

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

10 November 2009

Present:

Councillor Dilys Baldwin (Chair)

Councillors Shiel, Branston, Mrs Danks, Hobden, Newcombe, R Smith, Taghdissian, Thompson and Wardle

Director Community and Environment, Head of Housing Services, Head of Environmental Health Services, Head of Contacts and Direct Services, Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer and Member Services Officer (HB)

Also present:

Councillor Mitchell
Councillor Newton

- Portfolio Holder for Environment and Leisure
- Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Involvement

63 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2009 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

64 **Declaration of Interests**

A Member declared the following personal interest:-

COUNCILLOR	MINUTE
Councillor Newcombe	67 (Member of Devon County Council and Chair of the Play Building Project Board)

65 **Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and the Family Intervention Programme (FIP)**

The Chair reported that this Committee had agreed earlier this year to take on the responsibility for scrutinising the work of the CDRP as required by Government. Following a discussion with the Leader of the Council and Superintendent John Vellacott, the Chair of the Partnership, a briefing session on the work of the CDRP had been organised for Monday 15 February 2010 at 5.30pm. The Committee would also receive a presentation on the Family Intervention Programme. The presentations would be undertaken by Superintendent John Vellacott and Michael Miller, the Community Safety Partnership Manager.

66 **Trews Weir Allotments**

The Director Community and Environment declared a personal interest as she was on the waiting list for an allotment.

The Head of Contracts and Direct Services reported that the Planning Western Area Working Party had referred the planning application for a new site for the Trews Weir Allotments to the Planning Committee. It had first been necessary to meet with the

Environment Agency to alleviate their concerns relating to their projections of flood risk at the allotments. As a result, a new type of fencing had been identified and a revised application in respect of .9913 hectares had been registered on 22 October 2009 and was scheduled to be considered at the Western Area Working Party on 17 November 2009. If not determined under delegated powers at the Working Party, the application would go before the Planning Committee on 7 December 2009. A bio-diversity report and a contamination risk report would be provided as part of the application.

Although this matter had taken some time to resolve, with the Environment Agency on board, it was hoped that substantial progress would be made by the New Year. The Allotment Holders were being kept fully informed of developments.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the position.

67 **Half Yearly reports of Portfolio Holders**

Councillor Newcombe declared a personal interest as a Devon County Councillor and the Chair of the Play Building Project Board.

Councillors Newton and Mitchell presented progress reports on priorities within the Housing and Community Involvement Portfolio and the Environment and Leisure Portfolio respectively. The priorities and progress reported are appended to these minutes.

The former reported that, in respect of affordable housing, it was now anticipated that 138 units would be provided in this financial year.

The following responses were given to Members' questions:-

Housing and Community Involvement

- The 16-17 years Homelessness pathway covered access to all services including housing and was Social Services led; and
- Work with the Muslim community in respect of building strong and cohesive communities was part of a national project, one of the aims of which was to build closer relationships and therefore contribute to preventing extremism. Work with other ethnic groups was undertaken as part of the City Council's wider equalities work.

Environment and Leisure

- With regard to play in targeted areas including Kings Heath, Wyvern Park and Summerway, consultations were held with local representatives including ward Members prior to the installation of play equipment. In Summerway, for example, it was recognised that attracting young people to a site as a consequence of installing new equipment could impact on local residents living close to the amenity and liaison with them on this would continue;
- The "Students On The Move" pilot scheme fully funded by the University had resulted in the removal of 16 tonnes of rubbish from student areas and there had been extremely positive feedback from local residents;
- An update on progress of the Swimming Pool Working Group would be submitted to the January meeting of this Committee. Other than normal running costs, no additional expenditure had been incurred on the Pool;
- An independent report had recommended a new approach to the Renaissance management regime from 2011. The monies available for schemes across the

country was in a state of flux and it was unclear at present what funding would be available to optimise benefits for Exeter and Devon; and

- The work on parks and open spaces had been commended. New management systems had been introduced as part of the process of improving efficiency. Although some contracting out was proposed as part of the tree management process there was no intention at present of extending this to other parts of the parks service.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY EXECUTIVE

68 Proposals for Community Involvement

The Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer presented the report seeking Members' views on proposals for the Council's approach to Community Involvement, the identification of priority neighbourhoods of the City as a focus for one aspect of the Council's involvement work and on the future format of Community Forums.

