

EXECUTIVE

Date: Tuesday 7 November 2023

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Rennes Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business.

If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Mark Devin, Democratic Services Manager on 01392 265477.

Entry to the Civic Centre can be gained through the rear entrance, located at the back of the Customer Service Centre, Paris Street.

Membership -

Councillors Bialyk (Chair), Wright (Deputy Chair), Denning, Foale, Morse, Parkhouse, Pearce, Williams, R and Wood

Agenda

Part I: Items suggested for discussion with the press and public present

1 **Apologies**

To receive apologies for absence from Committee members.

2 **Minutes**

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2023.

(Pages 5 -
22)

3 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors are reminded of the need to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests that relate to business on the agenda and which have not already been included in the register of interests, before any discussion takes place on the item. Unless the interest is sensitive, you must also disclose the nature of the interest. In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, you must then leave the room and must not participate in any further discussion of the item. Councillors requiring clarification should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer prior to the day of the meeting.

4 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

It is considered that the Committee would be unlikely to exclude the press and public during consideration of any of the items on the agenda, but if it should wish

to do so, the following resolution should be passed:-

RECOMMENDED that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the particular item(s) on the grounds that it (they) involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act

5 **Questions from the Public Under Standing order No. 19**

To receive questions relating to items on the Agenda from members of the public and responses thereto.

Details of questions should be notified to the Democratic Services Manager by 10.00am at least three working days prior to the meeting. Further information about speaking at a committee can be found here: [Speaking at a Committee](#)

6 **Digital Customer Strategy 2023-2025**

To consider the report of the Director, Jo Yelland.

(Pages 23
- 96)

7 **Annual Scrutiny Report 2022-23**

To consider the report of the Scrutiny Programme Board.

(Pages 97
- 118)

8 **Amendments to the Scheme of Delegation and minor updates to the Constitution**

To consider the report of the Director Corporate Services.

(Pages
119 - 130)

9 **Request to repatriate a sacred bundle - a Motokiks ceremonial headdress to the Blackfoot (Siksika), Alberta, Canada**

To consider the report of the Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism.

(Pages
131 - 150)

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Executive will be held on **Tuesday 28 November 2023** at 5.30 pm in the Civic Centre.

A statement of the executive decisions taken at this meeting will be produced and published on the Council website as soon as reasonably practicable.

Find out more about Exeter City Council services by looking at our web site <http://www.exeter.gov.uk>. This will give you the dates of all future Committee meetings and tell you how you can ask a question at a Scrutiny Committee meeting. Alternatively, contact the Democratic Services Officer (Committees) on (01392) 265115 for further information.

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EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 3 October 2023

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)

Councillors Wright, Denning, Foale, Morse, Parkhouse, Pearce and Williams, R

Also present:

Councillor Jobson (as an opposition group Leader);

Councillor Moore (as an opposition group Leader); and

Councillor M. Mitchell (as an opposition group Leader).

Councillors in attendance under Standing Order No. 44

Councillor Vizard speaking on item 10 (Minute No. 93 below)

Apologies:

Councillor Wood

Also present:

Chief Executive, Director Corporate Services, Director of City Development, Director Finance, Service Lead - Environmental Health & Community Safety, Assistant Service Lead – Local Plan and Democratic Services Manager

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct, subject to the following amendment:-

Minute No. 83 – to amend the sentence “*The Council needed to take a similar approach to the Government in policy and strategy for addressing Net Zero in the city*” to read as: “**The Council needed to learn from the Governments experience in court in its approach to policy and strategy for addressing Net Zero in the city**”.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

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QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 19

Four questions were received from members of the public, relating to Minute No. 99:-

Question received from Mr Neil Martin

I've suffered with asthma for 20 years. Now I and others, struggle to walk by Pinhoe and Polsloe Roads. What are the current pollution levels measurement since August 2023? Under the 2010 Equality Act, decision makers at Exeter City Council, are required to consider and take account of disabilities needs like asthma. Will Exeter City Council agree that pollution is rising on these arterial roads?

Response

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Democratic Services and Environmental Health in responding, advised that the data presented in the report did not show that pollution levels were rising on roads in Exeter and that there had been significant reductions seen over the period covered by this report. The data from 2023, would be presented in the next Annual Status report, which would be published in 2024. Presenting annual data in this form was the Council's legal duty under the Environment Act 1990.

Supplementary question, asked by Mr Martin

Do you agree that the current timescales are far too long between the readings and the publishing of the pollution levels, which in the case of the report was 21 months behind since the readings were taken? Will the Heavitree active streets project increase pollution and therefore, the frequency of my asthmas attacks and incur breaches of nitrogen dioxide in 2023/24?

Supplementary Response

The Leader advised that the timescales were covered in the report later in the meeting and some of the points would also be covered in the report. He also advised that due to the reporting process, certain information would not be available at the time of reporting.

Question received from Mr Alan Conibere

Given that increased traffic congestion has the potential to increase pollutant emissions and degrade air quality, particularly near main arterial routes, please confirm if Exeter City Council intend to install any additional air quality monitoring equipment so that the full impact of the Heavitree & Whipton Experimental Traffic Regulation Order can be established and assessed.

Response

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Democratic Services and Environmental Health in responding, advised that the City Council had no plans to install additional air quality monitoring equipment for the purpose of assessing the impact of the scheme. The current monitoring network would allow the Council to perform its statutory functions, which were to monitor and report on compliance with the air quality objectives.

However, the City Council had recently started a separate project to explore whether new methods could be used to better understand and present the air pollution levels along the Heavitree corridor. A summary of this project had been included with the report to Members and the project would include the installation of some additional monitoring equipment along the corridor from Livery Dole to Sweetbrier Lane. Data from these would be made available to Devon County Council to use in their appraisal of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order scheme.

Supplementary question, asked by Mr Conibere

What enquiries had been made by Devon County Council or its agents in respect of the adequacy of the air quality monitoring equipment for the Heavitree and Whipton Active Street trial both before and after implementation and on what dates?

Supplementary Response

The Leader advised that a response to the question would be provided and supplemented to the minutes.

Question received from Mr Ian Frankum

This report, and Executive is discussing historic data from 21 months ago (January 2022), up to nine months ago. Therefore, are you aware, that City Council decisions made, are using potentially inaccurate figures? Would the Executive agree that data should be reported more frequently and will the Heavitree Active streets project increase pollution and incur new breaches of nitrogen dioxide in 2023 and 2024?

Response

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Democratic Services and Environmental Health in responding, advised that the reporting frequency was that which was legally required of the Council under the Environment Act 1990 and the data is presented in the report was in accordance with the relevant guidance from national Government. Altering this to use data in ways that did not meet the guidance would reduce the reliability of the data. This report was also not one, which was seeking to make decisions and the data was presented for Member's information.

Supplementary question, asked by Mr Frankum

Would the Council accept that the effects of NO² levels are above the target level, particularly in the Heavitree corridor and will impact on health of those affected in that period, which was quite substantial and that more should be done now rather than waiting 12 months?

Supplementary Response

The Leader advised that all factors had been taken into consideration, and that the report reflected the air quality of the previous year and further data would be collected.

Question received from Mrs Lucy Haigh

Housing developments and recent road closures have increased demand on Pinhoe/Heavitree corridors. HGVs are being caught up with displaced residential traffic, causing more idling and emissions outside homes, and walking routes for our school children. The Council had a duty to protect children and 'protected statuses' from dangerous air quality. Please evidence how the Council prepared for these publicised changes, and if it did not, why not?

Response

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Democratic Services and Environmental Health in responding, advised that Housing developments which had the potential to have a significant adverse effect on pollution levels were required to undertake an air quality assessment as part of the planning process. The developer was required to demonstrate that no significant impact would result from the scheme or provide suitable mitigation.

The changes to the road network in Heavitree were not directly City Council decisions. Whilst the Council were consulted, they were planned and implemented by the Highways Authority, which was Devon County Council (DCC) and questions about the planning of the scheme were best directed to the County Council. Exeter City Council was feeding in air quality data to the officers at DCC to help them evaluate the impact of the changes. The City Council's legal duty was to monitor air pollution, identify any failures of the legal objectives and implement its Air Quality Action Plan. The data from monitoring during 2023 would be presented in 2024 in accordance with the legal timetables for doing so.

Supplementary question, asked by Mrs Lucy Haigh

How will the Council prove to the East Wonford community regarding the Heavitree corridor, that it understands that resident health needs require protection, particularly considering the proposed 'Ella's Law' which is a new clean air human rights bill, following the death of a 10 year girl? Please could the Council step in before another year passes and do the right thing for our community.

Supplementary Response

The Leader advised that whatever law was passed by the Government that the Council would implement those laws and always does its best in accordance with available legislation framework.

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OVERVIEW OF GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24 – QUARTER 1

The Executive received the report which advised Members of the overall financial position of the General Fund Revenue Budgets for the 2023/24 financial year after three months and sought approval of additional expenditure required during the financial year.

Members were advised that the Council was currently on target with the revenue budget and that the positive impacts included more interest on investments, which was generating an extra £700,000, lower energy prices over last six to eight months and several internal staff vacancies, leading to an underspend on the budgets. However, there were several budgetary pressures, including the pay award which would be higher than budgeted for and a few income budgets which were underperforming and being monitored.

Reference was made to the supplementary budgets requested for Council approval, which would be funded from earmarked reserves or other incomes sources, which totalled at £47,000.

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and enquired as to how much money was being lost as a result of being unable to claim the Devon County Council shared scheme, by not having full coverage of the food waste collection service? She also enquired whether the Executive considered its

approach to commercialisation and the commercialisation strategy needed to be reviewed?

Councillor M. Mitchell, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and noted that the shortfall on parking services was an area of concern and enquired if the major loss of income could be outlined and whether mid-year adjustments needed to be made?

In response to questions and points from Members, the Director Finance advised:-

- the projected loss of income for the Devon County Council food waste scheme was £250,000; and
- the impact on car parking was related to the reduction of season tickets and reduced commuter travel into the city. There were no projected in year reductions expected for car parking, which would be covered by the positive impacts discussed.

The Leader advised in regards to the enquiry on the commercialisation process that this would be reviewed in due course.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes and approves (where applicable):-

- (1) the General Fund forecast financial position for the 2023 financial year;
- (2) the supplementary budgets and budget transfers as detailed in paragraph 8.10 and Appendix 3 of the report;
- (3) the outstanding Sundry Debt position as at June 2023;
- (4) the creditors payments performance; and
- (5) the One Exeter programme update.

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2023/24 GENERAL FUND CAPITAL MONITORING STATEMENT – QUARTER 1

The Executive received the report on the current position of the Council's revised annual capital programme and to advise Members of the anticipated level of deferred expenditure into future years. The report also sought Member approval to amend the annual capital programme in order to reflect the variations outlined in the report.

Members were advised that there had been ongoing difficulty with the Capital Programmes, particularly with issues relating to contractors to complete work and remain within budget. Tenders had also been coming in higher than budgeted for, which was an issue relating to the current construction market and had a significant impact on the Capital Programme, pushing a number schemes forward into the next financial year.

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and enquired about the splash pools schemes being listed as a single project and whether the budget line for the Heavitree paddling pools also included the St. Thomas splash pool?

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and welcomed the completed work for the Guildhall roof replacement. She enquired about the completion of work for the roof section which was still leaking and whether the Council now had the funding for the work for Trews Weir taking place in 2025/26.

Councillor M. Mitchell, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and requested clarification on the loan to Exeter City Living of £14,141,500 which was listed as being unlikely to be utilised. He enquired if that was money that's already been earmarked for use elsewhere or whether it was a loan that had not been taken up?

In response to questions and points from Members, the Director Finance advised

- that he would consult with the property team for an update on the Guildhall and whether any further work was planned;
- that depending on Council approval, the £14,141,500 would be taken out of the Capital Programme and would not be a loan. There were no resources backing the amount as the loan had not been taken out; and
- the Heavitree and St. Thomas splash pools had been merged, however the Heavitree project was a larger project which required a significant level of work, in addition to the patching undertaken to allow it to open this year.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves:-

- (1) the overall financial position for the 2023/24 annual capital programme; and
- (2) the amendments and further funding requests to the Council's annual capital programme for 2023/24.

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2023/24 HRA BUDGET MONITORING REPORT – QUARTER 1

The Executive received the report which advised on the financial position of the HRA Revenue and Capital Budgets for the 2023/24 financial year after three months and the reported budgetary over/under-spend. The report also highlighted areas of risk, where certain budgets had been identified as being vulnerable to factors beyond the control of the Council, which may result in potential deviations from the budget, and were closely monitored by officers.

Members were advised that the HRA was currently on target, with no significant issues expected. Members were reminded that the long term and medium term finances were still limited for new developments and maintaining the existing Council stock.

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and enquired whether the £4 million being transferred from revenue to capital, was already earmarked or was to be added to the reserves of the capital account?

In response to questions and points from Members, the Director Finance advised that the £4 million was not a transfer to a reserve and was expected to be used to finance the in-year capital programme. The HRA was self-financing, with rents from tenants being used to maintain and manage properties, and some revenue contributions could be used to enhance the tenant properties.

RECOMMENDED that Council notes and approves (where applicable):-

- (1) the HRA forecast financial position for 2023/24 financial year; and
- (2) the revision of the HRA Capital Programme to reflect the reported variations detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

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NET ZERO EXETER UPDATE

The Executive received the report which provided a summary and review of the work that had been delivered to date, by Exeter City Futures (ECF) in delivering a Net Zero Exeter. The report also formally acknowledged the closure of ECF and provided options for how the work would be managed going forward and the challenges ahead in achieving a Net Zero Exeter by 2030.

The Chief Executive provided Members with a background on Exeter City Futures (ECF), advising that Exeter City Council became a member of the Exeter City Futures (ECF) Community Interest Company in 2016, who went on to develop the Net Zero 2030 plan. In 2021, the Executive agreed the secondments of the former Chief Executive and Growth Director and the Director of Transformation for a 12 month period, ending in December 2022. In June 2023, Global City Futures who established ECF moved to close the Community Interest Company (CIC).

Members were advised that the report provided a summary of the work undertaken by ECF, acknowledged the closure of ECF and set out options for managing the work for Net Zero 2030 going forward. Members were also provided with a copy of a review report prepared by the former Chief Executive and Growth Director at the end of his secondment to ECF, which provided an overview of the scale of ambition adopted by ECF and the success it had achieved in creating a culture of collaboration and innovation. Members were also referred to Appendix B of the report, which provided an update on the Exeter Development Fund.

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and noted that the new version of the Exeter Development Fund would be discussed at a future Strategic Scrutiny Task and Finish group. She also sought confirmation on the grant funding made to ECF, and whether it had either been spent or could be used by the Council for other work.

Councillor Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and made the following points:-

- tackling the climate emergency was one of the three big challenges the city faced;
- she had submitted an enquiry outside of the meeting, relating to various figures amounting to half million pounds, requesting information on how the figures had been approved and spent, and why there were differing amounts for various accounts;
- she enquired on the assets produced by ECF, such as the data mill, the Net Zero plan and what has happened to them; and
- requested the Leaders opinion on whether he was satisfied on the outputs from ECF and if he considered that the outcomes had moved the city on practically in terms of achieving Net Zero by 2030?

Councillor M. Mitchell, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and requested an outline of the residual asset liabilities of the organisation in relation to financial and physical assets and any ownership of any intellectual property.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate & Ecological Crisis thanked all officers including the current and former Chief Executive, who had been involved with writing the report. She advised that she was continuing to work with officers and stakeholders about resourcing and delivering the Net Zero 2030 target and reminded Members that Exeter City Futures had created a culture of collaborative working and that Net Zero was a shared responsibility across the city.

In response to questions and points from Members, the Chief Executive advised:-

- an update report on the Exeter Development Fund would be brought back to Members at a later date;
- funding that had been allocated to ECF by the Council, had either been spent or have been returned to the Council's budget for internal work and resourcing of future projects; and
- the question regarding the assets produced by ECF, would be provided outside of the meeting.

The Leader in responding to the question of his opinion on his satisfaction of the outputs from ECF, advised that he was concerned about the current climate crisis and the recent Government deferral of Net Zero. Exeter City Council had never received Government support for its Net Zero aspiration and had applied for various grant funding. The Council would continue to look at options going forward and would not deviate from its ambitions and would continue to use its influence to reach its Net Zero target.

RECOMMENDED that Council:-

- (1) note the content of the report contained in Appendix A of the report and to reflect that that a step change in the Government's approach in delivering Net Zero is required to allow any prospect for the city of Exeter in achieving a Net Zero Exeter 2030;
- (2) note the closure of ECF and the work that has been done through ECF in building collaboration and delivering progress against the city's Net Zero ambitions;
- (3) agree that in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate and Ecological crisis, the Chief Executive will develop proposals for how Members might work with partners locally to ensure oversight of the city's delivery on this key strategic goal; and
- (4) note that officers will identify how external work on this priority will be resourced given the end of the secondments to ECF.

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REVIEW OF EXETER CITY LIVING

The Executive received report which provided a review of the current position of Exeter City Living (ECL), a wholly-owned council housing delivery vehicle which was setup in June 2018. A review was commissioned by the Council following the failure to secure a contract for the redevelopment of the Clifton Hill site and the continued uncertainty around development given the difficult current economic climate. The findings of the review were outlined in Appendix A of the report and as presented at the meeting.

Councillor Vizard, having given notice under Standing Order No. 44, spoke on this item. He acknowledged that the Leader understood the history of the Clifton Hill site and the firm local opposition to development of the green space currently occupied by the Council's tenants, including the ski slope and golf driving range. He highlighted that under the Leaders' direction that a good, balanced decision had been made to develop only the broad footprint of the old leisure centre and retaining the rest of the site as public space. He sought reassurance, that in light of the report on Exeter City Living, that the Council had no intention of reconsidering the sale and development of the whole Clifton Hill site, and that a future sale and development would be limited strictly to the land area that was sold to ECL and received planning consent.

The Leader in responding, advised that the land that had been sold to Exeter City Living did not include the Green space behind the former Leisure centre site, nor the Golf driving range or the ski slope and valuations on the site to be acquired by the Council, would be identified. The Council's aspiration was clear, in that it required housing for people, to include the required social housing requirement to be built on the land where there was already planning permission and that the Council would endeavour to bring forward appropriate proposals as soon as it could.

Councillor Vizard in asking a supplementary question, enquired whether the Leader had concerns on the viability of the sale of the site in its current state?

The Leader advised that he had concerns relating to the impact of the Covid Pandemic on development. There had been many consultations for Clifton Hill and a lot of work had been undertaken to move the proposals forward, to provide suitable housing. Although he had concerns on developing suitable housing in Exeter, the Council would continue to work hard to bring forward plans for the delivery of housing.

The Chief Executive presented the report which outlined issues relating to the financial position of ECL its continued ability to repay its loans to the Council and recommendations to minimise the financial risk to the Council, which had been supported by an independent review by Local Partnerships. Members were provided with a background overview of Exeter City Living, with particular reference made to:-

- ECL was a wholly owned company of Exeter City Council, established in 2018, in which, the Council was the only shareholder. The company was governed through a management agreement, in which the Chief Executive takes on formal shareholder representative role to act at the main point of contact between the Council and ECL;
- The Leader and Deputy Leader provided the Chief Executive with guidance on the direction of the company and the Directors of ECL were then required to deliver, based on the business plan approved by Members;
- there were currently six staff working at ECL, who were employed by the Council;
- the purpose of ECL was outlined to Members in 2018, which was being a vehicle for providing housing in the city to address the housing crisis, delivering affordable homes and creating new sustainable neighbourhoods and communities;
- since 2018, there had been several significant changes in market conditions, including Brexit, the Covid Pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine, resulting in increased inflation rates and costs of materials and labour. These increases had resulted in received tenders being outside the standard pricing level to cover future costs of development. There had also been further issues of borrowing and financing caused by the Bank of England interest rate increases;
- ECL, despite operating in an open market environment, was subject to the public sector ethos of the Council, which had unfortunately created tensions for the company in their operation and alignment with the Council's multiple objectives;

- ECL had made significant achievements since 2018, which were outlined in Appendix B of the report, but of note, were the 22 new Passivhaus homes developed, 56 new units of social housing and the granting of planning permission for 41 new homes at the Clifton Hill site. ECL had also developed design proposals for a further 92 homes, which are ready to be submitted for planning permission;
- ECL had obtained £7.4 million of brownfield land release grants from One Public Estate government, which had been used at Vaughan Road and Clifton Hill for demolition purposes;
- of the total £25 million loaned to ECL, as agreed by Council, only £10.9 million had been loaned to ECL. To date ECL had repaid £0.8million leaving £10.1 million outstanding;
- The company had an income of £7.2 million from the sale of homes and consultancy services, with £16.3 million in business and development costs, land purchases and loan interests and repayments;
- assets of the company included the Clifton Hill site as well as various liquid assets amounting to £1.8 million; and
- the Council had received a total of £3.4 million from ECL since 2018, for land, services, office rent and reduced the need for the Council in finding savings for the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members were advised that in January 2023, following a failed tender for the Clifton Hill site, concerns had been raised on the remaining schemes for ECL. With the current challenges to the construction market and ECL incurring additional costs, exposing the Council to an unacceptable financial risk a review was commissioned from Local Partnerships, with the scope of the review being agreed between the ECL Board and the Council. Representatives of both the Council and ECL were interviewed during the review and ECL had been made aware of the findings and recommendations of the review.

Councillor Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and made the following points:-

- could confirmation be provided on whether plans to establish a build to rent company would no longer proceed;
- could confirmation on the recommendation for managing properties be provided that the properties would be rented at market level, with no further plans to take on any additional properties?;
- what was proposed to happen to the connected companies related to Exeter City Living (ECL), including Exeter City Group and Exeter City Homes;
- in regards to any disposal strategy for Clifton Hill, having a criteria for protecting the land for community benefit was needed to ensure it was not used for any other purpose; and
- clarification was requested on the Council's future financial liability costs, the implications of writing off the debts and impacts to the Council's budget.

Councillor M. Mitchell, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and made the following points:-

- he noted that the report showed a loss of income to the Council on the General Fund, and sought clarification on whether the £1 million figure was an annual amount or a fixed period amount?;
- in reference to the accumulated losses in 2023/24 of £6,026 million and 2025/25 rising to £8,934 million, had the liability amount been established if the company was liquidated and what would the liability to the Council be for not liquidating the company; and
- why hadn't the Council followed the review recommendation of liquidating the company?

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and advised her questions had been asked by other opposition Members and thanked officers for the report.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- the Chief Executive's report and presentation was commended and the work of those involved had been welcomed;
- the scale of the ambition in building affordable and social homes was commendable but since ECL had been setup it was no longer viable;
- decisions taken by ECL had been made for the right reasons at the time;
- Members and the public should be reminded that ECL had been responsible for the development of several high quality homes for the HRA in the city;
- thanks to both the Chief Executive and previous Chief Executive were made, for the hard work involved in the report and for ensuring the report was presented in public;
- the reason for setting up ECL were commendable and had been a difficult process, but good quality Council Houses had been built through ECL, setting a precedent for housing standards; and
- it was a difficult decision for Members to make, given the financial situation, but appreciation was noted for the work that has been undertaken to date.

In response to questions and points from Members, the Chief Executive and Director Finance advised

- the connected companies related to Exeter City Living, had not been set up by a business case and only agreed in principle, and as such did not require Member approval for winding the companies down;
- the six flats at the Guildhall Shopping Centre were let out at market rent level;
- officers were not putting recommendations forward to liquidate ECL, so that the company could be retained in a reduced form to manage the flats. The Council had no mechanism to hold flats for market rent, which would become Council stock, becoming eligible for the right to buy schemes and could prejudice future projects at the Guildhall;
- the £1 million figure was an annual amount, however the amounts shown in the report were not new savings, but reductions that would have been required when ECL was setup; and
- a benefit of having a controlled winding down of the company allowed the Council to work with ECL to manage their liabilities. ECL would pay its creditors from its existing cash funds, leaving the loan to the Council as the only outstanding liability. Any outstanding loan liability could be written off under delegated authority, giving ECL a positive financial balance to continue trading.

The Leader advised that his commitment to delivering homes for the city had not changed. There would also be further reports coming in due course related to ECL

and the future delivery of housing. He emphasised that although disappointing, it was important to not put the Council at continued risk.

