

## **EXECUTIVE**

Tuesday 31 May 2022

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)

Councillors Wright, Denning, Ghusain, Morse, Parkhouse, Pearce, Williams and Wood

Apologies:

Councillor D. Moore (as an opposition group Leader)

Also present:

Councillor K. Mitchell (as an opposition group Leader)

Councillor Jobson (as an opposition group Leader)

Also present:

Chief Executive & Growth Director, Deputy Chief Executive, Director Corporate Services, Director of City Development, City Surveyor, Assistant Service Lead – Local Plan, Skills & City Inclusivity Manager and Democratic Services Team Leader

54

### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2022, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

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### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

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### **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 19**

No questions from members of the public were received.

57

### **APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2022**

The Executive received the report on appointing Members to outside bodies, which ensured that there was Council representation to maintain effective partnerships with the external organisations. Appendix A, included with the report presented at the meeting, highlighted the proposed appointments. The Leader highlighted the following proposed changes to appointments listed in Appendix A:-

- Community Safety Partnership - Councillor Amal Ghusain as the Portfolio Holder for City Management & Environmental Services, in place of the Leader;
- Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee - Councillor Ruth Williams as the Portfolio Holder for Recycling & Waterways, in place of Councillor Ghusain;
- Energy From Waste Liaison Committee - Councillor Ruth Williams as the Portfolio Holder for Recycling & Waterways, in place of Councillor Ghusain;
- Exeter Canal & Quay Trust Ltd - Councillor Ruth Williams as the Portfolio Holder for Recycling & Waterways, in place of Councillor Ghusain;
- Exeter Fairtrade Steering Group - Councillor Trish Oliver to take the vacant position;

- Maynard School – Vacancy, in place of Councillor Pearce; and
- Relate – Vacancy, in place of Councillor Wright.

The Leader acknowledged the historic value of the appointments to outside bodies, but highlighted that a review of the Council representation on the various bodies would be undertaken, in consultation with the opposition Leaders.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Culture, Corporate & Democratic Services highlighted that there was an error in the first recommendation and that approval was a Council function. She moved an amendment to the wording of the recommendation, to state that the Executive recommended that Council approve the appointments to the outside bodies set out in Appendix A of the report.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council:-

- (1) approve the appointments contained in Appendix A of the report and as amended at the meeting; and
- (2) grant delegated authority to the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, in consultation with the Group Leaders, to appoint, when necessary, representatives to outside bodies during the course of the Municipal Year.

58

#### **MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES PAID 2021/22**

The Executive received the report on expenses and allowances paid to elected Members in 2021/22, which, the Council had a statutory obligation to publish each financial year.

**RESOLVED** that Executive Committee note the allowances paid and the expenses claimed by Members in 2021/22.

59

#### **EXETER SKILLS STRATEGY**

The Executive received the report on the new Exeter Skills Strategy, which had been developed to consider the impact and changes to the labour market and economy, following the Covid Pandemic. Members were reminded that in March 2020, the original Skills Strategy had been approved, just prior to the Covid lockdown, which had impacted on the delivery of the strategy priorities and to the local labour market and workforce.

Particular reference was made on the impact of the Pandemic to the Skills Strategy, with the following key points:-

- At its peak, 30% of the city's workforce was part of the Furlough scheme which equated to 17,000 people;
- Universal Credit claims had risen to over 4%; and
- There had regularly been over 3,000 job vacancies within five miles of the city and 9,000 vacancies within 25 miles of the city over the past year and as was still the case, as of April 2022.

In March 2021, Council approved a review of the evidence base to refresh the Skills Strategy following the impact from the Pandemic and had begun working with 'Wavehill Social and Economic Research' and its partners and stakeholders to develop the revised strategy. This included a review of available data on to one

consultation and an event in April 2022, which brought together partners to engage on key themes and topics to bring the strategy forward.

Highlights from the evidence gathered included:-

- The number of Universal Credit claimants had reduced to under 2%, but there were a lot of complex barriers to employment;
- Older workers, aged over 50, had become economically inactive and had left the labour market, which had further impacted on employment retention;
- There were issues with recruitment across the city, despite there being a number of qualified residents available, there were noticeable skills gaps identified;
- Around 45% of the city's employment was in three sectors - Health & Care, Retail and Education;
- The Self-employment rate for the city had dropped from 15% in 2017/18 to just 6% since the Pandemic;
- Various sectors had been impacted by new demands from the workforce, including an increased desire for more home working and hybrid working options, which remained a challenge to attract a work force – particularly for those sectors unable to offer these flexibilities; and
- Although there were identified deprived wards, the strategy covered all wards across the city, but there would be actions and focus in place for the identified wards.

Reference was made to the priorities outlined in the strategy, which had strong links to the Exeter 2040 vision, supporting the city in becoming healthy, inclusive, sustainable and delivering world class education. The priority of the strategy was focussed on inclusivity and productivity, working with a wide range of key partners across the city. Following approval, a short summary document would be produced, with a Members' Briefing provided in September 2022 to highlight the priorities and to finalise the action plan with the skills group.

The Chief Executive & Growth Director commented on the strategic point, where Members had agreed to the vision of the city as an inclusive, healthy and sustainable city, providing many opportunities for its residents. The report highlighted how the city delivered on inclusive growth, which the skills agenda connected with younger residents to provide them with opportunities and the building of relationships with educational providers. The Civic University Agreement work had brought education providers together to help residents enter the work place. Members noted that, although the Council had no statutory responsibility to undertake the work, it had moved from economic development to inclusive growth, which included building a skills agenda.

