

EXETER BOARD

Thursday 17 July 2014

Present:-

Exeter City Council

Councillors Baldwin, Branston, Robson and Sutton

Devon County Council

Councillors Foggin, Hannaford, Hannan, Hill, Leadbetter, Morse, Owen, Prowse and Westlake

Associate Members

Simon Bowkett (Exeter CVS)

Also Present

Partnerships and Policy Development Officer, Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer, Housing Performance and Projects Manger, Assistant City Development Manager (Planning), Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (HB)

Also Present

Vicki Worthington - ExeTRA

1

APOLOGIES

These were received from Angela Pedder, Geoff Pringle and Sharon Taylor.

2

CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR

In accordance with the agreement that the Chairmanship and Deputy Chairmanship should alternate annually between the City and County Councils, it was

RESOLVED that:-

(1) Councillor Leadbetter be appointed Chair for 2014/15; and

(2) Councillor Sutton be appointed Deputy Chair for 2014/15.

3

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 APRIL 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2014 be taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4

FUNDING SUB GROUP

RESOLVED that:-

(1) the Chair, Deputy Chair, Councillors Baldwin, Hannaford, Owen, Prowse and Westlake serve on the Funding Sub Group; and

(2) the next meetings of the Sub Group be held on 30 July and 2 Sept 2014.

5

OPEN FORUM

Electric Car Charging

Mr Ives spoke on the difficulties he had experienced at trying to use the various electric car charging points throughout the City. He had found that, at three charging points in the City, the Guildhall Car Park, outside the Civic Centre and at Matford Park and Ride there had been petrol/diesel cars parked continuously, with Council vans re-charging at the latter two. Further, although the Government had allocated money for the provision of charging units, such as at main line railway stations, he had been informed by the manager of the St David's Railway Station that there were no plans to provide such a unit at present.

The Chair advised that clarification would be obtained on the use of the Council's charging points and of any proposals for unit installation elsewhere in the City,

St. Thomas Church, Cowick Street and Library in Cathedral Yard

The following responses, in italics, were provided to questions put by Paul Gibbons:-

1 St Thomas Church, Cowick Street has applied for Heritage Lottery Fund support. What are the two councils doing to support this?

No approach has been made to either Council. The Church could apply to the City Council's Major Grants and New Homes Bonus Panel, subject to future plans including use by the wider community. The churches in the St Thomas Parish are St Thomas, St Andrews and Emmanuel, the latter in use by the Riverside Church. It was suggested that plans for St Thomas could be part of an holistic approach to the future planning for all three churches.

2. The Law Library in Cathedral Close adjacent to the Devon and Exeter Intuition is a Grade I listed building and is owed by a private individual. Can it be used for tourism ?

The property was in private ownership and the Council was not in a position to take it on for tourism purposes.

6

EXETRA PRIVATE TENANT PROJECT

Councillor Hannaford introduced issues relating to private sector renting and the difficulties being experienced in the City by many tenants, referring also to the recent eviction of 40 tenants from a property in Bartholomew Street. Government ministers had been lobbied on the need for stricter regulations for this sector and he welcomed the Exeter CVS backed ExeTRA project.

The Chair welcomed Vicki Worthington who enlarged on the ExeTRA scheme, established earlier this year to offer support to private tenants by signposting to advice services and campaigning to achieve policy and cultural change in the way people live in the private sector. It was estimated that 21% of Exeter's residents were in the private sector, many in disputes with landlords, paying large fees even before moving in, with some 46% paying rent that was classified as "unaffordable rent". The average occupancy of a property was 12 months which had implications for social cohesion and community building as well as for the tenants themselves such as children's education etc.

Simon Bowkett referred to the National Private Tenants Organisation, now called Generation Rent, which also lobbied the Government and encouraged and supported a network of local groups such as ExeTRA. The growth in the private renting sector from 14% to 21% in recent years made the development of a strategic approach vital.

The Chair thanked Vicki Worthington and advised that the ExTRA grant request of £3,000 for a project officer to develop and deliver an education outreach programme on private tenants' rights to the Funding Sub Group.