RECOMMENDED that Council:-

- (1) note the findings of the Local Partnership LLP report presented at the meeting;
- (2) note ECL's achievements to date;
- (3) that, notwithstanding the recommendation from Local Partnerships to wind down the operations of ECL, officers recommend that the company be retained for the limited purpose of holding and managing property;
- (4) grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to facilitate recommendation no. 3 above to reduce ECL's activities as follows:
 - a) the Council enters into a business sale agreement with ECL, whereby the Council acquires all of ECL's assets (with the exception of the six leasehold flats in the Guildhall Shopping Centre), including any work in progress in return for proper consideration, in the form of a release of ECL from its obligations under the Loan Agreements. The sale agreement shall include a novation of all contracts save those that may be terminated by ECL with the Council's agreement;
 - b) in the likely event that the value of the assets to be acquired from ECL is not sufficient to repay the loan to the Council, then delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Section 151 officer, to write off any shortfall; and
 - c) thereafter, ECL, in a much reduced capacity shall continue for the purpose of holding and managing property and, in particular, the 6 Guildhall flats.
- (5) agree that any staff implications are dealt with in accordance with its Organisational Change Policy;
- (6) extend the ECL appointments of the Interim Managing Director and the two non-Executive Directors until such time as they are no longer required to assist with the reduction of the company's activities, with the termination of those appointments delegated to the Chief Executive;
- (7) grant delegated authority to the Service Lead - Legal Services to amend the Management Agreement to reflect the changes to the remit of ECL;
- (8) agree that SMB reflect on the Local Partnerships report as well as work being undertaken by the District Councils Network on commercial companies owned by local authorities to produce a report in due course setting out principles for how the Council will enter into any commercial ventures in the future;
- (9) agree that the Chief Executive be tasked to liaise with One Public Estate to negotiate an amendment to the grant conditions with the aim of retaining the Brownfield Land Release Funding (BLRF) funding where possible; and
- (10) agree to receive a report, if necessary, setting out a site disposal strategy in the likely event of a shortfall on the ECL loan after the Council acquires ECL's assets.

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CONSULTATION OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME FOR 2024-25

The Executive received the report which sought Members' agreement to carry out a consultation on a proposed change to the local Council Tax Support Scheme for working age for 2024-25, to create a class of support within the scheme, to award 100% council tax support to care leavers who are looked after by Devon County

Council, up to age of 25. The report followed on from the report presented to the Executive meeting on 5 September 2023, recommending in principle approval for a Council Tax exemption for care leavers up to the age of 25, subject to a further report setting out all the implications and financial impact to the Council.

Members were advised that the consultation would formally consult with the preceptors who would be impacted by the decision as well as formally consult with the public. A report would be brought back, following consultation, to request approval to enact the scheme from 1 April 2024.

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and supported the recommendations.

Members welcomed and supported the report.

RECOMMENDED that Council agree for a public consultation on the proposed change to the local Council Tax Support Scheme for the working age for 2024-25 to introduce a class within the scheme to award 100% council tax support to care leavers looked after by Devon County Council, up to the age of 25.

95

EXETER PLAN: FULL DRAFT PLAN CONSULTATION

The Executive received the report which provided an update on the progress of the Exeter Plan (Local Plan) and sought approval for a third public consultation on the Full Draft of the Plan.

Exeter City Council had a statutory duty, as the Local Planning Authority to prepare planning policy for the city and the new Exeter Plan would replace the two development plan documents for the city - the Core Strategy and the Local Plan First Review. The Full Draft plan would take the plan process another step further from the outline draft and provide a draft of the full set of planning policies proposed for Exeter.

Members were advised that the Exeter Plan would be used to help determine planning applications, direct growth and curate high quality design and sustainability for the city. The plan would also provide the city's infrastructure requirements and framework for future investment. Work commenced in 2020, leading to the 2022 outline draft of the plan which went to public consultation. Work had been undertaken on the feedback received and gathering further evidence, which has been include in the full draft plan. The updated plan now included a spatial strategy with a brownfield first approach to development and a development map of proposed allocations.

The plan had also been designed to match the Exeter 2040 vision and corporate plan, and building high quality sustainable development and since the last draft report, an additional Liveable Exeter principle included for culture and place making. The plan would go to a 12-week consultation using the same methodology as the previous consultation. After consultation, there would be an evidence gathering stage to produce a submission draft of the plan for the planning inspectorate.

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and welcomed the three month consultation and enquired on what environmental assessment would be produced in the plan for achieving Net Zero and the impact on climate change with the proposed developments?

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and enquired on flood risk impacts and what further work was being undertaken on the infrastructure.

The Leader advised the questions raised were not related to the recommendations in the report and should be submitted as part of the consultation process.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- the plan was welcomed and represented a large volume of work;
- the document was very accessible and included feedback from the previous consultation; and
- there would be a lot of work on the climate change in the plan as well as working with partners to show where the Council will make a difference and hold the Government to account on future home standards.

The Portfolio Holder for City Development highlighted that the Council was currently pushing for biodiversity on planning applications and the team had been working very hard on multiple policies. Having the same level of response as previous consultations would be welcomed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the full Draft Exeter Plan (included in Appendix A of the report) be approved as the basis for public consultation commencing on 23 October 2023;
- (2) the Director City Development, in consultation with the Council Leader and Portfolio Holder for City Development, be granted delegated authority to agree minor changes to the Full Draft Plan content before it is published for consultation; and
- (3) the Director City Development, in consultation with the Council Leader and Portfolio Holder for City Development, be granted delegated authority to agree a change to the consultation start date if required.

96

CONSULTATION ON LIVEABLE WATER LANE: DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND DESIGN CODE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Executive received the report on the progress made to prepare a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to guide development at Water Lane and sought approval for public consultation on the document. The SPD provided a development framework and design code for a key strategic brownfield site in Exeter and support the delivery of high quality, co-ordinated redevelopment in the area.

The Council had a statutory duty to consult on the Water Lane SPD before it could be adopted and a consultation undertaken during the autumn period, would allow the Council to adopt the SPD in time for it to guide the determination of planning applications that have been made, or are anticipated to be made, soon. The SPD would also assist the Council in delivering the Liveable Exeter principles which were consulted upon in the Outline Draft Exeter Plan in 2022.

Members were advised that the new vision for Water Lane was in creating a high quality, low carbon neighbourhood, focussed on the Exeter Ship Canal for 1,500 new homes and would follow the Exeter Vision principles and Exeter Plan. The design code would set out rules for developers to adhere to and how the rules would be applied across a large area providing the key place marking elements.

Members noted that there had been a lot of engagement work undertaken with stakeholders, Councillors and community groups and the next stage would be to commence the public consultation which coincided with the Exeter Plan consultation.

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and welcomed the consultation.

Councillor D. Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and welcomed the report, noting it was an important document for the area of the city and enquired how it would impact on planning applications before the document was approved. She also enquired on the approach to resolving risks to the environment, canal health and transport.

The Portfolio Holder for City Development advised that document would look to improve the community and create a more vibrant area. Engagement with the community and stakeholders had been ongoing and it was a good time for consultation for further engagement and amendments.

The Leader advised that detail on the approach to resolving risks to the environment, canal health and transport would be responded outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

(1) the Liveable Water Lane: Development Framework and Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (included at Appendix A of the report and hereafter referred to as the Water Lane SPD) be approved as the basis for public consultation commencing on 23 October 2023;

(2) the Director City Development, in consultation with the Council Leader and Portfolio Holder for City Development be granted delegated authority to agree minor changes to the Water Lane SPD content before it is published for consultation; and

(3) the Director City Development, in consultation with the Council Leader and Portfolio Holder for City Development, be granted delegated authority to agree a change to the consultation start date if required.

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HOUSEHOLDER'S GUIDE TO EXTENSION DESIGN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

The Executive received the report which set out the details of a review and update on the Council's Householder's Guide to Extension Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and sought approval to consult on the document for a six week period in October 2023. The current SPD for householders on extension design had not been updated since 2008, and an updated SPD would ensure alignment with current planning policy and guidance.

Members were advised that the Council as the local planning authority for Exeter, had a statutory duty to consult on the draft revised SPD before it could be adopted and would ensure that it was in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) adopted in July 2022 and Consultation Charter adopted in July 2021.

Particular reference was made to the SPD which would look at improving how applications for housing extensions were submitted and having good guidance and policy for applications and the impact on neighbouring properties.

Members welcomed the clear and accessible document and noted one link in the document needed to be fixed before going to consultation.

The Portfolio Holder for City Development advised that Council's Householder's Guide to Extension Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) had been presented at a recent Planning Member Working Group meeting. She further emphasised its importance and encouraged engagement with the consultation.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the 'Householder's Guide: Design of Extensions and Alterations' (included in Appendix A of the report) be approved as the basis for public consultation commencing on 23 October 2023;
- (2) the Director City Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for City Development be granted delegated authority to agree minor changes to the 'Householder's Guide: Design of Extensions and Alterations' before it is published for consultation; and
- (3) the Director City Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for City Development be granted delegated authority to agree a change to the consultation start or end date if required.

98

**FOOD LAW AND HEALTH AND SAFETY ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN 2023
- 2024**

The Executive received the report which sought approval for the adoption of the statutory Food Law and Health and Safety Service Plan 2023-24, which set out the Council's regulatory function in respect of food safety and health and safety over the forthcoming year.

Members were advised that there had been 183 new food business registrations with the Council and that the Council had a 99% compliance level with food hygiene law, which was higher than the previous year and showed the dedicated engagement of officers with food business operators in encouraging compliance. The report also highlighted the positive work in relation to health and safety and the good work undertaken in building businesses up following the Covid Pandemic and re-building public confidence.

Particular reference was made to the successful development of the apprenticeships for Food Law and Health and Safety Service and building future Environmental Health Officer roles

Councillor Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and enquired if the team would have sufficient resources to deliver the plan as expected?

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- The inspections had been noted as being positive engagements between the food business operators and officers;
- a 99% food hygiene compliance reflected how well the team was working;
- were the previous years compliance score known; and
- the development of the apprenticeship scheme was welcomed.

In response to questions and points from Members, the Service Lead – Environmental Health and Community Safety advised that:-

- the team had remained unchanged for a number of years and had adequate resources to discharge its statutory functions for food safety and health and safety; and
- the previous food hygiene compliance rating was between 97-98% for the previous year, but the conformed compliance rating would be confirmed.

RECOMMENDED that Council:-

- (1) approve the Food Law and Health and Safety Service Plan 2023/24; and
- (2) grant delegated authority to the Service Lead – Environmental Health and Community Safety to change the plan if necessary in the light of national guidance and/or to meet operational needs.

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AIR QUALITY ANNUAL STATUS REPORT

The Executive received the statutory Annual Status report which contained the monitoring data from 2022 and a summary of the actions taken in that year to improve local air quality. The Council had a statutory duty to submit an Annual Status Report to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and to present the report to Members at a local level. The Council's role was to monitor and report on air quality in the city, with the approval for air quality matters being the responsibility of various partners.

Particular reference was made to the air quality monitoring process which was monitored through the two fixed air quality monitoring stations and 85 diffusion tube monitoring devices in deemed problem areas. The diffusion devices are temporarily setup and then sent to a laboratory for data analyses and the results are put through a Government report template for checking. Data is ultimately returned to Defra who report back to the Council. Members also noted that air quality had improved in the city over a 10 year period, with only Heavitree being in exceedance.

Members were also advised that a supplementary Defra Annual Appraisal report had been received prior to the meeting and had been circulated and tabled at the meeting and was available at supplementary document on the agenda. The Service Lead – Environmental Health and Community Safety provided an overview of the Defra report and findings.

Councillor Moore, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and welcomed the improvement of the air quality findings, but was mindful of the impacts of long term exposure to high levels of air pollution. She sought clarification on the air quality management area and whether that included the actions contained in the air quality management plan, and where some elements were no longer deliverable, that improvements needed be addressed.

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, spoke on this item and enquired if the report was dated for June, could it be brought to the Executive earlier to ensure it was up to date.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- the report figures showed a good improvement trend on air quality in various areas around the city, including the Heavitree corridor;

- the report provided complex information, but had been presented in a very accessible and understandable document; and
- could details on the Defra project be provided?

Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Democratic Services and Environmental Health advised that the Council had achieved four years of NO² compliance and the monitoring of 90 sites had shown air quality hotspots had been reduced to just one area of exceedance which a large improvement. He highlighted that there was large amount of air quality information available, through the Council, Devon County Council and Defra.

In response to questions and points from Members, the Service Lead – Environmental Health and Community Safety advised

- the air quality action plan was set for a review in 2024 and would also look at reviewing the air quality management area;
- air quality data was required by June, for submission to various partners for input, including that of Defra. By bringing the report later, it would include any government commentary for completeness; and
- in September 2022, a bid was put into Defra, for the Defra project, which was developing new technology to improve information gathering and the bid was confirmed as successful in April 2023. With the funding from Defra, work has been underway to develop virtual sensors to predict pollutant levels in traffic corridors, using AI technology to look at input values, display estimates of daily pollution concentrations and make appropriate predictions for inclusion in future reporting.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the statutory annual status report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.05 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 17 October 2023.

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 7 November 2023

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 12 December 2023

Report of: Director, Jo Yelland

Title: Digital Customer Strategy 2023-2025

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report presents the draft Digital Customer Strategy 2023-2025, why it is important for the council and gives feedback on the public consultation that took place between July and September 2023. It also reports insights from independent research on how well the council understands and meet the needs of customers including those facing digital exclusion.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 that Executive recommends and Council approves the adoption of the Digital Customer Strategy 2023-2025 together with the intended outcomes and priority actions proposed; and

2.2 that Executive and Council notes that a detailed delivery plan will be produced to enable Council to monitor progress towards the achievement of the ten goals set out in the strategy. The implementation plan is likely to require additional resources and so this will be bought back through the Council governance process in 2024.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 As part of One Exeter, the council is embarking on an ambitious organisational wide programme of transformation including development of a Digital Customer Strategy. The strategy sets out the council's vision to put the customer first which means constantly looking to improve the user experience and ensuring that customer's needs guide how services are developed and delivered.

3.2 This is needed as customer behaviour and technology are becoming increasingly complex and changing faster than ever. It is critical that our whole organisation understands what we mean by excellent customer and digital service, where we want to be and the outcomes we want to achieve.

3.3 Digital customer transformation demands a step change to the structures, systems, processes and technology that we use and requires a strategic approach. Enhanced

knowledge, skills, and experience of the digital world will inform our everyday values, attitudes and behaviours.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

4.1 There are sufficient resources available to develop the detailed delivery plan by December 2023. However, whilst existing resources will be directed toward the delivery of this strategy as appropriate, there are potential additional costs that will be identified as the delivery plan is crafted. Work has already begun with our IT provider STRATA Service Solutions Ltd, alongside our partners (East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils), on the infrastructure necessary for all partners to deliver on their digital and customer ambitions. There may be additional skills and capacity needed in our own workforce in addition to technological architecture. Business plans will be produced as required and considered as part of existing “business as usual” processes and governance throughout the lifespan of the strategy.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 The paragraph above is noted. Any financial implications, where there is no existing budget available, will require a further report to Council to allocate funds.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 The Council is working with its IT provider, STRATA Service Solutions Ltd and its partners (East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils) to re-design the underpinning data architecture to ensure it is fit for the future and to enable the step change in the Council’s customer services approach as set out in this strategy.

6.2 Councils are required to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) concerning the use of personal data and officers will apply the key principles under the Act and UK GDPR in formulating the new Digital Customer Strategy.

6.3 The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 require public sector organisations to make their websites and mobile applications accessible. The ‘accessibility requirement’ is set out in the Regulations and ‘...means the requirement to make a website or mobile application accessible by making it perceivable, operable, understandable and robust’. The effect of this is to reduce barriers to accessibility provided that to do so ‘...would not impose a disproportionate burden on the public sector body’. The factors to take into consideration in determining proportionality are set out in the regulations.

7. Monitoring Officer’s comments:

This recommendations set out in this report, raise no issues of concern for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

8.1 As part of One Exeter, the council is embarking on an ambitious organisational wide programme of transformation including development of a Digital Customer Strategy. This sets out the council's vision to put the customer first which means constantly looking to

improve the user experience and ensuring that customer's needs guide how services are developed and delivered.

8.2 Digital technology has, and is continuing to change the way people live, connect and work. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen resident and customer expectations shift. Digital technology has evolved significantly and for most of us, digital technologies have become an essential part of our lives. We all want easy access to joined-up information and efficient, secure services in the palm of our hand.

8.3 People increasingly expect to interact with organisations wherever they like, whenever they like, on whichever device they have and on whatever channel they choose. With customer behaviour changing faster than ever, the task of digital transformation demands significant changes to people, processes and technology.

8.4 In addressing this challenge our vision is to put the customer first. This means: constantly looking to improve the user experience and ensuring that the customer needs guide how services are developed and delivered; understanding and responding to customer communication preferences; taking into account the needs of people who may face barriers to using digital services, and balancing customer choice with efficient service delivery.

8.5 To deliver this vision our mission is that: we excel at customer and digital service.

8.6 In order to achieve our mission this strategy sets out ten goals, which cover all elements of digital customer service. The ten goals are set out in the proposed Digital Customer Strategy 2023-2025 in Appendix 1. For each of these goals we have explained the outcomes: the way we want things to be and our priority actions: the improvements that we will make to achieve these outcomes.

8.7 In developing the vision, mission and goals within the strategy we have drawn on best practice from the Local Government Association, formal networks such as the Local Government Partnership Network events and informal contacts and relationships with other local authorities.

8.8 Early drafts of the strategy were informed with input from the council's Operational Management Board and our stakeholder partners within Strata Services Solutions Ltd. A final draft was subject to a formal public consultation which ran from 2nd August to 15th September 2023. The consultation was launched by Cllr Laura Wright, the Council's Deputy Leader, who set out the aims of the consultation in this statement: *"This new strategy is designed to make it as easy as possible for people to contact us and access all of our services. We now need to hear from our residents to see what they think of the plan. The feedback they provide will be hugely valuable in helping to shape the delivery of this policy going forward, and I hope as many people as possible will take part in the consultation"*.

8.9 The consultation included a short online survey: publication of the strategy on the council's website alongside a short summary with the key actions points. The consultation was also promoted on the council's social media sites. To provide opportunities for those not already digitally connected to the council, officers worked with Wellbeing Exeter and other partners in the community to ensure that as many people as

possible are able to access and complete the survey. Support was also available from our customer services frontline desk in the Civic Centre. A direct approach was made to Public Libraries in the City and materials were made available to enable them to promote non-digital access to the consultation. Invitations to provide feedback were also invited from a range of stakeholder organisations and statutory partners.

8.10 Qualitative feedback was received from 7 residents and 2 organisations garnering feedback from over 100 individuals. This feedback is summarised in Appendix 2 and provides helpful insights that we can build upon during implementation.

8.11 451, completed surveys were submitted. The majority of responders were aged over 50 and a quarter were from people with a disability and there was an equal response from those identifying as male/female. Overall the responses were positively in support for the direction of travel set out in the strategy as illustrated below. This shows over 68% of respondents say it is very important to them that they liaise with professional customer service staff when they contact the council and 63% say it is very important to them that the Council provide a single point of contact so they do not have to navigate multiple complex contact points.

We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important.

Q1	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Resolving my enquiry on my first contact	1.33%	3.55%	14.86%	27.4...	52.77%	100.00%
Short waiting times	0.89%	1.77%	8.87%	31.9...	56.54%	100.00%
24/7 access to services	11.75%	16.63%	28.60%	20.4...	22.62%	100.00%
Speaking to an officer to resolve my issue	3.10%	8.65%	13.97%	24.6...	49.67%	100.00%
Having a choice of channels to contact the council (e.g. phone, digital services, webchat)	3.33%	3.33%	18.63%	27.0...	47.67%	100.00%
Resolving my enquiry with as little effort as possible	1.11%	2.66%	11.09%	26.3...	58.76%	100.00%
Clear standards of service; information about the quality of services being delivered	2.22%	5.76%	23.06%	29.9...	39.02%	100.00%
Ability to use any device (e.g. phone, tablet, computer)	4.88%	6.43%	11.97%	23.2...	53.44%	100.00%
Feedback mechanism – ways to feedback on my experience	6.21%	13.08%	29.71%	27.9...	23.06%	100.00%
Professional customer service staff	0.67%	0.67%	6.87%	23.2...	68.51%	100.00%
Proactive/tailored updates (e.g. text messages or emails on the progress of your enquiry)	2.66%	4.21%	19.51%	36.1...	37.47%	100.00%
A simple way to book appointments online	5.54%	3.99%	15.08%	31.4...	43.90%	100.00%
A single point of contact without having to navigate multiple, complex contact points	2.44%	2.22%	6.87%	25.0...	63.41%	100.00%
Total	21.29%	40.35%	75.83%	86.9...	94.68%	100.00%

8.12 Full details of all the questions and responses can be found in the council's BI Report on survey responses to the public consultation on the draft Digital Customer Strategy (September 2023) at Appendix 3.

8.13 To aid our understating of the experience customers currently have when dealing with the Council, we engaged the expertise of a public sector customer experience partner, Red Quadrant. The work we asked Red Quadrant to undertake is a critical underpinning phase of exploration to help us understand what data we already have about our customers and their experiences of using our services, and how to translate this data into intelligence and insights that we can use to design and deliver on our customer ambitions. The project has identified gaps in data, and Red Quadrant have made recommendations on how to enhance customer intelligence in the context of our digital customer strategy ambitions. This includes understanding the scale and characteristics of those who may face digital access and exclusion is an important focus of this work.

8.14 The objectives set for Red Quadrant were:

- 1) Mapping and Identifying: Identify and map existing data on customer demand and experience across all access routes and channels;
- 2) Analysis: Analyse our existing data to uncover insights about customer demand, experience, and outcomes;
- 3) Data Gap Identification: Highlight gaps in data gathering and insight across the organisation;
- 4) Digital Exclusion Assessment: Understanding the digital accessibility challenges our customers face and the demographic specifics of the digitally excluded in Exeter; and
- 5) Customer Experience Maturity Assessment: Evaluation was designed to gauge the council's current capabilities, systems, and strategies in delivering customer-centric services.

8.15 The detail of this work is in the Customer Intelligence at Exeter City Council, Red Quadrant Report (September 2023 at Appendix 4. Key findings are summarised here:

8.16 The Council's understanding of customer interactions and experiences is fragmented, with current datasets primarily limited to phone and web-based interactions, providing partial insights into reasons for contact and satisfaction. However, there is no holistic view and oversight of the council's customers' journey and responses across all engagement channels. A key challenge is the presence of multiple access points for our customers. Each service has a distinct point of contact, leading to possible inefficiencies and inconsistencies in the customer experience.

8.17 The in-depth research involved a variety of methods: a systematic three-sprint approach, regular interactions with the project team, data collection and synthesis, and stakeholder surveys. The objective was to understand the council's current customer experience maturity and provide actionable insights. Key Findings:

- 1) The Council's customer experience operating model boasts strengths in digital transformation and a commitment to data-driven improvements. However, clearer governance and role definitions, along with explicit service design principles and outcome measures, are needed;
- 2) The Council's data maturity has room for growth. There are gaps in demand data recording, particularly in non-digital channels. Enhanced data literacy and improved data management practices are pivotal;

- 3) Digital inclusion is vital. While Exeter's risk of digital exclusion is slightly lower than regional and national figures, 10-15% of residents still face barriers; and
- 4) The Council's customer experience maturity score stands at 2.7 (on the cusp of 'emerging' to 'developing'). This underscores potential across all four pillars of customer maturity.

8.18 Key recommendations for the Council to take forward in its delivery plan include

- Develop a customer intelligence model and a data accountability framework;
- Invest in digital inclusion, with strategies like a digital champions programme and connectivity solutions;
- Cultivate customer-centric strategies, rooted in deep customer insights and co-design;
- Elevate the organizational culture, linking employee experience to customer experience; and
- Drive a strategic vision for customer experience, underpinned by clear standards and robust governance.

This comprehensive review provides a clear baseline in customer experience, while also highlighting avenues for considerable enhancement. By acting on these insights, The Council will be able to foster a more connected, responsive, and resident-focused council.

8.19 This research highlights the importance of Digital inclusion: an issue already reflected as one of the 10 key themes of the proposed strategy. We define digital exclusion as: 'individuals who face barriers to accessing digital services leading to inequality of outcome'. There are four main causes of digital exclusion:

- 1) Digital Skills;
- 2) Data and Connectivity;
- 3) Devices; and
- 4) Motivation or Attitude.

