

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 10 September 2019

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)
Councillors Sutton, Foale, Ghusain, Harvey, Leadbetter, Mitchell, K, Morse, Pearson and Wright

Also present:

Chief Executive & Growth Director, City Solicitor, Director (DB), Director (J-PH), Service Lead Housing Assets and Democratic Services Officer (MD)

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2019, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

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CITYPOINT - PARIS STREET AND SIDWELL STREET REGENERATION

The Director (DB) presented the report on the progress of plans for the wider development of the former Bus & Coach Station and adjoining areas of Paris Street and Sidwell Street and to seek authority for the City Surveyor to take the next steps to progress the redevelopment proposition. There had been substantial work undertaken to move the development forward and the next step would be to enter into a joint ownership and land promotion agreement, to bring the development forward in a comprehensive manner. These agreements were especially valuable during periods of economic uncertainty.

Members were referred to the design plans in the report, noting the proposed developments on the land would include: office spaces, luxury and budget hotels, built to rent housing, retail space, multi-purpose performance venue and the new Civic Centre and Bus Station.

Councillor D Moore, having given notice under Standing Order No.44, spoke on this item. She had submitted three questions relating to city centre business. The Leader provided responses, which are appended to these minutes.

In response to a Member's question, the Chief Executive & Growth Director explained that the advantage of the proposed joint arrangements, would be to ensure that the development would be deliverable. There was the risk, that should any partner organisation decide to back out as a joint partner, then the development would be delayed. Market research testing had identified that there was a great interest from various brands, including blue chip companies to build in Exeter. A joint working practice would support the Council's vision of delivering a high quality development and joint partnership arrangements was considered to be the best approach to move the project forward.

The Chief Executive & Growth Director discussed national funding issues, and that despite these issues, Exeter City Council was continuing to address sustainability and testing working practices, to enable the development of Grade A. office and accommodation space during a period of financial uncertainty.

Members expressed their satisfaction on the progress of the work undertaken and the recommendations to move the development forward.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) The progress to date on bringing forward the Citypoint site be noted; and
- (2) The City Surveyor be authorised, in consultation with the Leader and the Chief Executive & Growth Director, to negotiate and enter into a joint ownership and land promotion agreement with the other main land owners on the site.

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CORPORATE PROPERTY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMPLIANCE

The Director (DB) presented the report, on Corporate Property Compliance which sought approval for funding to achieve the required levels of statutory Health and Safety compliance. He explained that the objectives of establishing the Corporate Property service was to identify and address failures in property Health and Safety compliance. There had been numerous areas of Health and Safety non-compliance and issues identified and that although progress had been made in several areas, the existing approved budgets were insufficient to deliver the proposed work to address the identified risks outlined in the report.

Members were referred to the report, which highlighted the work and the costs involved to deliver the scheme and informed that the recommendations had been developed from the health and safety assessments, undertaken by Corporate Property Compliance.

In response to questions from Members, the Director (DB) explained:-

- The property inspections had been part of ongoing assessments, which had collected results and collated them to form a single piece of work;
- The inspections were undertaken using in-house resources and fire risk assessments. There had been a focus on prioritising spending to challenge the previous issue of under investment in the properties.

RECOMMENDED that Council be requested to approve the £650,000 estimated budget requirement, for undertaking fire risk compliance works that will mitigate the current identified risks to the Council and building users in operational and commercial properties.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

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ADVERTISING AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK ADOPTION

The Director (J-PH) presented the advertising report which sought to trial a single point booking system for existing and new advertising opportunities and to adopt an ethical advertising framework linked to the council's corporate priorities for officers to work to. The report requested approval to allow digital advertising on the remaining city centre screens as part of an existing Devon County Council/Exeter City Council contract. Having a single point system would centralise the advertising opportunities for Exeter City Council and increase the sources of income, commercial opportunities and revenue.

The Director (J-PH) highlighted for Members' attention to the following:-

- The banner advertising, which had limited spaces available could increase revenue to the Council;
- Changes in digital technology to amend agreements in advertising on digital monoliths and digital bus shelters across the city;
- Changes to advertising arrangements in the Exeter Citizen and improvement to the advertisement opportunities.