Proposals for Community Involvement, including the roll out of My NeighbourhoodPACT into eight neighbourhoods, had been identified through the Place Survey results 2009 and with reference to the Geography of Deprivation Priority Neighbourhoods. The Place Survey identified where residents were least satisfied with City Council services and felt least able to influence decisions. The areas where people were least satisfied correlated with the most deprived wards.

With regard to the Community Forums, two models had been proposed - a Question Time format and a thematic approach. It was proposed that four thematic forums and one Question Time a year be introduced.

Some Members queried the need for identifying Area Liaison Officers to work in the eight areas, suggesting that they would be duplicating the work of Councillors whom it was felt were the first point of contact for residents with issues. These Members felt that the Councillors themselves were able to pass on queries to relevant officers in the Council for which a first class response was provided. The question was also asked by a Member why Gloucestershire County Council rather than Gloucester City Council had been approached for guidance, the same Member expressing concern regarding duplication and increased bureaucracy.

The Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer explained that, although Gloucester City Council had a Community Engagement Officer who helped to co-ordinate partnerships across the City as part of a team, the County Council was operating a similar model to that proposed for Exeter with a number of officers across the authority identified as the point of contact for the community areas identified. This supported greater understanding of the importance of involving communities across the whole authority.

She explained that, as part of the Duty to Involve agenda, it was the responsibility of all public sector agencies to seek to improve engagement in their role as service providers. One of the goals of this agenda was to increase public participation in the democratic process including improving turnout at elections. Whilst it was important for Communities to develop their own agenda and that Councillors had a very significant role to play, the Area Liaison Officers would be a key element and would essentially play complementary roles. The Director Community and Environment explained that this initiative would generate greater activities in local areas, and not just focus on housing and environmental issues. Officers would therefore be supporting not supplanting Councillors.

A Member referred to outcomes in the Newtown/Polsloe area, chosen as one of the initial pilots. Use had been made of the Belmont Community Centre in Newtown and valuable work undertaken. The Polsloe Ward did not have a separate Community Centre but a Community Association had been formed. He welcomed the Community kitty of £15,000 to be made available to groups from across the City but suggested that the remainder of the £33,000 budget could be better spent if used by local Councillors themselves on similar lines to individual budgets allocated to Devon County Councillors for use in their areas.

Referring to work in the Digby/Clyst Heath area of the City, the local Member welcomed the rolling out of this initiative. She referred to the on-going joint work of a number of agencies in this area and to the significant number of local people who had attended local meetings.

Another Member, referring to Polsloe Ward, felt that there should be further consideration of the Duty to Involve agenda and what it was hoped to achieve by this programme. He did not oppose the proposal for Area Liaison Officers but emphasised that their roles should essentially be that of intermediates as ultimate responsibility rested with Councillors. Referring to the establishment of a Community Association in Polsloe resulting from the pilot in that area he suggested that communication with this body could be improved and that there should be greater outreach to those in the community who did not want to be involved in the Association.

The Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer emphasised that a key role of Area Liaison Officers was to work with Community Associations and to help ensure that these bodies worked in partnership with Councillors and other key partners. Part of their role would be to ensure that representatives of all relevant agencies were available at public meetings to address issues raised. This had been a key element and role of the officer when the initial pilots had been set up.

In response to the Chair, who suggested that much work in local neighbourhoods was already undertaken by housing officers, the Head of Housing Services explained the role of estate officers in managing Council housing estates who were funded through the Housing Revenue Account. The Area Liaison Officers would have a wider remit and it was not anticipated that there would be duplication of work between the two roles. The former did however have a contributory role in areas with a high percentage of Council houses.

The above views of Scrutiny Committee - Community Members on the proposals for the roll out of My NeighbourhoodPACT into Neighbourhoods identified through the Place Survey results 2009 and the Geography of Deprivation Priority Neighbourhoods would be reported to Executive on 24 November 2009.