8.20 The details of the research undertaken in this area can be found in Red Quadrant Report but key headlines are:

- The population of Exeter is at a slightly lower risk of digital exclusion than that of the Southwest region and England;
- 10-15% of the local population are likely to face some barriers to digital engagement;
- A significant majority of customers are likely to move to digital channels to access services as they are introduced, delivering benefits to both customers and the Council;
- Some digital inclusion support or alternative access channels are needed, particularly for targeted services such as social housing;

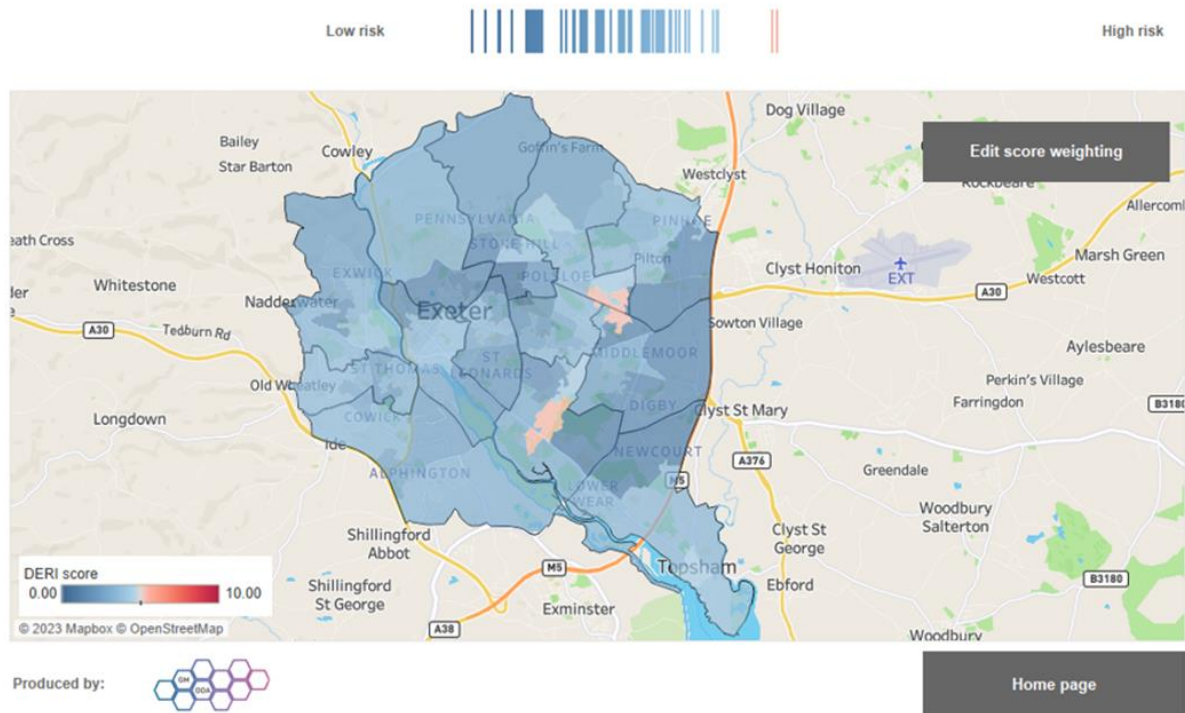
The average digital exclusion risk index (DERI) score for all areas (LSOAs) in Exeter is 3.395 out of ten, compared to 3.649 in the Southwest region and 3.597 in England. Only two areas in Exeter have a DERI score above 5, indicating a higher risk of digital exclusion, which are in the Priory and Mincinglade and Whipton wards. These areas contain 3,891 residents (3% of the local population). This is illustrated in the heat map below.

Digital Exclusion Risk Index DERI Score

Choose a local authority / local authorities:
Exeter

Choose a score calculation base:
Local Authority

Choose an IMD score national base:
England



8.21 All the insights and recommendations offered by Red Quadrant will be considered and addressed in the creation of a delivery plan for the Digital Customer Services Strategy. Further actions relation to Digital Inclusion that could be delivered through the Council's Community Grants programme and its work with Wellbeing Exeter will be proposed to members in due course.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

9.1 The council's corporate plan 2022-26 is the Council's overarching strategy, setting out the council's vision and ambitions for Exeter and the outcomes it wants to achieve for both the city and the council. The Digital Customer Service Strategy is vital for the council's role in leading a well-run council and delivering customer-focused services.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 There are significant risk to the successful achievement of the outcomes attached to the ten strategic goals. These could be themed as reputational, leadership, culture, skills, capacity and financial resources. As the delivery plan is implemented change projects will have risk assessments and mitigation plans built in.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;

- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention and can be found in Appendix 5. Mitigation actions will be identified and included in the delivery plan which will follow in December 2023.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 There are no direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 The Council could consider maintaining the status quo with the majority of services offering limited variety of channels and continuing to rely on traditional (old fashioned) delivery methods and incremental shifts to digitisation. The Council could also continue to develop services from an organisational perspective and not make the shift to customer "centric" thinking. However this would create an increasingly inefficient, costly and ineffective experience for customers and staff. This would also be contrary to all expectations of a modern local authority as set out in *The Outcomes Framework for Improving and Supporting Local Government Digitalisation* published by the Local Government Association (LGA) in July 2022.

Director, Jo Yelland

Author: Jo Yelland Contributors: Bruce Luxton and Stephen Clayton

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

- Digital Customer Strategy 2023-2025 Appendix 1.
- Digital Customer Strategy Consultation Summary of Qualitative Feedback September 2023 Appendix 2

- ECC BI Report on survey responses to the public consultation on the draft Digital Customer Strategy (September 2023) at Appendix 3
- Customer Intelligence at Exeter City Council, Red Quadrant Report (September 2023) at Appendix 4
- Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix 5
- Local Government Association Digitalisation Almanac (2023)
<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/cyber-digital-and-technology/almanac>

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 4.36
01392 265275

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Draft Digital Customer Service
Strategy
2023-2025
Version for Consultation July-
September 2023

Contents

1. Introduction – our mission and our ten goals
2. The link with our corporate plan
3. Our ten goals
4. Our ten goals – outcomes and priority actions
5. Our approach to change
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1. Introduction

Digital technology has, and is continuing to change the way people live, connect and work. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen resident and customer expectations shift. Digital technology has evolved significantly and for most of us, digital technologies have become an essential part of our lives and we all want easy access to joined-up information and efficient secure services in the palm of our hand

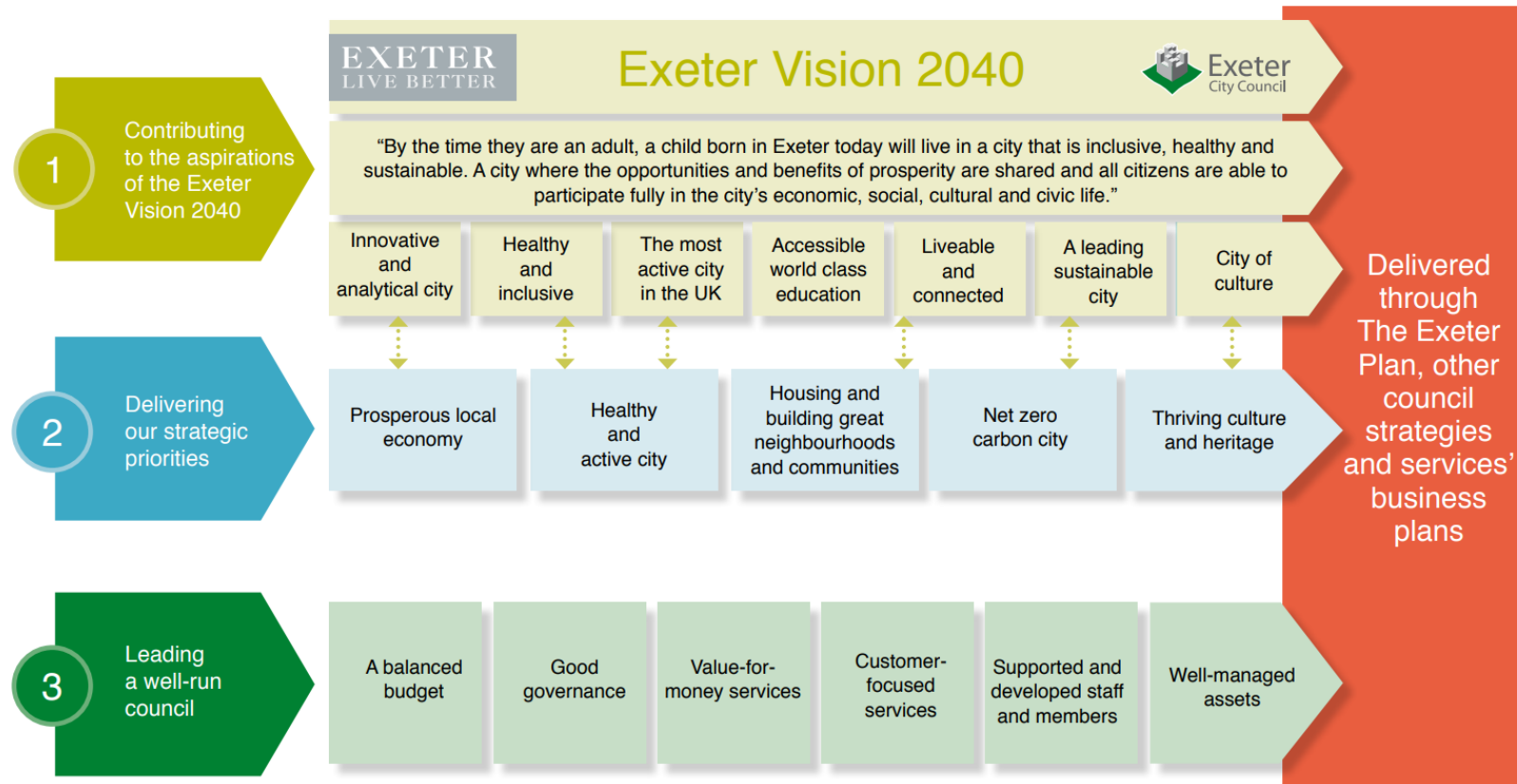
People increasingly expect to interact with organisations wherever they like, whenever they like, on whichever device they have and on whatever channel they choose. With customer behaviour changing faster than ever, the task of digital transformation demands significant changes to people, processes and technology

In addressing this challenge our **vision** is to put the customer first, this means: constantly looking to improve the user experience and ensuring that the customer needs guide how services are developed and delivered; understanding and responding to customer communication preferences; taking into account the needs of people who may face barriers to using digital services, and balancing customer choice with efficient service delivery.

To deliver this **vision** our **mission** is that : **we excel at customer and digital service.**

In order to achieve our mission this strategy sets out **ten goals**, which cover all elements of digital customer service. For each of these goals we have explained the **outcomes**: the way we want things to be and our **priority actions**: the improvements that we will make to achieve these outcomes.

2. The link with our corporate plan



The council's corporate plan 2022-26 is the council's overarching strategy, setting out the council's vision and ambitions for Exeter and the outcomes it wants to achieve for both the city and the council. **The Digital Customer Service Strategy** is vital for the council's role in **leading a well-run council** and delivering **customer-focused services**

3. We excel at Customer and Digital Services

Our goals

1. A culture of excellent customer and digital service
2. Digital equality
3. Excellent customer and digital services
4. Prioritised, joined-up channels
5. One front door
6. Accessible information
7. Efficient Processes
8. Fit-for-purpose ICT infrastructure and systems
9. Well-maintained and secure data
10. Digital collaboration

Goal 1. A culture of excellent customer and digital service

Customer behaviour and technology are becoming increasingly complex and changing faster than ever. It is critical that our whole organisation understands what we mean by excellent customer and digital service, where we want to be and the outcomes we want to achieve.

Digital customer transformation demands a step change to the structures, systems, processes and technology that we use. Enhanced knowledge, skills, and experience of the digital world will inform our everyday values, attitudes and behaviours.

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Our outcomes

Our staff and members understand our digital customer service strategy and its outcomes. These inform the design of their work, putting customers and digital at the forefront of everything we do

Our members and staff have the knowledge and skills to plan, resource and deliver a first-class customer service

Our organisational structure and the allocation of our resources enable our digital and customer service outcomes



Our priority actions

We will run awareness (cultural change) sessions on our digital customer strategy for all staff, highlighting and explaining expectations and how they can contribute through behaviours, systems and ways of working

We will provide a programme of training tailored to the needs of staff and members

We will ensure that this vision and mission is embedded in to our organisational change plans

Goal 2. Digital equality

A lack of digital skills and access can have a huge negative impact on a person's life, leading to poorer health outcomes and a lower life expectancy, increased loneliness and social isolation, less access to jobs and education.

It can mean paying more for essentials, financial exclusion, an increased risk of experiencing poverty. People who are digitally excluded also lack a voice and visibility in the modern world, as government services and democracy increasingly move online. Some people are already getting left behind: for example 20% of the population lack basic skills and 37% of the over 75's face some form of digital poverty.

A comprehensive understanding of the scale of digital inequality in Exeter is critical to achieving our digital customer service goals.

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Our outcomes

Members and staff understand the scope and scale of digital inequality in Exeter and we work with communities and partners to address digital exclusion and inequalities so that everyone can benefit from digital opportunities



Our priority actions

We will commission a report from experts to get insight and data to better understand digital inequality in Exeter.

We will implement a plan to address the issues that we discover.

We will increase our training around disabilities and diversity to help our staff deal with all customers more effectively

Goal 3. Excellent customer and digital services

To excel at customer and digital service our digital services need to be so good, convenient and well-known that people prefer to serve themselves . To make that happen, and to ensure that we extend our offer, we will focus on these 7 aspects of digital services:

- ❶ Standards of service

❷ The customer experience

❸ Virtual assistance

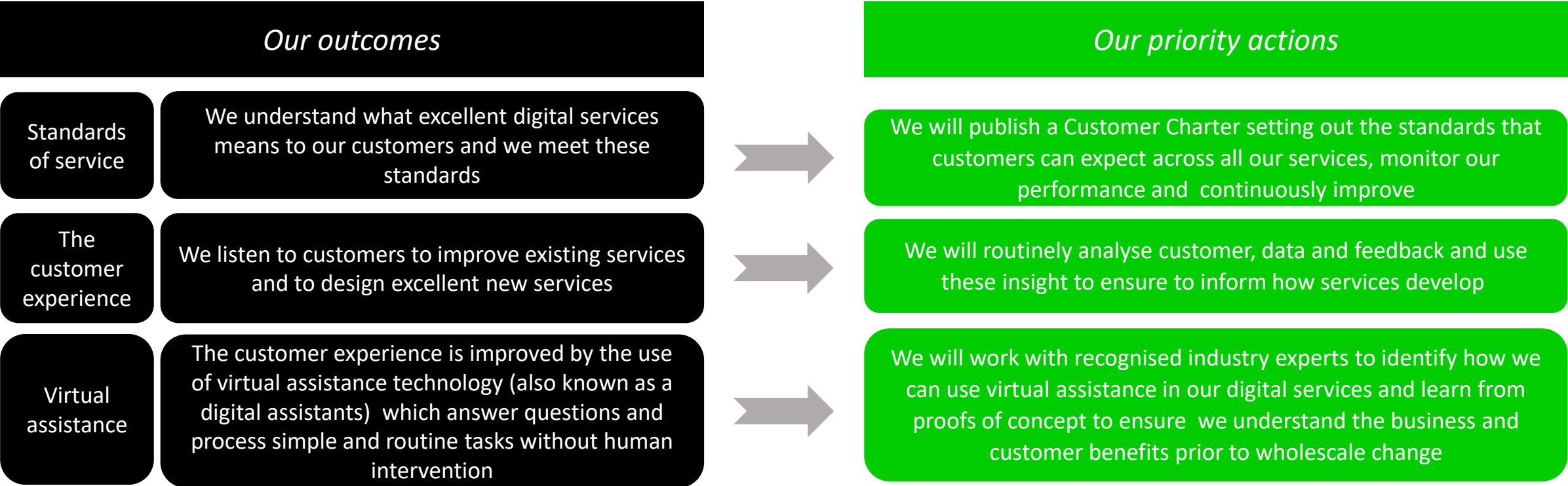
❹ Proactive digital communication

❺ Problem resolution

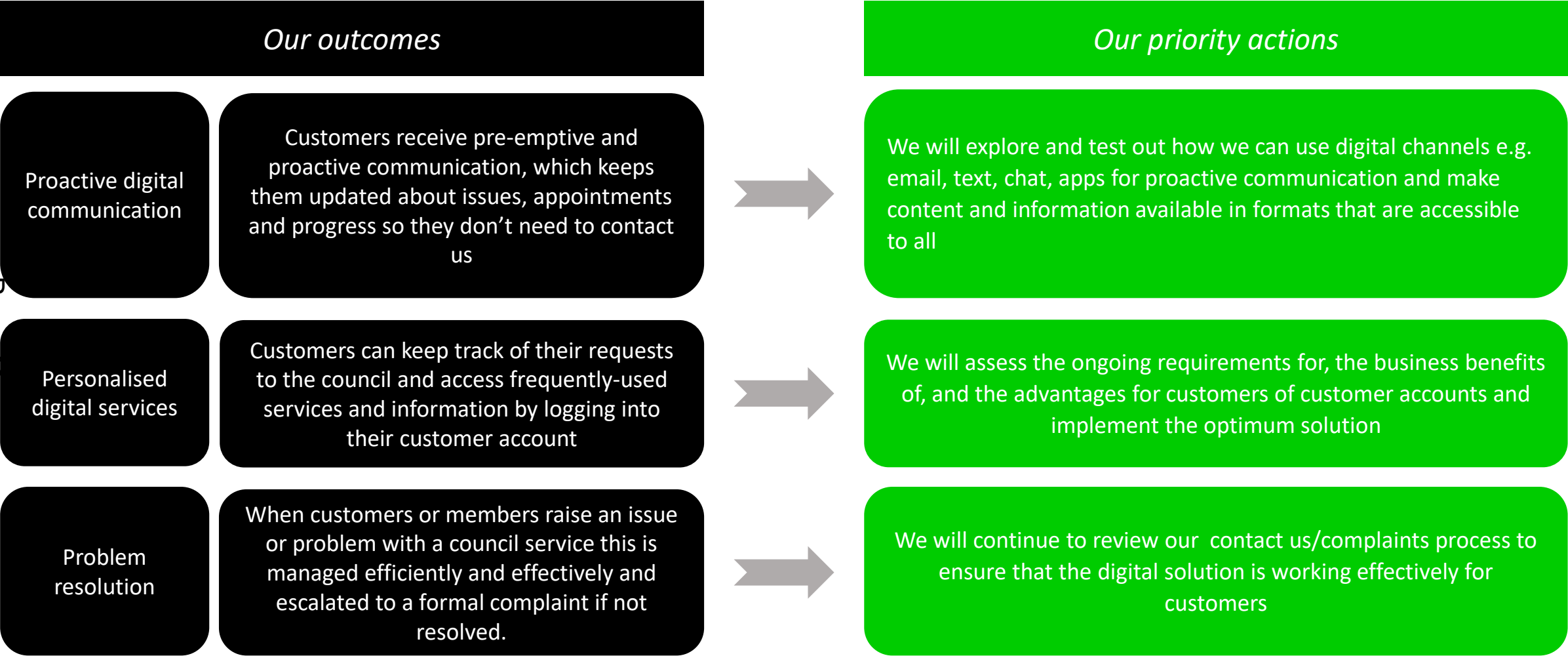
❻ Personalised digital services

❼ Promotion and marketing

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Goal 3. Excellent customer and digital services ... contd.



Goal 4. Prioritised, joined-up channels

Covid-19 rapidly and dramatically changed the ways in which we deliver, and customers prefer, to access our services. We now have limited face-to-face contact in our customer service centre with customers contacting us by phone and email and using more online services. However, we still deliver services through numerous, often disjointed channels such as emails, phone, videos, face to face, website, apps and multiple first contact points by multiple means. Most people want to do business with us online 24/7 and the majority use their mobile phone. Too many contact points is confusing, inefficient and difficult to monitor.

We need to prioritise digital channels, reducing the number of contact points into the council, and create more streamlined access routes driven by customer preference, costs, new technology and the need to spend more personal contact time with those who need extra support.

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Our outcomes

The majority of customer enquiries and transactions are handled through digital channels and demand for other forms of contact (face-to-face, telephone and email) is continually reducing and is mainly for specialist or complex enquiries



Our contact centre offers a choice of channels, but the relevant information follows the customer across channels and interactions, so we retain the full history and context of customers' enquiries



Our priority actions

We will design services, so that digital becomes the channel of choice, providing staff with the time and skills to deal with specialist and more complex enquiries

We will assess the capability of our line of business and customer relationship management systems, to deliver a seamless customer and staff experience.

Goal 5. One front door

We want to build on the work we have started to make contacting us as simple and easy as possible. We currently have a complex network of contact points. A limited volume of face-to-face contact is directed to and handled in our customer service centre, but we also have:

- A central telephone contact centre and switchboard
- Multiple mini contact centres dispersed across the council
- Multiple internal telephone contact points and email addresses published on our website

Our outcomes

Our single customer services function with the knowledge and skills to resolve enquiries at the first contact point and with the ability to enable customers to easily access specialist support



Customers can contact us easily via a single point of contact without having to navigate multiple, complex contact points



Staff use joined-up technology so that they can view and update a single customer record to handle the majority of customer enquiries and review records of customer transactions across multiple services, avoiding the need for handing off to others



Our priority actions

We will

- Design services so that customers get to the right place, first time.
- Train staff to gain the skills, to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact and, where this is not possible, to efficiently enable customers to the right place/person

We will

- Increase the proportion of contact handled by our professional contact centre function
- Reduce the number of published contact routes
- Enhance our online 'Contact Us' and central telephony services, to simplify and improve the user experience
- Join up services for a seamless customer experience

We will upgrade the capability of our customer contact systems to deliver a seamless customer and staff experience.

Goal 6. Accessible information

Many customers contact us with simple questions, the answer to which is often available on our website but may not be easily found so people phone or email us because that is often the easier option. We need to ensure that customers can find information quickly and easily - in the format that they need, using a device of their choice e.g. phone, tablet or PC.

To comply with the law and to support our digital inclusion goal, we must also ensure that our information is in an accessible format. This means more than putting things online. It means making our content and design readable and clear and simple enough so that most people can use it without needing to adapt it, while supporting those who do need to adapt things.

Our outcomes

All customers can serve themselves on any device by finding, or being directed to readable, accessible, accurate and up-to-date online information



Our priority actions

We will:

- Redesign the content of our website to ensure that our published digital information is readable, accessible, accurate and up-to-date
- Improve our staff's knowledge and skills in writing readable (Plain English) digital content and accessibility requirements

Goal 7. Efficient processes

Across the council we have thousands of processes to deal with customer enquiries. Many of these have been automated through the removal of paper, the use of digital forms, digital databases and fast, computerised data processing.

But we know that many of our processes can be confusing and disjointed for customers and not comparable to the streamlined, fully digital processes that we use in our everyday lives when banking, booking holidays or buying goods and services.

Our outcomes

Processes are streamlined, paperless and automated so that it's simple for customers to complete a transaction (apply for something, pay for something, book something) and more efficient and cost effective for the council



Our priority actions

We will:

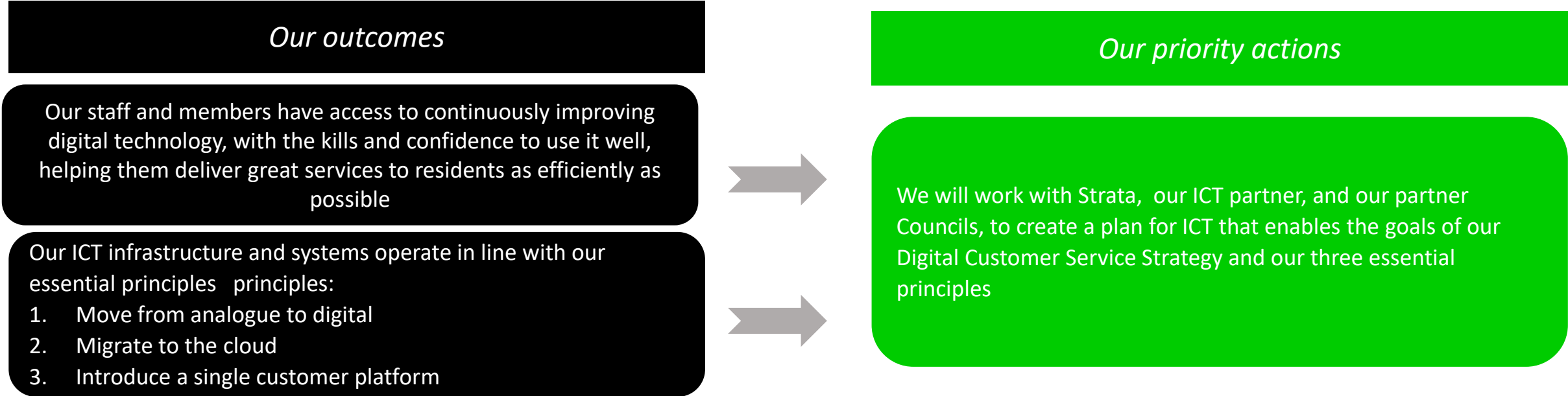
- Start with the customer when reviewing and designing our processes
- Ensure our processes are as effective and efficient as possible by automating routine steps and removing inefficient manual (human) processing
- Aim for processes that are automated from beginning to end
- Remove paper transaction and communication
- Explore the use of artificial intelligence, robotics and digital signatures and develop proofs of concept.

Goal 8. Fit-for-purpose ICT infrastructure and systems ... contd.

ICT infrastructure and systems are critical to the delivery of this strategy and are central to all aspects of this work. We have three essential principles that underpin our approach:

1. **Move from paper based (analogue) to digital** - digital technologies will be used to transform business operations.
2. **Migrate to the cloud** - the delivery of computing services—including servers, storage, databases, networking, software, analytics, and intelligence—over the Internet (“the cloud”) for faster innovation, flexible resources, and economies of scale. This will enable us to add new systems at pace, reduce service disruption and integrate communication channels in a single customer platform
3. **Introduce a single view of the customer** – replace multiple customer platforms with one that has sufficient breadth and depth to enable deployment of new innovations in a rapid and agile manner. Ensure a single measurable view of the citizen and their journey and incorporate communication tools (e.g. emails, chat, apps, video etc.) to connect both front and back-office and provide personalised responses to customers

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Goal 9. Well-maintained and secure data

We hold significant amounts of customer data and information in numerous systems to enable us to deliver our services. As we rely more on digital interaction it is vital that this is properly governed to ensure its currency, security, confidentiality and integrity and to mitigate the risks of cyber security breaches and unauthorised sharing.

