

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY

6 March 2008

### Present:

Councillor Adrian Fullam (Chair)

Councillors Martin, Choules, Coates, Mrs Evans, Gale, Hannaford, Prowse, Sterry, Wadham and Winterbottom

Director Economy and Development, Directorate Projects Officer, Head of Administration and Parking, City Centre Manager and Member Services Officer (SLS)

### Also present:

Councillor Greg Sheldon - Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism  
Councillor John Shepherd - Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development and Transport

### 9. **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared by Members.

### 10. **Question from Members of the Council under Standing Order 20**

In accordance with Standing Order 20, a question from Councillor Smith was submitted to which the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Transport and Development replied. A copy of the question was made available at the meeting, and the question is also set out below.

*"In view of the increased understanding of the need for remembrance symbols to be accessible, what progress is being made to ensure the awareness & accessibility of such symbols in Princesshay?"* Councillor Smith qualified his statement by voicing his concern that the memorial areas in particular lacked position and interpretation.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the wide range of public art and a number of memorials in Princesshay. Further work on interpretation of all of these elements will be undertaken, but this has yet to be progressed. Interpretation, including that for the blitz memorial in Broadwalk Gardens could be incorporated into Phase 2 of the Strategic Signage programme. He felt that the blitz memorial had appropriate access and the location provided the opportunity for quiet reflection.

## **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY**

### 11. **Sustainable Transport Initiatives: Progress Update on Walking, Cycling and the Travel Smart Programme**

The Directorate Projects Officer presented a report updating Scrutiny Committee - Economy on recent progress and development of the City Council's sustainable

transport initiatives in relation to Walking (and in particular the Green Circle); Cycling and Cycling Demonstration Town status and the Travelsmart Individualised Travel Marketing Programme for Exeter and neighbouring Exminster. The latest version of the Green Circle information pack was also available at the meeting.

He responded to a number of Member comments relating to the lack or loss of signage to differentiate between the cycle track and pathway on the canal bank to Turf Lock, and would also ensure that the County Council were aware of the need for maintenance of the river wall of Sir Alex Walk (Footpath 20). A number of issues were raised in relation to the Exwick Loop and responsibility for the land adjacent to the path through Luggs Farm. A Member sought assurance that the surface of the new pedestrian route to Exwick Heights School would be suitable for the predominantly muddy conditions during the winter months and for consideration of additional planting on the path at Farm Hill to shield nearby properties. The Director reminded Members that they were always able to contact Devon County Council's Customer Service Centre to pass on any maintenance concerns regarding footpath and cycle routes.

A Member hoped that the evaluation evidence of the Travelsmart programme would demonstrate a lasting modal shift and he welcomed the combination of individual travel and energy efficiency advice. Further detail on cycle track work at the junction of St Leonard's school and Topsham Road would be sent to the Member for St Leonard's.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the contents of the report and offered their continued support of the sustainable transport initiatives designed to encourage more sustainable travel.

(Report circulated)

## **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY EXECUTIVE**

### **12. Park and Ride Strategy for Exeter**

Councillor Newcombe attended the meeting and spoke on this item having given notice under Standing Order No. 44.

The Director Economy and Development presented the report outlining the joint City and County Council Strategy for 'Park and Ride' in Exeter. The Strategy highlights the aspiration to improve the park and ride service in Exeter including doubling the number of park and ride spaces on sites that are in the appropriate catchment, have the necessary viability and gradient and do not impinge significantly on the environment. Satisfactory sites are proving difficult to identify in the north and west of the city.

Councillor Newcombe wished to advise the Scrutiny Committee that she had a number of concerns over sites, particularly one that had been identified in the Alphington ward. She confirmed that no decisions had been made, but she had met with a County Highways Engineer to discuss four site options.

The Director made the following responses to Member comments:-

- More effort will be made to discourage misuse of the park and ride facility by parking and walking to work or car sharing to travel out of Exeter as this does reduce the capacity of the facility.
- No site for a park and ride facility on the north side of the city has been identified, as suggested sites such as Cowley Bridge have been unacceptable in terms of the potential for flooding and the impact on the open countryside.
- Usage of preventative measures such as height barriers at the entrance of park and ride sites were essential in deterring misuse of sites by travellers. He welcomed details of the park and ride in Gloucester with innovative charging structures.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy supported the recommendation of Executive’s endorsement of the County Council ‘Park and Ride’ Strategy for Exeter and requested that regular updates on progress in relation to it be made.

