



**Exeter City Council**

To the Chair and Members  
of the Scrutiny Committee - Community

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**Our ref:**  
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**AGENDA FOR**  
**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY**

The Scrutiny Committee - Community will meet on **TUESDAY 6 MARCH 2012**, commencing at **5.30 pm**, in the Rennes Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter to consider the following business. If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Howard Bassett, Member Services Officer on **Exeter 265107**.

***Entry to the Civic Centre can be gained through the Customer Service Centre, Paris Street.***

Pages

**Part I: Items suggested for discussion with the press and public present**

1 **APOLOGIES**

To receive apologies for absence from Committee Members.

2 **MINUTES**

To sign the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2012.

3 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillors are reminded of the need to declare personal and prejudicial interests, including the nature and extent of such interests, in relation to business on the agenda, before any discussion takes place on the item. Councillors requiring clarification should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer prior to the day of the meeting.

Office of Corporate Manager Democratic & Civic Support

Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1JN

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[www.exeter.gov.uk](http://www.exeter.gov.uk)

4                    **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 -  
EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It is considered that the Committee would be unlikely to exclude the press and public during consideration of the items on this agenda, but if it should wish to do so, the following resolution should be passed:-

**RECOMMENDED** that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the particular item(s) on the grounds that it (they) involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

5                    **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 19**

A period of up to 15 minutes will be set aside to deal with questions to the Committee from members of the public.

*Details of questions should be notified to the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support at least three working days prior to the meeting. Further information and a copy of the procedure are available from Member Services (01392 265107) also on the Council web site.*

<http://www.exeter.gov.uk/scrutinyquestions>

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

To receive questions from Members of the Council to appropriate Portfolio Holders.

7                    **PERFORMANCE HOUSING DIGEST - QUARTER III**

Members are requested to advise the Member Services Officer of any Questions or Issues on the Housing Performance Digest Quarter III by 9.00 am on the day of the meeting. The digest can be viewed on the website at

<http://www.exeter.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=12572>

The Intranet link is:

<http://intranet/index.aspx?articleid=2615>

8                    **PARKWOOD LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT**

To welcome representatives of Parkwood Leisure.

1 - 6

Members are requested to advise the Member Services Officer of any questions on the Leisure Contract by 9.00 am on the day of the meeting.

To consider the report of the Strategic Director - *report circulated*

9

**SYSTEMS THINKING**

To receive an update on the progress with the Systems Review from the Assistant Director Business Transformation and the Acting Assistant Director Housing and Contracts.

10

**PUBLIC TOILETS WORKING GROUP**

To consider the verbal report of the Assistant Director Environment on the interim findings of the working group. 7 - 24

**MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION BY EXECUTIVE**

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**DRAFT RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY 2012-15**

To consider the report of the Acting Assistant Director Housing and Contracts - *report circulated* 25 - 46

**MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY**

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**STREAMLINING OF BRING BANK SITES**

To consider the report of the Assistant Director Environment - *report circulated* 47 - 50

**PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

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**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT STEWARDSHIP TO DECEMBER 2011**

To consider the joint report of the Strategic Director and Assistant Director Finance - *report circulated*. 51 - 54

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**COMMUNITY SERVICES STEWARDSHIP TO 31 DECEMBER 2011**

To consider the joint report of the Assistant Director Finance and Acting Assistant Director Housing and Contracts Services – *report circulated*. 55 - 64

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next **Scrutiny Committee - Community** will be held on Tuesday 29 May 2012 at 5.30 pm

## **FUTURE BUSINESS**

The schedule of future business proposed for this Scrutiny Committee and other Committees of the Council can be viewed on the following link to the Council's website: <http://www.exeter.gov.uk/forwardplan>  
Councillors can view a hard copy of the schedule in the Members Room.

### ***Membership -***

Councillors Mitchell (Chair), Thompson (Deputy Chair), Branston, Choules, Clark, Crow, A Stone, Hobden, Morris, Mottram, Newcombe, Tippins and Wardle

Find out more about Exeter City Council services by looking at our web site <http://www.exeter.gov.uk>. This will give you the dates of all future Committee meetings and tell you how you can ask a question at a Scrutiny Committee meeting. Alternatively, contact the Member Services Officer on (01392) 265107 for further information.

**Individual reports on this agenda can be produced in large print on request to Member Services on 01392 265111.**



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## EXETER CITY COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY 6 MARCH 2012

#### REPORT ON PARKWOOD LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

#### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Members on progress in improving the Customer Comments procedures and propose future initiatives to develop customer feedback channels.

#### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Committee has raised previous concerns to how customer comments are being dealt with and whether Parkwood Leisure is responding positively to issues raised by the users of the leisure facilities. Rather than just repeatedly hear and discuss individual complaints at Committee Meetings, it is more important to ensure that more comments are proactively encouraged and collected and that more important and recurring issues are dealt with appropriately and effectively.

#### **3 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK INITIATIVES**

- 3.1 Officers have met with Parkwood Leisure to agree positive actions that will enhance the Customer Comment process. One of the agreed actions is to initiate the installation of more prominent customer focused notice boards at all of their facilities. The notice boards will include the following information:

- A Customer Comment procedure, a copy is provided as Appendix A.
- Forthcoming Customer Forum dates and minutes of previous meetings, the full list of Forum dates for 2012 is provided as Appendix B.
- A leaflet dispenser for Parkwood Leisure customer comment forms and a dedicated, clearly identifiable Customer Comments post box for the safe return of completed forms.
- Statistical information on the nature and resulting actions taken relating to the previous months Customer Comment feedback.

- 3.2 As requested at the last Scrutiny Committee Meeting Officers are currently investigating various options and costs to undertake independent customer research on the facilities and services provided by Parkwood Leisure.

At the time of writing this report the specific proposals and their associated costs were not available but will be presented at the meeting.

- 3.3 It is very important to work with Parkwood Leisure to develop its service and enhance its facilities and achieve a level of service delivery well above the contractual baseline. Given these objectives it would be very beneficial to develop a working group to constructively agree and resolve actions and responsibility for their delivery with the following makeup:

- Portfolio Holder
- One representative Member from each political party

- Assistant Director Economy
- Leisure Facilities Manager
- Representatives from Parkwood Leisure

3.4 It is proposed that the meetings will initially be held monthly, reducing to quarterly when agreed. There will be formal minutes that will be provided for Scrutiny Committee. The meeting agenda would focus on contractual issues, monitoring customer comments and the relevant action taken and agreeing service improvement initiatives.

#### **4 RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) Members support the formation of a working group and each political party nominates a candidate for the group;
- 2) Members authorise officers in liaison with the Portfolio Holder to consider the most effective method to undertake a programme of customer surveys within budget constraints.

#### **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ECONOMY**

S:PA/LP/Ctee/312SCC5  
23.2.12

#### **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

#### **Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

None



## Customer Comments Procedure

This facility is managed by Parkwood Leisure on behalf of Exeter City Council.

If you would like to make any comments about the facility or the service managed by Parkwood Leisure we would ask all customers to follow the procedure as outlined below.

1. Speak to the facilities Duty Manager who **will record your comment** and then will endeavour to resolve the issue to your satisfaction. **We also welcome positive feedback on this facility and the service you have received on your visit.**
2. If the Duty Manager is not available or you prefer to **direct your comment to the** Centre Manager you may do by one of the following methods:
  - Complete the Customer Comment Form available at the facility.
  - Completing the company's Comment Form on-line by accessing the website [www.leisurecentre.com](http://www.leisurecentre.com)
  - Write to the Centre Manager at the facility. The address for this facility is:  
[Riverside Leisure Centre](#)  
[Exe Bridges Retail Park](#)  
[Cowick Street](#)  
[Exeter](#)  
[EX4 1AF](#)
  - Telephone the Centre Manager directly, the number for this facility is:  
[\(01392\) 221771](tel:01392221771)

The Centre Manager will investigate your complaint in full and respond to you within 7 working days. Sometimes investigations can take longer but should the timescale be exceeded then you will receive updates on the progress every 7 working days.

3. Should you still feel dissatisfied with the resolution you may refer your issue to the Parkwood Leisure, Exeter Contract Manager by one or both of the following methods:

- Email to [jeremy.wright@parkwood-leisure.co.uk](mailto:jeremy.wright@parkwood-leisure.co.uk)
- Writing to:  
Mr Jeremy Wright  
Parkwood Leisure Exeter Contract Manager  
[Riverside Leisure Centre](#)  
[Exe Bridges Retail Park](#)  
[Cowick Street](#)  
[Exeter](#)  
[EX4 1AF](#)

This leisure facility is managed by Parkwood Leisure on behalf of Exeter City Council.

If having followed the procedure outlined above your issue is not resolved please contact the Leisure Facilities Manager **at Exeter City Council** by one or both of the following methods:

- Email to [steve.lyon@exeter.gov.uk](mailto:steve.lyon@exeter.gov.uk)
- Writing to:  
[Leisure Facilities Manager](#)  
[Exeter City Council](#)  
[Paris Street](#)  
[Exeter](#)  
[EX1 1JN](#)

The Council's Leisure Facilities Manager will investigate your complaint in full and respond to you within 5 working days. Sometimes investigations can take longer but should the timescale be exceeded then you will receive updates on the progress every 5 working days.

4. Sometimes issues cannot be rectified at this point and you may feel you wish to take this matter further. The final response from the Leisure Facilities Manager will advise you what to do next if you still do not feel the issue has been resolved to your full satisfaction.



## Parkwood Leisure

### Customer Forums 2012

Customers Forums are an opportunity for customers to meet the Centre Manager. The forum will provide an opportunity for the Manager to present details of any issues the facility has had since the last Forum and provide information on any forthcoming events or developments of the facility.

Customers will be given the opportunity to ask the Manager questions at the Forum.

All Forums are scheduled to commence at 7.00pm at the facility and formal minutes will be taken and displayed on the Customer Notice Board.

Clifton Hill Sports Centre	5 March 2012	13 August 2012
Exeter Arena	12 March 2012	20 August 2012
Isca Bowls & Bridge Centre	19 March 2012	27 August 2012
Northbrook Golf Course	Not required	Not required
Northbrook Swimming Pool	26 March 2012	3 September 2012
Pyramids Swimming Centre	2 April 2012	10 September 2012
Riverside Leisure Centre	9 April 2012	17 September 2012
Wonford Sports Centre	16 April 2012	24 September 2012

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## EXETER CITY COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY 6 MARCH 2012

#### COMMUNITY TOILET WORKING GROUP - INTERIM REPORT

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This interim report advises Members of the progress of the Community Toilet Working Group, and highlights some of the key points developing in regard to public toilet provision.

#### 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 On 8 March 2011, Scrutiny Committee - Community decided to establish a Member Working Group to examine the merits of a community toilet scheme in the overall context of public toilet provision (Minute 23 refers).
- 2.2 At the first meeting in June 2011, the Working Group agreed that it should adopt a broad remit with a comprehensive examination of issues, and not limit its deliberations solely to community toilet schemes.
- 2.3 It adopted the following terms of reference:

*"To suggest the most appropriate and cost effective toilet provision for the City, including determining whether a community toilet scheme should be considered for any future provision."*

- 2.4 It was also determined that there was insufficient time to carry out a proper examination of all issues and feed any meaningful recommendations back into the Autumn 2011 budget setting process; however, it would aim to report to this Committee in March 2012.