Our outcomes

Our systems and data are secure and protected from cybersecurity breaches and unauthorised sharing

Customers are confident that any information provided to the council will be kept safe and secure

Our data is organised and maintained in line with best practice

Our priority actions

We will:

- work with Strata our ICT partner to ensure that our systems are regularly tested to identify any vulnerabilities and mitigate any risks
- Ensure staff are aware of our information security policies and procedures and how to mitigate the risks of cyber security breaches

We will implement a strategy for protecting and managing sensitive and business critical data so that:

- We know where our business critical and sensitive data resides and what is being done with it
- We have control of this data as it travels inside and outside of the council
- We use technology to classify, label, and protect this data
- We use our data to inform decision making and improvement

Goal 10. Digital collaboration

The majority of our office-based staff are able to work effectively from anywhere as a result of our 2019 Agile and Flexible project which enabled us to switch, virtually overnight, to a home working model during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Microsoft 365 will underpin our digital transformation and will enable us to collaborate more effectively and provide the tools to support our staff, improve the way we work , the customer experience and business efficiency

Our outcomes

As a Microsoft 365 house we will use digital collaboration tools to work effectively internally and with customers and partners to promote more open communications, and making use of shared data and digital platforms



Our priority actions

- We will compile a detailed implementation plan for a cross-council roll out of Microsoft 365, which optimises the opportunities for breaking down silos and using tools to achieve our digital customer service goals

5. Our approach to improvement

As we constantly look to improve the customer experience and implement the priority actions in this strategy, we will take a consistent, robust and analytical approach to change. Co-producing proofs of concept with customers and staff and trialling solutions at low cost will be key before we introduce wider solutions.

Analytical Approach

- What do our residents expect?
- What do we need to achieve?
- Why do we do it that way?
- What do others do?
- What can we stop doing ?
- What are the real risks?
- What is the business case?

6. Checking and measuring progress

Our vision and mission is ambitious, and we need to ensure that we check and measure our progress across the lifetime of the strategy.

The goals, outcomes and priority actions in this strategy will be captured in a detailed action plan, including timescales, resources and quantitative and qualitative measures of success. These will include:

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Feedback from Customers:

Customer surveys
Public consultations
Focus groups with communities of interest and minority groups
Feedback from compliments, complaints and enquiries

Feedback from staff:

Staff Sounding Board
Responses to compliments and complaints
Annual staff surveys
Growth and Development Reviews
Feedback from data will include:

Web analytics

Analysis of compliments and complaints
Contact volumes and channels
Analysis of themes and trends
Service measures (key performance indicators and service level agreements)
Mystery shopping

Summary of qualitative feedback

A. Residents – 7 responses

Next Door, (neighbourhood social networking service) – various resident comments

“Fine, but one wonders how long the very energy intensive internet will last in a likely future world where energy might be in much more limited supply than it is today.”

“Just done the survey it doesn’t give the options of rejecting digital access. This is something I feel strongly about as working with older people a lot of them do not own a computer or tablet and shy away from anything on a mobile other than making a telephone call. The elderly are being totally forgotten in this rapidly changing world.”

“...where were the options to talk about real money, take parking questions were about paying by card or app NOTHING for cash”

Resident 1

“I want to say it is extremely important to me that NOT all staff can check progress as there are confidential matters that need only certain people to know and a system that is being designed without that in mind is a very big concern.”

Resident 2

I have concerns about this strategy as it will exclude many of the older generation from being able to contact the council.

“I run a bereavement group which consists of mainly older members. I know for a fact that many do not own a laptop/tablet nor wish to own such a device. A lot of older people shun modern technology and no amount of persuasion will change their minds. Therefore there should remain some sort of access to advice and information that is not computer based.”

Resident 3

“The ability to actually come and speak to someone at the City Centre is being hidden under a plethora of digital promotions. If you truly wanted people to have their say you would not offer loaded questions.”

“Do I need to point out that those people not already digitally aware will be disenfranchised by this survey?”

Resident 4

“The Draft Digital Customer Service Strategy rightly identifies the need for content of the Council's website to be written in a style that the public can understand. As a public consultation document, the same Draft also provides evidence of the task ahead in training officers to use clear, concise language when writing for a diverse readership.”

B. Partners -2 responses from over 100 contacts

Q1

YMCA

"It has the potential to save time in attending appointments for Housing Options and in making calls to find the progress on a case or situation."

"It could also easily also put a barrier between a worker and the decision maker preventing critical information being accessed and so making it successful for everyone is crucial."

"You can't conclude how this will go from a strategy document"

St Petrocks

"Difficult to determine until further consultation / co-production with clients."

"Many of our clients are extremely socially excluded and struggle to access any digital services as they do not have smartphones / regular computer access, or they need in person support. Many also experience literacy difficulties which mean that they need in person / verbal support."

"If this strategy means that Homeless Assessment decisions / letters are written with a plain English summary then this would be beneficial as many clients request this."

Q2

YMCA

"This method of working has lots of benefits and time saving potential. Having a digital access system works really well when it's clear that the in-person assistance part of the process is to help the customer use and accomplish what they need to do on the digital system. That can mean someone very efficient on the system, explaining they are not the decision maker but can get the information across on behalf of the customer and ensure that they know how and when they will hear back."

"For digital services, the most helpful thing is some form of messenger/chat system where conversations are recorded and kept so they can be referred back to. If you can't do what you feel you need to do - you need to be able to leave a message and show you tried and request help. Please ensure this is a feature of the system."

St Petrocks

"Expectation and understanding that there will always be a % of people who do not and cannot access services digitally or via telephone [missing from Goal 6 - accessibility] and that in person support at the Civic Centre or at Hubs such as CoLab is essential."

Q3

YMCA

"I hope this helps priorities the right people working on the right work. It is very difficult to decision make, investigate and critically think about a person's issue when it is complex with them right there in front of you. So a move to rearrange this, retaining customer focused employees assisting with applications and enquiries by completing digital requests and forms can work really well."

"We see the benefit of accessing housing options digitally rather than in person appointments and we see benefit from recorded interactions accessible online."

St Petrocks

"Consistently clients feed back that because ECC staff call from a withheld number they do not answer. Increasing alternative means of communication [known telephone number / text message] would improve communication channels."

"Clients frequently lose access to email addresses and mobile phone numbers - this has proved incredibly problematic in terms of access / resetting accounts, so there needs to be an easy but secure 'way back in' for them. Draw on learning from the rollout of the Universal Credit journals / DWP where this has been a challenge for many."

"The CSC staff are amazing!! The sheer breadth and depth of their knowledge is humbling, and I have huge respect for the difficult job they do - anything that will give them more ability to answer and resolve customer queries will be great - but please ensure that you are led by the staff doing the work and their feedback as much as the other priorities identified - they really are the experts!"

"Please contact me directly if you would like to arrange a focus group with homeless / vulnerably housed clients - we would need a member of ECC staff to attend the StP Centre in person as this is the preferred method of communication for our client group. Ideally with a laptop to demonstrate any new digital pathways."

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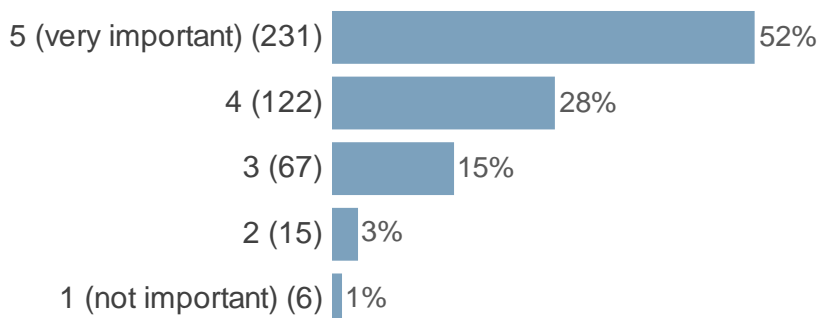
This report was generated on 15/09/23. Overall 441 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

The following charts are restricted to the top 12 codes. Lists are restricted to the most recent 100 rows.

We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

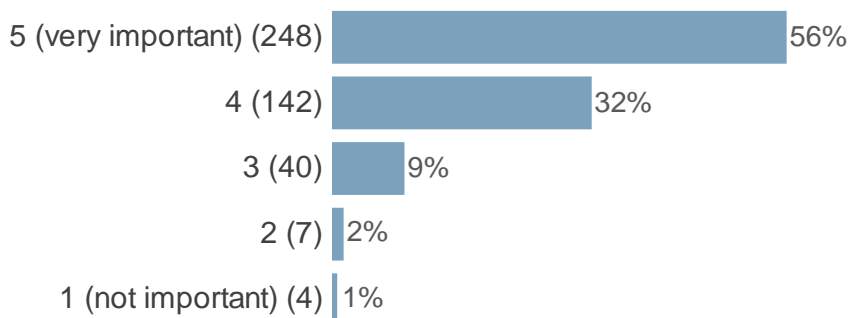
(Resolving my enquiry on my first contact)



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

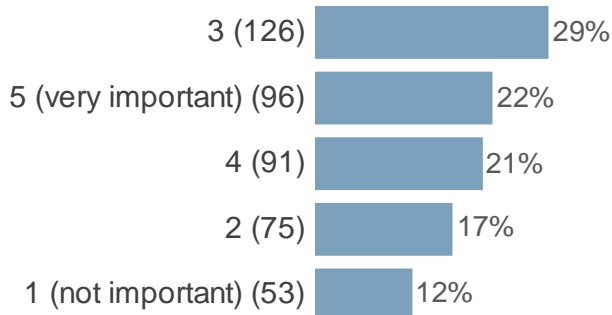
(Short waiting times)



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

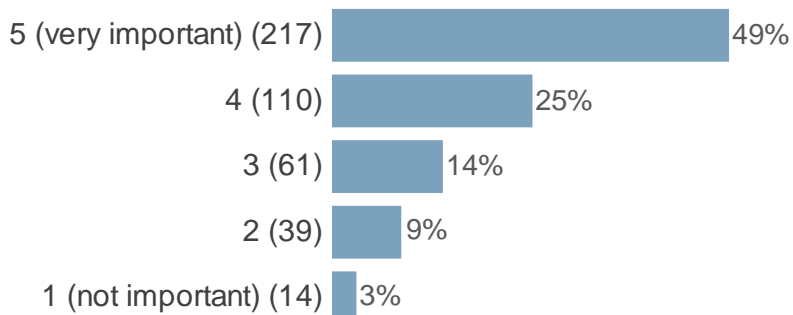
(24/7 access to services)



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

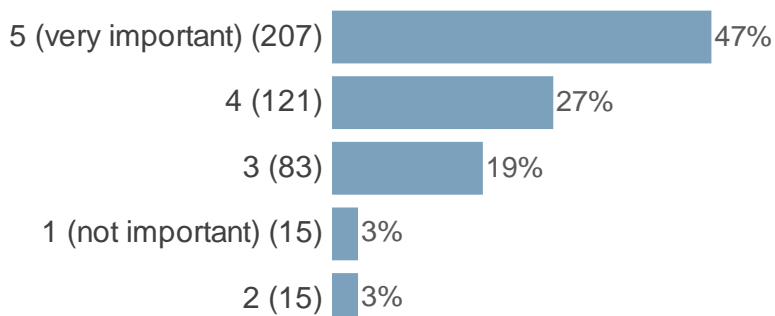
(Speaking to an officer to resolve my issue)



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

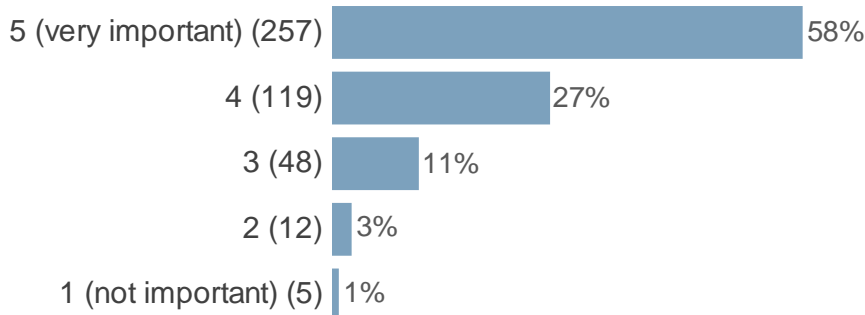
(Having a choice of channels to contact the council (e.g. phone, digital services, webchat))



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

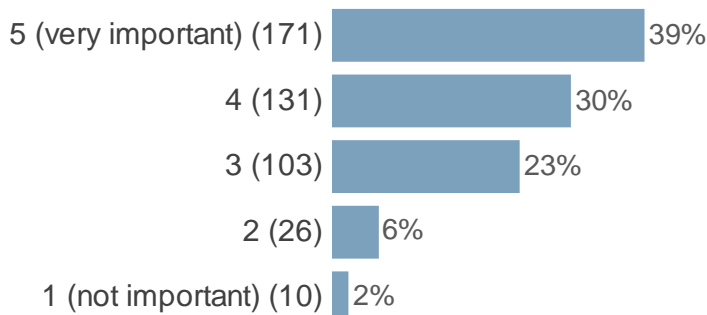
(Resolving my enquiry with as little effort as possible)



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

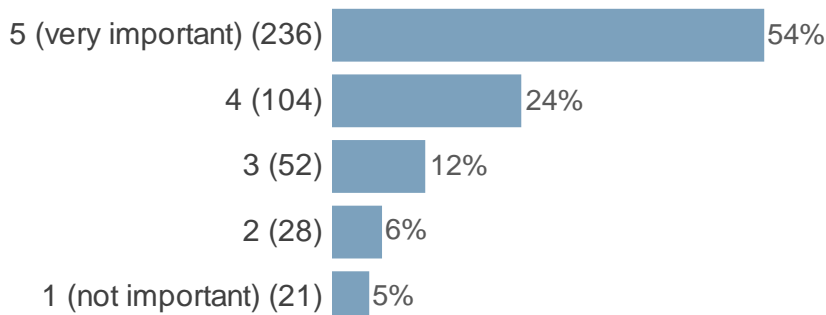
(Clear standards of service; information about the quality of services being delivered)



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

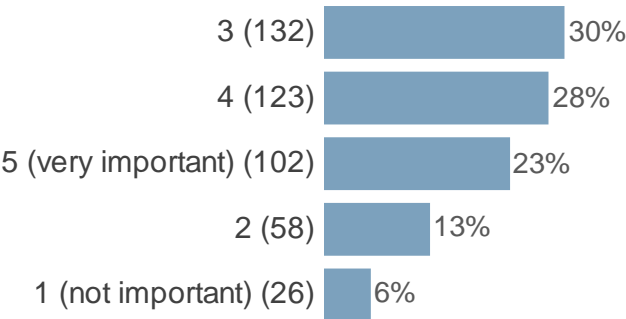
(Ability to use any device (e.g. phone, tablet, computer))



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

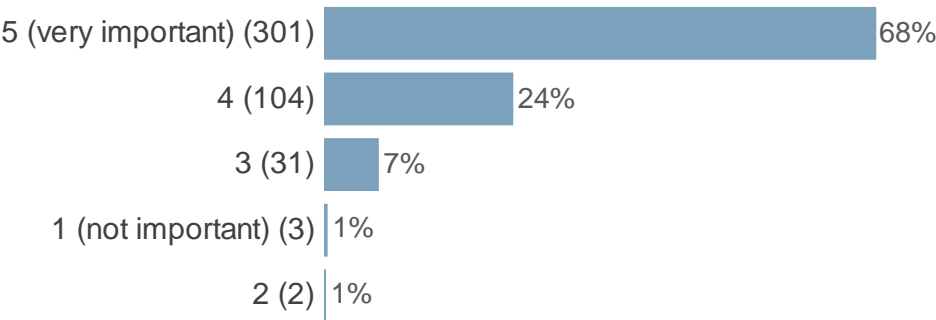
(Feedback mechanism – ways to feedback on my experience)



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

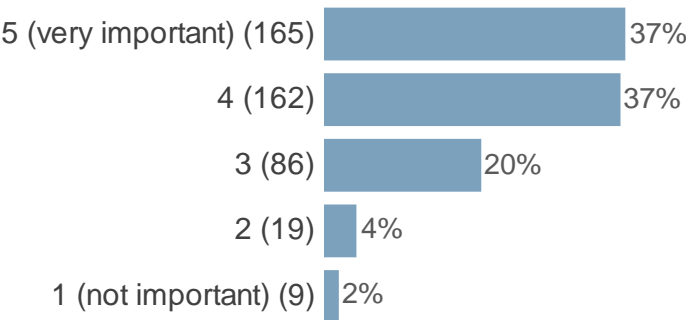
(Professional customer service staff)



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

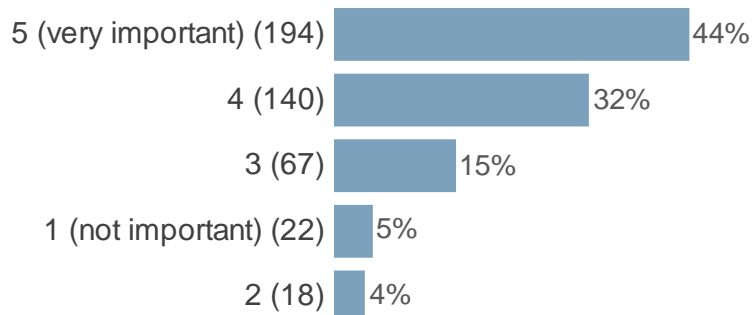
(Proactive/tailored updates (e.g. text messages or emails on the progress of your enquiry))



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

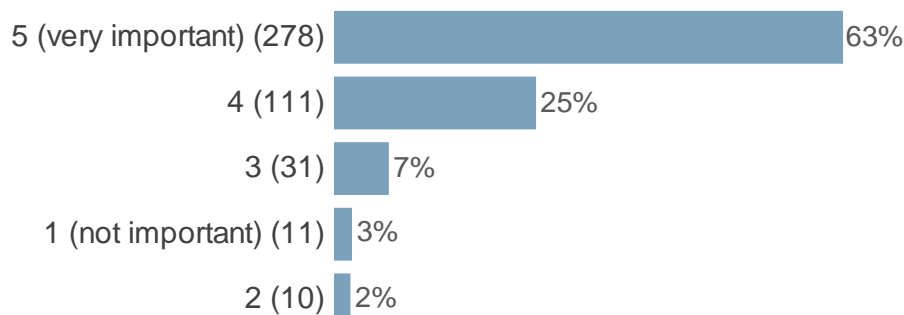
(A simple way to book appointments online)



We want to know what matters most to you when you contact the council.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

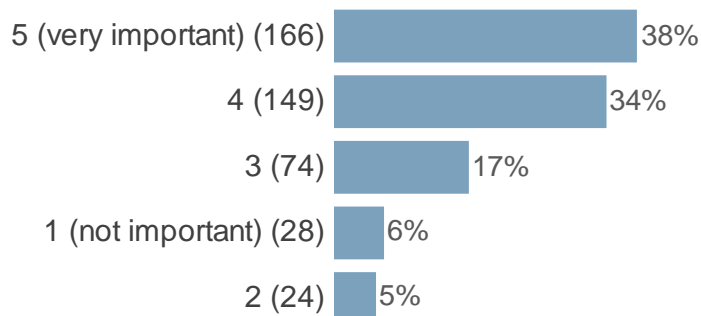
(A single point of contact without having to navigate multiple, complex contact points)



We'd like to know how important you think the following points are.

Please rate each point on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

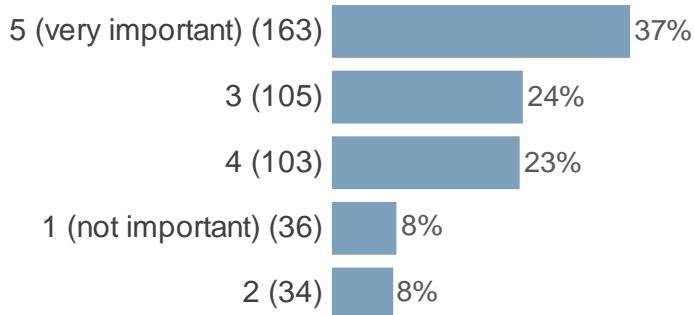
(Online services that match your experience of other business, (e.g. banks, online shopping etc.))



We'd like to know how important you think the following points are.

Please rate each point on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

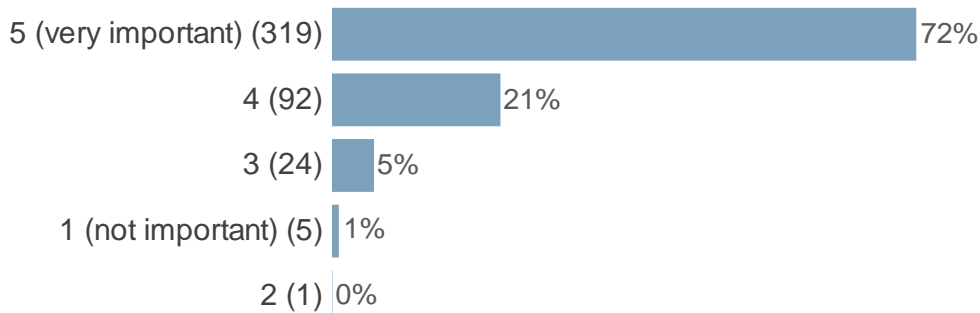
(Everyone in the city having access to digital services and the skills to use them)



We'd like to know how important you think the following points are.

Please rate each point on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

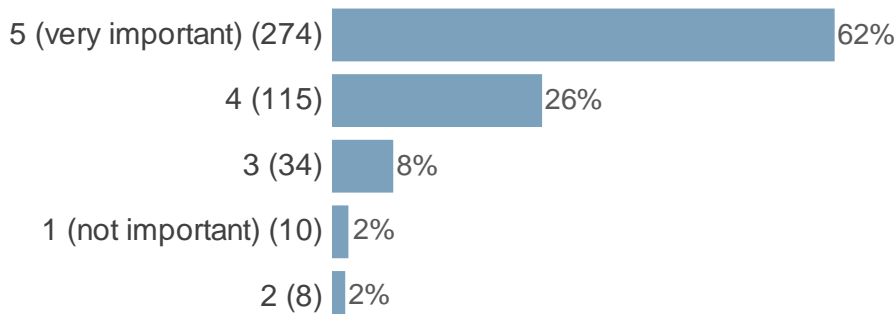
(The service you receive through digital, phone, face to face etc. is professional and friendly)



We'd like to know how important you think the following points are.

Please rate each point on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

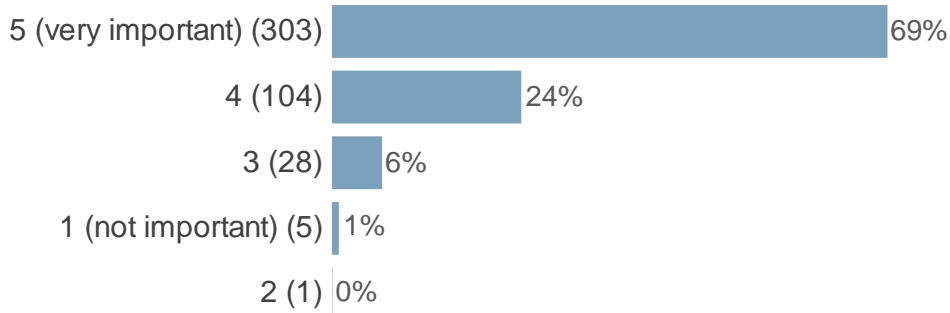
(Being able to access details of your enquiries, track progress and that this information is available to any staff who deal with your enquiry)



We'd like to know how important you think the following points are.

