

SCRUTINY BULLETIN

The papers attached are primarily for Councillors' information but will be made publicly available on the internet, with the exception of Part 2 items. They may relate to work in progress or updates on reports which have already been considered by the Scrutiny Committees.

The provision of this information does not override the authority of the Standing Orders as set out in the Council's Constitution. For example, Councillors remain entitled to ask for a specific item to be placed on a Scrutiny agenda, request a call-in or to ask questions of a Portfolio Holder.

If require further information please contact Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer on 01392 265197 or alternatively email committee.services@exeter.gov.uk

1	Annual Performance Review - Exeter Corn Exchange	3 - 8
2	Annual Performance Review - The Matford Centre	9 - 14
3	Annual Performance Review - Visitor Facilities	15 - 20
4	Summary notes from Scrutiny Programme Board meeting - 5 June 2023	21 - 22
5	Launch of new Tenant Portal	23 - 24

This page is intentionally left blank

Scrutiny Bulletin: July 2023

Annual Performance Review - Exeter Corn Exchange 2022/23

Relevant Officers:

David Lewis – Facilities and Markets Manager

Sian Mulchrone – Corn Exchange Manager

Contact for general enquiries:

Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Democratic Services, Room 4.36

Email: jo.quinnell@exeter.gov.uk. Tel: 01392 265197

1. What is the update about?

- 1.1 This report is to update Members on the performance of Exeter Corn Exchange for the financial year from 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2023.

2. Background

- 2.1 Exeter Corn Exchange is the council's directly managed multi-purpose events venue in the city centre.
- 2.2 The Facilities and Markets Manager is the Service Lead with overall responsibility for The Corn Exchange, as well as the Matford Centre, Markets and the Visitor Facilities (Underground Passages, Custom House Visitor Centre and Red Coat Guided Tours Service).
- 2.3 The Corn Exchange Manager is responsible for the management of the facility.
- 2.4 The Facilities and Markets Manager retains responsibility for programming and financial management at the Corn Exchange. The Corn Exchange Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Corn Exchange and Exeter Tickets including facilities management, marketing, box office and technical requirements.
- 2.5 There are three other full time staff mostly dedicated to the venue. These are the Bar & Events Officer, the Events & Facilities Officer (who also has some responsibilities for the operation of markets) and the Events and Ticketing Administrator. We are currently recruiting a part-time Marketing and Box Office Administrator.

All other staff working at the venue are casual employees or volunteers, these cover front of house, cleaning and the bar and catering operation.

2.6 Management of the Corn Exchange encompasses:

- Facility management of the site including maintenance and security;
- Programming all events at the venue, whether as in-house promotions, joint promotions or venue hires;
- Managing the venue's box office system;
- Marketing the venue and events including website, print and social media;
- Managing all events taking place at the venue;
- Operating the venue's bar and catering operation.
- Managing the Exeter Tickets box office facility.

3. Current Position

3.1 There were 134 ticketed events hosted during 2022/23. The total number of tickets sold for all shows was 36,958 giving an average sales figure of 276 per show.

The total income from ticket sales (net of VAT) received was almost £635,000, the highest ever achieved. This was an average of around £4,700 per show.

The related expenditure (primarily payments to the artists performing) amounted to £518,000.

The surplus achieved was £117,000, this represented 19% of the total income. The percentage surplus was lower in 22/23 because of an increase in the number of venue hires hosted, in particular, 11 full days of the Titanic exhibition for which we receive a venue hire fee rather a percentage of the income. This has led us to review all hire fees to ensure that they are set at a level which gives us the best chance of achieving our target surplus – 25%.

The table below shows how these results compared to those achieved over the previous four financial years (20/21 is omitted because of the lack of activity caused by the pandemic):

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22	2022/23
Shows hosted	118	124	132	116	134
Tickets sold	34,706	39,270	38,178	31,815	36,958
Average per show	294	317	289	274	276
Ticket income	£509,000	£548,000	£619,000	£614,968	£634,618
Average per show	£4,314	£4,419	£4,689	£5,301	£4,736
Event expenditure	£397,000	£410,000	£463,000	£453,227	£517,732
Surplus achieved (% of income)	£112,000 22%	£138,000 25%	£156,000 25%	£161,741 26%	£116,886 19%

The ticketed events staged in 2022/23 can be categorised as follows: 34 comedy, 31 music, 8 sports/adventure, 4 theatre, 11 days of the Titanic exhibition, 24 pantomime performances and 22 others.

Although the venue's maximum capacity is 500, the following needs to be taken into account when considering the average tickets sold per show:

- Some shows (such as cabaret style events, which includes many of the comedy shows) have a smaller capacity (typically 250);
- Some tickets are also sold by direct by the artist/agent and not all of these sales are included in the sales figures shown above;
- When the above two factors are taken into consideration the total sales represent just over 80% of the available seats;
- Of the 99 ticketed events (which ignores pantomime performances and the Titanic Exhibition) 33 sold out including all 12 monthly comedy clubs;
- In addition to the 134 shows which went ahead 15 were cancelled having already gone on sale. This is a reduction on last year but remains higher than pre-pandemic levels. Cancellations are due to a number of factors such as artist illness, tours being rescheduled and low demand for tickets.

- 3.2 There were also 130 venue hires in 2022/23. These included vintage and record fairs, student events, conferences, jobs fairs, dance competitions and shows, blood donor sessions, a bodybuilding show and a beer festival.

