

REPORT TO: PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES
Date of Meeting: 2nd June 2016 (People) and 9th June 2016 (Place)

Report of: Cllr Brimble
Chair of the University Task and Finish Group

Title: University Task and Finish Group Report.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

To report the findings and recommendations of this Task and Finish Group to the People Scrutiny Committee for comment and the Place Scrutiny Committee for approval.

2. Recommendations:

Topic 1: Retention of Graduates

The Council:-

- 1) Facilitates a meeting between the Federation of Small Businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, Exeter University and the Council's Economy Department to encourage a joint approach to retaining graduates in the City.
- 2) Shares the list of companies (particularly tech companies) with Exeter University to develop the aim mentioned in Recommendation 1.
- 3) Facilitates a networking event to encourage and support a good relationship between key organisations, businesses and Exeter University and Colleges.
- 4) Explores the opportunities available to support the Innovation Centre in increasing the number of start up weekends held and developing them into a regional network that involves Exeter residents.

Topic 2: Anti-social behaviour

The Council:-

- 5) Encourages the Students' Guild to expand the "big street party" event to cover different areas across the City.

Topic 3: Waste, recycling and littering

The Council:-

- 6) Explores the opportunities for sponsorship and provision of cardboard bottle carriers to student households which also advertise where recycling facilities are located.
- 7) Explores the possibility of a pilot scheme where temporary recycling facilities are situated in highly populated student areas at the end of term.

- 8) Enquire whether student wardens are able to support the educational work of the Council's Recycling Team in visiting student houses identified as a priority.
- 9) Encourage the students, with the support of the Students' Guild, to make a promotional, educational video on effective waste and recycling which other students can easily access on line.

Topic 4: Volunteering

The Council:-

- 10) Sponsors a student volunteering award to be presented at the Guildhall and publicised via the Exeter Citizen and Exepose publications.
- 11) Liaise with the Student Opportunities Manager (Students' Guild) to explore buddying community groups with student volunteers.
- 12) Encourages key organisations to highlight and publicise the good work that student volunteers already do for their organisations across Exeter.

Topic 5: Planning and Student Accommodation

The Council:-

- 13) Encourages and supports the Students' Guild to explore the possibility of Co-operative Housing.
- 14) Reviews the level of developers' contributions to infrastructure in respect of student accommodation, should an overall review of the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule be undertaken in future.
- 15) Positively highlight, through a timely press release, the management requirements that accompany planning approvals on Purpose Built Student Accommodation blocks (PBSA's); the Central Government funding that PBSA's bring to the City and the effect of students moving from Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) to PBSA's.
- 16) Arrange for a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group to investigate the possibility of an HMO/landlord accreditation scheme, engaging with key partners to explore the possibilities and how the Council could support work which may already be underway.

Topic 6: Parking

The Council:-

- 17) Supports the University in developing their updated Sustainable Transport Strategy, ensuring, in so far as is possible, the involvement of both Exeter City Councillors and Officers.

3. Reasons for the recommendations:

Topic 1 – Retention of Graduates

- Linking the growth aspects of the City by creating better links between local enterprise and students is an essential component of graduate retention. This approach also supports the drive towards continued growth within the City. Cooperative working and the sharing of information between the Council and the University is a practical way to achieve progress.
- A key way in which graduates could be encouraged to stay in Exeter is through better communication between the commercial sector and the University so that under graduates are aware, at a very early stage, as to the opportunities that exist for them in Exeter.
- Plans to hold a networking event are already underway as a result of the Growth and Marketing Task and Finish Group approved recommendation. Recommendation 3 of this report could be incorporated within this planned event.
- The Council continues to recognise the importance and value of the Innovation Centre and its work, particularly in respect of the success and benefits of the “Start Up” weekends at the University. Expanding the remit of these weekends will help to develop local enterprise for the residents of Exeter and the surrounding areas.