Please rate each point on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

(Ensuring that all information we publish is clear and accessible)



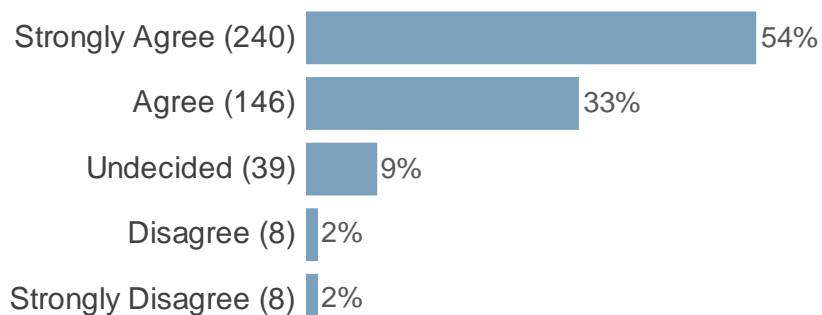
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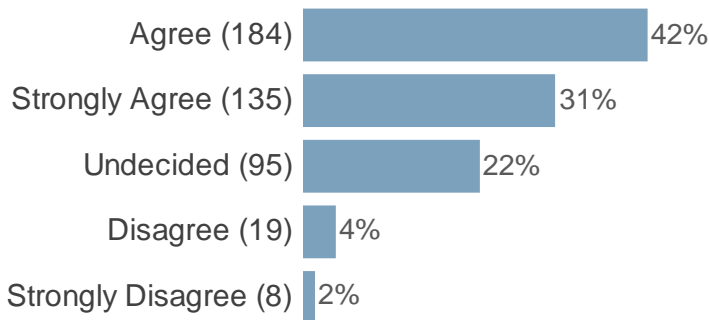
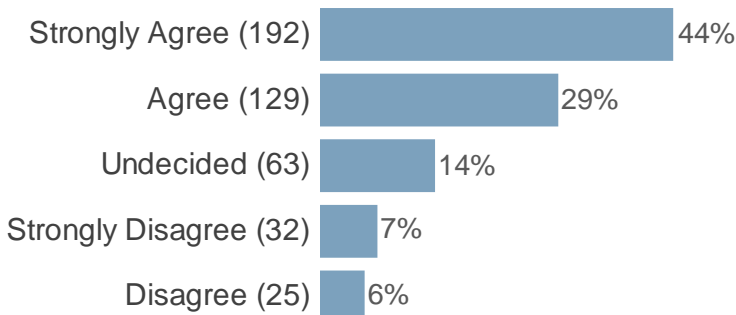
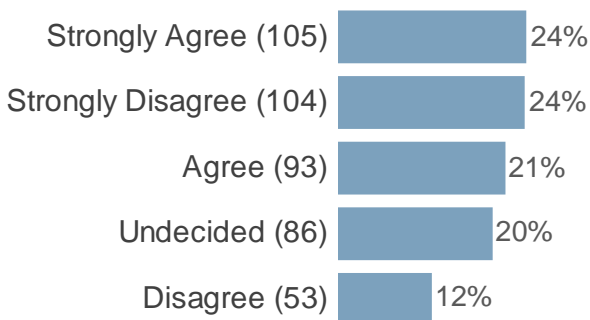
Please rate each point on a scale of 1 to 5. Where 1 is not important and 5 is very important:

(All personal data is secure and safe)

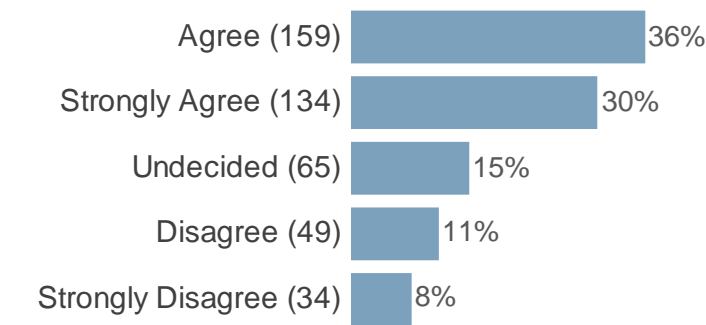


It is important for the Council to let people know they can pay the Council for things with cash and cheques through the post office and local shops with a Pay Point console

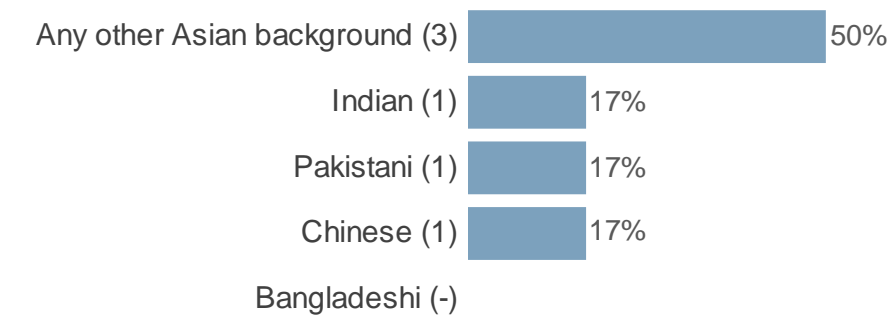


It is important for the Council to let people know they can pay through their PayPal account**When using Council car parks I would like to be able to use a credit or debit card at a pay and display machine****When using Council car parks I would like to be able to use a car parking app such as RingGo**

People should be encouraged to pay the Council by direct debit and on-line, as this helps to reduce back office costs



Asian or Asian British

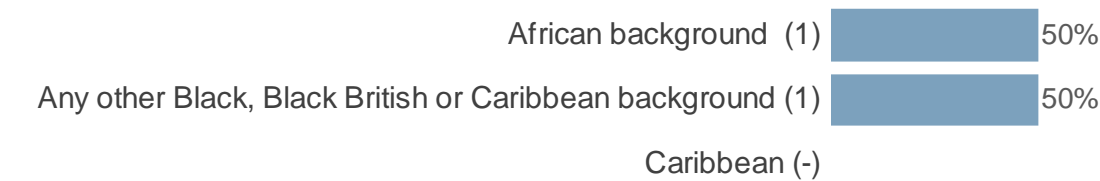


Other Asian or Asian British background (please describe)

Anglo Indian

Cannot delete this error. I'm not Asian

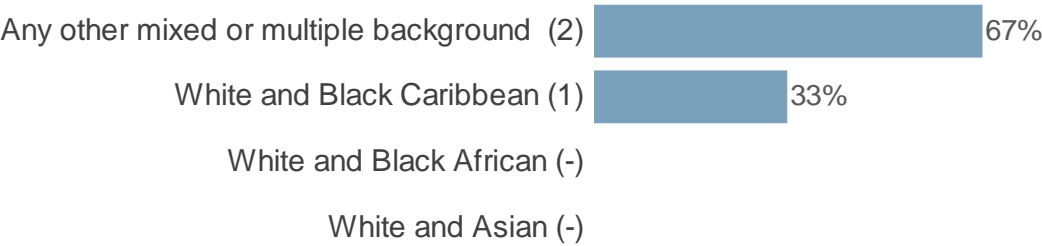
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African



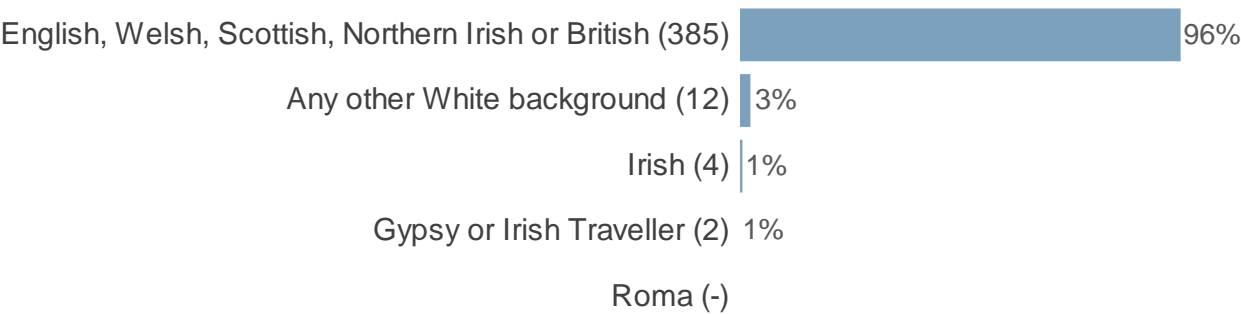
African background (please describe)

Kenyan

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups



White



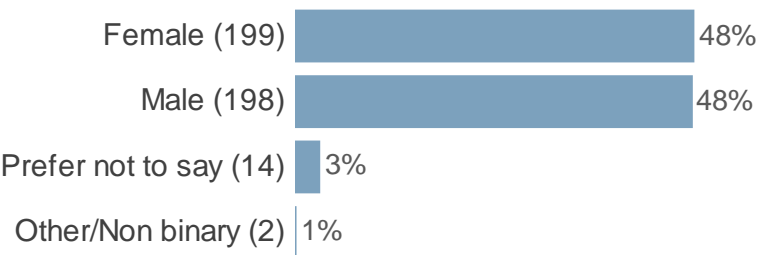
Any other White background (please describe)

English and Irish	Continental European / Australasian
German	White American
European English	Angloirish
German	central European

Other ethnic group



What is your gender identity?



Other gender/non binary (please describe)

Non binary

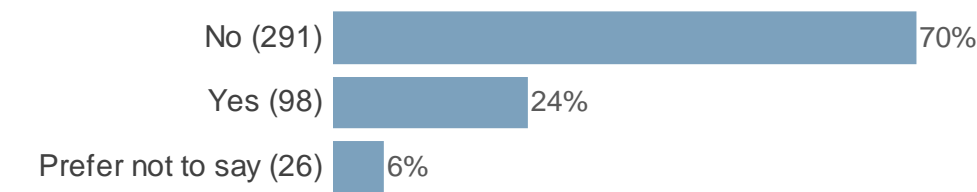
Is the gender you identify with the same as the sex you were registered with at birth?



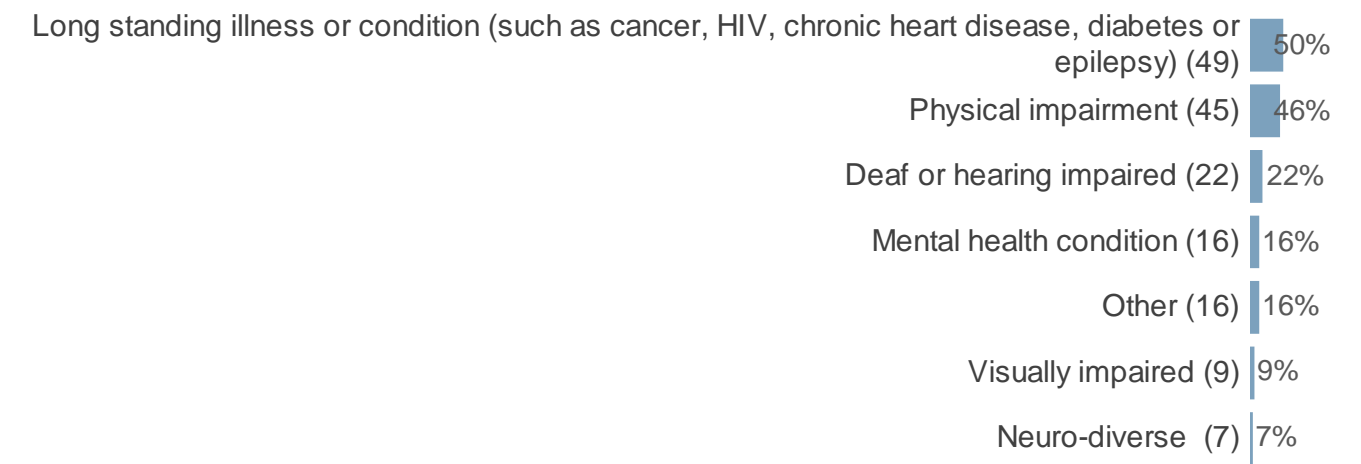
What year were you born?

1950	1980	1938	Exeter	1948	1960's	1996	N/A
1943	1961	1957	1950	1945	1950	1955	1960's
1938	1954	1955	1953	1977	1952	1992	1984
1980	1957	1955	1946	1945	1963	1963	1949
1944	1971	1943	1958	1940	Essex	1989	exeter
1961	1970	1946	1964	1948	1946	1960	1962
1975	1960	1948	1967	1951	1935	1957	1968
1958	1962	1962	1960	1950	1972	1950	1978
1949	1961	1938	1962	1953	1954	1931	1976
1972	1983	1954	1957	Xxx 1950	1976	1949	
1988	1947	1946	1951	1943	1946	1958	
1958	1944	1958	1987	1944	1969	1956	
1966	1951	1963	1963	London	1970	1954	

Do you identify as a Deaf or disabled person or have a long term health condition?



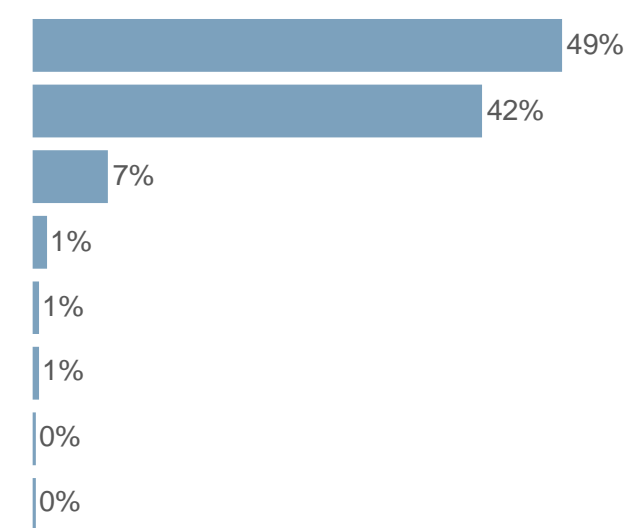
If you answered yes, please tick all that apply



Other disability or long term health condition (please describe)

COPD Arthritis spin hip knees	Crohn's Disease
M.E, arthritis, bile salt malabsorption	ME/CFS ; Asthma; IBS.
Copd	Parkinsons
Arthritic knees and raised blood pressure.	Addisons Disease
Chronic fatigue syndrome	spinal stenosis causing greatly reduced mobility
Hyperthyroidism	Thyroid problems , osteoporosis
Degenerative disk disease. COPD	Chronic pain
asthma	

What is your religion?

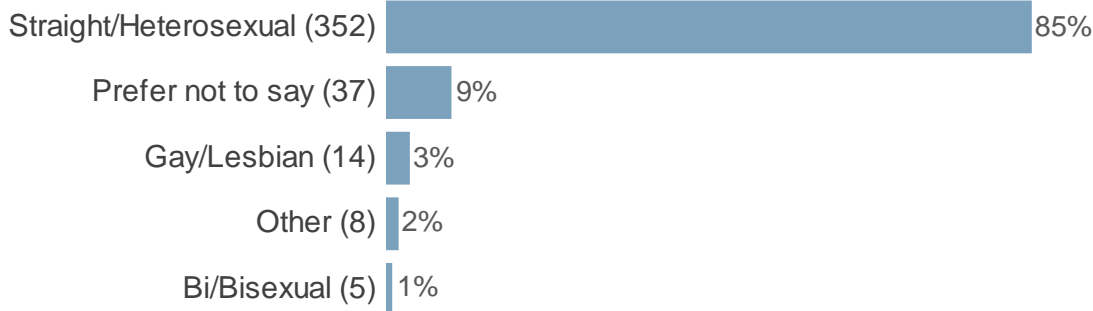


Any other religion (please state)

Spiritual

Humanist

individual system of beliefs

Select the option which best describes your sexual orientation**Other sexual orientation (please describe)**

Please don't ask this

Nice cheeses

Asexual

Surely, "Straight" is an offensive and outmoded term, being originally the 'opposite' of "Q***r", and other derogatory terms.

Pansexual

Queer

What is your postcode (or leave blank if you'd prefer not to let us know)

ex4 5eb	EX4 2EW	EX4 1EL	EX2 6NJ	EX13EJ	EX2 8EZ	EX3 0AJ
EX4 2PB	EX4 8NS	EX6 8RW	EX4	EX2	EX2 5RT	EX2 5DU
ex4	EX4 8BR	EX4 1HA	EX4	EX1 1TQ	EX2 9BP	EX2 7TG
ex2 8jt	ex2 6da	Ex2 9nx	EX1 3BB	EX3	EX11EE	EX1 3JL
EX4 5DN	Ex4 8az	EX2 5EG	EX4 1PQ	EX3 0AJ	EX5 4NP	EX2 5AJ
EX4 2NS	EX4 4QU	EX4 2PG	EX1 3LS	EX4 5EL	EX2 9AX	EX2
EX9 6ED	EX2 5QH	EX1 2ES	EX2 6DX	EX1 2RS	Ex27gf	Ex3 0FB
EX2 5HX	EX2 5DF	ex4 9al	ex4	EX4 8EL	EX4 4FW	EX3 0NE
EX4 ---	EX2 4LJ	EX3 0FB	EX2	EX2 7QE	Ex46qw	Ex48Br
Ex13dp	EX1 2PB	EX2	Ex4 8qp	EX2 6LJ	EX2	EX2 9dj
EX11 1UD	EX4 8HP	EX4	EX2 4TQ	ex1 3	EX1 2ET	EX4 6SY
wx13bt	EX2 6NJ	EX2 4TQ	EX3 0BW	EX4 2BB	Ex44ef	ex2 6lh
ex2 4st	Ex41ea	EX4 5DS	EX4 9ED	EX44SD	ex1 3xe	EX1 2ra
Ex2 9pj	EX4 1EA	ex4 6ej	EX48QY	Ex3 0ld	EX4 5EQ	EX2
ex2 7al	EX2 8TL					

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Customer Intelligence at Exeter City Council

RedQuadrant Report

September 2023



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Director

1. Executive Summary

Exeter City Council (ECC) is developing an organisational wide approach to improving customer experience, through the digital customer strategy, building a new operating model for customer experience, and bringing a focus on customer intelligence.

ECC's understanding of customer interactions and experiences is fragmented, with current datasets primarily encompass phone and web-based interactions, providing partial insights into reasons for contact and satisfaction. However, there is no holistic view and oversight of ECC's customers' journey and responses across all engagement channels. A key challenge is the presence of multiple access points for our customers. Each service has a distinct point of contact, leading to possible inefficiencies and inconsistencies in the customer experience.

Our in-depth consultation with Exeter City Council (ECC) involved a variety of methods: a systematic three-sprint approach, regular interactions with the project team, data collection and synthesis, and stakeholder surveys. The objective was to understand ECC's current customer experience maturity and provide actionable insights.

Key Findings:

1. ECC's customer experience operating model boasts strengths in digital transformation and a commitment to data-driven improvements. However, clearer governance and role definitions, along with explicit service design principles and outcome measures, are needed.
2. ECC's data maturity has room for growth. There are gaps in demand data recording, particularly in non-digital channels. Enhanced data literacy and improved data management practices are pivotal.
3. Digital inclusion is vital. While Exeter's risk of digital exclusion is slightly lower than regional and national figures, 10-15% of residents still face barriers.
4. ECC's customer experience maturity score stands at 2.7 (on the cusp of 'emerging' to 'developing'). This underscores potential across all four pillars of customer maturity.

Recommendations:

- Develop a customer intelligence model and a data accountability framework.
- Invest in digital inclusion, with strategies like a digital champions programme and connectivity solutions.
- Cultivate customer-centric strategies, rooted in deep customer insights and co-design.

- Elevate the organizational culture, linking employee experience to customer experience.
- Drive a strategic vision for customer experience, underpinned by clear standards and robust governance.

This comprehensive review illustrates ECC's foundation in customer experience, while also highlighting avenues for considerable enhancement. By acting on these insights, ECC can foster a more connected, responsive, and resident-focused council.

2. Project Scope

As part of One Exeter, ECC are embarking on an ambitious organisational wide programme of transformation including development of a Digital Customer Strategy. This sets out ECC's vision to put the customer first which means constantly looking to improve the user experience and ensuring that customer's needs guide how services are developed and delivered.

This project is a critical underpinning phase of exploration to help us understand what data we already have about our customers and their experiences of using our services, and how to translate this data into intelligence and insights that we can use to design and deliver on our customer first ambitions. The project has identified gaps in data, and we have made recommendations on how to enhance customer intelligence in the context of our digital customer strategy ambitions. This includes understanding the scale and characteristics of those who may face digital access and exclusion is an important focus of this work.

The objectives were:

1. **Mapping and Identifying:** Identify and map existing data on customer demand and experience across all access routes and channels
2. **Analysis:** Analyse our existing data to uncover insights about customer demand, experience, and outcomes
3. **Data Gap Identification:** Highlight gaps in data gathering and insight across the organisation
4. **Digital Exclusion Assessment:** Understanding the digital accessibility challenges our customers face and the demographic specifics of the digitally excluded in Exeter.
5. **Customer Experience Maturity Assessment:** Evaluation was designed to gauge the council's current capabilities, systems, and strategies in delivering customer-centric services.

3. Method and Approach

To ensure we delivered on the requirements, the following methods and approaches were used:

Three-sprint approach

- Building on the rapid mobilisation, we delivered the requirements across three sprints moving from understanding the current state of play, exploring the insights we collated and building the findings and recommendations.

Regular engagement with the 'Project Team'

- Our weekly check-in sessions enabled transparent conversations each week to discuss progress, challenges and findings so far. This connected two-way partnership enabled us to continually understand the context and developments within ECC.

Data collection and analysis

- Develop a data model that can accept data from any level in the organisation
- Develop a quality framework to assess source data
- Identify sources of data on customer demand and assess their quality
- Compile acceptable data into an analytical dataset to develop insight

Document review

- Collect all relevant and appropriate documents to review, including digital customer strategy, customer experience target operating model and customer insight

Survey delivery and insight development

- The customer experience maturity assessment was completed by 42 staff at ECC, across SMB, OMB and the Staff Sounding Board.
- Insights were both quantitative and qualitative, with qualitative comments being tagged and synethised to produce the insights findings pack.

4. Key Findings & Recommendations

We have developed our findings and recommendations, across **four key themes**:

1. Proposed Customer Experience Operating Model
2. Customer Insight, Access, and Demand Data
3. Digital Inclusion
4. Customer Experience Maturity

4.1 Proposed Customer Experience Operating Model

In addition to the requirements and scope, we reviewed your ‘customer experience’ operating model, and have detailed our high-level findings and recommendations below:

Key positives:

- Strong emphasis on digital transformation and customer-centricity
- Recognition of the importance of continuous improvement and data-driven decision-making

Key Recommendations for Improvement:

- **Now vs Future:** Describing the current ‘operating model’ and how it compares to the ‘target operating model’. Articulating this will enable the organisation to understand the journey ahead and how it compares to the existing model. If you don’t have an existing documented operating model, then describing the components within the current state of play would suffice.
- **Clear Governance Structure:** A more detailed governance structure would be beneficial, clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes. This might include if the operating model will include things like a design authority, customer experience board and resident involvement group. Developing the right level of governance for ECC will be critical, ensuring organisational wide oversight, while empowering and enabling services to understand and develop customer experience.
- **Service Design Principles:** These principles, ideally developed through both customer insight and strategic direction, will enable services to translate the strategy and what customers need into designing services.
- **Measures and Outcomes:** An effective operating model should clearly articulate measures and outcomes, ensuring they are directly linked to strategic objectives. Measures must be specific, actionable, and encompass both quantitative and qualitative data for a comprehensive view of the customer experience. Outcomes should reflect desired end-states and be tied to business impact.

4.2 Customer Access and Demand Data

Exeter City Council's (ECC) assessment reveals a critical need for structured data management and customer engagement. A ‘Customer Access Data Model’ was introduced, categorising demand from the enterprise level down to demand sub-types. However, significant gaps in demand data recording were identified, notably in non-digital channels, with notable discrepancies in phone and email recordings.

To address these challenges, recommendations include developing a customer intelligence model, creating a data accountability framework, enhancing data literacy, and integrating qualitative feedback within transactional surveys. These steps aim to strengthen ECC's data maturity and improve customer-centric service delivery.

Introducing the 'Customer Access Data Model'

We applied the following scheme to the structure of the organisation:

1. Whole enterprise
2. Directorate (e.g., Culture, Communications, Leisure, and Tourism)
3. Service (e.g., Environmental Health and Community Safety / Licensing)
4. Demand type (e.g., Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support)
5. Demand sub-type (e.g., Assisted Waste Collection)

The data quality assessment framework

Data to be included had to have the following features:

- Data representing customer access over at least one continuous calendar year
- The customer access channels must be identifiable, i.e., phone, online form, etc.
- The directorate, service and/or demand (sub)type can be identified in the data

Summary of additional findings from the data review:

- The most data can be found within the Finance Directorate which has **€**Customer Service Centre under it which has the main amount of demand.
- The majority of all demand we looked at is non-digital. 42.8% is digital, 57.2% is non-digital.
- There was a small amount of data available to us for Culture, Communications, Leisure, and Tourism. A total of 452 Contacts.
- The highest contact by channel was for phone which was 54,159 contacts – this number is still very low to what we know it should be.
- The second highest was Firmstep – self which had 53,540 contacts.
- The service with the highest demand recorded is Waste. A total of 49,339 Contacts.



Customer demand across channels



Customer demand split between digital and non-digital, across departments

Demand data use findings:

- Critical gap: No reports produced routinely had individual customer numbers, so were based on service not customer measures.
- 54,159 phone calls, compared to 299,897 showing on the ECC Telephony dashboard (excludes 50% of services and direct dial calls)

- 5,683 emails, but from the one-off demand audit there are 85,000 emails per year from the ten highest-volume services
- No or little demand data for Housing Assets, Leisure, Culture and Tourism, Facilities & Markets, Port Authority, Revenues and Benefits, Payment & Collections, Environmental Health, and Housing Needs

Demand data use insights:

- Phone demand is very poorly recorded outside of Customer Service
- Email demand is very poorly recorded across all service areas
- Recording demand is currently very service-focused and does not make the customer visible
- It is impossible to identify issues like failure demand and unavoidable contact using current customer demand recording processes
- The channel mix analysis is heavily skewed towards digital transactions and only reflects a fraction of actual customer demand

In appendix 5.1 and 5.2, we list the data and reports used, and not used within the customer access analysis.

