

**REPORT TO:** SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PEOPLE

**Date of Meeting:** Scrutiny Committee People – 1 June 2017

**Report of:** Programme Manager - Communities  
**Title:** Exeter: A Young People-Friendly City  
Towards a Youth Strategy for Exeter

**Is this a Key Decision?**

No.

**Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Council.

**1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1 An update on the Exeter Youth Strategy, which was initiated by Exeter Board, and information about the project planning phase.

**2. Recommendations:**

- 2.1 That Exeter City Council:
- commits to working together with young people and key agencies to make Exeter a young people-friendly city, where the views and aspirations of young people are heard and responded to, and where young people can access the best possible services wherever they live and whatever the wider economic, social and political context;
  - supports the ongoing development of the youth strategy and action planning process to help plan for and address some of the key concerns identified by young people;
  - considers recommendations that emerge from the action planning process to ensure that council services recognise and value young people's views and aspirations and, where feasible, embed these in future service planning and delivery.

**3. Reasons for the recommendations:**

- 3.1 Exeter aspires to be a young people-friendly city. Exeter City Council appointed a member champion for young people in 2016/17 to help focus on young people's aspirations for their lives in living in or visiting Exeter. The member champion role was instrumental in helping with the development of the youth strategy.
- 3.2 As background, Exeter has the highest population growth rate in Devon. Seven per cent of Exeter's population is aged between 10 and 17 years. At April 2016 11.9% of 16-18 year olds in Exeter were NEET (not in Education Employment or Training) compared to 7.3% for Devon as a whole. In some deprived areas of the city the figure is over 20%. Around 39% of crimes committed in Exeter (where information about the perpetrators exists) are committed by people under 24. Homelessness amongst young people in Exeter is under-reported in statistics as they are frequently not eligible for support by statutory agencies. Nationally there is a significant increase in young people's mental ill health, with young

people often not in contact with mental health services. Exeter has the second highest number of school age children with a mental health disorder in Devon.

- 3.3 The youth strategy aims to consider the impact and contribution of all services, which influence young people's lives, rather than a narrow group of services. Young people deserve the best possible services wherever they live and whatever the wider economic, social and political context. In times of economic restraint, optimised allocation and use of resources, alongside commitment from partners, will underpin this.

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

- 4.1 The Exeter Board contributed £5,000<sup>1</sup> and the Youth Service (which, at the time, was part of Devon County Council) made £2,500 available to support the development of the strategy. The funding has paid for a consultant to help co-ordinate a consultation exercise with young people and write the strategy, printing costs and a launch event for 80 participants held at the Guildhall in March 2017.

Two officers from the Council, the Programme Manager for Communities and the Community Officer, have helped to co-ordinate the work to date. Other officers contributed to the launch event in terms of leading or contributing to workshops. The same officers will continue to have an ongoing role in coordination and the action planning process. This fits with their existing responsibilities and will not require additional resources.

Exeter Board will be approached for any resource requirements that emerge from the action planning phase. Any impact on individual council services will be assessed when the emerging actions are considered in more detail.

**5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications for the Council in this report.

**6. What are the legal aspects?**

- 6.1 None identified

**7. Monitoring Officer Comments**

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

**8. Report Details:**

- 8.1 In 2015/16 Devon County Council closed three out of four youth centres in Exeter, leaving the 100 Club in Countess Wear as the base for the head office of the new, staff mutual-run youth service now known as Space. Two of the youth centres in Exeter were transferred to community organisations. The Knight Club in Beacon Heath is now managed by ISCA Community Enterprises (and is now known as the Beacon Community Centre), the Phoenix Youth Centre in Wonford is now managed by Wonford Community Learning Centre as part of an extension to the community provision for the area. Devon County Council was unable to find an appropriate agency to manage the Westside Youth Centre in St Thomas and this centre closed in 2015 leaving very limited youth provision in the west of the city.
- 8.2 A steering group oversaw the development the strategy that included member involvement from Exeter City Council including the Lead Member for Communities and the Member Champion for Young People. The first stage included a consultation exercise with young

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<sup>1</sup> Exeter City Council contributes 10% annually to the total Exeter Board budget.

people to identify priorities. 680 young people aged between 10 and 19 responded to the survey. 50 further young people from groups who were harder to reach, including those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic origin, LGBT young people and others with particular needs were interviewed by peer researchers. 51 organisations that work with young people provided their perceptions of issues for young people in Exeter through a separate survey. The 'Towards a Youth Strategy for Exeter' document was developed in partnership with Devon County Council, Exeter Community Forum and the City Council using the feedback from the consultation exercise with the young people.

