



## Exeter City Council

A meeting of **EXETER CITY COUNCIL** will be held at the **GUILDHALL, HIGH STREET, EXETER** on **TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2024**, on the rising of the Extraordinary Meeting of Council which commences at 6.00 pm, at which you are hereby summoned to attend.

The meeting will be live streamed on YouTube - [Democratic Meetings – YouTube](#)

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

The following business is proposed to be transacted:-

	Pages
1 Minutes	
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023.	5 - 16
2 Official Communications	
3 Public Questions	
Details of questions should be notified to the Democratic Services Manager at least three working days prior to the meeting - by 10am on Thursday 15 February 2024. Further information and a copy of the procedure are available from Democratic Services (Committees) (Tel: 01392 265115) with details about speaking at Council to be found here: <a href="#">Public Speaking at Meetings</a> .	
4 Local Government (access to Information act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public	
To pass the following resolution:-	
<b>RESOLVED</b> that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of item 24 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph's 1, 2, and 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.	
To receive minutes of the following Committees and to determine thereon:-	
5 Audit and Governance 29 November 2023	17 - 22
6 Planning Committee - 5 December 2023	23 - 36
7 Planning Committee - 15 January 2024	37 - 44
8 Licensing Committee - 30 January 2024	45 - 46

9	Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee - 30 November 2023	47 - 54
10	Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee - 1 February 2024	55 - 60
11	Strategic Scrutiny Committee - 25 January 2024	61 - 68
12	Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee - 7 February 2024	69 - 74
13	Exeter Harbour Board - 14 December 2023	75 - 82
14	Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee - 16 January 2024	83 - 86
15	Strata Joint Executive Committee - 30 January 2024	87 - 90
16	Executive - 9 January 2024	91 - 100
17	Executive - 22 January 2024	101 - 104
18	Executive - 6 February 2024	105 - 114
	Notice of Motion	

19 Notice of Motion by Councillor Read under Standing Order No. 6

Box shifting is a practice whereby businesses “occupy” a commercial premises by means of some boxes and so trigger zero business rates relief for up to 6 months. Businesses return sporadically to shift the boxes creating sufficient proof of occupation meaning that zero rates relief remains applied. In practice, businesses employ other companies to do this. Companies which specifically advertise their capacity to carry this out and indeed in many cases this “box shifting” is their only trade.

It is well known to this Council that there are several businesses of this type operating in Exeter, working with multi chain operating businesses to deprive this Council of vital funds. An internal estimate is that Exeter City Council is losing out by around £150,000 a year because of this practice. Meanwhile, premises stand empty disfiguring our city centre and depriving charities and community art projects or similar of what could be useful community-centred space.

This Council notes that:

- Box Shifting is a well-established business rates avoidance practice which enables landlords and multi chain operators to exploit legal loopholes triggering 3–6-month rate relief and deprive the Councils of England an estimated £250 million annually, according to the charity Ban Box Shifting. Exeter City Council is aware that the practice occurs in our city, depriving the Council of much-needed funds.

- Ethical rates mitigation, ie the offering of rent-free spaces of charities creates benefits to local communities, landlords and charities.

This Council further notes that box shifting could be prevented by:

1. extending the period of occupation which activates rates exemption from six weeks to six months.
2. Giving councils more powers in deciding when empty rates relief can legitimately be granted.

This Council resolves to request the Chief Executive write to Exeter’s two MPs to draw this to their attention and to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to ask for implementation of these points to prevent box

shifting, and promotion of ethical rates mitigation.

20 Notice of Motion by Councillor Jobson under Standing Order No. 6

Nearly 1600 people have now replied to the Conservative organised survey and over 85% are clear, this scheme is not working. It is causing social isolation and increasing the vulnerability of many within the scheme area. It is causing additional pollution on the arterial roads and on North Street in particular. It is adversely affecting local trades and businesses.

There are 8 Members of the Exeter HATOC Committee that also sit on this Council. Those members are urged to:

Either

(i) request in writing that the Exeter HATOC Chairman calls an urgent meeting of Exeter HATOC to pass a motion to suspend the Heavitree and Whipton Active Travel Scheme at the earliest opportunity.

Or

(ii) write to the DCC Committee secretariat demanding that such a meeting is called to suspend the scheme. Only 4 signatures are required.

21 Notice of Motion by Councillor Jobson under Standing Order No. 6

It is understood that the introduction of a car charging - ULEZ style scheme is being considered for Exeter. It is to be hoped that this is not the case.

Such a scheme would penalise many of the less wealthy motorists and would adversely affect trade and business.

This Council resolves to oppose any attempt to introduce such a scheme in Exeter.

22 Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order No. 8

Pages

23 Senior Leadership Review

To consider the report of the Leader and Chief Executive.

115 - 122

Part II: Items suggested for discussion with the press and public excluded

24 Senior Leadership Review

To consider the report of the Leader and Chief Executive.

123 - 140

A plan of seating in the Guildhall is attached as an annexe

Date: Monday 12 February 2024

**Bindu Arjoon**  
**Chief Executive**