Executive would also be advised of this Committee's support for the Community Forum model proposed for further consultation to take place with LSP partners on the thematic areas and format.

(Report circulated)

69 **Review of Anti Social Behaviour and Policy and Procedures for Housing Landlord Services**

The Head of Housing Services presented the report seeking Members' approval for the amended Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedures document following its regular review.

Scrutiny Committee - Community supported the report and requested Executive to adopt the revised Anti-Social Behaviour - Statement of Policy and Procedure.

(Report circulated)

70 **Tree Management in Exeter**

The Head of Contracts and Direct Services presented the report setting out recommendations for the safe, effective and sustainable management of trees within the Council's care.

In response to a Member, he agreed to change the title proposed in respect of Job No. CE11109 and explained that the precise cost of the changes were subject to the results of job evaluation.

A Member queried the need for committing the resources proposed to the management of trees and it was explained that many trees across the City, such as poplars, were coming to the end of their life span. It was important to minimise risks to the public by removing dangerous trees and it was also important when replanting to ensure that the correct species were used. He advised that the contractors used acted solely on the instruction of the Council officers as client and he explained the rationale behind the risk matrix. TPOs were an important part of the tree management process, the responsibility for these covered within the remit of the Head of Planning and Building Control.

Scrutiny Committee - Community supported the report and requested Executive to approve the proposals for tree management in Exeter including:

- revised funding proposals;
- the deletion of the posts of Arboricultural Officer (CE11109) and Assistant Arboricultural Officer (CE11148);
- the appointment to the post of Parks Tree Administration Support Officer (CE11109) at a grade to be determined by Job Evaluation and subject to the renaming of the post;
- developing the existing contractual arrangement to a partnership approach as detailed in section four of the report; and
- supporting the move from reactive to planned maintenance.

(Report circulated)

71 **Council Housing Energy and Sustainability Policy**

The Head of Housing Services presented the report seeking approval of the new Housing (Landlord Services) Energy and Sustainability Policy setting out how the energy efficiency of homes could be improved and incidents of fuel poverty for tenants reduced.

Scrutiny Committee - Community supported the report and requested Executive to adopt the Housing (Landlord Services) Energy and Sustainability Policy.

(Report circulated)

72 **Downsizing Incentives for Council Tenants**

Councillor Edwards spoke on this item having given notice under Standing Order No. 44.

The Head of Housing Services presented the report seeking agreement to implement an amended downsizing incentive scheme for Council tenants to improve the management of the housing stock and increase the supply of family housing to applicants on the Home Choice register.

Councillor Edwards stated that he had received a large number of requests for support for re-housing and that the downsizing scheme was a great help in facilitating such moves. As such, he believed that greater resources should be committed to this initiative. He asked that the annual budget of £50,000 proposed to be made available within the Housing Revenue Account to make downsizing payments to tenants should be increased to £100,000. He also felt that the individual cash incentive payments should not be reduced.

Some Members supported this request and also proposed that the £20,000 identified from reserves for 2009/10 for paying removal fees only for those people still willing to move but who require some financial assistance with the actual move should be used to continue paying cash incentives to move. Other Members did not support these proposals.

The Head of Housing Services advised that the motivation of those accepting support in moving was not always known but there were many advantage for moving and the payments helped greatly with the costs and stress of the process. With regard to moves to new build only help with the cost of removal was on offer as these properties possessed new facilities. The rental for these properties was greater than for existing properties.

He outlined the implications on the overall Housing Revenue Account of increasing the figure proposed for supporting downsizing. He advised that it would be unwise to reduce this account below a working balance of £1.5 million because of the need of a reserve for emergencies. There was also a possibility that borrowing to supplement the capital budget might be necessary in future years. He explained the additional costs associated with improvements necessary to void properties.

Because of the cost implications it was not considered appropriate to seek an increase in the budget to £100,000. The recommendation to request Executive to support the use of £20,000 identified from reserves to pay cash incentives was also not supported. This would be used for paying removal fees as proposed in the report.

