

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE

Statement of Decisions

Tuesday 17 June 2008

Present:-

Councillor Adrian Fullam (Chair)
Councillors Cole, Edwards, R M Hannaford, Mrs Henson, Mitchell, Mrs Morrish and Wadham

Also Present

Chief Executive, Director Community and Environment, Director Economy and Development, Director Corporate Services, Assistant Chief Executive and Member Services Manager

Minutes (Minute 54)

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 18 March, 8 April (Special) and 15 April 2008 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (Minute 55)

No declarations of interest were made.

Food Law Enforcement Plan 2008/09 (Minute 56)

The report of the Head of Environmental Health Services was submitted informing members of the Council's performance against the previous year's Food Law Enforcement Plan and seeking approval to the adoption of the Food Law Enforcement Plan 2008/09.

Scrutiny Committee – Community considered the report at their meeting on 3 June 2008 and the support of members was noted.

Executive recommended that:-

- (1) the Food Law Enforcement Plan 2008/09 be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Environmental Health Services be authorised to make changes to the Enforcement Plan in the light of centrally issued guidance and/or to meet operational needs.

Health and Safety Service Plan Annual Review (Minute 57)

The report of the Head of Environmental Health Services was submitted seeking approval to the Health and Safety Plan for 2008/09 which sets out the functions for regulating health and safety in businesses for the forthcoming year.

Scrutiny Committee – Community considered the report at their meeting on 3 June 2008 and the support of members was noted.

Executive recommended that the Health and Safety Service Plan 2008/09 be approved.

Local Air Quality Management - Air Quality Action Plan (Minute 58)

The report of the Head of Environmental Health Services was submitted updating Members on the Council's duties relating to local air quality management and the outcome of the consultation exercise for the proposed Air Quality Action Plan. The report also sought approval to the Plan for 2008-11.

Scrutiny Committee – Community considered the report at their meeting on 3 June 2008. Executive shared the concerns of the Committee regarding the impact on air quality of traffic management measures on main City routes and sought reassurance that ward Councillors would be consulted on future proposals.

Executive recommended that:-

- (1) a meeting be sought between the Chair of Executive, the Chair of Scrutiny Committee – Community and Devon County Council to seek how the County Council plans to reduce the pollution that is caused along the five routes coming in and out of the City;
- (2) Devon County Council be requested to review the current traffic management arrangements for Sidwell Street, with all local Councillors being involved; and
- (3) Exeter's Air Quality Action Plan for 2008 –11 be approved.

Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 (Minute 59)

The report of the Head of Housing Services was submitted seeking Members' endorsement of the content of the revised Homelessness Strategy.

Scrutiny Committee – Community considered the report at their meeting on 3 June 2008 and the comments and support of members were noted.

The Director Community and Environment identified the key proposals within the revised Strategy reflecting needs identified through the consultation process. Executive welcomed the revised strategy particularly the emphasis on preventing homelessness and supporting clients to move through the varying types of housing. They noted Scrutiny Committee – Community's request for a further report to that Committee providing information on how homelessness decisions relating to vulnerable people were reached.

Executive recommended that:-

- (1) the revised Homelessness Strategy document 2008-2013 be adopted; and
- (2) an annual report be submitted outlining progress against the strategy's action plan.

Private Sector Housing Strategy - Annual Review (Minute 60)

The report of the Head of Environmental Health Services was submitted proposing specific changes to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy in order to address local needs, as identified in the on-going private sector house condition survey.

Scrutiny Committee – Community considered the report at their meeting on 3 June 2008 and the support and comments of members were noted. Executive welcomed the proposed changes to the Strategy identified in the report.

Executive recommended that:-

- (1) the changes to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy outlined in the report be adopted;
- (2) expenditure of the single pot allocation be monitored and the proposed financial allocation to each of the schemes proposed or further schemes be developed with the approval of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Social Inclusion; and
- (3) the Policy be reviewed annually, or sooner if needs be, in order to ensure that it addresses local needs and/or government policy.

Canal Basin Regeneration Area (Minute 61)

The report of the Head of Estates Services was submitted seeking agreement to the appropriation of land held by the Council within the area covered by the Canal Basin Regeneration Scheme for planning purposes to facilitate the delivery of the scheme.

Executive recommended that the sites shown shaded on the circulated plan within the Canal Basin area be appropriated for planning purposes to facilitate the Canal Basin Regeneration Scheme.

Draft Alphinbrook Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Minute 62)

The report of the Head of Planning Services was submitted seeking agreement to the draft Alphinbrook Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for the purpose of public consultation. Members requested that local ward Councillors are kept informed of public consultation meetings.

Executive resolved that the proposed boundary amendments outlined in section 4 of the report and the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be approved for public consultation.

Corporate Plan 2007 - 2010 (2008/09 Update) (Minute 63)

The report of the Strategic Management Team was submitted seeking approval to the Council's Corporate Plan 2007 – 10 (2008/09 Update). The Assistant Chief Executive reported that the Corporate Plan had replaced the Best Value Performance Plan.

Executive recommended that the draft Corporate Plan 2007-10 (2008/09 Update) be endorsed and that any necessary drafting amendments before publication be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Exeter City Council Vexatious Complaints Policy and Guidance (Minute 64)

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive was submitted seeking approval to a policy for dealing with vexatious complaints from customers. The Chief Executive stated that whilst it was likely that the policy would rarely be invoked, it was important to have a procedure in place for dealing with vexatious complaints.

Executive approved that the corporate Vexatious Complaints Policy.

Appointment of Representatives to serve on Outside Bodies (Minute 65)

A schedule of appointments to outside bodies was circulated as proposed by the four Group leaders.

Executive resolved that the proposed appointments to outside bodies as set out in the Appendix to the minutes be agreed where unopposed and recommended that contested appointments be agreed by Council.