Members discussed the proposals and welcomed the adoption of an ethical framework, which would allow the Council to have a good balance of advertising in the city and which could be monitored.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves:

- (1) That a single point of advertising booking is established within the Communications, Tourism and Culture team to obtain better value;
- (2) That the responsibility for Citizen Advertising is in-sourced within the existing Communications, Tourism and Culture Team;
- (3) That Exeter City Council will not seek to exploit its position to offer advertising at a cost which undercuts locally available market rates;
- (4) That a report is brought back to council within a year with measurable outcomes, should a permanent resource from created revenue be required;
- (5) That the ethical advertising framework attached to the report presented to the meeting, aligned to corporate priorities, is adopted;
- (6) That officers explore additional income generation opportunities through advertising and sponsorship; and
- (7) That Members approve the joint Devon County Council/Exeter City Council approach to digital advertising in high street locations;

BUSINESS CASE FOR THE REVIEW OF STAFF STRUCTURE IN HOUSING ASSETS

The Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development & Services and the Service Lead Housing Assets presented the report which set out the draft business case for the review and the re-structuring of the Housing Assets service area. Following the appointment of the Service Lead Housing Assets, it had been identified that there were a number of key functions that had been overlooked and a resourcing shortfall to cover the Council's statutory and contractual obligations.

The Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development & Services stated that the proposal to restructure the assets team would follow the Council's Organisational Change Policy.

The Service Lead Housing Assets explained that the restructure Business Case included in the report proposed a new post of Social Housing Delivery Lead which will oversee the delivery of the HRA Development Programme. Furthermore, the Business Case also set out a structure to ensure that all business critical areas were fully resourced including compliance and contract management.

RESOLVED that the Executive agree to the draft proposal for the restructuring of the Assets Team to enable meaningful consultation with affected employees and Trade Unions in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Organisational Change Policy.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.13 pm)

Chair

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 2019.

MEMBER QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER at Executive Committee, Under Standing Order 44 – 10 September 2019

From Councillor D Moore

Response by the Council Leader

Question 1

Over our busy summer holiday, how many city centre businesses welcomed visitors who were not customers to use their toilet facilities and how many of these toilet facilities are fully accessible?

Response 1

The Council Leader explained that the toilet facilities, were not owned or maintained by the Council and consequently there was no available information on their usage. The only way to collect this information would be to individually survey every business in the City and check whether their facilities were fully accessible. The Council would then need to ask the businesses to record who used their facilities and for them to assess whether they thought they were customers or not.

The Council Leader suggested contacting the Business Improvement District (BID) to see if any of their members had records of this information. However the information may be difficult to obtain, due to the issue for stores with multiple floors, in defining who was and was not a customer.

Question 2

With threat of a No Deal Brexit still a real and dangerous risk how much money has the Government seen fit to give to Exeter to manage this and how will the Council allocate these funds?

Response 2

The Council Leader stated that the Council had received £35,000 as an Exit Preparation Grant and were currently confirming whether an additional £28,000 would also be made available. In terms of how the funding would be spent, currently the work of local authorities in Devon was being co-ordinated by Phil Norrey and his team, which all the local authorities were participating in and liaising with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnerships.

This work was informing where the major issues are likely to be and the Council wished to give some funding towards that work which was taking place and that Exeter City Council were currently looking to host some workshops with the Federation of Small Businesses. The Council was mindful that it may be called upon to help out other local authorities who may face acute pressure, such as Ports and that it may be expected to provide temporary support and assume a level of backfill to help out.

Question 3

Would the Leader agree with me that as a city based in the heart of a rural county we should be celebrating the best of Devon and that a covered market square in the redevelopment could play a valuable role for a permanent farmers/producers market, space for small and new business to set up and for a wider range of cultural activities?

Response 3

The Council Leader explained that Exeter City Council ran a successful Farmers Market, and had done for many years. It was kept under review and officers regularly have conversations with interested parties, including traders, those interested in food security, developing the circular economy, eradicating food poverty and improving the city centre itself through the Business Improvement District (BID). It was a successful market that independent traders in South Street and Fore Street covet and the Matford Centre continued to act as a flagship asset as a city based in the heart of a rural county.

The Council Leader stated that cultural activities in the city, and a report commissioned by Members would be brought back to Council later this year and that with regards to workspace, Members had already commissioned marketing to attract investors to create office space as part of the wider CityPoint site.

Councillor D Moore requested the Leader to comment on the negotiations to agree a joint venture and confirm that the Council have the opportunity to input on the terms for joint working and to discuss the potential risks involved.

The Leader reassured Councillor Moore that Members would be kept updated on all matters. He referred to Councillor D Moore to the response from the Chief Executive & Growth Director, on the potential risks involved. He confirmed that these would be included in the minutes.