

CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 October 2022

Present:

Councillor Matthew Vizard (Chair)
Councillors Mitchell, M, Bennett, Ellis-Jones, Harvey, Holland, Newby, Snow, Sparling, Wardle and Warwick

Apologies:

Councillors Oliver and Sutton

Also present:

Service Lead - Environmental Health & Community Safety, Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, Corporate Manager – Executive Support and Democratic Services Officer (HB)

In attendance:

Councillor Bialyk	Leader
Councillor Williams	Portfolio Holder Recycling, Waste Management and Waterways
Councillor Denning	Portfolio Holder Customer Services and Council Housing
Councillor Ghusain	Portfolio Holder City Management and Environmental Services
Councillor Pearce	Portfolio Holder Communities and Homelessness Prevention

18 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 30 June 2022 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

19 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

20 **Questions from the Public under Standing Order No 19**

No questions from members of the public were received.

21 **Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order No. 20**

No questions had been received from Members.

22 **Update from the Portfolio Holder for Recycling, Waste Management and Waterways - Councillor Williams**

Councillor Williams reported on the Recycling and Waste, Waterways and the Exeter Port Authority areas of her Portfolio, detailing the issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities, major ongoing programmes of work, issues impacting delivery, financial performance and budget requirements and potential changes being considered.

The following responses were given to Members' queries:-

- there were a number of factors which made it difficult to provide a precise timetable for the full rollout of food waste collection across the city. As well as the difficulties noted in recruiting qualified drivers, care needed to be taken to ensure

that the collection routes were planned as efficiently as possible. There were a number of different types of properties, particularly in inner city areas, which required careful analysis and the collection of garden waste, for example, often covered more than one ward and there was a need to minimise the mileage covered when factoring in the need to return to Exton Road to offload materials. There was presently a limit to the amount of food waste that could be stored at the depot prior to being transferred to Holsworthy for anaerobic disposal. It was estimated that 47% of current waste within the black bins was anaerobic and, therefore, once the full rollout of food waste collection occurred, Exeter's rate of recycling would increase significantly;

- it was necessary to prioritise black and green bin collection which was a statutory requirement. As such, it had been unfortunate that it had proved necessary to suspend the garden waste collection service in order to maintain the statutory service. The communication process in notifying residents of changes had been improved and a data base was being developed with Strata including the compilation of residents' emails;
- the Service Lead Environmental Health and Community Safety confirmed that the recruitment of drivers was a key issue and that obtaining licences to drive 7.5 tonne and 26 tonne refuse collection vehicles was a complex process and that the same problem was being experienced by the private sector. The service had embarked on an internal development programme giving opportunity to a number of staff within the service to qualify as drivers. The roll out of food waste containers also had to be factored into the process;
- the Service Lead Environmental Health and Community Safety advised that the Council has a comprehensive fleet management replacement programme and the timescale for replacing existing diesel vehicles was seven years and would be eight years for the new electric vehicles;
- the Service Lead Environmental Health and Community Safety referred to the ongoing advertising for the recruitment of drivers as well as the use of recruitment agencies which it was hoped would attract those with relevant experience such as delivery drivers. The development programme was encouraging existing staff such as loaders to become drivers. He praised the response of staff to the recent extra day's bank holiday following the passing of Her Majesty the Queen and to their turn out to ensure that there were no disruptions to the service. They were very dedicated and excellent ambassadors for the city;
- the Service Lead Environmental Health and Community Safety advised that the total staff complement required for the food waste collection service was five drivers and 10 loaders. The delay in obtaining licenses from the DVLA had been resolved, although there could be delays in booking training courses with companies due to the demand for places on intensive driver training programmes. The new electric vehicles had been well received by staff who had quickly adapted to the nuances of longer vehicles. Manufacturers had been advised of the value of enabling the vehicles to be charged from the rear;
- the Service Lead Environmental Health and Community Safety updated Members on progress with the construction of the larger roll on roll off food waste disposal bays to the necessary standard required by the Environment Agency. At present, the volume of disposal was limited by the smaller skips used by the 7 tonne vehicles; and
- a report on the Harbour Revision Order would be submitted to Executive and Council, the key aims of the Order being to improve access to the River and Canal, to charge for existing services and to codify Health and Safety requirements. It was difficult to predict any date for implementation because of the costs involved and the need for consultation. Responding to a Member, she acknowledged the unique nature of the Canal and its value to the city and the importance for the City Council to maintain control. The River and Canal was a

great asset to residents and visitors and she praised the work of the Harbour Master and his team. The Portfolio Holder also referred to the intention to hold a Historic Vessels Festival which was being progressed by the Exeter Canal and Quay Trust.

23 Operation London Bridge - Expenditure

The Corporate Manager, Democratic and Civic Support presented the report setting out the details of an urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive & Growth Director, in consultation with the Director of Finance, the Leader of the Council and the Chair of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee, relating to the expenditure of £31,000 on the Council's response to Operation London Bridge. The Constitution required officers to present this to the next available meeting of the Executive which had been held on 4 October 2022 (Minute Number 100 refers)

The Chair of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee, who in agreeing the urgent matter, requested that a breakdown of the costs also be presented to this Committee.

