

EXECUTIVE

Thursday 8 July 2021

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)

Councillors Wright, Foale, Ghusain, Harvey, Morse, Sutton and Williams

Apologies:

Councillors Pearson and Wood (Self-isolation - Covid)

In attendance:

Councillor D. Moore (as an opposition group Leader)

Councillor K. Mitchell (as an opposition group Leader)

Also present:

Chief Executive & Growth Director, Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management, Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, Corporate Manager – Executive Support, Assistant Service Lead – Local Plan and Democratic Services Officer (MD)

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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

A member of the public, Mr Cleasby submitted the following question, related to Minute No. 72:-

- In addition to the undertaking at paragraph 18 of the proposed consultation charter, will the council commit to publishing an annual report demonstrating the extent of compliance with the charter requirements?

The Council Leader explained that the results of all consultations were published, and enabled members of the public to assess continuously and check if the commitments in the Consultation Charter were being met. As the Council faced significant budget reductions, there were limited, potentially reducing, resources for dealing with consultations and the compilation of an annual report would be an additional and unnecessary burden and a duplication of information that would be available in a more accessible, timely way.

Mr Cleasby asked a supplementary question on whether, in the interest of openness and transparency, if there was another way to show the compliance information, without it being too much of a burden?

The Council Leader responded that the Council maintained openness and transparency and that he understood the concerns. However, he didn't feel it was necessary for himself or Executive Members to instruct the time of officers to undertake additional work. There were a great many things to do in Exeter and the Council was consulting with residents and were committed to being open and transparent but needed to focus on work within the budget restraints.

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EAST DEVON, EXETER, MID DEVON AND TEIGNBRIDGE JOINT STRATEGY: SCOPE, RESOURCING TIMETABLE AND GOVERNANCE

The Executive received the report which sought the formal agreement of the scope, resourcing, timetable and governance arrangements for preparing a non-statutory Joint Strategy for East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge Councils. The Joint Strategy was considered to be the most appropriate way of ensuring a co-ordinated approach for addressing strategic issues in the region, following the end of the work on the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP).

The Assistant Service Lead Local Plans made particular reference to:-

- a previous report was presented to the Executive and Council in December 2020, which approved the involvement of the Council in the Joint Strategy work and the report presented moved the work forward;
- the Strategy would be an informal, non-statutory document whilst the formal planning policy for Exeter would be provided by the Local Plan which was currently being prepared;
- the scope of the Strategy would enable shared resourcing of evidence base which would also support the Local Plan;
- the Strategy would act as a prospectus when bidding for infrastructure funding across the area;
- a consultant would be engaged to prepare the Strategy and to work with officers from each Council enabling officer resources to be concentrated on the production of respective Local Plans, which were a priority for each Council;
- the timetable included public consultation in the summer of 2022 with formal approval in October 2022 and the governance of the project remained within the remit of each authority to approve the document; and
- consistent reports were currently going through each respective Council authority for approval.

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition leader, welcomed the report which would co-ordinate action across the authorities but questioned if a short period of consultation across the summer holidays on key matter would be sufficient and suggested that the consultation timetable should be reviewed. She asked for information on the position of the LEP in this process which did not have a foreseen role in funding and that its future was in doubt, following the Government's review of the LEP. This was considered a potential risk and which should be brought to the attention of Council.

The Portfolio Holder for City Development thanked the staff involved in the production of the GESP and excellent work that has come from the GESP, which she hoped would remain of value in the production of the Local Plan.

RECOMMENDED that Council support the scope, resourcing, timetable and governance arrangements set out in Section 8 of the report presented at the meeting, for preparing a non-statutory Joint Strategy for East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge Councils.

The Executive received the report which explained the commencement of work on the new Exeter Local Plan and sought approval for public consultation on an initial 'Issues' document to explore the scope and topics of the new Local Plan, and some initial concepts regarding future development in the city.

The City Council had a statutory duty to prepare planning policy and the Council's existing principal development plan documents were more than five years old and a

new statutory planning policy was required, which would be provided by the new Exeter Local Plan;

The Assistant Service Lead Local Plans made particular reference to:-

- the first formal stage of producing the Local Plan would be the Issues Consultation,;
- the report included a short brochure setting out the key issues the Local Plan would address including, amongst others, climate emergency, homes, jobs, natural environment, transport and infrastructure;
- the document included the Exeter 2040 Vision for the city,
- the document formalised the approach to meeting housing needs in the city reflecting the Liveable Exeter Strategy which sought to make efficient use of land including brown field sites and improving development quality;
- public consultation was a vital part of the process for preparing the planning policy, to gain insight on local issues and for residents to contribute to the policy and consultation would be held in September for eight weeks which would be in accordance with the emerging Consultation Charter and the Statement of Community Involvement. A further report would be brought back to Executive detailing the responses to the consultation; and
- a formal draft Local Plan would be produced in 2022.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the new Local Plan Issues document presented to the meeting be approved as the basis for an eight-week public consultation commencing in September 2021; and
- (2) the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council Leader and Portfolio Holder for City Development, be granted delegated authority to agree minor changes to the Local Plan 'Issues' document before it is published for consultation.