#### 3. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The group examined a number of highly relevant documents on public toilet provision, as follows:
- Extract from report to Scrutiny Committee - Community setting out the financial cost of Running Toilets in Exeter;
  - A Code of Practice for Public Toilets in Britain - Professor Clara Greed MBE;
  - Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets - Communities and Local Government;
  - Guidance on Community Toilet Schemes and SatLav - Communities and Local Government
  - The Provision of Public Toilets - House of Commons debate
- 3.2 It then determined that there was great merit in inviting views from a variety of people who either had particular expertise in the area of public toilet provision, or could represent the diverse views of various parts of the community. The intention was for the Working Group to sit as a inquisitorial-style panel and invitees would be asked to express their views and answer questions in a non-adversarial environment.

3.3 Lastly it was agreed to examine a comparator local authority where a community toilet scheme had been implemented, and Oxford City Council was chosen as a suitable local authority for this purpose.

#### **4. PROGRESS**

4.1 At the meeting of 14 July 2011, three invitees with a professional perspective attended to give the Working Group their views on the relative need of public toilets and the considerations warranted should the current Council public toilet provision be altered in conjunction with the introduction of a Community Toilet Scheme. The invitees were:

- John Harvey – City Centre Manager
- Andrew McNeilly – Manager, Guildhall Shopping Centre
- Professor Clara Greed – University of the West of England

4.2 Minutes of the meeting are attached, but in summary the following key points emerged:

1. public toilet provision within Exeter is fairly good when compared with other local authorities, although we are not in the ‘top league’;
2. when taking into account both Council provision and public provision within retail areas such as large department stores or shopping centres, the city centre has good provision during the retail day, but lacks sufficient provision in the evening for non-patrons of restaurants and public houses;
3. quality of provision is extremely important in terms of customer expectation and the quality of the Council provision within the city centre is sometimes not maintained to a good enough standard;
4. businesses would benefit from good provision of high quality toilets, as the visitor experience to the city centre would be enhanced if first class toilets were provided;
5. public toilets are very important for visitors to an area, particularly at transport termini (bus stations, train stations and car-parks), and within destination centres (retail and tourist), and lack of provision can strongly deter many groups of the population from visiting, whereas poor quality can mar the experience of a visit, deter any return and undermine the reputation of a destination;
6. good provision of accessible public toilets is extremely important to certain groups of the community such as the elderly, mothers with young children, children, those with a mobility disability, and those suffering from incontinence and conditions such as colitis and Crohn’s disease;
7. the need for a community toilet scheme within the city centre when considered against current provision from the Council and private provision open to the public, is not demonstrated, but in terms of supplementing provision in outlying district shopping areas, it could be particularly beneficial;
8. within city centre restaurants it was unlikely that there would be enthusiasm for joining a community toilet scheme as this would most likely detract from the dining experience of customers;

9. introducing a community toilet scheme should not be a reason for reducing local authority provision, as fluctuations and withdrawals from a community toilet scheme could easily undermine future public toilet provision, with all the consequential impacts;
  10. there were many unanswered questions about the viability of community toilet schemes, (eg liability, insurance, sign-posting, 'exclusion' to certain parts of the community), and these had to be addressed or understood before embarking on such a scheme;
  11. public toilet provision does not have the important profile it should have in terms of strategic planning and how it links with and influences visitor dynamics and experience of a place, or how it encourages beneficial use of parks and open spaces;
  12. many local authorities view public toilet provision as an expensive problem they would like to get rid of, but fail to realise the benefits to the community and to businesses that good quality public toilet provision can make – Britain is now seen as poor provider in international terms, and falls behind much higher standards found in many European countries and the far East.
- 4.3 At the meeting of 2 December 2011, five invitees attended to give a user's view from but from the perspective of specific parts of the community; those attending were:
- Yvonne Pope - Living Options
  - Laura Robinson and Pauline Haggarty – Sure Start
  - Martyn Rogers – Age UK
  - Linda Regan – Fawcett Devon
- 4.4 Minutes of the meeting are attached, but in summary the following key points emerged:
1. public toilet provision was seen as important and any reduction in toilet provision would not be supported;
  2. a community toilet scheme would be perceived as beneficial if it supplemented the current provision, but not if it was introduced as a replacement for such;
  3. the more that good quality toilets became widely available the more the confidence of the disabled and elderly in visiting the city centre grew;
  4. many businesses already offered use of their toilets for the public, some still lacked disabled adaptations;
  5. some disabled toilets had simple deficiencies that deterred use (e.g. placing of the flush handle on the wrong side of the cistern, making it difficult to flush);
  6. signage was important, as was sufficient space in the toilet for those with physical constraints – a comprehensive plan of private and Council toilet provision was not available, and would be extremely helpful;
  7. there was concern that and businesses entering a community toilet scheme may later withdraw their support, and reduce the overall provision to users, therefore there was a risk which could be difficult to manage;

8. there were concerns about the location of toilets within premises that may join a scheme – often these were at the back of premises and sometimes on other floors, and consequently were not easily accessible to people, particularly the disabled, those with mobility problems and those with push-chairs and young children;
  9. it was important that any public toilet was easily identifiable and easily accessible to the users - users would be embarrassed if having to ask for assistance within a premises and draw attention to themselves;
  10. few private premises made provision for nappy-changing facilities, a community toilet scheme would therefore struggle to cater for this need;
  11. in general terms the provision of public toilets in Exeter was good, but cleanliness could improve, and there were problems with undesirable individuals misusing the toilets in some (e.g. drug use), which deterred general users;
  12. many would be happy to pay a small admission fee so long as standards of cleanliness, etc., were high and maintained that way – charging was strongly associated with improved standards;
  13. toilets with turnstiles were an impediment, particularly to those with mobility problems or pushchairs;
  14. there was an imbalance in public toilet provision in Exeter (as with most local authorities), and the ideal ratio of 2 to 1 in favour of women was not met;
  15. even a fully operational community toilet scheme only functioned during trading hours and accessing pub toilets was not popular with women, many feeling uncomfortable in entering alone solely to use the toilets.
- 4.5 The Head of Environmental Health Service was invited by the Rev Iain McDonald, the representative of the Interfaith Group, to a meeting of the Group on Tuesday 6 December 2011 in the Fore Street Church. Many of the above views were echoed by this group, which included many representatives from a wide range of faiths, but with the following additions:
1. a number of people of certain faiths would not enter premises selling alcohol in order to use a toilet;
  2. Some women of certain faiths would be deterred from entering any male-dominated premises in order to access a toilet, or a unisex toilet.

## **5. FACT-FINDING VISIT TO OXFORD**

- 5.1 A fact-finding visit to Oxford City Council to meet with the co-ordinator of Oxford's community toilet scheme, the Street Scene Manager and Portfolio Holder was planned for February 2012, but unfortunately has now been postponed until March. The Working Group's intention is to learn about the mechanics of setting up and operating a scheme and to examine the real benefits and issues that such a scheme may generate. The intention is also to visit premises participating in the scheme and to question participating businesses for their views, as well as comparing public toilet provision with Exeter, and visualising the way a scheme would operate in Exeter.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

That Scrutiny Committee Community:

- 1) note the interim report, and the progress made to date; and
- 2) await the findings and recommendations of the Working Group at a future committee.

## ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT

S:PA/LP/ Committee/312SCC6  
2.3.12

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**  
**Background papers used in compiling this report:**

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## **COMMUNITY TOILETS WORKING GROUP**

Thursday 14 July 2011

### Present:-

Councillors Mitchell (Chair), Branston, Hobden and Thompson

### Also Present

Head of Environmental Health Services, Cleansing Operations Manager and Member Services Officer (HB)

### In attendance

Professor Clara Greed – University of the West of England  
John Harvey – City Centre Manager  
Andrew McNeilly – Manager, Guildhall Shopping Centre

7

### **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

This was received from Mike Trim.

8

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2011**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

9

### **CITY CENTRE BUSINESSES**

The Chair welcomed Andrew McNeilly, Asset Manager, Aviva Guildhall Centre and Vice Chair of the Chamber of Commerce and John Harvey, City Centre Manager.

#### John Harvey

John Harvey spoke on toilet provision in the City Centre and the position of the business community. He reported that the St Catherine's Street toilets, built as part of the Princesshay development and therefore the most modern, were the most popular reflecting the fact that the public preferred to use toilets of the highest standards and cleanliness. He referred to the existing larger stores such as M&S, Dingles and Debenhams where toilets were well used by the public effectively providing an unofficial "community" use and suggested that, with the forthcoming addition of John Lewis at Home, the City Centre was well catered for in terms of private premises. He listed the new restaurants in the City Centre - Coal, Strada, La Tosca, Carlucci's and Giraffe - all of which provided toilets for their clients but who would be unlikely to join any scheme on the basis that their customers would feel that allowing the public to use the toilets would detract from the dining experience. The other obvious alternative of using pub toilets was often only an option for single males.

Given existing use of store toilets by the public, there could be scope for further retail outlets, cafes, restaurants etc. to also open their facilities but he suggested that, based on his links with City Centre store etc. managers, whilst a partnership approach to community toilet provision could be of real benefit to individual businesses in other areas of the City, it was generally felt that little added value

could be achieved by incorporating City Centre stores in any scheme. Further, it was not felt that the schemes introduced in other Cities could be replicated in respect of the City Centre.

A Member, referring to the Pinhoe area, advised that some businesses in this area would be amenable to providing toilets which could be used by the public with City Council backing. Another Member urged caution with regard to local authority assistance to private enterprises.

Responding to a Member, the City Centre Manager stated that businesses did not feel that the City Centre was lacking in public toilet provision generally but that consideration could be given to late opening of existing facilities, especially if trading hours were extended further into the evening. The Business Improvement District Bid included a proposal for further extending Christmas opening hours and, in the event of this occurring, an integral feature would be partnership working with the City Council which could include a review of toilet opening hours.

The Chair, supporting the view that outlying districts could benefit from a Community Toilet Scheme, asked why, given that outlets such as Macdonalds, Burger King and KFC were used by the general public, the City Centre's other restaurants could not do the same. He also asked how, given the doubts expressed by the business community, both the Richmond and Oxford schemes were apparently successful.

The City Centre Manger stated that City Centre restaurants offered a different dining experience with customers usually staying on the premises for 45-60 minutes plus, whereas Macdonalds etc. were fast food outlets/takeaways and were patronised in greater numbers by a younger demographic. Andrew McNeilly remarked that prices were far greater in the former and that these businesses would suffer if their customers felt that they did not receive value for money as a result of the general public's use of in-house toilets.

Although believing that local, smaller businesses in the suburbs could benefit from a Community Toilet Scheme, a Member felt that introducing a scheme for the City Centre could place unnecessary budgetary demands on the City Council and that difficulties could result should private businesses withdraw from any scheme. Another Member asked for further information on the operation of the scheme in Oxford, a City similar in nature to Exeter, and remarked that Richmond, which he knew well, differed to Exeter, in that its one unattractive under-ground toilet had acted as one of the catalysts for introducing a Community Toilet scheme but that the retail area there was largely confined to a single High Street and therefore differed from Exeter.

Another Member, with reference to the Group's remit, felt that greater regard be given to the bigger picture and that it was inappropriate therefore to rule any scheme out at this early stage. As the first step in a more positive approach, research on the level of demand was required and she also suggested involving groups/support networks for those with health related issues such as Crohn's and Colitis. The Head of Environmental Health Services advised that any research would be resource intensive although usage levels could also be obtained from assessing utilities and consumables consumption.

The Cleansing Services Manager confirmed that the presence of an attendant, as at the Paris Street Bus Station toilet, where problems could be severe, were of value in deterring misuse. These and the King William Street, Musgrave Row and Blackboy Road toilets were well used, Guinea Street toilet, less well so, the Manager referring to a recent incident experienced there. She referred to the need

for double locking of radar operated doors as some individuals possessed radar keys. She acknowledged that public misuse including drug-taking, anti social behaviour and rough sleeping would not be tolerated in private stores and that fear of such activity could be a major sticking point. She referred to the need for attention to be given to the fabric of some public toilets but stressed that the standard of cleanliness was generally high.

