

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 14 March 2019

Present:

Councillor Sills (Chair)
Councillors Wood, D Henson, Mitchell, Owen, Prowse, Lyons, Pattison and Robson

Also present:

Director (DB), Skills Officer, Interim Principal Accountant (SR) and Democratic Services Officer (SLS)

In Attendance:

Councillor Bialyk	- Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing, Communities & Sport
Councillor Harvey	- Portfolio Holder Place and Commercialisation
Councillor Sutton	- Portfolio Holder Economy and Culture

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of Place Scrutiny Committee held on 17 January and 31 January 2019 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

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DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made.

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QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 19

In accordance with Standing Order 19, three members of the public submitted questions in relation to the transfer of the Legacy Leisure contract arrangement, the draft Exeter Transport Strategy, public toilet consultation, and the status of a best-practice guidance note to accompany the Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). (Attached as an appendix to these minutes).

A copy of the questions had been previously circulated to Members, and these, together with the responses from Councillor Bialyk, Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Sport, Councillor Harvey, Portfolio Holder Place & Commercialisation and Councillor Sutton, Portfolio Holder Economy, Culture standing in for Councillor Denham as Portfolio Holder City Transformation, are appended to the minutes.

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER

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In accordance with Standing Order 19, a Member of the Council, Councillor Mrs Thompson, submitted a question in relation to the lighting at the Exeter Arena Skate Park (attached as an appendix to these minutes). The Chair read out the question as Councillor Mrs Thompson was unable to attend the meeting.

A copy of the question had been previously circulated to Members, and these, together with the response from Councillor Harvey, Portfolio Holder Place and Commercialisation is appended to the minutes.

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PRESENTATION ON INTERWOVEN AND PLACE MAKING

JoJo Spinks attended the meeting and provided a PowerPoint presentation and outlined the work of Interwoven and Place Making which used a multi-faceted approach to community led projects, by orchestrating community planning, design and management of public spaces or within a local community to promote health, happiness and wellbeing.

The approach adopted from the very beginning included the following:-

- cross disciplinary approach to enable bonds and connections to be made in order to make progress.
- a strong participatory model which could include anything from the views, thoughts and involvement of individuals in the local area.
- an awareness of the Place-led model to explore in a one square kilometre space, or the phrase they have coined of 'squilometre', which is co-created by participants and by nominated projects made by residents.

There have been projects around the city starting in Heavitree and others have followed in St Thomas, Polsloe, the West Quarter and St David's. Ms Spinks outlined the main premise for the projects which operate in a 'squilometre', with nominations from residents, which can be as simple as exploring a street or small area, or even an inanimate object. A steering group or 'pod' is formed, which remains open for the duration of the project expected to be six to nine 9 months in duration and should close with a sharing event with everything they found out about their place and project. The projects have been completely self-sustaining and not dependent on funding from external bodies, and was one of the most sustainable ways of creating a community building project and celebration of place.

Interwoven are a Community Interest Company (CIC), providing governance guidance and a network of participation, so that volunteers and participants were immediately rewarded by being part of a wider network. Ms Spinks referred to her voluntary role as an animateur or facilitator, using the arts and heritage as a mechanism to carry out community building projects and the aim to find other voluntary participants to continue the good work using the framework. The squilometer projects were inherently intergenerational and also captured the value and sense of the place right on people's door step. It was important to have a community aim with a shared language with an intergenerational audience. The sharing events encouraged a 'pay it forward' approach to provide a small level of continued funding. Interwoven were currently on their seventh project and each time there had been an accumulated sum to kick-start the next project, which was useful alongside the usual community and ward grants that may be available.

Ms Spinks responded to Members' questions and was delighted with the response so far to bring existing community builders to see how the 'squilometre' worked. She noted a Member from Pinhoe had expressed an interest in forming a squilometre. She added that such participatory models through Exeter had helped manage a number of very positive projects, often with consultation weary public. She hoped that it would also be possible to consider introducing a squilometre in the South

Street/West Quarter areas taking into consideration the future development of that area.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the presentation and thanked Ms Spinks for her attendance.

