

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 4 October 2022

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)

Councillors Wright, Denning, Ghusain, Morse, Parkhouse, Pearce, Williams and Wood

Also present:

Councillor Jobson (as an opposition group Leader)

Councillor D. Moore (as an opposition group Leader)

Apologies:

Councillor K. Mitchell (as an opposition group Leader)

Also present:

Chief Executive & Growth Director, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of City Development, Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Director Finance, Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, Corporate Manager – Executive Support, Assistant Director of Housing (LB), Service Lead - Environmental Health & Community Safety and Democratic Services Team Leader

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2022, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

94

ALDERMAN GEORGE CLARK

The Leader passed on his condolences, and reflected on the memory of the former Mayor of Exeter and Honorary Alderman George Clark, who had recently passed away. Alderman Clark had represented the Wonford Ward between 1983 and 1998 and had been a good friend to many people. The Leader thanked staff and Councillors who had sent condolences and attended his funeral. References and Members' thoughts would be presented at the full Council meeting on 18 October 2022.

95

MATTERS ARISING: COST OF LIVING CRISIS

The Leader raised the matter of the cost of living crisis which had been highlighted as a matter of urgency at the previous meeting (Minute No. 84). He highlighted that there had been impacts over the course of the month relating to the mourning period, following the passing of HRH Queen Elizabeth and limited guidance from the Government.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that officers had assembled information on how the city was mobilising to support those affected by the cost of living pressures. Currently several organisations had been identified in the public, business, community and voluntary sectors who were working to support residents and businesses, which the City Council had also been included. The list had been shared with Members and would be regularly updated by the Communities team as more offers and support were made known. The Council was working with the information as it was made available, to help direct people to contact the Council for advice and support.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities & Homelessness Prevention thanked the Deputy Chief Executive and the officers for the work undertaken to date. He highlighted that there had been a great response with residents, organisations and the Council working together. Although the Council didn't have a statutory duty to do so, it was considered important that support was given to residents and the list would be provided to as many people as possible.

In addition to directing people to the list, community grants funding would be repurposed with an allocation of £10,000 made available, with up to £500 grant funding available to help cover additional costs during the winter period. A new application form would also be made available through the Council's website to support communities in opening warm spaces in the city. The Portfolio Holder for Communities & Homelessness Prevention advised that existing applications would not be penalised under the new scheme and more information would be made available in due course.

The Chair welcomed the update and considered that in line with the current crisis, it was important to provide an update to Members.

96

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

97

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 19

No questions from members of the public were received.

98

CORPORATE PLAN 2022-26

The Executive received the report on the Council's draft 2022-26 Corporate Plan, which set out how the Council would operate in its role in delivering the agreed Exeter Vision 2040. There were five strategic priorities outlined in the plan to achieve the vision for the city, which would be delivered through various strategies such as the Exeter Plan, as well as through the service plans of various Council departments.

Particular reference was made to the focus on leading a well-run Council which underlined the importance of ensuring that the Council was a fit for purpose organisation in order to deliver on the key priorities. The priorities would be reviewed on an annual basis and its progress would be monitored by the Strategic Management Board (SMB) and Members.

The Leader highlighted that an all Members' Briefing on the Corporate Plan had been scheduled, but had been cancelled due to the recent mourning period for HRH Queen Elizabeth, and there had been no time to arrange a subsequent briefing ahead of bringing the Plan to Members for approval.

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and highlighted that an all Members' briefing would be welcomed.

RECOMMENDED that Council:-

- (1) approve the Council's 2022-26 draft Corporate Plan; and

- (2) grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive & Growth Director, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to draft any necessary amendments before publication.

99

CATERING PROVISION AT EDWARDS COURT

The Executive received the report on the proposal for providing in-house catering provisions at Edwards Court with an increase in staffing to provide the service. In February 2022, Council approved for all non-care services operating for the 51 properties at Edwards Court to be managed by Exeter City Council, with care provisions provided by Devon County Council. However, following an unsuccessful tendering exercise for the catering service, a decision was required to provide catering to the residents and an in-house provision was considered the only viable option.

