

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Monday 13 March 2023

Present:-

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor, Councillor Mrs Yolonda Henson (Chair)
Councillors Atkinson, Bennett, Bialyk, Branston, Denning, Ellis-Jones, Hannaford, Harvey, Holland, Jobson, Leadbetter, Mitchell, K, Mitchell, M, Moore, D, Morse, Newby, Packham, Parkhouse, Pearce, Read, Rees, Snow, Sparling, Sutton, Vizard, Wardle, Williams, Wood and Wright

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allcock, Asvachin, Ghusain, Knott, Lights, J. Moore, Oliver and Warwick.

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LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND

The Leader reported that the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) had made £500 million available to Local Authorities to purchase housing for those households who had come to the UK from Ukraine and Afghanistan through the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Afghan Resettlement Scheme. Exeter City Council had provisionally been identified as eligible for £1,842,378 capital grant funding to purchase 15 homes.

It was permissible to bid for less than 15 properties which would reduce the level of grant received but which would negate the need for any potential borrowing by the City Council. It was therefore proposed that the Council does not take on additional borrowing and accepts a reduced allocation of £1,086,378 in DLUHC grant funding to purchase eight properties to be held in the Housing Revenue Account and that a bid be submitted on this basis by the deadline of 15 March 2023.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Council Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homelessness Prevention welcomed the report, noting that once the resettlement needs had been met, the longer term use of the houses would be for local authority determination e.g. housing and homelessness relief.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendations and following a vote, the recommendations were carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the Council not take on additional borrowing and accepts a reduced allocation of £1,086,378 in DLUHC grant funding to purchase eight properties to be held in the Housing Revenue Account;
- (2) the Council's capital contribution is funded through £1,537,906 of available Section 106 funds and from a £265,740 Homes For Ukraine (H4U) grant contribution from Devon County Council;
- (3) the Council identifies and purchases suitable properties to let for eligible households using introductory tenancies for the first year and fixed term tenancies for up to five years;

- (4) the rents be set as per the recommended rental funding model as set out in the table within the circulated report;
- (5) the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU), as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be signed and returned to the DLUHC by the 15 March 2023 deadline confirming the Council's participation in the programme and allow payment from DLUHC; and
- (6) the Council grant delegated authority to the Director of City Development and Housing and the relevant Portfolio Holder to proceed with the acquisitions and to amend the number of properties purchased in line with the agreement above, including where additional Government grants may become available (providing no capital borrowing is involved).

8 **APPOINTMENT OF NEW PERMANENT CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

The Leader reported that, following interview, the Selection Committee on 7 March 2023 had recommended the appointment of Bindu Arjoon, the Deputy Chief Executive, as the new permanent Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service from 1 April 2023. Members noted that Executive Members had ratified the Selection Committee's recommendation.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendation and following a vote, the recommendation was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the recommendation of the Selection Committee and Executive be ratified and Bindu Arjoon be appointed as the permanent Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service of Exeter City Council from 1 April 2023.

9 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

It was noted that no public questions had been received.

10 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 8**

In accordance with Standing Order No. 8, the following question was put by Councillor Rees to the Leader

How will you engage with the County Council, to ensure that they understand the impact of the £1.5 million planned cuts to the homeless prevention services, which will have a significant impact on our Council's ability to achieve its goals in this area? What more can we all do to reverse these planned cuts?

The Leader requested that the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homelessness Prevention respond to the question.

Response

- the County Council were consulting on the proposed cuts, having already set and approved the budget in February and there was fear amongst the City Council's partner agencies that there would be a severe impact on the most vulnerable in the city;

- engagement was being undertaken through a number of channels;
- direct discussions were being held between Exeter City Council Members and Devon County Council Members regarding potential impact as further pressure on the County Council was necessary;
- cross-District engagement was being undertaken through the District Housing Partnership who reported to Team Devon (a Districts and County Council Chief Executive Officer meeting) and a comprehensive cross-District impact assessment, was being collated;
- Exeter-specific feedback and impact assessment was being prepared for a data audit of households being supported under the direct Devon County Council contract as well as sub-contracting arrangements with Exeter City Council. This included support to Exeter City Council temporary accommodation plus the 11-bed hostel for rough sleepers at Howell Road. This included collating cases where there was a discernible impact on individuals with disabilities, health issues and reducing inequalities; issues aligning with Devon County Council statutory responsibilities. The information would be incorporated into the Team Devon report and also considered by Exeter City Council to contribute to and counter the Devon County Council Impact Assessment;
- Exeter had requested data returns and impact assessments from its three providers delivering the contract in the city and was supporting them to make their respective and collective representations to Devon County Council. Meetings with senior officers were also being scheduled to assess information alongside viability and mitigation options;
- Devon County Council did not seem to have considered the impact that the cuts would have on Adult Social Services; and
- Exeter's homelessness partner agencies met on 13 March 2023 to agree a collated response to the consultation with a view to maximise a one-voice feedback from both Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises and statutory partners.

Councillor Rees, asked a supplementary question as to the level of engagement that had occurred with Devon County Council colleagues and how the level of engagement could be increased to reduce the impact of the cuts?

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homelessness Prevention advised that a representative of Devon County Council had not been in attendance at the meeting earlier in the day. He referred to the YMCA not having been consulted by the County Council on the proposals and only hearing of the cuts via Devon Live which was indicative of the level of consultation that had occurred. A co-ordinated response by the District Councils and partner agencies was therefore vital.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 6.21 pm)

Chair