

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 9 April 2024

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)

Councillors Wright, Denning, Foale, Parkhouse and Williams, R

Also present:

Councillor Moore (as an opposition group Leader); and

Councillor M. Mitchell (as an opposition group Leader).

Apologies:

Councillors Pearce and Wood and Jobson (as an opposition group Leader)

Also present:

Chief Executive, Director Corporate Services, Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management, Director of City Development, Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Director Finance, Service Lead Net Zero & Business, Service Lead - Environmental Health & Community Safety, Service Lead - Active & Healthy People, Assistant Service Lead – Local Plan and Democratic Services Manager.

42

COUNCILLOR WOOD

The Leader advised Councillor Wood was unable to be in attendance, following a recent operation and on behalf of the Executive Committee, wished him well for his recovery.

43

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

44

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

45

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 19

No questions from members of the public were received.

46

OVERVIEW OF GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24 – QUARTER 3

The Executive received the report which advised Members of the overall financial position of the General Fund Revenue Budgets for the 2023/24 financial year after nine months and the approval of additional expenditure required during the financial year.

Particular reference was made to:-

- a number of service projects were likely to run over into the next financial year, with a predicted service underspend of £2.9 million, and future supplementary budget requests would need to be made; and

- there were requests for three supplementary budgets, two of which were for reductions in the budget for areas to be carried forward into the next financial year and one for the depreciation budgets.

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Mitchell – enquired on the terminology of ‘income realignment’ in relation to parking and trade waste.
- Cllr Moore – enquired on the risk related to the commercial income generation and what was being done to address the ongoing issue.

During the debate, a Member advised that trade waste realignment referred to original income targets being unrealistic and had been amended to set a more realistic target to support the service.

In response to questions raised, the Director Finance advised that:-

- budget realignment involved the reduction of income budget for trade waste and car parks to reflect the Council’s current financial circumstances;
- the capital programme was proving a challenge to deliver and had not currently required borrowing, with the Council using its own existing funds to finance it and therefore, no additional loans had been taken out;
- commercial income initiatives would be considered over the next financial year as part of the budget process.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Denning seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes and approves (where applicable):

- (1) the General Fund forecast financial position for the 2023 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 December 2023;
- (4) the creditors payments performance; and
- (5) the One Exeter programme update.

47

2023/24 GENERAL FUND CAPITAL MONITORING STATEMENT – QUARTER 3

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

Particular reference was made to:-

- full Council approved a general fund capital programme of £72 million, which as of December 2023, £3.45 million had been spent;
- the total forecast spend for the financial year was £8.6 million;
- the significant capital programme being carried forward into the new financial year, some of which had been approved in the February 2024 budget and the remainder would be presented to Members in July 2024;
- the challenges in delivering capital receipts, with only £20,000 worth of general fund capital receipts generated in the financial year;
- some schemes had been deferred, whilst other schemes including BLRF were no longer proceeding; and

- the further funding requests outlined in the report were being sought this year and would be carried forward for delivery in the new financial year.

An opposition group leader spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Moore – enquired on the AV budget for equipment and whether it would be for improvements to meetings and broadcasting.

During the debate, a Member enquired on the issues of delivering the capital strategy and sought clarification on the uncertainty of the projects in relation to timings.

In response to questions raised, the Director Finance advised that:-

- the AV programme should improve the technology used for delivering meetings;
- some capital projects in the programme were uncertain by their very nature, and although there was a large budget for enhancements at the Guildhall Shopping Centre, it was not known when a lease would be ended or the budget required; and
- there was an ongoing issue in recruiting and maintaining staff in engineering and corporate property services, which were vital in managing the capital programmes.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Denning seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves:-

- (1) the overall financial position for the 2023/24 annual capital programme; and
- (2) the amendments and further funding requests to the Council's annual capital programme for 2023/24.

