

**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**  
**(HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING)**

Tuesday 23 February 2021

Present:-

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

Apologies for absence

Councillors Martin, Newby and Sills

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**FIRE IN CLAYTON ROAD**

The Lord Mayor expressed his great sadness over the devastating fire in Exeter in the early hours of Sunday morning. On behalf of everyone at Exeter City Council he expressed condolences to the family and friends of those who had died. Whilst grieving, he commended all aspects of the community who were coming together to offer what help they could. He thanked the emergency services for their prompt response arriving within minutes and doing everything they could to save lives. He paid tribute to everyone involved, from the fire and rescue, police and ambulance services, to the staff at the RD&E and Frenchay Hospital in Bristol. The Lord Mayor stated that flags were flying at half-mast out of respect.

The Council observed a minutes' silence to reflect on those lives lost and those children still in a critical condition. The Lord Mayor highlighted that the city stood with all those affected.

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**PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**Question from Peter Cleasby**

What was the purpose of the consultancy commissioned from Respublica for which the Council paid £33,000 on 26 November 2020; and what benefit has the public secured from it?

**Response**

Towns and cities across the country have been economically-devastated by the Covid-19 pandemic and they will face further pressures moving forward. As the Exeter Recovery Plan has already set out, this will require significant Government support and investment.

As the Government turns its attention to recovery from Covid-19, ambitions for devolution, regional levelling-up and for extending new freedoms and responsibilities to the local state will come to the fore.

Respublica is one of the country's most successful public policy think tanks. We have commissioned them to provide insight and advice on the current and future political landscape and to assess how Exeter can excel as a place, in its role as a leader and economic driver within the sub-region. This includes looking at the future opportunities for wider growth and connection with other localities. This piece of work will be instrumental in identifying the city's asks and position as it responds to the challenges of Covid-19 and the regional levelling-up agenda and secures essential investment.

The project has just got underway but, in terms of public benefit, it is critical that, in a post-Covid world, the importance of Exeter to the sub-region, as an economic and cultural centre with significant assets is recognised and optimised. This is vital for the city's ambitions for net zero, future skills generation, innovation, productivity growth, housing, the city centre and the health and wellbeing of all of Exeter's communities.

**Mr Cleasby asked a Supplementary question.**

Was there no Devon or Exeter firm suitable for the task?

**Response**

The Leader advised that he was not aware of any suitable firm locally.

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**BUDGET 2021/22**

Minute 6 (2021/22 Budget Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan) of the meeting of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee held on 21 January 2021 and Minute 6 (General Fund/HRA Estimates and Capital Programme 2021/22) of the meeting of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 11 February 2021 were taken as read and noted.

Minute 8 (Council Tax Base and NNDR 1 2021/22) of the meeting of Executive held on 12 January 2021 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 2021/22.

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

- in the face of the Pandemic, an Emergency Budget had been set in July 2020 to balance the books in the current financial year highlighting the need to make a substantial reduction of £1.7 million in spending in the current financial year and to make further budget savings of £5.8 million over the next few years. Income losses and additional expenditure incurred during the Pandemic were estimated to total £11.19 million. The Pandemic has had a major impact on finances and financial discipline was essential to face the challenges;
- the Council, with all major organisations and employers in the city, had worked on a city-wide Recovery Plan with a range of recovery groups set up to address the impact of Covid-19 on the city;
- the Liveable Exeter Place Board was instrumental in supporting and coordinating the city's response to the Pandemic and the Building Exeter Back Better Recovery Plan would support recovery for the whole city. These were

crucial in helping realise wider social, economic and environmental ambitions and the Council's commitment to delivering a Net Zero Carbon city by 2030;