Particular reference was made to the following:-

- work on the protocol had been ongoing for a number of years, making it possible to act immediately on the announcement of the sad passing of Her Majesty the Queen;
- Council staff and partners across the city, including the University and Football and Rugby Clubs who had been involved in developing the protocol, had responded magnificently to enable the public to be engaged in the mourning period;
- the protocol had been developed nationwide, in part to reduce the anticipated pressure on the capital following the announcement. Few would have experienced the Proclamation of a new monarch and some 3,000 members of the public had gathered outside Exeter Cathedral on Sunday 11 September 2022 to hear the Chief Executive & Growth Director deliver the Proclamation; and
- the public reaction to the arrangements had been well received and there had been significant local and national media coverage of the city's arrangements.

The following responses were given to Members' queries:-

- the expectations of His Majesty for arrangements for the Coronation were unknown and no date had been fixed. As such, it was not possible to report on local arrangements and costs;
- no equivalent arrangements to Operation London Bridge for the Coronation had been made;
- the protocol for the Queen's passing had been developed in conjunction with the National Association of Civic Officers; and
- although there would have been carbon footprint implications, such as the involvement of additional vehicles, energy uses etc., it had not been possible in the time given for these to have been calculated.

The Chair of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee, on behalf of Members, thanked all Council staff involved in the arrangements and also extended the thanks of the Committee to all partners across the city who had participated in the arrangements and which had been so well received by the public.

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

24 **Street Naming and Numbering**

The Corporate Manager - Executive Support presented the report seeking Members' approval of a number of minor revisions to the Council's Street Naming and Numbering Policy.

The report proposed that Executive recommend that Council approves revisions to the Council's Street Naming and Numbering Policy and that approval of future revisions to the policy be delegated to the Director with responsibility for planning and development in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee.

The policy covered both the naming and numbering of streets and the renaming of existing streets when requested. It was also an opportunity to raise awareness of arrangements.

A Member raised the following queries which the Corporate Manager - Executive Support undertook to respond to:-

- can 2.5 be clarified as to its meaning with perhaps regard to updating the language used for accessibility?;
- can the necessity of the very specific clause in 3.9.13 be explained and is there a reason other considerations are not included and what is the significance of the starting date of 1914?; and
- can 8.13 be clarified as to whether it means the local authority will instruct developers on where to site the nameplates or just that it is a requirement that developments have nameplates?

The following responses were given to Members' queries:-

- the policy covered a situation where a street name could be challenged, for example, on historical grounds and, in such circumstances, the appropriate action could be to hold a referendum;
- relevant Ward Councillors were consulted as a matter of course and requests from the public often came via Members; and
- a bank of names was not maintained.

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee noted the report and recommended to Executive and Council for approval.

25 **Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group - Update from the Chair of the Working Group**

The Deputy Chair and Chair of the Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group briefed Members on meetings of the Group held on 27 September and 3 October 2022 following an initial meeting on 27 June 2002. He explained that the working group had been established in response to changes in Universal Credit and the feared impact this would have on existing homeless numbers but since then the economic climate had changed with inflation and the energy and cost of living crisis. At the same time, the City Council was consulting on its Homelessness Strategy.

As well as a call for public views on the issues including those who had experienced homelessness, two sessions were being held with witnesses, one to consider causation and prevention, the other to examine the handling of homelessness presentations. The first session on 3 October had received statements from Shelter, Exeter Citizens Advice and the City Council on the nature of homelessness, the

national picture of homelessness with consideration given to what recommendations could be made, not only for the City Council, but also for regional and national bodies and to Government.

Six bodies had been invited to the second session arranged for 19 October 2022. There had been a good response to a social media promotion of the work of the Task and Finish Working Group from individuals who had experienced homelessness. St Petrocks had also invited Members of the Group to meet with some of its clients. Councillor Pearce, as Portfolio Holder for Communities and Prevention, had been invited to the meetings with witnesses.

The Committee noted the update.

26 **Scrutiny Programme Board Annual Report**

The Chair, as a member of the Scrutiny Programme Board, presented the Board's report which offered an annual update in respect of the Scrutiny work achieved during the Municipal Year 2021 - 2022. He, and another Member, thanked Democratic Services for their input into the preparation of the report. The Member thanked the Portfolio Holder for the quality of the report and also remarked that it would be beneficial if that, in addition to the selected Portfolio Holder reporting in detail to the respective Committee meeting, brief updates from the other three Portfolio Holders who also reported to this Committee could be provided at each meeting.

The Chair stated that the current format had been considered and supported by the Scrutiny Programme Board and also pointed out that there was an opportunity under Standing Order 20 for Members to ask questions of the relevant Portfolio Holders at each meeting, all four being present at this meeting.

The Corporate Manager, Democratic and Civic Support advised that the suggestion could be raised at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Board. He stated that it would also be appropriate for the matter to be raised at the next meeting of the Governance Review Board as part of the Board's annual review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements.

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee:-

- (1) supported the suggestion regarding brief Portfolio Holders updates to be made at each Committee meeting to be put to both the Scrutiny Programme Board and the Governance Review Board; and
- (2) noted the Annual Scrutiny Report 2021-2022 which would be presented to Executive to note and to recommend to Council to approve.

27 **Forward Plan of Business and Scrutiny Work Plan**

Members noted the Forward Plan and the Scrutiny Work Plan.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.47 pm

Chair