

ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2014/2015

APPENDIX

(a) The Scrutiny Work Programme 2014/2015

The Annual Scrutiny Work Programme Meeting which took place in July 2014 allowed Members to establish whether they were satisfied with the substance and direction of the proposed Scrutiny Work Programme for 2014/2015. All Members were invited to put forward their suggestions for Task and Finish Group topics (prior to the meeting) and those topics were prioritised taking into account the Council's current aims and objectives.

Topics identified which resulted in Member Briefings included:-

- Pensions
- The HRA re-structure
- The Local Enterprise Partnership.

(b) Task and Finish Group Investigations (Priority Topics)

Were established as:-

- The Future of Exeter Quay
- Review of Income Generating Measures
- Community Patrol/Out of Hours Operatives/Anti Social Behaviour
- Health Issues – Review of the Public Health Plan
- Social Media
- Council's Role in the Community and Tackling Isolation
- Procurement
- Growth and Marketing Exeter
- Scrutiny Spotlight Review of the Parking Review
- Continuation of the work of the Cost of Living Forum

The Future of Exeter Quay (Scrutiny Committee Economy)

Group Objectives:-

To promote:-

- Tourism within the Quay area.
- Development and Commercialisation of the Quay area.

To explore ways of improving:-

- Accessibility to the Quay and between the Quay and the City Centre.

To ensure that:-

- The recommendations contained within the Masterplan for the Quay area have been actioned;

And:-

- To continue to work with stakeholders and local businesses to achieve these key objectives.

Group Recommendations:-

- Encourage the formation of a Quay Traders Association.
- Ensure that promotional material covers the wider Quay area and the Basin.
- Support a meeting of Cllr Denham (Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture), Cllr Owen (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Well Being) and the Assistant Director, Economy to discuss the different areas of the Quay and the feedback obtained from Quay Traders.
- Liaise further with Stagecoach and Devon County Council to ensure that the new promotional branding for the Quay, once available, is featured and advertised through the local public transport system and promotional literature.
- Approach Ring and Ride providers to enquire whether they could provide a circular transport route linking the City and the Quay during the weekends/school holidays.
- Obtain a costing, subject to the recommendations of the Parking Review, as to essential improvements to the Quay Car Park.
- Support a formal partnership for management of the Quay involving stakeholders and traders.
- Investigate opportunities, in the long term, for externally funded improvements to the Quay area.
- Request that the Planning Members' Working Group review the Master Plan for the Quay area to establish whether it requires updating and whether it meets with the Council's current aims and priorities.
- Monitor the progress of these recommendations with an update to be provided to the Scrutiny Committee Economy in 12 months' time.

The Group had the benefit of a visit from Mr Philip Ardley, Consultant, Asset Management Service, Regeneration & Economic Development, Gloucester City Council, who spoke about the waterways regeneration in Gloucester.

The Future of Exeter Quay Task and Finish Group report will be submitted to the Scrutiny Economy Committee on the 18th June 2015 for approval.

Review of Income Generating Measures (Scrutiny Committee Resources)

Group Objectives:-

- To review/identify what income generating measures the Council has already in place.
- To identify aspects that the Group will not wish to consider to avoid duplication of work.
- To obtain a broad sense of the types of areas which could generate further income with consideration to the available resources.

Group ideas:-

- A Solar Photovoltaic site on Council owned land.
- A dedicated member of staff to bid for external funding.
- Use of St Nicholas Priory for weddings and maximising the use of RAMM for corporate events.
- Selling external advertising on the outside of car parks in a prominent place.
- Exeter has a number of parks and open spaces which are not utilised to their maximum potential. The Council could look into:-
 - holding events (eg concerts) in parks
 - licensed ice cream vendors in parks
 - open air cinemas
 - weddings
 - more car parks
 - more paid facilities in parks
- Museum – voluntary donations for entry.

Group Recommendations:-

- To consider and comment upon the ideas submitted by the Group.
- To approve the selection of income generating ideas detailed within the report with a view to business cases being submitted for consideration to the Scrutiny Committee Resources.
- Decide upon a timescale for the provision of those business cases to the Committee.

- Review progression either at a point in time agreed by the Committee under the above recommendation or 6 months from the date of this report, whichever the sooner.

The Review of Income Generating Measures Report was submitted to the Scrutiny Committee Resources on the 28th January 2015 and the recommendations approved (Minute 12).

Community Patrol/Out of Hours Operatives/Anti Social Behaviour
(Scrutiny Committee Community)
A Spotlight Review

An update on the current position was provided to the Group by the Housing Solicitor, Assistant Director Environment, Senior Environmental Health Officer, Environmental Health Manager and the Community Safety and Enforcement Service Manager.

