

EXETER STRATEGIC BOARD

Thursday 12 November 2020

Present:-

Councillors Ackland, Asvachin, Atkinson, Aves, Bialyk, Ghusain, Hannaford, Leadbetter, Sutton, Whitton and Williams

Also Present

Head of Communities, Democratic Services Officer (HB) and Democratic Services Officer (SS)

Also Present

Councillor John Hart, Leader, Devon County Council.

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ELECTION OF 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 2020/21; and
- (2) Councillor Bialyk be appointed Deputy Chair for 2020/21.

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APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Prowse.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2019 were taken as read and approved as correct, for signing by the Chair at the earliest possible convenience.

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COUNCILLOR JOHN HART, LEADER DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL - AUTUMN BUDGET STATEMENT

The Chair welcomed Councillor John Hart, Leader of Devon County Council, who presented the County Council Autumn Budget.

He highlighted the following:-

- total County budget of up to £1.2 billion all allocated for services with no surplus. Current year's budget is £542,800 million with approximately £550 million allocated for schools;

- £43.5 million Government allocation for Covid and awaiting detail of further Government funding support in addition to extra £6.4 million given for test and trace;
- huge financial pressures on the Council across adult and children services budgets and particularly in the SENDS (Special Education Needs and Disability) budget with an overspend of £24.5 million anticipated for this financial year on which Government advice is awaited;
- pressure on adult services with 330 care homes for 8,500 people, 2,500 supported by the County Council, the service helped by a 2% grant increase in last two years;
- County budget may increase by up to 5.5 % necessitating a 2% Council Tax increase, dependent on Government allocation;
- 35,000 people shielding with 7,000 supplied with food in the first Lockdown during which time Team Devon comprising the County, Districts and other agencies had been very successful in supporting the people of Devon;
- guidance is awaited from the Government for the County Council to finalise its plan to feed 14,700 young people over the Christmas period

He responded as follows to Members' queries:-

- 66 local authorities had been chosen as test and trace pilots, only four being Shire Councils, Devon being one and already working with Public Health Devon in readiness. On-going tests in Liverpool with 130,000 tested to date with less than 1% being carriers and the half hour test more accurate than anticipated;
- some concerns over the self-isolation grant of £500 when some may be reluctant to take the test to avoid impact on jobs/earning capacity;
- every effort made to secure funding from Central Government for example North Devon Link Road, the South Devon Link Road, Exeter College Flybe Academy and infrastructure support for the west of Exeter including the road network and a new school. Will continue to combat apparent greater focus on other areas such as Bristol and Bath and to continue pressure to achieve completion of the second strategic link to the South West as supported by the Consortium of South West Councils.

Councillor Leadbetter left the meeting at 6:00pm and the Chair was taken by Councillor Bialyk, the Deputy Chair.

- Uncertainty over a no deal Brexit, issues including free port status for Plymouth and Exeter Airport and need for haulage companies to change administrative systems. The Brexit Bill has been amended by the House of Lords for imported food to be of the same standard of production as in UK. The green farming agenda Continued support for farming community is important to ensure production of own food and the continuation of grazing across Dartmoor;
- Climate Change initiatives include the provision of £700,000 for a further street lighting upgrade in the next 12 months;
- main thrust of the County Council's Transport Strategy is to keep traffic moving with the only noticeable increases around the am and pm peaks. Government funding of Active Travel has been utilised to assist the reduction of traffic with a number of schemes across the city approved by Exeter HATOC which has resulted in improved traffic flow and should assist air quality;
- in respect of the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan, a similar breakdown in a joint authority approach to sub regional planning has occurred in the Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Bath area. The identification of suitable development areas and associated plan within a formal collaboration framework is necessary to draw down funding for necessary infrastructure. With limited capacity within Exeter, development will need to occur outside the

city boundary up to 2040. A long term vision and development plan are vital and, even current proposals for additional Park and Ride facilities, support for bus services etc. will not be able to support development in the next 20 years;

- anticipated that the Marsh Barton station will start soon with County funding identified and with necessary support from Network Rail. A possible rail link from Okehampton and improvement to the Waterloo line between Exeter and Honiton also muted;
- three local authorities in the country have been identified for possible devolution. Any future devolution plans are anticipated to focus around authorities with populations of between 500,000 and 600,000 and a preferable approach for Devon would be the continuation of good working relationships with District Councils such as with Team Devon in respect of the Covid-19 crises;
- will work with the City Council to bring forward initiatives identified in the Exeter Transport Plan following the consultation undertaken. Important elements in the overall strategy include rural bus subsidies and looking to provide additional Park and Ride sites around the city served by a reliable bus service, with Peamore one potential site. Public reliance on the car remains a problem. It is hoped that roll out of electric cars and home delivery from supermarkets etc, will have an impact in reducing traffic;
- agree to work with City Council representatives on the Exeter Place Board team on progressing these transport issues;
- the County Council has followed a prudent investment policy including the investment of funds from the sale of surplus assets for use elsewhere in the County and future policies must be viewed in the light of the withdrawal of EU funding; and
- Exeter businesses, through business rates, contribute hugely to the success of Devon and Exeter.

The Deputy Chair referred to the significant investment by the City Council in Exeter such as the bus station site and the utilisation of planning gain in the Sandy Park/Ikea area as well as Marsh Barton and welcomed further collaboration with the County Council. He thanked Councillor Hart for the joint work the County Council undertook with Districts, particularly the assistance through the Wellbeing Team and Team Devon during the Covid-19 crises. He thanked Councillor Hart for attending.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates of future Board meetings were noted, all commencing at 5.30pm.

Thursday 28 January 2021

Thursday 17 June 2021

Thursday 16 September 2021

Thursday 11 November 2021

Thursday 27 January 2022

Thursday 16 June 2022

Thursday 22 September 2022

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.37 pm)

Chair