Venue hire levels have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels, primarily because of the loss of a weekly dance class. The following shows the number of venue hires for the last five years (20/21 omitted):

2017/18	205
2018/19	209
2019/20	184
2021/22	107
2022/23	130

The income from venue hires in 22/23 was £114,000. The charge for venue hires is set after considering a number of factors such as: access times required, facilities to be used, purpose of event, status of hirer, frequency of event and ancillary income anticipated.

The following shows the venue hire income for the last five years (20/21 omitted) and the average income received per hiring:

	Total Income	Average per hire
2017/18	£113,000	£551
2018/19	£116,000	£555
2019/20	£97,000	£527
2021/22	£68,000	£632
2022/23	£114,000	£877

The average income received is dependent on the type of bookings secured.

In August the Corn Exchange hosted an 11 day Titanic Exhibition. This large hire in a usually quiet time of year is the reason for the large increase in income received from hiring the venue. The event was an excellent example of just how multi-purpose the venue's main space is. It is unlikely we will be able to replicate a booking of that size on a regular basis, but we hope to be able to attract similar types of event in the future.

- 3.3 The venue's bar and food operation supports events staged. Because the venue is situated in the city centre, amongst many restaurants and other catering outlets, the venue does not open for business other than to support events. For the same reason there is limited scope to achieve income from food sales. The venue has a 5 star rating from Environmental Health.

During the last year, after carrying out a financial appraisal, we updated our cellar equipment to a smart dispense system in an effort to reduce wastage through improved storage. Early indications are that draught product wastage has reduced significantly and the financial target will be achieved.

The following shows the bar income for the previous five years along with the cost of goods sold (COGS) and the consequent gross profit (GP) achieved:

	Income (£)	COGS (£)	GP
2017/18	149,000	48,000	68%
2018/19	153,000	50,000	67%
2019/20	142,000	52,000	63%
2021/22	63,674	32,662	49%
2022/23	157,906	61,081	61%

No bar services were offered in 20/21 and the following year was adversely affected by the ongoing pandemic.

The following shows the food income for the same five year period, along with the cost of goods sold (COGS) and the consequent gross profit (GP) achieved:

	Income (£)	COGS (£)	GP
2017/18	38,000	22,000	43%
2018/19	42,000	17,000	60%
2019/20	41,000	18,000	56%
2021/22	15,884	4,825	77%
2022/23	42,122	18,815	55%

- 3.4 The venue uses a web-based box office system (Spektrix). There is an annual cost, based on turnover, this is generally around £19,000 pa. The cost is recouped from booking fees charged to customers.

The following shows how Corn Exchange ticket sales were split over the last five financial years (20/21 is omitted):

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22	2022/23
On line	77%	78%	78%	80%	82%
Face-to-face	10%	9%	9%	13%	11%
Telephone	13%	13%	13%	7%	7%

Since January 2020 we have been charging £1 postage per order in an effort to reduce waste, and meet costs where postal tickets were still requested. Collect at Box Office and E-Ticket delivery methods remain free. E-tickets can be scanned from a smart phone. This year 73% of tickets were delivered as E-tickets which compares favourably to 2018/19 (the last full year where no postage charge was made) in which only 16% of tickets were E-tickets.

- 3.5 In 2021 the Corn Exchange office was moved to a vacant unit below the venue and re-named Exeter Tickets. This has allowed us to expand our ticketing service to include third party ticketing for external event organisers including Gone Wild Festival, the Two Moors Festival, Libraries Unlimited and various other community events. Exeter Tickets also support the RAMMs box office and Customer Relationship Management via Spektrix, and is now preparing online ticketing services for the Underground Passages.

Exeter Tickets collects commission as a flat fee (proportional to ticket value) charged on top of ticket price allowing event organisers to retain the entire value of their ticket. We offer in person and telephone sales for many of the third party organisers, some are now requesting a listing on the Corn Exchange website, which we are now able to offer. In the next year we would hope to develop social media and email marketing programmes for Exeter Tickets with a view to developing a basic website to catalogue external events.

Exeter Tickets has the dual benefit of providing an additional revenue stream and greater audience insight.

The below income was achieved by Exeter Tickets with no digital presence and only word of mouth advertising of services.

	2021/22	2022/23
Income	£11,972	£16,634
Expenditure	£7,472	£8,253
Surplus	£4,500 37%	£8,381 50%

- 3.6 The venue’s marketing concentrates on the events staged rather than simply signposting the availability of the venue. Our focus is mainly on email marketing. Our emailing list currently has around 23,000 subscribers to whom we can target marketing campaigns, send show updates and seek feedback. Both open and click-through rates exceed the industry average across all formats.

In recent years the focus of our marketing has shifted more towards dynamic email marketing. Our approach here is very behaviour oriented and uses markers based on location, genre preferences and type and frequency of engagement to target customers with relevant information. We are hopeful that this will continue to improve year-on-year retention and in-year repeat visits. The detailed customer profiles we have been able to build will not only improve the quality of our marketing but will allow us to build the best possible programme of events for Exeter residents.