RESOLVED that the grant application be referred to the Funding Sub Group.

7 **WEED TREATMENT - REFERENCE BACK FROM DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL CABINET**

On 14 May 2014, Devon County Council Cabinet noted that this Board at its meeting on 28 April 2014 (Minute 43) and in considering a report on the Weed Spraying Programme for 2014/5 in Exeter and the outcome of the Payback Community trial in 2013/14, had resolved that *'in view of the cost and other benefits, the Cabinet be requested to finance three annual weed sprays (and not just one) for an additional approximate cost of £22,000, to be funded from surpluses within the City's On Street Parking Account'*. The Cabinet had **RESOLVED** that, the views of the Joint Board be noted, but it be advised that use of On-Street Parking income in this way was not permitted under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Weed spraying had been reduced from three to one a year but there had been a delay in confirming the County Council works order to the City Council for weed control on footpaths for early June. As a result, the planned use of herbicide which had to be undertaken at the correct time of year and plant growth (that is spring or autumn) was impractical as the efficacy of herbicide would be extremely limited. Arrangements had been made with community groups and local businesses to undertake weed pulling in some areas of the City and County Council Highways Inspectors had arranged similar work by deploying Community Paybacks schemes. Liaison between City and County Council staff, before September, was vital to ensure the correct timetabling of weedspraying for the autumn.

In addition to the aesthetic value of removing weeds, uncontrolled growth was a danger to pedestrians, particularly the elderly, as long grass and weeds could hide bumpy footpaths, cracked pavements etc.

RESOLVED that the County Council's Neighbourhood Highway Manager attend the September Board meeting to update Members on arrangements for the autumn weed spraying.

8 **DEVON YOUTH SERVICE PROPOSED LOCATION OF EXETER HUB**

Devon County Council Cabinet on 11 June 2014 had resolved to retain eight area based Youth hubs with one to be identified for Exeter. As part of this decision, it had also resolved to invite this Board to advise the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills on the most appropriate site/location/venue for the proposed Exeter Hub, having regard to any expressions of interest received from Community Groups and views of interested parties in the City.

Following on from this decision, a briefing had been held for Exeter Members of the Board for a full understanding of the issues and options. It was apparent that the provision of a single youth hub for the City was unacceptable and that at least two youth hubs should be created for Exeter, one for the west of the City and one for the east at the Phoenix Club, Wonford. In addition, it was considered that, with the loss of two remaining youth centres, it would be necessary to create a Youth Strategy for Exeter in order to ensure as strong a youth service as possible for the City as a whole, including those areas currently served by the 100 Club and the Knight Club.

Members were supportive of the proposed way forward. They referred to the enormous contribution made by youth workers in the City especially for vulnerable youngsters and children from difficult backgrounds both at home and in school and those living in deprived areas of the City. There was a real concern that the reduction in youth centres could have a negative impact on young people in Exeter. A Member referred to correspondence from the Wonford Neighbourhood Police Team suggesting that the closure of the local youth centre would lead to a significant increase in anti social behaviour in the area. He also referred to the outreach work of the Youth Service as well as work in schools. He supported the creation of youth hubs in the east and west of the City and the development of a City wide Youth Strategy, including those areas currently served by the Knight Club and the 100 Club.

Members felt that Exeter, with different needs and geography to the County's rural hinterland, did not fit the suggested Cabinet model for Devon which proposed single, area-based Youth Centre Hubs for the major urban areas such as Exeter, Barnstaple, Tiverton etc. Although a single hub would be appropriate for other Devon towns, it would be inadequate for Exeter. A city centre hub location was not supported as it was felt that youngsters identified more with their local areas and problems associated with the city centre's late night economy could present issues for some parents.

