

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE

Statement of Decisions

Tuesday 22 January 2013

Present:-

Councillor Peter Edwards (Chair)
Councillors Denham, Hannaford, Mrs Henson, Martin and Sutton

Also Present

Chief Executive, Strategic Director (KH), Assistant Director City Development, Assistant Director Economy, Assistant Director Housing and Contracts, Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, Corporate Finance Manager and Member Services Manager

Minutes

(Minute 1)

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 November and 4 December 2012 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

Declarations of Interest

(Minute 2)

No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

2013/14 Council Tax Base and NNDR1

(Minute 3)

The report of the Assistant Director Finance was submitted seeking approval to set the 2013/14 Council Tax base in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012. The report also sought approval to delegate to the Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) the Council's estimate of Business Rate Income (NNDR1) for the next and following financial years for subsequent circulation to all Members.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Exeter City Council as its tax base for the year 2013/14 shall be 33,820; and
- (2) responsibility to approve the Council's NNDR1 return by 31 January 2013 is delegated to the Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer).

Housing Rents 2013/14

(Minute 4)

The joint report of the Assistant Director Finance and the Assistant Director Housing and Contracts was submitted recommending a rent and service charge increase from 1 April 2013 for Council dwellings and garages.

The report was submitted to the Scrutiny Committee – Community on 15 January 2013 and the support and comments of members were noted.

Executive welcomed the introduction of self-financing of the Housing Revenue Account in April 2012 which enabled the Council to retain rents for investment in its housing stock. Members noted that the Government was keen for local authorities to continue working towards the social rent policy, whereby convergence with housing associations would be achieved by 2015-16. Rents would then follow the same formula as for housing associations; currently an increase of RPI + 0.50% per annum.

Members commented that the convergence with housing association rents had been on-going over a long period and requested officers to monitor the increases in housing association rents and the current position on rents regulation.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) rents of Council dwellings are increased from 1 April 2013, by an average of 6% which includes a general inflationary increase of 3.1% together with the phased introduction of the Government's rent restructuring proposals; and
- (2) service charges are increased by 3.1% with the exception of the following charges:-
 - 2.5% increase in respect of cleaning communal areas in line with anticipated rises in cleaning contract costs
 - 0% increase in respect of communal electricity at Weirfield House
 - 0% increase in respect of water at Magdalen Gardens
 - 14% increase in respect of heating at Toronto House due to rise in consumption and gas costs (heating system programmed to be replaced during 2013-14)
- (3) garage rents are increased by 3.1%; and
- (4) the Assistant Director Housing and Contracts be requested to report to Scrutiny Committee - Community in due course about rent levels charged by other registered housing providers and the position on rents regulation.

Tackling Homelessness

(Minute 5)

The report of the Assistant Director Housing and Contracts was submitted updating members on the flexibilities created by changes to Homelessness legislation made as part of the Localism Act.

The Assistant Director Housing and Contracts reported that the Localism Act permitted local authorities to meet their homelessness duty by providing good quality private rented homes. Whilst this was a beneficial opportunity, its success depended on the supply of suitable properties and it was unlikely that the offer of private rented accommodation could be made to all homeless applicants due to an insufficient supply of suitable properties. It was proposed to make the majority of offers through the EXtraLet scheme.

The report was submitted to the Scrutiny Committee – Community on 15 January 2013 and the support and comments of members were noted including their concern that the offer of short term tenures of private sector properties to homeless persons, should be made only to appropriate and willing recipients.

Executive noted the proposed standard stating that children up to 10 years of age could share a bedroom, regardless of gender, and queried whether this applied to extended families and whether the age limit was too high. The Assistant Director Housing and Contracts agreed to feed back this comment and review the appropriateness of the existing standard for Council stock.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the use of the new flexibilities in relation to the Council's homelessness duty be approved as proposed in the report, subject to further consideration of the standard relating to the upper age limit at which children of opposite gender could share a bedroom;
- (2) the views set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report be supported; and
- (3) officers be requested to monitor the use of the flexibilities and report back to Scrutiny Committee – Community in 12 months time.

Vacant Student Accommodation

(Minute 6)

To consider the report of the Assistant Director Housing and Contracts seeking approval to negotiate a lease on two blocks of student accommodation (96 bedspaces in total) for use as additional short term housing options for single people and couples, managed partly through the Council's EXtraLet scheme and partly as leased temporary accommodation.

Whilst members were disappointed to note the over-supply of purpose-built student accommodation for the University, they welcomed the opportunity to increase the supply of social rented housing in the city for the benefit of applicants on the housing register. Members were pleased to note the intention that the scheme would be cost-neutral to the Council. Mindful of any impact on local residents, members sought reassurance that the units would be offered to suitable tenants, rather than chaotic or high needs homeless applicants. The Assistant Director Housing and Contracts accepted the importance of effective management of the properties and agreed to report back to Scrutiny Committee – Community six months after the scheme becomes operational.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the negotiation of a 10 year lease on both Bonhay House and King Edward Studios be approved, subject to the variation of the Section 106 agreement and to the schemes being cost-neutral to the Council;
- (2) the Assistant Director City Development, in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee, be requested to agree a variation of the Section 106 agreement on King Edward Studios;
- (3) the accommodation should be used mainly for properties managed under the EXtraLet scheme with the remaining properties being used as temporary accommodation to prevent homelessness; and
- (4) a report be made to Scrutiny Committee – Community approximately six months after the scheme becomes operational, reviewing demand for the units, management/tenant issues and costs.

