

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY

3 March 2016

Present:

Councillor Brimble (Chair)

Councillors Lyons, Brock, Bull, Harvey, Henson, Prowse, Robson, Vizard and Williams

Apologies:

Councillors Branston and Wardle

Also present:

Assistant Director Public Realm, Corporate Manager Property, Principal Accountant Service (PM), Events, Facilities and Markets Manager, City Arts and Events Manager and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (SLS)

In attendance:

Councillor Rosie Denham	- Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture
Councillor Rachel Sutton	- Portfolio Holder City Development
Steve Barriball	- Chief Executive, Exeter Citizens Advice Bureau
Richard Cox	- Project Manager, Environment Agency

15 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2016 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

A Member referred to the current procedural arrangements, which included the minutes of the previous meeting being ratified at Council. He advised that he had not received information on the Rugby 7's. The Democratic Services Officer would ensure that the information was made available to the Member as requested.

16 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable interest were made.

17 Exeter CAB Presentation - Economic Well Being Survey

Steve Barriball, Chief Executive of Exeter Citizens Advice Bureau, CAB, presented the results of the second Economic Well-Being Survey, predominantly completed by clients in January 2016. He also provided a comparison with the first survey carried out in September 2015, which was conducted in partnership with the Express & Echo, Radio Exe, the Exeter Chamber of Commerce and Exeter City Council.

He set out the key findings and offered a direct comparison between the surveys covering the following areas:-

- income
- expenditure levels
- concern of debt
- main borrowing figures

- job satisfaction, and
- date of the last pay rise

One of the key findings from those clients who had completed the survey was a growing concern from 56% of clients who had commented on debt and it was important to ensure that strategies were in place for clients to manage this. They anticipated running a further survey later in the spring to establish if there was a growing trend and include details of any pay rise. They also hoped to include more detail from participants including age and gender as well as work with their partners to promote the findings. Steve Barriball responded to Members' questions to consider looking beyond the client group to expand the audience base to the wider population, and it was likely that the feedback to questions would differ between the age groups, particularly in relation to pay. The next steps would include follow up work on participation, additional press work, analysis by age and gender and a further survey in late spring.

The Chair and Members thanked Steve for the presentation and for the valuable work carried out by the Bureau.

18 **Update on the Exeter Flood Defence Scheme**

Richard Cox, Project Manager with the Environment Agency attended the meeting and provided an update on the Exeter Flood Defence Scheme and the work to strengthen the flood defences to protect properties at risk of a 1 in a 100 year flooding event. He referred to the 2,300 domestic properties and 1,000 commercial properties that would be at risk. The works included:-

- Phase 1 – the completion of 'In Channel' works south of Trew's Weir and the modification of the Trew's Flood Relief Channel including the creation of a wetland habitat.
- Phase 2 - would raise the standard of flood protection with raised defences and gates. Tenders for the construction contract were due to be awarded, with site works due to commence in May with completion of the project by Summer 2018. The work would be undertaken in two parts with 'in channel' works and a raising of the flood defence level, including clay embankments or a demountable wall or gate, as appropriate.

There had been a greater focus on consultation with excellent communication with the public and businesses, in an effort to mitigate the potential for disruption and impact on the road network and the many services that run underground and along the river corridor. Every effort would also be made to keep disruption to a minimum including the impact on the local population, natural environment and wildlife. He also referred to the demountable defences which would directly protect over 300 properties. This effective tool as a first line of flood defence would be in the care and operation of Exeter City Council with trained staff coordinating the placement of the demountable boards under the guidance and support of the Environment Agency. The boards would be kept locally, and an annual practice exercise would be held.

The total cost of the project was £32.5m, with sizeable contributions of £3m from both Exeter City Council and Devon County Council, £1.5 which was being negotiated with South West Water and over £25m of Environment Agency funding from Central Government. He referred to the importance of communication and the valuable partner cooperation and he welcomed any suggestion, as to how the City Council would like to be kept informed over the next two years. A Member reported

on the success of a recent drop-in session on the project and also referred to the importance of an effective communication and social media strategy to offer details of progress and forthcoming work. Richard Cox agreed that they would ensure that more messages were spread through social media as well as by more traditional means of communication such as the Express and Echo.

