

COUNCIL

Tuesday 18 October 2022

Present:-

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor Councillor Mrs Yolonda Henson (Chair)

Councillors Allcock, Atkinson, Bennett, Bialyk, Branston, Denning, Ellis-Jones, Ghusain, Hannaford, Harvey, Holland, Jobson, Knott, Leadbetter, Lights, Mitchell, K, Mitchell, M, Moore, D, Moore, J, Morse, Newby, Packham, Parkhouse, Pearce, Read, Rees, Snow, Sparling, Sutton, Vizard, Wardle, Warwick, Williams and Wood

Also Present

41

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Foale, Oliver and Wright.

42

OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Lord Mayor and Leader paid their tributes to Her Late Majesty, reflecting on her long service to the country and to her relationship with the city and County of Devon.

The Lord Mayor reported that the city had been honoured to have the opportunity to pay its respects to Her Late Majesty on a number of occasions throughout the official mourning period as well as hosting a book of condolence at the Guildhall. Despite the city's obvious sorrow, she thanked all of those Members and staff involved in the very necessary protocols that had to be adhered to following the death of a sovereign. She had visited a number of care homes to allow residents to record their thoughts and pay their respects which had been warmly received.

The Lord Mayor passed on her condolences, and those of Council Members, to the family and friends of former City Councillor George Clark who had passed away in September. He had been a former Mayor and Honorary Alderman and had served the former Wonford ward for 15 years.

The Lord Mayor passed on her condolences, and those of Council Members, to the family and friends of former City Councillor Diana Bess who had recently passed away. She had been a former Mayor and Honorary Alderman and had served the former Barton and Countess Wear wards for 17 years.

The Council stood and observed a minutes' silence in memory of Her Majesty the Queen and Alderman Clark and Alderman Mrs Bess.

The Lord Mayor and Leader paid their tributes to Alderman Clark and Alderman Mrs Bess. They had both known the Aldermen for many years having served with them on the Council for similar periods and spoke of them with great affection and respect for their work in their respective wards and the city as a whole.

The Lord Mayor advised that she had attended the following:-

- a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Exeter Chiefs with an exhibition at RAMM on 27 July 2022;
- the Cranbrook education campus on 9 August 2022 to take part in a football fun factory;
- the Ukrainian Independence Day celebrations at Poltimore House on 24 August 2022;
- a reception at the Guildhall on 6 September 2022 in honour of the Exeter Chiefs Women's Team Allianz Cup victory over Harlequins on 23 April 2022; and
- the Exeter Dementia Action Alliance Memory Baton Relay on 16 October 2022, in which the City Council's own John Street had participated. The Lord Mayor's coffee morning continued to be held every month raising funds and awareness for the Alliance.

The Lord Mayor announced that Chief Constable Shaun Sawyer had retired after 10 years at the head of the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary and 36 years overall in the police service. The Lord Mayor welcomed his successor, Will Kerr, and looked forward to working with him in the future.

The Lord Mayor reported that St. Sidwell's Point Leisure Centre would be hosting the international Passivhaus Conference on 25 and 26 October 2022 when it would receive its Passivhaus certification. In addition to the Construction Manager of St. Sidwell's Point winning the Chartered Institute of Building Construction Manager of the year Award, the Centre had been shortlisted for the following awards:-

- the Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors Awards for the most inspirational initiatives and developments in the land;
- the Constructing Excellence National Awards 2022 which were taking place on 18 November 2022; and
- the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards Excellence in the Planning for Health and Wellbeing category. The winner to be announced at the awards ceremony on 30 November 2022.

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19 July 2022 were moved by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk and seconded by Councillor Morse taken as read, approved and signed as correct.

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PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Lord Mayor reported that no questions had been received from members of the public.

45

PLANNING COMMITTEE - 25 JULY 2022

The minutes of the Planning Committee of 25 July 2022 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Morse, and taken as read.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 25 July 2022 be received.

PLANNING COMMITTEE - 5 SEPTEMBER 2022

The minutes of the Planning Committee of 5 September 2022 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Morse, and taken as read.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 5 September 2022 be received.

STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

The minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee of 29 September 2022 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Hannaford, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 14 (Minutes)**, the Chair, in response to a Member's question, advised that it had been necessary to move the meeting of the Governance Review Board to a new date of 7 November 2022. The Board would be asked to consider the most appropriate mechanism for the Council to scrutinise the serious challenges presented by Climate Change and the Council's goal of achieving Net Zero 2030. Both he and the chair of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee were committed to ensuring a robust and transparent scrutiny process on the Council's response to the Climate Change crisis.

In respect of **Minute No. 17 (Questions from Members of the Council Under Standing Order No. 20)**, the Leader, undertook to ensure, in liaison with the Director City Development, that a response had been made to a Member's request for clarification on planning performance agreements and the proportion of any costs of such agreements being funded by developers.

In respect of **Minute No. 19 (Working towards Net Zero – Exeter City Council's Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Action Plan)**, the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, responded as follows to Members' questions:-

- whilst Devon County Council and other Councils had set targets of achieving Net Zero by 2050, the City Council had set a much more ambitious target of Net Zero 2030. Referencing a number of initiatives being progressed by the Net Zero team as part of the work to achieve Net Zero, he emphasised that, whilst every effort would be made to achieve this goal, Members should not underestimate the scale of the challenge; and
- Council retrofit initiatives would seek to adhere to the guidelines defined within the Skills Strategy, which was key to encouraging the development of green technology skills across all industries. It was noted that there was ongoing engagement with the Exeter College skills programme.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee held on 29 September 2022 be received.

CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 6 OCTOBER 2022

The minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee of 6 October 2022 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Vizard and, subject to an amendment to be made at the next Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee to replace the word "anaerobic" with "organic", taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 22 (Update from the Portfolio Holder for Recycling, Waste Management and Waterways – Councillor Williams)**, the Portfolio Holder responded as follows to Members' questions:-

- the third phase of the rollout of food waste collection had commenced on 17 October 2002 and that, as 47% of the current waste in the city's black bins was organic, once the full rollout of food waste collection had been completed, the Council's recycling rate would increase significantly;
- the Council had performed better than other Devon Districts in respect of the amount of waste collected per annum per person; and
- the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee met quarterly, comparing methods and sharing best practice.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 6 October 2022 be received.

49 **COMBINED STRATEGIC SCRUTINY AND CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 28 JULY 2022**

The minutes of the Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee of 28 July 2022 were presented by the Chair for the meeting, Councillor Vizard, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 26 (Exeter Development Fund)**, the Chair, in response to a Member's question, advised that the Chief Executive & Growth Director would inform the Task and Finish Group and all Members whether a Development Corporation would be established, should the Development Fund be progressed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 28 July 2022 be received.

50 **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 27 JULY 2022**

The minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee of 27 July 2022 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Wardle, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 14 (Review and Update of Whistleblowing Policy)**, the Chair moved and Councillor D. Moore seconded the recommendation and following a vote, the recommendation was carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 15 (Annual Governance Statement 2021/22)**, the Chair moved and Councillor D. Moore seconded the recommendation and following a vote, the recommendation was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 27 July 2022 be received and, where appropriate, adopted.

51 **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 28 SEPTEMBER 2022**

The minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee of 28 September 2022 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Wardle, and taken as read.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 28 September 2022 be received.

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 6 SEPTEMBER 2022

The minutes of the Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee of 6 September 2022 were presented by Councillor Knott, and taken as read.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee held on 6 September 2022 be received.

EXECUTIVE - 6 SEPTEMBER 2022

The minutes of the Executive of 6 September 2022 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 85 (Proposed Adoption of Community Asset Transfer Policy)**, the Leader, in response to a Member's reference to the question she had raised at Executive regarding the inclusion of Community Benefit Societies within the policy, advised that he would consult with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homelessness with a view to its inclusion in the policy.

The Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendation and following a vote, the recommendation was carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 86 (Food Law and Health and Safety Enforcement Service Plan 2022-2023)**, the Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendations and following a vote, the recommendations were carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 87 (Air Quality Annual Status Report)**, Councillor D. Moore moved and Councillor K. Mitchell seconded an amendment to the recommendation, to request that the City Council ask Devon County Council what measures they were taking to improve air quality in Exeter. The amendment was accepted by the Leader and became the substantive motion.

During the discussion, the following points were made:-

- there had been an increase in deaths attributable to particulate air pollution in Exeter since the publication of previous data but it was not the sole responsibility of the County Council. There was a need to do more to protect Exeter residents where high levels of pollution had been recorded;
- the figures showed that, apart from one area of the city, which had failed to meet the target, overall, there had been a decline in the pollution figures; and
- to achieve a pollution free city it would be necessary to radically reduce the reliance on cars and the type of fuel used, both of which were beyond the control of the Council.

The Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendation, as amended for Devon County Council to be asked to advise what measures it was taking to improve air quality in Exeter, and following a vote, the recommendation was carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 88 (Northbrook Wild Arboretum Project Initiation and Funding)**, a Member welcomed the proposal for enhancing the green space at Northbrook close to a busy arterial route into the city, referring also to the balanced approach on the Clifton Hill site where green space was also to be protected allied to the provision of housing

The Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendation and following a vote, the recommendation was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive held on 6 September 2022 be received and, where appropriate, adopted.

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EXECUTIVE - 4 OCTOBER 2022

The minutes of the Executive of 4 October 2022 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 98 (Corporate Plan 2022-2026)**, and during the discussion the following points were made:-

- welcomed the opportunity given by the Leader to provide feedback on the Corporate Plan;
- welcomed the on-going commitment of increasing the energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock and the Council moving towards making its assets Net Zero;
- welcomed the commitment to build 500 houses in the next 10 years to Passivhaus standards which would help reduce the cost of living;
- there was a wish to see a more extensive retrofit programme as well as a commitment to providing additional affordable homes by means other than through those set out in the Plan in order to combat the high cost of renting and buying in the city;
- the Plan did not sufficiently acknowledge the Council's commitment to its two emergency motions in respect of nature - the Climate Emergency and the Ecological Emergency;
- Climate Change was recognised as a huge challenge and the Carbon Reduction Plan and the Net Zero 2030 goal were welcome;
- assurance was sought on whether Liveable Exeter housing developments would be carbon neutral in construction; and
- welcomed the rollout of food waste collection across the city and asked when the rollout would be completed?

The Leader, in response, made the following points:-

- the Corporate Plan was a vision of how the Council wished to see the city moving forward;
- it had not been possible to hold the intended Members' briefing on the Corporate Plan because of the passing of Her Majesty the Queen, but other briefings would be arranged, as appropriate;
- the Council remained committed to undertake whatever was possible in order to meet its stated goal of Net Zero 2030, but Members needed to appreciate that this was against the background of the original savings of £2.3 million identified for 2023/24 but as a result of additional costs, including the impact of energy increases, a further £2 million in savings was required; and
- detailed responses in respect of affordable housing and the retrofitting programme would be provided under Min. No. 57 below.

The Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendations.

In respect of **Minute No. 99 (Catering Provision at Edwards Court)**, and during the discussion the following points were made:-

- given the rising food and staffing costs which were impacting on the ability of firms to tender for contracts, it was vital for the City Council to provide the catering; and
- the service would contribute to residents' wellbeing and ensure they benefitted from hot meals.

Members were invited to visit Edwards Court.

The Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendations and following a vote, the recommendations were carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 101 (Amendments to the Scheme of Delegation)** the Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendation and following a vote, the recommendation was carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 102 (Minor Amendment of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places for Exeter and East Devon Constituencies)** a Member expressed his opposition to the proposal to combine two polling districts into a single polling district in the St Thomas Ward, with the intention being to no longer use the West Exe Children's Centre but to utilise the St Thomas Church Community Centre instead. He referred to long queues out to the car park that occurred at the former during peak periods and that this situation would be exacerbated when the Community Centre catered for the increased numbers. He also referred to access difficulties at the polling station located in the Bowhill Primary School.