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EXETER SKILLS STRATEGY PRESENTATION

The Skills Officer provided an update on the Skills Strategy for the city as part of the Emerging Exeter Vision up to 2040. It was important to ensure that as part of the Council's skills ambitions that there was appropriate engagement and dialogue to continue the development of skills and learning, and be able to recruit and retain a suitable skilled workforce. A PowerPoint presentation outlined the work, and included key findings from research and results of a survey of 202 businesses in the city. Information around skills, qualifications and employment had provided the opportunity to update a number of key indicators relating to employment activity. These were used for discussion with key partners and stakeholders to build up a picture of involvement and trend analysis to create an evidence base.

There were a number of trends, including the earnings status, with little disparity between workplace earnings in Exeter of 79.8% (*October 2017- 2018*) and the national trend of 78.5%; also resident earnings of £529.20 for Exeter (*2018*) compared with a figure of £569 nationally, a figure borne out by a correlation between the level of daily inward migration of the workforce and local residents. Qualification levels had risen and 51.4% of Exeter residents were qualified at Level 4 and above, and over 50% of the city's workforce occupations were in professional and technical roles, with over 12% of Exeter graduates remaining in Exeter for work. One other area of interest was a spike in self-employment and a further study would be made to establish whether they were part of the highly qualified bracket of employees in traditional employment or were in contract or consultancy employment.

The Skills Officer also provided detail of the business survey which was conducted by telephone and interviews were broadly in line with the sectional composition.

- 2/3 of business recruited in 2018; (England 50%)
- 48% of vacancies were 'hard to fill'; (England 33%)
- 1/3 of business identified skills gaps in their workforce;
- 73% said staff would need new skills or knowledge in 12 months;
- 3/4 of staff had some training in past 12 months;
- 20% employing an apprentice; and
- 2/3 had not engaged with school, college or university. (12m)

The survey had shown that most vacant roles were in customer services, administration and skilled trades and reasons for this included skills matching, but essentially it was about there being more vacant positions than people to fill them. The survey also highlighted a skills gaps in the workforce of respondents within a specific and broad range, and in relation to employing an apprentice there was a lack of knowledge and understanding about the new opportunities and levels of apprenticeship training, which now included degree level.

Some of the emerging priorities were shared with Members and included:-

- whether businesses should be taking the initiative and developing those relationships to ensure that potential employees had the right skills set and

understood the world of work. It was important to match young people's aspirations to a predicted learning and employment pathway to ensure a skilled workforce for the future.

- a better understanding of the growth in the self-employment sector.
- impact of the forecast shortfall in working age population.
- Apprenticeships.
- ensure adequate learning development support for lower skilled employees, and their employers/businesses.

In drawing the presentation to a conclusion, the Skills Officer referred to the governance arrangements and the formation of the Skills Advisory Group, which included the City Council, Greater Exeter Partners, the Local Enterprise Board and the LEP Advisory Panel as well as a range of stakeholders, businesses, and, crucially representatives from the education sectors.

The Skills Officer responded to Members' questions on the following:-

- set out the classification for a small or medium business and the training and development of individual skills, with potentially greater opportunities to gain experience in a variety of roles. She also provided detail on the increase in the number of businesses and particularly in the science and professional sector.
- the classification of self-employed and the interesting dynamic in moving from being self employed to offering the opportunity of employment. Anecdotal feedback was that some large organisations offered employment on a contract basis, and that classification was also deemed as self-employment.

The Skills Officer added that projects underway included joint working with the Heart of the South West Careers Hub locally to enable greater schools engagement and a joined up approach to make sure there was the right signposting in place.

A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the presentation and thanked the Skills Officer for her attendance.

