

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE

Statement of Decisions

Tuesday 1 October 2013

Present:-

Councillor Peter Edwards (Chair)
Councillors Denham, Fullam, Hannaford, Mrs Henson, Owen, Pearson and Sutton

Also Present

Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Director Economy, Assistant Director Environment, Acting Assistant Director Finance, Projects and Business Manager and Democratic Services Manager (Committees)

Major Grants and New Homes Bonus Panel

The minutes of the meetings of the Major Grants and New Homes Bonus Panel held on 13 September 2013 were submitted.

The Projects and Business Manager updated Members on the recommendations of the Panel and the position with regards to the Citizens Advice Bureau Rent Grant depending on confirmation of the move to the Civic Centre.

Executive Members welcomed the significant investment in community initiatives enabled by the use of the New Homes Bonus Local Infrastructure Fund and acknowledged the huge voluntary effort which made these projects viable.

Members discussed the impact of the proposals currently out for consultation for a proportion of the New Homes Bonus funding to be allocated to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), what impact this would have on the City Council's ability to fund community projects and the need to ensure that the City Council was in a position to come forward with projects to apply for funding from the LEP.

Executive resolved that the minutes of the Major Grants and New Homes Bonus Panel held on 13 September 2013 be received and, where appropriate, adopted.

Overview of the General Fund Revenue Budget 2013/14

The report of the Acting Assistant Director Finance was submitted, advising Members of the overall projected financial position of the General Fund Revenue Budget and Housing Revenue Account after three months, for the 2013/14 financial year. The Service Committees showed an overspend of £378,990 against a revised Service Net Expenditure budget of £12,223,520.

In response to a Member, the Acting Assistant Director Finance advised that the main variance in the Housing Revenue Account was due to additional funding required for Phase 2 of the Council Own Build Programme, which had been previously approved by the Executive.

Members welcomed the improvements undertaken in Cowick Street and the installation of solar panels on the Civic Centre. They discussed the need to scrutinise the trends of sundry

debts figures over a five year period; the kitchen and bathroom programme and to invite external contractors to address Members through a Members briefing. It was also felt that Executive should have an overview of the Housing Benefits situation particular in relation to the backlog of applications and progress towards the February 2014 deadline for the claiming of subsidy from the Government.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the installation of the solar panels had generated a savings of approximately 40% in electricity usage at the Civic Centre and that the Council would looking to install solar panels on other suitable council buildings.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Customer Access proposed an additional recommendation that a detailed report on the Housing Benefit situation addressing the backlog of applications and February 2014 deadline be brought to the next Executive. This was agreed.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at its meeting on 18 September and the comments of the Members were noted.

Executive recommended that Council notes and approves:-

- (1) General Fund forecast financial position for the 2013/14 financial year;
- (2) HRA forecast financial position for 2013/14 financial year;
- (3) additional supplementary budgets listed in Appendix C of the report;
- (4) the outstanding Sundry Debt position as at June 2013; and
- (5) creditors' payments performance. and

Executive resolved that a report on the Housing Benefits situation be placed on the agenda of the next Executive.

Capital Monitoring Statement to 30 June 2013

The report of the Acting Assistant Director Finance was submitted, reporting on the current position in respect of the Council's revised annual capital programme and advising Members of the anticipated level of deferred expenditure into future years.

Members were asked to approve an urgent request for an additional sum of £36,000 to complete essential resurfacing of Leighton Terrace car park. The works were necessary to ensure that the car park could continue to operate and comply with Health and Safety Regulations.

The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that, as a result of this valuation, the Council had updated its estimates process.

Members discussed the wider issue of the tendering and procurement process within the City Council and the need to ensure that small local businesses were not precluded from tendering for Council Projects. The Chair suggested that the tendering and procurement process could be an issue for Scrutiny Committee – Resources to scrutinise.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Customer Access expressed disappointment that the scheme to help bring empty properties back into use had been withdrawn due to lack of interest from landlords. The Acting Assistant Director Finance would clarify if these funds would have to be given back to the Government.

The Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture advised that the scheme to replace the running track at Exeter Arena had been deferred to take account of the weather conditions required for works to be undertaken.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at its meeting on 18 September and the comments of the Members were noted.

Executive recommended that Council notes and approves the current position in respect of the annual capital programme and requested to approve an urgent request for an additional £36,000 to complete the resurfacing of Leighton Terrace car park.

Revision of Asbestos Policy

The report of the Assistant Director Environment was submitted, seeking approval of a revision of the Asbestos Policy.

Members were advised that the Council Asbestos Policy was approved in 2008 and the review of the policy had been undertaken to ensure the policy met current regulations and aligns with the organisational structure.

In response to a Member, the Assistant Director Environment clarified that the policy was necessary to ensure that asbestos in Council owned property was actively managed in accordance with regulations and Health and Safety Guidance.

Scrutiny Committee – Resources considered the report at its meeting on 18 September and the comments of the Members were noted.

Executive resolved that the Asbestos Policy and management arrangements held within it be approved.

Recording of Council Meetings

The report of the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support was submitted, seeking consideration of the possibility of allowing the recording of all Council and its committee meetings.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised on the new requirements on Local Authorities with regards to Public Access to meetings which included a statement to require reasonable facilities for any member of the public to report on meetings. To allow this to occur at the earliest opportunity, and in compliance with Standing Orders, Executive would need to recommend to Council the removal of Standing Order 30. Members were updated on the proposal for the use of Social Media at Committee meetings.

Executive welcomed the positive way forward of allowing the recording of meetings. They noted the convention with regards to the use of social media by Councillors during meetings and instructed officers to draw up the necessary protocols to protect the wishes of members of the public during the recording/filming of meetings of the Council and its committees.

Executive recommended that Council:-

- (1) remove Standing Order number 30, so as to allow for the recording of the Council's meetings and the constitution be amended accordingly; and

Executive resolved to:-

- (2) note the convention with regards to the use of social media by Councillors during meetings; and

- (3) instructs officers to draw up the necessary protocols to protect the wishes of members of the public during the recording/filming of meetings of the Council and its committees.

Exeter Science Park Centre

The joint report of the Assistant Director Economy and Acting Assistant Director Finance was submitted, seeking approval for an additional support measure in the form of a loan facility to enable the Science Park Centre and Exeter Science Park to make progress against the prevailing difficult economic background.

Members were updated on the background to the development, the proposal to take forward the Exeter Science Park and the financial implications for the Council.

Executive Members welcomed the progress being made with respect to the Science Park and recognised the importance of the park to the future economic growth of the city and surrounding area.

Executive recommended that Council approve the provision of a loan facility to Exeter Science Park Company Limited on the terms as set out in the report to enable the development of phase one of the Science Park Centre to progress.

(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 15 October 2013.