The Corporate Manager Democratic & Civic Support, in his role as Returning Officer, advised that the Council was being asked to combine the two polling districts being served by the West Exe Children's Centre and the St Thomas Church Community Centre into one building. Providing two stations at the Church Community Centre would be consistent with double stations provided in other polling districts in the city. Alternative methods of catering for elections were always being considered and, in respect of access to polling stations in school grounds, it was for the schools themselves to determine access and egress arrangements and whether the school should remain open.

The Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendation and following a vote, the recommendation was carried.

In respect of **Minute No.103 (Overview of General Fund Revenue Budget 2022/23 – Quarter 1)**, the Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendations and following a vote, the recommendations were carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 104 (2022/23 General Fund Capital Monitoring Statement – Quarter 1)** the Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendations and following a vote, the recommendations were carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 105 (HRA Budget Monitoring Report – Quarter 1)**, the Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendations and following a vote, the recommendations were carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 106 (A Public Arts Strategy for Exeter)**, the Leader, in response to a Member's question, advised that the responsible Portfolio Holder for the Strategy would be the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Arts and Culture and Corporate Services and confirmed that the Strategy would be added to the Council website.

The Leader moved and Councillor Morse seconded the recommendation and following a vote, the recommendation was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive held on 4 October 2022 be received and, where appropriate, adopted.

The meeting adjourned at 7.25 pm and re-convened at 7.35 pm.

55 **NOTICE OF MOTION BY COUNCILLOR BENNETT UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 6**

Councillor Bennett, seconded by Councillor M. Mitchell, moved a Notice of Motion in the following terms:-

“Making Votes Count with Proportional Representation

Council notes:

- Within Europe, only the United Kingdom and authoritarian Belarus still use the archaic First Past the Post (FPTP) system for General and Local Elections. Whilst internationally, Proportional Representation (PR) is used to elect parliaments in more than 80 countries.
- The UK’s FPTP voting system curtails voter choice, making millions of votes ineffective, and leaving millions feeling unrepresented and unheard.
- MPs and other elected representatives would better reflect their communities, leading to improved decision-making, wider participation and increased levels of ownership of decisions taken.
- PR is already used to elect the parliaments and assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Council believes that:

- The FPTP system has contributed to dangerous levels of distrust and disillusionment with our democratic processes and politicians.
- It is essential that faith is restored in our democratic system and that the public see Parliament as fairly reflecting their views.
- Our FPTP voting system is a significant barrier to restoring this faith and all but guarantees that the balance of opinion among the electorate is not reflected in Parliament.
- A system of PR in which seats match votes and all votes count equally would help to rebuild public trust by ensuring that all political views are represented in Parliament in proportion to their level of public support.

Council therefore resolves:

- 1 To write to His Majesty’s Government calling for a change in our outdated electoral laws to enable PR to be used for general and local authority elections.
- 2 To call upon Exeter’s two MP’s to push for a change to electoral law to permit PR and to promote the matter for debate within Parliament.

Councillor Pearce moved and Councillor Parkhouse seconded the following amendment:-

“The removal of the words “and local authority” in the proposed resolution 1”

Councillor Pearce, in presenting the amendment, stated that he was doing so with reluctance as, although he had been a long standing advocate of PR, in supporting the entire motion without the removal of the suggested wording, he would be going against the policy of the Constituency Labour Party who supported electoral reform and PR for General Elections but not for Local Elections. He stated that he was pleased that so many people from different parties supported electoral reform.

During the debate on the amendment, a Member also welcomed the growing support from so many for PR across a number of political parties and stated that it did not matter what level of government an election related to, voters deserved the opportunity for their votes to matter. Referring to the May 2022 elections in Exeter, she suggested that the results reflected the unfairness of the existing system. She stated that she could not support the amendment, as introducing PR for one level of government and not another was inequitable.