2023/24 HRA BUDGET MONITORING REPORT – QUARTER 3

The Executive received the report on the financial position of the HRA Revenue and Capital Budgets for the 2023/24 financial year after nine months. The report also highlighted areas of risk, where certain budgets had been identified as being vulnerable to factors beyond the Council's control and could result in potential deviations from budget, were subject to close monitoring by officers.

Members noted that the HRA had remained broadly stable throughout the financial year, however particular reference was made to:-

- the significant challenges to the repairs and maintenance budget, which had significantly overspent by £1.1 million and there had been a number of substantial voids reported;
- the HRA had attracted more investment interest than was anticipated when the budgets were set;
- the capital charges were about £350,000 lower than budgeted for; and
- repairs and maintenance would need close monitoring for reasons that the more spent in the revenue account would provide less available funding for capital projects.

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Mitchell – enquired on whether there was a strategy in place to recover the repairs and maintenance situation and what the timescales would be to balance it.
- Cllr Moore – enquired if the Portfolio Holder could report on the HRA budget, following conversations held at the Council Housing Advisory Board on the non-expenditure of sundry land maintenance in relation to trees and in respect of property maintenance. She also enquired on what the final outcome of overspending would be with the likely increased demand for repairs.

The Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development and Support Services advised that budget issues were being addressed at the appropriate level. Additional contracts were in place to allow repairs which needed to be completed. Voids were also being looked at to ensure that people could move in quickly to regain the rent charges. The Council Housing and Development Advisory Board received reports on these matters and full engagement was made. She requested that detailed questions be emailed to her and a response would be provided.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Denning seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes and approves (where applicable):

- (1) the HRA forecast financial position for 2023/24 financial year; and
- (2) the revision of the HRA Capital Programme to reflect the reported variations detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

49

THE HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND – SCHEME 5

The Executive received the report which sought Member agreement to delegate authority to the Director Finance in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development & Support Services to agree and disburse funding from the fifth Household Support Fund scheme.

Members noted that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced a 6-month extension to the Household Support Fund, to run from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 and given the timing of the announcement, delegated power was being sought to agree the scheme and ensure the money could be used by the 30 September.

Particular reference was made to:-

- since the report was written, Devon County Council (DCC) had indicated that the Council's allocation of funding may be £309,000, but the official grant agreement had not yet been received;
- DCC were required to send their overall delivery plan to the Department for Work and Pensions by 10 May; and
- support would be provided to a cross section of vulnerable households, including disabled people, care leavers and people with caring responsibilities.

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Mitchell – enquired on how the Council could ensure that those who need support could apply and can get hold of this funding and be directed toward the information.
- Cllr Moore – welcomed the report but considered the government proposal to be late and too short a time period for support. She enquired if there was any data available from the previous funding schemes to inform on the level of

demand and if the Council had previously been able to fulfil all the requests made.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- the funding was welcomed and would be put to good use;
- was the funding similar to the previous household support fund schemes?
- was the Council likely to receive a top up amount from DCC? and
- the Council had records of those who had benefited from the schemes and enabled residents to be contacted and advised.

The Leader requested that data on funding allocations made to date be made available to Councillors.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Denning seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RECOMMENDED that Council grant delegated authority to the Director Finance in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development & Support Services to agree the scheme for disbursing funding from the fifth Household Support Fund.

50

CLIMATE ADAPTATION STRATEGY FOR DEVON, CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY

The Executive received the report which sought the Councils endorsement of the Climate Adaptation Strategy for Devon, Cornwall, and Isles of Scilly, which had been produced by the Devon, Cornwall, and Isles of Scilly Climate Impacts Group, who coordinate the regional action on climate application and to improve resilience across the region and was chaired by the Environment Agency.

Particular reference was made to the strategy which included an action plan which would be reviewed again in five years and focussed on impacts relating to river and surface water flooding, rising sea levels, reduced water availability and temperature changes.

Members noted that 64 impacts had been identified and evaluated across five sectors, with 18 being classified as severe, 28 major, 16 moderate, one minor and one negligible. The City Council would work with the actions in the strategy to support the work of the Net Zero team.