This Spotlight Review found that the new team and system which had replaced the old Community Patrol did not have as high a profile as its predecessor. However, Members were satisfied that this did not mean that the new team and system were lacking by comparison. The new team and system were found to be successful in delivering a targeted and focussed approach. The new service was generating good results and this had not been adversely affected by the loss of late night patrollers as was initially thought to be the case by Members. The introduction of the new Anti Social Behaviour legislation in October 2014 and the review of the current service by the Senior Environmental Health Officer were welcomed by Members as positive steps forward for the continued improvement of this service.

Group Recommendations:-

- That the Group's findings are noted and that Scrutiny Committee Community are content with the Review.
- Scrutiny Committee Community support a further meeting of the Review Group once the new anti social behaviour legislation has been implemented fully so that any impacts on service delivery can be considered.

A report was submitted to Scrutiny Community on the 11th November 2015 which was noted (Minute 51).

Ancillary to the Review:-

- An e-mail was circulated to all Councillors with details of the relevant officers in Housing, Environmental Health and Legal Services so that they would know who to approach for advice in respect of anti social behaviour and noise nuisance complaints which they may receive from their constituents.

The Environmental Health Manager will submit an update report to the Scrutiny Committee Community (as per the Group's second recommendation) on the 16th June 2015.

**Health Issues – Review of the Public Health Plan
(Scrutiny Committee Community)**

The Scrutiny Programme Officer advised Members of the Group that following enquiries with Devon County Council in October 2014, it seemed that the Public Health Plan was due to be reviewed by the Health and Well Being Board on the 11th November 2014.

The main question identified was whether it would prove necessary for a Task and Finish Group to review this?

It was established that the terms of reference for the Health and Well Being Board are:-

- To develop and update an annual Exeter Health and Wellbeing Plan setting out evidence based priorities and actions;
- To ensure that all key plans and policies appropriately reflect the health and well being priorities identified through the joint needs assessment process;
- To establish “expert” task and finish groups where additional needs, analysis or guidance on the evidence of the effectiveness of interventions is required.

In order to save Members’ time and ascertain whether any issues would require Task and Finish Group assistance, the Scrutiny Programme Officer attended the Health and Well Being Meeting on the 11th November 2014 ensuring that there was provision on the Agenda to specifically consider this point. The Health and Well Being Board decided that Task and Finish Group assistance would not be required on this occasion and that there was no need to investigate any issues surrounding the current Public Health Plan with which the Board were content.

The Assistant Director, Environment agreed to provide an update to the Scrutiny Community Committee in this respect.

Social Media (Scrutiny Committee Resources)

Group Objectives:-

To explore:-

- The social media landscape
- The council’s use of Twitter
- The council’s use of Facebook
- Measures of success
- Engaging with communities
- Ideas for future developments

Group Recommendations:-

- Scrutiny Resources have the opportunity to consider and comment upon the findings of the Task and Finish Group;

- Social media training should be incorporated into the Councillors' induction training programme.
- Acknowledge the Group's finding that the Council's current use of and presence through social media is currently of a high standard and as such, no further improvements are considered necessary at this point in time.
- Agree that this Task and Finish Group should meet once more in 9 months' time to review the position to see if it remains the same or whether further improvements can be suggested.
- The Group will report back to the Scrutiny Committee Resources after October 2015 with a review on the position together with any further recommendations.

A report was submitted to the Scrutiny Committee Resources on the 18th March 2015 and the recommendations were approved (Minute 11).

Council's Role in the Community and Tackling Isolation
(Scrutiny Committee Community)

At the first meeting of this Group a presentation was provided by the Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer to give an overview of the current position and work in progress. It was recognised at an early stage that there was a significant risk of duplicating work given the enormity of the topic associated with the wide ranging areas of existing work. Some areas were identified as already dealt with through existing Council work streams together with the work of outside community organisations and the Health and Well Being Board. A clear focus for the Group would be paramount if realistic and useful recommendations were to be put forward.

The Group highlighted that:-

- Social isolation is an ongoing concern in particular and recognised the valuable work of Community Organisers.
- That the drive is very much towards mobilising services and organisations around individuals.
- The success of the current trial of the Neighbourhood Health Watch project in St Thomas would be reported back to the Health and Well Being Board for consideration.
- Mapping of organisations, services and facilities was recognised as a real challenge in so far as collation and accuracy of information was concerned.

The Group heard from Exeter CVS representatives and Community Organisers from Wonford, Cowick and St Thomas.