Building on these findings, we have developed the following recommendations to enhance ECC's data maturity:

- **Use data to better understand your customers, not just your services**
You should move towards recording service activity through a customer lens, i.e., that any data recorded can be expressed in terms of unique and repeat customers, not just types of service interaction. This will help to develop an understanding of the proportions of your customers who prefer accessing council services via different access channels such as phone, email and digital self-serve and the different levels of need or demand among customer groups.
- **Use data standards to align and combine your data for better insight**
Aligning your data on common standards will allow you to combine service-level data to generate greater insight about your customers and their needs. You will need to consider customer privacy in this process, and you may need to consult customers and update published privacy notices.
- **Develop a customer intelligence model and embed this into operational datasets**
A customer intelligence model is a set of attributes and patterns that when combined enable predictive ability for customer needs and demand. Such models might include attributes like age, disability, household composition and patterns like combinations of service interactions such as channel preference or accessing two or

more specific services (e.g., housing and employment & skills) or specific activities, such as cancelling a council tax direct debit.

- **Develop a data accountability and ownership framework**

All datasets that you generate and maintain in your data store should have a named sponsor/owner and accountable lead who has good operational knowledge of the data collected and stored. The content of each dataset and its uses should be recorded as part of this framework. This might be incorporated into your Record of Processing Activity (RoPA).

- **Develop a corporate data dictionary**

This data dictionary should show which datasets you currently store, who owns and is accountable for them, what items they contain (e.g., personal identifiers, attributes, and service access data) so that data projects can easily discover what data is available when needed.

- **Develop and maintain a corporate metadata framework**

Data from different sources should be expressed using the same metadata standards, such as a date of birth format (e.g., 'dd-mm-yyyy')

- **Develop a business intelligence process**

You should operate a model process for establishing new business intelligence. A high-level business intelligence model process has been provided as an example.

Appendix 5.3 – high-level business intelligence process model visual

- **Develop the right data skills and knowledge**

You should take a proactive approach to assessing the data skills that you need. These skills are likely to include:

- Understanding the importance of data in individual staff's work
- Understanding when data can be shared
- Being able to link data management practices to organisational outcomes
- Data and analysis skills and expertise in senior leadership roles

- **Allocate resources to improving data literacy**

You should take steps to systematically understand the data skills requirements of all roles and invest in the data skills of all staff who work with data and data specialists.

- **Develop a community of practice or centre of excellence for managing and working with data**

You should identify where in your structure data skills would best be stewarded and develop this into a community of practice or centre of excellence and resource this area to support other parts of the council to develop their own data skills.

- **Make data interpretable for different users**

Consider the different audiences at an early stage in planning your use of data and how analysis should be presented to be of most value in decision making. Data and

analysis should be presented in ways that can quickly and easily be interpreted by non-specialists without additional support.

- **Ensure you have the right tools for organising, accessing, and analysing data**
You should think about whether real-time or periodic analysis is needed for any given task, ensure data and analysis tools are aligned with wider organisational needs and outcomes and are appropriate for both data specialists and non-specialists.
- **Break down silos by increasing interlinking between data storage systems**
You will be able to generate significantly more insight from your data if your analytical systems and tools are able to draw from multiple data sources (with appropriately managed user access controls).
- **Use data tactically, strategically, and ethically**
You should develop repeatable processes for using customer data to improve service delivery, using demand and outcome data to plan future services, and understanding how your use of data affects the communities you serve, particularly those who are vulnerable or excluded.
- **Integrating Qualitative Feedback within Transactional Surveys**
ECC should enhance its customer insight by embedding open-ended questions within transactional surveys. This dual approach captures immediate service experience while gathering deeper qualitative feedback. Encourage residents to share stories and suggestions, ensuring their voices shape service improvements. By blending quantitative metrics with qualitative insights, the council can understand the customer voice, design services around this, ensuring they resonate with the diverse needs and expectations of the Exeter community.

Appendix 5.4 – shares the difference between perception and transactional surveys

Appendix 5.5 – shares the benefits of qualitative customer insights

- **Exeter City Council needs to establish a clear operating model and designed architecture for customer listening**
Implementing a structured framework for surveys and engagement is crucial. By doing so, ECC can systematically capture, analyse, and act on feedback, ensuring residents feel heard and valued. This foundation will foster better decision-making, more tailored services, and enhanced trust between the council and its constituents.

4.3 Digital Inclusion

We define digital exclusion as: ‘individuals who face barriers to accessing digital services leading to inequality of outcome’.

There are four main causes of digital exclusion:

1. Digital Skills

2. Data and Connectivity
3. Devices
4. Motivation or Attitude

Appendix 5.6 – definition and causes of digital exclusion visual

Digital Inclusion – the key headlines:

- The population of Exeter is at a slightly lower risk of digital exclusion than that of the Southwest region and England
- 10-15% of the local population are likely to face some barriers to digital engagement
- A significant majority of customers are likely to move to digital channels to access services as they are introduced, delivering benefits to both customers and the council
- Some digital inclusion support or alternative access channels are needed, particularly for targeted services such as social housing

Exeter is low risk for digital exclusion

The average digital exclusion risk index (DERI) score for all areas (LSOAs) in Exeter is 3.395 out of ten, compared to 3.649 in the Southwest region and 3.597 in England.

Only two areas in Exeter have a DERI score above 5, indicating a higher risk of digital exclusion, which are in the Priory and Mincinglade and Whipton wards. These areas contain 3,891 residents (3% of the local population).



Exeter City's Digital Exclusion Risk Index

Exeter residents likely to not have internet access at home

Appendix 5.7 – internet access at home visual

- 9.9% of Exeter households (5,193) due to their age (compared to 11.4% in the Southwest region and 10.2% in England)
- 4.0% of Exeter households (2,075) due to their social grade (compared to 3.7% in the Southwest region and 4.1% in England)
- 5.1% of Exeter households (2,661) due to being unemployed (compared to 3.1% in the Southwest region and 4.0% in England)

(Household numbers are not cumulative)




Exeter residents likely to have not used the internet in the last three months, by digital exclusion risk factor:

Risk factor	Number of Exeter residents	% of local population	South West Region	England
Age (65+ years old)	6,465	4.95%	6.59%	5.37%
People with disabilities	4,424	3.38%	3.45%	3.22%
Economically inactive	958	0.73%	0.80%	0.95%
Retired	5,941	4.55%	6.15%	5.06%
Living in social housing	2,537	1.94%	1.59%	2.06%

Resident numbers are not cumulative

Exeter residents likely to have not used the internet in the last three months

Exeter residents likely to not have basic digital skills:

- 3.5% of Exeter residents (4,524) due to their age (compared to 4.5% in the Southwest region and 3.8% in England)
- 1.2% of Exeter residents (1,563) due to their social grade (compared to 1.2% in the Southwest region and 1.3% in England)
- 3.4% of Exeter residents (4,484) due to being unemployed (compared to 4.0% in the Southwest region and 3.5% in England)

(Resident numbers are not cumulative)

Source: Lloyds Digital Consumer Index 2022

Other digital exclusion headline statistics for Exeter:

- 7.2% of 2021 census returns from Exeter were made via non-digital channels (equivalent to 3,718 households) compared to 7.0% in the Southwest region and 5.9% in England
- At least 2.75% of connected households in Exeter (1,302) have an internet connection slower than 10 MB/s
- Up to 19.7% of households in Exeter (10,437) cannot get an internet connection of 30 MB/s or faster
- Average download speeds offered by internet providers in Exeter range from 44.0 MB/s to 106.3 MB/s

We have developed the following recommendations to enhance ECC's digital inclusion capability:

Recommendation 1

Develop a digital champions programme for *very low skilled residents*

- Digital champions can be volunteers who work informally with others who lack the skills or confidence to access digital services. This model works well in community settings like sheltered housing or community centres
- Digital champions can be embedded into service delivery teams, particularly those that are likely to have more digitally excluded customers. This is a low-cost way to enable customers with more complex needs to access council services
- There are a range of digital champions development programmes available, for example, the programme operated by Digital Unite: <https://www.digitalunite.com/products/what-we-do> and from Citizens Online: <https://www.citizensonline.org.uk/digital-inclusion/digital-champions/>

Recommendation 2

Commission digital skills training for low skilled residents

- Residents in low-skilled work, many of whom also have low levels of education, may benefit from some formal training to enable them to access digital services.
- There are a range of free services and resources available to help residents develop their digital skills, for example We Are Digital's Vodafone digital skills helpline: <https://info.we-are-digital.co.uk/vodafone-digital-skills-line>
- Free resources include "Learn my way": <https://www.learnmyway.com/>
- More substantial digital skills training programmes are also available at cost, for example this offer from We Are Digital: <https://www.we-are-digital.co.uk/training>

Recommendation 3

A common approach to helping customers with data and connectivity is to develop a SIM card loan/gift scheme that is low cost or free for service users who are struggling to access the council's digital services due to a lack of access to internet connectivity

- Some mobile network providers have offers for charitable organisations to offer SIM cards to those who need data or connectivity, for example this programme from Vodafone: <https://www.vodafone.co.uk/mobile/everyone-connected/charities-connected> and this example from the Good Things Foundation: <https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/databank/>
- Working in partnership with local voluntary sector organisations that are both able to reach those who are digitally excluded and access schemes like that offered by Vodafone is likely to enable a significant proportion of digitally excluded residents' access ECC digital services

Recommendation 4

Address both general device needs, e.g., for customers on low incomes and specialist device needs for those with specific disabilities

- Many councils operate device recycling schemes, either operated via third party suppliers or their own waste management functions. See this LGA case study: <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/refurbishing-it-devices-opportunity-tackle-digital-poverty-norwich>
- Example 1, Merton Council: <https://news.merton.gov.uk/2021/11/23/connecting-merton-digitally-is-a-success/>
- Example 2, Bristol City Council: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/jobs-and-training/digital-inclusion-scheme>
- Example 3, Barnet Council: <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/barnet-digital-inclusion/refurbished-laptops-and-tablets>

Recommendation 5

Develop a digital champions programme for digitally disengaged residents

- Digital champions can be volunteers who work informally with others who lack the confidence or motivation to access digital services. This model works well in community settings like sheltered housing or community centres
- Digital champions can be embedded into service delivery teams, particularly those that are likely to have more digitally excluded customers. This is a low-cost way to enable customers with more complex needs to access council services
- There are a range of digital champions development programmes available, for example, the programme operated by:
Digital Unite: <https://www.digitalunite.com/products/what-we-do>

Citizens Online: <https://www.citizensonline.org.uk/digital-inclusion/digital-champions/>

4.4 Customer Experience Maturity Assessment

In our engagement with Exeter City Council, we undertook a comprehensive Customer Experience Maturity Assessment. This pivotal evaluation was designed to gauge the council's current capabilities, systems, and strategies in delivering customer-centric services. The findings provide a clear benchmark of where the council stands and offer insights into potential areas for improvement, ensuring that residents receive the best possible experience.

The overall customer experience maturity score for Exeter City Council is **2.7**. This score sits towards the upper part of 'emerging', and very close to move into 'developing'. This signals that the council has a real opportunity to develop all capabilities across the four pillars. Each pillar scored a similar maturity, with small variance between highest and lowest; therefore, all capabilities need strengthening to enable Exeter City Council to deliver its customer experience aspirations.



Slide from the customer experience insights pack, visual sharing the maturity score

As within the 'Customer Experience Maturity Insights' pack developed, we recommend the following, across the **four maturity pillars**:

Pillar 1 – understanding your customers

- Create a corporate wide approach to customer insight and turning insight into action continually. With a specific focus on developing more qualitative customer feedback.
- Develop expertise and mechanism for co-designing services with residents
- Define and embed an organisational approach to customer journey design
- Create a data collection and management framework for customer access and demand data

- Develop easily understandable and clear customer personas to increase customer centricity and designing for all customers in different contexts
- Develop a set of Service Design principles that enables the organisation to design services for customers

Appendix 5.8 – pillar 1 maturity insights overview

Pillar 2 – culture and engagement

- Build an employee experience blueprint from recruitment, on-boarding, training, and engagement
- Deeper employee engagement insights to understand the link and drivers with customer experience
- Review the customer experience capability and capacity gaps including the customer insight and service design
- Create organisational-wide customer service training to support and enable front-line staff with service delivery
- Build on the existing culture within ECC, by ensuring effective performance management to uphold the values and behaviours

Appendix 5.9 – pillar 2 maturity insights overview

Pillar 3 – customer experience strategy

- Continue to develop your customer experience and digital strategy, engaging the organisation in the design and delivery to ensure understanding and buy-in
- Clearly articulated standards and corporate wide approach to customer experience
- Develop an organisational blueprint and Operating Model for customer experience either with the strategy or as one of the key priorities from the strategy
- Review customer experience measures to ensure effective monitoring and reporting on what matters most to ECC customers

Appendix 5.10 – pillar 3 maturity insights overview

Pillar 4 – organisational architecture


- Develop stronger governance on customer experience – service design and technology to ensure stronger alignment, co-ordination and prioritisation in resources and investments
- Corporate wide approach to service and process design to enable consistency and joined up services
- Develop a structured approach to defining the ‘return on investment’ for customer experience initiatives
- Develop executive alignment on customer experience, through a co-designed vision and strategy.

Appendix 5.11 – pillar 4 maturity insights overview

5. Appendix

5.1 Customer access analysis – reports included:

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Data that was included in the dataset:

- Most data included was sourced from the ECC Power BI dashboards maintained by Strata Service Solutions and other data was included if it did not duplicate these reports
- Reports included were:

Demand Logger - Customer support	Firmstep Overview	Assisted Waste Collections
Bin Reminders	Bulky Waste	Fly Tipping
Graffiti	Homelessness	Litter and sharps
Mixed Bin Escalations	Mixed Bin	Noise Complaints
Sharps Collections	RANM Dashboard	

5.2 Customer access analysis – data that is not included

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Data that could not be included in the dataset:

Data source	Reasons why it could not be included
Cleaning Contact Us	Not enough data – only six months of demand data
Contact us	Not enough data – only one week of demand data
Contact us - March 2023	Not enough data – only three months of demand data
ECC Telephony Dashboard	Not enough data – only average calls and whether they were accepted or missed, service information partial/missing
Building Control	Not enough data – focused on fee charges and locations
Planning web stats	This dataset is focused on website usage not service access
EnCS final	This dataset is focused on internal processes not customer requests
RANM Visits	Focuses on visitor numbers and footfall but not customer interactions

5.3 High-level business intelligence model process



5.4 Customer Insight – Perception and Transactional

Customer insight can be broadly split into **two categories**:

Perception Surveys

Aim to understand how customers view the council as a whole

Transactional Surveys

Aim to understand the customer's experience during a specific interaction or transaction

Perception customer surveys focus on understanding the general feelings, beliefs, and attitudes that customers have towards a brand, product, or service. These surveys often target a broad range of topics and aim to capture the overall sentiment and image of the brand in the minds of the customers.

Key Features:

1. Broad Topics: Can cover topics like Council awareness and perception of the Council
2. Less Time-Sensitive: These surveys are not necessarily tied to a specific interaction or purchase.
3. Target Audience: Might target both current customers and potential customers to gauge market perception.
4. Examples of Questions: "How likely are you to recommend Exeter City Council to a friend?", "What words come to mind when you think of Exeter City Council "How do you perceive the quality of our services?"

Transactional customer surveys are focused on gathering feedback about a specific interaction or transaction that a customer had with the business. This could be after a purchase, a customer support interaction, or any other specific touchpoint.

Key Features:

1. Specific Interaction: Directly related to a recent transaction, interaction, or experience with the council.
2. Time-Sensitive: Typically sent out shortly after the transaction or interaction to capture fresh feedback.
3. Target Audience: Targets customers who have recently interacted with the business.
4. Examples of Questions: "Were you satisfied with your recent interaction?", "How would you rate the assistance you received from our customer service representative?", "Was the service smooth and easy?"

Both types of surveys can provide invaluable insights for ECC, enabling the council to refine services, improve customer service, and enhance the overall customer experience.

5.5 Benefits of qualitative customer insights

While quantitative data provides numerical metrics and statistical analysis, qualitative insights provide a deeper understanding of customer experiences, perceptions, contexts, and needs.

In-depth Understanding

Qualitative insights will enable Exeter to gain a nuanced and in-depth understanding of customer behaviours, contexts, and needs. It helps uncover the "why" behind customer actions, going beyond just "what" they do.

Gaining the genuine 'Voice of the Customer'

Qualitative enables Exeter to gain authentic words, voices of customers – which can act as a powerful enabler of change, through using customer stories and quotes to influence change or prioritisation of resources.

Understanding Customer Pain Points

Qualitative research can reveal specific pain points and challenges that customers face. Identifying these pain points enables businesses to address them effectively, leading to improved customer satisfaction.

Identifying Opportunities for Improvement

Qualitative insights can highlight areas where products, services, or processes can be enhanced. This information is valuable for making strategic improvements and staying competitive.

Developing 'Customer Personas'

Understanding customers on a deeper level allows for better segmentation based on preferences, behaviours, and needs.

Building 'Service Design' Principles

Understanding what matters to customers through the qualitative insights enables ECC to translate this into 'guiding' principles that everyone in the organisation can understand and embed within their services and ways of working.

Building Customer Empathy

Listening to customer stories and experiences fosters empathy within the organization. This empathy helps teams align their efforts to better serve customer needs and improve customer relationships.

Emerging Themes/Early Warning Signs

Qualitative research can serve as an early warning system for emerging issues or negative sentiment among customers, allowing Exeter to proactively address concerns.

Validating Quantitative Findings

Qualitative insights can provide context and validation for quantitative data. They help interpret statistical results and provide a richer understanding of the numbers.

5.6 Definition and causes of 'Digital Exclusion'

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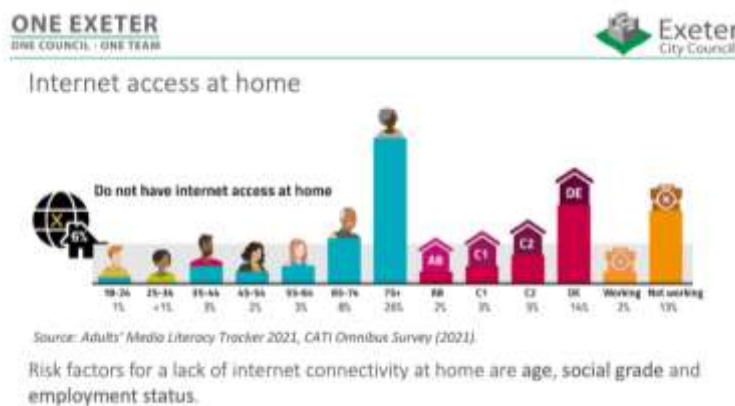
The definition of digital exclusion:

"Individuals who face barriers to accessing digital services leading to inequality of outcome."

The causes of digital exclusion:

Digital Skills	Data and Connectivity	Devices	Motivation or attitude
Those who do not have the skills or confidence to access digital services.	Those who do not have access to an internet connection.	Those who do not have the devices needed to access digital services.	Those who are unwilling to use (some) digital services.
More likely for those who have never used digital services for work (e.g., older and low-skilled).	More likely for those in low-income households and those living in rural areas.	Driven by affordability and disability, e.g., those on low incomes and visually impaired.	More likely for older people and those who have experienced inequality/disadvantage.

5.7 Internet access at home visual



5.8 Pillar 1 – customer experience maturity insights

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Pillar 1: Understanding your customers

Overview
This pillar is focused on how effectively your organisation has implemented and culture of listening, analysis the data and acts on customer insights.

The Data	Themes & Issues	Actions to take to increase maturity
How Mature Score: 0.7	"You don't have a consistent approach to customer engagement, understand segments of the data you have, nor do you have enough insight into the data to have a consistent understanding of it."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a consistent data approach to customer insight, and using insight into customer maturity, with a specific focus on understanding and improving customer feedback. Develop a consistent approach to customer insight, and using insight into customer maturity, with a specific focus on understanding and improving customer feedback.
What is the Customer: 0.8	"You have a consistent approach to customer insight, and using insight into the data to have a consistent understanding of it."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a consistent approach to customer insight, and using insight into customer maturity, with a specific focus on understanding and improving customer feedback. Develop a consistent approach to customer insight, and using insight into customer maturity, with a specific focus on understanding and improving customer feedback.
Customer Data: 0.8	"You have a consistent approach to customer insight, and using insight into the data to have a consistent understanding of it."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a consistent approach to customer insight, and using insight into customer maturity, with a specific focus on understanding and improving customer feedback. Develop a consistent approach to customer insight, and using insight into customer maturity, with a specific focus on understanding and improving customer feedback.
Customer Journey Design: 0.0	"You have a consistent approach to customer insight, and using insight into the data to have a consistent understanding of it."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a consistent approach to customer insight, and using insight into customer maturity, with a specific focus on understanding and improving customer feedback. Develop a consistent approach to customer insight, and using insight into customer maturity, with a specific focus on understanding and improving customer feedback.

5.9 Pillar 2 – customer experience maturity insights



5.10 Pillar 3 – customer experience maturity insights



5.11 Pillar 4 – customer experience maturity insights



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Equality Impact Assessment: Draft Digital Customer Strategy: Report on Consultation and Recommendations.

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:
Executive 7 November 2023	Draft Digital Customer Strategy: Report on Consultation and Recommendations.	Adoption of the Digital Customer Strategy 2023-2025, along with the intended outcomes and priority actions proposed.	Those with barriers to digital engagement. Research commissioned by ECC suggested that 10-15% of the population may face some barriers to digital engagement

Factors to consider in the assessment: For each of the groups below, an assessment has been made on whether the proposed decision will have a **positive, negative or neutral impact**. This must be noted in the table below alongside brief details of why this conclusion has been reached and notes of any mitigation proposed. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact – some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers; asylum seekers).	Positive & Negative	Medium	Digitisation has the potential to improve engagement with potentially marginalised groups. However, where this characteristic intersects with age and/or deprivation factors, the ONS suggests these groups may experience greater than average barriers to digital inclusion, particularly where English is not spoken as a first language
Disability: as defined by the Equality Act – a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.	Positive & Negative	Medium	High quality digital services have the potential to better engage those whose disability may mean encountering barriers to accessing services through in-person or voice channels. However, where disability intersects with other factors, such as access to employment, there may be increased risk of digital exclusion. In 2020 81% of disabled adults were regular internet users compared with 92% of all adults.

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
Sex/Gender	Negative	Low	Nationally, women are consistently less likely to access the internet, which may mean there is a low impact from further digitisation of services. However, this gap is significantly lessening year on year and in 2020 was 2%.
Gender reassignment	Neutral		
Religion and belief (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions).	Neutral		
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual).	Neutral		
Age (children and young people aged 0-24; adults aged 25-50; younger older people aged 51-75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).	Positive & Negative	Medium	ECC's commissioned research reported that 9.9% of Exeter households are likely to not have access at home due to their age. However, the related consultation shows that over 44% of responders were over 70 years, with the vast majority in support of effective digital services.
Pregnancy and maternity including new and breast feeding mothers	Neutral		
Marriage and civil partnership status	Neutral		

Actions identified that will mitigate any negative impacts and/or promote inclusion

Our Research

As part of the Digital Customer Service Strategy work programme ECC have commissioned a report investigating barriers to digital inclusion for Exeter residents. It found that risk factors for a lack of home internet connectivity are age, social grade and employment status.

Our research highlights that the main causes of digital exclusion are:

- Digital Skills – Those who do not have the skills or confidence to access digital services.
- Data and Connectivity – Those who do not have access to an internet connection.
- Devices - Those who do not have the devices needed to access digital services
- Motivation or attitude – Those who are unwilling to use (some) digital services.

Actions

In response, we will:

- Use the insights from the research commissioned research into the extent and impact of digital inclusion barriers in Exeter to develop a digital inclusion plan, ensuring there is clarity regarding the goals and measures associated with this plan.
- Ensure there are always alternative routes for those unable to contact digitally and that these are simple to use and easy to understand, ensuring equal opportunity access to services.
- Design services and create a channel mix that allows us to spend more personal contact time with those who need extra support, due to their needs and/or the complexity of their enquiry.
- Ensure that customer inclusion is a goal of any centralised Customer Experience function, with clear responsibility at the strategic level.
- Ensure that service design aligns with the Accessibility Regulations 2018 and the Equality Act 2010
- Promote the benefits of digital as a tool for inclusion and for engaging with those with protected characteristics.
- Address the current, potentially confusing, customer offer, with multiple contact points, which are not joined up and lack corporate standards around how they are delivered.
- Ensure all staff are suitably trained around equalities and inclusion and have the necessary skills and attributes to assist and enable those who cannot contact us digitally.

- Work with partners and other third parties to develop a map of, and promote opportunities for, digital skills training, (including how customers protect themselves online), and access to devices and affordable connectivity.
- Explore and apply for funding opportunities to deliver inclusion projects with tenants and other residents.
- Introduce a co-design approach to significant digital projects, which is inclusive of those individuals potentially most impacted and groups that represent them.

Web Accessibility

A well-designed website can be powerful tool for inclusion of those with certain protected characteristics, particularly where this is a barrier to accessing services through more traditional means. Web Accessibility refers to the degree to which websites are designed so that people with disabilities can use them. It also benefits those without disabilities, such as older people with changing abilities due to aging and those who may have a slow internet connection.

- Exeter City Council's website has an accessibility score of 96.4/100
- The Silktide monitoring website ranks Exeter 40th out of 350 local government websites in the UK for accessibility.