Scrutiny Committee - Community supported the report and requested Executive to adopt the amended policy document - Reducing Under-Occupation in the Council's Housing Stock - Incentives for Downsizing.

(Report circulated)

73 **Funding of New Technology for Efficiency Gains in Cleansing Services**

The Head of Environmental Health Services presented the report seeking approval for the introduction of new technology and working practices as outlined in this report together with the initial costs.

Scrutiny Committee - Community supported the report and requested Executive to approve the introduction of new technology and working practises as set out in the report with the initial costs being met from external funding of £110,000 from SWRIEP and up to £127,100, subject to confirmation of final process from systems providers, from the Council's LGR and Mobile Working budget.

(Report circulated)

74 **Replacement of Homecall Equipment**

The Head of Environmental Health Services presented the report notifying Members of a forthcoming withdrawal of support by the Council's current provider for its Home Call equipment and systems and seeking approval to purchase new equipment and systems in this financial year.

Scrutiny Committee - Community supported the report and requested Executive to:

- (1) adjust the 2009/10 capital programme to include capital funding of £58,800 from new borrowing, with an ongoing revenue cost of £12,000 for five years for the purchase of new Telecare equipment and systems and the purchase of a Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) in 2009/10 to replace the existing one before 31 March 2010;
- (2) approve revenue funding of £2,500 from the General Fund Reserve from April 2010 to maintain accreditation with the Telecare Services Association; and
- (3) support the expansion of the customer base subject to the available resources of the service.

(Report circulated)

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

75 **Review of Control Room Resources**

The Head of Environmental Health Services presented the report seeking Members views of a review being undertaken of the Control Room resources and the likely impact that potential options may have on service delivery. He tabled the comments of the Police on the review. The Police were not able to support a reduction in CCTV real time monitoring and had also advised that they were not in a position to assist in funding the CCTV monitoring. Members felt that the proposals should only be discussed following the completion of consultations and when a detailed report had been finalised.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the contents of the report and rejected the proposals for a reduction in CCTV surveillance as set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report. They asked for the deferral of the report and for a further report to be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

(Report circulated)

76 **Noise Enforcement Update**

The Head of Environmental Health Services presented the report reviewing the work of Environmental Health Services relating to the investigation of noise complaints and enforcement action undertaken over the last 12 months and reviewing the pilot

scheme that had resulted in an extension of the hours worked by the Community Patrol on the noisiest days of the week and noisiest periods of the year in order to enhance the Council's response to late night noise complaints.

In response to a Member, he advised that, as part of the prosecution process, the full costs incurred by the Council were sought.

Scrutiny Committee - Community supported:

- (1) the work undertaken by officers and noted the improvements to the Council's noise service; and
- (2) the proposal to continue with the extension of the hours of the Community Patrol to maintain an effective out of hours response to late night noise.

(Report circulated)

77 **Licensing Policy Statement - Cumulative Impact Zone**

The Head of Environmental Health Services presented the report informing Members of the recommendation of the Licensing Committee to introduce cumulative impact zones in the City Centre as part of the Council's Licensing Act 2003 Policy. He advised that the recommendation of that Committee would go straight to Council without the report being submitted to Executive on 8 December 2009.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report in relation to its potential beneficial effect on crime and disorder in the City Centre.

(Report circulated)

78 **Energy Efficiency in Private Sector Housing**

The Head of Environmental Health Services presented the report informing Members of the progress of initiatives to improve the energy efficiency in private sector housing and to reduce the level of fuel poverty in Exeter.

In response to a Member, he advised that properties targeted as being in need of grant support to improve energy efficiency were identified in a number of ways. These included knowledge of construction, age of house, inspection of private sector houses in respect of other issues together with publicising the availability of grants.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the progress made towards the NI 187 target contained in the Local Area Agreement.

(Report circulated)

79 **Risk Management**

The Head of Environmental Health Services presented the report advising Members of the risks identified relating to its areas and of the action taken and proposed to mitigate the risks concerned.