The Deputy Chief Executive suggested the following amendment to the recommendations in the report:-

That Executive recommend and Council approve that, subject to the outcome of discussion with Devon County Council, the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Council Housing be given delegated powers to agree:

- (1) that Exeter City Council provides in-house catering at Edwards Court; and
- (2) that Exeter City Council creates and recruits to the following posts: Head Chef, Assistant Chef and 2 x Catering Assistants contracted for 25 hours per week at estimated grades of F, D and B respectively and that they are added to the Council's staffing establishment.

It was explained that the reason for the amendment was that since the report had been drafted, further work had been undertaken by officers to understand the impact on the estimated costs on the City Council. Further analysis of the projected cash flow showed that the anticipated financial return over the projected 30-year period would reduce in the region of £3 million as a result of the in-house provision and projected increase in costs as a result of inflation.

There was still value in providing catering to residents at Edwards Court, and the creation of a communal area would help prevent social isolation and provide tenants with a daily hot meal. While the Council was contractually committed to using best endeavours to provide a daily two course hot meal every day, the impact on the Council's Housing Revenue Account could not be ignored. Conversations had commenced with Devon County Council as a partner in the Scheme, to help understand how the increased costs could be shared, and recognising that the catering provision funded by Exeter City Council would also have a positive impact on the care delivery costs of the County Council.

The Leader advised that the number of positions and salary grades would be agreed with the relevant trade unions and would follow the appropriate recruitment process.

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item. She welcomed and supported the in-house service provision and commented on the assumptions for the cost and quality of service. The report stated, that there would be no direct carbon and environmental issues arising from the recommendations, however, the production and quality of food provision would have environmental and carbon impacts and needed to be considered as the service was commenced.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- residents had been confirmed as now living at Edwards Court, which was welcomed;
- there would be neither a positive or negative carbon impact at the site as the Council would provide residents with the means to eat at the premises; and
- Edwards Court was one of the first UK Passivhaus extra care homes built and it highlighted the Council's commitment to building to Passivhaus standard.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Council Housing commented that Edwards Court was a good building and the report showed the Council's commitment to developing Passivhaus homes. She expressed her thanks to the Assistant Director of Housing for the hard work that had been undertaken, to ensure the residents' need were met.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve, subject to the outcome of discussion with Devon County Council, that the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Council Housing be given delegated powers to agree that:

- (1) Exeter City Council provides in-house catering at Edwards Court; and
- (2) Exeter City Council creates and recruits to the following posts: Head Chef, Assistant Chef and 2 x Catering Assistants contracted for 25 hours per week at estimated grades of F, D and B respectively and that they are added to the Council's staffing establishment.

100

OPERATION LONDON BRIDGE - EXPENDITURE

The Executive received the report which set out the details of the urgent decision relating to the expenditure of £31,000 which had been incurred in the Council's response to Operation London Bridge. In accordance with the Council's constitution the expenditure had been reported to Members at the first available meeting of the Executive for noting. The decision was taken by the Chief Executive & Growth Director, in consultation with the Director of Finance, the Leader of the Council and Chair of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee. The report would also be presented to the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee on 6 October 2022.

Particular reference was made to how Operation London Bridge was actioned within minutes of the news of the passing of the Queen and highlighted how well Exeter managed the process to ensure the event was successful.

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item. She thanked everyone involved for their hard work and highlighted that the efforts had shown the city in a good light.

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition group leader, also thanked all those involved for the work undertaken.

The Leader highlighted how well Operation London Bridge had been managed and thanked all staff and Members, who went beyond the call of duty and working together, demonstrating the city's great respect to the Queen. The Leader formally thanked the Lord Mayor for the work undertaken in taking the book of condolence to retirement homes, the hospital and the prison to sign the book.

Additional thanks, were also given to the Council's partners, notably Sandy Park, Exeter City Football Club and Exeter Cathedral for their help and support

RESOLVED that the urgent decision be noted.

101

AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Executive considered the report which set out the proposals to amend the Scheme of Delegation to Officers to match operational arrangements of the Council and to ensure suitable day to day operational decisions could be taken. The Scheme of Delegation was reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they were up to date. It was confirmed that there were no additional delegations given to officers in the report.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers as set out in the Appendix of the report presented to the meeting.