It was confirmed that there were now a greater number of private toilets available in the Princesshay area following the re-development.

#### Andrew McNeilly

Mr McNeilly felt that, in principle, a suitable Community Toilet Scheme could be good for businesses but expressed certain caveats.

Referring to the City Council review of toilets in 2010, he urged caution that any introduction of a Community Toilet Scheme should not be for the reason of reducing local authority responsibility in this matter. Introducing such a scheme could lead to an initial increase in toilet numbers but then losses below the original provision could result if businesses withdrew. He felt that if there had been a business case for such a scheme it would already have been pursued by the private sector. Although there was an issue with evening time provision he felt that the overall provision in the City Centre was very good but suggested that the introduction of a scheme to outlying suburban areas, including existing shopping centres, could be of benefit.

Ultimately, it would be for individual businesses to decide if they wished to participate. The different size and demographic of customers would have an impact and regard would need to be had to building capacity, for example, provision for the disabled. Insurance, health and safety, marketing, staffing and maintenance were all factors although funding through a partnership approach and/or sponsorship could be investigated. He also suggested funding could be obtained if the Business Improvement District bid succeeded. Charging should also be considered.

He recognised that the overall retail/entertainment experience of a City Centre would be enhanced if first class toilet facilities were available and would also be of advantage to those with medical problems. Visitors, shoppers and tourists would all benefit. Car parks and toilets were often the first port of call and good facilities would be noted and approved of, lead to further visits and boost the economy. Businesses would benefit from the overall improvement in personal services. Quality, as well as quantity, were important as was the provision of as wide a choice as possible for the public.

A Member referred to the importance of meeting the needs of the disabled. It was noted that Exeter did not suffer from severe problems of vandalism, as experienced in some areas, but that regard should be had to its role as a tourist venue with large numbers of people alighting from coaches.

The Head of Environmental Health Services, in response to a Member, advised that consultation had not been undertaken with the private sector in 2010 because of the resource implications. Consultation would be an inherent part of any future plans and the Chamber would play a significant role in this respect.

**PROFESSOR CLARA GREED OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND**

The Chair welcomed Professor Greed who spoke on her circulated paper on public toilet provision and to her power-point presentation – Lack of Public Toilet Provision - An Inconvenient Truth.

The following points were made during the course of the presentation:-

- Toilet provision was not mandatory under the Public Health Act 1936 Act. Victorian engineers had more regard to linkage with public sewers than public accessibility;
- Some local authorities had undertake wholesale public toilet closures with little regard to a sustainable provision strategy - the last 10 years had witnessed the closure of 40% of toilets;
- Local authorities might operate more as facilitators than providers in the future - could offer rate relief, local authority cleaners, help with insurance where businesses sought to provide toilet facilities;
- Wider spatial strategy required for planning toilet provision - covers a wide area - transport, leisure centres etc.
- Regard to be had to women, mothers with children, elderly, disabled, wheelchairs users;
- Community toilet schemes often not open at the time people want toilets, for example in the morning rush hour period;
- Often, attendants and CCTV saved money in the long term;
- Unisex toilets often not a great success but introduced with view to removing queues for female toilets;
- Need in suburbs due to postmen, mobile libraries, meals on wheels, school children, “white van man”, people in parks, local shopping centres;
- Toilet facilities at bus and train stations also need to be considered;
- Public use of pub toilets – not attractive to women, children;
- World Toilet Organisation – great provision in Far East such as Japan and China with street maps of toilets on bins, New York – Bathrooms mean Business and Potty Parity to ensue equal parity of provision for women. Belgium and Holland - right to use any pub/café toilets but not in France any longer;
- World Toilet Association – view that toilets not a priority in the UK and any public perception of facilities being dirty and run down could be a disincentive to visit
- Association of Town Centre Managers state that retail turnover is higher where high quality toilets are available;
- BS6465 is under review by the Sanitary Installations Committee covering public toilets, offices, schools, factories etc.;
- Charging - Westminster City Council and Cambridge City Council charge to fund provision and other mechanisms such as business rates and Section 106 agreements could be examined;
- Public Sector Equality Duty - e.g. equal charges for men and women;
- Key approach - Survey - Analysis - Plan; and

She responding as follows to Members queries:-

- Some local authorities include specially worded sections in Supplementary Planning Guidance to facilitate support for toilet provision;
- Localism Bill - seeks to empower local communities to run own facilities and may impact on toilet provision;
- Cambridgeshire, Ceredigion and Evesham seen as exemplars in provision;
- Long term liability - Richmond experienced much good will at first but experiencing some fall out in support;

- Internal conversions may be necessary where scheme introduced - new set of customers so need to increase size, regard to fire regulations; etc.
- Bristol had a short lived scheme involving the Museums, University, transport stations and the Borders bookshops but insufficiently robust – information pamphlets not made available;
- Although not in the “premier league” Exeter, with 26 public toilets, compared favourably with many areas. Suggest investigation of Lincoln City Toilet Strategy because of the City’s similarity to Exeter; and
- Outsourcing to private companies is another option e.g. City Toilets in London. However, they have focussed on hotspots rather than the suburbs.

The following publications were recommended-:

- User and Provider Perceptions of Public Toilet Provision UWE
- Inclusive Urban Design - Public Toilets - Professor Clara Greed - published by Architectural press;
- Universal Design and Design for the Disabled - Selwyn Goldsmith - published by Architectural press;
- Public Toilets in London - London Assembly - Health and Public Services Committee
- Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing - New York University Press

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#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**AGREED** that the next meeting be held at 10am on Wednesday 14 September 2011.

(The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 12.35 pm)

Chair

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## **COMMUNITY TOILETS WORKING GROUP**

Friday 2 December 2011

### **Present:-**

Councillors Mitchell, Branston, Hobden and Thompson

### **Also Present**

Head of Environmental Health Services and Member Service Officer (HB)

### **Also Present**

Yvonne Pope : Living Options  
Laura Robinson and Pauline Haggarty – Sure Start  
Martyn Rogers – Age UK  
Linda Regan – Fawcett Devon

### 18 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2011**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

### 19 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES - REPRESENTATION FROM INTERESTED PARTIES**

The Head of Environmental Health Services reported that the Rev Iain McDonald, the representative of the Interfaith Group, had submitted apologies but invited him to a meeting of the Group on Tuesday 6 December 2011 in the Fore Street Church.

Councillor Hobden suggested that if there was a branch of the National Association for Cholititis and Chrohn's, representatives should be invited to attend to give evidence and that, if there was no local group, written representation should be sought. In her view, representation from the group was preferable to GP evidence. Councillor Mrs Thompson referred to water retention problems experienced by those on blood pressure medication and it was felt that the various group representatives attending on the day would be able to give a fair range of user views.

Oxford City Council operated a Community Toilet Scheme and had agreed to host a visit from this group including a meeting with the relevant officer, (who was the co-ordinator of the scheme), and the Portfolio Holder. Oxford retained a number of public toilets although the community toilet scheme total had been reduced. The relevant reports on the background and costs of the scheme would be made available. Members agreed that it would be helpful to speak to the businesses involved on the day as well as the public using the premises.

The Head of Environmental Health Services agreed to provide detailed figures on the operation of the scheme in Oxford including costs and a visit to Oxford for the group was agreed to be arranged for late January/early February 2012, 20 or 27 January being provisionally suggested (subject to Oxford City Council agreeing).

## **EVIDENCE FROM INTERESTED PARTIES**

The Chair welcomed each of the following witnesses, explaining that the group had been established to examine toilet provision in the City and to look at a Community Toilet Scheme (CTS) including financial implications.

### Yvonne Pope - Living Options

Yvonne was the disabled access champion for Living Options, a user led Devon charity covering physical and/or sensory disabilities and deaf people.

Previous plans to reduce the number of Council toilets had not been supported by members of the organisation, notwithstanding the recognition that budget cuts were necessary. Both the disabled and the elderly had greater confidence in visiting the City Centre if good quality toilets were widely available. King William Street was popular because of easy access into the City Centre via a ramp/bridge.

It was recognised that a community toilet scheme could be an acceptable addition if the toilets provided were of a sufficiently high standard. Although many businesses already offered use of their toilets for the public, some still lacked disabled adaptations. It was noted that issues relevant to the potential CTC operators were likely to include lack of space, liability and extra disruption to customers. For the disabled, access was a key issue and many toilets were located at the back of a restaurant/café and, although clearly visible, access was hindered by obstacles. Many disabled people were unwilling to use the toilets because of the embarrassment in drawing attention to themselves. Different levels also caused problems if a toilet was not on the same floor as the main entrance. Signage was important, as was sufficient space in the toilet for those with physical constraints. She referred to a good quality toilet at St. Stephen House which was not widely known about by the public.

She sought an assurance that any community toilet scheme would be constantly monitored and the needs of the disabled addressed. She queried the impact of any business subsequently withdrawing from a scheme.

The Head of Environmental Health Services explained the powers of local authorities in ensuring that local businesses provided facilities for the public. Depending on size, businesses were required to provide facilities for the disabled. Where shortcomings were found, recommendations were made and enforcement powers could be used. For small businesses, a single, small, unisex toilet was often provided.

In response to Yvonne Pope acknowledging that there were severe constraints on the budget, the Chair advised that no decision had been made to close toilets and that examining the feasibility of a community toilet scheme was part of the overall assessment of toilet provision in the City.

Yvonne Pope stated that there was room for improvement in toilet provision and cited the toilets in Debenhams, Boots and M&S as templates for good provision. A Guildhall restaurant also provided a toilet for public use but when previously visited she had found it to be somewhat cluttered with mops and buckets. It was important also to keep the route to the toilet clear not only for wheelchair users but visually impaired owners with their guide-dogs. A Member referred to his use of the toilet in Dingles which he admitted was not on the ground floor. Yvonne Pope advised that she was not aware of this facility and stated that if she had more time she would have undertaken a wider survey of toilets in City Centre cafes etc. and suggested



that the availability of toilets for public use could be listed in promotional brochures, web-sites etc.

Responding to the Head of Environmental Health Services in respect of Council owned toilets, she stated that access generally was acceptable but comments had been made that cleanliness could be improved. A further problem was that, in many instances, the toilets had not been flushed. She explained that this was sometimes the result of inaccessible handles or buttons which a disabled person simply could not reach or, if with a disability such as arthritis, could not operate. It was noted that planning applications were considered by Environmental Health Officers to check provision and design of toilets in new buildings but not necessarily the fine design of the toilet cistern handle location. In respect of overall satisfaction amongst her members, she stated that this could only be assessed properly if a comprehensive survey was undertaken across the full membership.

#### Laura Robinson and Pauline Haggarty - Sure Start

Laura and Pauline reported the views of parents and Surestart managers in relation to any CTS. Concerns expressed included pushchair access, especially where toilets were located on the first or second floors of restaurants and the requirement to pay when the toilets were required quickly. The use of turnstiles at public toilets to facilitate charging was therefore off-putting to mothers with pushchairs. It was noted that increased standards were expected with charging. Generally, people were aware of the availability of toilets in Macdonald's, Marks and Spencer's and BHS etc. A reference was made to a small cafe which allowed use of their toilet by members of the public for a charge. There was a strong view that any community toilet scheme should not discriminate against any member of the public and that the toilets should be open to all.