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Moore – welcomed the report and enquired about how the measures set out in the five-year strategy would be incorporated into the new local plan.
- Cllr Mitchell – enquired on the statutory function of the board and how it related to planning implications. He also enquired on how the strategy fit in with the Councils 2030 Net Zero target in relation to the timescales of other authorities.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate & Ecological Crisis welcomed the report, noting that the recommendations focused on the responsibilities of Devon County Council, covering the period until 2027, where it was hoped a further report would be made. She also welcomed the number of organisations and authorities involved who were addressing the importance of climate change.

The Leader requested that information on the statutory functions be provided to Councillors and would enquire on how it fit in with the new Local Plan under Minute No. 54.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Denning seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:-

- (1) the endorsement of the Climate Adaptation Strategy for Devon, Cornwall, and Isles of Scilly; and
- (2) to continue attending and participating in Devon, Cornwall, and Isles of Scilly Climate Impacts Group meetings, which coordinate regional action on climate adaptation, preparing communities and organisations for a changing climate, and improving resilience across the region.

51

COUNCIL HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK POLICY

The Executive received the report on the Council's Health and Safety at Work policy, which was a legal policy had been revised to reflect changes to the Council's structure, legislation, and best practice. Members were advised that there were no major changes to this report other than administrative amendments as set out in section 8 of the report .

The Leader moved, and Councillor Wright seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RECOMMENDED that Council adopts the Corporate Health and Safety Policy.

52

MEMBERS' TRAINING

The Executive received the report which provided an update on the progress of work on the Members' training programme and Members' attendance and feedback for the various training sessions, which have been held since November 2023 to present. The report also provided a summary of the work undertaken by the Councillor Development Steering Group for 2023-24.

Particular reference was made to:-

- the training feedback received from Members showed that 59% were either very satisfied or satisfied with the training provided;
- the average turnout for the last quarter was 44%, and more work would be done to ensure training sessions were accessible; and
- the safeguarding and GDPR training on the SSS training platform was notably popular with Members.

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Moore – welcomed the figures and satisfaction levels.
- Cllr Mitchell – noted that a planning training event was only open to six members and would therefore be 100% turnout.

During the debate, Members made the following points:-

- the SSS training platform was commended in its ability in providing various training options at a user's leisure;

- GDPR and Safeguarding was recommended as priority training for all Councillors; and
- one of the SSS training courses had been entered twice on the spreadsheet.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Democratic Services and Environmental Health in commending the report, advised that he had sought responses from Members, of which 80% had been very positive. Work had been undertaken on the training provided for licencing and planning to be more interactive and varied and further work on timings and accessibility was being taken.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Wright seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Executive Committee note the report.

53

LIVEABLE EXETER PLACEMAKING CHARTER AND PRE-APPLICATION CHARGES

The Executive received the report which set out the details of the six-week consultation on the proposals for the provision of charging for pre-application advice on major planning applications, and the introduction of the Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter.

Particular reference was made to:-

- the Council currently provided a free pre-application advice service, and implementing a fee for advice would provide a more proactive service and encourage developments whilst being consistent with neighbouring authorities;
- the report was seeking delegated authority to make minor editorial changes before publishing the charter on the council's website, and to also ensure it was updated regularly;
- benchmarking work had been undertaken on charges with other authorities, as well as market testing with consultants prior to launching consultation;
- the fee structure was divided into three bands, to reflect the complexity and need for specialist advice, and income would be reinvested to improve the quality of the service provided; and
- the consultation was targeted to a specific group of likely users of the service and some criticism had been received around the limited scope.

