

STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday 25 January 2024

Time: 5.30 pm

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

Members are invited to attend the above meeting.

If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Sharon Sissons, Democratic Services Officer (Committees) on 01392 265115.

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 Atkinson (Chair), Mitchell, M (Deputy Chair), Allcock, Asvachin, Branston, Ketchin, Knott, Leadbetter, Lights, Moore, D, Read, Snow, Vizard and Williams, M

Agenda

1 Apologies

2 Minutes

(Pages 5 -
14)

To approve and sign the minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee held on 16 November 2023.

3 Declaration 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 - Exclusion of Press and Public

It is considered that the Committee would be unlikely to exclude the press and public during the consideration of the items on this agenda, but if it should wish to do so, then the following resolution should be passed:

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

5 **Questions from Members of the Public Under Standing Order No.19**

Details of questions should be notified to the Democratic Services Manager via the committee.services@exeter.gov.uk email by 10.00am at least three working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting any questions must be submitted by 10.00am on Monday 22 January 2024.

For details about how to speak at Committee, please click the following link - <https://exeter.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-meetings/public-speaking-at-meetings/overview/>

6 **Questions from Members of the Council Under Standing Order No.20**

To receive questions from Members of the Council to the relevant Portfolio Holders for this Scrutiny Committee. The Portfolio Holders reporting to this Scrutiny Committee are:-

Councillor Bialyk - Leader
Councillor Morse - Portfolio Holder City Development
Councillor Parkhouse Portfolio Holder Climate and Ecological Crisis
Councillor Wood - Portfolio Holder Leisure Services and Physical Activity
Councillor Wright - Portfolio Holder, Culture and City Centre Strategy

Advance questions from Members relating to the Portfolio Holders above should be notified to the Democratic Services Manager.

7 **Portfolio Holder report - Climate and Ecological Crisis**

(Pages 15
- 20)

Councillor Josie Parkhouse (Climate and Ecological Crisis) to present a report on her portfolio.

8 **Forward Plan of Business and Scrutiny Work Plan**

(Pages 21
- 28)

Please see for noting a link to the schedule of future business proposed for the Council which can be viewed on the Council's web site. This on-line document is a source for Members to raise issues at Scrutiny on forthcoming Executive agenda items:-

<https://exeter.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-meetings/forward-plan-of-executive-decisions/>

Also attached is a draft work plan of future scrutiny items.

Should Members wish to raise issues in respect of future business please notify Sharon Sissons in advance of the meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee will be held on **Thursday 14 March 2024** at 5.30 pm in the Civic Centre.

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STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 November 2023

Present:

Councillor Yvonne Atkinson (Chair)

Councillors Mitchell, M, Allcock, Asvachin, Knott, Moore, D, Read, Snow, Vizard and Williams, M

Apologies:

Councillors Branston, Ketchin and Leadbetter

Also present:

Director Corporate Services, Director of City Development, Service Lead Legal Services, Service Lead - Active & Healthy People, Assistant Service Lead – Local Plan, Service Lead - Communications, Tourism & Culture and Democratic Services Officer (SLS)

In attendance:

Councillor Philip Bialyk	- Leader
Councillor Emma Morse	- Portfolio Holder for City Development
Councillor Josie Parkhouse	- Portfolio Holder Climate and Ecological Crisis
Councillor Duncan Wood	- Portfolio Holder Leisure Services and Physical Activity
Councillor Martin Pearce	- Portfolio Holder Communities and Homelessness Prevention
Councillor Ruth Williams	- Portfolio Holder Place and City Management

68 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct, subject to the amendment that Minute 67 was a resolved matter.

69 **Declaration of Interest**

Councillor Read declared a Discloseable Pecuniary Interest, as having sought to ask a question under Minute 73 (Full Draft Exeter Plan Consultation), she had an interest as a Member of the Exeter Canal and Quay Trust (ECQT) and withdrew from the room, whilst the matter was raised by Councillor Moore.

