

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD

Monday 4 March 2024

Present:-

Councillors M Mitchell (Chair), Rees and Vizard

Apologies:-

Councillors Allcock and Atkinson

Also Present:-

Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officers (SLS and PMD)

30

APOLOGIES AND APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Apologies were noted. Councillor M Mitchell was appointed Chair for the meeting, in Councillor Allcock's absence.

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SCRUTINY NOTE OF 13 DECEMBER MEETING

The Democratic Services Manager advised that he had met the Director Finance to talk about incorporating the Budget scrutiny process into the Committee cycle.

During discussion:-

- Councillor Rees reminded Members that the Director Finance had suggested June 2024 for a single-item Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee meeting;
- Members established that it would not be practical to hold a briefing before the beginning of the period of heightened sensitivity;
- the Chair felt that the public consultation needed considering;
- Councillor Rees enquired about doing a scrutiny of the spending of the budget, as agreed by the Director Finance;
- the Monitoring Officer reminded Members of the existing quarterly budget reports, although Councillor Vizard remarked that these currently went to the Executive and not to Scrutiny.

Members **AGREED** to schedule a single-item Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee meeting (around Budget) for June 2024, with a follow-up meeting in the autumn.

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SCRUTINY PROPOSALS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

The Chair expressed his approval for both scrutiny proposals but felt that the issue of Exeter City Council Paris St Office Usage was not weighty enough to warrant a task & finish group. During discussion:-

Exeter City Council Paris St Office Usage

- it was confirmed that that this was an operational matter which was firmly on SMB's agenda;
- there were several possible solutions, which would be presented to Members;
- Councillor Vizard suggested a spotlight review be more suitable than a task & finish group;

- there was a consensus for this item to be added to the June agenda of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee; and
- the Monitoring Officer advised that not all figures might be available by then.

Leisure Services

- the Chair advised that SMB had suggested that this item be added to the June agenda of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee; and
- the Monitoring Officer confirmed that SMB were highly supportive of this piece of scrutiny.

It was **AGREED** that:-

- Exeter City Council Paris St Office Usage would be added to the June agenda of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee; and
- Leisure Services would be added to the June agenda of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee.

33 **NOTICE OF MOTION BOX SHIFTING - DISCUSSION ON REFERRAL TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chair reminded Members of the context for this item, namely the Full Council meeting of 20 February 2024, where Councillor Read had been advised that the matter would be referred to a scrutiny committee. During discussion, it was **AGREED** that Box Shifting would be added to the June agenda of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee, Members and officers having established that the March meeting would be unrealistic.

34 **DRAFT WORK PLAN**

The Democratic Services Officer (SLS) talked Members through the draft work plan. During discussion:-

- Members felt that the Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee would be the best forum for the Exeter Plan;
- Councillor Vizard advised that the item Update on Street Cleansing/Bin Collection scheduled for the March meeting could be removed from the work plan, having been covered extensively at the February 2024 meeting of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee; and
- Members opted not to bring forward the item Review of Consultation Policy.

It was **AGREED** that:-

- the Exeter Plan would be the subject of a single-item Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee meeting in October 2024 (exact date to be agreed);
- the item Update on Street Cleansing/Bin Collection scheduled for the March meeting would be removed from the work plan; and
- the Democratic Services Officer (SLS) would update the work plan as a result of this meeting.

35 **STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING.**

The Chair read out the following statement on the subject of external speakers:-

“You will have noticed from several recent email exchanges that there have been

requests from Scrutiny Committee Members to invite external speakers / expert witnesses to address this Council's Scrutiny Committees.

The Local Government Act 2000 does indeed state that an Overview and Scrutiny Committee of a Local Authority may invite other persons to attend meetings of the committee. However, this must be agreed in advance by the relevant Committee in question in order to ensure a majority of Members are in support of the proposal to do so. Once agreed, an invitation through the Chair can be issued to the individual for a subsequent meeting.

It has also been suggested that Scrutiny Committee Members be consulted by email about inviting external speakers. Such an approach, taking place 'behind closed doors' (as it were), would not be consistent with either good governance or the Nolan principle of Openness. Above all, this Council's Constitution is clear: it is not the remit of this Board to allow, refuse or even discuss external invitations to Scrutiny Committees.

Therefore I invite Scrutiny Committee Members to submit any such requests at the next meetings of this Council's two Scrutiny committees on: 14 March for Strategic Scrutiny and 28 March for Customer Focus Scrutiny."

The Democratic Officer (SLS) reminded Members that an external speaker (Dr Daniel Lash) was scheduled for the September meeting of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The date of 21 May 2024 was agreed for the next meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Board.

Finally, Members placed on record their thanks to Sharon Sissons for her hard work and dedication throughout her tenure as Democratic Services Officer.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.22 pm)

Chair