

EXETER STRATEGIC BOARD

Thursday 11 November 2021

Present:-

Councillors Atkinson, Aves, Barnes, Bialyk, Ghusain, Hannaford, Jobson, Prowse, Whitton, Williams and Wright

Also Present

Head of Communities and Democratic Services Officer (HB)

Also Present

Councillor John Hart, Leader Devon County Council

1 **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 Bialyk be appointed Chair for 2021/22; and
- (2) Councillor Leadbetter be appointed Deputy Chair for 2021/22.

2 **APOLOGIES**

These were received from Councillors Adams, Asvachin and Leadbetter.

3 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2020**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2020 be taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

5 **COUNCILLOR JOHN HART, LEADER DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL**

The Chair welcomed Councillor John Hart, Leader of Devon County Council, who highlighted some of the key issues currently faced by the County Council:-

- a budget shortfall in the current financial year of £7 million but which it was anticipated would be reduced in the following months to achieve an overall balanced financial year end budget;
- huge financial pressures on the Council across adult and children services budgets and particularly in the SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) budget;

- pressure on adult services with 330 care homes for 8,500 people, 2,500 supported by the County Council and 6,000 being fee payers, with a significant percentage spent on younger disabled people;
- current data shows Covid figures currently at 128 in hospital and 100 in intensive care but alongside a significant post pandemic surgery backlog. To improve delays in care and 'bed blocking' health services are working closer as part of the Integrated Care System initiative, with the County, with its voluntary partners, involved in preventative care, for which additional funding would be beneficial;
- Devon possesses an 8,000 mile highway network, of which approximately 5,000 miles are in a poor condition with little or no foundations, Exeter being in a comparatively better position as a result of new housing developments coming on stream. Decisions on highways fall to the local Highways and Traffic Orders Committees (HATOC's).

He responded as follows to Members' queries:-

- the County Council's vision for reducing car use and encouraging other forms of transport is set out in its Transport Strategy, Exeter benefitting from the commitment to improving the cycle network. Lockdown resulted in a notable increase in cycle use but with reduced bus usage. Caution is required to avoid pinch points creating difficulties for emergency vehicles. 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;
- reflecting the ambitions of the Devon Climate Assembly, two new rail stations in Exeter have opened with a further station for Marsh Barton subject to necessary support from Network Rail. The opening of the Okehampton line could reduce traffic through the west of the city and consideration is being given to a station at Cullompton. There is a commitment to bring forward Park and Ride sites in the Science Park and Tuckers Garage areas;
- 400 electric car charging points are to be provided across Devon, with sites soon to be operational around the RD& E Hospital. Costs of the points vary according to speed of charging;
- the breakdown of the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan, mirrored the failure of a joint authority approach to sub regional planning in the Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Bath area;
- it is noted that Exeter, through Liveable Exeter, is fulfilling its role in future housing provision with its vision to provide 12,000 sustainable homes, largely on brown field sites. The GESP process identified 100 potential housing sites across its area and Districts are now separately going through the "call for sites" process and collaboration with neighbours remains important;
- the housing crisis is Devon wide and, whilst Exeter does not have the same holiday lets/Airbandb issue, the city also requires affordable homes and homes for key workers;
- issues around social care and the Children's Service are being addressed through staffing restructures and increased salaries, although recruitment of social workers is a nationwide problem; and
- to maintain Exeter's role as the County's economic powerhouse helping Devon to prosper, the identification of suitable development areas and associated plans within a formal collaboration framework was necessary to improve infrastructure and the development and upskilling of the workforce was also key. Although the employment rate was high, there remained significant shortages in many sectors. It was hoped to build on the success of the Exeter College Flybe Academy by developing a similar structure for the health sector, jointly with the University.

The Chair referred to the need to maintain footpaths and to push again for Government support for electric buses. He thanked Councillor Hart for attending.

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TEAM DEVON AND GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF £9.3 MILLION INVESTMENT IN INNOVATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS ACROSS DEVON

The Board acknowledged the value of Team Devon (Leaders and Chief Executives) over the past two years which would help any future Devolution bid - the agenda for which was under review by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. It was noted with disappointment that there had been no Government support for Devon to date through the Levelling Up process. However, of the 16 bids to the UK Community Renewal Fund, 13 had succeeded with 18 months to launch the supported projects. The £9.3 million allocation compared favourably with those given to Cornwall (£1 million), Torbay (£800,000) and Somerset (£3.6 million).

Devon County Council had co-ordinated the bid, inviting schemes from individual organisations, some being pan Devon. The chosen schemes would be discussed at the next Team Devon meeting.

The list of successful bids can be found in the link below:-

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1031148/UKCRF_successful_bids_list.ods

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chair requested Board Members to provide two week's advance notification of issues they would wish discussed at the January Board meeting.

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

Thursday 27 January 2022
Thursday 16 June 2022
Thursday 22 September 2022
Thursday 10 November 2022

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.50 pm)

Chair