Scrutiny Committee - Community:

- (1) noted the risks relating to its areas; and

- (2) supported ongoing monitoring to ensure that the risk register remains current and risk assessments are valid and that the proposed mitigating action is taken by the agreed target dates.

(Report circulated)

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

80 Community Services - Stewardship to September 2009

The Director Community and Environment advised Members of any major differences by management unit to the revised budget.

The current forecast suggested that, after adjustments for increased capital charges and net movements from reserves, net expenditure for this Committee would increase from the revised budget by a total of £43,080, which represented a variation of 0.3% from the revised budget.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report.

(Report circulated)

81 Housing Revenue Account Stewardship to September 2009

The Director Community and Environment advised Members of any major differences by management unit to the outturn forecast for the first six months of the financial year up to 30 September 2009. During this period, the total of the variances indicated that there would be a net deficit of £684,220 which would be transferred to the working balance as at 31 March 2010. £682,100 was the planned reduction in the working balance to support Revenue Contributions to capital expenditure (RCC) and £2,120 was the estimated additional deficit identified at the end of the second quarter stewardship. It was estimated that the working balance would stand at £2,174,045 at 31 March 2010.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report.

(Report circulated)

82 Results of Half Year Performance Monitoring 2009/10

The Director Community and Environment advised Members of performance in the middle of the year on a range of services across the Directorate.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report.

(Report circulated)

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.25 pm

Chair

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PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMUNITY 10 NOVEMBER 2009

HALF-YEAR UPDATE

A City of Strong Communities

- Organise re-elections for the Tenant & Leaseholder Committee (TALC), and carry out training of new committee members so that they can contribute effectively.

Elections took place in June 2009 and the new committee was formed at its AGM in July. The new committee have agreed the content and format for formal induction training and this is now being organised.

- Continue to act on recommendations of Resident Auditor Team.

The Resident Auditor Team are currently finalising their report on the Council's Resident Involvement Strategy. Their recommendations will be fed into a review of the strategy in the latter part of this year

- Review of consultation and engagement practice across the council with recommendations for ways forward up to 2011, with reference to the new Duty to Involve. (Paper went to Executive 30 June 2009.)

Review completed, action plan developed to take forward actions over the next 18 months for:

- *Changing culture - information on the Duty to Involve and what it means for changing practice in the council.*
- *Training and support – on implementing the Duty to Involve and sharing best practice*
- *Exploration of social media to support on-line engagement and promote inclusion – development of new policy*
- *Development of framework and standards for consultation and engagement – to ensure a consistent approach to Duty to Involve*
- *Improved website area on all community engagement activity and duty to involve*
- Partnership with Exeter CVS on the 'Take Part - Active Learning for Active Citizenship' project, including community focused events and training on 'How your city works'.

How your city works tasters starting October 2009.

Actively promote Take Part pathfinder in any community consultation

Continue to be part of planning group for Take Part and link to city councils work on engaging communities

- Ongoing support for the My Neighbourhood pilot areas to support these areas to be 'trailblazers' in the city as a model of good practice in terms of city council partnership working with communities.

New and existing community/resident associations that were supported in the My Neighbourhood pilot areas continue to hold area community meetings in partnership with local councillors. Some of these groups have supported the consultation with residents regarding the changes to refuse collection (St.David's, Exwick, Newtown and Polsloe).

- Develop an appropriate model for roll out of the council's Neighbourhood Engagement work, (depending on the outcome of LGR.)

Proposals have been worked up over the summer and key stakeholders internally and externally have had an opportunity to contribute to the plans.

Proposals to be discussed at Community Scrutiny 10 November and agreed at Executive on 24 November.

- Develop a Consultation and Engagement Strategy for the council, ensuring that the council meets all of its requirements in line with relevant legislation and government guidance.

This will be developed 2011 – 12 once the neighbourhood engagement model is piloted.

- In the light of challenging financial circumstances, develop proposals for working with residents to develop budget proposals for consideration by elected members.

Residents will have the opportunity to comment on 2010/11 budget through the citizens panel, on line and through an engagement event scheduled to take place in October.