(Report circulated)

### 13. **Civil Parking Enforcement**

The Head of Administration and Parking Services presented the report updating Members on the process for introducing the Civil Parking Enforcement scheme from 5 May 2008. The challenge remains to ensure that effective parking enforcement is delivered at nil cost to the City Council as well as meeting the transport objectives and needs of residents and businesses more effectively.

Members made the following comments:-

- Concern that the County Council was contributing to the delay in the process, and what the City Council might inherit after the review by the Boundary Committee. It was also noted that the public had not had the opportunity to comment as the necessary Traffic Order had not been advertised. The implications of a change of culture for City Council staff currently working as car parking attendants to the challenges of on street parking enforcement and the importance of adequate training must be acknowledged.
- A request that traffic warden cover would not be restricted to the city centre and the housing estates and suburbs would have their allocation. The Head of Parking and Administration advised that they would seek to improve the out of hours cover for some zones of the city, particularly those covered by residents’ parking.
- That there would be the appropriate level of parking enforcement when most needed, as there was a particular problem in St Thomas at weekends and evenings.

The Head of Administration and Parking made the following responses to Members:-

- That the new legislation was very prescriptive and he would contact the County Council as it was important to ensure that the appropriate traffic signs and street

markings are correct. Staff training was a priority for all CPE staff and discussions with all affected staff and trade union representatives have commenced.

- He would pass on concerns that Exeter City Council vehicles should be parked appropriately overnight to meet the on street parking requirements.
- He would pass on Members' concerns over the accuracy of lines and signs throughout the city and in Topsham to the County Council.

Members of Scrutiny Committee – Economy supported the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement as appropriate and recommended that the Executive endorse the approach set out in the report, delegating authority for any further decisions that need to be made, including variations to establishment and budget, to the Director Economy and Development in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holders for Sustainable Development and Transport and Business Transformation and Human Resources.

(Report circulated)

#### 14. **Use of Bedford Square**

The City Centre Manager presented a joint report with the Director Economy and Development seeking Members support for new Bedford Square usage and booking arrangements to facilitate a wide range of community group uses and charity events. The nature of the space had now changed since the reopening of Princesshay and it was important to ensure the guidelines could meet the changed dynamics of Bedford Square.

A Member suggested that a small panel of councillors and officers might offer a quick solution for events that might be refused, rather than the City Council's complaints procedure. The City Centre Manager suggested that the wide spectrum of users combined with existing Council policies was unlikely to result in many refusals. Existing Council policies on tolerance and equality would help to avoid unnecessary discrimination. The Director added the portfolio holder would also be consulted where there might be a refusal for events, due to public safety implications or due to concerns over events causing unnecessary offence.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted and supported the recommendation that the Executive approve the proposed guidelines for use of Bedford Square.

(Report circulated)

### **PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

#### 15. **Financial Stewardship**

The Director Economy and Development presented the report advising Members of any forecast variations to the budget, based on the first nine months of the financial year 2007/08. The total variances indicate that the overall net expenditure of this

Committee will decrease by £436,450 which represents variation of 38.71% from the approved budget.

A number of budget areas were highlighted including the increased income on Car Parks, and in Markets and Halls, as well as savings in staff costs within the planning team as a result of vacancies. He wished to flag up that Planning income during the fourth quarter was likely to reduce as a reflection of the general down turn of the economy. He responded to comments on the Southgate Hotel's turnover rent and the improved position on rent payments of Exeter City Football Club. It was suggested that the Corn Exchange's success had partly benefited from the recent refit of Northcott Theatre, but recent improvements have also enabled the venue to operate more effectively. Work is scheduled to start on a facelift for the toilets which will improve the facility further. Members welcomed the financial surplus from the Summer Festival.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the contents of the report.

(Report circulated)

16. **National Performance Indicator Results 2006/07 - How Exeter's Results Compare**

The Director Economy and Development provided a brief overview of the performance of the Council, followed by a summary of the performance of those services covered by this Committee which were highlighted in paragraphs 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 of the report. He invited Members to contact him if they wished to address the approach made on any of the indicators and in particular in relation to the appeals process for planning applications

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the report.

(Report circulated)

17. **Councillor Mrs Evans**

Councillor Mrs Evans wished to take the opportunity to place on record, before the end of her term of office her thanks and appreciation to both Members and officers for their continued support during her time as a Councillor. This would be her last Scrutiny meeting as she was due to step down as one of the Councillors for Topsham in May.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.05 pm

Chair