

## EXECUTIVE

Monday 4 April 2022

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)

Councillors Wright, Foale, Ghusain, Harvey, Morse, Sutton, Williams and Wood

Apologies:

Councillors Leadbetter and Moore, D as opposition Leaders

Also present:

Councillor K. Mitchell (as an opposition group Leader)

Councillor Vizard speaking on item 6 (Minute No. 47 below)

Also present:

Director Finance, Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support and Democratic Services Team Leader

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### MINUTES

Councillor Wood declared a non-pecuniary interest and left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2022, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct, subject to the following amendment:-

Minute 38 – The Portfolio Holder for City Management stated that the project had been developed in response to concerns over the loss of library facilities which had expanded to encompass the development of other services and that “**the Trustees had made a commitment to raise £750,000, to match Council funding to support the project**”.

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### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members declared the following interests:-

- Councillor Wood - Minute. 44 - non pecuniary interest.

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### QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 19

A member of the public, Mrs Thompson, submitted the following question, related to Minute No. 44. Mrs Thompson was unable to be present and her question was read out by the Democratic Services Team Leader:-

- As the Portfolio Holder for City Management stated that the figure of £750,000 having been raised by the Pinhoe Hub Trustees was incorrect. Could the Portfolio Holder clarify the actual figure raised by the Pinhoe Hub Trustees?

The Leader responded that the Portfolio Holder for City Management had corrected Minute No. 38 (as stated above), to say that the Trustees had made a commitment to raise £750,000, to match Council funding to support the project. The Leader referred to the Pinhoe Community Hub Business Plan, which indicated that funding would be made through use of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), Section 106

money and locally raised funding. The correction to the minutes had therefore, answered the question from Mrs Thompson.

## **ADDITIONAL STAFFING AT CONTROL CENTRE**

The Executive received the report to recruit three additional, full time staff members at the Council's Control Centre, to ensure there were suitable staffing provisions in place to proactively monitor city centre CCTV, and to support improvements to public safety.

Particular reference was made to the total cost of £87,000 to the Council in this financial year, which would come from the additional unbudgeted funding received from the Government's final settlement which also totalled £87,000. Members were reminded of the requirement for longer term spending reductions and this extra cost would form part of this going forward.

Councillor Vizard, having given notice under Standing Order No. 44, spoke on this item, thanking the Executive for the opportunity to speak. He referred to the full Council meeting on 22 February 2022, where Members heard from Mr Tony Cox, who was the father of Lorraine Cox, who had been murdered in Exeter, and had spoken passionately at the meeting on the tragic events.

Councillor Vizard passed on Mr Cox's apologies for the evening, and stated that he had gotten to know Mr Cox over the past year, and many Members had accompanied him on the memorial walk for Lorraine Cox, to raise money for the Devon Rape Crisis and abuse services which had exceeded their £4,000 target and had raised £6,348. The walk was to raise awareness for the campaign for safer streets and to end violence towards women.

Mr Cox had called on the Council to find funding to ensure the £550,000 investment to upgrade and extend the existing CCTV coverage was supported with funding for additional CCTV staff. Mr Cox felt that a minimum of two staff needed to be on duty at any given time to ensure suitable cover and support the upgrading of the CCTV, to better protect residents.

Councillor Vizard in concluding, welcomed the recommendation in the report, thanking the Director of Finance for finding the £87,000, which was a compelling reason to spend on the service, despite current financial pressures. Councillor Vizard also expressed his thanks to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development and Services for the hard work that had been undertaken and with the community safety partnership and safety for women at night, and hoped the recommendation would be supported at full Council on 19 April 2022.

Councillor K. Mitchell, as an opposition leader, spoke on the item and welcomed the report and supported the recommendation. Like other Councillors, he had been moved by Mr Cox at the Council meeting in February 2022, and was pleased funding had been found. He highlighted his support and emphasised the importance of cross party support. He expressed his thanks to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development and Services for the hard work that had been undertaken to bring this forward.

The Portfolio Holder for City Development stated that as a local Councillor to Mr Cox, she had spent time with him, debating how to address violence against women. The need for CCTV coverage in the city was important and she supported the recommendation. However, additional CCTV, wouldn't solve the larger issue of violence against women and that work would need to be continued at all levels.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development and Services highlighted that the Council didn't have to provide CCTV services, but chose to provide it for the people of the city. The service was discretionary and the Council had been fortunate to receive the £550,000 grant to improve CCTV services. By partnering with the Safety of Women at Night (SWAN) charter, it been beneficial in providing further support, and signs would be erected for any concerned women to call the contact centre, if they felt unsafe.

She expressed her thanks to the Portfolio Holders for supporting the work, and to Mr Cox and his family for the work they had been doing. The work undertaken highlighted the Council's commitment to safety and more work was being undertaken to further improve safety in the city.

The Leader commented that this was a supplementary spend, which demonstrated that the City Council did listen to residents to make changes in the city and was pleased that there would be cross party support.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council approve the recruitment of 3 additional full time equivalent staff, in order to increase the capacity to proactively monitor city centre CCTV.