- Respond positively, and provide support to community groups developing proposals arising out of the Sustainable Communities Act.

A panel of Exeter residents took part in reviewing SCA proposals in May 2009. Two proposals were supported by the Executive and were submitted to the LGA by the deadline of end of July. We are waiting to hear which proposals the Government are going to take forward. At present there is no commitment to further rounds of the SCA from government.

A City Where Everyone Has a Home

- Provide at least 80 new units of affordable housing.

There are currently over 100 affordable homes 'on-site', most of which are predicted to complete within this financial year. This target should therefore be exceeded.

- Undertake a comprehensive review of the responsive repairs service for council housing, establish a procurement strategy and retender the work.

The Procurement Strategy was agreed at Executive on the 16 June 2009. Informal interviews have been held with a number of potential contractors to help with this process. A formal notice has been placed in the European Journal. A pre-qualification questionnaire has been sent out and is due to be evaluated in October/November which will determine the final shortlist of contractors to be invited to tender. Formal tender documents will be issued in December.

- Continue the Older Persons' service review in partnership with DCC's Supporting People team.

Work on the design of a new service is continuing in negotiation with Devon Supporting People. It is hoped the proposed new service will be reported to Members early in the new year with the service going live in April 2010.

- Implement the Devon Homechoice Scheme.

Implementation of Devon Home Choice will start in December 2009 with the proposed 'live' date for Exeter being January 2010.

- Implement service charges for tenants living in flats.

Work is on-going to identify those areas of work where service charges will apply and we have contacted a number of other landlords to help us understand the process of implementation. Calculations are also being made to 'de-pool' the charge from the current rent. We are on target to issue the new service charge statements with the rent notification letter in February 2010.

- Deliver the Private Sector Renewal Strategy in particular the development of the new loans scheme.

Comprehensive training for staff and the partner Home Improvement Agency on the new loans scheme will commence in October, with the loans being introduced in November 2009 administered by a partner organisation Wessex Home Improvement Loans.

A key part of the strategy is for high risk Houses in Multiple Occupation to be licensed by the Council, and a recent survey of Local Authorities showed that Exeter came 6th overall in England and Wales for the numbers so licensed. In addition, partnership work on an Accreditation Scheme for student houses has made a significant step forward with the appointment of a dedicated officer by the University Accommodation Service, with an anticipated implementation date in Quarter 4. Further partnership working includes the re-launch of a private sector landlord forum in October, with the National Landlords Association.

- Keep working to achieve the adoption of an effective housing and support protocol for young people by all the Devon district councils and Devon County Council.

Following a landmark ruling by the High Court placing responsibility for vulnerable homeless 16-17 years olds on Children's and Young People's Services, we are continuing to work with Devon County Council to agree a protocol for jointly assessing and supporting any such applicants to prevent them from becoming homeless.

A Safe City

- Review the antisocial behaviour and neighbourhood management policies in housing to deliver improved services.

The review of the existing anti-social behaviour policy has been completed and is on the agenda for tonight's meeting

- Continue to work with others to build strong and cohesive communities and meet the requirements of the Prevent agenda.

Several meetings have taken place between City Council, police, county council, community safety staff and Muslim community leaders and representatives. City Council staff are attending Advice and Information sessions at the mosque. The Chief Executive is involved in discussions with police and Government Office with regard to security of the city under the Prevent agenda.

A Prosperous City

- Use all the tools at our disposal to help owner occupiers retain their homes including participation in the national mortgage rescue schemes and advice and support.

The mortgage advice service continues to work with households who have difficulties paying their mortgage and/or who are in mortgage arrears. Since April, 24 clients have been referred to Homemaker South West. By helping clients with budgeting and benefits advice this work has resulted in each client increasing their income by an average of

£1,400. We have also successfully assisted one household through the national mortgage rescue scheme – the first in Devon – and their home has been purchased by a local association with them becoming the tenant.

- Implement the Enhanced Housing Options Scheme to help people access homes where there are jobs.