- residents, communities and organisations across Exeter had come together throughout the restrictions and lockdowns to look after and support each other. The Council's Customer Support Team had set up a virtual contact centre overnight. In addition to the 60,000 calls for existing services taken since the first lockdown, Exeter Community Wellbeing had received more than 4,000 calls and 1,500 online requests for support. The team also administers the Covid-19 Community Wellbeing fund and had helped almost 400 residents with grants totaling over £75,000, to assist with Covid-related financial hardship;
- since September 2020, the Council has run the Test and Trace Support Payments scheme on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care with flat rate grants of £500 paid to low income working residents who lose income as a result of isolating and £77,000 had been paid out to date with the scheme extended to the end of March 2021;
- the Council was currently implementing nine different Business Grant Schemes - seven mandatory and two discretionary - as a lifeline for businesses and more than 4,000 awards totalling in excess of £34 million had been made. Another £5 million would be paid out in discretionary grants and a further £1 million used to support businesses through a range of interventions;
- in April 2020, the Council had held what was thought to be the country's first virtual Council meeting, bringing Exeter to national attention;
- the Council was very proud of the dedication of its staff, who continued to deliver all of the Council's key services. Every single waste collection round, street sweeping round, grounds maintenance work and burial service were continued during the Pandemic. Social distancing measures were delivered to keep the streets safe and the Council ensured all businesses complied with Covid-19 safe working practices to keep residents safe;
- the Exeter Wild City programme had been expanded, glyphosate use was reduced and biodiversity encouraged. Staff had worked with community groups to directly improve local areas, including the Wonford Planters and the St David's Community;
- the Council was a finalist in the Best Local Authority Re-cycling Initiative, a national award for excellence;
- two major Co-living developments for residential provision were agreed at The Harlequins in the city centre and the former Ambulance Station in Heavitree, reflecting a new form of living choice for single people and providing affordable housing for key local and retail workers. Considerable work was done by Building Control during the fitting out of the Nightingale Hospital. A dedicated Local Plan team was established to bring forward a new Exeter Local Plan;
- Exmouth Junction represented one of the largest brownfield developments in recent years within the city providing 400 homes and 65 living with care units within a mix of house sizes and tenures with 170 units for sale and 230 Build to Rent units, another first for the city;
- to date, £19,191,177.85 had been collected in Community Infrastructure Levy payments, £10.672 million to be spent on projects such as St. Sidwell's Point, and transport schemes such as the Sandy Park Road junction and Marsh Barton Railway Station;
- the City Council continued its role as a municipal entrepreneur, finding ways to fund the infrastructure needs of the city by blending various income streams to secure outcomes for the city;
- the New Homes Bonus data showed that Exeter's housing stock had increased by almost 1,020 between October 2019 and October 2020. Of these, just over 80 comprised 'empty' homes brought back into use. Therefore, most of the 935 homes were either built from scratch or delivered by converting or changing the use of existing buildings and, of these, more than 80 were affordable homes;

- the wider roll-out of a retrofit programme for all Council housing commenced in January. The current target for affordable housing provision by the Council was to deliver 500 properties over the next 10 years;
- progress on the Council's development programme during 2020 included:-
  - 53 one and two bedroom Extra Care flats at Edwards Court, due to complete this summer;
  - Nine, three bedroom Passivhaus houses at Thornpark Rise, due to be purchased from Exeter City Living shortly;
  - 18 poor quality properties in Newman Road are being demolished and rebuilt;
  - 10, three bedroom Passivhaus houses at Bovemoors Lane, had been completed in January;
  - 21, one and two bedroom flats at Hamlin Gardens were due to start on site this spring; and
  - 60 flats for the Council's affordable housing programme and 32 for Exeter City Living at Vaughan Road were due to start this summer.
- work continued with the Liveable Exeter Place Board and other strategic partners, including Homes England and Sports England, to identify opportunities for strategic interventions to support the delivery of the 2040 Vision and the Liveable Exeter programme continued to progress to deliver up to 12,000 new homes for the city;
- Homelessness was a major issue in 2020 and the Rough Sleeping and Emergency Accommodation service was asked by the Government to bring all known and new rough sleepers into accommodation in March under the Everybody In initiative. As the night shelter scaled down to minimal from March, plans were drawn up with the Exeter Homelessness Partnership to provide crisis support services such as food and medicines alongside additional health protection measures. Of the almost 150 people accommodated and supported, 85% moved on to more permanent housing;
- successful bids were made in the summer to the Government's Next Steps Accommodation programme to provide more dedicated housing and support for move-on for those brought off the streets during the Pandemic. Alongside a capital contribution from the Council, a £3.5 million package of housing and support was being developed which would result in an additional 29 supported accommodation beds in the city;
- excellent progress had been made at St. Sidwell's Point and the new Exeter Bus Station which were due to open in the summer 2021. This £50 million re-development was the biggest single investment the Council had made in the city in a generation. These much-needed new facilities would play a vital role in the recovery of the city. St. Sidwell's Point would be one of the best facilities of its kind anywhere in Europe. The Riverside Leisure Centre would also open again this summer;
- the Council took back direct control of leisure centres to run the service in-house. The Leisure services team were working together with the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot to embed its priorities and values into the leisure offer. The pilot, Live and Move, was working to reduce health inequalities across the city and in Cranbrook;
- traditional income sources for local authorities, such as business rates, commercial rents and car parking were all under threat and City centres more than ever needed local authority support and the Council was leading on this. The work to diversify the city centre and the investment in leisure at St. Sidwell's Point was therefore critical;
- the Council had taken decisive action to address the financial challenges posed by Covid-19 enabling a balanced budget with only a small amount of savings