The Group established the following points upon which recommendations should be based:-

- To ensure that the Scrutiny Committee Community are kept fully informed and up to date on a regular basis with Community Engagement work which was not the case at present.

- The Scrutiny Committee Community should have the opportunity to investigate any areas of concern which may be highlighted at any point in the future by the Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer.
- To continue to support Exeter communities in so far as the Council is able with consideration to available resources and capacity.
- To encourage stronger communities in line with the Exeter Vision.

Group Recommendations:

- The Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer will provide an update to the Scrutiny Committee Community twice a year detailing work in progress, results of work and any areas of concern.
- The Group will hear from the two new Community Organisers in 6 months' time to find out what progress they are making and what issues they may identify as needing attention. The Group will then report back to the Scrutiny Committee Community.
- The Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer, at any point in time, can ask for this Task and Finish Group to reconvene and consider any areas which she would suggest merit further investigation, with a direct reporting line between the Group and the Scrutiny Committee Community.

The Report will be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee Community on the 16th June 2015.

This Task and Finish Group is a prime example of how Members and Officers carefully navigated a huge topic and adapted the way in which they approached the subject to avoid duplicating work and to reach both realistic and practical recommendations which would add value and compliment existing work.

Growth and Marketing Exeter (Scrutiny Committee Economy)

Group Objectives:-

- To identify the opportunities within the City which are not being progressed or not being progressed in the way they should be.
- To find out who our competitors are – what are they doing marketing wise and who are their partners?
- Draw comparisons with areas which have strong inward investment and marketing campaigns. What are other cities doing that we are not?
- Identify ways in which the Council can persuade our neighbours, big stakeholders and businesses to contribute.

Current Progression:-

- The Group wished to hear from Cambridgeshire County Council given that Cambridge is also a University City and has undertaken significant growth and economic development in recent times. On the 9th April 2015 the Business Manager, Enterprise and Economy from Cambridgeshire County Council visited and provided an overview and presentation to the Group followed by a question and answer

session which Members found both interesting and helpful. The next meeting of the Group will be scheduled towards the end of June 2015 when the CEO of a South African Company which has recently re-located to Exeter, will attend to speak with the Group as to why the company specifically chose to re-locate to Exeter. Following this the Group should be in a position to identify recommendations which will be submitted to the Scrutiny Economy Committee during the September 2015 cycle of Scrutiny. It is anticipated that these recommendations will help identify any new ways in which further growth may be supported together with possible new ways and styles of marketing the City.

Consideration of the Parking Review (Scrutiny Committee Economy)

As a result of the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme Meeting (July 2014), Members highlighted that they would like a Task and Finish Group to review the outcome of the Parking Review once the Report is available. The Task and Finish Group would then submit their findings to the Scrutiny Economy Committee.

Officers have liaised at regular points over the last 4 months to monitor progress in respect of the provision of the Parking Review Report so that a timely meeting of this Task and Finish Group can be arranged and is now due to take place on the 27th May 2015.

The Cost of Living Forum (Scrutiny Committee Economy)

The Cost of Living Forum membership consisted of Members and Officers together with representatives from outside organisation and support services.

Key Objectives:-

- Gather evidence to establish a baseline on wages and cost of living in the City of Exeter.
- Gather and analyse evidence on the impact that low wages and high relative cost of living has on residents in the City of Exeter (taking a broad perspective on impacts and to include Health and Wellbeing).
- Gather and analyse evidence on particular problems.
- Explore (in partnership with a broad range of stakeholders) strategies and solutions to problems identified following the gathering of evidence for this Forum.

Following approval from both the Scrutiny Committee Economy and the Executive a report was commissioned from Exeter University to gather detailed, accurate and localised information and statistics particularly in respect of Housing and Wages which were two particular areas identified by the Forum, at an early stage, as requiring further investigation.

Areas Identified for Future Work:-

1. Working with young people in schools to provide better careers advice and to raise awareness as to what is available in the local economy.
2. Availability of financial advice – it was suggested that the private and voluntary sectors could work together to achieve this.

3. Debt strategy – to look at the immediate future as more families need access to more finance.
4. Availability and access to affordable and ethical credit.
5. Procurement – with particular attention as to how the Council procures and reviewing what powers the Council has under the Social Value Act (with particular reference to the Living Wage).
6. Skills agenda relating to productivity (Knowledge Economy Strategy).
7. Grants – liaising with Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to ensure that the Council make the most of any available grants and funding.
8. A need to put forward a business case to all small businesses with particular reference to tangible statistics.