East Devon Local Plan Development Plan Document - Consultation

(Minute 7)

To consider the report of the Assistant Director City Development seeking to formulate a response to the "Proposed Submission" document that is being published by East Devon District Council. Members were reminded that Executive had approved a response to the Consultation Draft Local Plan in February 2012 since which time an amended version of the Local Plan 2006-2026 had been submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination.

Executive acknowledged that the economic prosperity of the sub-region was inextricably linked to the growth of the City and emphasised the need for key infrastructure investments. They were particularly concerned about the implications of the village green application at Eastern Fields on the capacity of the double mini roundabouts in Pinhoe. This might form a development constraint to other development in East Devon around Pinhoe such as further development beyond 600 homes to the north of Blackhorse and beyond the 450 homes permitted north of Pinhoe. They also reiterated the importance of the Tithebarn Lane Link Road (the phase three access strategy) to serve wider development in the West End and requested that these concerns be reflected in the response to East Devon District Council.

Councillor Hannaford expressed an interest as a member of the Devon County Council Development Control Committee.

Members noted that the proposed approach was supported by Planning Member Working Group on 8 January 2013.

Executive resolved that the City Council's response to East Devon District Council is based upon the following five principles:

- (i) support for the overall development strategy and the commitment to development growth east of Exeter, particularly the provisions for economic development;
- (ii) welcoming the commitment to large scale housing development in the West End but seeking additional 'reserve' provision north of Blackhorse on land that has previously been identified as deliverable;
- (iii) the City Council's commitment to ongoing joint working and cooperation between the authorities and other service providers to deliver comprehensively planned sustainable communities that help to fully realise the sub-region's growth potential;
- (iv) a commitment to work closely with East Devon and other service providers on respective infrastructure delivery plans; identifying and agreeing funding arrangements that seek to maximise the early provision of essential infrastructure; and
- (v) the importance of the proposed Tithebarn Lane link road to serve further development of East Devon's West End and the need for a satisfactory outcome of the Village Green application at Eastern Fields to avoid the double mini roundabouts in Pinhoe becoming a greater constraint to further development.

Draft City Centre Strategy for Exeter 2013 - 2022

(Minute 8)

To consider the report of the Assistant Director Economy updating members on preparation of a new City Centre Strategy to cover the period 2013/22.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy considered the report at the meeting on 17 January 2013 and the support of members was noted. The Assistant Director Economy drew Executive's attention to the comments of the Committee. These covered a range of matters including: the impact of internet sales on high streets, the importance of a mix of national and

independent retailers, the significance of a range of generations on evening culture and the potential for “taxi marshalls”.

Executive welcomed the draft Strategy for consultation. The Portfolio Holder Economy and Tourism emphasised that the Strategy was very much a partnership document, rather than solely in the ownership of Exeter City Council and that the involvement of stakeholders was crucial to its success. The Portfolio Holder Business Transformation and Human Resources stressed that the delivery of a City Centre Business Improvement District remained a critical element of providing the necessary resources for achieving desired progress during the 5 year period.

Executive approved the draft City Centre Strategy as the basis for public engagement and consultation with key stakeholders.

Civic Properties - Sustainable Development Proposal

(Minute 9)

The report of the Assistant Director Housing and Contracts and the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support was submitted informing members of the decision taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council to install photovoltaic arrays on four Council roof areas. The decision was taken under delegated powers as a matter of urgency in order that installation could take place prior to the further reduction of the Feed-In Tariff for new projects in April 2013. The aim was to help reduce carbon emissions, meet pledges made as required by the Climate Change Act, demonstrate a culture of carbon awareness as well as providing an on-going reduction in the Council’s energy costs.

The Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support reported that tenders had been received that day and were within budget. It was projected that the installation would generate an income of approximately £900,000 over a 20 year period. It was planned to donate the existing wind turbines on the roof of the Civic Centre to a renewable energy consultancy which educates children about sustainability.

Executive supported the proposal and welcomed a further contribution towards the Council’s low carbon footprint.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the actions of the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, as detailed in the report, be noted; and
- (2) further opportunities for sustainable photovoltaic arrays on Council assets be explored where schemes provide a similar return and are sought by Property Managers.

Appointment of Representatives to serve on Outside Bodies

(Minute 10)

The schedule of appointments to outside bodies was circulated.

Executive recommended to Council that Councillor Hannaford, Portfolio Holder Housing and Community Involvement, be appointed to the Royal Devon and Exeter Healthcare NHS Trust.

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

(Minute 11)

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

Future Role and Funding of the Growth Board Delivery Team

(Minute 12)

The report of the Strategic Director was submitted setting out a proposal for supporting the Growth Point delivery team for the next three years.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the major changes that have taken place since the Growth Point was first designated be noted;
- (2) the significant added value that the Growth Point Team brings to the delivery of the strategic developments in the City and the West End of East Devon be recognised; and
- (3) the proposal to provide core funding of up to £80,000 per year for the team for the years 2013 to 2015 be endorsed, ensuring provision for progressing green infrastructure projects; the City Council's contribution to be funded from the New Homes Bonus.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.35 pm)

The decisions indicated will normally come into force 5 working days after publication of the Statement of Decisions unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. Decisions regarding the policy framework or corporate objectives or otherwise outside the remit of the Executive will be considered by Council on 26 February 2013.

24 January 2013