

EXETER CITY COUNCIL**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY
10 NOVEMBER 2005****DEVON LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN, 2006 – 2011****1 PURPOSE OF PAPER**

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the preparation by Devon County Council of their draft Local Transport Plan for 2006 – 2011 on which Members' views are sought.

2 INFORMATION

- 2.1 Under the system which has been in place since the start of the decade, Highway Authorities are obliged to produce 5 year Local Transport Plans which set out the overall transport strategy for the area and propose a range of broadly costed proposals for achieving that strategy on the ground. The County Council submitted a Local Transport Plan as part of this process at the beginning of the decade and the Department for Transport rated Devon's LTP very highly. A funding stream has ensued from DfT over the ensuing years.
- 2.2 The second round of LTP submissions has now started with Highway Authorities submitting their plans in provisional form in July 2005 with the final version to be submitted in March 2006.
- 2.3 The County Council are seeking comments from stakeholders on the document entitled "Devon on the Move" and, given the importance of transport strategy for achieving a wide range of the City Council's objectives, the principal elements of the draft document are summarised below and Members are invited to comment on its content. For ease of reference, Annex 1 to this paper encloses the 7 objectives and the 13 provisional targets that the County Council have identified which form the framework for this document. Also attached at Annex 1 is the section dealing with the Exeter Local Transport Plan proposals so that Members can see, in some detail, what is intended over the next 5 years.
- 2.4 The 7 objectives and 13 provisional targets are derived from a combination of central government guidance and from Devonwide aspirations covering local concerns. These were developed as a result of the County Council's Stakeholder Consultation exercise. The major part of the document is devoted to an explanation of how the County Council proposes to achieve these various objectives through a series of Countywide initiatives. Thus, for example, the proposals for improving Exeter's bus services and facilities is in part met by an effective strategy for enhancing bus service provision with a wide ranging network of supported bus services across the County. The target of tackling traffic congestion obviously requires a wide range of complementary measures from the support of bus services through to Demand Management, along with the promotion of cycling and a range of highway improvements to tackle particular congestion points on the network.

- 2.5 The LTP makes it clear that within Exeter the road network cannot carry further increases in traffic without significant increases in congestion. Thus the quality of the transport system overall in the City can only be improved if significant numbers of people can be attracted to walk, cycle or travel by bus. This will only happen if the networks for these systems are improved considerably and if demand management is introduced. The proposals for the Exeter Sub Region include a wide range of comprehensive measures.
- 2.6 A further important area of work which will be subsumed under the umbrella of the Local Transport Plan is tackling deteriorating air quality. The LTP specifically identifies the need to set targets to reduce local air pollution and these will be derived from Air Quality Action Plans which are designed to address the problems of the air quality management areas which have been designated in Devon.
- 2.7 The section on the Exeter Sub Region identifies a provisional programme allocation for the 5 year period 2006 – 2011 of £20 million. The Foundation Programme will comprise schemes to:
- increase bus use through priority measures and marketing, including community transport schemes
 - park and ride upgrades, extensions and promotion with increased service frequencies
 - improve access to rail stations, service enhancements and interchange facilities
 - improve traffic efficiency through the provision of traffic management measures, junction improvement, ring road and new highway infrastructure
 - develop and improve walking and cycling
 - provide signage and information
 - implement soft measures, including employers and school travel plans, training, communications and publicity
 - implement intelligent transport systems to reduce and contribute to the reduction in air pollution
 - introduce further parking measures to encourage modal change especially for short journeys
- 2.8 In addition to this Foundation Programme, the County Council are proposing a Core Network Programme which will improve key junctions on the motorway network to enable the PUA to be developed fully and a Key Congestion Programme which requires major transport infrastructure provision, including public transport, park and ride and highways to enable a step change in the use of public transport to be made and to address congestion and air quality. A further bid will need to be made by the County Council to deliver all three phases of the strategy with the likelihood that a major scheme bid in excess of £5 million will be needed to ensure delivery. In terms of the more specific proposals that will arise from this programme, Members should look at the plan in the Annex which is an extract from the LTP submission. The final element of the package of achieving a step change in transport provision in the City is the Transport Innovation Fund submission. As Members will be aware, the paper was produced for Executive, at short notice, to seek the City Council's backing for this bid. The Executive strongly endorsed that bid which was submitted by the County Council to DfT on the 7 October.

3 EVALUATION AND COMMENTS

- 3.1 The draft LTP is a coherent document which addresses a range of transportation issues which the County faces across a quite disparate area. The weakness of the earlier LTP was the comparatively low recognition of the problems of congestion in the major urban areas and the need for a comprehensive strategy to address this. It is therefore welcome that there is now, in provisional form, a comprehensive approach to tackling urban transport problems, particularly those faced by Exeter. If the whole package of measures were well received by government and therefore fully funded, then over the next 5 year period of the LTP, there could be a dramatic change in the quality of the transport network which will underpin the future growth of the Exeter PUA, albeit that not all of the measures that are necessary will be fully implemented during this next 5 year period.
- 3.2 The principal issue in responding to the draft LTP is not therefore its content but simply the necessity to use every mechanism available to lobby for sufficient funding for the LTP to be fully implemented.
- 3.3 Whilst supporting the comprehensiveness of this LTP, there are two areas which require further consideration:
- air quality management
 - public transport provision within the City
- 3.4 On the first of these, as Members are aware, the City has declared 5 Air Quality Management Areas and an Action Plan is now needed to address the identified problems. It is intended that the transport elements of the agreed Action Plan are integrated within the final LTP to be submitted in March 06 but there is concern from the Director of Community and Environment that progress on this joint work needs to be accelerated if comprehensive proposals are to be included in the final LTP by March in line with Government Guidance. There is clearly a need to do a significant amount of work in the next three months if this concern is to be fully addressed.
- 3.5 The second area to emphasise is that whilst the document deals with the Devonwide issues of accessibility by public transport, the inevitable scale of this consideration is that it can tend to lack detail on local accessibility issues within Exeter. Members' concerns expressed previously at this Committee have been that the bus network in Exeter is not particularly strong in the evenings and on Sundays and that orbital services do not exist in order to link residential areas with key employment areas. If a step change in public transport provision is to be achieved, improving such bus services will be important as well. A simplified fares structure and far greater use of off-bus ticketing are both issues that would encourage greater use of the network but, as yet, there has been little sign of progress with the local operator.
- 3.6 In conclusion, the overall focus of this document and the priority given to Exeter is to be welcomed but Members further comments are sought.

4 RECOMMENDED that:-

- 4.1 (i) the provisional Devon Local Transport Plan be strongly supported;
- (ii) the City Council support the County Council's lobbying for adequate funding for the LTP and for the TIF submission;
- (iii) the City Council work closely with Devon County Council to deliver the projects outlined in this document through effective joint working and the use of the Planning System.

John Rigby
Director Economy and Development

ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report: -

"Devon on the Move". Provisional Devon Local Transport Plan, 2006-2011. July 2005
Transport Innovation Fund. Devon County Council Executive Paper. 27 September 2005