

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY**

Thursday 18 January 2007

### **Present**

Councillor Adrian Fullam (Chair)  
Councillor Kevin Moore (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor Margaret Baldwin  
Councillor Connel Boyle  
Councillor Marcel Choules  
Councillor Chris Gale  
Councillor Ben Noble  
Councillor Paul Pettinger  
Councillor Hilda Sterry

Director Economy and Development, Head of Economy and Tourism, Head of Archaeological Field Unit and Member Services Officer (SLS).

### **Also Present**

Councillor Shepherd: Portfolio Holder Sustainable Development and Transport.  
Councillor Martin: Portfolio Holder Economy and Tourism.

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### **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

The following personal interest was declared:-

The following personal (\*prejudicial) interests were declared:-

<b>COUNCILLOR</b>	<b>MINUTE</b>
Councillor M A Baldwin	*7 (company secretary of the South Devon Enterprise Agency)
Councillor Choules	9 (an employee of the University of Exeter)
Councillor Gale	9 (wife is an employee of the University of Exeter)

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### **Questions from the Public under Standing Order 19**

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### **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 20**

In accordance with Standing Order 20, a question from a Member was submitted to which the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Transport and Development replied. A copy of the question was previously circulated and made available at the meeting. The question and reply (in italics) is

appended to the minutes.

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### **ESTIMATES AND FEES AND CHARGES 2007/08**

The Director Economy and Development presented a report outlining the strategic framework within which the estimates have been prepared, changes in accounting practices, which affect all budgets and detailed reasons for any significant changes in the Management Unit estimates. The key revenue changes proposed for 2007/08 were also highlighted and in response to a comment, he explained that they are part of a budgetary process that commenced last May. The Director responded to an enquiry on the temporary closure of the Guildhall Shopping Centre car park, advising that this initial period of closure was necessary to resurface the access ramp. He had also imposed a restriction on night-time working to lessen the impact on neighbouring properties. After this initial period of closure, the car park capacity will only be reduced by 25% at any one time.

A Member referred to the possible link between the uptake of the concessionary fare scheme and the resulting reduction in car parking revenue and if this would necessitate future rises in car parking charges. The Director stated that the high level of concessionary fares expenditure was mainly from passengers travelling on longer journeys and all the indications are that they are going further and more frequently, rather than using their cars less. There are a number of factors affecting demand, including the reduction in numbers using Broadwalk House (with more using the Summerland Gate car park) and the impact on perceptions of work at Princesshay, but all of those elements are modest, compared with the long term drop in the cost of motoring compared with the increase in public transport costs.

The Scrutiny Committee – Economy supported the draft Revenue Estimates and proposed Fees and Charges for 2007/08 for approval by the Executive.

(Report and Economy Estimates and Fees and Charges circulated)

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### **OPERATION OF SCRUTINY WITHIN THE COUNCIL**

The Chair reported on the conclusions of the working party set up by Scrutiny Committee – Resources to review scrutiny arrangements, and consider a number of proposals to develop a more effective operation of Scrutiny within the Council.

He suggested the following focus for discussion -

- the way in which the overall work programme is developed, with more concentration of one area or item in greater depth at a particular meeting and a review of other items in a truncated section at the end of the agenda or even through the Councillor web portal on the intranet rather than a lengthy debate at the meeting
- to develop more working groups as a means of progressing a particular

topic, with discussion on a meeting by meeting basis with officers present as resources permit

- increased involvement of portfolio holders at Scrutiny meetings, ensuring there was a higher profile of the political issues and decisions rather than just the managerial implications

Members welcomed the report and made the following suggestions and comments that:-

- task groups should be welcomed; portfolio holders should take a more active role at Scrutiny meetings as well as a physical change in seating with officers and portfolio holders facing members of Scrutiny; also if unitary authority status is achieved, then the Council will be scrutinising a wider range of functions and organisations
- the role of scrutiny should be reinforced with Executive actually being held to account. A Member welcomed the opportunity to challenge portfolio holders with attendance at scrutiny and taking part in the debate being an integral part of the process
- information only agenda items could be placed on the intranet with the opportunity to raise questions through the Director or relevant head of service if needed
- any Member should be able to attend any of the Scrutiny meetings and speak on any item. Although aware, the Member was reminded of the existing arrangement, of Standing Order 44, which entitles any Member to attend provided the required 48 hours notice is given
- there was some concern that if too much ‘Scrutiny business’ was reduced to the level of a small working group, the collective expertise of scrutiny would be lost, with the adage of more heads being better than one, with open debate. The Chair referred to the consolidation of business, adding that there would still be the ability for Members to consult him about a particular issue for the Scrutiny agenda or work programme
- Exeter has the benefit of being a well run authority. The benefits and strength in the current system, with high Member involvement and attendance at Scrutiny should be recognised, compared with other authorities where there may be little opportunity for pre-scrutiny
- Members supported setting up a working party to look at the Scrutiny Economy work programme, which would include the Chair and the following Members, Cllrs M A Baldwin, Gale, Noble and Moore

Members’ comments would be reported to the Executive along with the comments of the other Scrutiny Committees and would be followed by further discussions between all the Scrutiny Chairs and the Assistant Chief Executive.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy requested that the Member comments be reported to Executive.