The Chair explained that community toilets schemes operated elsewhere at no charge, as the businesses received funding from the respective Councils and that they were open to all members of the public to use.

Concerns had been expressed in respect of the King William Street Car Park because of the smell which some thought emanated from the stairwells and it had been noted that the toilets at the Guildhall were small and the sinks awkward

The provision of changing facilities was a key issue. Where available, model separate units were clean, warm and comfortable allowing mothers to sit with children. Mothercare provided such a facility. Department stores such as M&S and BHS toilets could also offer toilets of a high standard.

Commenting on the City's toilet provision in general, reference was made to the Guildhall and Musgrave Row toilets which were less attractive, the former being somewhat constrained and the latter attracting less desirable individuals. Outside the City Centre, Beacon Heath benefitted from toilets that remained open until 7.00pm at present. Parks, such as Heavitree, were made more attractive to families with the presence of toilets. Belmont Park lacked facilities and use was sometimes made of Clifton Hill Sports Centre. Convenience was therefore a key issue.

Generally, those who had been spoken to had not found that Exeter was lacking in toilets and it was noted that Exeter, in fact, was better provided with public toilets than some other areas.

### Martyn Rogers - Age UK

Martyn reported that he had undertaken a straw poll of users of the Age UK café. In relation to the Council's public toilets, issues raised had included cleanliness with special reference to the dangers caused from discarded needles and the importance of not reducing toilet numbers. Commenting on City Centre toilets, M&S toilets were very well known to the public and the disabled facility in the Guildhall toilets was praised because of its size. It had been remarked that the Catherine Street toilets were complicated to use and it was recognised that where there was a requirement to pay, toilets were cleaner and standards higher. Pay toilets also reduced the likelihood of misuse especially drug usage. Turnstiles clearly disadvantaged the disabled.

As people already took advantage of toilets in department stores there was support for a community toilet scheme although it was felt that in-house access could be a disincentive to the operator. Access to toilets on first or second floors using a lift or chairs presented difficulties for the elderly and disabled. Many were embarrassed when attention was drawn to themselves including when they sought assistance. Some toilets were occupied as storage facilities and this was a further problem. It had been remarked that a community toilet scheme could only function effectively if adequately promoted including discreet advertisements in shop/restaurant windows. Good signage to the toilets inside the establishment and high cleanliness standards were also important. Again, comments had been made concerning the odour around the King William Street Car Park and it had been remarked that the Cowick Street toilet, where needles had been evident, could benefit from extra cleaning and vigilance. Some older people would plan convenience stops as part of their visit to the City Centre. He concluded that it would be real challenge to maintain existing stock at a high standard given local authority cut backs.

Responding to a Member, he emphasised that the opinions he had gathered were in response to a straw poll only as he lacked the resources to undertake a comprehensive survey of his membership. Nevertheless, an informal view was helpful. Age UK also ran an "Out and About" service collecting the elderly and disabled from their homes and lack of sufficient toilets had never been an issue – many of the clients availed themselves of their home toilets before travelling. However, proposals to cut toilet numbers had aroused considerable opposition.

He admitted that he would be reluctant to allow the use of Age UK toilets by the general public as problems of drug abuse and opportunist theft could arise.

With regard to cost, he believed that many were happy to pay a small admission charge to public toilets to ensure high standards of cleanliness etc. and even a Council Tax increase might be looked upon favourably if an improved City-wide service resulted.

He referred to Exeter Senior Voice, chaired by Councillor Shiel, as a valuable sounding board for the views of the elderly.

### Linda Regan - Fawcett Devon

She explained that the Fawcett Society was the oldest gender equality organisation in the country and had been consulted by the County Council for a number of years on gender issues. She had been able to consult some members in spite of the short notice. There had been a long term imbalance in toilet provision and Exeter, as with the rest of the country, did not meet the ideal ratio of 2 to 1 in favour of women. Notwithstanding issues such as pregnancy, menstruation and continence, women took physically longer to use a toilet than men - 80-90 seconds for urination

compared with 32-40 seconds for men. Up to 50% of women experienced some form of loss of bladder control.

Even a fully operational community toilet scheme only functioned during trading hours and accessing pub toilets was not popular with women many feeling uncomfortable in entering alone solely to use the toilets.

She referred to toilets at Budleigh Salterton sea front and the rear of the car park near the Town Hall as effective toilets. Both offered free, stainless steel, unisex toilets. They were therefore easy to use and good examples of toilet provision. She remarked that charging for toilet use was generally considered to be acceptable.

A Member referred to the Richmond Upon Thames website that stated that 90 toilets were available although the Head of Environmental Health Services stated that he understood that these were now reduced in number.

Ms Regan stated that the majority of women were aware of toilet availability in the major department stores. She suggested that some businesses might be reluctant to participate because a community toilet scheme might result in groups of young people proving disruptive to customers.

The Chair thanked all who had attended and asked if they would be prepared to attend a further meeting of the Group if asked to provide any further evidence. All were willing to do so.

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#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting to be the fact-finding visit to Oxford, provisionally arranged for 20 or 27 January 2012.

(The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and closed at 12.00 pm)

Chair

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## EXETER CITY COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY 6 MARCH 2012

EXECUTIVE  
20 MARCH 2012

#### DRAFT RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY 2012–2015

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Member approval for the Resident Involvement Strategy 2012–2015.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The purpose of resident involvement is to find out the priorities of the Council's tenants and leaseholders. This assists the Service to focus the available resources into these areas and make efficiency savings elsewhere.
- 2.2 The Housing Service manages over 6,000 properties. The Strategy specifically focuses on housing resident involvement activities that relate to the Council's landlord function. Community engagement initiatives are developed across Exeter in conjunction with residents and partner agencies by the Community Involvement & Inclusion Officer. The plan for how the Housing Service will be involved in the wider development of communities will be contained in the Neighbourhood Management Strategy which is currently being reviewed.
- 2.3 Regulatory requirements for registered providers of social housing are set out by the Tenant Services Authority in its Regulatory Framework for Social Housing, which came into effect in April 2010. The framework is based on the principle of co-regulation where there is a clear role for tenants to scrutinise performance.
- 2.4 The Housing Service is expected to support co-regulation by:
- Offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing related policies and the delivery of housing resident services
  - Consulting with tenants and acting reasonably in providing them with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery
  - Providing tenants with a range of opportunities to scrutinise performance against all standards and in the development of the Annual Report
  - Providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more actively involved.

#### 3. THE STRATEGY

- 3.1 The draft Resident Involvement Strategy 2012–2015 is available for Members to view in the Members' room and on the intranet. This sets out the current position with regard to resident involvement and outlines the Council's vision for involving tenants and leaseholders in all aspects of housing service and provision.

3.2 The Strategy for the next three years focuses on the following areas to ensure that effective tenant and leaseholder involvement is at the heart of housing at Exeter City Council, that the different levels of involvement are accessed by a representative cross-section of residents and that all regulatory requirements are met through:

- Resident scrutiny and regulation
- Assessment of impact, structure and performance monitoring
- Increasing the numbers and diversity of residents actively involved
- Communication
- Training and support.

**4. RECOMMENDED**

that Scrutiny – Community support and Executive approve:

- 1) The Housing Resident and Involvement Strategy 2012–2015
- 2) That a further report on progress against the action plan be submitted annually.

ACTING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR HOUSING AND CONTRACTS

S:PA/LP/312SCC2  
23.2.12

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**  
**Background papers used in compiling this report:**

# Housing Resident Involvement Strategy for Exeter City Council

2012 - 2015

*The purpose of resident involvement  
is to improve services, deliver  
accountability or improve residents'  
quality of life*

This document can also be provided in LARGE PRINT, other languages, Braille, or CD  
by request to Exeter City Council on 01392 265738.



**Exeter City Council**

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## **Summary**

This document sets out the purpose of resident involvement, where the Council is now, the key objectives that will be delivered over the next three years and the actions that will be taken to meet these objectives.

### Key Objectives

Improve the performance of the housing service by listening to and involving tenants and leaseholders

Increase the number of tenants and leaseholders who get involved

Increase the number of ways in which tenant and leaseholders can get involved

Increase involvement from hard to reach groups

## **Introduction**

The Council is actively committed to ensuring that resident involvement is at the heart of housing. It develops, promotes and encourages tenant and leaseholder participation and consultation in all aspects of housing service and provision.

The purpose of resident involvement is to find out the Council's tenant and leaseholders' priorities. This enables the service to focus the available resources into these areas and make efficiency savings elsewhere.

Changes to housing regulation in England from April 2012 require landlords to be more proactive in self-regulation and in involving tenants in the scrutiny process. In addition, the localism act envisages a greater role for service users at a local level to influence and scrutinise service delivery.

Housing resident involvement at Exeter City Council has undergone fundamental changes in the past year. Organisational change was implemented in 2010 to give a greater focus on working holistically across neighbourhoods and embedding resident involvement at the heart of service delivery. Part of this change involved transferring many of the Tenant Involvement Team's duties into the restructured Neighbourhood Management Team. Dedicated resident involvement staff were reduced from three to one to oversee the implementation of this strategy and maintain the resident governance structures that are currently in place (Restructure of Tenancy Services Team Report – Executive 14 Sept 2010).

This Strategy specifically focuses on housing resident involvement activities that relate to Exeter City Council's landlord function. Community engagement initiatives are developed across Exeter in conjunction with residents and partner agencies by the Community Involvement & Inclusion Officer. Responsibility within the housing department to link with this role and drive forward improvements within communities sits with the Neighbourhood Management team in the current housing management structure. The plan for how the

Housing Service will be involved in the wider development of communities will be contained in the Neighbourhood Management Strategy.

The term **hard to reach** has been used throughout this document. The context of use relates to the demographic definition of tenants and leaseholders. Groups which the housing service has found difficult to engage with include, but are not restricted to; BME communities, people with disabilities and young people.

The term **volunteer** has been used in this document to describe those committed residents who give up their time willingly and without pay to improve the housing service delivered for the benefit of all residents.

This document will review the current resident involvement structure and activities, highlighting successes and areas that require improvement. The outcome of this review will inform the service priorities for the next three years. The final part of the Strategy takes the form of an action plan which sets out the practical steps that need to be taken to meet the aims of the strategy; what success will look like; how success can be measured and setting deadlines by which actions will be carried out.

### **Links to Corporate Objectives**

The Resident Involvement Strategy links to a number of Exeter City Council's corporate objectives:

- Ensure that we have high performing services which focus on customer needs
- Provide cost-effective services and proper use of resources
- Promote an extremely positive image and reputation and ensure high levels of customer satisfaction
- Listen to the community and respond to their needs
- Work with partners across and beyond the city to deliver better outcomes.

### **Benefits of Resident Involvement**

The benefits of resident involvement can be considerable. Audit Commission research in 2004 established clear evidence of benefits to the business, to tenant and leaseholders and to the wider community. The Council's tenants and leaseholders have said that they get the following benefits from being involved:

- They are provided with an opportunity to learn about the Housing Service
- They feel that the Council listens to and appreciates their views whilst also acting on them
- They are able to influence important decisions within the service
- They continue their professional lives in a voluntary capacity
- It encourages them to socialise and meet new people
- The service provides access to further training and development.

Greater accountability and value for money is achieved when tenants and leaseholders have input into service provision because people will get what they want. Involving them in the service enables the housing department to shape services to meet their needs.

## **Resident Involvement and Regulation**

Regulatory requirements for registered providers of social housing are set out by the Tenant Services Authority in its Regulatory Framework for Social Housing which came into effect in April 2010. Responsibility for regulating social housing passes to the Homes and Communities Agency from April 2012. The framework is based on the principle of co-regulation where there is a clear role for tenants to scrutinise performance.