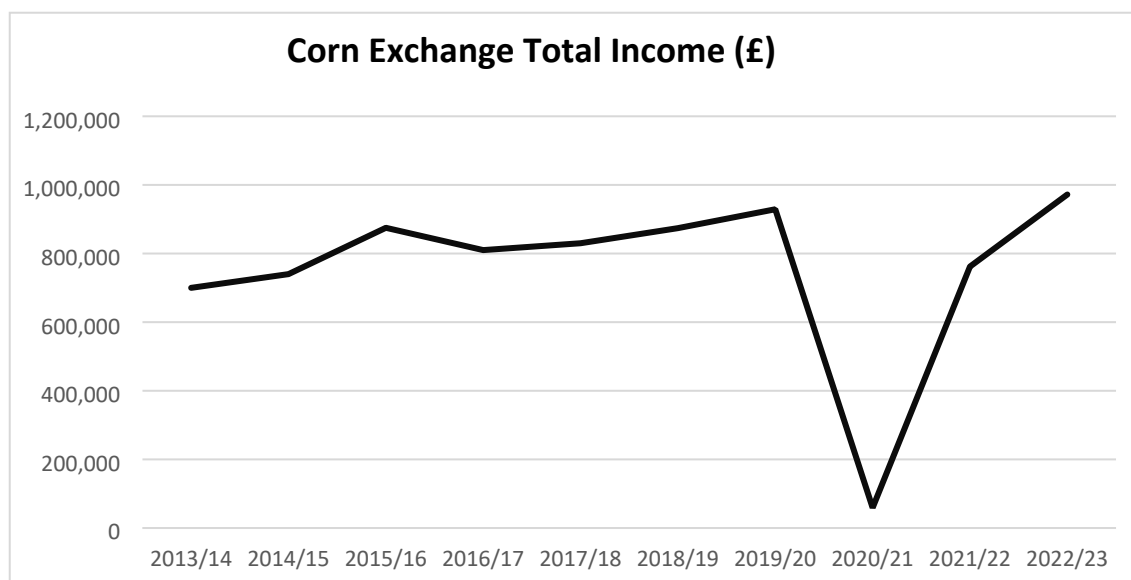
In 2021/22 we printed around 20,000 events guides, we expect to cut this number by at least 50% in 2022/23 as well as removing the automatic option for future sign-ups to this service.

- 3.7 The venue’s total income in 2022/23 was £972,000, the highest ever recorded. The following shows the income earned over the last five years:

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22	2022/23
Income (£)	828,000	874,000	929,000	762,000*	972,041

*2021/22 was affected by the on-going pandemic

The chart below shows how the Corn Exchange income has changed over the last ten years (2020/21 has been included here to show the scale of the pandemic effect on income)

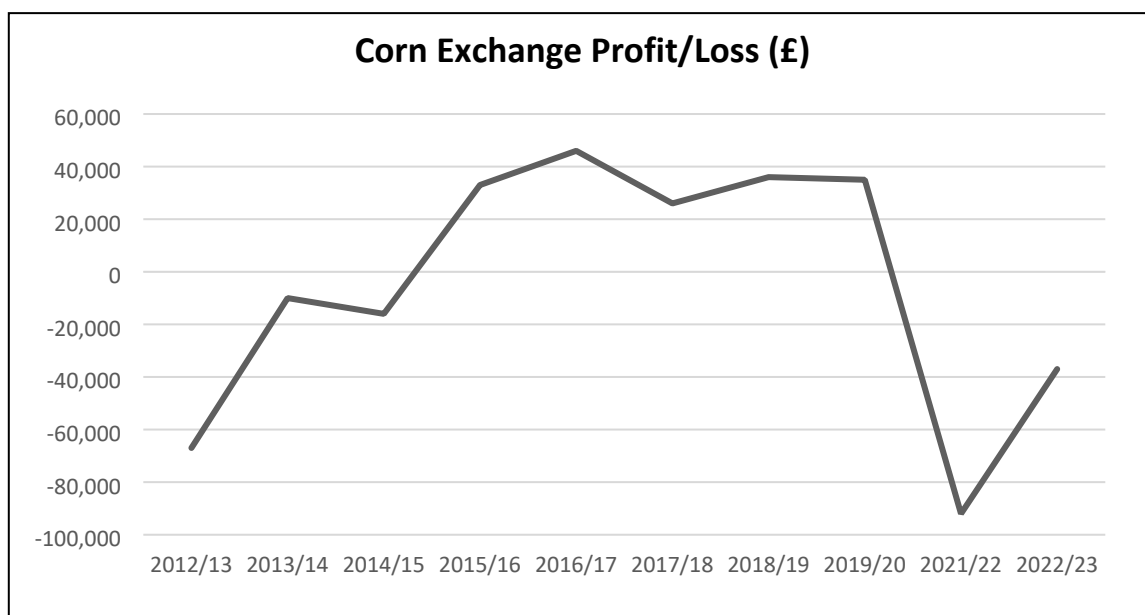


The venue made an operating loss of £37,000 in 2022/23. The following shows the nett profit achieved over the last five financial years (20/21 omitted):

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22	2022/23
Nett profit	£26,000	£36,000	£35,000	-£125,389*	-£36,654

*2021/22 was affected by the on-going pandemic
 Figures exclude capital expenditure and depreciation.

The chart below shows how the Corn Exchange profit/loss has changed over the last ten years, (2020/21 is omitted):



It is important to note that the Corn Exchange differs from many other entertainment/arts venues, both within the city and nationally, in that it receives no external funding.

