

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE

Statement of Decisions

Tuesday 18 June 2013

Present:-

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

Also Present

Chief Executive & Growth Director, Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Director Environment, Assistant Director City Development, Assistant Director Housing and Contracts, Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, City Centre Manager, Projects and Business Manager and Democratic Services Manager (Committees)

Minutes

(Minute 52)

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 19 March and 9 April 2013 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

(Minutes 53)

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

Revision of Environment Enforcement Policy

(Minute 54)

The report of the Assistant Director Environment was submitted, informing Members of the revisions made to the Enforcement Policy to reflect changes created by Government guidance and the revised structure of the directorate. The proposed revised policy ensured that enforcement actions were fair, consistent and transparent.

In response to a Member, the Assistant Director Environment advised that he would liaise with Devon County Council Trading Standards Service regarding the control and checking of meat substitutes.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Community and Maintaining Assets advised that he would ask the Chair of the Exeter Board for the issue of checks for meat substitutes to be placed on an agenda.

Scrutiny Committee – Community considered the report at its meeting on 28 May 2013 and the comments of members were noted.

Executive approved the Environment Enforcement Policy.

Commercial and Environment Support Team Statutory Service Plan 2013/14

(Minute 55)

The report of the Assistant Director Environment was submitted, seeking approval for the adoption of the Commercial and Environment Support Team Statutory Service Plan 2013/14. The Statutory Service Plan sets out the Council's regulatory function in respect of food safety, health and safety, licensing, Environmental Permitting and other statutory functions over the forthcoming year.

Scrutiny Committee – Community considered the report at its meeting on 28 May 2013 and the comments of members were noted.

Executive recommended to Council that:-

- (1) the Statutory Service Plan 2013/14 be approved; and
- (2) the Assistant Director Environment be authorised to change the Statutory Service Plan in the light of centrally issued guidance and/or to meet operational needs.

Downsizing Incentives for Council Tenants

(Minute 56)

Councillor Fullam declared an interest as an employee of Sanctuary Housing.

The report of the Assistant Director Housing and Contracts was submitted, seeking Members' agreement to amend the existing downsizing scheme for tenants to help mitigate the impact of the recent welfare reforms.

Members were advised that the Welfare Reform changes would have an impact on 326 families of working age renting Council properties although tenants not of working age would not be affected. The options that the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Community and Maintaining Assets, in conjunction with officers, had considered were outlined. The Assistant Director Housing and Contracts updated Executive on the recommendation from Scrutiny Committee – Community regarding the discretionary payment of removal funds.

Members discussed the requirement for the Downsizing post, the role the officer would take in helping Council tenants and the need to assess the position after the initial 12 months.

The Assistant Director Housing and Contracts clarified the role of the Downsizing Officer post which was for a fixed term of 12 months, this post would be active in helping tenants to downsize, matching tenants should they wish to exchange properties and explore all the options available to tenants that express a desire or need to move.

Scrutiny Committee – Community considered the report at its meeting on 28 May 2013 and the comments of members were noted including the addition to the recommendation that the removal fund be operated at the discretion of the Assistant Director Housing and Contracts.

Executive resolved to:-

- (1) implement an amended downsizing incentive scheme for Council tenants based on option one set out in the report, the removal fund to be operated at the discretion of the Assistant Director Housing and Contracts; and

- (2) introduce a temporary fixed term Downsizing Officer post for 12 months to assist tenants downsizing by identifying the most appropriate properties and giving them support throughout the move.

Christmas Tree Lights Task and Finish Group

(Minute 57)

The report of the City Centre Manager was submitted, setting out key outputs from the work of the Task and Finish Group.

Members were advised that Christmas Lights in the City Centre had been a long- standing issue and the task and finish group had focused on the effective use of Council funds and the need to provide a quality display for the core of the City Centre.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy considered the report at its meeting on 30 May 2013 and the comments of members were noted.