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### **OVERVIEW OF GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2021/22 - QUARTER 3**

The Executive received the report which advised Members of the overall financial position of the General Fund Revenue Budgets for the 2021/22 financial year after six months.

Particular reference was made to the budget projection, which showed a significant underspend with a significantly lower than expected take from the General Fund balance and to the challenges faced by the Council in delivering projects which were outside the control of officers. A number of supplementary budget requests would be expected at the end of the financial year.

Members noted that the projected underspend would cover the supplementary budget requests and there were areas of income that were still a challenge, following the Covid Pandemic. An ear-marked reserve was in place to help off-set pressures for both the current and 2022/23 financial years.

The Director Finance referred to the supplementary budget requests for approval and confirmed that they related to grants received from Government to be incorporated into the budget and would not impact the General Fund balance.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Director Finance explained that the current year underspend was a challenge, caused by difficulties in the construction industry and subsequent delays in service delivery. The Council's accountants continued to challenge Service Leads where there was a particular underspend in their budgets, however, this year the challenge in underspending was a larger economic issue.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council notes and approves (where applicable):

- (1) the General Fund forecast financial position for the 2021 financial year;
- (2) the supplementary budgets as detailed in paragraph 8.12 of the report;
- (3) the outstanding Sundry Debt position as at December 2021; and
- (4) the creditors payments performance.

## **2021/22 GENERAL FUND CAPITAL MONITORING STATEMENT - QUARTER 3**

The Executive received the report on the current position of the Council's revised annual capital programme, and advised Members of the anticipated level of deferred expenditure into future years. The report also sought Member approval to amend the annual capital programme in order to reflect the reported variations.

Particular reference was made to the budget which currently stood at £100 million, with only £12.9 million spent, and was recognised as the lowest percentage spend in any one year. The same challenges from the delay of goods and services deliveries had impacted on the Capital Monitoring programme and there would be a significant carry forward expected for the Capital Programme due to the issues faced from the construction market in delivering tenders.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Director Finance explained that there were two projects for CCTV improvements. Funding had been received from the safer streets funding which was used for CCTV improvements. Members had also approved a separate capital project to deliver CCTV improvements, funded by the Council, which had been carried forward in the Capital Programme for a number of years.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council approves:-

- (1) the revision of the annual Capital Programme to reflect the reported variations detailed in 8.1 and in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (2) the additional budget detailed in 8.6 of the report.

## **2021/22 HRA BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 3**

The Executive received the report on the financial position of the HRA Revenue and Capital Budgets for the 2021/22 financial year after nine months. Members were referred to the highlighted areas of risk, shown in the report, which identified vulnerable budgets due to factors beyond the Council's control and could result in potential deviations from budget. Members noted that the budgets were being closely monitored by officers.

Particular reference was made to there being little movement within the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) budget and was in line with the approved budget, with a £20,000 variance. It was expected that at the end of the financial year, there would be a likely impact on the HRA Capital Programme, which would impact on the HRA with a potential for an under-spend.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Director Finance explained that in 2008, central Government announced a project to deliver new Council homes across the country, which was partially funded by central Government. There were a number of stipulations, which included for any projects being self-financing and held separately from the HRA. Exeter City Council made a successful bid to deliver a number of Passivhaus homes in the city, which were still self-financing.

**RECOMMENDED** that Council notes and approves (where applicable):-

- (1) the HRA forecast financial position for 2021/22 financial year; and
- (2) the revision of the HRA Capital Programme to reflect the reported variations detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

The Executive received the report which set out a proposal to offer the Freedom of the City to Mr Philip Bostock in recognition of his civic service to the city of Exeter, particularly as a former Chief Executive of the Council. The proposal met the criteria for nominations as set down in 2018.

Members welcomed the proposal and considered it to be a well-deserved honour.

**RECOMMENDED** to Council that:-

- (1) the title of Honorary Freeman of the City Status be conferred on Philip Bostock; and
- (2) the Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor be requested to convene an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to be held on the rising of the Ordinary Meeting on 19 April 2022, for the purpose of passing the appropriate resolution under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972.

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

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**MEMBER TRAINING**

The Executive received the report which provided a quarterly update on the progress of work on Members' training and also included Members' attendance and feedback for the sessions attended from 5 January 2022 to present.

Particular reference was made to the good work undertaken by the Councillor Development Steering Group on enhancing training and development opportunities for Councillors and on the Members' Induction Programme ahead of the intake of new Councillors after the May 2022 elections. The Councillor Development Steering Group had been addressing training for both current and new Members and was looking at the use of online training to enhance specific training requirements.

**RESOLVED** that the Executive note the Members' Training report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.03 pm)

Chair

**The decisions indicated will normally come into force 5 working days after publication of the Statement of Decisions unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. Decisions regarding the policy framework or corporate objectives or otherwise outside the remit of the Executive will be considered by Council on 19 April 2022.**