The Chair thanked Richard Cox for the presentation.

19 **Update on the Waterways Strategy**

The Assistant Director Public Realm provided a verbal update on the Exeter Waterways Strategy and referred to the September 2015 and March 2015 meetings of Scrutiny Committee - Economy when Members considered the way forward for the future management of the waterways, which included working with the Canal and River Trust.

The first meeting of the Exeter Waterways Advisory Board took place in November, with a further meeting in February to support the Council in developing a strategy for the waterways.

The Canal and River Trust were invited to explore the potential for future working with the Council following the meeting in September and they also gave a presentation at the Civic Centre last month to invited stakeholders, which was well received. They were currently seeking approval from their Board to allocate resources to undertake due diligence on the risks and rewards of future joint working. They anticipate completing this work in the next six to nine months and would bring forward a proposal to Members.

At Executive on 9 February, provisional powers were granted to enable the City Council as the Harbour Authority to adopt new powers under the Harbours Act 1964 to make Harbour Directions to enable improved management of the Estuary and Canal. The Council would need to undertake consultation on these Harbour Directions. They have continued to work with colleagues at East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils in relation to continuing work as part of the Greater Exeter Visioning Board and agreed to investigate options for a Joint Harbour Authority for the River Exe.

Given the demands on the team in pursuing these issues, the proposed Waterways Strategy would be deferred in favour of an Action Plan, which would address the operational issues that require attention in the interim.

Members noted the progress made.

20 **Parking Strategy 2016 - 2026**

The Assistant Director Public Realm presented a report which sought the adoption of a new Parking Strategy for the period 2016 – 2026. This would provide a new strategic approach to the parking services provided by the Council, with a focus on four key objectives of economic growth, parking capacity, congestion and maintaining parking income. The Consultant's work had also enabled a number of Member Spotlight Review meetings to be held and also deliberate over the consultant's findings and contribute to the final Strategy. Four main objectives were identified and would be addressed in the accompanying Action Plan, including decisions on the specific interventions set out in the Plan, which would also take account of new initiatives such as Exeter City Futures and the Council's aspirations for carbon reduction.

The Assistant Director Public Realm responded to the following Members' comments:-

- following a suggestion of a 'smart' or 'intelligent' pricing model, she confirmed a report would be brought forward and include a future pricing model and review of the tariffs to the September meeting of Scrutiny Committee - Place.
- the Action Plan had identified a number of physical changes, including signage, and lighting in relation to the parking estate, and that would include the Cathedral and Quay Car Park.
- opportunities to reduce anti-social behaviour would be explored.
- every effort would also be made to actively promote evening car parking to compliment the further development of the evening economy offer, and that might include a more segregated market approach including attended car parking.
- the new parking ticket machines offered a greater choice of paying for parking including card, phone, pay on foot and cash. Other opportunities such as future consideration of a pre-payment card, rather like an oyster card may be developed and could also include other transport across the city. The ticket machines did not give change, but any overpayment, offered additional parking in real time.
- the electric charging bays were not particularly well used, and technology was moving at such a fast pace, and even mid-range electric cars now had a far greater charge range, and any further capital investment should take account of this.
- Exeter had achieved a 'Park Mark' and had the market standard of at least 5% of parking for disabled users across the city, although not necessarily in every car park. Charging for disabled parking would be included in the forthcoming review of parking tariffs.
- the only comparison of car park charges with other cities was in relation to tariffs.
- it was acknowledged that the Variable Message Signs (VMS) system did not always offer drivers the most accurate detail of car park availability and the Action Plan proposed improvements that would need to be negotiated with Devon County Council.

A Member also commented on the partnership improvements set out in the Action Plan and suggested that would require greater cooperation and capacity in relation to the bus operations in the city.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy recommended Executive approval of the following:-

- (1) the adoption of the Parking Strategy 2016 – 2026 and that work commenced towards the delivery of the actions set out in the Strategy's Action Plan; and
- (2) an additional recommendation that the Parking Strategy and accompanying action plan be reviewed in 12 months' time and take account of proposals such as the Exeter City Futures.