Officers: Stephen Clayton and Bruce Luxton

Date: 3rd October 2023

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REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 21 September and 5 October 2023

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 7 November 2023

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 12 December 2023

Report of: The Scrutiny Programme Board

Title: Annual Scrutiny Report 2022-23

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 To provide an annual update in respect of the Scrutiny work achieved during the municipal year 2022 – 2023.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 The Annual Scrutiny Report 2022- 2023 is noted by the Strategic Scrutiny Committee and the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee; and

2.2 The Executive note and recommend that Council approve Annual Scrutiny Report 2022- 2023.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 The Annual Scrutiny Report provides the Scrutiny Committees with an opportunity to:-

- a) Monitor the progress of the Scrutiny function and process at Exeter City Council;
- b) Comment upon the progress and direction of Scrutiny over the past year and into the future;
- c) Ensure that the Scrutiny Committees are kept fully up to date as to the Task and Finish Groups and what they have achieved; and
- d) Illustrate how effective Scrutiny can contribute towards an accountable, transparent and democratic process.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

None.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 There are no financial implications contained within this report.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 None identified.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

8.1 This update concentrates on providing Members with an overview of the work and achievements of Scrutiny during 2022 - 2023 and is set out in detail at Appendix A attached to this report.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

9.1 Good governance contributes to the Council's purpose of a "Well Run Council".

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

N/A

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report is for information only.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

13. Are there any other options?

N/A

Scrutiny Programme Board

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 4.36
01392 265275

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SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

(September 2022 – June 2023)

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Foreword from the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board

The role of Scrutiny is to provide support, challenge and to maximise the effectiveness of Exeter City Council and its working relationships with its partners across the local and wider communities it serves.

The two Scrutiny Committees have continued to take a proactive approach to matters concerning the Council and its residents, to support the Council in making a positive contribution to work in the city. The Scrutiny Programme Board supported by the Democratic Services Team have also continued to work to reinforce the focus of Scrutiny and manage the available resources to develop scrutiny training for all Members.

The Scrutiny Programme Board was set up to meet on a bi-annual basis, but have more recently moved to meet once a quarter to provide oversight and direction on the work of Scrutiny. The meetings attended by the Chairs and Deputy Chairs aim to develop a future programme of work, review any Scrutiny Proposals (pro-forma) submitted by Members and support best practice for both of the Scrutiny Committees.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Scrutiny Committee Members, and our partners for their continued support in contributing to the Scrutiny process as well as officers and the Democratic Services team in facilitating the operation of the Board and the Committees.

**Councillor Allcock,
Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board**

September 2023

Introduction

The Annual Scrutiny Report for Exeter City Council provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Strategic Scrutiny Committee and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee during the 2022/23 year (September 2022 to June 2023).

Scrutiny is a key tool for promoting the best interests and wellbeing of the area and seeks to ensure that local people receive high quality services that meet their needs. The two Scrutiny Committees act as a 'critical friend' to the Executive, and hold it to account, providing challenge where it deems necessary. Scrutiny has a vital role in the areas of reviewing the formulation of policy development and advising the Executive of areas of potential improvements. The work of the two Scrutiny Committees supports the Council in the work undertaken to achieve the aims of the Council's corporate objectives.

The aims of the Scrutiny process are to:-

- add value to Council business and decision-making;
- hold the Executive to account;
- to monitor the budget and performance of services;
- assist the Council in the development of policy and review the effectiveness of the implementation of Council policy;
- to review relevant Government policy development and legislation to assess the impact on the City and make recommendations to Executive.

The two Scrutiny Committees of Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus discharge the functions conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 or regulations under section 32 of the Local Government Act 2000. Work has continued to highlight the role of Scrutiny and the following training and resources are in place and include:-

- A link on the Council Intranet site to the [Scrutiny Hub](#) to provide Members with supporting information and guidance to assist them in good scrutiny practice;
- Highlighting the importance of Scrutiny Committees being led by Members, who are responsible for setting their own work programme and taking into account the views of Committee Members who are not Members of the largest political group on the Council; Members are encouraged to submit requests for consideration at Scrutiny to the Scrutiny Programme Board using the [Scrutiny proposal form](#)
- Appointing Deputy Chairs of Scrutiny Committee to Chair any Task and Finish Groups or Spotlight Reviews, as and when established;
- A Pro-Forma for Portfolio Holders to complete to update Members on activities within their portfolios;
- Face to face training scrutiny with an external provider took place on 7 September 2023.

The Council's Scrutiny Committees continue to have an important role in relation to the development of the Council's budget and policy framework, as well as to make proposals to the Executive in so far as they relate to matters within their terms of reference. Members have access to the Council's Forward Plan for work being undertaken throughout the year and where there is need for Scrutiny consideration following an Executive decision to bring the matter to Committee first – the Call In process.

This Annual report serves as a reminder to Members of what their responsibilities and powers are, and to re-iterate the importance of Scrutiny being Member led. For the benefit of Members, the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Programme Board are included in this report.

Terms of Reference and Membership

Scrutiny Programme Board (SPB)

The purpose of the Scrutiny Programme Board is to manage scrutiny in a way that ensures the functions of overview and scrutiny are fairly balanced across all aspects of the Council's work, with a view to improving services, reducing inequalities and improving outcomes for the people of Exeter.

Role of the Scrutiny Programme Board:-

- to set priorities for the annual scrutiny work programme, based on submissions from Members, referrals from Council, the public and proposals from Executive, Strategic Management Board (SMB) or Scrutiny Committees;
- to allocate work fairly across the two scrutiny committees and that the work reflects all aspects of the Council's work by providing oversight and direction to the committees' work programmes;
- to ensure corporate and cross cutting business is dealt with by the relevant committees;
- to review performance against the relevant corporate priorities and inform work programmes as appropriate;
- to receive for information, and oversee implementation of, recommendations made by each of the two Scrutiny Committees;
- to plan and oversee implementation of the process for annual Budget Scrutiny;
- to produce an annual scrutiny report to Council (in conjunction with the scrutiny committees);
- to review national best practice and guidance in relation to scrutiny and recommend any changes to the way scrutiny is undertaken as a result.

Committee Membership – Scrutiny Programme Board (formed of the current Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the two Scrutiny Committees)

- Councillor Naima Allcock (Chair);
- Councillor Matthew Vizard;
- Councillor Catherine Rees;
- Councillor Yvonne Atkinson;
- Councillor Michael Mitchell.

General role of the Scrutiny Committees

The relevant scrutiny committee is responsible for

- hearing call-ins, petitions and any Councillor's call for action (CCFA) - which enables a ward Councillor to refer issues of direct local concern to the Scrutiny Board; approving the creation of time limited working groups for issues within its remit;
- monitoring performance against the relevant corporate priorities;
- receiving finance and performance reports;
- agreeing recommendations to Executive, Council and partner organisations;
- agreeing appointments of co-opted representatives;
- monitoring the forward plan;
- reviewing new and developing legislation to assess its impact on the city;
- considering and introducing schemes to involve the public in developing policy;
- working with national, regional and local organisations to promote the interest of local people;

- considering matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee through established Task and Finish Groups and Spotlight Reviews

Strategic Scrutiny Committee

The Strategic Scrutiny Committee provides scrutiny for the following areas of Council Work

- Relevant policies in the Exeter Plan
- Corporate Health & Safety
- Response to Central Government's Policy Making
- Climate change and sustainability
- Council wide/strategic matters
- Hear call-ins relevant to the role of the committee
- Partnership links
- Growth Board
- Joint Committee for Heart of the South West
- Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership

Committee Membership

- Councillor Yvonne Atkinson (Chair);
- Councillor Michael Mitchell (Deputy Chair);
- Councillor Naima Allcock;
- Councillor Marina Asvachin;
- Councillor Richard Branston;
- Councillor Andy Ketchin;
- Councillor Paul Knott;
- Councillor Andrew Leadbetter;
- Councillor Zion Lights;
- Councillor Diana Moore
- Councillor Tess Read
- Councillor Martyn Snow
- Councillor Matthew Vizard, and
- Councillor Matthew Williams

Note: Membership for Scrutiny Chair's is proposed by the majority group and Deputy Chairs are proposed from the opposition groups.

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

The Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee provides scrutiny for the following areas of Council Work

- Corporate Performance Monitoring
- Financial Performance Monitoring
- Annual Budget Setting Process
- Service specific/operational matters
- Hear call-ins relevant to the role of the committee Partnership links
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Exeter Community Safety Partnership
- Strata

Committee Membership

- Councillor Matthew Vizard (Chair);
- Councillor Catherine Rees (Deputy Chair);
- Councillor Yvonne Atkinson
- Councillor Jane Begley;
- Councillor Joshua Ellis-Jones;
- Councillor Adrian Fullam;
- Councillor Rob Hannaford
- Councillor David Harvey;
- Councillor Peter Holland;
- Councillor Mollie Miller;
- Councillor Susannah Patrick;
- Councillor Amy Sparling;
- Councillor Tony Wardle; and
- Councillor Steve Warwick.

Note: Membership for Scrutiny Chair's is proposed by the majority group and Deputy Chairs are proposed from the opposition groups.

Year in Review: Scrutiny 2022/23

Strategic Scrutiny Committee

The Strategic Scrutiny Committee has met on six occasions between September 2022 and June 2023.

29 September 2022

- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from the Leader and Councillor Wood the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change
- Working Towards Net Zero – Exeter City Council's Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Plan
- Progress Report Shared Prosperity Fund
- Scrutiny Programme Board Annual Report

17 November 2022

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Wright the Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture and Corporate Services
- Commercialisation

12 December 2022 (Call-In)

- Community Infrastructure Levy – Partial Review Consultation – Special Meeting in accordance with Standing Order No 17 following a Call-In on the Executive decision on a partial review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

19 January 2023

- St Sidwell's Point
- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from Councillor Morse, Portfolio Holder for City Development and Planning

16 March 2023

- Question from the public – Mr Cleasby on the future role of Exeter City Futures
- Member Questions and Answers.
- Councillor Parkhouse, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Physical Activity
- St Sidwell's Point Project Contractual Arrangements
- Live and Move Programme Update
- Exeter Plan: Outline Draft Consultation : Initial reporting
- Working Towards Net Zero – Exeter City Council's Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan –
- Progress Report Shared Prosperity Fund – Update 2

16 June 2023

- Question from the public – Mr Cleasby on the adequacy of the bus service
- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from the Leader
- Presentation on the Role of Scrutiny
- Ethical and Low Carbon Advertising

There was one call-in request during 2022/23 – see above.

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

The Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee has met on five occasions between September 2022 and June 2023.

6 October 2022

- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from the Portfolio Holder for Recycling, Waste Management and Waterways – Councillor Williams
- Operation London Bridge – Expenditure
- Street Naming and Numbering
- Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group – Update from the Chair of the Working Group
- Scrutiny Programme Board Annual Report

1 December 2022

- Question from a Member of the Public
- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homeless Prevention – Councillor Pearce
- Tackling the Ecological Emergency
- Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group

2 February 2023

- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from the Portfolio Holder for City Management and Environmental Services – Councillor Ghusain
- Recycling and Food Waste Management
- Review of Exeter City Council's Homelessness Service – Report of the Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group

30 March 2023

- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from the Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Council Housing – Councillor Denning

- Community Safety Partnership – Presentation

29 June 2023

- Member Questions and Answers.
- River Exe – Presentation by representatives of South West Water
- Presentation on the Role of Scrutiny

No call-in requests were received during 2022/23.

Combined Customer Focus and Strategic Scrutiny Committee

The Combined Scrutiny Committee meets to discuss joint issues and also meets to discuss the Council budget. The Chair rotates between the Chairs of the respective Scrutiny Committees.

9 February 2023

Budget 2022/23 – Annual briefing for Members prior to the Council Tax Budget Council in February 2023.

Looking Ahead to 2023/24

The Scrutiny Programme Board agrees the format and content of the work programme, (Scrutiny Work Schedule) which is regularly updated and reported on, at each Board meeting.

A copy of the Scrutiny Work Schedule is attached to each Scrutiny Committee agenda.

The Forward Plan is circulated to Members and is available on the [Council Website](#)

Scrutiny Contact Details

Contact for information for Scrutiny items coming forward can be made through committee.services@exeter.gov.uk

Strategic Scrutiny Contact

- Sharon Sissons - sharon.sissons@exeter.gov.uk
- **Chair:** Cllr Yvonne Atkinson
- **Deputy Chair:** Cllr Michael Mitchell

Customer Focus Scrutiny Contact

- Howard Bassett - howard.bassett@exeter.gov.uk
- **Chair:** Cllr Matt Vizard
- **Deputy Chair:** Cllr Catherine Rees

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Equality Impact Assessment: *Annual Scrutiny Report 2022-23*

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:
Executive Committee 7 November 2023 Council 12 December 2023	Annual Scrutiny Report 2022-23	The Executive note and recommend that Council approve Annual Scrutiny Report 2022-2023.	None

Factors to consider in the assessment: For each of the groups below, an assessment has been made on whether the proposed

decision will have a **positive, negative or neutral impact**. This must be noted in the table below alongside brief details of why this conclusion has been reached and notes of any mitigation proposed. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact – some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers; asylum seekers).	Positive	Low	The report outlines the work of Scrutiny for 2022-23 year
Disability: as defined by the Equality Act – a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.	Positive	Low	The report outlines the work of Scrutiny for 2022-23 year
Sex/Gender	Positive	Low	The report outlines the work of Scrutiny for 2022-23 year
Gender reassignment	Positive	Low	The report outlines the work of Scrutiny for 2022-23 year
Religion and belief (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions).	Positive	Low	The report outlines the work of Scrutiny for 2022-23 year
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual).	Positive	Low	The report outlines the work of Scrutiny for 2022-23 year
Age (children and young people aged 0-24; adults aged 25-50; younger older people aged 51-75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people	Positive	Low	The report outlines the work of Scrutiny for 2022-23 year

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).			
Pregnancy and maternity including new and breast feeding mothers	Positive	Low	The report outlines the work of Scrutiny for 2022-23 year
Marriage and civil partnership status	Positive	Low	The report outlines the work of Scrutiny for 2022-23 year

Actions identified that will mitigate any negative impacts and/or promote inclusion

Officer: Democratic Services

Date: September 2023

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REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 7 November 2023

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 12 December 2023

Report of: Director Corporate Services

Title: Amendments to the Scheme of Delegation and minor updates to the Constitution

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This reports sets out proposals to amend the Scheme of Delegation to Officers to match operational arrangements.

1.2 The report also requests a minor update to the Financial Regulations for Section 7, for Orders for Goods, Work or Services.

1.3 The report also requests a minor update to Standing Order No. 54.

2. Recommendations:

That the Council approve the changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, and the minor updates to the Financial Regulations and Standing Order 54 as set out in Appendix A of this report.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 To ensure that the Constitution and the Scheme of Delegation to Officers is up to date and matches the operational arrangements of the Council, thereby ensuring that day to day operational decisions can be taken. Particular attention has also been taken to ensure that Deputies have been appointed in all cases where authority has been delegated to officers, thereby ensuring that matters can continue to be dealt with, even in the absence of the named officer(s).

3.2 The minor update to the Financial Regulations will continue to reflect minor changes to the ordering process, which have occurred with the implementation of the eProcurement system.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

None.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

There are no financial implications contained within this report.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 It is important to ensure that appropriate authority for officers to undertake the operational requirements of the Council, is appropriately approved by full Council and forms part of the Council's constitution.

6.2 The Council must prepare and keep up to date a constitution in accordance with s37 of the Local Government Act 2000. The minimum requirements for the content are set out in The Local Government Act 2000 (constitutions) (England) Direction 2000 which includes a description of the rules and procedures for the management of the Council's financial affairs including: procedures for auditing and financial rules. These are the rules that officers follow in the day to day operation of the Council set within this council's budget and statutory framework of local government finance.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

This recommendations set out in this report, raise no issues of concern for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

8.1 The Scheme of Delegation to Officers is the working document which sets out what decisions and powers officers have on a day to day basis. It therefore needs to be kept up to date to match operational requirements and arrangements.

8.2 The latest annual revision mainly concentrates on:-

- The inclusion of the appropriate Service Leads being authorised to sign agreements/contracts for which the service of the officer is responsible for;
- The inclusion of additional responsibility for the Service Lead City Development to provide responses on behalf of the Council to consultations from Government, regional bodies and other authorities in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder;
- The inclusion of the Business Systems Team Lead being an additional deputy for the Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services) for delegations 1 and 2, as shown in Appendix A;
- Moving four delegations from the Service Lead Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access to the Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services) and amending the deputy to the Business Systems Team Lead for delegations 5 - 8 as shown in Appendix A;
- The addition under the Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services) for delegations 9 and 10, as shown in Appendix A;
- The insertion of the Service Lead – Legal Services as a deputy for the Director Corporate Services for sections 1, 2, 3 and 4a.
- The addition of the Director Net Zero and City Management to exercise the role of Duty Holder for the Exeter Port Authority.

8.3 Appendix A also makes reference to a minor amendment to the Councils Financial Regulations to insert an additional paragraph (7d) under Section 7, for Orders for Goods, Work or Services.

8.4 Appendix A also makes reference to the minor amendment to the wording and regulations relating to Standing Order No. 54.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

It ensures that the Council is working as efficiently as possible.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

There are no risks associated with the proposals.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

13. Are there any other options?

None

Director Corporate Services, Baan Al-Khafaji

Author: Mark Devin, Democratic Services Manager

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
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APPENDIX A

CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

Delegation to officers and deputies	<u>Proposed amendment</u>
DIRECTORS AND CORPORATE MANAGERS	<p>Insert amendment:</p> <p>Under 1. Insert additional sentence – and to authorise such signing by the appropriate Service Lead.</p>
CITY DEVELOPMENT Service Lead City Development	<p>Insert:</p> <p><u>Responses to consultations</u> Provide responses on behalf of the Council to consultations from government, government agencies, regional bodies, other Councils and local planning authorities, in consultation with the Executive Member with Relevant Portfolio.</p>
HOUSING Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services)	<p>Under 1. Grant, administer and, where necessary, terminate any flexible tenancy.</p> <p>Insert: Additional Deputy: Business Systems Team Lead</p>
HOUSING Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services)	<p>Under 2. To terminate any tenancy or licence where necessary, by relying on the absolute grounds for possession introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 (the ASBCP Act 2014).</p> <p>Insert: Additional Deputy: Business Systems Team Lead</p>
HOUSING Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services) (Moved from Service Lead Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access)	<p>Insert:</p> <p>5. To authorise the service, in relation to rent arrears, of Notice of Intention to Seek Possession (secure tenancies) and Notice to Quit (non-secure tenancies); and Notice of Proceedings for Possession of an Introductory Tenancy (introductory tenancies).</p>

	Deputy – Revenues Lead <i>Deleted from: Service Lead Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access</i>
HOUSING Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services) (Moved from Service Lead Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access)	Insert: 6. Initiation and conduct of legal proceedings for possession in respect of cases where rent arrears are outstanding. This shall include the power to authorise officers to appear in the County Court to represent the Council in respect of rent arrears. Deputy – Revenues Lead <i>Deleted from: Service Lead Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access</i>
HOUSING Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services) (Moved from Service Lead Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access)	Insert: 7. To accept payment of arrears of rent by instalments. Deputy – Revenues Lead <i>Deleted from: Service Lead Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access</i>
HOUSING Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services) (Moved from Service Lead Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access)	Insert: 8. Authority to apply for a warrant for Possession of Property in relation to rent arrears. Deputy – Revenues Lead <i>Deleted from: Service Lead Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access</i>
HOUSING Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services)	Insert: 9. To appoint enforcement agents for the recovery of any outstanding debts. Deputy – Business Systems Team Lead
HOUSING Assistant Director of Housing (Tenancy Services)	Insert: 10. In consultation with Service Lead, Legal Services, authority to institute legal proceedings where fraudulent activity is suspected in relation to Housing related activities. Deputy Business Systems Lead and Tenancy Services Team Lead
FINANCE	To remove:

Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Deputy Section 151 Officer)	<p>1. To determine interest rates and their applicable dates in respect of new and existing mortgages.</p> <p>Deputy – Finance Manager – Corporate</p>
<p>FINANCE</p> <p>Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Deputy Section 151 Officer)</p>	<p>To remove:</p> <p>2. In consultation with the Service Lead, Legal Services to initiate court proceedings for the recovery of arrears in respect of mortgages.</p> <p>Deputy – Finance Manager – Corporate</p>
<p>FINANCE</p> <p>Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Deputy Section 151 Officer)</p>	<p>To remove:</p> <p>12. In accordance with the Housing Act 1980 and the Council’s agreed policy to accept/refuse applications for mortgages, including further advances to administer and monitor payments of mortgage instalments and where necessary issue possession proceedings for mortgage arrears in consultation with the Service Lead, Legal Services.</p> <p>Deputy – Finance Manager – Corporate</p>
DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER	<p>Insert Deputy - Service Lead Legal Services</p> <p>For Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4a</p>
<p>ENVIRONMENT AND CITY MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Insert: Director Net Zero and City Management</p>	<p>Insert:</p> <p>Exercising the role of the Duty Holder for the Exeter Port Authority, as the Director responsible for the City’s waterways.</p>

Reference	Current entry	Proposed amendment
Section 4c – FINANCIAL REGULATIONS		New Entry – INSERT 7d The Officer authorising an order shall be senior to the Officer ordering the goods. This authorisation may be made either by e-mail or in writing if the relevant Officer is not able to authorise directly on the system.
Standing Order No. 54 – Dismissal of Statutory Officers	Standing Order 54 Dismissal of Statutory Officers (1) A decision to dismiss the Head Paid of Service, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Finance Officer may only be taken by Full Council in accordance with the procedure set out in the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2015/881, as may be amended from time to time.	Standing Order 54 Dismissal of Statutory Officers (1) A decision to dismiss the Head Paid of Service, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Finance Officer may only be taken by Full Council in accordance with the procedure set out in the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001/3384 , as may be amended from time to time.

Equality Impact Assessment: Amendments to the Scheme of Delegation and minor updates to the Constitution

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:
Executive Committee – 7 November 2023; Council – 12 December 2023	Amendments to the Scheme of Delegation and minor updates to the Constitution	That the Council approve the changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, and the minor updates to the Financial Regulations and Standing Order 54 as set out in Appendix A of this report.	None

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:

Factors to consider in the assessment: For each of the groups below, an assessment has been made on whether the proposed decision will have a **positive, negative or neutral impact**. This must be noted in the table below alongside brief details of why this conclusion has been reached and notes of any mitigation proposed. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact – some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers; asylum seekers).	N/A	N/A	No impact.
Disability: as defined by the Equality Act – a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.	N/A	N/A	No impact.
Sex/Gender	N/A	N/A	No impact.
Gender reassignment	N/A	N/A	No impact.

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or Negative Impact	High, Medium or Low Impact	Reason
Religion and belief (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions).	N/A	N/A	No impact.
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual).	N/A	N/A	No impact.
Age (children and young people aged 0-24; adults aged 25-50; younger older people aged 51-75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).	N/A	N/A	No impact.
Pregnancy and maternity including new and breast feeding mothers	N/A	N/A	No impact.
Marriage and civil partnership status	N/A	N/A	No impact.

Actions identified that will mitigate any negative impacts and/or promote inclusion

Officer: Mark Devin, Democratic Services Manager

Date: 30 October 2023

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REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 7 November 2023

Report of: Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism

Title: Request to repatriate a sacred bundle - a Motokiks ceremonial headdress to the Blackfoot (Siksika), Alberta, Canada

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

1.1 De-accessioning from RAMM's collection a ceremonial headdress traditionally worn by a holy woman of the Holy Buffalo Woman Society (Motokiks) headdress, sometimes referred to as a sacred or ceremonial bundle.

1.2 It was bequeathed to the Museum in 1920 by Edgar Dewdney. He was the Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories, and a Member of Parliament for Canada. Very little contextual information about the headdress' acquisition was provided by him or his widow. In his role as Lieutenant Governor, Dewdney had responsibility for all indigenous peoples within the Northwest Territories.

1.3 The headdress had been publicly displayed at RAMM since 1920. As part of a Leverhulme-funded project to visit RAMM's Plains collection, and especially the Chief Crowfoot regalia in 2013, a Blackfoot delegation representing the Siksika, Kainai and Blackfoot Nations identified the headdress as a sacred ceremonial headdress. It should not have been displayed and has since been cared for in store.

1.4 When in May 2022 Siksika Elders visited Exeter in connection with the repatriation of Chief Crowfoot's regalia, they once again viewed the headdress. During their visit they stressed the sacred significance of the headdress to the community.

1.5 In September 2022, RAMM received a formal letter from the Blackfoot (Siksika) requesting an act of repatriation.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That Executive notes the due diligence process that has been carried by the Council's Museum Officers in order to establish whether there are any rival claims to the headdress and that it has been established to the satisfaction of the Museums Manager and the Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism that the headdress was originally the property of the Siksika Nation prior to its acquisition and ultimate transfer to the ownership Exeter City Council and its predecessors; and

2.2 That Executive approves the recommendation that legal ownership of the headdress is surrendered by Exeter City Council and transferred to the Blackfoot Tribal Council of the Siksika Nation.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 To the Blackfoot, the Motokiks headdress is a ceremonial bundle which holds great cultural and religious significance. Although the exact means of acquisition is undocumented, it was likely acquired through the enforcement of colonial assimilation policy in connection with Treaty 7 of 1875 (one of eleven Treaties signed between the Crown and the First Nations between 1871 and 1921) and the Indian Act 1876. It would not have been given freely. Unlike other items found in public collections, ceremonial bundles are not made for sale or gifted.