During the discussion, Members welcomed and commended the strategy and team for the excellent work that been undertaken to identify the impacts of the pandemic on the city work place, and developing a wide ranging evidence base. The Skills Strategy was crucial in supporting residents and bringing new businesses to the city, which would enable residents to also work in the city, rather than travel elsewhere. The Strategy identified the need for developing green skills to support climate change, which combined with the Council's objectives for Net Zero.

The Council Leader, in summarising, noted the importance of the report, highlighting that, although it wasn't a statutory function, the Council was choosing to invest in providing skills for all residents for the benefit of the city's future.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council approve:-

- (1) the Exeter Skills Strategy; and
- (2) the development of the associated action plan to enable the Skills & City Inclusivity Manager to address the identified priorities.

60

### **NEW STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: PROPOSED ADOPTION**

The Executive received the report on the new Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which was a legally required document and was an important planning tool that explained to residents how they could engage with planning applications and how the Council would consult on plan making. The existing SCI had been adopted in 2005 and no longer met legal requirements.

The draft SCI alongside the Exeter Local Plan 'Issues Consultation' underwent an 8 week consultation in 2021, and the results and comments received were incorporated into the document presented at the meeting. Although the SCI set out the minimum legal requirement for consulting on planning applications and plan making, Exeter City Council had opted for a best practice approach and had gone further than the legal minimum requirement. Interactive engagement exercises had been undertaken, which included pop-up exhibitions on the High Street, where residents were invited to attend and build Lego models to represent their view of the future of the High Street, and the information attained would feed into the Exeter Local Plan.

Particular reference was made to the planned engagement with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), Exeter University and Exeter Culture on further interactive engagement projects during the summer period, to attain further detail from residents on the future they want for the city. Members also noted that a planned city wide consultation exercise on the future place initiative, would be undertaken, allowing residents to engage with the Council on the future of their local neighbourhoods.

The Leader proposed an amendment, as agreed with Group Leaders, to page 6 of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), to replace the last paragraph with the following text:-

'Through Liveable Exeter, the Council will strengthen communities and create new neighbourhoods. Using innovative and interactive engagement tools, the Council will better inform communities about Liveable Exeter and enable them to shape emerging development proposals as they come forward, as well as feeding into the new Exeter (Local) Plan.'

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition leader, spoke on this item regarding the issue of neighbourhood planning and asked that it be made clear that there was funding and support available for groups who wanted to setup neighbour plans through the locality budget.

Councillor K. Mitchell, as an opposition leader, spoke on this item and thanked the Director of City Development for the report and previous correspondence. He commented on Neighbourhood Planning, which was an important way for residents to address what they wanted in their neighbourhoods and that it needed to be a part of the process. The St. James Forum had recently disbanded for various reasons and he would welcome a conversation about what had happened with the forum and how improvements could be made in the future. He acknowledged that a lot of time and support was needed for residents to develop neighbourhood plans and sought reassurance that support would be provided. Councillor K. Mitchell

welcomed the report and thanked the Chair for the amendment to the SCI document.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- The report highlighted that a best practice approach had been taken and with few comments received that required a change to the document, provided a strong indication that the Council was doing what communities wanted and was going beyond the minimum legal requirements;
- It was important and innovative to run consultations for future residents so they could engage and contribute on how the future of the city would look;
- The eight week consultation on the SCI also demonstrated a best practice approach and how the Council went beyond the minimum legal requirement to produce the document; and
- There has been historic difficulty with consulting on planning documents and the new interactive engagement process with communities showed how much the Council was prepared to engage through various means of consultation with residents.

The Council Leader stated that the Statement of Community Involvement, was an important document and allowed residents to contact the Council and engage with local councillors. He commented on the neighbourhood plan, which was available online and was easily accessible but help and support would be provided to anyone looking to setup up a neighbourhood group.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive grant delegated authority to the Director of City Development, in consultation with the Council Leader and the Portfolio Holder for City Development, to make minor editorial changes to the final Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) document.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council adopt the final Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) including any minor changes (as per recommendation 1).

61 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

62 **LAND IN SUMMERLAND STREET**

The Executive received the report, which advised Members on the proposed disposal of land at Summerland Street to facilitate the re-development of a site on Council owned land on the edge of the city centre. The three existing long leases would be surrendered with a new long lease being granted to facilitate re-development of the site for co-living accommodation, thereby securing a significant capital receipt.

Particular reference was made to the difference between co-living and purpose built student accommodation. The City Surveyor confirmed that the lease on the land would limit use of the site to co-living accommodation and would exclude use as purpose built student accommodation.

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition leader, spoke on this item and wanted to ensure that the Council kept an open mind on the types of development on the land.

Members welcomed the report, which was considered to be a good opportunity to re-develop the Council owned land and to create vibrant living spaces close to the city centre.

**RESOLVED** that the surrender of the existing leases of land at Summerland Street and the grant of a new long lease (as set out in the report) be approved with the detailed terms to be agreed by the City Surveyor in consultation with the Director of Finance, Director of Corporate Services and the Council Leader.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.32 pm)

Chair

**The decisions indicated will normally come into force 5 working days after publication of the Statement of Decisions unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. Decisions regarding the policy framework or corporate objectives or otherwise outside the remit of the Executive will be considered by Council on 19 July 2022.**