Topic 2 - Anti-social behaviour

- Instances of anti-social behaviour across the City are not solely attributable to the student population. However, those instances which are usually involve complaints of transient noise.
- A lot of problems can be resolved quickly and effectively though good face to face communication. However, communication itself can be a barrier if there isn't already a relationship between the students and other local residents.
- This recommendation is designed to support development of the Student Guild's existing good work by encouraging more residents and students to meet, integrate and develop a community relationship. By taking a pro-active approach the potential for problems to occur can be substantially reduced.

Topic 3 – Waste, recycling and littering

- Different areas around the country have different recycling requirements which can cause confusion amongst students coming to the City. Therefore education, communication and awareness are key components to ensuring successful, effective recycling within the City.
- Providing information which is easily accessible and tailored to students and recognising the transient nature of their stay in respect of term times is also important to success.
- Putting practical provisions in place such as temporary recycling facilities at the end of term and bottle carriers may encourage more students to recycle easily and effectively. This keeps the City cleaner, reduces the cost to the

Council of sorting incorrectly disposed of items and boosts recycling rates and revenue.

Topic 4 – Volunteering

- The Council should take a lead role in positively recognising and promoting the good student volunteering work which already takes place across the City.
- The Council and the University can work together to make sure that student volunteering work is targeted where it is needed most across the City.

Topic 5 – Planning and Student Accommodation

- The Council is committed to working with Exeter University to provide appropriate student accommodation within the City (Corporate Plan 2016).
- Investigating the possibility of Co-operative Housing and the responsible development of PBSA's are two examples of an active approach towards ensuring a status quo between the need for student accommodation and the availability of housing for others within the City.
- Without good communication misunderstandings can occur. Raising public awareness of the positive benefits of PBSA's is important. For instance, students moving from Houses in Multiple Occupation to PBSA's frees up accommodation for others, in addition to which PBSA's bring Central Government funding to the City (via the Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus).
- A landlord accreditation list/scheme may prevent some of the issues surrounding student accommodation areas such as transient noise and waste complaints by promoting a cooperative approach with better lines of communication and information sharing between landlords, students, the University and the Council.

Topic 6 – Parking

- The Council has limited options when it comes to recommendations in this area, since on street parking and residential parking permits no longer fall within the remit of Exeter City Council and the University regulates its own car parking facilities on campus.
- The University's Sustainable Transport Strategy is in the process of being updated. This will involve a consultation process in which the Council will be involved as a consultee and presents a good opportunity for the Council to highlight the needs of the City and become actively and positively involved in shaping the overall Strategy.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources:

None.

5. Section 151 Officer Comments:

There are no financial implications contained in this report.

6. What are the legal aspects?

None identified.

7. Monitoring officer comments:

This report raises no issues of concern for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report Details:

The University and exploring its current impact on the City was identified as a high priority topic for Task and Finish Group investigation at the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme Meeting which took place in June 2015.

Membership of the Group consisted of:-

Cllr Brimble (Chair of the Group)
Cllr Baldwin
Cllr Bull
Cllr Buswell
Cllr Morse
Cllr Owen
Cllr Shiel
Cllr Denham
Cllr Prowse

Richard Short, Assistant Director City Development
Bob Norley, Assistant Director Environment
Victoria Hatfield, Economy and Tourism Manager
Maureen Gori-de-Murden, Senior Economy and Tourism Officer
Oenone Thomas, Partnerships and Project Manager
Lisa Cocks, Principal Environmental Health Officer
Dawn Rivers, Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer

The Scope:-

The Group established their scope at the outset and agreed that the key objective should be to:-

- Continue to develop and improve the positive relationship between the City and the University, for the good of both and the residents of Exeter, working towards promoting further growth within the City.

It was essential for the Group to agree specific focus topics for investigation given the broad remit.

The Group met on several occasions between October 2015 and January 2016 to address the specific topics they had identified as priorities for investigation and also had the benefit of hearing from various external guest speakers. Set out below are sub headings detailing the topics addressed and some salient points which will help add context to this report and its recommendations.