required. But even by increasing Council Tax by the maximum £5 available, the Council would only have the same amount to spend next year as it did this year. Inflation increases alone accounted for an increase in the spending requirement of £817,000;

- the Council had been awarded a further £1.941 million in New Homes Bonus taking the total earned by this Council to over £27 million. On top of that, the Council was still generating £2.3 million more in Business Rates Growth than the Government believed was needed to provide vital services in Exeter. However, the Government was consulting on modifications to the New Homes Bonus and was still intent on overhauling the Business Rates retention scheme, meaning that the financial benefits enjoyed would be lost from 2022/23 onwards. This meant that reductions of £6 million would be required over the next three years to balance the budget and equated to 13% of the total spent by the Council on services in Exeter; and
- during this last year the importance of reserves had been evidenced when, because of Covid-19 and the lockdown measures imposed by Government, the Council had suffered a loss of around £11 million in its income and hence the decision to make an emergency budget.

It was proposed to approve both the revenue estimates and capital programme for the year 2021/22 to result in the setting of a District Council tax of £165.05 for a Band D property. This would be an increase of £5 a year for a Band D property, less than 10p a week. By comparison the County Council precept would rise by £71.82 or £1.38 a week, the Police by £14.92 a year or 29p a week and the Fire and Rescue Services by £1.76 or 3p a week.

Therefore the Band D Council Tax would be split as follows:

Exeter City Council	£165.05
Devon County Council	£1,511.28
Devon & Cornwall Police	£236.56
Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service	£90.00
Making a total bill of	£2,002.89

The Leader commended the budget and the recommendations set out in the papers.

Councillor Sutton seconded the proposal.

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

- Council staff were thanked for their dedication and skilled work at all times but especially during a very grueling and uniquely challenging period;
- St. Sidwell's Point and the new Bus Station becoming beacons of hope for the city, highlighting the importance of investing in the city centre and supporting the retail sector;
- the intention to adopt a kerbside waste collection was an important commitment;
- welcome the leisure services being back in house offering an improved leisure service for the citizens of Exeter; and
- the maintenance of vital services was highlighted by the Council not having missed one collection round for waste collection or one street sweep/street cleaning round in spite of different working methodology.

The Opposition Leader thanked the Leader and also welcomed the budget on behalf of his Group and made the following points:-

- paid tribute to the Finance team and everyone working for the City Council for their excellent work during a very difficult year and also paid tribute to Devon County Council, especially care home workers and those others working in very demanding situations;
- welcomed the Government contribution in excess of £6 million to the City Council;
- regarded the £5 increase in the Council Tax as acceptable in the present circumstances; and
- asked that the City Council continues to support the economy of the city and those residents who need help.

The Leader of the Progressive Group also thanked the Leader and welcomed the budget and made the following points:-

- paid tribute to City Council staff as well as community and neighbourhood groups for their work during a difficult period for the city;
- welcomed the bringing forward of 500 homes within the next five years and bringing leisure services back in house;
- looked forward to the opening of the Riverside and the St. Sidwells Point Leisure Centres;
- supported the food and glass doorstep collection and hoped that this project would be implemented as soon as possible; and
- stated that the city's recovery would be even stronger with a bottom up approach involving communities and neighbourhoods.