The Corn Exchange building also incorporates a number of retail units and an indoor car park, these are leased by the Council to private tenants and the income from these leases is accounted for separately by Corporate Property. The income budgeted from these properties is approximately £300,000 per year.

4 Principal Objectives

The following are the principal objectives for the centre as identified by the current service plan:

- 4.1 Continue the post-pandemic recovery to improve the overall financial of the centre
- 4.2 Improve the number of venue hires secured and increase average income from this source
- 4.3 Improve the financial performance of Exeter Tickets, and extend opening hours
- 4.4 Improve marketing reach and impact
- 4.5 Make improvements to the fabric of the building and the facilities available for events

5 Conclusion

The Corn Exchange has bounced back remarkably well after two years which were seriously affected by the pandemic, the new box office/ticket agency has improved several aspects of the venue's operation for customers and staff and there is a real opportunity to develop this facility over the next two or three years.

David Lewis
Facilities & Markets Manager
July 2023

Scrutiny Bulletin: July 2023

Annual Performance Review – The Matford Centre 2022/23

Relevant Officers:

David Lewis - Facilities and Markets Manager

Helen Coombes - Matford Centre Manger

Contact for general enquiries:

Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Democratic Services, Room 4.36

Email: jo.quinnell@exeter.gov.uk. Tel: 01392 265197

1. What is the update about?

- 1.1 This report is to update Members on the performance of the Matford Centre for the financial year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

2. Background

2.1 The Matford Centre is a multi-purpose centre on Matford Business Park.

2.2 The centre's business streams include:

- Exeter livestock market
- Leased units
- Events concourse
- Catering facility
- Meeting rooms
- External area

2.3 The Facilities and Markets Manager is the Service Lead with overall responsibility for The Matford Centre, as well as Exeter Corn Exchange, Markets and the Visitor Facilities (Underground Passages, Custom House Visitor Centre and Red Coat Guided Tours Service).

2.4 The Matford Centre Manager is responsible for the management of the facility.

2.5 There is one other full time employee (Markets & Facilities Supervisor) this post works closely with the Matford Centre Manager. There is another part time employee, and occasional use of casual employees.

2.6 Our responsibilities for the Matford Centre include:

- Management of the site including maintenance and security;
- Liaison with, supporting and monitoring all tenants of the centre;
- Hiring of the venue for events and meetings;
- Overseeing the external running of the Sunday Market/Car Boot Sale;
- Identifying other income earning opportunities at the site;
- Organisation of other markets within the city;
- Giving advice and issuing consent to other market organisers.

3. Current position

- 3.1 The Livestock Market is one of the largest in the south west and is operated by Kivells Auctioneers who have now renewed their lease until 2032. The revised terms of the lease are designed to encourage and support Kivells to increase business at the centre which will improve the financial position for the council.

Kivells have been extremely successful in attracting new business to Exeter with animal throughput increasing notably over the period of their tenure. The tables below show the animal throughput over the last five financial years and provides more details regarding the throughput in 2022/23:

Throughput	
2018/19	255,000
2019/20	255,000
2020/21	253,000
2021/22	274,000
2022/23	294,490

Throughput in 2022/23	
Sheep/Lambs	85%
Cattle	13%
Pigs	1.5%
Produce	0.5%

The auctioneers pay the Council a rent based on commission earned, with a guaranteed minimum rent. The rent received has increased year-on-year, and we are optimistic that this pattern will continue.

The total value of the transactions carried out at the livestock market during the financial year was almost £45 million.

Another important part of the auctioneer's activities is special breed sales and shows such as those for young farmers which helps to ensure the future of the sector in the south west.

The council income from the livestock auctioneer in the last financial year was in excess of £500,000. The following shows the amount received by the City Council over the last five years:

2018/19	£393,000
2019/20	£413,000
2020/21	£391,000
2021/22	£476,000
2022/23	£502,607

The auctioneers work very closely with the farming community, respecting the industry's traditions, whilst introducing their modern approach to auctioneering. They assist the Farming Community Network (FCN) who provide a voluntary service to support farmers who often spend long hours out in the field with little or no social interaction.

- 3.2 The centre's concourse and external areas are hired to organisations who stage a variety of events.

There were 41 events hosted at the centre in 2022/23, this is a 50% increase on the previous financial year. It is still slightly fewer than in pre-pandemic years but indicates a respectable recovery.

The income from these events in the last financial year was £57,000. The following shows the amount received from events over the last five years

2018/19	74,000
2019/20	82,000
2020/21	-8,000*
2021/22	34,000
2022/23	57,000

*Refunds made of deposits paid for events cancelled because of Covid

There were 66 meeting room bookings during the year, earning around £8,000. Again this was fewer than we would have expected pre-pandemic as virtual meetings have become much more prominent.

- 3.3 The centre hosts a market and car boot sale every Sunday morning. This sees a mix of market traders' stalls and private individuals selling their possessions at the car boot sale. An agreement was reached to outsource this event, which was labour intensive and expensive for us to continue with. This has proven to be successful with a large saving in net costs and a much needed easing of workload. The total income from this source in 22/23 was £20,000, with minimal costs incurred.
- 3.4 The centre earns income from a number of leases. The units are currently occupied as follows:
- Catering unit
 - Livestock auctioneer's office
 - Estate agent
 - Chartered surveyor
 - Transport training centre
 - Solicitor
 - Insurance company
 - Accountant
 - Animal nutrition retailers
 - Stagecoach bus depot

Most of these units have been occupied by tenants for some years which provides the centre with a stable income. Total income from this source in 2022/23 was £162,000. This includes some outstanding rent from renewed leases. The annual budget is currently £137,000.

