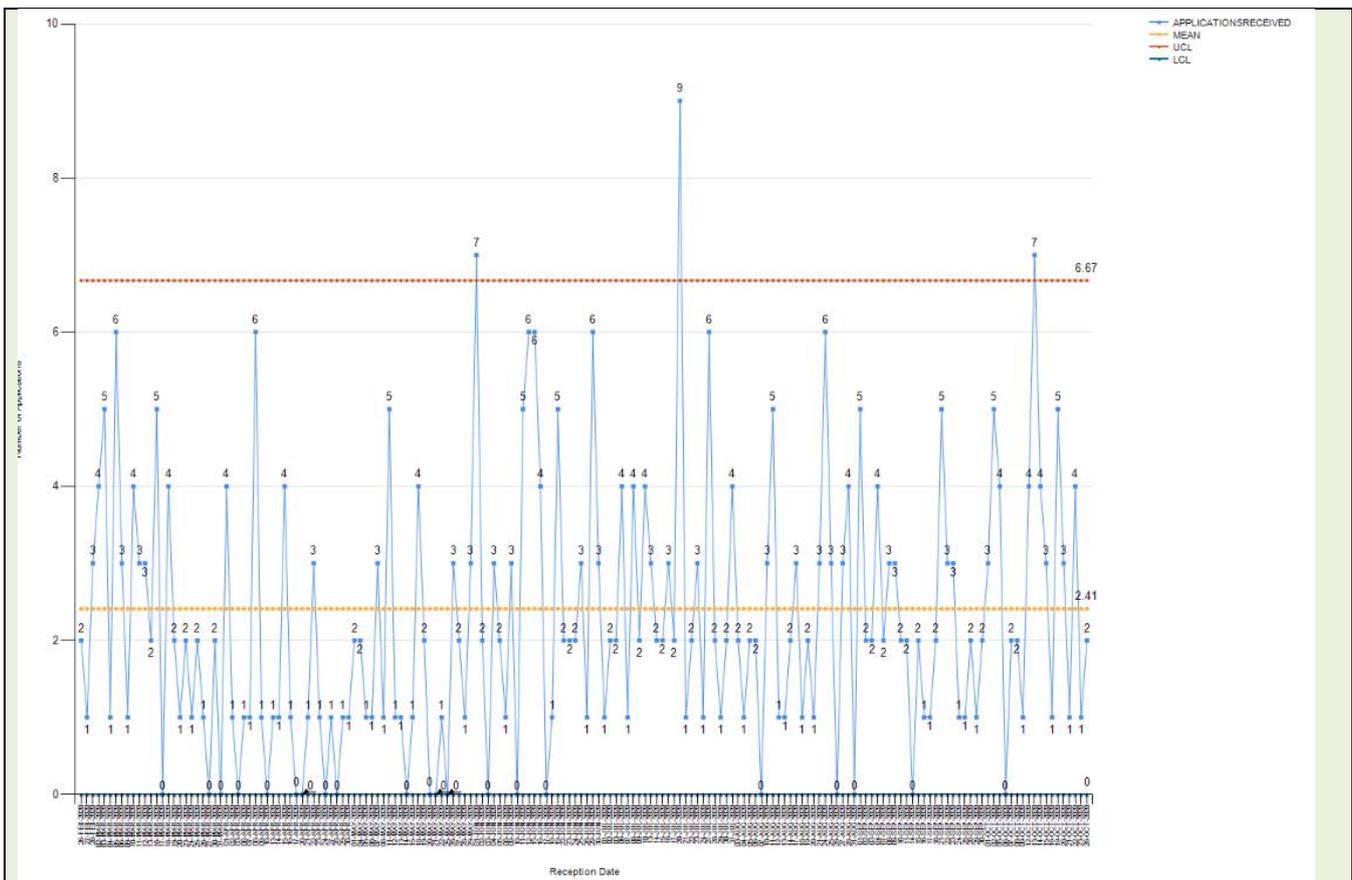
## Team Meetings

Teams are meeting virtually both as whole teams and through 1:1s and issues that are identified are actioned as appropriate. Staff are given regular updates on Covid and the impact this may have on working arrangements and the safety procedures for site visits remains in place and is working well. There are some limitations and this does affect access inside premises which has some impact, particularly on applications involving internal works, such as Listed Building applications. Agents and applicants, however, have been providing photos to identify works to assist with decision making.

## **Building Control & Land Charges**

Both Land Charges and Building Regulations application numbers are exceeding the average since the inevitable dip during lockdown. The charts below show the weekly numbers. In summary there was an expected dip in demand from end of March through lockdown but demand had recovered to above average levels at the end of June and continues above average. This is due to buoyant market activity and pent up demand from lockdown.





### Nightingale Hospital

The Nightingale hospital was completed and Building control issued certification on the 30 June 2020 to enable handover allowing the building to be occupied by the NHS. The certification is solely for use as a Nightingale given the limits in accessibility for the public for other purposes.

### Building Control Site Inspections

Site visits have continued with some limitations with the building industry having recommenced working after lockdown. Greater use is being made of IT for site inspections with videos being used and photographs where inspection cannot be undertaken safely. The aim remains to minimise the number of site inspections only visiting sites where it was essential and where virtual inspections cannot be used.

### Team Meetings

Meetings and 1:1s continue to ensure regular communication and check on the welfare of staff, team meetings are carried out on a weekly basis with Building Control and Land Charges via Skype and there has also been some return to small face to face meetings in line with social distancing.

### **Support to the Development Industry**

In line with government expectations and to support the local economy, there have been a number of requests to defer / delay CIL / S106 contributions, at least in part in response to Covid-19. We had requests to delay payments from Taylor Wimpey in relation to two different developments in the City, but they have now caught back up with payments and have no outstanding debts. Burrington Estates were behind with CIL payments on their EX111 (Topsham) and Home Farm Phase II

developments but, as of last week, have now cleared their CIL debts. Consequently, the only (Covid-19 related) outstanding payment authorisation delays relating to CIL or S106 are as follows:

#### CIL

- Application 17/0006/FUL – Exeter Golf & Country Club Practice Ground – Heritage Homes – deferral of payment of 3<sup>rd</sup> invoice authorised until January 2021.

#### S106

- Outline application 10/2088/01 and Reserved Matters application 19/1100/RES – Pinhoe Quarry, Harrington Lane – Vistry Homes – deferral of payment of pre-commencement S106 financial obligations authorised until 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021.
- Outline application 14/2066/OUT and Reserved Matters application 17/1091/RES - Land To The North Of Exeter Road Topsham, Exeter – Burrington Estates EX111 development – deferral of payment of S106 Affordable Housing contributions authorised until 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Update on payment intentions expected by Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

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