Focus Topics identified for investigation:-

a) Retaining graduates within the City

This topic was broken down into three aspects for the purposes of this meeting:-

- *Internships and Employment*
 - Welcoming guest speaker Jo McCreddie, Employment Liaison Officer, Exeter University
 - It would be very helpful to identify local companies where students could go and do some project work for free and gain experience.
 - It is important to reach students very early on as large companies do.
 - Large graduate recruiters are very strategic – they target students from the top 5 Universities at a very early stage and put a lot of time and investment into this.
 - Students and graduates rate career prospects, a good work/life balance and good employer leadership and friendly colleagues as being important as well as money.

- *Digital Excellence*
 - Welcoming guest speaker Dr Robin Jackson, Innovation Centre Director
 - The importance of connecting students and businesses.
 - Building up relationships with key organisations.
 - Expanding and building on the success of the start up weekends.

- *General Movement of Research and Knowledge Transfer*
 - Welcoming guest speaker Ben Neild, Assistant Director, Marchmont Observatory, Exeter University
 - The reason some students do not stay is because they are not from Exeter.
 - It is essential to have local links with local enterprise.
 - The main considerations to encourage retention of graduates are availability of apprenticeships, local travel and links with schools.
 - Exeter University is currently the only Russell Group University to offer a degree in digital technology solutions.
 - Within the graduate retention dilemma the main issues which post graduates consider are:-
 - ✚ Economic development
 - ✚ Employment opportunities

✚ The vibrancy and culture of the City – is it an attractive place for young people to stay?

b) Anti-social behaviour and noise issues

- Welcoming guest speaker Rory Cunningham, Community Liaison Officer, Exeter University
- Overview by Lisa Cocks, ECC Environmental Health Officer

This meeting concentrated upon:-

What do Members see as the issues?

Could more be done to tackle these issues?

- It is important not to hold a generalisation that all students are the sole cause of anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance within the City.
- Transient noise seems to be the subject of most complaints.
- Members recognised that there had been a lot of progress already in tackling these issues, on both a pro-active and reactive level. This needs to be positively publicised.
- Early and appropriate communication with a pro-active approach is key to resolving problems.
- Old fashioned “first introductions” are invaluable and the street party sponsored by the University in 2015 provided an opportunity for that first introduction between students and other local residents to take place. As a result of this the number of complaints reduced from 35 to 1 or 2 which demonstrates the success of the concept.
- The positives are that there have been a quarter fewer complaints with community issues in respect of students which is good progress particularly now that there are a higher number of students. The seriousness of complaints has also dropped.

c) Waste, recycling and littering

- Welcoming guest speaker Rory Cunningham, Community Liaison Officer, Exeter University
 - Overview by Assistant Director, Environment, Cleansing Fleet Manager and Environment Support Officer
- ECC are already in touch with the University and the Students’ Guild in respect of this issue.
 - The student guide now includes details and information about rubbish collection times and recycling.
 - An app is available to students which links into the collection day IT system so that information is easily accessible on phones.
 - Students can sign up to alerts from the Council’s gov delivery system.
 - Main complaints relate to bins left on pavements and overflowing rubbish
 - “Face to face” visits to student households which were identified as a priority have proven very successful and students have been very receptive to the visits. However, there is a resource issue and Council officers have only been able to visit a small proportion of households (200 out of 3000).