See appendix - **Exeter: A Young People- Friendly City. Towards a Youth Strategy for Exeter**

The strategy was launched on 22 March 2017. Eighty young people and representatives from organisations in the city took part in workshops addressing the priorities raised by young people and took part in discussions about taking this work forward.

8.3 The main priorities identified by young people through the consultation process were:

Priority 1: **A voice for young people in the city:**

- Local youth forums involving young people in their communities
- Young people contributing to city-wide strategies for environment, transport, sport, recreation, arts, culture and community development
- Exeter young people make a strong contribution to Devon-wide youth voice forums
- Public bodies can show how young people's views have influenced policy and strategy decisions

Priority 2: **Things to do, places to go:**

- More youth centre's and safe spaces for young people to go to meet their friends, get involved in new activities and get support from experienced youth workers
- More affordable music, arts and sports events and venues for young people
- More young people-led initiatives to provide local places to go and things to do
- Increased availability of 'pop-up' premises for short term youth facilities
- Partnership arrangements in place that enable Exeter's young people to benefit from specialist sports and arts facilities in colleges, universities and other public bodies
- Information about things to do and places to go in Exeter is regularly updated and made accessible to young people

Priority 3: **Protection from bullying and violence**

- Multi-agency campaign that involves young people in order to eliminate bullying in schools, youth projects, sports and cultural organisations
- Education programme for young people delivered through schools, colleges and youth projects to highlight ways of reducing the risks of on-line bullying
- Zero tolerance of bullying behavior in public forums
- Young people report reduction in fear of bullying and violence

Priority 4: **Support young people's mental health**

- A multi-agency strategy for supporting young people's mental health in Exeter, informed by the views of young people
- Accessible early help for young people experiencing mental health concerns including counselling and peer group support
- Support for families of young people with mental health issues, to enable them to be able to help the young person themselves

#### Priority 5: **An environment with young people in mind**

- Young people are consulted and engaged in environment and transport planning
- Bus fares and timetables are determined taking into account accessibility for young people
- Exeter's parks and city centre are more welcoming to young people, with safe spaces, better lighting and places where young people can sit and talk to friends
- Free Wi-Fi access is built in to the creation of young people-friendly spaces
- Organisations in Exeter support youth-led projects to combat litter and improve the environment

#### Priority 6: **A young people-friendly economy**

- Consistent approach to careers advice and stronger links between higher and further education institutions and organisations working with young people
- Stronger relationships between organisations that support young people and local potential employers leading to new work opportunities for young people in the city
- More volunteering and project work opportunities that help young people develop the life skills they need
- Specific programmes and materials on financial management aimed at young people delivered through schools, colleges and youth projects

- 8.4 The next stage is for workshop coordinators (from a range of different agencies) to work with young people and partner agencies to develop action plans to address some of the issues and programmes identified by young people. It is possible that some of this work is already being delivered in Exeter, but it will be helpful for different agencies to identify where a more collaborative approach may be useful to better address young people's aspirations.

Officers from the city council (alongside the Lead Member for Communities and Young People) and colleagues from Space and VOYC Devon will continue to work together as part of an advisory group for this work, liaising with workshop leaders, a wide range of partner agencies and young people. There are plans to hold a follow up event in March 2018 to identify progress made and keep continuity for this important work for Exeter.

#### **9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

As part of our focus on "Support Exeter's Communities": *"we will continue to provide support to the community and voluntary sector to achieve a range of positive outcomes for our communities through co-design and co-delivery".*

#### **10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

Services and support for young people are likely to be less effective without the contribution of the City Council.

#### **11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?**

- 11.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, public sector organisations have an equality duty. The Equality Duty ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees. Age is one of the protected characteristics

Contributing to the ongoing development of a Youth Strategy and Action Plan for Exeter, enables the council to be committed to be working towards Exeter: A Young People Friendly City.

**12. Are there any other options?**

There are currently no other options to take forward this agenda in Exeter.

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**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**  
**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

None

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