Noting the options and the reasons stated in the report Executive recommended to Council that a budget of £14,500 be allocated for 2013, 2014 and 2015 to provide a core display of Christmas Lights.

Low Average Earnings in Exeter

(Minute 58)

The report of the Deputy Chief Executive was submitted, bringing to Members attention the issue of low wages across Exeter and the potential impact this had on both the local economy and citizens across the City.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy considered the report at its meeting on 30 May 2013 and the comments of members were noted including the setting up of a Task and Finish Group to look at ways to address the low wage economy.

During discussion Members raised the following points:-

- the reason many people move to Exeter is because it's a pleasant area of the country to live and not because of the wages
- whilst not everyone working in the city were on a low wage; there are a lot of residents who do not earn enough to purchase their own property
- there was a balance to be found between low wages, taxation and the complicated benefits system
- concern that wages were lower in Exeter than other parts of the South West
- there was the impact of the rising cost of living to consider
- the need to attract new businesses to Exeter and how wages costs impact on this.

The Portfolio Holder Economy and Culture put forward a proposal to establish a Forum, to be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture and with members from Scrutiny Committee - Economy, to consider the impact of low wages and high cost of living on Exeter residents and identify strategies to address these issues. This Forum would invite representatives from the University, Local Businesses and Community Groups to come along to give views and evidence.

This was seconded by Councillor Hannaford.

A Member raised concerns regarding the effectiveness and purpose of a Forum and that there were limitations as to what it could actually achieve.

The majority of Executive Members supported the establishment of a Forum to take forward the impact of low wages and high cost of living on Exeter residents.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the contents of this report and the potential impact on citizens and the wider economy be noted; and
- (2) a Forum be established, to be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture and with members from Scrutiny Committee - Economy, to consider the impact of low wages and high cost of living on Exeter residents and identify strategies to address these issues.

Proposal for an Exeter Health and WellBeing Board

(Minute 59)

The report of the Assistant Director Environment was submitted, proposing a new single board to address improved health and wellbeing outcomes, and reduce health inequalities in Exeter, which had strong links with the new health and wellbeing landscape recently introduced by national legislation. This single board would be an evolution of and succession to the current two tier Social Health and Inclusion Partnership (SHIP), and mirror the make up of the Devon Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Assistant Director Environment advised on the proposed membership of the Exeter Health and Wellbeing Board which would reflect the strategic nature of its work.

Executive welcomed the establishment of this Board which would help to improve health and wellbeing across the City.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the establishment of an Exeter Health and Wellbeing Board be agreed in line with the draft terms of reference outlined in this report to succeed the two tier Social Health and Inclusion Partnership;
- (2) the makeup of the membership of Board be agreed as specified in Section 4 of the report;
- (3) 3 City Councillors to be appointed sit on the Board; and
- (4) make a request to Devon County Council to appoint the Chair of Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, together with an Exeter Board Member on to the Board, to replace the 3 Devon County Councillors currently appointed to SHIP.

Tackling Social Housing Fraud

(Minute 60)

The report of the Assistant Director Housing and Contracts was submitted, seeking approval to participate in a new Devon-wide approach to addressing the issue of social housing fraud.

Members welcomed this robust approach to unauthorised sub-letting whilst recognising the need to be sensitive to any occupants who may have entered into a tenancy in good faith unaware that the property was being sub-let without permission.

Executive resolved that the opportunity for Exeter City Council to join the Devon Social Housing Fraud Fund and take a more robust approach to tenancy fraud be welcomed.

Exeter St James Neighbourhood Plan

(Minute 61)

The report of the Assistant Director City Development was submitted, informing Members about the outcome of the Exeter St James Neighbourhood Plan referendum and seeking Members' agreement to ask Council to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan as part of the statutory development plan.

RESOLVED that Executive offers its congratulations to Exeter St James Forum for their success in the referendum and agrees the decision statement attached as Appendix A to the report; and

Executive recommended to Council that it adopts the Exeter St James Neighbourhood Plan as part of the statutory development plan.