(Report circulated)

## **ARCHAEOLOGY RESEARCH PROGRESS**

The Head of Archaeological Field Unit presented a report, which advised Members of progress made with archaeology reports and projects funded from

the Economy and Tourism budget, and included information relating to archaeological projects carried out in the city, both for the City Council and for external clients.

A powerpoint presentation of a photographic record of the archaeological investigation of Princesshay was made at the meeting, and a number of artefacts found on the site were circulated. He referred to the good level of communication between the Archaeological Field Unit and Land Securities and Sir Robert MacAlpines who have worked well on the development, enabling the archaeology to be dealt with properly, as well as encouraging access through innovations like the successful open day and viewing gallery. He also paid tribute to the hard work of the field workers on site. In response to a Member comment about future exhibit opportunities including access for local school children, he advised that all finds belong to the city, and a dedicated exhibition as well as a heritage open day will accompany the teacher pack already sent to local schools.

The Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the progress made with these projects.

(Report circulated)

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### **UPDATE - HEART OF DEVON ENTERPRISE AGENCY**

Councillor M A Baldwin declared a personal and prejudicial interest as company secretary of the South Devon Enterprise Agency and withdrew from the room whilst the matter was discussed.

The Head of Economy and Tourism presented the report on the proposed merger of the Heart of Devon Enterprise Agency (HODEA) with Enterprise South Devon Enterprise Agency (ESD). The benefits of the merger were outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the report.

The Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the report and supported the intended formation of a new agency that will provide business support for small businesses across the whole of Exeter and the Heart of Devon sub-region.

(Report circulated)

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### **EXETER OPEN STUDIOS 2006**

The Head of Economy and Tourism presented a report on the City Council's involvement in and the performance of the Exeter Open Studios event in Exeter, and to seek continued support for an Exeter Open Studios event to take place annually. There are useful outcomes including increasing opportunities for artists to display their work and improve both their profile and sales.

Members noted the report on the Exeter Open Studios event in November 2006 and supported the 'Open Studios' proposal for 2007.

(Report circulated)

9                    **SHAKESPEARE IN THE GARDENS ROUGE GARDENS 12 JULY –  
12 AUGUST 2006**

Councillor Choules declared a personal interest as an employee of Exeter University and Councillor Gale declared a personal interest as his wife is an employee of Exeter University.

The Head of Economy and Tourism presented the report informing Members of the success of the Northcott's production of Twelfth Night which was supported by the City Council. He responded to a comment confirming that the annual programme of festivals and events were part of a wider programme approved by the Executive.

The Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the performance of the Northcott Theatre's production of Shakespeare in the Gardens 2006.

(Report circulated)

10                   **DEVON DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION**

The Head of Economy and Tourism presented the report informing Members on the progress with the establishment of the Devon Destination Management Organisation. This would help to break down the clear fragmentation and duplication, promote more work in partnership and capture spending in a more effective way.

The Scrutiny Committee – Economy supported –

- 1) development of a Destination Management Organisation for Devon and the proposed roles and responsibilities it would undertake, as detailed in the report; and
- 2) the City Council's role in working with the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership to establish a membership structure to encourage wider involvement of tourism businesses to enhance the activities of the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership.

(Report circulated)

11                   **EXETER TOURISM FORUM**

The Head of Economy and Tourism presented a report informing Members of the proposal to establish an Exeter Tourism Forum and develop specific projects.

The Scrutiny Committee – Economy supported the development of the Exeter Tourism Forum.

(Report circulated)

12                   **EXETER RED COAT GUIDES**

The Head of Economy and Tourism presented the report, which updated Members on the progress of the voluntary Red Coat Guides. He responded to a number of questions, advising that tours were made up of a whole cross section of the visiting community including students from language schools in the region; training comes from a variety of internal and external sources over a wide range of subjects including not only tourism but areas such as customer care, and although not unique to Exeter, most city guides are paid, but Exeter's guides continually develop and adapt their tours to provide a unique and individual experience. An annual event is held for them, hosted by the Lord Mayor in appreciation for the service they give the city.

The Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the success of the Red Coat Guides Service and expressed its thanks to the Voluntary Guides for their continued valued service.

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### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Director Economy and Development reported on the  
Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the progress/supported

(Report circulated)

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### **FUTURE BUSINESS**

((The meeting commenced at 5.30pm and closed at 7.20pm))

Chair

