

Building a stronger sustainable city

Our corporate plan for 2012-14

Published July 2012



Exeter City Council

Message from the Leader of the council

Cllr Pete Edwards



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Message from the Leader of the council

Like all cities, Exeter faces significant economic, social and environmental challenges. The changing landscape of the city centre illustrates how we are actively responding to those challenges – and we are ambitious for the future.

We will enhance Exeter as the regional capital, working with our partners to improve the quality of life for all people living, working in and visiting the city.

Cuts in funding from central government require us to prioritise which aspects of quality of life we can improve. Therefore, over the next couple of years, we will be focusing on:

- Meeting housing needs
- Growing business and creating jobs
- Reducing carbon emissions
- Providing leisure and cultural facilities
- Supporting Exeter's communities and neighbourhoods

As well as contributing to the overall success of Exeter, the council continues to provide value-for-money services. In seeking further improvements we have started a fundamental transformation of our structure and the way we work. Our focus will be on purposes - the issues that matter to citizens and customers rather than our traditional functions. This will require commitment to new ways of working.

This plan sets out our ambitions and provides a snapshot of some of the key things we will be doing over the next few years; it is not a statement of everything we do. We will keep you informed of how we are getting on.

All councillors and members of staff are committed to delivering high quality services and working for the benefit of the city. If we play our part in taking forward the purposes and actions in this document Exeter will be a stronger sustainable city.

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Exeter City Council

Playing our part

Philip Bostock, Chief Executive



Collective & individual responsibility

We all have an important role to play in the direction of this plan.

As a council, the **importance of the customer** is emphasised in our purposes, but we are all responsible for ensuring that customer needs are met in practice every day. We must also ensure that everyone in the city has **equal access to our services** and that the diverse needs and backgrounds of our residents are respected and valued. And, as we continue our transformation programme, it is imperative that we **develop our staff** and support them through change.

Exeter is a great place to be because the organisations based here, and the people that live and work here, have a unique and distinct passion for Exeter as a place - they are prepared to go the extra mile for the city. At the city council we will **reinforce this passion for the city**.

We can also help to **tackle climate change** by reducing our CO₂ emissions and reducing waste.

Similarly, by looking to create jobs at the city council through, for example, apprenticeships, we can play our part in **tackling unemployment**. All of the issues highlighted here must be at the forefront of our thinking.

Our values: how we will work

Our staff and members have identified what they value at the council, what they see as important in the way we work. If our **values** are to be meaningful we must all make sure that they underpin our attitudes and behaviours. Accordingly, we will:

1. **Meet customers' needs with high-quality services**
2. **Be flexible and have a can-do approach**
3. **Show trust and respect**
4. **Tell people what is going on, listen and respond to their views**
5. **Be proud to work for the city and the council**

I look forward to working with you to make Exeter a stronger sustainable city.

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Our purposes: what we are here to do

As a council, we are here to meet the needs of our citizens and customers. These vary in size and complexity, for example: a family needing help finding a home; a shopkeeper seeking new premises; children looking for somewhere to play; a major company looking to build a shopping complex; a group of neighbours setting up a community group. Responding to needs like these is why we are here – **our purposes**. We have ten purposes, which are shown below.

We are in the midst of significant change. Senior management has been re-organised and we are now looking at how we can put our purposes at the centre of everything we do. This transformation demands new ways of thinking, new ways of working and a shift from our traditional structure.

With this in mind we are using a 'systems thinking' approach to review how we meet our purposes, how we might be structured more effectively around them, and what more we can do to meet customers' needs.

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Our key actions: meeting our purposes

Over the next couple of years we will invest significant resources in meeting all of our purposes. However, current events, external pressures, national and local political priorities and pressing public needs, mean that some purposes will merit additional expenditure and activity. In line with this we have set out below some of the **key actions** we will be taking over the next couple of years to meet our purposes.