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NEW STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Executive received the report on Exeter's new Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which was a document that needed to be prepared by all Local Planning Authorities. The document set out how the public, organisations and other interested parties would be involved in planning matters and would replace the existing SCI which was adopted in 2005. The SCI would be published for consultation alongside the Exeter Local Plan 'Issues Consultation' and any amendments following the consultation would be brought back to the Executive and Council for approval.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the contents of the draft SCI presented to the meeting be approved for an eight-week consultation commencing in September 2021; and
- (2) the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council Leader and Portfolio Holder for City Development, be granted delegated authority to agree minor changes to the draft SCI document before it is published for consultation.

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EXETER CIVIC UNIVERSITY AGREEMENT

The Executive received the report on the Exeter Civic University Agreement (CUA), which would formalise Exeter City Council's future relationship with the University of Exeter and endorse formal arrangements with both the University and other key agencies in the city.

The Chief Executive & Growth Director stated that the Agreement was a significant statement of the University's commitment to its role in the life of the city. The University was a major educational institution internationally, having achieved recent ascendancy in world rankings, with the new Vice Chancellor seeking to build on this success. Fundamental to these aspirations was to ensure that the University also played a full role and makes a positive impact on the city and the region.

The Chief Executive emphasised the importance of the city's major institutions working with the Council to complement and enhance the aspirations of the 2040 Vision for the city to deliver key outcomes to make the city more inclusive, sustainable, healthier and delivering a world class education. The commitment and role of Exeter University was key. The University offered world class science and medical research and this expertise not only impacted locally in terms of the Council's Net Zero and Health and Wellbeing initiatives but was also helping build the city's prestige on the world stage. The agreement was a major step forward and would enable Exeter University to work with the Council to support wellbeing and the Net Zero agenda.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- the importance of acknowledging the University's role in the life of the city such as providing job opportunities for graduates who wished to remain in the south west;
- the importance of developing further the relationships between the Council and all major institutions in the city, needed to be welcomed;
- the need for residents to respond to the recent University questionnaire sent to Exeter's residents asking if people feel connected to the University; and
- welcoming the various strands within the Agreement including health and well-being, culture and tourism.

In response to a question from a Member, the Chief Executive & Growth Director, stated that various committees would be quickly established to develop the strands within the Agreement and that the document was shortly to be put to the Exeter College Council for adoption.

The Chair highlighted the five priority areas set out in the Agreement, which reflected the ambitions of the City Council:-

- Support the sustainable and inclusive growth of the city;
- Deliver a Net Zero Exeter;
- Build a city of Aspiration and Opportunity;
- Support an ambitious culture and tourism offer; and
- Enhance the Health and Wellbeing of our citizens

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:-

- (1) the adoption of the Exeter Civic University Agreement; and
- (2) that further amendments to the Exeter Civic University Agreement be delegated to the Chief Executive & Growth Director in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

CONSULTATION CHARTER

The Executive received the report which sought agreement to adopt a Consultation Charter and formalise the Council's commitment to consultation and best practice, while ensuring that there were consistent arrangements in place. The Consultation Charter would also ensure that Exeter communities would have the chance to contribute to proposals for Council policies and decisions.

The Corporate Manager – Executive Support stated that, following report to Executive in February, the draft Consultation Charter had been considered by a Spotlight Review Working Group who had made a valuable input into the proposals with a number of helpful amendments agreed including clarification on the scope of consultations, confirming a minimum of six weeks for all consultations and supporting detailed consultation plan templates, which would accompany all consultations.

Responding to the Chair, the Corporate Manager – Executive Support confirmed that the results of all consultations could be amalgamated into a single document and included on the City Council website.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- welcome inclusion of accessibility issues within the Charter to ensure everybody had the opportunity to respond; and
- given that Government requires consultations on many issues, should there be additional financial support be lobbied from Government for the consultations.

The Chief Executive & Growth Director highlighted the significant ongoing resource and financial pressures faced by the Council and the need to identify efficiency savings going forward. These pressures had a significant impact on the extent to which resources could be allocated to consultation exercises and other Council services.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the Consultation Charter.

PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARY REVIEW

The Executive received the report, which set out the suggested response of the views of the Council on the recently published Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Review and its impact on the existing Parliamentary constituency's boundaries and Exeter City area.

Members noted that the current boundaries included parts of Priory, St. Loye's and Topsham City Council wards in the East Devon Parliamentary constituency and that the proposed changes would only affect the Parliamentary constituency boundary's and would not affect local government ward areas.