The proposed Youth Strategy would need to encompass new housing developments, reference being made to the recent successful provision of a community centre at Newcourt. The involvement of other community groups and interested parties, churches and charities would be an important element to be addressed by the strategy as would a mapping exercise on location/use of properties and community assets in the City across both Councils. Work should also ensure the effective targeting and support for the most vulnerable young people. In moving a motion to proceed on the basis of the above discussion, it was suggested that a working group of County Council and City Council Members and Officers be established, subject to the support of the County Council's Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Westlake and **SECONDED** by Councillor Owen, and

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) Devon County Council be recommended to establish two youth hubs in Exeter, one at Westside and the other at the Phoenix Centre, Wonford;
- (2) in order to facilitate and promote the provision of youth services across the City, including at the Knight Club and the 100 Club, Devon County Council be requested to work with Exeter City Council to establish a Youth Strategy for Exeter; and

- (3) a Working Group be established comprising Members and Officers of Devon County Council and Exeter City Council to progress the Youth Strategy.

9

PROTECTION OF TREES

Councillor Hannaford referred to the loss of trees experienced at Flowerpot Fields, Cowick Street, Manor Road Orchard, Exe Bridges, Fore Street and Wardrew Road and, more recently, South Street opposite the newsagents. Many were the result of developers/residential occupiers failing to consult properly with the local authority or simply disregarding Orders. The latter works had been undertaken by the County Council because of shallow and dangerous roots disrupting pavement slabs and creating a safety hazard.

The Assistant City Development Manager explained the background to local planning authority control on works to trees. The Council applied a consistent scoring system and landowners were required to provide the Local Planning Authority with six weeks prior notification of their intention to carry out works to trees within a Conservation Area. There were presently 477 TPO's in force with 32 area orders, 240 group orders and 51 woodland orders. It was important to strike the right balance and the intention of the system was only to protect trees with significant public amenity value. He would take on the Councillor's comments and undertook to ensure appropriate future consultation.

Other Members referred to tree planting undertaken recently in the City including the Millennium Wood at Topsham and to the County Council policy of replacing a lost tree by two trees somewhere in the City. The Chair suggested that this practice should be adhered to with regard to the loss of the South Street tree

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

10

HOUSING STRATEGY - EXETER

The Housing Performance Manager reported that the City Council was producing a Housing Strategy and had recently consulted on the form and content. From this exercise, it had been evident that data on housing need and demand in the City was very limited.

As knowledge of demand was necessary to develop the strategy, the University of Exeter had been commissioned to undertake a study to measure need not recorded on the Housing Register and to understand the housing issues and problems of Exeter's citizens. A report would be made available by the end of the year. The Housing Strategy would help the Council deliver its aims of meeting housing needs, reducing carbon emissions and supporting Exeter's communities and neighbourhoods.

Councillor Hannaford advised that the Strategy was wide ranging, including planning and housing policies and covering all of the City's housing, not just the Council's stock. He referred to a report to the City Council's Executive on 15 July 2014 reviewing the Council's allocation of social housing which was now out to consultation.

A Member referred to the condition of Jubilee Court in Queen Street inspected by herself and a City Councillor who had written to the Chief Executive of Westward Housing Association highlighting the residents' concerns relating to cleanliness etc. but was still awaiting a response. It was noted that issues could be raised with Housing Associations at the regular Exeter Homes Partnership hosted by the City

Council and that the regulations for Housing Associations were set by the Homes and Communities Agency.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

11 **FEEDBACK FROM MEMBER REPRESENTATION ON MULTI AGENCY GROUPS**

(a) Vision Partnership

The Board noted the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014.

(b) Exeter Health and Well Being Board

The Board noted the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2014.

12 **DATES OF MEETINGS 2014/15 AND FUTURE BUSINESS**

(a) Board Meetings – all at 6.00pm

Thursday 25 September 2014 (County Hall)

Tuesday 15 November 2014 (Civic Centre)

Tuesday 15 January 2105 (Civic Centre)

Thursday 28 April 2015 (County Hall)

Thursday 23 July 2015 (Civic Centre)

Thursday 24 September 2015 (County Hall)

(b) Future Business

(i) University of Exeter – Role in City

(ii) Mapping Exercise on location/use of properties in the City

(iii) Economic Development

(iv) Transition Town Exeter and Economic Development Strategy

(v) Exeter Cultural Strategy

(vi) Exeter Respect

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.38 pm)

Chair