Membership of Committees (Minute 66)

Paragraph 21(9) of Part II of the Local Government Act 2000 precludes members of an authority's executive from also being a member of an overview and scrutiny committee. In accordance with this provision, Councillor Wardle was nominated as a member of Scrutiny Committee – Community to replace Councillor Edwards who is a member of Executive.

Executive recommended that Councillor Wardle be appointed to Scrutiny Committee – Community to replace Councillor Edwards.

Post Office Closure - Urgent Business (Minute 67)

The Chief Executive reported that he had received from the Post Office details of the schedule of proposed closures of post offices which included four within Exeter: Union Road, Queen Street, Pinhoe Road and Foxhayes. The Chair agreed to accept this item for consideration as a matter of urgency since the consultation period for the programme would end on 30 June.

Members expressed their strong opposition to the proposed closures. They noted that the particular branches identified for closure had amongst the highest number of customer transactions, between 750 and 1500 per week, of the 45 branches proposed for closure throughout Devon. In each case alternative facilities were in excess of half a mile away.

A number of branches had been lost in previous closure programmes and this had increased the pressure on remaining branches. Members were particularly concerned about the impact on elderly customers and those with disabilities who would have difficulty in accessing alternative branches. Additional car journeys would also increase pollution. In addition to the service provided, the post office fulfilled an important social function for many people. In the event of closures going ahead, members suggested that local authorities should work together to consider other models for the provision of services such as within supermarkets.

Councillor Hannaford, seconded by Councillor Mitchell, proposed the following motion:

“Exeter City Council strongly opposes the continuing erosion of essential and well-used Post Office outlets in the city.

It considers that the closure of the four Exeter branches proposed in this latest round of cuts will lead to real problems of accessibility to a vital community facility. The impact will fall disproportionately on elderly residents and on communities already suffering from relative social and economic disadvantage.”

The motion was agreed unanimously.

Executive resolved that the Chief Executive be requested to respond to the Post Office consultation in the terms set out in the agreed motion.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public (Minute 68)

Executive resolved that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Leisure and Museums Restructure (Minute 69)

The report of the Head of Leisure and Museums was submitted setting out proposals for the restructuring of the Leisure and Museums Unit in order to create future savings in the revenue budget.

Scrutiny Committee – Community considered the report at their meeting on 3 June and expressed concern at the reductions in services that would be necessary as a result of the proposals. Some Executive members were also concerned at the proposals and proposed that the recommendations should be referred back in order that savings could be identified from across both the leisure and museums services. It was also felt by some members that the proposed restructure was a retrograde step. Members were particularly concerned at the impact of the termination of services such as the Splash Holiday play scheme in disadvantaged areas. Whilst regretting that such measures were required, Portfolio Holders acknowledged the need to make savings to avoid over-expenditure on the budget. They considered that it was preferable to take forward any proposed reductions in services in a planned manner rather than in response to circumstances as they arose and which might result in compulsory redundancies.

Members were pleased to note those events and activities identified which it was hoped may continue to be delivered in future by other agencies and organisations. In response to the particular concerns expressed by Scrutiny members regarding the Splash Holiday scheme, an amendment to the recommendations was proposed to delete the reference to the termination of the scheme in May 2009 and the deletion of the Splash Co-ordinator post in order to give more time to attempt to identify alternative funding sources.

Noting the options available and for the reasons stated in the report Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the employment of the holder of the post of Community Outreach Manager (CE 12121) be terminated on the grounds of redundancy as from 31 March 2009, he be paid a compensation payment in accordance with the discretion exercised by the Council under the provisions of the Local Government (Early Termination)(Discretionary Compensation)(England and Wales) Regulations 2006 and that his post be deleted on that date;
- (2) the post of Play Development Manager (CE 12122) be deleted immediately and savings from this year's budget of £27,100 inclusive of on-costs be used to fund the extension of the post of Temporary Countryside Ranger (CE 12236), and the remainder be used to assist the funding of the costs of redundancy and early retirement of the Community Outreach Manager;
- (3) the post of Temporary Countryside Ranger (CE 12236) be extended from 11 December 2008 until 31 March 2009;
- (4) the post of Part-time Splash Holiday Co-ordinator (CE 12205) be extended to 31 May 2009; and
- (5) the new staffing structure for the Leisure & Museums Unit set out in Appendix II to the report be approved with effect from 31 April 2009, and the Head of Leisure & Museums be authorised to transfer services and functions as appropriate.

(In accordance with Standing Order 43, Councillors Edwards and Mrs Henson requested that their names be recorded as having voted against the resolution).

Housing Landlord Service Re-structure (Minute 70)

The report of the Head of Housing Services was submitted proposing a restructuring of the Housing Services Unit to support the service improvement plan.

Noting the options available and for the reasons stated in the report, Executive resolved that, with immediate effect:

- (1) the four Rent Officers (Post numbers CE 06138, 06139, 06140, 06165) are moved from the Tenancy Services Team into the new Income Recovery Team and that their posts are renamed Income Recovery Officers;
- (2) the Housing Support Manager (Post number CE06191) becomes the Income Recovery Manager;
- (3) the current honorarium paid to the Tenancy Services Manager (Post number CE 06190) is ended;
- (4) the Tenant Liaison Officer (post number CE06213) moves from the Tenant Participation Team into the Tenancy Services Team as a Housing Assistant;
- (5) the Clerical Assistant (post number CE 06123) becomes a Housing Assistant and moves from the Housing Support Team into the Tenancy Services Team;
- (6) a new post of Housing Assistant Team Leader is created within the Repairs and Technical Services Section; and
- (7) the post of the successful Housing Assistant is deleted once they have started their new role.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.10 pm)

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 15 July 2008.