The Electoral Registration & Returning Officer made particular reference to:-

- the initial proposal of the Boundary Commission would include the whole City Council wards of Priory, St Loye's, and Topsham in a new parliamentary constituency which would stretch as far as Exmouth;

- this extension, particularly in the Priory ward, could be viewed as being too far into the urban area of the city, especially as it included the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital;
- in addition to the whole of St Loyes and Topsham wards being included, the Council would need to decide whether the whole of the Pinhoe ward rather than Priory should be included as then the three most easterly wards would be part of the new Parliamentary Constituency allowing a contiguous boundary between the City Council and East Devon District Council;
- as almost 25% of Exeter's electorate would be included in the new constituency the name should be the Exmouth and East Exeter Constituency;
- the figures for electorates for both Pinhoe and Priory wards, were taken from March 2020 figures were equal at 6,399;
- the Returning Officer for the current East Devon constituency had no issue with the proposals;
- the closing date for consultation was 2 August 2021 for Members, the public and organisations to respond via the Government website; and
- the Parliamentary timetable in the report, set out the schedule going forward, and that any changes to the law would not be made until late 2023.

The Chair stated that the report before the Executive was for commentary on the process and that the recommendations on proposals to be put to the Boundary Commission would be a matter for Council to discuss on 21 July 2021.

In response to questions from Members, the Electoral Registration & Returning Officer, explained:-

- subject to a Parliamentary Election not being called in the period leading up to consideration of the proposals by the Privy Council in late 2023, the new boundaries would come into effect from 2024; and
- it was understood that legislation required Parliamentary Constituencies to be reviewed during the period of each Parliament to help maintain consistency of electorates across the country. Currently, Parliamentary periods were fixed for five years although Parliament could vote to hold an emergency election.

RECOMMENDED that Council:-

- (1) decides which of either of the Pinhoe or Priory City Council wards should be suggested for inclusion in a revised Parliamentary Constituency to the east of the City;
- (2) suggests that the name of any new parliamentary constituency to the east of the city include a reference to the fact that it included a significant proportion of the city within its boundary, with the suggested name of Exmouth and East Exeter; and
- (3) instructs officers to inform the Boundary Commission for England of its views on the proposals.

The Executive received the report which sought approval to adopt the statutory Food Law and Health and Safety Service Plan 2021-22, which sets out the Council's regulatory function in respect of food safety and health and safety over the forthcoming year.

The Director Net Zero Exeter and City Management explained that the Food Law Plan would show how the Council meets its regularity obligations in respect of food safety and the Health and Safety Services Plan demonstrates arrangements for enforcing health and safety. Particular reference was made to:-

- the Council was generally responsible for non-industrial premises with the Health and Safety Executive being responsible for industrial premises;
- the plans contained service aims and objectives, the 2021/22 action plan and the financial arrangements for providing the service;
- the food safety programme had been affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic with a number of businesses closed or required to undertake Covid secure checks and compliance.
- the Council was supporting the track and trace programme following changes made to national guidance, and the programme intended to catch up with the changes by June 2022;
- the Council was required to recover its food inspection programme by March 2023; and
- additional resources had been brought into the service because of ongoing Covid work paid for by Central Government funding.

The Portfolio Holder for Supporting People thanked the Director and the teams for their hard work during the Pandemic, who had been under considerable pressure and working additional hours.

Members acknowledged and expressed their thanks to the officers for the work that has been undertaken, during very challenging circumstances.

RECOMMENDED that Council:-

- (1) approve the Food Law and Health and Safety Service Plan 2021/22; and
- (2) authorise the Service Lead - Environmental Health and Community Safety to change the plan in the light of national guidance and/or to meet operational needs.

FUNERAL SERVICE PROVISION REVIEW 2021

The Executive received the report which sought approval to develop a Columbarium, following a review on the provision of funeral services, which had identified a reduction in the capacity for full body burials at the three Council run sites at Higher, Exwick and Topsham cemeteries. The review highlighted that the current demand would mean that the Council would be unable to carry out full body burials beyond 2025 and addressed the re-design of how the Council undertook the burial of ashes, using the remaining cemetery land in an efficient and respectful way.

The Director Net Zero Exeter and City Management explained that the report set out a business case which demonstrated the viability of constructing a Columbarium in Higher Cemetery which was considered an ideal location and would provide a pleasant land tranquil location for people to visit the interred ashes of their loved ones.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the proposed £367,300 Columbarium design, to support the increased demand for cremation services.

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's 1 and 2 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

MEMBERS' TRAINING

The Executive received the report which provided an update on the progress of work on the Members' training programme and included Members' attendance records for the various training sessions held since March 2021.

Particular reference was made to:-

- the re-constituted Councillor Development Steering Group, which had been convened to discuss Member training requirements;
- the development of the online Member feedback form, which was issued following each training session;
- the recording of training sessions which were archived for Members to access after the sessions; and
- the appendix which highlighted Members' attendance of the various training sessions held.

In response to a question from Members, the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, confirmed that Members could access recordings of the training sessions and confirm they have attended a training event.

RESOLVED that the Executive noted the Members' Training report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.25 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 21 July 2021.