In accordance with Standing Order 27, a named vote on the amendment, was recorded, as follows:-

Voting for:-

Councillors Allcock, Asvachin, Atkinson, Bialyk, Branston, Denning, Ellis-Jones, Ghusain, Hannaford, Knott, Lights, Morse, Packham, Parkhouse, Pearce, Snow, Sutton, Vizard, Wardle, Warwick, Williams, and Wood.

(22 Members)

Voting against:-

Councillors Bennett, Harvey, K. Mitchell, M. Mitchell, D. Moore, J. Moore, Reed, Rees and Sparling

(9 Members)

Abstain:-

The Lord Mayor
Councillors Holland, Jobson, Leadbetter and Newby

(5 Members)

Absent:-

Councillors Foale, Oliver and Wright

(3 Members)

The amendment was CARRIED and became the Substantive Motion:-

During the debate on the substantive motion, Councillor Jobson, as the leader of an opposition group, referred to both the 2011 referendum on electoral reform when the public had rejected PR and to the referendum on Scottish Independence in 2016, when it had been agreed that it would be a once in a generation event. She suggested that the 2011 referendum should also be treated as a once in a lifetime event. She did not feel that the Government should commit time and money on a re-run of the 2011 referendum and therefore would not be supporting the Motion.

A Member made the following comments:-

- everybody's vote should count and be equal to everyone else's. The only votes that counted were the ones for the person at the top of the poll;
- no Party since 1935 had won a General Election with over 50% of the votes cast and that was a national coalition. In two General Elections, the party that came second and lost the election got more votes nationally than the party that won the most seats;
- the present First Past the Post (FPTP) system discouraged greater public participation and low turnout numbers undermined local democracy and, as parties focussed on marginal seats, safe seats could be neglected at election time;
- opponents of Proportional Representation (PR) refer to postal vote provisions and longer voting hours but, if people felt that their vote did not count, they still would not vote;
- convincing people that their votes count was preferable to a compulsory system;
- PR could result in coalitions but many local authorities function on this basis and it would be inappropriate to exclude PR for local government elections;
- in spite of objections to PR systems, both Conservative and Labour governments introduced differing forms of PR over the years, such as in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland;
- in England, elections for directly elected mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners have just reverted to the FPTP system;
- PR was centre stage at this year's Labour Party Conference;
- when people believe their vote counted they do vote, with an example being the 2016 Referendum on EU membership; and
- PR systems allowed people to vote for what they wanted, rather than tactical voting or lending their vote to stop a party they oppose.

The Notice of Motion, as amended, was put to the vote and CARRIED.

56

**NOTICE OF MOTION BY COUNCILLOR PEARCE UNDER STANDING ORDER
NO. 6**

Councillor Pearce, seconded by Councillor Morse, moved a Notice of Motion in the following terms:-

“Cost of Living Emergency Declaration

This Council declares we are in a Cost of Living Emergency and calls on the Government to introduce an Emergency Budget, to take urgent action to protect the people of Exeter from further harm.

Council notes that:

- Energy costs have more than doubled since October 2021, from a unit cap of £1,277 to £2,500 currently for average households. Before this hike there were more than 6,000 households in fuel poverty in Exeter.
- Food prices are soaring, some basic staples by as much as 20%.
- Inflation has soared above 10%, its highest level in 40 years.
- Personal Taxation is now at its highest level in 70 years, yet public services continue to face a funding crisis.
- The real value of pay is falling at its fastest rate since records began.

- Universal Credit has been slashed and there appears to be no prospect of an appropriate uprating of welfare payments for those most in need. Current proposals will see families, and others, plunged further in to hardship as they fail to keep pace with rising costs.
- In 2020/21 more than 4,000 children in Exeter lived in poverty.
- Meanwhile, £11.8 billion of public money has been lost to fraud through the Government's Covid support schemes.