Staff have now been recruited to this scheme and are working across Devon to implement the services outlined in the bid document. A major part of the plan is to link the new Devon Home Choice scheme with other housing options, such as private sector renting, Extralets etc and to give all applicants the widest choice of housing solutions possible. The new service will also link housing opportunities with job vacancies

S:LP/Cttee/Nov09

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE

REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMUNITY 10 NOVEMBER 2009

HALF-YEAR UPDATE

Healthy and Active City

- Develop the exit/continuation strategy for the Free Play City project. Funding ends August 2010. Continue to deliver the play strategy. Hold a further 200 play ranger sessions.

A bid has been submitted to the Local Children's Trust for funding to extend the current play ranger service and to also extend play rangers working in the city's youth clubs during the holiday periods. This funding would sustain the service until March 2011

- Develop play in targeted areas including Kings Heath, Pinhoe, Wonford, Summerway. Support the use of playbuilder grant.

Successful play events were held in all of the targeted areas. From February 2010 two static Play Ranger sessions will occur in Wonford and St Thomas. A further two sessions will rove around the City to provide experience with as many children as possible in the City.

A bid has been submitted to Playbuilder to enhance play opportunities in the Riverside Valley Park. This was turned down and was re-submitted in October with additional consultation evidence. An additional bid for Wonford Playing Field will also be submitted.

The Wyvern Special is now in place and looking good. The other play equipment will hopefully be in place the early part of next year.

Consultations continue at Summerway and I will once again be meeting with the local Councillors to discuss the plans further.

The planning application for the Countess Wear MUGA should be submitted next week.

- Deliver a youth sports programme in target sports and achieve target number of sessions and attendance.

Youth sports sessions have been delivered over the spring and summer periods in the following: Football; Girls Football; Netball; Baseball; Running; Golf. Over 120 sessions have been delivered (Apr-Sep) with a total of over 4600 attendances.

- Work with Exeter Schools Sports Partnership to deliver Sports Unlimited and Skilled for Health Programmes. Deliver target number of sessions and activities.

Phase 2 of the Sports Unlimited programme is under way with delivery to schools of the following activities: Golf Xtreme; Futsal; Dance; Running; Cage Football. These activities are targeted to reach over 500 school children with delivery via the Exeter Schools Sports Partnership.

Skilled for Health is continuing to develop, but at this point in time there is limited scope for our sports development staff to be directly involved.

- Continue to explore options for future swimming provision in the City.

The Pool Working Party has continued to meet and intends to report to Scrutiny Community in January 2010.

Cultural and Fun Place to Be

- Continue to make progress with the scheme to improve and extend RAMM, closely monitoring the budget.

The building is now out of the ground and the unforeseen structural problems largely overcome. Both the senior Members Group and Scrutiny Resources continue to oversee the budget. A further grant has been obtained from the Wolfson Foundation and an externally funded fund raiser is working hard to obtain more contributions towards the project

- Plan and agree arrangements for the opening and exhibitions for the new RAMM.

Staff are working on a number of ideas and negotiations for opening events with impact and a report will be brought to Committee when more details are available. The new building will open relatively quietly as soon as everything is in place with a high profile formal event planned for later

- Let the new Leisure Management Contract.

This is progressing according to the timetable. The contract documentation has been developed with the support of external consultants and scrutinised by Resources Scrutiny Committee. 11 organisations expressed an interest in the contract, and some of these submitted pre-qualifying questionnaires, which are currently being evaluated. Tenderers have already been told that they will be invited to tender and the tender documents will go out at the end of the month.

- Engage fully with the new Renaissance management regimes to optimise benefit for Exeter and Devon.

This is a critical time for Renaissance as an independent report has recommended a completely new approach from 2011. We are trying to ensure that Exeter is well placed to benefit from any changes.

City of Strong Communities

- Develop a programme of targeted advice to help higher risk BME food businesses comply with regulations.

A programme has been developed with sole responsibility given to one environmental health officer in order to engender a consistent and targeted approach. Part of this work has involved designating more time to carry out face-to-face advice with BME non-compliant businesses. This approach will be evaluated during Quarter 4 of the year to establish its effectiveness, but initial indications are that the businesses welcome this changed approach.