21 **South Street/Corn Exchange Regeneration Proposals**

The Corporate Property Manager presented a report which sought approval to commence a review of South Street and the Corn Exchange block in the city and initial funding to resource the projects. South Street remained an important part of the city, but there was also the potential to develop the area as a bridge between the city centre and Exeter Quay. It was important to plan the future of the area through a

comprehensive assessment of the areas' constraints and opportunities and link to the City Centre Strategy. It was acknowledged that the process of renovation would take a number of years, but it was also hoped that some quick wins could be identified and delivered in advance of the plan, through consultation with local business and residents.

Councillor Denham attended the meeting and spoke under Standing Order 44 and appreciated there were would be many valid questions from those residents and businesses in the locality. The consultation should guide the needs of the local and wider community and pick up any potential areas of concern. It was anticipated that a Steering Group would be established and include a range of stakeholders to help drive the work, which would commence after the forthcoming local elections in May.

The Corporate Manager Property and Councillor Denham responded, as appropriate, to Members' comments:-

- the initial stance was not to be too prescriptive over the boundary of the review areas but it was acknowledged that this was an opportunity to take a comprehensive approach to connect the Cathedral area, the city centre and the Quay.
- one of the early tasks would be to look at ways in which to design out anti-social behaviour as it was acknowledged this had an effect on the wider community. Councillor Denham referred to the levels of anti-social behaviour. It was intended that a number of initiatives such as the new Homelessness Strategy and work with partner organisations would manage such behaviour more effectively. The Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, Superintendent Sam de Reya from Devon and Cornwall Police was also committed to delivering a renewed drive.
- a range of stakeholders including local residents and businesses would be invited to take part at an early stage of the consultation process.
- the City Council was the landlord of the British Homes Stores building and KPMG had been working on a nationwide review of their stores, and this could be seen as a further opportunity to include in the review area.
- the request for £75,000 would enable the process to be initiated, by funding the public consultation as well as include urban design, valuation and legal work to progress the project to the point of formulating a masterplan for any future development.

Members also made the following comments for consideration:-

- this was a once in a generation opportunity that would enable the aspirations for the area to be realised.
- every effort should be made to help local business in their long term planning and future investment.
- the future devolution of the business rates framework be explored in the context of options for new and existing business.
- a new market beneath the Corn Exchange.
- that every effort be made to continue to work with the traders to promote the unique cultural and independent character of Fore Street and similarly boost South Street and build on the ideal of what could be achieved.
- the bus link between the city centre and the Quayside should be improved as this was vital to bridge the movement of people to enjoy the riverside and canal area.

Members were in agreement that it was fundamentally important to ensure that there was cross political party unity on this matter which was essential for the long term economic and cultural future of the city centre.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the report and requested Executive to recommend approval by Council of an initial resource of £75,000 to progress the commencement of a review of South Street and the Corn Exchange block.

22 **Budget Monitoring report to 31 December 2015**

The Principal Accountant advised Members of any major differences by management unit to the outturn forecast for the first nine months of the financial year up to 31 December 2015. The current forecast suggested that net expenditure would decrease from the approved budget by a total of £1,029,704 after transfers from reserves and revenue contributions to capital. This represented a variation of 104.36% from the approved budget and included a supplementary budget of £837,460, which had already been approved by Council. He provided details of the variations and these were also detailed in the circulated report. The current Capital Programme was detailed in an appendix to the report, with a total spend of £2,246,887 in the first nine months of 2015/16 with £398,098 of the programme potentially deferred to 2016/17.

A Member welcomed the rollover of the £50,000 funding allocation for Alphington Village Hall and although confident about the programing, appreciated that it would not be delivered by the end of the year. A Member also referred to the expenditure of the Rugby World Cup and it was noted that a report detailing this had been presented to the January meeting of this Committee. The Principal Accountant would ensure that he had obtained all of the detail in relation to the expenditure. In response to a Member's question, he confirmed that there was no dedicated planning solicitor employed by the City Council at present.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the report.