The Housing Service is expected to support co-regulation by:

- Offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing related policies, and the delivery of housing resident services
- Consulting with tenants and acting reasonably in providing them with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery
- Providing tenants with a range of opportunities to scrutinise performance against all standards and in the development of the Annual Report
- Providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more actively involved.

### **Local Offers**

The Housing Service consulted widely with tenants and leaseholders to assess their priorities and service requirements following the publication of the new standard. The results of this consultation created a set of 'Local Offers' promising certain levels of service. Each resident involvement activity should support the service's commitment to these standards:

- We will review the Resident Involvement Strategy to give you every opportunity to be involved with the service
- All important consultation will be clearly marked on the envelope with the Exeter City Council logo
- We will support the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee which represents your views
- We will support the Tenant Participation Agreement which spells out our approach to resident involvement
- We will provide some financial help for resident involvement
- We will provide advice, support, training and 'one-off' financial assistance to set up local residents associations
- We will provide information on the Exeter City Council website about resident involvement
- We will arrange an annual tenants' event
- We will give you every opportunity to get involved in decision making
- We will invite you to inspect the Housing Service and make recommendations for change
- We will involve you in monitoring our performance. We will deliver training and skills development to you if you are interested in getting involved

- We will form partnerships with other organisations to support resident involvement
- We will tell you about current issues
- We will ask you how satisfied you are with the overall service we provide every two years.

Local Offers are due to be reviewed in 2013

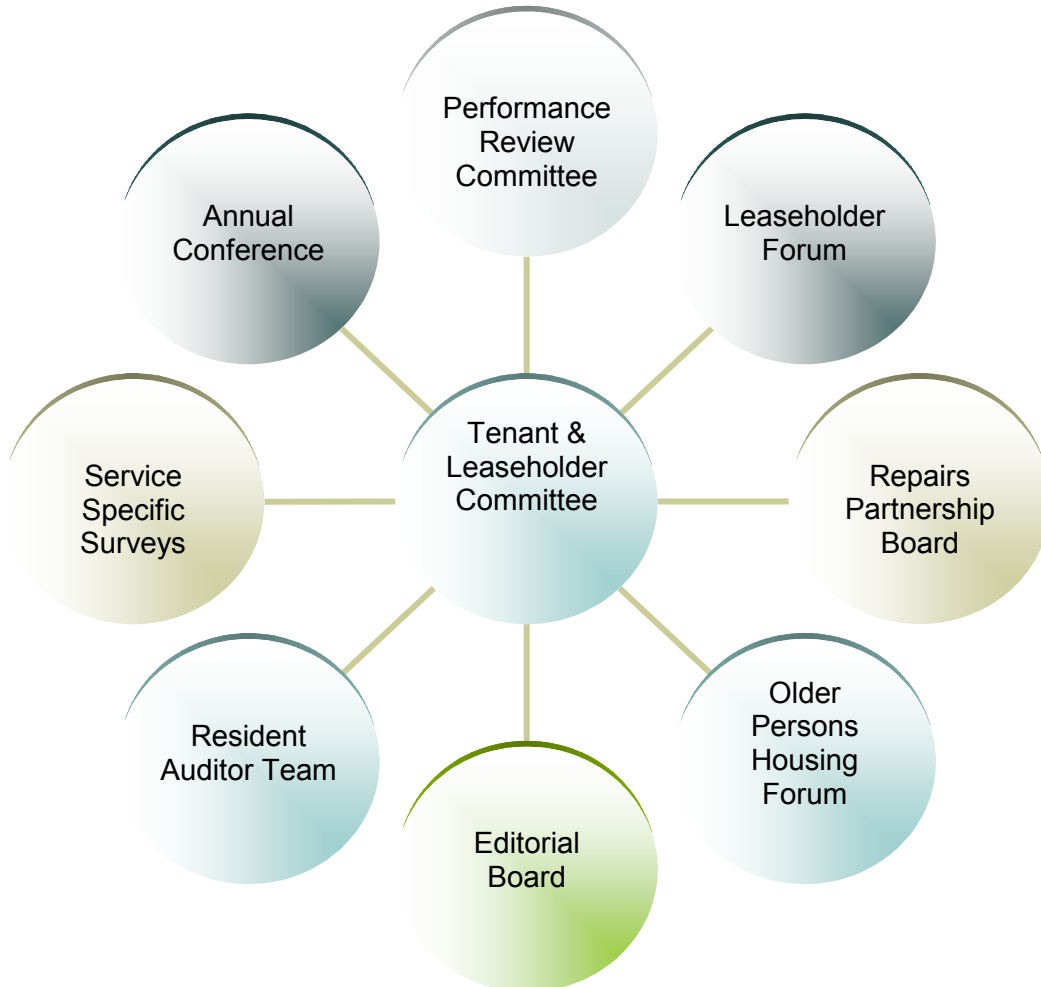
In addition to ensuring that the level of service promised in the 'Local Offers' document is met, the cost of delivering the service needs to be continually monitored to ensure that tenant and leaseholders receive the maximum benefit from the available resources.

### **Localism Act**

The Localism Act, which gained royal assent in November 2011, contains a requirement for a 'democratic filter' to be developed to resolve more complaints at a local level. This will involve giving power to tenant's panels, Councillors or MPs to resolve complaints before they are referred to the Ombudsman.

## Current Structure

Since 2006, Exeter City Council has looked for new ways to involve tenants and leaseholders within the Housing Service. This commitment led to a formal resident involvement structure being created:



### Tenant & Leaseholder Committee (TALC)

The TALC is the strategic group of tenants and leaseholders for housing resident involvement. The committee is elected by tenants and leaseholders in each ward of the city. The group meets monthly with housing managers and contractors to represent the views of tenants and leaseholders with reference to repairs, improvements of housing stock and conditions of tenancy. They make informed choices on behalf of all tenants and leaseholders. It has representatives on each of the working groups who report back to the committee. The group is well established and contains a good knowledge of the Housing Service and wider national issues. Project teams are created from the TALC membership to work with Housing Officers and Managers in the development and reviews of strategies, policies and procedures.

### Resident Auditor Team (RAT)

The RAT was established in 2006. The team take an in-depth review of processes and services, such as the voids process or complaints handling, that takes into account tenant, leaseholder and housing officer's views, customer experience data, benchmarking information and best practice data. They also carry out mystery shopping of the service. Recommendations are then made on how service delivery and value for money can be improved. Areas of review are decided by residents themselves or requested by housing managers. There is no current work-plan in place linked with planned service reviews.

### Editorial Board

The Editorial Board is responsible for writing and producing InSight, the quarterly magazine for residents. They also review all leaflets and newsletters produced by the Housing Service to ensure that they do not contain jargon and can be clearly understood.

### Performance Review Committee

This is a sub-group of the TALC. It helps to ensure that the housing services performance is open to regular scrutiny and can be challenged. The Council's Portfolio Holder for Housing & Social Inclusion and Chair of the Scrutiny Community are also part of this committee. Its meetings coincide with the publication of the Performance Digest for Housing. Managers take the committee through their own targets and answer questions on overall performance.

### Repairs Partnership Board

This group considers all aspects of repairs and maintenance within the Housing Service with the aim of influencing service direction and making decisions that relate to changes in policy.

### Older Persons Housing Forum

This forum represents older persons housing schemes within the City. It meets four times a year to discuss issues that impact on this type of accommodation.

### Leaseholder Forum

This forum meets twice a year providing an open session for leaseholders to meet with the Council and air their views.

### Service Specific Surveys and General Consultation

Surveys provide an opportunity to measure tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with specific areas of the service. The Housing Service also undertakes a range of consultation exercises where the provision of services will directly affect them or their neighbourhood. Examples include:

**Major Works Programme:** The Council has a comprehensive procedure for consulting its tenants and leaseholders prior to any improvement works starting in their homes.

**New Developments:** Tenants and leaseholders living in the neighbourhood near to new planned development sites will be fully consulted on the design of any planned development. This is particularly important where the Council plans to develop smaller infill sites within existing housing estates.

**Environmental Improvements:** Fencing schemes, landscaping, demolition projects etc.

**Housing Management Issues:** Where a particular issue is affecting a neighbourhood, tenants and leaseholders will be consulted to ensure the full extent of the problem is understood and that proposed solutions are agreed jointly.

**Satisfaction Surveys:** Undertaken every two years to measure levels of satisfaction with the Housing Service. The results are used to inform service priorities. The last survey identified low levels of satisfaction on the outcomes of anti-social behaviour reports which led to a revision of the policy and procedures in place. The cleaning of communal areas was also introduced in response to levels of satisfaction in communal areas which was reflected in the survey.

#### Annual conference

The annual conference has been running since 2007. They have been an opportunity for the housing service to obtain information to inform service priorities and for tenants and leaseholders to meet housing staff and their elected representatives to ask questions. Workshops have been held on issues ranging from anti-social behaviour to resident empowerment. Attendance has declined in recent years.

#### **Where we are now**

The last comprehensive review of resident involvement was carried out in 2009 by the Resident Auditor Team; there are some recommendations from this review that have not yet been implemented. There has been no individual evaluation of each component of the current structure carried out to assess its effectiveness.

#### **Access Customer care and User Focus**

##### *Staff knowledge and commitment to resident involvement*

A housing staff survey conducted in Nov 2011 found that 52% of staff felt that there is a commitment to resident involvement throughout the Housing Service. The organisational change described earlier has been put in place to address the separation in duties that is often felt between the day-to-day delivery of the service and resident involvement activities. Training for all housing staff would provide a better understanding of how resident involvement enhances service delivery and the role they play in involvement.

##### *Service standards and performance monitoring*

Monitoring is not currently undertaken to ensure that the involvement service is meeting the service standards outlined in the 'Local Offers' document.

##### *Resident's magazine*

Insight is produced four times per year by the Editorial Board. It contains information that the housing Service would like tenants and leaseholders to be made aware of and articles that the editorial board think will be of benefit. There is a lack of 'real-life' examples included in the magazine to illustrate the information being provided. The Council also has the facility to record the publication for which can be downloaded from the internet as a podcast. This has not been utilised to date. There has been no evaluation of satisfaction levels with the publication.

#### *Other published information*

- Handbooks. All new tenants and leaseholders receive a handbook which provides comprehensive information on their rights and responsibilities and the ways in which they can be involved in, and influence service delivery
- Leaflets. A leaflet is available from the Civic Centre or can be downloaded from the website. No information is available on how many of these have been issued
- Exeter City Council website. There are dedicated pages on the internet. These pages are not well visited, with the front page only receiving 95 unique views in 2011.

The current published information is very traditional and relies on people engaging with the written word. Social networking is not currently utilised to promote resident involvement or engage with residents.

#### *Feedback to tenants and leaseholders on how the Housing Service has responded to their involvement*

Many changes have been made to the way in which housing services have been delivered as a result of involvement activities. A new standard for how properties are let has been put in place as a result of a review by the Resident Auditor Team. Tenants and leaseholders have been involved in the recruitment of senior housing officers and the appointment of major contracts. An area that could be improved relates to feedback to both those who have been actively involved as well as the wider tenant and leaseholder population. Inconsistency in giving feedback can lead to a loss of trust with volunteers and does not encourage others to get involved.

#### *Engaging service users*

There are a range of well established groups manned by committed tenants and leaseholders. The current structure is based on a traditional approach to involvement, with formal meetings and some more informal information sessions. Other methods of consultation that do not involve formal meetings are not currently utilised. The last customer satisfaction survey took place in 2008. 61% of tenants and leaseholders felt that their views were taken into account and 46% were satisfied with opportunities for participation.