Exeter Energy Network

(Minute 62)

The report of the Assistant Director City Development was submitted, advising Members of the final outcomes of the detailed feasibility study into the potential for District Energy in Exeter. It asked for approval to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with other stakeholders to prepare a business case for District Energy and recommend a preferred structure for an Energy Services Company to deliver the network.

Executive resolved to agree that Exeter City Council continue to support the project with officer time, sign the Memorandum at Appendix 2 of the report and request that a report is brought back to Executive at such time a business case and assessment of the need for public sector involvement has been prepared and soft market testing has been undertaken.

Councillors Pensions

(Minute 63)

The report of the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support was submitted, seeking to agree a response to the Department for Communities and Local Government's Consultation Paper on pensions for Councillors and other elected local office holders.

Members were advised that the Department for Communities and Local Government were seeking the views of interested parties, including Councillors, on access by Councillors and other elected local office holders to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) which would come into force in April 2014. The Government's preferred option proposed the exclusion of Councillors and other elected local office holders from membership of the scheme.

In response to a Member, the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support advised that any payments made to date would be fully protected.

Executive resolved to:-

- (1) confirm its preference for Option 3: No change to the current arrangements, in accordance with the Council's policy and for the reasons set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report;

- (2) confirm the view that there should be no change in the Councillors' contribution rate which should remain at the current rate of 6%; and
- (3) request that a response to the consultation paper on access by Councillors and other elected local office holders to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) be sent to the Department for Communities and Local Government as set out on recommendations (1) and (2) of the report.

New Home Bonus - Local Infrastructure Funding - Application by Newcourt Community Association to vary a condition of grant

(Minute 64)

The report of the Projects and Business Manager was submitted, seeking Members' authority to vary a condition of the grant awarded to Newcourt Community Association (NCA) and to agree that in future conditions of grant could be varied under delegated powers, so that it was not necessary to bring such matters to Executive unless the Chair of the Major Grants and New Homes Bonus Panel so required.

Executive resolved that condition 12 of the New Homes Bonus grant to Newcourt Community Association be varied to allow up to £2,000 of the revenue element to be released for legal fees in advance of the transfer of the community building to the Council; and

Executive recommended to Council that authority to vary conditions of grants from the New Homes Bonus Local Infrastructure Fund be delegated to the Assistant Director City Development, in consultation with the Chair of the Major Grants and New Homes Bonus Panel.

Membership of Committees

(Minute 65)

Council on 23 April 2013 agreed that the Audit and Governance Committee should comprise 11 members and not include members of the Executive.

In accordance with this provision, Councillor Brock had been nominated as a member of the Audit and Governance Committee to replace Councillor Fullam who is a member of Executive.

Executive recommended to Council the replacement of Councillor Fullam with Councillor Brock on the Audit and Governance Committee.

Appointment of Representatives to serve on Outside Bodies

(Minute 66)

The schedule of representatives on outside bodies was circulated.

Executive resolved that:-

- (1) the following appointments be agreed:-

City Centre Management Partnership – Councillor Newby to replace Councillor Mrs Henson

Exeter Canal and Quay Trust – Councillor Crew to replace Councillor Bull

Exeter Fairtrade Steering Group - Councillor Donovan to replace Councillor Leadbetter;
and

(2) existing representatives continue to serve on those bodies set out on the schedule.

Executive recommended that appointments to Exeter Health and Wellbeing Board be agreed by Council.

Urgent Item - Changes to Portfolio Holders Titles

(Minute 67)

The Leader advised of minor changes proposed to clarify Portfolio Holders titles and responsibilities. A paper was circulated – attached to minutes.

Executive resolved that the necessary changes to the constitution in respect of the Portfolio Holders titles and responsibilities be noted.

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

(Minute 68)

Executive resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board Minutes

(Minute 69)

Executive resolved that the minutes of the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board of 30 April 2013 be noted.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.48 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 16 July 2013.