Group Recommendations:-

- a) To hold an ESIF (European Structural and Investment Fund) information event in association with LEP and the Federation of Small Businesses to which private and voluntary sector organisations and stakeholders will be invited to attend.
- b) To hold a 6 month review of ongoing, relevant Council work streams identified by the Forum, reporting back to the Scrutiny Committee Economy with an update.
- c) To promote the Living Wage by putting information on the Council's website, the Exeter Citizen and through social media highlighting the work of the Cost of Living Forum and providing case studies reflecting the Council's success in implementing the Living Wage along with an interview with a local business which has implemented the Living Wage successfully.
- d) The Cost of Living Forum should continue to meet annually.
- e) To engage with existing businesses via their networking events to raise the profile of the Living Wage and the Cost of Living Forum work.
- f) To provide Council staff with information to increase their knowledge of the Living Wage which they can share with outside organisations.
- g) To share the Cost of Living Forum reports with East Devon District Council and Teignbridge Council.

Reasons for the recommendations:-

- (i) To encourage collaborative working between the Council, private and voluntary sectors and stakeholders in relation to ideas and submitting bid applications for ESIF funding. A combined approach to bids may increase the chance of successfully securing funding.
- (ii) To monitor progress in respect of the Council's existing and relevant work streams in direct relation to the work of the Cost of Living Forum.

- (iii) To ensure that the Scrutiny Committee Economy remains up to date on the issues and work taking place in respect of (ii).
- (iv) To ensure that ongoing issues surrounding the Cost of Living and the difficulties faced by Exeter residents are monitored, so that finding further strategies and solutions to tackle these difficulties remains at the forefront of the Council's priorities.
- (v) To highlight the benefits of implementing the Living Wage to businesses and the probable effect on productivity.
- (vi) To identify networking opportunities where the Council may be able to talk about the Living Wage and the Cost of Living Forum work amongst the local and wider business community.
- (vii) To work collaboratively, on a cross boundary basis, with our neighbouring authorities to address this national issue.
- (viii) To invite comments from Members of the Scrutiny Committee Economy in respect of the report, the work of the Cost of Living Forum to date and its final recommendations which all contribute towards a robust and accountable scrutiny process.

The Current Position:-

The next Cost of Living Forum (review) meeting is scheduled for 28th January 2016 in line with recommendation (d).

The Scrutiny Programme Officer is working with the Chair of the Group, the Council's Economy Department and Media Officer and The Federation of Small Businesses in respect of recommendations (c) and (f).

The Exeter University Report has been forwarded to Teignbridge and East Devon District Councils as per recommendation (g).

A verbal update to the Scrutiny Committee Economy in respect of the proposed ESIF event (recommendation (a)) and progress on existing work streams (recommendations (a), (b) and (e)) is due to be provided at the next Committee meeting on the 18th June 2015.

Procurement (Audit and Governance Committee)

This Task and Finish Group recognised that there is now an agreed budget in place for a dedicated Procurement Officer and that the Corporate Manager, Legal Services and the Housing and Contracts Officer have already worked together on updating the Regulations.

Although a dedicated Procurement Officer has not yet been appointed, an interim Procurement Officer is currently in post.

The Group decided that it would be both sensible and of greater benefit to wait until a full time permanent Procurement Officer is in post before proceeding further. It was recognised that a permanent officer would undertake an imperative role within the Group. The main danger in progressing now with input from the interim Procurement Officer, could be a lack of consistent approach between the interim officer and the permanent officer both of whom may present, at differing points in time, conflicting professional views and suggestions on best working practice. This would have a

detrimental effect on previously proposed and indeed, any approved recommendations. This in turn would only serve to complicate and undermine the procurement process and system. A double review of procurement would be undesirable at best, given the inevitable duplication of work and would also put an unnecessary strain on limited time, resources and capacity of both Members and Officers.

(c) Scrutiny Process

The cross party Scrutiny Review Working Group continue to meet regularly to consider improvements to the scrutiny process. The meeting of this Group provides an additional mechanism to ensure that suggestions are dealt with quickly and efficiently thereby avoiding unnecessary delays and provides a direct reporting line to Executive.

Developments 2014/2015:-

- **Scrutiny Arrangements**

A report was submitted to the Executive on the 7th October 2014 updating Members as to the implementation of the new Scrutiny arrangements following the report of the cross party Scrutiny Review Working Group to Executive dated 9 April 2013 (Executive Minute 46) and Council, 23rd April 2013 (Minute 22). The 2014 report reviewed implementation of the previous scrutiny arrangements and Committee structure which recommended, amongst other things, the need for a dedicated Scrutiny Officer to support Scrutiny Members.

The 2014 report recommendations were approved by Council on the 15th October 2014 (Minute 52).