Council therefore resolves to write to the Prime Minister, copying in our Exeter MP's, urging her to:

- Introduce an immediate Emergency Budget to protect children, families, and pensioners from the worst fall in living standards in generations.
- Cut business rates for small businesses.
- Cut the VAT rate on energy bills.
- Increase the support available to all claimants through the welfare and benefits system.
- Deliver on the calls made by UNISON, the National Education Union (NEU) and other education unions to expand the free school meals programme to all families receiving Universal Credit or an equivalent benefit.

The Council believes that the Emergency Budget must include real help for residents and local businesses in Exeter."

Councillor D. Moore moved and Councillor K. Mitchell seconded the following amendments:-

- Restore the £20 uplift to Universal Credit and double this uplift to £40 per week.
- At the end of the sentence "Increase the support available to all claimants through the welfare and benefits system", add "in line with inflation".
- Continue to support families and businesses after 23 April 2023 in regard to any increased energy costs.

Councillors Pearce and Morse accepted the amendment, subject to the addition of the words "at least" between "to" and "£40" in the first bullet point above and the insertion of the word "price" before "inflation" at the end of the second bullet point.

Councillor D. Moore accepted the addition of these words. The motion, as amended, became the substantive motion as follows:-

- Introduce an immediate Emergency Budget to protect children, families, and pensioners from the worst fall in living standards in generations.
- Cut business rates for small businesses.
- Cut the VAT rate on energy bills.
- Increase the support available to all claimants through the welfare and benefits system in line with price inflation.
- Deliver on the calls made by UNISON, the National Education Union (NEU) and other education unions to expand the free school meals programme to all families receiving universal credit or an equivalent benefit.
- Restore the £20 uplift to Universal Credit and double this uplift to at least £40 per week.
- Continue to support families and businesses after 23 April 2023 in regard to any increased energy costs.

Members made the following comments:-

- the work of the Exeter Food Bank reflected the seriousness of the cost of living crisis, the demand having increased by 130% over the last month and a number of harrowing personal testimonies had been received underlining the hardships many were facing; and
- the Government had failed to respond to a United Nations report in 2018 which had highlighted that the UK was failing in its Human Rights obligations and which recommended a number of measures to address poverty in the UK.

Councillor Jobson, as the leader of an opposition group, made the following comments, stating that she would not be supporting the Motion:-

- the current Government stance to combat the rise in inflation should be welcomed, particularly in light of the recent impact of the Covid Pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The control of inflation is necessary as continuing increases will impact adversely on children, families and pensioners and lead to increased interest rates;
- although it was necessary to borrow during the Pandemic, the cost of borrowing has to be paid for;
- a previous Government ultimately recognised that it was not possible to combat a recession and increase employment by increasing taxes and spending; and
- an uplift in Universal Credit in line with inflation would be welcome and it is hoped the Chancellor would include this in his statement on the Medium Term Fiscal Plan at the end of the month.

Members made the following comments:-

- a previous Government had responded to the economic downturn caused by sub prime mortgages in the United States by investing in schools, hospitals and public services. In contrast, the current Government seeks to continue with the previous 12 years of austerity which has undermined and ravaged public services. More austerity is not the answer, and further cuts will impact elsewhere in the economy such as the health sector;
- trickle-down economics does not work, whereas a mixed economy with increased investment in public services will ultimately also benefit the private sector;
- the recent mini Budget sought unfunded tax cuts with a disastrous impact on household mortgages and business costs;
- would advocate all children in primary and secondary schools receiving free school meals, as in Scotland and Wales;
- rather than wait a further two years, a General Election should be called;
- the Government has imposed suffering on the country - on householders, pensioners and those on benefits and on businesses with the rise in energy costs;
- the system has broken down when 40% of those on universal benefit are in full time employment;
- the Motion puts forward reasonable suggestions and solutions but it will only be a start; and
- the city and the Council can help those affected by encouraging a circular economy and further progress its energy saving measures through its retrofit and Passivhaus programmes.