Help me run a successful business in Exeter

We will:

- Promote the city nationally and internationally to secure investment and attract new businesses and skilled workers
- Promote the city as a retail and visitor destination
- Bring employers to major employment sites, including Exeter Science Park, creating upwards of 26,000 jobs in the next 15 years in the Exeter growth area
- Provide free professional advice to small start up businesses and social enterprises and help existing ones grow
- Help businesses to make their premises safe places for people to work and visit with business processes that do not harm the environment
- Advertise premises and sites through our on-line commercial property register
- Rename key car parks to direct customers to where they want to be
- Build on the success of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme to promote Exeter's higher-rated food businesses
- Support thriving district shopping centres including Topsham, Cowick Street, Fore Street, Heavitree, Magdalen Road and Whipton Village

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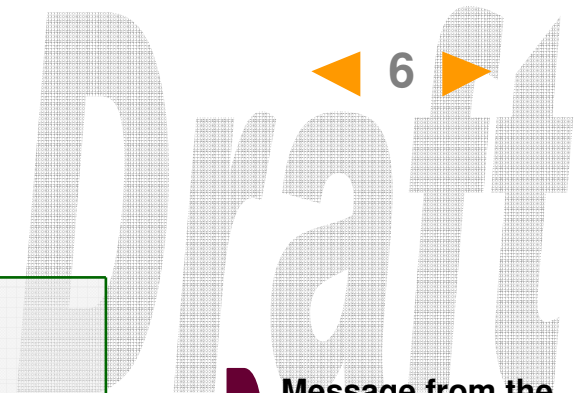
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Help me find somewhere suitable to live

We will:

- Ensure that no-one spends a second night sleeping on the streets and establish a hotline number and provision for extreme weather periods
- Prepare and consult on Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to guide provision of affordable housing and the introduction of an increased requirement of 35%
- Set fair and affordable council rents and use increased flexibilities to decide how we allocate housing in Exeter
- Seek to introduce innovative solutions to building new housing, such as a co-operative and mutual model of home ownership where people are given stability and equity
- Bring privately-owned empty homes back into use
- Grow the Private Sector Leasing and EXtralet schemes to improve access to affordable private sector tenancies and drive up standards in private rental properties
- Provide financial assistance to those most in need to make private sector homes fit for habitation, safe and decent
- Improve the council's existing housing stock to high energy efficiency and sustainability standards
- Assist in the development of 150 Extra-Care homes
- Deliver at least 5% of all new affordable homes to meet the council's wheelchair design standards and speed up adaptations in private homes through our Disabled Facility Grants

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Improve the environment and my neighbourhood

We will:

- Follow and promote the waste hierarchy: reduce waste at source, re-use materials, recycle and compost
- Support Fairtrade Fortnight and raise awareness of social and environmental concerns about goods and services
- Continue to promote the Green Accord Accreditation and work with businesses to achieve the award
- Continue “Green Team” initiatives in schools and extend the message of waste minimisation to other groups
- Work with partners to combat fuel poverty, including the installation of solar panels on council houses across Exeter
- Reduce car dependency and encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport
- Work with the Carbon Trust’s Local Authority Carbon Management Programme to reduce our CO₂ emissions through environmental purchasing, green travel plans, the efficient use of energy and the minimisation of waste
- Encourage lower emissions in Exeter’s taxi fleet
- Work with Exeter Wild City project to conserve natural habitats and wildlife, improve the quality of urban green space and include green corridors as the city grows
- Extend Higher Cemetery Garden of Remembrance, develop natural burial options and organise a programme of memorial and other events in the city’s three cemeteries
- Submit an Air Quality Action Plan to Defra and seek to increase awareness of the health impacts of poor air quality
- Reduce fly-tipped rubbish by working with partners, landlords and residents to bring about sustainable solutions
- Extend our range of recycling banks to capture more small electrical goods and textiles and introduce a wider range of waste receptacles to householders to support waste minimisation

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Provide great things for me to see, do and visit

We will:

- Work towards a comprehensive re-development of the Bus and Coach Station, including retail space, new swimming pool and leisure facilities and new bus and coach station.
- Support the organisation of the Exeter Festival of South West Food and Drink in Northernhay gardens
- Continue to grant aid Animated Exeter, Vibraphonic and Exeter Respect festivals
- Work with the Exeter Cultural Partnership to prepare a Cultural Strategy to develop the breadth and quality of activity in the city
- Offer an inspiring programme of events, activities and exhibitions at the Museum, enriching the cultural lives of all who live, visit and work in the city
- Maintain the high standard of parks and open spaces as a free-to-use, community resource
- Improve existing play areas, consult residents about developing new ones and refurbish water play facilities at Heavitree and St Thomas
- Re-furbish Flowerpot Skate Park
- Work with Parkwood Leisure to maintain and improve sporting and leisure facilities operated on behalf of the council

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Keep my city safe and looking good

We will:

- Use our licensing function to maintain a lively and safe night time economy
- Work in partnership to address crime and anti-social behaviour across the city
- Support the Exeter Domestic Abuse Forum and awareness raising events
- Work with communities to tackle hate crime and continue to be an active partner in the Devon Hate Crime Prevention Task Group
- Complete environmental enhancement schemes at London Inn Square and Cowick Street and finalise schemes for Central Station

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Deliver good development

We will:

- Implement the recently adopted Core Strategy
- Prepare and adopt Supplementary Planning Documents to guide sustainable transport and sustainable construction
- Introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy
- Consult on an initial 'Issues and Options' stage of a Site Allocations and Development Management plan
- Bring forward outline and full planning permissions for proposed new communities at Monkerton and Newcourt and prepare a development brief for growth at Alphington in partnership with the local community
- Implement the council's Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Support initiatives to develop viable proposals for district heating schemes at Monkerton and the Grecian Quarter/Heavitree Road
- Explore how a Design Review Panel can help to raise the quality of development
- Introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy to ensure funding is captured from development to pay for required infrastructure
- Work with the private sector to deliver 600 homes per year
- Explore opportunities to secure funding to unlock barriers to building

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Enable me to have my say and be heard

We will:

- Develop the scrutiny role for the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee in line with new Government legislation
- Develop the Residential Park Forum to strengthen the voice for park home residents
- Help residents shape their areas, for example through neighbourhood plans
- Fund communities at a local level and across the city through community grants and the New Homes Bonus
- Work in partnership with other agencies to ensure we are developing the best services for communities in the city
- Fund voluntary sector groups to meet the needs of the more vulnerable and continue to support existing joint work with community groups, charities, community associations and faith groups across the city

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Provide me with the information I need

We will:

- Explore the opportunities offered by social media and mobile technology to engage more residents and provide timely information
- Through the systems thinking reviews, ensure residents are receiving the information they require in the most efficient ways
- Publish the Exeter Citizen four times a year, ensuring all residents are informed of the council's policies, activities and events
- Enhance and promote the use of the council's website for accessing information and services online

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Maintain the assets of our city

We will:

- Refurbish the King William Street car park and install charging points for electric cars
- Identify schemes and funding to address significant flooding issues in the city affecting the River Exe and Northbrook
- Improve democratic accountability in respect of the river and canal to maximise its potential
- Update the council's Open Space Strategy and records of locally important heritage
- Establish a register of Assets of Community Value



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Help me get back to financial independence

We will:

- Continue to work in partnership with Wessex Home Improvement Loans to develop innovative loan products and provide debt advice to clients in need
- Continue to work with the Exeter and Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board to promote investment in training provision for employers and progress projects which support local people to take advantage of job opportunities
- Help people into employment through an Exeter City Council Apprenticeship Scheme equipping them with skills and vital work experience
- Improve the way we deal with visitors to our Customer Service Centre who have financial and housing problems so that they receive timely and cost effective advice
- Work with local partners to explore how we can join up services to help residents to find or get back into employment
- Ensure that affected residents are aware of the changes under the Welfare Reform Act and support them in dealing with these

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Responding to financial challenges

The activity set out in this plan will require significant resources, which presents a challenge when our grant from the Government has been reduced by around 23% over the previous 2 years. And things will not get any easier: the implications of the Government's next Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2013 are unknown, but the assumption must be for further cuts to our grant.

The table below highlights the scale of the challenge, with the council facing a projected budget deficit of approximately £2.2m by the end of 2016/17.

Despite these challenges we are responding positively to the funding gap. We have made significant efficiency savings in recent years and we take every opportunity to innovate and make our services more effective and efficient. Our lean, systems thinking approach is central to this, ensuring that our services not only meet the aspirations of local residents, but are as efficient as we can make them.

We are also investigating other potential revenue streams, such as the proposed Local Business Rate Scheme, being developed by the Government, and the potential impact of the Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus.

| | 2012/13 £m | 2013/14 £m | 2014/15 £m | 2015/16 £m | 2016/17 £m |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Revenue Budget | 14.301 | 14.301 | 14.124 | 13.880 | 13.485 |
| Less Resources | (14.301) | (13.624) | (13.480) | (13.185) | (13.287) |
| DEFICIT (in year) | 0 | 0.677 | 0.644 | 0.695 | 0.198 |
| CUMULATIVE | 0 | 0.677 | 1.321 | 2.016 | 2.214 |

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