- 3.5 The centre has a large external area which, in addition to being used for the Livestock Market, Sunday Market and concourse events, also provides an income from activities such as vehicle storage and lorry & motorbike training.

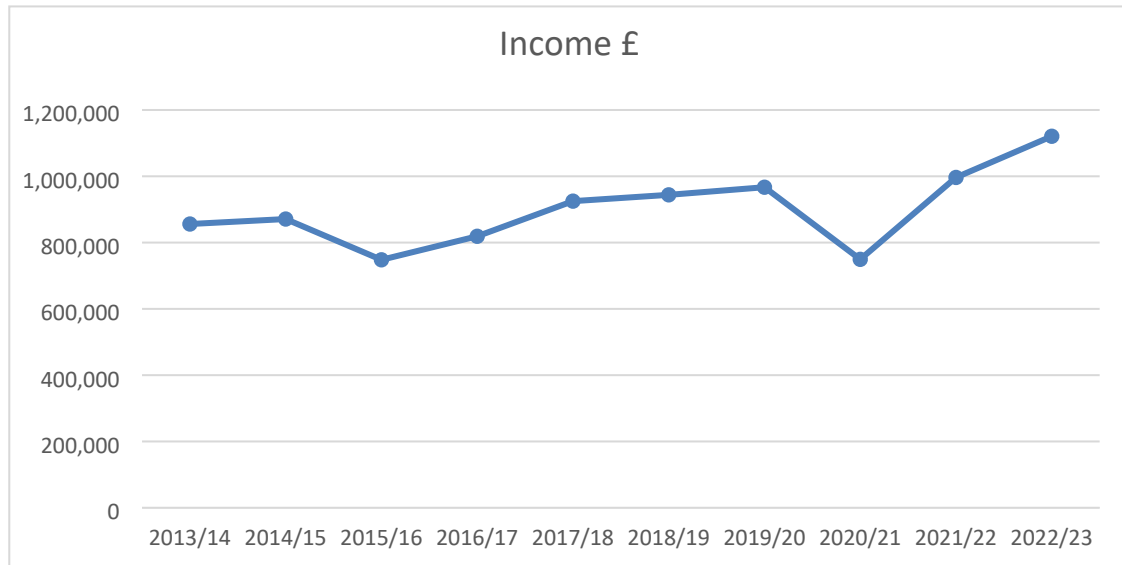
This income is less certain because of short-term licences which frequently change according to clients' requirements, although over the last five years average annual income has been more than £74,000

The total income from this source in 2022/23 was just over £80,000.

- 3.6 The centre also earns income from the solar panels installed on the roof in 2015. Total income from this source in 2022/23 was £216,000. The centre now has a battery storage facility enabling us to use the stored renewable energy that has been achieved.
- 3.7 Financial Performance - Total income for the centre in 2022/23 was over £1million, the first time that this has been achieved. The following shows the total income earned at the centre over the last five years:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Income (£)	944,000	967,000	749,400	996,500	1,120,748

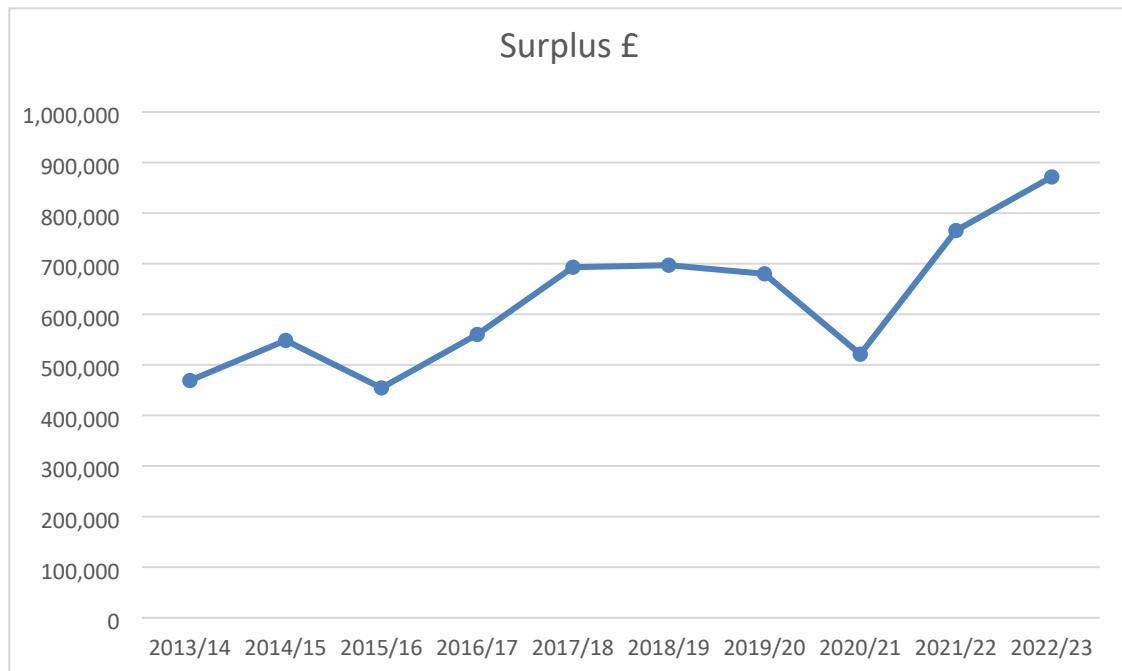
The following graph shows the income earned over the last ten years:



3.8 The centre achieved an operating surplus of £871,500 in 2022/23, the highest ever recorded. The following shows the surplus achieved over the last five years:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Surplus (£)	697,000	680,000	521,000	765,500	871,500

The following graph shows the surplus achieved at the centre over the last ten years:



Figures exclude FRS17 and depreciation.

4. Principal Objectives

The following are the principal objectives for the centre as identified by the current service plan:

- 4.1 Adopt a new fire strategy for the centre, this is being organised by the council's Corporate Property Unit.
- 4.2 Review the lease for the centre's catering unit, which is due to expire in March 2025.
- 4.3 Work with the auctioneers to continue increasing throughput at the livestock market.
- 4.4 Review operation of the Sunday Market.
- 4.5 Increase the number of events hosted at the centre and explore the scope for two-day events.
- 4.6 Increase the number of meeting room bookings.

5. Conclusion

It has been an extremely good year for the centre which, overall, has fully recovered from the effect of the Covid pandemic. The livestock market continues to go from strength to strength and other business streams at the centre continue to improve.

David Lewis
Facilities & Markets Manager
July 2023

This page is intentionally left blank

Scrutiny Bulletin: July 2023

Annual Performance Review - Visitor Facilities 2022/23

Relevant Officers:

David Lewis – Facilities and Markets Manager

Dave Adcock – Visitor Facilities Manager

Contact for general enquiries:

Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Democratic Services, Room 4.36

Email: jo.quinnell@exeter.gov.uk. Tel: 01392 265197

1 What is the update about?

- 1.1 This report is to update Members on the performance of Exeter City Council's Visitor Facilities (Underground Passages, Custom House Visitor Centre and Red Coat Guided Tours) for the financial year from 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2023.
- 1.2 Other than the Underground Passages, which re-opened to the public on the 9 June 2022, all other facilities operated for the full financial year.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Facilities and Markets Manager is the Service Lead with overall responsibility for the Visitor Facilities, as well as for Exeter Corn Exchange, Matford Centre and Markets.
- 2.2 The Visitor Facilities Manager is responsible for the management of the facilities.
- 2.3 The Underground Passages is a unique tourist attraction. The centre offers guided tours of medieval vaulted passageways that were built to bring a fresh water supply to the city.
- 2.4 The Custom House Visitor Centre is an information centre, heritage centre and cultural hub situated on Exeter's historic quayside.
- 2.5 The Red Coat Guided Tours service offers people the opportunity to join free walking tours of the city.

3 Current position

- 3.1 The operation of the Underground Passages was examined under the Council's One Exeter transformation programme, which aimed to make better use of its skills and resources, enabling improved and efficient services, and delivering financial savings throughout the organisation. As a consequence, the facility's operating days and opening hours were reduced and the annual revenue budget was cut from £81,000 to £36,000. There were no redundancies involved because the staffing establishment had shrunk over the previous two years as employees had elected to retire or resign their posts. Two members of staff were retained on slightly fewer hours, and two other part-time posts were created.

The Underground Passages are now open four days a week (Thursday to Sunday). The facility has a permanent staffing establishment of two full time equivalents (FTE) supported by casual staff as required.

The facility re-opened to the public on 9 June 2022. The re-opening was delayed because of a water leak which had to be investigated thoroughly by South West Water.

The table below shows the performance of the Underground Passages over the last five operational years, the closure period (20/21 and 21/22) is omitted:

UNDERGROUND PASSAGES					
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2022/23
Number of visitors hosted	22,824	21,772	21,862	20,206	9,495
Number of groups hosted	84	60	70	56	16
Total Income (£)	92,000	91,000	90,000	95,000	61,000
Total Expenditure (£)	157,000	155,000	161,000	171,000	102,000
Nett Cost of providing the service (£)	65,000	64,000	71,000	76,000	41,000

NB: Excludes depreciation and FRS costs

- 3.2 The Custom House opens seven days a week in the peak season (April - October) and Thursday to Sunday for the rest of the year. It is staffed by 0.9 FTE. The centre operated throughout the 22/23 financial year.

The centre is funded by an annual grant from Exeter Canal and Quay Trust (ECQT). The grant funding has been in place since 2008. The grant was amended in 22/23 following updates to the Service Level Agreement. These extended the winter opening pattern to four days a week, and provided additional staffing to ensure the centre does not close during lunch time as previously.

In 22/23 the Custom House continued to host two cultural partners, Quay Words and Honeyscribe. Throughout the year the Custom House was brought to life with various artist residencies, author events and workshops.

Both partners' original agreements came to an end in March 23. ECQT's ambition was to continue with two cultural partners for a further three years, matching their contracts with Arts Council England. Subsequently two partners were appointed, with Quay Words continuing for a further three years, and a new arts organisation, Art Work Exeter, being engaged. This has met ECQT's ambition to create a cultural hub within the Custom House.