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BUDGET MONITORING (QUARTER 3)

The Interim Principal Accountant (SR) presented the Budget Monitoring report for Quarter 3, which advised Members of the material differences, by management unit, between the 2018/19 approved budget and the current outturn forecast in respect of Place Scrutiny Committee revenue and capital budgets. The net expenditure for the Committee would increase from the revised budget by £162,250, after transfers from reserves, and included supplementary budgets of £1,055,800, which had already been agreed by Council, and included £300,000 for a review of the Bus Station site options. This represented a variation of 1.55% from the revised budget. The Interim Principal Accountant explained that the apparent overspend by Planning Services is more than offset by the available transfers from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and New Homes Bonus (NHB) earmarked reserves, as set out in the Appendix.

It was also noted that the report included a predicted outturn update in respect of the Place Capital Programme, with a total current spend of £3,703,018 in 2018/19 with £31,950 of the programme potentially deferred until 2019/20.

In response to questions from Members, the Director (DB) explained that:-

- a review of the Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) would be carried out. Staff worked hard to keep the machinery running at the MRF, but regular breakdowns of the machinery, some of which were over 20 years old, had resulted in the need for recyclable material being processed elsewhere, with additional costs to cover the gate fee (tipping fee) levied by other MRF facilities. In addition, finer grade material could not be processed at Exeter's MRF due to the coarse nature of the machinery, this again has to be sent to a secondary reprocessor. He advised that a review would also look at opportunities to expand the materials processed for generating additional income. It should be noted that changes to any aspect of waste collection would have an impact on many different aspects of the service such as vehicle requirements, as well as equipment required for the MRF. The financial modelling of these options is extremely complex. The impact of such identifiable costs would be included in the report to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

A Member welcomed the points raised by the Director and suggested a further site visit to the MRF with an opportunity for informal discussion by Members of the Committee to ensure a better understanding of the issues relating to the site. Further investment in the MRF would ensure greater income and he supported any future business case. The Chair asked for the Democratic Services Officer to liaise with the Director and the MRF Manager to find suitable dates for a site visit.

A Member also referred to his role as the Chairman of the Exeter Tidy Group, and despite previous visits to the site, it appeared that little had changed in the intervening period. He had raised a question on this matter at the last meeting of this Scrutiny Committee and he hoped that the report by the Director (DB) would be presented as soon as possible.

The Interim Principal Accountant explained in response to questions from Members:-

- the forecast £50,000 additional parking service costs included the additional signage costs arising from two tariff changes, among other maintenance and supplies costs;
- in greater detail, the apparent overspend in relation to the Planning Services budget which was included in Section 8 of the circulated report. The CIL grants and Growth Point payments which are included in this service's figures are funded from CIL and NHB, distorting the true results of Planning Services, Building Control and Land Charges, which is forecast to be an underspend of £105,000. The way in which this information was presented would change from 1 April and offer greater transparency.
- Information in Appendix 3, set out the budgetary risk for some of the service areas. Planning Services was included in this report due the possibility of unbudgeted costs arising for reasons outside of the service's control. The inclusion of the Planning Service in this appendix does not indicate that it is expected to overspend against its budget; indeed, it is expected to underspend. The revenue from recycling was included as a risk due to the intrinsic uncertainty of recycling rates and market prices for recyclates, and the availability of the MRF to process the recycling.

A Member referred to the Council's approach to planning appeals which included the need for external consultants and he asked whether the City Council would consider employing a planning solicitor again. The Interim Principal Accountant

stated that the amount spent on consultancy fees was a management issue, and the duties of the Treasury team were to monitor and report on the financial aspects to both Members and the Senior Management Board. A Member added that the recent Member's Briefing on Procurement by the Service Lead – Commercial and Procurement had been useful in informing Members about this newly formed team. Their role included monitoring the Council's performance against any contract, service or supplier to ensure that value for money was achieved.

Place Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

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**EXETER HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC ORDERS COMMITTEE - 14 JANUARY
2019**

The minutes of the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee meeting held on 14 January 2019 were circulated for information.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.10 pm)

Chair