102

MINOR AMENDMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES FOR EXETER AND EAST DEVON CONSTITUENCIES

The Executive received the report for a minor amendment to the current polling district arrangements for the Exeter Parliamentary Constituency and the part of the East Devon Parliamentary Constituency, which was within the Exeter City Council area. The report was requesting two minor amendments to polling districts within the city. The first amendment was in the St. Thomas Ward, which proposed to combine two polling districts into a single polling district, to make it more accessible for the public. The second amendment was to the Topsham area in relation to a number of houses within the polling district.

Particular reference was made to amendments to polling districts being a Council decision, whereas the situation of the polling stations within the Polling Districts, was the decision of the Returning Officer.

RECOMMENDED that Council adopt the proposals as set out in paragraphs 8.1 and 8.4 of the report presented to the meeting.

103

OVERVIEW OF GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23 - QUARTER 1

The Executive received the report on the overall financial position of the General Fund Revenue Budgets for the 2022/23 financial year after three months and sought Council approval for additional expenditure required during the financial year.

There had been a significant increase in the cost of living which had a major impact on the Council, with two significant financial pressures identified this year. The first pressure was the proposed pay award, which was £1.5 million more than was budgeted for. The second pressure was the substantially higher energy costs, which, even with the Government's six-month energy support scheme, it was estimated that the Council would incur an additional cost of £600,000 for energy. This would lead to a considerable overspend of more than £2 million on the budget, which had been partially offset by vacant posts and recruitment difficulties.

Members noted that during the Covid Pandemic, the Council had set aside an earmarked reserve of £4 million for budget changes. The Council would need to use £2 million to keep the General Fund Balance where it should be in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The pressure from the pay award of £1.5 million needed to be

addressed ahead of the forthcoming year and the energy cost, if the support cap was not extended, was expected to be £2.25 million more than the current budget.

Particular reference was made to the General Fund working balance which was now expected to stand at £4.5 million and was not currently projected to go below the minimum balance, however work was needed to address the significant financial challenges ahead.

The Director Finance referred to Appendix 4 which showed areas of key budgetary risk, Appendix 5, which outlined the performance against the One Exeter reductions highlighting that the Council was £30,000 lower against the £2.2 million that was expected. Appendix 6 showed the analysis of the progress of the One Exeter Programme against the Medium Term Financial Plan predictions.

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item. She enquired if the income generation shown in Appendix 6, would require further budget cuts or whether there would be any potential turn around before the end of the financial year.

The Director Finance clarified that the £2.3 million was from the previous year and was reported against this figure, with a £30,000 shortfall against the £2.3 million. In regards to commercialisation, the One Exeter Programme, was a four year programme with targets set against the end of the programme. There were a number of tenders bid for, which had been unsuccessful which highlighted the challenges faced. There were no requirements for Commercialisation in the One Exeter programme for 2023/24, but additional financial pressures were expected as set out previously.

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item. She noted that a report would be coming in November and updates to figures could be assessed by Members.

Members thanked the Director Finance and his team for the work they had undertaken. £2.5 million would have a large impact on residents, businesses, and Council services. Having prudent financial management had ensured that earmarked reserves were available.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes and approves (where applicable):

- (1) the General Fund forecast financial position for the 2022 financial year;
- (2) the supplementary budgets as detailed in paragraph 8.12 and Appendix 3 of the report;
- (3) the outstanding Sundry Debt position as at June 2022;
- (4) the creditors payments performance; and
- (5) the One Exeter programme update.

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

Members noted that the amount that the Council could borrow, was linked to the central government borrowing rates, with large fluctuations in the cost of borrowing for both central and local government. Following intervention from the Bank of

England, the amount that the Council could borrow had reduced with interest rates being 2.9% higher than interest rates in December 2021.

Particular reference was made to the longer term borrowing, which was at a fixed rate with no impact on existing borrowed money. However, planning for future borrowing on the Capital Programme, equated to £30,000 a year more for each million that was borrowed.

The Director Finance advised that SMB were reviewing the Capital Programme and looking at what could be deferred or stopped, with any proposals being brought back to Members later in the year. At Quarter 1, £38 million of the Capital Programme was being proposed for deferral with reviews to take place, and Members would be updated.

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item. She enquired about the £38 million capital programme which was introduced based on risk assessments for the capital structure and what would happen for immediate risks to health and safety. She further enquired about St. Sidwells Point and if the final amount would be disclosed this year?