- The student population is transient and the start and end of term presents a particular problem - students tend to have a good clear out at the end of term which results in more waste and recycling for collection.
- Council officers have met with the Green Team at the University to find out what students identify as the barriers to recycling. Glass was identified as a real issue for the students. This is because the students are mainly located in the centre of the City and there are not many bottle banks within walking distance, so either glass is being put in the black bins or contaminating the green bins.

d) Encouraging students to volunteer in the communities across the City

- Welcoming guest speaker Will Page, Student Opportunities Manager, Students' Guild
- Update by Dawn Rivers, Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer
 - Currently student volunteers are helping SW Ambulance, St John's Ambulance, the multi agency hub on a Saturday night and the environmental and recycling teams, so there is a lot of good work going on already but there is still a lot of high potential to tap into.
 - Students will generally be attracted to volunteering opportunities that fill a gap on their CV, or where they have particular personal interests/hobbies.
 - Outside organisations need to identify where they may need help and it will be their responsibility to carry out risk assessments and have the requisite insurance in place.
 - A reference was made to the important role of the Community Organisers and Integrated Care Exeter in coordinating and linking everyone together.
 - If the Council could let the Student Opportunities Manager know of any charities or anyone across the City who are desperate for volunteers, the Guild can put this information on the register and find volunteers. The Guild can establish contact direct with the organisations.
 - Post graduate research students are an untapped source for volunteering. The Students' Guild are doing the best they can to encourage post graduates to volunteer.

e) Planning and Student Accommodation

- Welcoming guest speakers:-
 - Hugh McCann,
Director of Estate Development, Exeter University

 - Gareth Oughton,
Director of Membership Services and People Development, Exeter University

 - Jo Hawkins,
Exeter St James Forum
- Overview by Richard Short, Assistant Director, City Development

The main issues to consider in respect of student accommodation and in terms of the City are:-

How many?

What type of accommodation?

Where should it be situated – what areas are appropriate?

- There is a move towards students wanting their own specific accommodation.
- It is important to acknowledge the positives of purpose built student accommodation (PBSA's).
- PBSA's and infrastructure exist side by side.
- There is a (University) masterplan (2010) in respect of development plans and the general consensus is that campus sites should ideally be preserved for academic and research purposes rather than for more student accommodation. However, there is an argument that accommodation developments on campus sites would relieve pressures on other parts of the City.
- The University's Estates Strategy will address how many developments will take place on campus sites.

f) Parking (and the sustainability of the University's travel plan)

- Welcoming guest speaker Amy Hill, Travel Plan Co-ordinator, Exeter University
- The University is in the process of developing a Sustainable Transport Strategy for 2016 – 2020, the draft of which should be approved for consultation sometime in March/April.
- Exeter City Council and other key organisations will be invited to participate as a consultee and the University are keen for everyone to have their say.
- Part of the discussion has to be how we integrate the University's transport needs with those of the City.
- Parking permit management needs reviewing both generally and in respect of the University.
- On street and permit parking do not fall under the remit of Exeter City Council so there is little that the Council can do to directly influence these areas.
- Cars parked in the same place for weeks restrict the ability of residents to park outside their houses and create complaints.
- How the bus routes operate and how they serve beyond the City Centre has to be considered. More routes supporting the campus from other parts of the City would be of benefit.
- Price and adequacy of travel by bus is key to resolving the parking issue.

Ancillary Work Arising from Group investigations:-

- Enquiries for comparative statistical information concerning graduate retention between Exeter and other similar cities resulted in an invitation from the Higher Education Statistics Agency to participate in the testing of their new University statistics system.

- The Group identified that the Students Guild were no longer receiving the weekly planning list. The Guild are now signed up to the Gov.delivery system which also includes other information relating to bins, waste and recycling; council tax and benefits; planning; community news and events; elections and the latest Council news.

- The Community Volunteering Co-ordinator, Students' Guild will:-

Provide a list of the different projects (including discipline linked) taking place by postcode to the Council's Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer so that Councillors can see what projects are taking place in their wards and will liaise with the Council to write a short piece for the Exeter Citizen about student volunteering in the City and how charities can register as providers.

- Relevant officers from key organisations such as the Council and the University are due to meet to discuss communications and other issues particularly relating to waste, recycling and littering. It is hoped that a student focus group will be involved in any work which may be taken forward in future together with the University, the Guild, managing agents and resident associations using social media as a conduit.

9 What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, Economy safety and the environment?

None.

**Cllr Brimble
Chair of the University Task and Finish Group
Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None

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