70 **Questions from Members of the Public Under Standing Order No.19**

There were no questions submitted by the public.

71 **Questions from Members of the Council Under Standing Order No.20**

In accordance with Standing Order No. 20, the following questions were submitted by Councillor Moore in relation to the Portfolios of Councillors Bialyk, Morse and also Councillor Pearce who attended the meeting. The questions were circulated at the

meeting to Members of the Committee. The responses of the Portfolio Holders are set out in italics below: –

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER SO20 TO CLLR BIALYK

Questions from Councillor Moore

How advanced is the work undertaken by ECL on the scheme to redevelop Mary Arches?

The work was at the Feasibility stage and the Director City Development will be able to provide further detail. A report on the Disposal of various sites would be presented to the forthcoming Executive meeting.

How much did the council pay ECL for this work?

The Director City Development would provide the information to the Leader, but unfortunately it was not yet available. There will be information on an overall cost for this in due course.

Councillor Moore asked a supplementary question, whether the Leader would involve the Ward Councillors in the discussions on the Feasibility work before it was reported to the Executive. The Leader said that Ward Members along with all Members and residents will be consulted in accordance with the Consultation Charter.

How advanced is the feasibility work on the Southgate Liveable Exeter site?

The project was now at Stage 2 Feasibility.

Councillor Moore asked a supplementary question relating to the advanced feasibility stage, which was beyond a vision and concept and asked if Ward Members would be involved in the discussion. The Leader advised that appropriate Ward Members would be contacted for any of the sites in the city.

How much did the council pay ECL and third parties for this work?

The overall picture will be available with a report to the Executive on the disposal of land.

Councillor Moore asked a supplementary question, if the figures would be available after the meeting. The Leader stated they were not currently available.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER SO20 TO CLLR MORSE (Portfolio Holder City Development).

Question from Councillor Moore

In light of the National Audit office report on resilience to flooding <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/resilience-to-flooding/> - will the Portfolio holder ask the Environment Agency for an assessment of the implications of these findings and their impact on Exeter and the development of the local plan?

The City Council has involved the Environment Agency in detailed discussions during the preparation of the Full Draft Exeter Plan. This has included inputs into site appraisal, policy preparation and evidence, while the EA have provided formal responses to the consultations which have been held previously. The EA have also

been proactively involved in the work on the Liveable Water Lane Supplementary Planning Document. The City Council would expect responses from the Environment Agency on the consultations for the Full Draft Exeter Plan and the Liveable Water Lane SPD; the EA would draw on appropriate policy, evidence, research and flood modelling as they see fit. The City Council is also working with Devon County Council and South West Water on the preparation of planning policy as other key organisations with responsibilities over flood risk, water supply and waste water treatment.

Councillor Moore asked a supplementary question to have sight of the correspondence. The Portfolio Holder advised it would be available at the end of the Local Plan process.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER SO20 TO CLLR PEARCE (Portfolio Communities & Homelessness Prevention)

Questions from Councillor M Mitchell

.Can the committee be provided with the details of the total income to date on a monthly basis from the Community Lottery since it commenced and the amount of income gained from the lottery by Exeter City Council?

The Community Lottery web site detailed an indicative figure of over £51,000 as the forecast for this year. The figure fluctuated with the buying pattern of tickets. The Portfolio Holder welcomed the income which was generated for good causes in the city.

Councillor Mitchell asked a supplementary question about the target set. The Portfolio Holder advised that they did not set a target, and the indicative figure was if the sales stayed at that level for the rest of the year. The projections were based on the number of ticket sales before launch and the percentage of the population that were likely to take the opportunity to support community groups in this way. Ticket sales were ahead of the target and that data will be reported to the Grants Panel in the spring and then on through the Committee process.

Based upon current predictions how much income will the Lottery in this current financial year contribute to community causes?

The following information was provided:-

As at 31/10/23) there were

- 832 members with 1590 tickets (monthly)*
- 95 Good Causes receiving benefit*
- Based on this the forecast for the annual contribution to good causes from the lottery is £51,012*

A historical monthly breakdown can be provided on the returns to date, from a report that can be downloaded from the dashboard.