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Mitchell – enquired on the differences between developers with various numbers of homes and charging rates and whether there was flexibility to charge by the number of units being produced. He also enquired on which authorities had been benchmarked with and whether future review periods were needed.
- Cllr Moore –enquired on whether there were any risks to other planning applications and decision making and how it would improve team capacity. She further enquired about formalising community engagement, enhancing decision making processes and whether councillors and public could see the review panel reports and what had been agreed.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- the report was welcomed, given there had previously been a public misunderstanding of pre-application advice, providing clarification on its purpose was beneficial;
- would there be any issues relating to an application being refused by the Planning Committee, if a developer had paid for advice?
- would the paid service create extra work for planning officers? and
- how would the fees be re-invested to support the planning team and improve application processes?

In response to questions raised, the Director of City Development advised that:-

- the report set out a legal framework for charging for pre application fees, which would provide a quality of service, but was not a decision process;
- advice provided from officers would be the same as that provided now but would provide a more project management approach. Government guidance encouraged the publication of planning performance agreements and Design Review Panel advice would be quoted in officer reports;
- the service would be contained within the major projects team to support larger, complex applications and would not impact on the overall planning team dealing with householder applications; and
- neighbouring authorities had been compared as part of the benchmarking process; and
- the approach to a flat rate would be structured to reflect the services provided to an applicant.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded an amendment to the recommendations to read as follows:-

2.3 That the Executive recommends that Council grants delegated authority to the Director of City Development, in consultation with **the Leader**, to make minor editorial changes to the Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter, attached at Appendix B, prior to its publication on the City Councils website.

2.4 That the Executive recommends that Council grants delegated authority to the Director of City Development, in consultation with **the Leader**, to regularly monitor and review the Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter, and make minor alterations to improve its clarity and detail.

The Leader explained that the reason for the amended wording was because he was currently managing after the Planning Portfolio and wished to ensure consultation on delegated authority was made with the appropriate Member.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Wright seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED as amended unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Executive Committee note the Consultation Statement, which documents the responses to the consultation on the proposals for pre-application charges and the introduction of the Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter, attached at Appendix A of the report.

That **Executive RECOMMEND** that the officer recommendations to Council be amended as follows:-

(1) approves the introduction of preapplication charges as set out in the report and endorses the Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter attached at Appendix B of the report;

(2) grants delegated authority to the Director of City Development, in consultation with the Leader, to make minor editorial changes to the Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter, attached at Appendix B, prior to its publication on the City Councils website; and

(3) grants delegated authority to the Director of City Development, in consultation with the Leader, to regularly monitor and review the Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter, and to make minor alterations to improve its clarity and detail.

54

EXETER PLAN: FULL DRAFT CONSULTATION REPORTING

The Executive received the report on the consultation held between September 2023 and January 2024 on the full draft of the emerging Exeter Plan for the city and the evaluation of the consultation responses received.

Members noted that this was the third major consultation undertaken on the draft plan and the first to include all the details of a full plan. Attention would now turn to the preparation of a final draft for a fourth consultation later this year before submission to the planning inspectorate for examination. Members were also advised that the Devon, Cornwall, and Isles of Scilly climate adaptation emergency strategy would be a part of the evidence base of the local plan.

Particular reference was made to:-

- the consultation used new methods of engagement, including coffee mornings, social media, and different venues;
- a full audio version of the documentation had been made available online, to enhance engagement;
- the consultation in numbers and responses were outlined in the report;
- positive support was received for the approaches set out in the quick questions, particularly in relation to energy efficiency and renewable and to the Council's brownfield approach. A firm level of support for development at higher density and height was identified in the appropriate context;
- 41 of the 61 topic-based policies had been well received;
- the responses to development site proposals generally demonstrated support for brownfield sites; and
- there was a slight reduction in the level of consultation responses compared to the previous consultations.

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Moore – thanked officers for the work undertaken but noted a number of issues requiring more discussion within the Council before the next draft. It was noted the local plan would go to one scrutiny committee and an ongoing series of monthly Planning Member Working Group meetings, but an agreed process for more Member inclusion was needed.
- Cllr Mitchell – thanked the officers for the work undertaken and welcomed options for Member involvement, including a Members' briefing or forum on the matter before a full Council debate.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- officers were thanked for the work undertaken and the detailed report was commended;
- Members needed to contribute to the consultations before a final version was received by full Council;

- it would be welcomed in future reports where any key changes or differences were; and
- having residents respond and engage with the consultation had helped shape and develop the plan.