23 **Radio 1 Big Weekend Update**

The City Council's Arts and Events Manager provided an update on the Radio 1 Big Weekend, which would take place at Powderham Castle on the Bank Holiday weekend, 28 and 29 May, from 11.00am until 10.00pm on both days.

Three stages were planned, including a stage celebrating new music, and local performers along with the usual bars and concessions. More information on the process for ticket allocation would be confirmed on the 21 March, with tickets allocated in April. 60% of ticket allocation would be shared equally between residents in Exeter and Teignbridge District Councils living in the EX1 to EX4 postcodes in Exeter, with a 35% allocation to the rest of the South West and 5% of tickets for the rest of the UK. The target market was 16 – 44 years. A small dedicated team from the two Councils and Powderham Castle was working closely in partnership with the BBC and the Emergency Services to develop a safe event. One key piece of work was to ensure that a good transport plan was achieved working with a Transport Group including Devon County Council, SEP Events, bus and rail services, and this included encouraging people to use a Park and Ride based at Exeter Racecourse, shuttle buses from Exeter and Dawlish as well as the train service. They had also been working with Devon County Council to manage issues around traffic flow over the Bank Holiday weekend and fully taking into account roadworks on Bridge Road by developing a plan that aims to avoid Bridge Road. There would be very limited parking on site, with advance bookings required, and no

dropping off facility on the site. They hoped to clear the site within two hours of the event finishing each evening. Other aspects of the event included the planned Academy work with a series of events for those wishing to become involved in the creative and arts industry. The organisers would be working with the two authorities offering a programme of events covering the Teignbridge and Exeter areas on 16 April and 16 May respectively. The Arts and Events Manager had every confidence that this would be a great event.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the report.

24 **Performance Review - The Matford Centre**

The Events, Facilities and Markets Manager presented the report and updated Members on the performance of the Matford Centre, which incorporated the Exeter Livestock Centre, Hussey's vehicle and plant auctioneers, a number of business units, an events concourse, cafe, meeting rooms and extensive outside areas. The report contained details of the centre's improved financial performance with the annual operating surplus increasing from £185,000 to over £500,000 over the last five year period. He confirmed that there had been a 40% increase in livestock throughput at the centre under the present auctioneers and the installation of solar panels and new roof at the Livestock Centre would extend the life of the Centre for at least another 20 years. An update on activity on the site was also presented including details of the bus depot development. The Sunday Market had reopened in January on a reduced scale and this had allowed the centre staff to keep much better control of the event by ensuring that those traders attending the Market were registered in advance.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy requested that their appreciation of the hard work by staff and the report be noted.

25 **Performance Review - Corn Exchange**

The Events, Facilities and Markets Manager presented the report and updated Members on the performance of the Corn Exchange over the last year. The venue was a directly managed facility which hosted a programme of arts and entertainment events as well a number of community and business related events. He referred to the comprehensive and varied arts and events programme, with over 137 such events held in 2015 from a total of 382 events hosted at the venue. The report also included details of the increased income received with annual income in the current financial year set to be more than £820,000 which is almost twice as much as the annual income from five years ago. This increased income meant that the venue should show an operating surplus this year for the first time ever – something quite unusual for this type of facility. One important factor to note was that the Corn Exchange did not receive external funding unlike many other arts venues. Other developments since the last report, included a new box office operation which had improved the booking experience and the outdated web site was due to be relaunched.

Members wished to thank the Events, Facilities and Markets Manager and his team for such a positive report and for creating such an excellent venue for the city. The Chair agreed that the Corn Exchange had been very successful and should continue to have greater economic potential in the future.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the report.

26 **Legacy Leisure Contract Working Group Minutes**

The minutes of the Legacy Leisure Group meeting held on 9 February 2016 were presented for Members' information.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the minutes and, as requested, the terms of reference would be amended to enable ward members to attend when the facility in their ward was being discussed.

27 **Exeter Highways and Traffic Order Minutes**

The minutes of Devon County Council's Exeter Highways and Traffic Order Committee held on 11 January 2016 circulated for information were noted. Member's particularly welcomed the update on the future stance in relation to road closures in the city.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy noted the minutes.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.45 pm

Chair