Councillor Morse, in seconding the Motion, made the following comments:-

- the Institute for Government confirms that the poor will feel the greatest impact of the cost of living crisis forcing difficult choices between heating or adequately

- feeding their families, whilst the World Health Organisation points to increased deaths during cold winters as a result of increased energy costs;
- there will be a knock on effect on the already overstretched Health Service and the impact of outside factors such as the increased cost of bulk foods from overseas can not be ignored;
 - other factors include 15 tax increases by a current, low cost Government, benefit freezes reducing income, a mini Budget causing increased mortgage and business costs and increased wholesale food prices following Brexit.

Councillor Pearce, in concluding, made the following points:-

- the motion was an emergency declaration following on from two previous motions on the Climate and Ecological emergencies, but those reflected global problems, whereas the cost of living crisis had been caused by the UK Government;
- the measures proposed at the mini Budget, such as the lifting of caps on bankers' bonuses and reducing income tax had all been unfunded;
- a demand led intervention is recommended as the way forward and has been the Council policy for a number of years and the greatest saving for individuals is to protect households from increased costs, such as energy, which has doubled in the last 12 months;
- increased mortgage costs have resulted in the loss of homes as re-mortgaging cannot be afforded and those landlords with mortgages pass on their costs by increasing rental levels;
- the impact in Exeter is exacerbated by its low incomes and higher housing costs; and
- the current Secretary of State's stated aspiration was that GP's should be seen within two weeks, whereas a previous Secretary of State's aspirations had been two days.

Councillor Pearce commended the Motion, as amended, to Council.

The Notice of Motion, as amended, was put to the vote and CARRIED.

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 8

In accordance with Standing Order No. 8, the following question was put by
Councillor Read to the Leader

Following the revelation at the recent planning inspectorate that in 2021 Exeter City Council only built 6 affordable homes, will the Leader launch an inquiry into why that figure was so low? And can the Leader let us know how many have been built in 2022 so far, and how many anticipated by the end of 2022?

Response

No, there will not be an inquiry. In its role as local planning authority the Council determines planning applications for housing development and implements the policies in the existing Core Strategy. The relevant policy regarding affordable housing is CP7. This sets out that for sites of three homes or more, developments should provide 35% of the dwellings as affordable housing. This policy is implemented consistently, but can be subject to considerations of viability which can sometimes reduce the number of affordable homes secured. Developments, and

therefore affordable homes, are generally built out by the private sector. The number of affordable houses provided in any given year is therefore a direct result of developer activity.

The figure of six affordable homes provided in 2020/2021 was quoted by the applicant at the recent Spruce Close appeal. This is a net figure after taking account of Right to Buy sales which took affordable housing out of the housing stock. This is a process which takes place outside of the planning system. The actual number of affordable homes delivered was 40. This in itself was a lower figure than delivered in previous years, however this is likely to have been significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic which had considerable impacts on the development industry. To illustrate this point, the figures below show the number of affordable homes which have been provided on an annual basis in the previous ten years. Average affordable housing provision across this ten year period was 96. This equates to 23% of all housing completions over that period. The total number provided in 2011/12 were 170 with 40 provided in 2020/21. The full figures are set out below:-

Year	Total
2020/2021	40
2019/2020	81
2018/2019	160
2017/2018	97
2016/2017	83
2015/2016	130
2014/2015	75
2013/2014	100
2012/2013	26
2011/2012	170
Total	962

Looking forward, it is challenging to specifically determine how many affordable homes have been/will be built in the remainder of 2022 because affordable housing is primarily brought forward by the private sector and because the monitoring data for the year is not yet available. In addition, in its role as the local planning authority, the Council does not directly deliver homes. However, the positive implementation of policy CP7 in the Core Strategy will continue - as already stated, this requires 35% of homes delivered to be affordable. Looking more widely, the housing team at the Council has an aim of delivering 500 homes over ten years at social and affordable rent to add to our social housing stock.

Councillor Read, asked a supplementary question as to whether it was the Council aim to provide 500 social and affordable housing in the next 10 years, that is, roughly 50 a year.