72 Portfolio Holder report - Councillor Wood

Councillor Wood as Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Physical Activity reported on the respective areas of his Portfolio, which detailed the Council's published priorities, major ongoing programmes of work, issues impacting delivery, financial performance and budget requirements and potential changes being considered.

He highlighted the key elements of his portfolio which included the Live and Move work, carried out in partnership with Sport England and a number of key stakeholders across the city as well as the Leisure Service with the many challenges faced.

The following responses to Members were given by the Portfolio Holder:-

- funding opportunities from Government had changed with bids invited on a competitive basis. As stated in the Portfolio Holder report, a recent funding bid in respect of reducing the carbon impact and improving sustainability for swimming pools had been unsuccessful. Northbrook Pool would have been an ideal beneficiary, as investment had already been made at the Riverside Leisure Centre and the passivehaus St Sidwells Point facility. Although a second tranche of funding had opened, the criteria had not changed and the bid was deemed likely to have the same result. The Leisure team were adept at identifying funding opportunities, and making bids but there needed to be a good chance of success to warrant further staff time and effort.
- the pool at the Riverside was a key asset and function for the western side of the city. There had been significant investment at the Centre after the fire and there were no plans to close that facility. Improvement work has taken place to address issues on the roof, which was divided into three sections, to both strengthen and make more waterproof with just a joining section of the roof to complete.
- the work of Leisure Services and the Live and Move teams was interconnected and efforts continued with Sport England to engage those harder to reach individuals to encourage physical activity which was the core focus and function of the Live and Move Strategy.
- communicating the overall message of culture, lifestyle and fitness through the Council's Communications teams as well as the Leisure Communications team and the Council's newspaper, the Citizen had been successful. The popular Pay As You Go app runs alongside the monthly membership offer and the numbers using the city's leisure centres on a daily basis was testament to the quality of the service offered. Statistics have shown that there was still some work as part of the Live and Move strategy shows there was still some work to do with those people who might have limited time and resources. In response to a further question on developing a more interactive or tailored experience for the individual, the Service Lead Leisure, Culture and Tourism advised that the gym equipment in the Leisure Centres was linked to the My Fitness, My Wellbeing app, with data collected to feed into the Live and Move Strategy. Further work was being undertaken to improve the data collection.
- referencing the data company Deep Green, and a link between heat loss and sustainable activities in leisure centres. St Sidwells Point does not need this and there was no industrial activity to help Northbrook Pool. The Service Lead Culture, Leisure and Tourism added that there were logistical issues in this regard in the Plant Room at the Riverside, but that could change if the equipment in the plant room was updated.
- maintaining adequate levels of staff in the leisure centres throughout the year, especially poolside with also dependent on student availability as well as the national shortage of lifeguards and swimming instructors remained a challenge for the service. Budgetary constraints had put additional pressure around, energy costs in the Leisure Centres, but they have continued to remain open as well as bring the staff in house, when many other Centres have closed.

- he would work with the Service Lead Leisure, Culture and Tourism to provide some evidence to meet Councillor Moore's request for examples of the effort needed for bids to share at a forthcoming LGA event she was attending.
- the Bromhams Farm Playing Field building was well located and he was keen to meet with any community members who might put forward any ideas for a sports facility. There were larger changing facilities at the King George V Playing Fields, and they were exploring ways to expand the use and make more of a centre for the community and offer more cohesion within the sporting community. The Bromhams Farm Playing Field represents a similar opportunity.
- despite a very competitive environment, the challenges in running the leisure service and utility costs which were still comparatively high, he was confident the income would exceed the budget agreed at Council. The team continued to explore every opportunity to increase the income, through engagement with communities and delivering activities and he anticipated more growth income next year. A balanced budget will depend on a number of factors and whilst he was not in a position to commit, the aim was to look at less subsidy from the General Fund to support the services.
- the pricing structure to assess the facilities of leisure services were offered at the lowest rate that could be sustained across all of the service. The team were currently exploring a new leisure card, which would be targeted at those who were least active and whose inactivity represented a potential risk to their physical or mental health. Those individuals will be identified through their GP or other health group and invited to engage on a tailor made programme. The card will also offer a reduced Pay As You Go access as part of a period of reduced membership for off peak access to those individuals with limited income to encourage them to visit the leisure centre environment.