Excellence in Public Services

- Set up the new Harbour Authority or re-activate municipal port activity as cost neutral and effective dependant on inspector's report.

We are still awaiting the Secretary of State's decision, along with the inspector's report. We agreed at the inquiry not to proceed further until the outcome of local government review was clear.

- Use benchmarking and unit cost information to critically review the parks and open space service and to deliver efficiencies.

Extensive work has been undertaken to populate the asset management database with unit costs and maintenance regimes moderated to meet current needs making it possible to model changes to optimise performance.

- Explore the remodelling of waste collection rounds from 5 day to 4 day working week.

Work is progressing on this in conjunction with a working party of Members and a series of public consultation events have been held. A report will be brought to Community Scrutiny Committee in the New Year.

A City Where the Environment is Cared For

- Manage the exit strategy for the Wild City Project to leave plans in place for continuation of constituent projects where possible.

A series of potential projects have been identified and early feasibility work carried out. The Devon Wildlife Trust's fundraising team are now seeking funding for these. The City Council's two year funding of this work ends in April 2010.

- Review the action plans of both the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme and the Climate Change Strategy in the light of budget and staffing reductions.

These were reviewed and reported through the last committee cycle.

- Improve our recycling rate beyond 37% and continue to reduce waste collected.

Our recycling rate is currently approximately 35%, which reflects a regional drop in recyclates due to the economic downturn. New initiatives such as one recently launched that focuses on removing glass bottles from the residual to the recycling waste stream, should assist in improving the recycling rate and reducing the residual waste collected. More substantial initiatives, such as moving more properties onto a bi-weekly collection, will be needed to sustain further improvements in the recycling rate.

- Develop a pilot initiative with the University to target student household rubbish problems in student areas.

A successful pilot scheme was launched in partnership with the University and University Guild of Student during the end of term period in early summer. The scheme, branded as 'Students on the Move' has been positively commented upon by residents in student areas; it was fully funded by the University. Over 16 tonnes of rubbish were collected from student areas as part of the scheme.

- Implement Tree & Woodland Strategy and in particular tree warden network to ensure partners protect and enhance the City's treescape in a sustainable way making allowance for the effects of global warming.

The Tree and Woodland Strategy was adopted by the Council in January this year. A report on the agenda of tonight's meeting outlines how we propose to deliver this. Inaugural meetings have been held with Tree Wardens and a programme of events including tree planting is planned for this autumn.

A Safe City

- Reduce the incidence of discarded needles in public conveniences by 20%.

At mid-term the incidence of needle finds in public conveniences has decreased by 10% compared to the same period last year. This issue is currently subject to a multi-agency approach with a range of partners, and as part of this EDP Alcohol and Drug Services (Exeter Drugs Project) has been conducting out-reach work in the city centre over the second quarter of the year. It is anticipated that this will have a gradual impact upon the incidence of discarded needles as their client group grows.

- Review the role and deployment of the Community Patrol to ensure service improvements.

The role of Community Patrol has expanded with the introduction of later night working to deal with noise nuisance. The effectiveness of this change has increased customer confidence and a corresponding increase in customer demand, and several service improvements have been introduced to cope with this increase, including stream-lining the processes, enhanced customer contact and better joined-up working between the different teams involved (Control Room, Business Support, Environmental Protection, Housing, Community Patrol and Legal). However, in order for the service to cope with this increasing demand effectively, a review of all functions is programmed for Quarter 4 of the year.

A Prosperous City

- Review the impact of regulatory functions on businesses and ensure that the benefits of regulation justify costs and are risk based.

Both the Food Law Enforcement Plan 2009/10 and the Health and Safety Enforcement Plan 2009/10 incorporate the tenets of better regulation, changing the emphasis of regulatory interventions to focus on high-risk, non-compliant businesses, and assisting other businesses in compliance. The approach of the Commercial Team has been re-organised to develop lead officers for health and safety regulation and non-compliant food businesses, and initiatives include the development of a Health & Safety Business Pack and improved working with BME businesses.