A Member thanked the Leader for his speech and staff for their commitment during the Pandemic and made the following points:-

- welcomed the efforts to achieve the Net Zero Exeter 2030 target for the city and emphasised the need for it to translate across the Council's work such as ensuring new houses would be low carbon;
- given the commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2030 was made 18 months ago the £50,000 budget cut for a carbon neutral delivery team is regrettable. Such investment was needed given the continuing climate and ecological emergency and with the Pandemic further exposing the inequalities in the city. Net Zero plans should be translated into action with appropriate funding and with community involvement encouraged;
- the carbon impact of every activity should be assessed and, in future, a carbon budget should be provided in support of the financial budget as stated in the Net Zero Exeter 2030 report; and
- further information is required on how to tackle poor air quality which is undermining the Net Zero ambitions and impacts on many people in the city, especially those who live in the city centre.

In conclusion, the Leader:-

- thanked the group leaders for their support, the Portfolio Holders and the Senior Management Team for their work and reiterated his thanks to staff, noting that sickness level had been very low during the Pandemic;

- undertook to circulate the Budget Brochure to all Councillors and to continue liaison with group leaders in developing the 2022/23 budget;
- emphasised the full commitment to work with partners in bringing forward the Net Zero Exeter 2030 agenda, referring to the many initiatives already adopted including solar panels on Council buildings and in the car parks, use of electric vehicles and encouraging electric charging points through planning conditions. Given the extreme pressure on Council resources, it was vital to work with other agencies and the Council's strategic partners to achieve the Net Zero goal. Community Infrastructure Levy funds would also be utilised on carbon infrastructure initiatives; and
- confirmed that Air Quality remained a Council priority and progress would also depend on public support and cooperation. The Council worked closely with Stagecoach and it had been unfortunate that their electric bus bid had not met the necessary criteria.

The Leader commended the budget to Council.

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, Bialyk, Branston, Buswell, Foale, Foggin, Ghusain, Hannaford, Harvey, Henson, D. Deputy Lord Mayor, Lord Mayor, Leadbetter, Lyons, Morse, Oliver, Owen, Packham, Pearson, Quance, Sheldon, Sparkes, Sutton, Vizard, Wardle, Warwick, Williams, Wood and Wright.

(29 Members)

Abstain:-

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

(4 Members)

Absent:-

Councillors Begley, Lamb, Martin, Newby and Sills

(5 Members)

The Resolution was carried:-

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the following, as submitted in the Estimates Book, be approved:-
  - (a) the Revenue estimates for 2021-2022;
  - (b) the Capital programme for 2021-2022;
  - (c) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021-22
  - (d) the Prudential indicators for 2021-22 (incorporating the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement

- (e) the Capital Strategy for 2021-22
- (2) that it be noted that, at the meeting of the Executive on the 12 January 2021, the Council calculated the figure of 37,377, as its council tax base for the year 2021-2022 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 2021-2022 in accordance with Sections 31A of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992:-
- (a) £113,844,595 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) £107,675,521 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) £6,169,074 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) £165.05 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
£110.03	£128.37	£146.71	£165.05
E	F	G	H
£201.73	£238.41	£275.08	£330.10

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 2021-2022, 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
£894.96	£1,044.12	£1,193.28	£1,342.44
E	F	G	H

£1,640.76	£1,939.08	£2,237.40	£2,684.88
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Devon County Council - Adult Social Care

A £112.56	B £131.32	C £150.08	D £168.84
E £206.36	F £243.88	G £281.40	H £337.68

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall

A £157.71	B £183.99	C £210.28	D £236.56
E £289.13	F £341.70	G £394.27	H £473.12

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority  
Valuation Bands

A £60.00	B £70.00	C £80.00	D £90.00
E £110.00	F £130.00	G £150.00	H £180.00

- (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 2021-2022 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Valuation Bands

A £1,335.26	B £1,557.80	C £1,780.35	D £2,002.89
E £2,447.98	F £2,893.07	G £3,338.15	H £4,005.78

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.17 pm)

Chair