The Portfolio Holder also responded to advance questions received from Councillors M Mitchell and Read. The responses were set out in italics below:-

Questions from Councillor Read

What are the leisure service income generation targets and how is financial performance progressing against these?

The 23/24 income target for the leisure portfolio is £4.05m and to date, actual income received is £3.6m (89% of the target had already been achieved). The income generation target was likely to be exceeded by quite a significant figure.

In respect of your reference to ageing leisure stock, what is the funding requirement for the capital programme for these repairs and how do you expect it to be funded?

The following figures were given:-

- *Leisure Property enhancements £2.1m budget*
- *funding will be from borrowing and or from the various competitive funding opportunities*
- *Leisure Equipment Replacement £661.7k budget*
- *Leisure equipment replacement, £100k is a year-on-year budget funded from capital receipts. A sum of £561.7k is leftover from the previous leisure capital budget and been combined with the £100k to give an enhanced*

spend on a rolling replacement equipment programme across the leisure stock which does become worn out.

The Portfolio Holder responded to a follow up question on the percentage of borrowing and stated that at this stage it was not possible to confirm, but currently, borrowing was not an option due to the high interest rates. There would be different criteria if capital investment was required for health and safety reasons. Many of the funding opportunities bid for also required an element of investment from the Council.

Questions from Cllr Mitchell

Can you provide an update on the work on the Riverside roof, the total expected costs against the budget and will this work to fix the roof be the end of the work on site?

The work to consider the replacement of the middle section of the roof at Riverside was nearing the end of the feasibility stage. . The overall Cost Plan was being developed as part of the conclusion to the Feasibility Stage and this will confirm the cost position against budget. It was expected that the Feasibility Stage will be concluded prior to Christmas. Once the Riverside gym roof is fixed, all three roofs at the facility will then have been replaced. Unfortunately there was no guarantee that other aspects of the building would not fail over the coming years which will require further repair work, in this busy municipal building.

In response to a further question on whether the costs identified in the Feasibility study would meet the supplementary budget for roof work, the Portfolio Holder stated that the work would remain within budget. He added that a funding opportunity was being explored as well, and if successful that would reduce the funds needed to invest in the building.

In regard to St Sidwells Point Leisure centre can the Portfolio Holder provide details of the membership figures and attributable income against revenue costs for the last year?

The figures and the volume of people using the facility of the team to keep the facility at the standard were as follows - .

Since St Sidwells Point (SSP) was built there have been 1,960,811 visitors

There are 5256 live SSP members

There are 43,000 pay-as-you-go members

The Membership base has doubled in the first year since opening SSP and that is a clear indication of the current position.

All membership and all other income revenue streams are attributable against revenue costs.

In respect of a £2.1m subsidy for the service, the costs were applied holistically against that service wide membership. They are running a service and facility in the city and were keen to sustain it. SSP is a certified passivehaus building and the costs of running it are lower than any other comparable building in the city.

Councillor Mitchell followed up the question and referred to income in 2022/23 being £1.67m against a cost of £2.845m. The net cost to the budget was £1.172m against the membership income of £1.583m and he asked what actions might be taken to reduce the costs. He acknowledged that there were start-up costs.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the service wide challenges and the pressures of the high utility costs and inflation which was reflected in the rising staff costs. Every effort was being made to increase the income, despite starting from a difficult place in a difficult industry. When the budget was set, a sum of £2.1m was requested but he anticipated that the same level of funding would not be required in the next year.

Members noted the Portfolio Holder's report.