The Custom House has been operating as the visitor centre on the quayside since 2015, when it replaced the previous visitor facility at Quay House, and this had seen a notable increase in the number of users. The pandemic limited the amount of time the centre was open to the public. The centre has been operating its regular opening pattern since 17 May 2021.

In 2022 Exeter Canal and Basin was awarded Heritage Harbour status, to celebrate this a Heritage Harbour Festival was organised, which took place in May 2023. A second Festival is being planned for September 2023

2022/23 also saw an increase in bookings for events in the Transit Shed and Piazza Terracina, for which the Custom House is responsible. A total of 91 events took place, ranging from Family activities, Jazz bands to Marathons and craft markets.

The table below shows the performance of the Custom House over the last five fully operational years (20/21 and 21/22 are omitted because they were affected by the pandemic) the number of visitors has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels but are now starting to show a marked increase:

CUSTOM HOUSE					
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2022/23
Number of visitors hosted	40,417	37,849	32,932	36,972	17,941
Number of groups hosted	160	78	98	169	72

3.3 The Red Coat Guided Tours service returned to an almost pre-pandemic operation in 22/23, although the number of tours were reduced because some of the guides (many of whom are retired persons) were initially reluctant to lead them, and demand from the public decreased.

In summary the service operates by:

- Providing historic tours of Exeter operating every day of the year except Christmas Day and Boxing Day;
- Delivery by 31 volunteer red coat guides co-ordinated by the Visitor Facilities Manager;
- There is a summer programme of 23 tours a week (12 different tours) and a winter tour programme of 15 tours a week (10 different tours);
- Group tours are also organised, offering a variety of different tours to school groups, language schools, local history groups and twinning visits. A charge is made for the group tours;
- A number of special tours are organised throughout the year, including Spooks & Broomsticks on Halloween, Heritage Open Days tours and Exeter Blitz tours.

The tours operated for the entire year in 2022/23. The numbers of tours offered was reduced. However a full programme has now been operating since April 2023.

In 22/23 a total of 8,274 people joined a Red Coat tour.

The tour guide service generates an income by offering booked group tours. There was more demand for this service in 22/23, attracting 108 group booking comprising of 2,019 people and generating £7,500 of income.

Since 2022 the VFM has been assisted by the Corn Exchange's Events & Ticketing Administrator which has greatly helped in the delivery of the booked tour service.

The service worked in partnership with InExeter to develop the Green Quarter tour, these tours proved to be popular and successful and has since been included in the current tour programme, but renamed as the Markets, Merchants & Mariners tour

Other new tours were developed during the year, including Royalty in Exeter. The service has also offered tours to Ukrainian refugees

The table below shows the performance of the guided tours service over the last five fully operational years, 20/21 and 21/22 are omitted because they were affected by the pandemic:

RED COAT GUIDED TOURS					
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2022/23
Number of visitors hosted	12,577	13,837	11,477	11,272	8,274
Number of groups hosted	157	173	141	117	108
Total Income (£)	7,000	10,000	9,000	8,500	7,500
Total Expenditure (£)	30,000	19,000	28,000	23,000	31,000
Nett Cost of providing the service (£)	23,000	9,000	19,000	14,500	23,500

NB: Expenditure and nett cost excludes depreciation and FRS costs.

3.4 The following developments within the Visitor Facilities service have been achieved:

- Recruitment and training new contracted and casual tour guides at the Underground Passages and Custom House;
- TripAdvisor Travellers Choice Award for the Red Coats;
- Successful delivery of three Quay Words seasons, focussing on the themes of Science, Maritime and Heritage. The events and workshops were all delivered in person;
- Successful delivery of three residencies with ECQT's cultural partner Honeyscribe;
- Successful recruitment of new cultural partner Art Work Exeter;
- Successful delivery of the Heritage Open Days programme in Exeter;
- Development of new red coat guided tours;
- Submission of 2 listed building consents for works to enhance the Custom House;
- Completion of a programme of building maintenance and decoration at the Custom House;
- Establishment of regular meetings of a Custom House working group whose aim is to develop ECQT's ambition to promote and enhance the Custom House as a cultural centre and its flagship building on the Quay ECQT's cultural partners;
- Repointing of sections of the Underground Passages including removal of the acrow props therefore improving the opportunity to offer special tours of the passages to areas where the public do not normally visit obstructions;
- Review of the current service level agreement with ECQT;
- Successful delivery of ECQT's Summer on the Quay programme.

4 Principal Objectives

The main objectives for the service in 2023/24 are as follows:

- 4.1 Introduce an on-line booking system for the Underground Passages;
- 4.2 Explore possibilities to introduce a website for the guided tour service and Underground Passages;
- 4.3 Continue to explore the possibility of opening new sections of the underground passages for public access;
- 4.4 Enhance social media output for all visitor facilities;
- 4.5 Work with Exeter Heritage Partnership and their volunteer co-ordinator to further develop volunteer roles within the Visitor Facilities;
- 4.6 Review the staff roles at the Custom House, and recruit to vacant positions;

- 4.7 Review the income and cost to ECC of the Underground Passages and if possible explore the opportunities of extending the opening times

5 Conclusion

All of the visitor facilities have come out of the pandemic successfully and now there are signs that business levels are gradually returning to pre-Covid levels.