The Leader agreed that Councillors had a role in the development of the local plan, but the current stage of the process was on listening to residents. Planning Member Working Groups would be holding informative sessions on the matter as it progressed, which were open to all Members. He agreed he would look at how Councillor engagement would be taken forward.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Wright seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RESOLVED that the content of the 'Exeter Plan: Full Draft Consultation Statement' (Appendix A) be noted as the document to be used to inform the preparation of the final draft of the emerging Exeter Plan.

55

WONFORD COMMUNITY WELLBEING HUB

The Executive received the report which provided an update on the progress of the Wonford Community Wellbeing Hub prior to a formal planning application and shared the business case and £7 million costs of the project.

Members were advised that there was a typo in the report, and that it was February 2022 that Council had approved the provision of £750,000 funding to progress to the next stage of work and the business case. There had been a high level of responses from the community and what they valued, and the business case outlined how the Wellbeing Hub could generate profit within its first five years.

Members received a presentation on the Wonford Community Wellbeing Hub (attached to the minutes), which included:

- an overview of the purpose and desired outcomes of the hub;
- the progress of work to date;
- an overview of the existing fragmented buildings and the proposed new hub;
- an overview of the designs of the hub; and
- a forecast of the capital cost & revenue position and next steps of the project.

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Moore – enquired on the different options to governance arrangements and legal structures, how these might be resolved and who will be taking the project forward in regard to community involvement? She also enquired on what extent would capital be addressed to ensure community organisations do not struggle financially.
- Cllr Mitchell – enquired on the capital funding for the project and what percentage of the capital requirements would be met through grant funding?

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- the Wonford area was one of the most deprived areas in city and deserved the new hub which was supported; and
- the hub would provide both social and community value to residents and be a benefit to the community.

The Leader in commending the report advised that business case figures should be integrated in regard to income and that a report would eventually go back to Scrutiny for consideration on its progress and community engagement.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Wright seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously

RECOMMENDED that Council note:-

- (1) the report, extensive business case and community engagement; and
- (2) that officers will bring back a report with potential funding options for £7 million by April 2025.

56

LIVE AND MOVE SPORT ENGLAND PLACE PARTNER 2025-2028

The Executive received the report on the Live and Move Programme (Exeter and Cranbrook) as one of the original 12 Sport England Local Delivery Pilots, which launched in 2017 following a successful bid receiving over £7.5m of investment.

The current funding would end on 31st March 2025 and the report sought approval to extend Exeter City Council's role as a Sport England Place Partner and apply for further investment to develop the work of the Live and Move Programme for a further three years (2025-2028).

Members received a presentation on the Live and Move Sport England Place Partner 2025-2028 (attached to the minutes), which included:

- what the report was about;
- the rationale and impact; and
- the high-level programme structure 2025-2028

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Mitchell – enquired on the process of going to Sport England and what would happen if the bid were not successful at the current level? Would funding continue?
- Cllr Moore – enquired on the Sport England framework outlined in 8.12 of the report and how various issues can be brought together and related to other strategies. She further enquired if groups would be involved with the Exeter Place Board in a governance capacity?

In response to questions raised, the Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism advised that the project was 100% funded by Sport England and there was no other funding available, so the Council was being proactive in applying for bid.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Wright seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously

RECOMMENDED that Council:-

- (1) authorise the Director of Culture, Leisure, and Tourism in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services and Physical Activity to develop a next stage bid and to apply to Sport England for funding;
- (2) recognise this next stage of work will focus on increasing physical activity, decreasing inactivity, reducing inequalities, and providing positive experiences for children and young people; and

- (3) support the proposed next stage bid to Sport England based on the learning from the project to date and the principles outlined at 8.12 of the report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.24 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 23 April 2024.

DRAFT