The Director Finance explained that a major conditions survey was undertaken which highlighted issues and that health and safety issues were a priority. The St. Sidwell's Point contract was with legal services and an update would be brought to Members within this financial year, once all negotiations were finalised.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:

- (1) the overall financial position for the 2022/23 annual capital programme; and
- (2) the amendments and further funding requests to the Council's annual capital programme for 2022/23.

105

2022/23 HRA BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 1

The Executive received the report on the financial position of the HRA Revenue and Capital Budgets for the 2022/23 financial year after three months and the reported budgetary over/under-spend. The report further highlighted areas of risk, where certain budgets had been identified as being vulnerable to factors beyond the control of the Council, which may result in potential deviations from the budget, and were being closely monitored by officers.

The Director Finance explained that the pay award was expected to be £138,000 over budget and the anticipated additional energy budget for the next financial year would be £350,000, which equated to around half a million pounds in cost pressures.

The HRA interest rates would impact on borrowing for new properties, which would be reviewed by the housing team. Maintenance to existing properties was generally managed by the housing financial resources and therefore not reliant on borrowing. HRA interest received, would be higher due to receiving more from the General Fund but there were no other significant movements to report.

In response to a Member's question, the Director Finance clarified that the HRA had previously borrowed £15 million at a fixed low rate, which had a low risk to social housing. Future planning would be re-assessed by the finance team to address the 3% interest rate increase.

RECOMMENDED that Council note and approve (where applicable):-

- (1) the HRA forecast financial position for 2022/23 financial year; and
- (2) the revision of the HRA Capital Programme to reflect the reported variations detailed in Appendix 4.

106

A PUBLIC ART STRATEGY FOR EXETER

The Executive received the report for a Public Art Strategy for Exeter, which provided an overview of the new ways of thinking about Public Art in Exeter and acknowledging the need for greater coherence and transparency around current practices across the city. The Strategy had been commissioned by Exeter City Council in partnership with the University of Exeter and Exeter Culture, and had been drafted by Art Work Exeter.

An investment of £12,000 from Research England's Strategic Policy Fund had been secured through the University of Exeter to develop the Strategy. The investment would seek to develop a new Public Art policy and strategy to bring ambition and improved future public art opportunities in a growing city. Art Work Exeter had consulted with several artist's curators, commissioners, consultants and specialists in developing the Public Art Strategy to ensure that there were key quality criteria, for all involved with art and culture.

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item. She welcomed the Strategy and enquired about whether future funding would be coming from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)?

The Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism explained that the Strategy was funded by the University of Exeter and there were no future financial impacts from the report.

Members welcomed the Strategy.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the Public Art Strategy for Exeter, to implement it where feasible and support the work of the Liveable Place Board, Exeter Culture, the cultural sector, local businesses, and key stakeholders in delivering the Strategy.

107

REQUEST FOR A VARIATION OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARES

The Executive received the report for an increase to the Hackney Carriage Fare Tariff, which had been made by the Chair of Exeter St David's Hackney Carriage Association. The report sought approval to commence a public consultation, having considered the requested variation of fares for the hire of hackney carriages.

Members noted that there had not been an increase in Hackney Carriage taxi fares since 2013, and amendments to the tariffs was an Executive function. The proposal was based on discussions with the Hackney Carriage taxi trade ahead of taking the proposal out for a public consultation, in accordance with Section 65 of the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act. The proposal followed the tested Guildford model which had stood up to legal challenges in the courts and was based on local information to consider the cost of living in the city.

Particular reference was made to the proposed tariff increase, which if approved in November 2022, would put Exeter at the top of the Devon Tariff charts and 54th in the national list.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- The Guildford model localised the figures for Exeter and was favourable in line with the request from the taxi trade to increase the tariff; and
- There had been no tariff increase since 2013, so any increase would be fair to support the drivers, especially with increased demand for taxis due to current public transport issues.

RESOLVED that the Executive approve:-

- (1) that the proposals set out in the report are put out to public consultation to run from 5 October 2022 until 2 November 2022 (4 weeks);
- (2) that a public notice containing the proposed variation table be published in one local newspaper during the above period; and
- (3) that the matter be brought back to Executive on 29 November 2022 for determination.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.35 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 18 October 2022.