The Leader confirmed that it was the aim, if possible, to provide 500 affordable and social housing in the next 10 years within the Housing Revenue Account, built to Passivhaus standard. In addition, through Exeter City Living, the City Council's private development company would bring forward privately rented properties to disrupt that part of the housing market in order to make housing more affordable.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 8, the following question was put by Councillor Rees to the Leader

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Following the Leader setting out an ambition for a programme of retrofitting all homes across the city, at our last Council meeting:

a. When will Councillors see a program detailing which houses will be insulated and when?

b. When will the Council be in a position to share this program with the residents of Exeter?"

Response

The Leader responded in respect of the Housing Revenue Account and from the Private Sector Housing point of view:

Housing Revenue Account

In 2020, the Housing Service developed an approach to meet the City Council's corporate objective to achieve Net Zero by 2030. The Service's strategy was to develop and deliver a retrofit programme of energy efficiency work to the existing housing stock. This focus was to alleviate fuel costs for those residents who lived in our stock with the worse energy performance.

The retrofit programme has recently completed the installation of energy improvement measures to 420 properties. These works were part funded by the Council through the Housing Revenue Account and part funded by a Government grant of £1.6million. The primary results from the programme of works, have seen;

- 56% of the properties achieve an energy rating of Band A
- 39% of the properties achieve an energy rating of Band B

The Housing Service is continuing the retrofit programme across the remainder of our properties. The performance results from the 420 completed properties continue to be analysed to ensure that the optimum retrofit model and works specification is deployed for future work streams. There is clearly a balance to be struck between maximising the energy performance of properties and the associated energy rating with the affordability of the works programme for all Council properties in the shortest timescale possible.

The Members' Scrutiny Bulletin on progress to date is currently being prepared for circulation and the revised Housing Asset Management Plan, due to be published early in 2023, will set the future delivery strategy, including programme locations and timescales

Private Sector Housing

There are a few funding streams open at the moment, all of which are detailed on the City Council website. We do not have a rolling programme, we rely on applications from private owners, or our officers referring people who they come into contact with for other reasons. Any Exeter resident meeting the eligibility criteria (generally a household income of less than £30,000 and low Energy Performance Certificate rating) can apply.

The majority of private sector retrofit is undertaken with partners, mainly Exeter Community Energy (<https://www.ecoe.org.uk/>)

In partnership with Exeter Community Energy, we retrofit around 250 private sector homes per year – this is in addition to any regulatory action taken against private sector landlords.

Details of the funding and how to apply are here:

<https://exeter.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency/green-homes-grant-local-authority-delivery/>

<https://exeter.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-help-and-advice/>

Councillor Rees, made a supplementary comment that it should be the ambition, over time, for all houses to be retrofitted to help eliminate poverty.

The Leader responded that he understood this ambition.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 8, the following question was put by Councillor Sparling to the Leader

Please can the Leader confirm, following the deadline of 14 October 2022 for submitting Expressions of Interest regarding Investment Zones, if the City Council requested to be included within the Devon County Council's submission? If so, please can the Leader summarise the response here, including any areas or sites proposed for inclusion as well as whether the City Council confirmed in principle to using a new streamlined planning system and also please commit to publishing the full detail of the submission?

The Leader stated that he had requested that the City Point site in the city centre be included in the Devon County Council Expression of Interest (EOI) for an Investment Zone. As site freeholder, the City Council would be able to safeguard the site and ensure developments meet City Council quality standards.

The Leader further explained that he had requested the inclusion of the site in the Devon EOI as it presented a potential opportunity to bring forward its development. City Point would provide a new city centre quarter with a focus on high density urban living, office and employment space including the relocation of the Civic Centre and an information hub delivered by the University of Exeter. It was recognised that development could only be achieved through collaboration with partners such as the University, the County Council and Crown Estates.

As with the St Sidwell's Point development, any proposal finally agreed would take time to bring forward. He emphasised that it would be one of a number of proposals the County Council would be putting forward with a significant number coming from other areas of the UK. The Leader stated that it had been made clear that the Council would control the governance process and he also assured Members that it was not the intention to accommodate a de-regulation of planning powers and that there was a right to opt out if the conditions were not acceptable.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 9.00 pm)

Chair