The number of volunteers is low; there are currently 20 who are actively involved. It has been difficult to attract new membership to these formal groups. The current governance structure provides a good base to build upon, however, a new way of thinking that embraces less formal methods of engagement to attract more tenants and leaseholders, particularly those in traditionally hard to reach groups, needs to be embraced. These new methods of engagement will link into the established groups and the current volunteers will be involved in their design and the recruitment and training of volunteers. It is envisioned that some tenants and leaseholders who are initially engaged in these less formal methods will build confidence in their abilities and trust in the Housing Service and commit to more formal methods of engagement in the future.



## **Diversity**

All housing staff have received training in equality and diversity. Hard to reach groups are not represented well in the current structure. Previous efforts to increase involvement with these groups, by working with representative organizations, have not been successful. The new more informal methods of engagement will be promoted to hard to reach and under-represented groups. These methods will be developed to ensure that they are accessible for people across the seven strands of diversity. Tenant and leaseholder groups must become more ethnically diverse and appeal across the community.

### **Training and Support for Involvement Activities**

There is a dedicated budget to support training activities. This training has led to volunteers having an understanding of current housing issues enabling them to make insightful recommendations as well as challenging housing managers on performance issues.

Training has been focused mainly on individuals rather than developing group capacity. A training plan is not currently in place and evaluation of training activities is not routinely carried out. Individual performance reviews are also not undertaken with volunteers to ensure that their personal and training needs in relation to being involved are being met.

There is an expense policy in place to ensure that being involved does not leave volunteers out of pocket and that the time that they donate is recognised. This has not been reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

### **Performance Monitoring**

The Housing Service is continually evolving to deliver a quality service that is valued due to the involvement of tenants and leaseholders. However, formal performance targets have not been put in place to measure the year on year performance of resident involvement activities and ensure that a culture of continuous improvement is maintained.

## Housing Resident Involvement 2012 – 2015

### Key Objectives

The Strategy for the next three years has four key objectives:

- Improve the performance of the housing service by listening to and involving tenants and leaseholders
- Increase the number of tenants and leaseholders who get involved
- Increase the number of ways in which tenant and leaseholders can get involved
- Increase involvement from hard to reach groups.

These objectives will be delivered by focusing on the following areas to ensure that effective tenant and leaseholder involvement is at the heart of housing at Exeter City Council, that the different levels of involvement are accessed by a representative cross-section of residents and that all regulatory requirements are met:

- Resident scrutiny and regulation
- Assessment of impact, structure and performance monitoring
- Increasing the numbers and diversity of residents actively involved
- Communication
- Training and support.

The purpose of resident involvement is to find out the Council's tenant and leaseholders' priorities. This enables the service to focus the available resources into these areas and make efficiency savings elsewhere. To meet this objective all involvement activities should meet at least one of the following aims:

- Provide feedback on current services
- Develop changes to services
- Scrutinise the services performance and hold managers to account.

### Scrutiny and regulation

- Create a tenant and leaseholder scrutiny group that is independent, has real power to challenge and effect change, complies with national guidance, involves new tenants and leaseholders in both a formal and consulting member capacities and other partner housing organisations as a critical friend
- Re-consultant on Local Offers in 2013
- Develop a 'democratic filter'.

### Assessment of impact, structure and performance monitoring

- Evaluate each component of the current structure for purpose, effectiveness and value for money
- Develop a new fit-for-purpose structure that embraces the ethos of co-regulation and represents the diversity of the tenant and leaseholder population
- Set performance indicators for the Resident Involvement Service and benchmark the results against similar landlords
- Create an involvement database that records and evaluates involvement activity that has taken place
- Undertake a value for money review of the new structure

### Increasing the numbers and diversity of residents actively involved

- Develop new less formal methods of engagement to compliment and feed into the formal structure with the intention of increasing the number of tenant and leaseholders who are providing feedback, developing change and holding the council to account for the services being delivered, ensuring that these methods are accessible across the seven strands of diversity.
- Utilise social media and the internet, e.g. online surveys, to engage with residents
- Monitor the demographics of those involved to ensure that that they are representative of the tenant and leaseholder population.
- Target hard-to-reach and under-represented groups in recruitment campaigns
- Produce recruitment information, utilising traditional and new media to attract more residents.

### Communication

- Utilise social networking to promote tenant and leaseholder involvement and support the existing communication methods in place
- Record publications and make available for download as a podcast
- Address the lack of feedback currently provided by developing and monitoring feedback mechanisms to inform volunteers and the wider tenant and leaseholder population and staff on the impact that involvement has had on the service.
- Investigate the use of new media such as live/video feeds as a form of feedback and communication with tenant and leaseholders.

### Training and support

- Deliver training to all housing staff on how resident involvement enhances service delivery and the role that they play in this process
- Develop a structured tenant and leaseholder involvement training program that focus on both individual and group knowledge, development and capacity building and ensure that training is accessible to all groups.
- Develop a training recording and evaluation database
- Introduce an appraisal system to ensure that personal and training needs are being met.
- Review the expenses policy to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose and takes account of the new methods of involvement that are being developed

**Resident Involvement Action Plan 2012 – 2015**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Feedback / Develop change / Scrutiny</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>What will look good like and how will it be measured?</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>Resident scrutiny and regulation</b>					
Reform the Performance Review Committee to undertake the tenant scrutiny role in the co-regulation framework	Sept 2012	Scrutiny	HRIM HPPM	Scrutiny framework in place that monitors and challenges performance.	
Review Local offers	Sept 2013	Develop change	HRIM HOM	New Local Offers produced	
Develop 'democratic filter'	April 2013	Scrutiny	HRIM HOM	Democratic filter	
<b>Assessment of impact, structure and performance monitoring</b>					
Evaluate each component of the current structure to establish <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose</li> <li>• Effectiveness</li> <li>• Cost</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Future direction</li> </ul>	Tenant & Leaseholder Committee – Jan 2013	Feedback / Develop change / Scrutiny	HRIM	New RI structure in place	
	Performance Review Committee – Sept 2012	Scrutiny		Scrutiny framework in place that monitors and challenges performance	
	Resident Auditor	Scrutiny		Annual work plan agreed and monitored	

Action	Target Date	Feedback / Develop change / Scrutiny	Who	What will look good like and how will it be measured?	Update
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training needs</li> </ul>	Team – Nov 2012				
	Editorial / Insight - June 2012	Feedback		Reduction in production costs High satisfaction levels	
	Annual Conference – Sept 2012	Feedback / Develop change		Annual RI activity/activities attended by a minimum of 10% of the household. High satisfaction levels	
	Service Specific Surveys – Oct 2012	Feedback		Standardised surveys Increased response rates	
	Leaseholder Forum – July 2012	Feedback / Develop change		Increased attendance figures	
	Older Persons Housing Forum – Aug 2012	Feedback / Develop change		Framework for involvement in service established	
	Repairs Partnership Board – Nov 2012	Develop change		Performance monitoring framework in place	
Agree performance indicators for RI	May 2012	Feedback / Develop	HRIM HOM	PI's benchmarked against peers	

Action	Target Date	Feedback / Develop change / Scrutiny	Who	What will look good like and how will it be measured?	Update
activities and develop performance monitoring database		Change / Scrutiny	HPPM	PI's reported in Housing Performance Digest	
Create an involvement database to record and evaluate involvement activity	April 2013	Feedback	HRIM	RI published quarterly in Insight TALC monitor reports	
Undertake a service review of new RI structure	March 2015	Feedback / Develop Change / Scrutiny	HRIM	New three year strategy produced	
Carry out resident satisfaction survey (STAR)	April 2014	Feedback	HRIM HOM HPPM	Survey results used to inform the Housing Service improvement Plan	
<b>Increasing the numbers and diversity of residents actively involved</b>					
Develop new methods of engagement to attract more residents	Jan 2013	Feedback / Develop Change / Scrutiny	HRIM	New RI structure Involved residents are representative of resident population	
Use of social media to obtain feedback on housing services	Jan 2013	Feedback	HRIM	New RI structure in place RI database records	

Action	Target Date	Feedback / Develop change / Scrutiny	Who	What will look good like and how will it be measured?	Update
Promote the need for resident involvement groups to reach 'hard-to-reach' groups and ensure all are accessible for people across the seven strands of diversity. Use tenant profiling information to target these groups.	Jan 2013	Feedback / Develop Change / Scrutiny	HRIM	Resident involvement groups should become more ethnically diverse and appeal across the community. PI to measure the demographics of involved residents	
Produce recruitment information, utilising traditional and new media to attract more residents	April 2013	Feedback / Develop Change / Scrutiny	HRIM	Range of promotional methods in place. Numbers of involved residents increase as a result of promotional activity	
Update Equality Impact Assessment	March 2013	Scrutiny	HRIM	The different levels of involvement are accessible by a representative cross-section of residents.	

Action	Target Date	Feedback / Develop change / Scrutiny	Who	What will look good like and how will it be measured?	Update
Review the demographic profile of involved tenant and leaseholders. Develop new mechanisms to increase the numbers of groups which remain under-represented.	June 2014	Feedback / Develop Change / Scrutiny	HRIM	Demographic of volunteers becomes more representative of tenant and leaseholder population	
<b>Communication</b>					
Develop feedback mechanisms to inform involved residents and the wider resident population and staff on the impact that involvement has had on the service	April 2013	Feedback		Housing Team updates Regular article in Insight Reporting format put in place to respond to RI groups on their input	
Record RI publications and make available from Exeter City Council website and as a pod cast	Sept 2012	Feedback	HRIM	Each edition of Insight available in this format	
Annual Report to residents against	Sept 2012 Sept 2013	Feedback	HOM HRIM	Production of Annual report	



Action	Target Date	Feedback / Develop change / Scrutiny	Who	What will look good like and how will it be measured?	Update
Local Offers	Sept 2014				
<b>Training and support</b>					
Deliver training to all housing staff on how RI enhances service delivery and the role that they play. Training to be jointly delivered with NMT to include the wider community engagement activities undertaken by that team	Sept 2012	Develop change	HRIM NMT HOM	All housing staff trained	
Develop a residents training programme	Apr 2013	Develop change		Programme in place. Increase in individual and group capacity	
Develop a training evaluation database	Sept 2013	Feedback	HRIM	Database in place	
Introduce annual appraisals for residents who are part of a formal RI group	April 2013	Develop change	HRIM	Annual appraisals in place	
Review Expenses policy - fit for purpose and takes account of the new	Sept 2012	Develop change	HRIM	New policy in place	

Action	Target Date	Feedback / Develop change / Scrutiny	Who	What will look good like and how will it be measured?	Update
methods of involvement					

**Key to action plan abbreviations**

HRIM      Housing Resident Involvement Manager  
HPPM      Housing Performance and Projects Manager  
HOM        Housing Operations Manager  
RI          Resident Involvement  
PI          Performance Indicators  
NMT        Neighborhood Management Team

## EXETER CITY COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY 6 MARCH 2012

#### STREAMLINING OF BRING BANK SITES

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To examine a proposal to streamline the bring bank operation, in order to focus on materials that are not collected from each home, release resources to improve the cleanliness and appearance of the bring sites, and improve the efficiency of the service.