David Lewis
Facilities & Markets Manager
July 2023

This page is intentionally left blank

Scrutiny Bulletin: (17th July 2023)

Title of Update: Summary Notes from Scrutiny Programme Board meeting held on 5 June 2023

Relevant Members and Officers:

Councillor Allcock (Chair) Councillors Atkinson, Vizard, M Mitchell and Rees and Director Corporate Services, Democratic Services Manager and Officers (SLS and HB).

Contact for general enquiries:

Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Democratic Services, Room 4.36

Email: jo.quinnell@exeter.gov.uk. Tel: 01392 265197

1. What is the update about?

To advise of the outcome of the meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Board meeting held on 5 June to discuss the forthcoming Scrutiny business for the City Council.

2. Background

The Scrutiny Programme Board is made up of the two Chairs and Deputy Chair of the Scrutiny Committees. The Chair is not a Member of Scrutiny. The Board meet regularly to timetable business for future Scrutiny Committee meetings. These items of business can come from a variety of sources, including being referred from the Council or Executive and also Members can suggest a review of a suggested topic or area of work.

3. Current position

Action Points from meeting on 5 June 2023

Review of Recent Scrutiny Committee Meetings

Members highlighted the large number of agenda items on Strategic Scrutiny Committee which had resulted in a long meeting. It was acknowledged that it was the role of the Chair to ensure the smooth running of meetings and a suggestion made that the order of items be changed. If there were no questions to Portfolio Holders it was felt that they were not obliged to attend Scrutiny Committees.

It was also the role of this Board to determine timetabling of items to the individual Scrutiny Committees.

Proposed items for Forthcoming Scrutiny Meetings

Bethan Evans, the Governance Training Consultant, had been provisionally booked for 7 September 2023 to provide a bespoke presentation on the role of scrutiny. Bethan would be requested to provide information in advance on her presentation. In the meantime, they felt that a general introduction to scrutiny at the forthcoming scrutiny meetings on the same lines as previous years would also be helpful.

With regard to future meetings of the Exeter Development Fund Task and Finish Group, the Director (IC) had advised that further detail was not yet available on the progress of this issue and future meetings of this Group.

A Climate Change Sub Committee had been raised at a recent All Group Leader's meeting. The Chair of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee would discuss further with the Director Corporate Services the content and timing on this Sub Committee.

Items for the respective Scrutiny meetings on 22 and 29 June were noted.

Members noted the draft work plan to be attached to the agenda for these meetings.

Draft Work Plan

The following matters were agreed:-

- the two Committees to be set out separately in date order on the work plan;
- financial monitoring would continue to be covered at a joint Scrutiny Committee meeting in the New Year prior to the Council Tax setting in February;
- noted that the terms of reference of both Committees covered invitations to outside bodies and agencies;
- Board meetings were now meeting more frequently than twice a year which was helpful in terms of agreeing the agenda for Scrutiny meetings in each cycle; and
- there was value in each meeting focusing on a single topic for scrutiny.

Proforma Document

Change to the proforma put forward by Councillors M. Mitchell and Rees were agreed.

South West Overview and Scrutiny Network – Finance Training

Training would be held on 26 June 2023 - moved to 31 July 2023 at 10 am.

4. Are there any other options?

The deliberations of the Board meetings as reported to the Scrutiny Bulletin enables the public to be aware of the matters potentially coming to Scrutiny.

5. Conclusion

A further update would be made to the next Scrutiny Bulletin.

Scrutiny Bulletin: 17th July 2023

Title of Update: Launch of a new Tenant Portal

Relevant Officers: Lawrence Blake and Adrian Pengelly - Assistant Directors, Housing

Contact for general enquiries:

Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Democratic Services, Room 4.36

Email: jo.quinnell@exeter.gov.uk. Tel: 01392 265197

1. What is the update about?

To inform Members that a new Tenant Portal for Council Tenants has just been launched. This is a secure, password protected system whereby tenants can access their rent accounts, pay their rents, arrange repairs to their homes and check on the status of repairs already raised.

2. Background

The Tenant Portal has been designed to be an add-on to the existing communication systems that we already operate; it is in addition to all other methods of communication to give tenants a wide range of methods of contacting us. The Tenant Portal has been carefully researched over a number of years to ensure the security of data and the ability of the system to link to the information we currently hold on other systems such as OPEN Housing. The Tenants' Voice groups were able to provide valuable feedback whilst the portal was in development and were the first to test the 'live' version.

3. Current position

Letters have been sent out to Council tenants across the city, ward by ward (to ensure that the system and support staff are not overwhelmed by demand) with log-in details and explanatory leaflets explaining how the portal will work. Drop-in sessions have been arranged so that tenants can find out more and be helped into logging on etc. Information is available in an accessible form on the Council's website and tenants can telephone for advice on how to access and use the system. Tenants, once they have registered, instead of telephoning officers just to check on progress/rent accounts etc will be able to undertake self-help which will enable officers to deal with people who are more vulnerable and unable to do this themselves.

4. Future position

In the future additional elements will be added to the Portal so that tenants will be able to raise further housing management issues and service requests.

5. Are there any other options?

As we move through digital shift towards more self-help, it enables limited officer time to be devoted to helping those needing more support in maintaining their tenancies.

6. Conclusion

We are excited about the introduction of the Tenant Portal and any comments received from Members about the system would be welcomed.