73 **Full Draft Exeter Plan Consultation**

Councillor Read having sought to ask a question in relation to a strategy declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as a trustee of Exeter Canal and Quay Trust (ECQT) and withdrew from the room, whilst another Member sought the information.

The Assistant Service Lead (Local Plan) presented the report which explained the progress made on the Exeter Plan (Local Plan) and made a presentation which was attached to the minutes. He explained the content of the Full Draft of the plan which is out for public consultation between 23 October 2023 and 15 January 2024.

The Chair reminded Members that the report was about the Local Plan consultation process and not a scrutiny of the Local Plan.

The Assistant Service Lead (Local Plan) advised that the team had been working on the Plan since 2021, when suggestions were made for development sites in the city. They consulted last year and had been reviewing the 3,500 responses and appraising further sites which were proposed during consultation. This current process is the third public consultation and covers the full Draft Plan. This work now included a large number of policies and strategies which direct the Plan. The six, strategic, brownfield sites identified had changed slightly but were still based on the sites in the Exeter Liveable initiative. The sites included in the plan were residential, employment or mixed use. They had also published a proposals map of all of the policies in the plan.

The presentation covered the detail of the Plan and he highlighted number of matters associated with the Plan. The identification of the strategic brownfield sites offered a sustainable strategy for the city. This offered an opportunity to meet the housing needs in sustainable locations and regenerate areas of the city. The challenges of developing brownfield sites were varied and included existing uses on site with multiple ownership and areas of contaminated land, the heritage setting of the city and the viability of the development. The current brownfield approach is a change from the previous plans which included large areas of greenfield development on the edge of the city.

There were significant challenges in delivering the evidence to support the Plan and to support the end of the process. The consultation was running for 12 weeks and was being run in accordance with the Consultation Charter and the Planning Statement of Community Involvement. There were a number of exhibitions and meetings with stake holder meetings and community groups running alongside an advertising and social media campaign. The next steps will include an assessment of the responses received and the Plan will come back to the Strategic Scrutiny Committee in March to provide an analysis of the responses. The team will put together more evidence and revise the Plan before further consultation next autumn as part of the formal Regulation 19 process and the publication of the Final Draft Plan. A more formal consultation will be run in a year's time.

The Assistant Service Lead (Local Plan) responded to the following Members' comments:-

- the consultation has been pitched to serve a variety of ways in which people can respond. Stakeholders were able to send detailed responses or very simple 'agree' or 'disagree' answers through the smiley or less happy face emojis.
- the structure of the consultation followed the Council's consultation Charter. The planning team had arranged 12 exhibitions and 2 pop up exhibitions in the Central Library and this was a significant undertaking. There was a limit to the events that they could support along with other meetings with community groups and with community builders.
- Regulation 19 was a formal approach and structure for commenting on the soundness of the Plan at the next stage of plan-preparation. That consultation on the Final Draft would take place next autumn and would be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and examined through a series of public hearings.
- the team would review their strategy of consultation in advance of the Regulation 19 stage, however this stage is very regimented as set out by regulations and this could have an impact on how the consultation is run.
- Regulation 19 would be a final draft. All responses received together with the evidence base would be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and an Inspector would have a series of meeting hearings to examine the plan. Respondents would be able to attend these hearings. The Inspectors recommends changes to the plan, and these recommended Changes are consulted on and then a final version of the Plan is produced.
- the call for sites had been carried out in 2021 and evidence was put together to support the Plan. The site appraisal is available as part of the evidence base for the plan. Any new sites which are proposed during the current consultation would be fed through that formal process and site assessment and conclusions would be made available when the next stage of the Plan was out for consultation. The Portfolio Holder City Development assured the Member that the call for sites would follow a robust set of criteria and it was not about the second sites coming forward again, it was about seeing new sites that would be appropriate.
- the team is working with neighbouring authorities and the County Council as there was a duty to cooperate on Plan making on cross-boundary issues.
- the principle of the Live and Move Strategy, Active Travel, Active Design principles and Place Making as well as the importance of health and well-being were included in the Water Lane Design Code and Development Framework.
- the site of St Luke's at the University of Exeter had been identified as an employment allocation, but was quite different to the other three traditional employment sites. St Luke's would offer a reinvigoration of the site to support the University's Research and Development functions and health partnership work with the Royal Devon University Healthcare Trust. It was a different type of employment allocation and that may need to be clarified in the next stage of the Plan.
- a Heritage Harbour strategy developed by the Exeter Canal and Quay Trust including the Harbour, Quay area and Water Lane had been taken into consideration by the Exeter Plan work.