#### 2. BACKGROUND TO THE BRING BANK COLLECTION

- 2.1 Glass bring banks are the only method of capturing household glass recyclate as it cannot be co-mingled with the other recycling materials and processed through the ECC Materials Recycling Facility, due to contamination and safety considerations arising from glass shards.
- 2.2 There are 72 bring sites throughout the city, providing separate banks for green, clear and brown glass; keeping the colours apart achieves the highest sale value, with clear glass being the most valuable.
- 2.3 In addition to the glass banks, 28 of the sites also have paper banks and 22 have mixed cans/plastic/card banks. The provision and servicing of these banks is an additional and questionable cost when householders have kerbside collections for an unlimited amount of these materials each fortnight.
- 2.4 The vast majority of the paper, card, plastics and cans are collected via the kerbside system, whereas approximately 5.0% of these materials come from the banks.
- 2.5 The new collection vehicle acquired in May 2011 records the weight of material from each bank as it is emptied, as well as the number of collections per site, which gives an accurate record of bank usage.

#### 3. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

- 3.1 Analysis of the data recorded by the collection vehicle (kg/container/lift) highlights the relatively low tonnage collected from the cans/plastic/card banks and many of the paper banks, as described below.

##### **Mixed cans/plastic/card banks**

- 3.2 From May 2011 – Feb 2012 there were only 31 tonnes of cans/plastic/card collected from 22 banks. This is an average of only 70 kg per collection, (compared to the 5500 tonnes collected from the kerbside during the same period). This low tonnage is a reflection of the bulky and light-weight nature of the mix that fills up the banks making regular collections a costly necessity. It is predicted that the removal of the banks will divert much of this material to the kerbside collection or trade recycling.
- 3.3 Approximately 1 day a week (50 days/year) is allocated to collecting this material from the banks. This does not represent efficient use of the driver's time which could

be more usefully deployed on other tasks currently done by an agency worker, (eg cleaning wheeled bins for re-use, delivering bins at busy times and covering for staff on the shop floor of the MRF).

### **Paper banks**

- 3.4 There are 28 sites with paper banks, and like the collection of mixed plastic/cans/card it is uneconomical to continue supporting this at many sites where the tonnages are low, especially as paper is also collected from the kerbside in the co-mingled collection. However it makes sense to retain paper banks where significant tonnages are collected such as supermarkets and other popular shopping areas (e.g. Sainsbury's, Tesco, Morrisons, Co-op (North Street), Holman Way (Topsham), Magdalen Road, Pinhoe Surgery and Cowley Bridge Road).
- 3.5 Shredded paper can be processed more effectively through bring banks and continuing to offer paper banks at the main sites would be economical as well as providing an outlet for shredded paper recycling. If shredded paper is put into the green wheeled bin or box it will not be rejected by the collection crews but much of the value will be lost as it 'falls through' the belt system in the MRF.

## **4. FINANCIAL SAVINGS**

- 4.1 An estimated revenue saving of £5600 per annum together with a one-off saving of up to £10,000 can be derived from removing the mixed can/plastic/card banks and reducing the paper banks as shown below:
- reduction in wear and tear on the collection vehicle of up to 15%, approximately £600;
  - reduction in fuel costs between 15% -20%, approximately £2000;
  - releasing an operative to replace agency costs for 50 days/ year, saving approximately £3,000
  - the redundant banks can be refurbished and reused thus reducing the demand for new banks, making a one off saving of up to £10,000.

## **5. IMPLEMENTING THE CHANGES**

- 5.1 To fully inform the public about the removal of banks it is proposed that a series of posters are attached to the bins that will be removed. This will be a 'count down' campaign stating that the bin will be removed in 4 then 3 weeks, etc. with further information on alternative sites for the paper and reminders that paper/cans/plastic/card can be collected from the door-step. Phone numbers for ordering additional recycling containers at home will also be on the posters.

## **6. OTHER BENEFITS**

- The driver will save approximately half a day each week by reducing the number of paper banks and it is proposed that this time is used for a bank cleaning programme. Maintaining cleaner banks may encourage greater participation from the public.
- The number of visits/glass bank is also being reviewed as part of this process to avoid unnecessary visits, from which a further time saving is expected to accrue.
- The space released from removal of the banks can be used to increase the spread of textile banks and possibly other bank types (either under ECC/DCC's contract with Wilcox Textile Recycling or by Charities supplying their own banks)

- The redundant banks can be used for additional glass banks and used to reduce the collection frequency and improve the capability to cope with the peaks in recycling that occur during the Christmas period.
- Further 'drinks carton' recycling containers could be deployed but there is a cost for emptying any additional banks imposed by the company that collects the cartons (this would not be covered by the recycling credit received for the tonnage collected from these banks and so would incur a cost to the Council) but could be off-set by part of the estimated £5600 savings derived; this will be given further consideration.

## **7. SUMMARY**

- 7.1 Removing the bring banks for mixed cans/plastic/card will make approximately £5,600 revenue savings and up to £10,000 capital savings, and removing the low-usage paper banks will enable the driver to maintain the remaining sites to a high standard and help encourage greater public participation in glass recycling.

## **8. RECOMMENDED**

That Scrutiny Committee – Community:

- 1) Support the proposal to streamline the bring bank operation and increase the range of banks for recyclates that are not collected from homes.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT

S:PA/LP/Cttee/312SCC1

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

**Background papers used in compiling this report:**

None

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**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY**  
**6 MARCH 2012**

**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**  
**STEWARDSHIP TO DECEMBER 2011**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Members of any major differences, by management unit, between the original budget and the outturn forecast as at the 31 December 2011 in respect of the Housing Revenue Account.

**2. STEWARDSHIP TO 30 DECEMBER 2011**

- 2.1 During this period the total budget variances indicate that there will be a net surplus of £1,665,990 which will be transferred to the HRA working balance at 31 March 2012. This represents an increase of £1,166,600 compared to the budgeted reduction to the working balance of £499,390. It is estimated that the working balance will stand at £5,082,541 at 31 March 2012.
- 2.2 The main variations by management unit are detailed below:

	£
<b>2011-2012 ESTIMATED TRANSFER FROM THE WORKING BALANCE</b>	<b>499,390</b>
<b>85A1 MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>(106,850)</b>
<p>Savings have been made in respect salary costs which include staff vacancies and a nil pay award for 2011-12. These savings have been off set by additional agency staff to cover both maternity leave and long term sickness.</p> <p>There are savings in respect of the new cleaning contract, which have been partially offset by a reduction in service charges, and additional savings in respect of travel expenses and the support service recharge for C and E Administration.</p> <p>There is a reduction in the Supporting People funding from Devon County Council, and there are some additional costs in respect of the transfer of tenants to temporary accommodation to enable repairs to be completed for fire and water damage.</p>	
<b>85A3 SUNDRY LANDS MAINTENANCE</b>	<b>7,000</b>
<p>There is an estimated reduction in expenditure for initial cultivations offset by a reduction in service charge income.</p>	

**85A4 REPAIRS FUND CONTRIBUTION** (1,241,990)

An additional £40,000 is required in order to carry out necessary Legionella testing work and £200,000 for work on void properties. This has been offset by reductions in service contracts for gas and central heating, communal area fire alarm testing, door entry systems and extractor fan maintenance.

The Revenue Contribution to Capital expenditure has been reduced by £1.24m due to a reduction in the outturn forecast in respect of the housing capital program. The majority of the shortfall will be carried forward to 2012/13.

**85A8 RENTS** (415,000)

It is forecast that additional rent from council dwellings of £405,000 will be collected during the financial year. This is due to a combination of factors, which include; a reduction in the number of council properties sold under the Right-to-Buy scheme and loft conversions and property extensions have resulted in certain dwellings attracting a higher rental income. The rent increase was also higher than the original budget due to the effect of rent convergence in 2015/16.

Upon a change of tenancy, the opportunity is also taken to amend the rent charged to Government guideline rent levels, which will help to accelerate rent convergence with other public sector housing bodies. This has also contributed to the higher than budgeted level of rent collected.

A further £10,000 additional income is expected to be received in respect of garages

**85B1 GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY**

The subsidy payment we make to the government has been increased for 2011/12 12,850

**85B2 INTEREST** 78,000

It is estimated that there will be a reduction in income from investment interest due to lower than budgeted interest rates.

**2011-2012 THIRD QUARTER FORECAST INCREASE TO THE WORKING BALANCE** (1,166,600)

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 That the Scrutiny Committee – Community note the content of this report

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - FINANCE

ACTING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - HOUSING & CONTRACTS

S:PA/LP/Cttee/312SCC3  
23.2.12

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)  
Background papers used in compiling this report - None



**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT STEWARDSHIP  
2011-2012**

**APRIL 11 TO JUNE 11**

Code	Approved Annual Budget	Current Outturn Forecast	Variance To Budget
	£	£	£
85A1 Management	2,865,390	2,758,540	(106,850)
85A3 Sundry Lands Maintenance	266,190	273,190	7,000
85A4 Repairs Fund Contribution	9,324,720	8,082,730	(1,241,990)
85A6 Capital Charges	0	0	0
85A8 Rents	(16,117,210)	(16,532,210)	(415,000)
85B1 Government Subsidy	4,284,210	4,297,060	12,850
85B2 Interest	(123,910)	(45,910)	78,000
85B4 <b>Variance in Working Balance</b>	<b>(499,390)</b>	<b>1,166,600</b>	<b>1,665,990</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Working Balance</b>	<b><u>1 April 11</u></b>	<b><u>31 March 2012</u></b>	<b><u>£ 5,082,541</u></b>
	<b>£ 3,915,941</b>		<b>£</b>

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## EXETER CITY COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY 6 MARCH 2012

#### COMMUNITY SERVICES STEWARDSHIP TO 31 DECEMBER 2011

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises Members of any material differences by management unit to the revised budget.

#### 2. STEWARDSHIP TO 31 DECEMBER 2011

- 2.1 The current forecast suggests that net expenditure for this committee will decrease from the revised estimate by a total of £187,560 after transfers to and from reserves, which represents a variation of 1.7% from the revised estimate.

- 2.2 The main variations by management unit are detailed below:

<b>2011-12 REVISED ESTIMATE</b>	£ 10,929,770
<b>81A1 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION</b>	(66,610)

There will be a saving on staff costs as a result of a vacancy which will not be filled, and two casual vacancies which have now been filled.

Additional savings are expected to arise on equipment purchases and various administrative costs. In addition, a reduced recharge from the Business Support unit (see 1A3 below) will further reduce the net cost of the unit.

An increase in the net cost of dealing with stray dogs will partially offset these savings.

<b>81A2 CLEANSING SERVICES</b> (see separate operational accounts)	200,000
-----------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

Fleet costs in both the domestic and trade refuse collection services are expected to exceed the estimates mainly due to the increased price of diesel, the additional mileage to Greendale waste transfer station, and the costs of maintaining the fleet.

In addition to fleet costs, the closure of the waste transfer station in Exeter has resulted in additional labour costs for handling and transporting street sweepings.

Waste disposal costs for the trade refuse service are expected to exceed the estimates. This is partially offset by increased income from trade refuse customers and the sale of recyclates collected by the trade recycling service.

Income from doorstep bulky collections is expected to be less than the estimates. The subsidised scheme was successful, but the subsidy money has now all been used.

The cost of producing and distributing information about refuse collection and garden waste services has been charged to this service. This exceeds the budget available but is offset by a corresponding saving on communication costs in the Recycling management unit (81B6) below.

These increased costs are further offset by net income from the garden waste collection service in excess of the estimates, and reduced electricity costs in public toilets.

**ACTION POINTS :**

- The 2012/13 estimates reflect the increase in the cost of waste disposal, and the charges to customers for trade refuse have been increased to reflect this rising cost.

**81A3 LICENSING, FOOD, HEALTH & SAFETY (6,400)**

A refund has been received in respect of a software package relating to earlier years leading to an underspend.