3.2 Dewdney's role as Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories was to ensure that all indigenous peoples (including the Blackfoot) within this region were assimilated. Dewdney's role was to enforce colonial policy. This process involved the confiscation or surrendering of materials pertaining to traditional practices. They were expected to give up their traditional way of life and change. As Crown subjects, they had to adopt Christianity as their new religion and settle on reservations becoming farmers.

3.3 Siksika Chief Ouray Crowfoot explained in 2022 that the headdress would be returned to the Motokiks and used as originally intended, rather than be treated as an artefact cared for at Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park.

3.4 Exeter City Council has the legal authority to de-accession objects from RAMM's collections and return them to the communities from which they originate 'taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance'. This is set out in RAMM's Collections Development Policy (2020-25) under The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains (section 15 of the policy). Recent discussions on the decolonisation of Britain's museums have placed greater emphasis on the moral obligation of museums to return material to community use that may override former concerns on the long-term preservation of sacred artefacts in museum conditions.

3.5 The four recognised Blackfoot Nations (Siksika, Kainai, Peigan and Blackfeet) are each governed by a Chief and twelve Councillors who constitute the Tribal Council. Following a request from the Siksika Nation it is recommended that the headdress be returned to the Blackfoot Tribal Council of the Siksika Nation for use by the Holy Buffalo Woman Society.

3.6 As part of the process of due diligence RAMM approached Chief Roy Fox of the Kainai Nation on the basis that it may have held a rival claim to the headdress. His response endorsed the Siksika Nation as the rightful recipients of the headdress. RAMM also approached Joset Melting Tallow of the Siksika Nation for confirmation of its Siksika origin. Members will note the attached correspondence in relation to this issue.

3.7 The implications of repatriating the items under the Equality Act 2010 are considered separately in the attached Equality Impact Assessment.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

4.1 Provided that Executive approve the recommendation, the RAMM will work closely with representatives from the Siksika Nation to agree on the most appropriate methods for packing and transporting the headdress to Canada. It is likely that representatives of the Siksika Nation will travel in person to the UK to collect the headdress. As a ceremonial bundle, traditionally it would be rolled, packaged, and carried by an appropriate elder.

4.2 RAMM's collections team will complete the necessary documentation for the repatriation. This will include recording the transfer of title and recording the repatriation of the headdress on the collections database and in object history files, as well as applying for the appropriate export licence. The headdress will need to be condition checked by a specialist conservator and will be photographed before return. These costs can be covered from existing revenue and Arts Council England budgets.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 There are no financial implications contained within this report.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 There is no legal requirement under English law to return artefacts of cultural importance to source communities. Current approaches are governed by the Museums Association Code of Ethics, Arts Council England's Accreditation Scheme and evolving practice within the museum sector. None of these sources of guidance impose any legal obligations on the Council. Accordingly, if a decision is made to repatriate the items, then that decision is made on a voluntary basis without any legal compulsion to do so. It is important that repatriation cases such as this are dealt with on a case-by-case basis and that each case is considered on its own merits. It is not intended that this creates a precedent as to how future requests for repatriation will be addressed.

6.2 In August 2022 Arts Council England issued a document, 'Restitution & Repatriation: A Practical Guide for Museums in England'. It provides best practice advice to support museums in making decisions and managing potential repatriation cases. This report and recommendation have been produced in line with that guidance. Members will note that the report includes a case study of Exeter City Council's repatriation of the Crowfoot regalia in May 2022.

6.3 There are export controls in place on objects of cultural interest. These are set out in the Export Control Act 2002. Under the Act, Arts Council England's export Licensing Unit issues export licences for cultural objects on behalf of the Secretary of State. The requirement for an Export Licence is dependent on financial thresholds. The headdress valuation is in excess of the threshold for textiles so an individual export licence would be required.

6.4 An export licence would only be refused if the Reviewing Committee for the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest designated the headdress as a 'national treasure' in accordance with the Waverley criteria established in 1952. The Waverley criteria are a number of questions to be considered when determining whether an item should be designated as a 'national treasure':

- Is it closely connected with our history and national life?
- Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance?
- Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history?

Museum Officers consider that it is unlikely that the return of the artefact will be objected to under the Waverley criteria.

6.5 The nature of the materials used in the headdress may mean that the Council needs to apply for an export permit under the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The Council's Officers will address the issues concerning the export licence and permit.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

This recommendations set out in this report, raise no issues of concern for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

8.1 The headdress was bequeathed to RAMM in 1920 as part of a larger group of Native American artefacts by Edgar Dewdney through his second wife Blanche Elizabeth Dewdney who resided in Torquay. In her letter bequeathing the headdress, Mrs Dewdney explained: "Some years ago my husband and I were on a visit to Exeter while home from British Columbia. We saw in the Museum an Indian Chief's shirt, I think it had belonged to 'Crowfoot' Chief of the Blackfeet Indians. My husband was very interested having known the Chief well, also having a unique collection of Indian Curios of his own. He told me after his death he would like me to offer some of his collection to the Exeter Museum."

8.2 Edgar Dewdney (1835-1916) was born into poverty in Devon. He found a way to leave England to find his fortune. Landing in British Columbia in 1859, aged 23, he was quickly employed as a surveyor for town and road building and for the Canadian Pacific Railroad. In 1868, he entered the colonial government rising to the position of Minister of the Interior and Superintendent-General of Indian affairs. In 1892, he was appointed Indian Commissioner and a year later was given the additional role of Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories. He retired from political life in 1897.

8.3 The Motokiks headdress (Accession number: 25/1920/2) has no documented provenance beyond being Blackfoot in origin. It is clear from the Dewdney biography that he had a working relationship with Chief Crowfoot, and both the Siksika and Kainai nations. It is equally clear that Dewdney's contacts with the First Nations were extensive, given his political role. The artefacts Dewdney bequeathed to RAMM include items from several tribal nations. He collected material from different parts of Canada, especially when he travelled to Ottawa for political business.

8.4 The headdress is made from buffalo horns, eagle feathers, indigo bunting bird, red-tailed hawk, red trade cloth, porcupine quills and brass bells. This was displayed in RAMM's America's gallery. A Blackfoot delegation in 2013 visiting RAMM informed the curator that the headdress was a sacred item belonging to the Holy Buffalo Woman Society and should not be in public view. It was immediately removed from display and placed in store.

8.5 The Blackfoot Confederacy represents tribal governments of the nations, Siksika, Kainai, northern Peigan and the Blackfeet, who live in Alberta, Canada and Montana, USA respectively. Each nation is governed by a chief and a tribal council of twelve. However, Blackfoot culture and religion is linked by seven important societies. These societies celebrate tradition and maintain and preserve cultural knowledge. They are called Horn, Crow, Black Soldier, Motokiks, Prairie Chicken, Brave Dog, and Ma'tsiyiiks. The Motokiks is a sacred society for holy women. After initiation into the society, each member would have earned the right to wear a sacred headdress. Headdresses are ceremonial bundles and are connected to the ancestors. RAMM's headdress once belonged to one of these holy women and with the support of contemporary members of the society we have been able to research the origins of headdress. Following consultation with the Siksika and Kainai it is now confirmed to be of Siksika origin.

8.6 For Members' information concerning terminology, this report uses the Anglicised noun Motokiks to represent the Holy Woman's Society. However, Members should be aware that other variants of that Society's name are used by non-members and members of the Blackfoot Holy Woman's Society and will be found in correspondence pertaining to this claim. Examples include Motoki, Maoto'kii and Maoto'kiiksi. Names will either refer to the society alone, to society members or ceremonial bundles belonging to that society.

8.7. In September 2022, Chief Ouray Crowfoot wrote to express his thanks to RAMM and Exeter City Council for the repatriation of Chief Crowfoot's regalia. He also formally requested the return of the Holy Buffalo Woman Society headdress.

8.8 Due diligence in late 2022 and early 2023 involved checking Dewdney-related documentation at RAMM and examining the digitised Dewdney papers held at the Glenbow Museum, Alberta. No evidence could be found to explain how the headdress had been acquired by him. To help determine the origin of the headdress, RAMM's curator sought the expertise of two holy women who are current members of the Kainai and Siksika Motokiks societies. They have both provided written statements in support of the formal request.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

9.1 The decision shows the council is well-run with effective governance and management of its assets. The debate on repatriation is a fast-moving one, and agreeing to the return will demonstrate that Exeter City Council through the Royal Albert Memorial Museum is prepared to lead sectoral change and to demonstrate trust and respect to international communities.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 If the return of the headdress to the Siksika Nation is agreed, it is possible that those opposed to repatriation may choose to voice their opinions in the media and criticise the council's decision.

10.2 There is also a risk that the return of the headdress would be perceived as setting a precedent for other claims on cultural property at RAMM, and from UK museums more generally. However in recent years there have been several well publicised repatriations by museums elsewhere in the UK.

10.3 The risk of reputational damage can be reduced by clarifying that repatriation cases are dealt with on a case-by-case basis, each considered on its merits. This proposed repatriation does not set a precedent. Whatever the moral issues related to an object's history, the Council through RAMM still needs to carry out due diligence before the return of culturally sensitive material to ensure its ownership is transferred to the most appropriate group. There may be competing claims from the same indigenous communities. In this case, the Siksika have been identified as the appropriate claimant. (See attached letter from Makiinima, Chief Roy Fox, Blood Tribe/Kainai).

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

The repatriation will require transport of the headdress to Canada, which will be accompanied by appropriate elders of the Siksika Nation.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 To refuse the repatriation request and cause significant hurt to the Siksika Nation. It would also create a large amount of negative coverage in the media and from groups who support the rights of indigenous communities in recovering their cultural heritage held in UK museums. There is a danger of reputational damage to RAMM and Exeter City Council which has been regarded as a leader in the field of carefully considered repatriation.

Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Jon-Paul Hedge

Author: Camilla Hampshire, Museums Manager

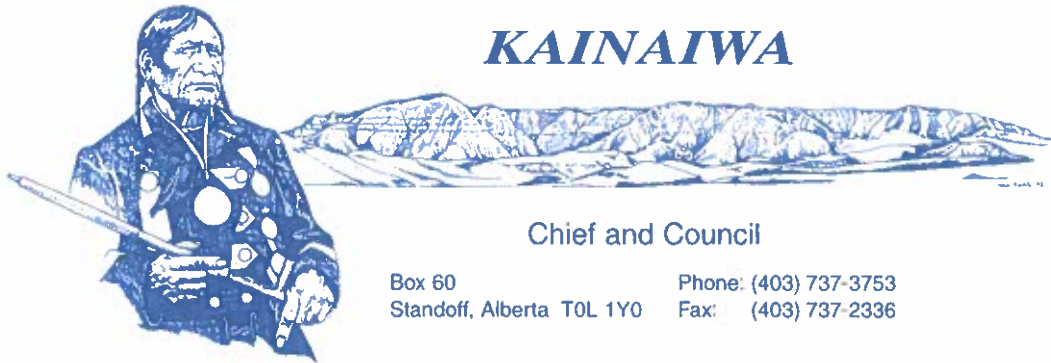
Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 4.36
01392 265275

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Chief and Council

Box 60 Phone: (403) 737-3753
Standoff, Alberta T0L 1Y0 Fax: (403) 737-2336

September 25, 2023

Camilla Hampshire
Museum Manager
Royal Albert Memorial Museum
Bradninch Offices/Brandninch Place
Gandy Street
Exeter EX4 3LS

Oki Ms. Hampshire,

Re: Siksika Repatriation Request of Maoto'kii Headdress

Further to Tony Eccles' email of September 7, 2023 and subsequent email correspondence with Annabel Crop Eared Wolf, Tribal Government Director and staff member responsible for Repatriation, we provide the following information you requested and a statement of support. Please note that we have consulted with members of the Maoto'kii from the Blood Tribe/Kainai as well as staff who have worked in the area of Repatriation for many years.

How the Bundle came into Dewdney's possession?

Other than the information provided by RAM Museum in the September 7th email, we don't have any record of how the Bundle may have gotten into Dewdney's hands. Bundles often came into the possession of colonial government officials and collectors through illegal and nefarious means. There was legislation in Canada prohibiting the practice of traditional Indigenous ceremonies and active and varied efforts to stop First Nation practice of their ceremonies and divest them of their Sacred Bundles. An 1889 amendment to s.114 of the Indian Act outright banned sundances, give aways, and trade dances. Contravention of this prohibition was an indicatable offence, punishable by imprisonment.

Where does this Bundle come from?

As you have indicated the record is not clear on this. Drawing on our Motokii representative and Repatriation staff member, who consulted Elders of the Motikii Society in the identification of other Maoto'kii headdresses in previous years, she finds that this headdress looks very similar to those other Maoto;kii headdresses, which were identified by those Elders as being of Siksika origin. Based on this assessment we believe this Maoto'kii headdress to be of Siksika origin.

How will this Bundle be used?


The Motoki Society is one of the Sacred Societies that existed traditionally in Kainai and Siksika and is still active within our communities. Community members rely on the Maoto'kii Society for spiritual assistance and guidance, as well as blessing and healing that is much needed by our people in these trying times. The Sacred Bundles are integral to our religious practice, our way of life and our cultural survival and need to be home in the community.

Support for Repatriation of the Sacred Motoki Headdress/Bundle

The Blood Tribe/Kainai does not contest the request of Siksika to repatriate the Sacred Maoto;kii Headdress/Bundle and is supportive of their efforts to bring the Sacred Headdress home to Siksika.

Thank you for your support and assistance in ensuring the Sacred Bundle/ Headdress returns home, the Bundle has been away for far too long. The entire Blackfoot Confederacy community will be pleased to see the Bundle return home. Let me know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Makiinima
Chief Roy Fox
Blood Tribe/Kainai

c.c. Annabel Crop Eared Wolf, Tribal Government Director - Kainai
Dorothy First Rider, Chairperson Tribal Government Committee - Kainai
Tony Eccles, Curator of Ethnography, RAM Museum
Chief Ouray Crowfoot - Siksika
Kent Ayoungman - Siksika
Joset Melting Tallow - Siksika

Joset Melting Tallow
Box 1442
Siksika, Alberta
T0J3W0

May 10, 2023

Tony Eccles Curator of Ethnography
Royal Albert Memorial Museum
Grandy Street, Exeter
EX4 3LS

Mr. Eccles

Accept this letter, supporting the return of Sacred Bundle belonging to the Buffalo Women's Society of Siksika. In 1996, the Late Angelina Leather was given the role and responsibility of leadership to the Buffalo Women's Society. Angeline stated that the Siksika Buffalo Women's Society was not complete as Bundles were either in the BCHP or RAMM or missing.

Today the society is missing two of the Bird Bundles. The Sacred Bundle in RAMM's possession, is called the Bird Bundle. These bundles are distinct with Horns on top of Feathered Hat. The Bird Bundle should still have yellow or red ochre painted on the Bundle or feathers. Often the Bundle will have bells on the side of a feathered hat. The bottom includes a red trade cloth decorated with eagle feathers and bells.

The repatriation of sacred material to the Siksika Women's Society is a story of perseverance and the community we represent. There is no history of sacred items being given away. The origin of the Siksika Women's Buffalo Society People is to help our people overcome difficult situations and the challenges we face in the post-colonial world. Please help us in returning the missing Bird Bundle Home to Siksika.

Sincerely

Joset Melting Tallow
Member of the Siksika Buffalo Women's Society

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Background Paper to Executive Committee Report: Request to repatriate a sacred bundle – a Motokiks ceremonial headdress to the Blackfoot (Siksika), Alberta, Canada

Paper reproduced by kind permission of the Royal British Columbia Museum Extract from the 'Indigenous Repatriation Handbook' www.RBCM.ca/RepatriationBook Prepared by the Royal BC Museum and the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kay Llnagaay Published 2019.

Produced with guidance from the First People's Cultural Council and the Royal BC Museum Indigenous Advisory and Advocacy Committee

How Did Indigenous Ancestors and Belongings Wind Up in Museums? Museums are amazing places of wonder and education. They provide opportunity for the general public to see and learn about people, places, things and ideas that might not have been accessible otherwise. But Indigenous people don't always feel this way about mainstream museum experiences. This is because a great many of the Indigenous treasures in museum collections were acquired during a very dark time in the history of Indigenous Peoples and the nation-state of Canada.

North America had been home to Indigenous people for millennia by the time the British and other Europeans began to arrive on the east coast of what is today called Canada. On the west coast, interactions between Indigenous people and settlers began in the latter half of the 1700s. Early relationships were mainly economy based (though not without conflict), and in BC, were largely driven by the maritime fur trade (ca. 1790–1840). Indigenous people traded their furs, food, commercial art and even some personal belongings, among other things, in exchange for iron, wool blankets and other exotic materials, including some personal belongings of the foreign traders. As the fur trade waned, British colonizers began to establish settlements, seeking new resource-based economies and the land itself. Relations between the two worlds had already become complicated at this point, but things were about to get much worse.

Along with foreign people came foreign epidemics, which drastically impacted Indigenous Peoples, decimating their populations by as much as 90 per cent or more—wiping out entire families, villages and sometimes even Nations. Following the devastating impacts of several smallpox epidemics, missionaries were able to entrench themselves within surviving Indigenous communities with the goal of converting them to Christianity.

In 1876, the Canadian government passed the Indian Act, with the intent of assimilating Indigenous people into Canadian society and erasing Indigenous identity, rights and territories. This included making Indigenous people wards of the state, removing them from their expansive territories and putting them on tiny reserves, and creating “legal” mechanisms for Indigenous disenfranchisement. In 1884, the Indian Act was amended to render the Potlatch and other traditional cultural ceremonies illegal, which ultimately outlawed the social, economic and legal systems of Indigenous Peoples in BC, with “offenders” facing confiscation of their treasures as well as imprisonment. The Potlatch Ban was quietly dropped during a revision to the Act in 1951.

In 1892, Canada's residential school system was formalized, removing children from their homes. It denied Indigenous children their lands, language, family and greater community for most of their childhood, and subjected many to abuse or even death (thousands of children died in residential schools). The last residential school in Canada only closed in 1996.

Hand in hand with colonial regimes came a collecting frenzy and the birth of (then-modern) anthropology. Nation-state museums and world fairs were hungry for collections representing Indigenous people and their cultures. By the 1880s, colonizers were actively “collecting” Indigenous people and heritage as they pleased, asserting that Indigenous Nations and cultures were going extinct, and that our existence and way of life should be “collected” in the “interest of science” and preserved for the “benefit of humanity.”

There was also notoriety and revenue to be gained in the field of collecting. Land surveyors, anthropologists and others were commissioned by nation-state governments and institutions to collect Indigenous heritage. There were also independents who dealt in “Indian curios,” buying and selling to museums, collectors and other dealers. Museums also “dealt” in the open art market: buying and selling Indigenous heritage with great freedom. The Ancestors and belongings that were taken from Indigenous communities were traded around the world, most landing in museum and university collections, some others in private collections.

The height of what was ultimately unethical and often illegal collecting occurred between the latter half of the 1800s and the first half of the 1900s, though the practice carried on in a quieter manner through the 1970s and '80s. Indigenous graves were desecrated, with human remains and burial goods stolen. Personal belongings were taken by theft, force or “sale.” Purchase records from this period document what one could perceive as “legitimate” sales of personal belongings by Indigenous people. However, given the circumstances of these times, it should be understood and accepted that most of these transactions occurred under duress, particularly sales that occurred during the Potlatch Ban era.

Unethical collecting still occurs today. Some cultural belongings and ancestral remains are still being stolen or bought under duress and sold on the black market. It is important to become aware of the collecting that is still happening and to educate community members about this, so that the old belongings in the community do not disappear.

More recently, archaeological belongings and Ancestral remains have also ended up in museums as a result of archaeological excavations and recovery by the RCMP. Archaeology as a discipline began to take off in the 1960s, and since that time, all archaeological material recovered under permit is required to be sent to repositories (many of which were also museums). This material includes archaeological belongings and Ancestral materials as well as maps, photos, field notes, animal bones and soil samples. In these cases, the documentation is often very good.

In some cases, Ancestral material was sent to the Royal BC Museum and other museums by the RCMP. If human remains were reported to the RCMP, and were not of current forensic interest, they were turned over to the provincial museum. In cases such as these, the documentation can range from very general to quite specific.

Equality Impact Assessment: Request to repatriate a sacred headdress to the Siksika Nation, Canada

This Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) is provided as part of the background papers for Members' information. Though this repatriation request by the Siksika Nation is not within the jurisdiction of UK law and therefore not covered by the Equality Act 2010, the key principles (or spirit) of the legislation are helpful in considering this case because equality issues are central to this request.

Protected Characteristics

Inequalities are embedded in our understanding of history, composed as it is by multiple and changing narratives, based on different experiences; perspectives and re-appraisal of events. The discovery of new facts or exposure of past injustices and inequality result in disputed or rewritten histories. British Colonial history is one such area. Its reach means that it is a global history intersecting with those of many other nations and communities. Its legacy continues to shape life in the UK today. However we now recognise the oppression and exploitation it caused to other people, including the First Nations of Canada. Attempts to assimilate indigenous people into Canadian society erased their identity, rights, and territories and created institutionalised discrimination on the basis of race (ethnicity); religion and belief, all Protected Characteristics under the Equalities Act.

Impact

Indigenous communities have suffered economic and social deprivation because of this history. During the late nineteenth century, a period during which the distinctive and separate identity of indigenous people was under systematic attack, cultural property belonging to First Nation peoples such as the Blackfoot was seized. Although some acquisitions were made legally, many were not and they were all made against the background of unequal power relationships between colonisers and indigenous people. More detail is provided in the attached paper reproduced with the permission of the Royal BC Museum, Victoria, Canada.

Returning the Motokiks Society headdress restores the source community's authority over their cultural identity and history. Some historical injustices, it has been argued, have become too distant to connect back to communities today. This is not the case in this repatriation request since the headdress would once more perform its traditional role within Blackfoot society. The significance of the repatriation process to a community that has suffered discrimination is a key consideration in terms of the Equality Act 2010.

The process of reducing the effects of discrimination and meeting the needs of a particular group is identified as high positive impact within Exeter City Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) methodology. There is no need for consultation with the equality group recommended in the EQIA checklist, as the request is made by the elected body representing the Siksika Nation.

Differential Impacts

Under the EQIA, this repatriation would have a differential or disproportionate impact affecting one group more than another. It is clear that repatriation would have a high positive impact for the Blackfoot people. This is set against a low adverse impact for others in the UK, or visiting, wishing to see this important material which is no longer on public display. Officer's recommendation is that in this particular case the power and symbolism of the headdress outweighs the needs of the second group. This is not unlawful discrimination. Lack of access to this historic material can be mitigated through the availability of digital records at RAMM, and it is hoped, an ongoing relationship is maintained between the museum and the First Nations of Canada.

Repatriation Requests

Decisions in this case are not intended to set precedent. Exeter City Council's Collections Development Policy states that repatriation requests are considered on a case by case basis. Case by case review of recommendation are also the purpose of EQIAs.

In order to comply with the Equality Act 2010, public authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices with particular regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between people

An assessment of these general duties in this case has informed the recommendation now put before Elected Members.

Equality Impact Assessment: Request to repatriate a sacred headdress to the Siksika Nation, Canada

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.

- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

Committee name and date:	Report Title	Decisions being recommended:	People with protected characteristics potentially impacted by the decisions to be made:
Executive 7 November 2023	Request to repatriate a sacred headdress to the Siksika Nation, Canada	Ownership should be transferred to the Siksika Tribal Council	Siksika Nation

Factors to consider in the assessment: For each of the groups below, an assessment has been made on whether the proposed decision will have a **positive, negative or neutral impact**. This is must be noted in the table below alongside brief details of why this conclusion has been reached and notes of any mitigation proposed. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

- High impact** – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.
- Medium impact** –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence
- Low impact** – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

Protected characteristic/ area of interest	Positive or	High, Medium or	Reason
--------------------------------------------	-------------	-----------------	--------

	Negative Impact	Low Impact	
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers; asylum seekers).	Positive	High	Contribution to community healing and reconciliation
Disability: as defined by the Equality Act – a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.			
Sex/Gender			
Gender reassignment			
Religion and belief (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions).	Positive	High	Return of ceremonial headdress that has sacred significance to Siksika Nation
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual).			
Age (children and young people aged 0-24; adults aged 25-50; younger older people aged 51-75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).			
Pregnancy and maternity including new and breast feeding mothers			
Marriage and civil partnership status			
<u>Actions identified that will mitigate any negative impacts and/or promote inclusion</u>			

- **Loss of access to this historic material for UK residents or others visiting RAMM, can be mitigated through availability of digital records at RAMM (subject to Siksika Nation agreement).**
- **Based on the experience of other UK museums which have repatriated culturally sensitive objects to the source community, it is hoped that RAMM can maintain their new relationship with the First Nations of Canada, based on mutual trust and respect. This would open the way for creative cultural exchange, willingly negotiated between equal partners.**
- **The repatriation will act positively by contributing to the process of healing and reconciliation of the source community, the Siksika Nation, to whom it is proposed the artefact should be returned.**

Officer: Museum Manager
Date: 29.09.2023

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