- **Scrutiny System**

A report was submitted to the respective Scrutiny Committees updating Members as to the success of the changes to the Scrutiny Agendas and structure of meetings which were trialled during the September and November 2014 cycles of Scrutiny. The report outlined the findings of the cross party Scrutiny Review Working Group and comments received from both Members and Officers. Members agreed that the changes had improved the efficiency and quality of the Scrutiny Committee meetings and resolved that the findings of the Scrutiny Review Working Group together with other Member/Officer comments should be noted. It was recommended to Full Council that the trial changes be implemented on a permanent basis with immediate effect and that the arrangements should be reviewed in 12 months. The recommendations were approved by Executive (9th December 2014: Minute 125) and by Full Council (16th December 2014: Minute 66).

- The Scrutiny Topic Proposal Form

This newly devised form was made available to Members on the 25th November 2014 under the documents section of their ipads. This allows Members to highlight topics or issues, throughout the municipal year, which they consider should be the subject of Task and Finish Group investigation.

- Scrutiny presence through Twitter

Will be trialled through the Council's Corporate Twitter Account as soon as the 2015/2016 Task and Finish Groups are established. Groups will decide at their initial meeting whether it is appropriate and of potential benefit to use social media to gain public feedback on the topics.

(d) Training and profile

- Scrutiny training for Members is now a regular feature of the Members' Induction Training Programme and 2014 provided the highest number of attendees for a Members' induction training session.
- As a new initiative this year Exeter are taking the lead in the providing joint Members' scrutiny training in conjunction with East Devon District Council and Teignbridge Council. This is scheduled to take place on the 16th July 2015 at the Guildhall, Exeter.
- Mid Devon and Gloucester Councils have approached Exeter to find out more about the way in which we currently run our scrutiny process which is developing a reputation as an example of good practice within the South West Region.
- The South West Charter for Member Development was awarded to the Democratic Services Team this year with particular mention of scrutiny:-

"The development of Scrutiny and how it is used to shape policy was seen as good practice by the assessment team and an area where there was scope to share ideas and developments with other Councils".

- Current discussions are underway for Exeter to host the next South West Network Overview and Scrutiny event to be held in October 2015.
- The Association of Democratic Service Officers' conference in October 2014 provided a good opportunity to compare Scrutiny practice with other Authorities in which Exeter, Gloucester and Devon County Council Scrutiny Officers took the lead on discussions.
- The Democratic Services Team were awarded runners up place in the Association of Democratic Service Officers' Awards 2015.

(e) Future Improvements

- The Scrutiny Review Working Group will explore whether committee meetings/cycles can be compacted in future and whether it would be of benefit for two consecutive Scrutiny Committee meetings to take place during each cycle for each respective Scrutiny Committee where one meeting will

deal with the usual Scrutiny Committee Agenda and the second meeting will allow time for specific presentations and debate upon areas of particular interest to Members.

- A running list of Task and Finish Group topics and outcomes (year by year) to be made available in spreadsheet form so that progress of approved recommendations may be tracked, updates provided and reviews carried out where appropriate. This will ensure continuity and a check system for follow up of work resulting from approved recommendations and will also provide a quick point of reference to identify those topics which have already been investigated in recent times.
- The Strategic Management Team will be informed of the topics for Task and Finish Group investigation following the Annual Work Programme meeting. This will ensure (for the most part) the availability of Senior Officers for the Group meetings and will allow detailed and helpful information to be sourced for Members at an early opportunity.

(f) Timetable for forthcoming municipal year:-

19/05/15	:	Annual Council meeting (Membership of Scrutiny Committees to be decided)
03/06/15	:	Scrutiny Induction training for Exeter Members
16/06/15	:	First Scrutiny Committee Community Meeting
18/06/15	:	First Scrutiny Committee Economy Meeting
24/06/15	:	First Audit and Governance Committee Meeting
01/07/15	:	First Scrutiny Committee Resources Meeting
09/07/15	:	Annual Scrutiny Work Programme Meeting
16/07/15	:	Joint Local Authority Scrutiny Training initiative
28/07/15	:	Full Council and confirmation of Task and Finish Group membership nominations
01/08/15	:	Commence with first tranche of Groups.

Conclusion

The Scrutiny process at Exeter City Council continues to provide Members with the chance to examine the workings of the Council and get directly involved in the development of Council policy. Through effective scrutiny, Members can ensure that the work of the Council is subject to democratic checks and that the provision and delivery of services is continually improved wherever possible. Task and Finish Group investigations are an integral part of that process as are the Members who give up their time to participate and to whom I would like to extend my thanks for their time and effort.