Following several successful prosecutions by the Commercial Team, the costs incurred in bringing about the prosecutions have been awarded to the authority by the courts.

Reduced costs in the Business Support unit will be refunded to other services within Environmental Health and this is reflected in the outturn forecasts for those units.

The net cost of taxi licensing will be funded by a transfer from the earmarked reserve.

**81A4 PUBLIC SAFETY 0**

The restructure of this unit, following the necessary period of notice and consultation, was implemented later than expected when preparing the estimates, leading to an overspend in respect of pay in the unit.

Income from the Supporting People subsidy is expected to be less than included in the estimates, while income from the Home Call Alarm service is expected to exceed the estimates.

A partial refund of service charges paid for the Control Room in 2010/11 is expected to result in a saving.

**ACTION POINTS:** Staffing is now at the level anticipated in the estimates so no further action is required. The estimates for the Supporting People subsidy and Home Call Alarm income have been reviewed in the 2012/13 estimates.

**81A6 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**  
(see separate operational accounts)

17,210

Works required to maintain the Flowerpot Skate Park are expected to lead to an overspend. In addition, the findings from the annual safety inspection of play equipment will result in expenditure on repairs in excess of the estimates.

Water costs in the allotments are expected to exceed the estimates as a result of the dry weather conditions experienced. In addition, the cost of emptying toilets and maintenance in the allotments is expected to exceed the estimates as a result of increased use.

The operational accounts are expected to show reduced expenditure for grass cutting as a result of the weather conditions experienced this year.

The planned deletion of a post in the Countryside service was not implemented until later than expected when preparing the estimates, leading to increased pay costs. This is however more than offset by various cost savings and additional income in this service.

A post has been transferred from Leisure Services Management (81B1 below) increasing the pay costs in this unit.

Arboricultural costs are expected to exceed the estimates.

Utility and insurance costs in parks and playing fields are expected to exceed the estimates.

Expenditure on dealing with illegal campers is expected to be less than estimated.

These additional costs are partially offset by reduced recharges from the Community & Environment Administration and Leisure Management services.

**ACTION POINTS :**

- Staffing in the Countryside service is now at the level anticipated in the estimates so no further adjustment is required.
- A proposal to replace the Skate Park and one of the paddling pools has been included in the capital estimates for 2012/13.

**81A7 MUSEUMS SERVICE**

(28,170)

There will be a saving on staff costs as a result of the restructuring of the service agreed by Executive in January 2011. The grades established for a number of posts by the Job Evaluation exercise are lower than the budgeted grades, but in some cases pay protection will apply.

Savings are also anticipated on transport costs with expenditure

	<p>on Car mileage allowances and fleet hire costs expected to be less than the budget.</p> <p>Reduced recharges from the Community &amp; Environment Administration service will arise due to vacancies in that service.</p> <p>These savings will be partially offset by the agreed extension in the contract of the Head of Museums to the end of March 2012, increased overtime costs due to vacant posts, and anticipated expenditure on additional temporary staff.</p> <p>The marketing and exhibition costs in respect of the museum launch have been included. In addition, costs have been incurred in respect of external legal advice and insurance costs allocated to this service exceed the estimates.</p>	
<b>81A8</b>	<b>SPORTS AND LEISURE FACILITIES</b>	56,820
	<p>Several unexpected contractual liabilities have arisen increasing the cost of this service. In particular, the government's withdrawal of the carbon reduction rebate and increased utility prices will lead to a reduction in the income from Parkwood. In addition, the cost of some equipment and essential electrical work has been incurred.</p>	
<b>81B1</b>	<b>LEISURE SERVICES MANAGEMENT</b>	0
	<p>All staffing and other costs in this unit have now been transferred to the Sports and Leisure Facilities and Grounds Maintenance units. These salaries and the resulting reduction in recharges from this unit to those services have been reflected in their respective outturn forecasts.</p>	
<b>81B2</b>	<b>BEREAVEMENT SERVICES</b>	(15,000)
	<p>Savings have arisen on staffing costs as a result of a restructure. Further net savings have arisen on various costs.</p> <p>However, Income levels are not expected to achieve the levels included in the estimates, partially offsetting these savings.</p>	
<b>81B3</b>	<b>PROPERTIES</b>	(4,280)
	<p>Additional rental income is anticipated. Insurance costs will be less than estimated.</p>	
<b>81B5</b>	<b>SPORTS &amp; PLAY DEVELOPMENT</b>	(14,230)
	<p>This service ceased with effect from 1st August 2011.</p> <p>Savings have been made on pay, transport and support service costs. However additional expenditure on supplies and services will partially offset these savings.</p>	
<b>81B6</b>	<b>RECYCLING</b>	(390,000)

(see separate operational accounts)

Income from the sale of recyclates continues to exceed the estimates and the cost of freight remains less than estimated. While the prices at which materials are currently being sold exceed those assumed for the estimates, the volatility of these prices makes it difficult to predict the outturn.

Freight costs and gate fees in the operational service are expected to be less than estimated.

There will be a saving on communication costs in this service as the cost of producing and distributing information about refuse collection and garden waste services has been charged to Cleansing Services (81A2) above.

The vehicle used to collect materials from recycling bring banks throughout the city was replaced during the year. The proceeds of sale have been credited to this unit, and maintenance costs of the new vehicle are less than the estimates.

Recharges to Cleansing Services have arisen as a result of operatives within this unit assisting with handling and transporting street sweepings and leaves. This will further reduce the net cost of this service.

**81B9 ADMINISTRATION SERVICE**

0

There will be a saving on staff costs as a result of a vacancy which will not be filled. This is reflected in the outturn forecasts of the units which use the service.

**81C2 ADVISORY SERVICES**

130,800

A number of Private Sector Leaseholders will not be renewing their leases this year as due to the economic climate they need to live in the properties themselves. Under the terms of the lease ECC have an obligation to make repairs to the properties before handing them back and these costs are expected to reach £16,000 by the end of the year.

In addition to this there has been a higher than expected number of void periods within the PSLs and in addition each void has had a higher than average amount of works required in terms of cost and volume. This issue is to be investigated however due to delays in invoicing from the main contractor we have only recently received the billing for these works and additional time is required to understand the invoice amounts and challenge costs where appropriate.

There has been a high level of turnover on the units at Shauls Court, this has resulted in the costs of repairing and cleaning the vacated units being significantly higher than budgeted.

At Glencoe there has been a large amount of water penetration into one of the larger rooms caused by damaged roof tiles. This has created significant damage requiring major works to rectify

and a reduction in income due to the room having to remain vacant during this time.

In addition two rooms were taken out of use in order to complete major works to refurbish. These rooms were out of action for 87 days which led to an unpredicted loss of revenue of £7,200.

The Homelessness Grant from central government was increased allowing £44,000 of additional funding to be used to prevent homelessness.

At the point of budget setting we expected to receive the full contract value of ECC's Supporting People contract with Devon County Council to provide supported temporary accommodation to homeless families. However, following budgetary reductions made by the County Council we have been advised that we will only receive 75% of this contract value for 2011/12. We have chosen to continue providing the same level of support to these families so they are not disadvantaged, however if further cuts are made for 2012/13 we will have to reconsider our position.

**81C3 STRATEGIC HOUSING & ENABLING (5,000)**

A saving is forecast within the salary budgets due to a combination of vacant posts during the first six months of the year and the recent team restructure. The overall savings have been partially offset by redundancy costs.

**81C4 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING (76,440)**

Savings have arisen as a result of the termination of the contract for the Pan-Devon Home Improvement Agency. Further savings have arisen as a result of changes to staffing in the unit.

It was previously reported that there would be a reduction in income from licences for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) compared with the estimates, but this income is now expected to achieve the level originally estimated.

**81C5 SUNDRY LANDS MAINTENANCE 0**

There are no material variances to report.

**81C6 CONTRACTS AND DIRECT SERVICES 0**

The costs of this unit are fully recharged to its clients, and there is therefore no direct impact on this committee. However, it has been necessary to employ additional staffing resources to cover increased workloads in some areas which will be recharged as appropriate.

**81C7 DIRECTOR – COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT 0**

There are no material variances to report.



<b>2011-12 EXPECTED FINAL OUTTURN</b>	<b>10,728,470</b>
<b>EXPECTED VARIANCE ON TRANSFERS TO / (FROM) RESERVES</b>	<b>13,740</b>
<b>EXPECTED TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>10,742,210</b>

### **3. RECOMMENDED**

That Scrutiny Committee – Community note this report.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FINANCE

S:PA/LP/Committee/312SCC3  
23.2.12

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)  
Background papers used in compiling this report - None

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BUDGET PER BUDGET BOOK	SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGETS AND VIREMENTS	NOTIONAL CHARGES***	REVISED BUDGET	MU CODE	MANAGEMENT UNIT (MU) DESCRIPTION	OUTTURN	OUTTURN VARIANCE 31.12.11
£	£	£	£			£	£
559,750	(1,540)	35,960	522,250	81A1	ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	455,640	(66,610)
3,863,760	(27,750)	612,790	3,223,220	81A2	CLEANSING SERVICES	3,423,220	200,000
360,040	0	14,170	345,870	81A3	LICENSING, FOOD, HEALTH & SAFETY	339,470	(6,400)
798,820	20,800	122,650	696,970	81A4	PUBLIC SAFETY	696,970	0
2,007,860	14,710	299,950	1,722,620	81A6	GROUND MAINTENANCE	1,739,830	17,210
2,256,740	9,100	255,920	2,009,920	81A7	MUSEUMS SERVICE	1,981,750	(28,170)
511,100	2,810	389,940	123,970	81A8	LEISURE FACILITIES	180,790	56,820
2,810	(2,810)	0	0	81A9	NON-CONTRACTED SPORTS FACILITIES - MERGED WITH 81A8	0	0
0		2,450	(2,450)	81B1	LEISURE SERVICES MANAGEMENT	(2,450)	0
305,200	0	23,690	281,510	81B2	BEREAVEMENT SERVICES	266,510	(15,000)
27,890	0	4,330	23,560	81B3	PROPERTIES	19,280	(4,280)
78,500	0	10	78,490	81B5	SPORTS & PLAY DEVELOPMENT	64,260	(14,230)
481,740	(5,220)	179,330	297,190	81B6	RECYCLING	(92,810)	(390,000)
0		3,610	(3,610)	81B9	ADMINISTRATION SERVICE	(3,610)	0
971,120		15,470	955,650	81C2	ADVISORY SERVICES	1,086,450	130,800
268,700		4,450	264,250	81C3	STRATEGIC HOUSING & ENABLING	259,250	(5,000)
351,060		8,080	342,980	81C4	PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING	266,540	(76,440)
77,960		0	77,960	81C5	SUNDRY LANDS MAINTENANCE	77,960	0
0		27,820	(27,820)	81C6	CONTRACT & BUILDING SERVICES	(27,820)	0
0		2,760	(2,760)	81C7	DIRECTOR COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT	(2,760)	0
<b>12,923,050</b>	<b>10,100</b>	<b>2,003,380</b>	<b>10,929,770</b>		<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>10,728,470</b>	<b>(201,300)</b>

\*\*\* Includes:  
 Capital Charges  
 IAS 19 Pension Costs

VARIANCES ON TRANSFERS TO / (FROM) EARMARKED RESERVES	
- 81A3	13,740
OUTTURN AFTER ADJUSTING FOR MOVEMENTS ON RESERVES ETC	<b>10,742,210</b>
REVISED BUDGETS	<b>10,929,770</b>
<b>ADJUSTED OUTTURN VARIANCE</b>	<b>(187,560)</b>

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