Strategic Scrutiny Committee noted the work associated with the Full Draft Exeter Plan.

Live and Move Programme Update

The Service Lead Active and Healthy People presented the report which provided a further update from March 2023 for Members on work undertaken and planned under the Live and Move Strategy, across Exeter and Cranbrook, with the aim of increasing health inequality and physical activity. The report also provided an opportunity to highlight the Council's programme of work around physical activity and well-being in local communities, an update on the Sport England delivery pilot and an explanation of a focus and data collected from survey work carried out over the last 12 months to highlight the work in the city. The team had embarked on a process to extend their work with Sports England, making an application for funding until March 2028. A combination of the report and a background presentation (attached to the minutes) detailed the main points in the survey.

The Service Lead Active and Healthy People advised that an independent academic evaluator from Exeter University ensured that an objective robust evaluation was made of all of the work the team does. The level of data from the enhanced local active live survey was unique to Exeter, which together with feedback information from residents and their focus groups meant the team were able to target their resources and work where it was needed the most. The enhanced survey had been carried out in May 2023 and targeted 2,000 residents in the 20 priority areas in the city with the highest rates of inactivity and the poorest health outcomes. The study period from April 2022 until March 2023, analysed behaviour for the period when moving out of the pandemic, and a further evaluation would be made in a year's time to study any further physical activity habits.

The Service Lead Active and Healthy People responded to the following questions:-

- all of the data and information feeds into the digital strategy work led by Jo Yelland, Director as part of the Council's customer services and strategy work.
- the target for Active Travel England was agreed through the development of the Exeter Transport Strategy. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) was a local target that aligns with best practice and was set in advance of Active England's targets.
- the important objective within the Playing Pitch Strategy was to develop a network of community sports hubs, such as the Exwick Sports hub which was created in partnership with Exeter College and managed by the Exeter Community Trust. The aspiration was to develop more sites and continue explore options for community led projects, and that might include seeking community assets transfer opportunities. As part of this theme, there had been some discussions relating to the changing rooms at the King George V Playing Fields. They team would have to reflect on their capacity to secure additional investment in their current programme of work.
- regarding the facilities at Bromhams Farm Playing Field, he would continue to engage with local partners, including Exeter College, the café owner, the Devon Wildlife Trust and the Exeter Spitfires baseball club who would like to consider that as their base.
- the data output covered the 20 priority areas.
- the priority areas did not include a student classification, but the team were aware that younger people had contributed to the city wide data which showed an increase in young people walking and an exercise to compare the data with the 20 areas and the city wide data would offer a breakdown of the people walking in the city.

- rather than any behavioural tracking devices which would have meant a significant investment for the Council and Sport England, the surveys were conducted by field work on the door step and covered a 12 month period.
- key policy interventions in relation to cycling, would require a systematic approach at national and local policy level. There should be a balance of infrastructure and behavioural change on the ground, working with schools, residents and community activity organisers who set up the local walking and cycling groups and who understand the local area. It was about having the positive experience of going for a walk and cycle and that could only be done if the investment in the infrastructure was in place.
- data from the Devon County Council, and Public Health data had informed the 20 priority areas and the Live and Move team were working in those parts of the city using information from the JSLA, and Sport and Active Lives. The data collected was being fed back to Public Health colleagues to include that information on their web sites and help inform policy decisions.
- in the context of walking and cycling the team have contributed significantly to the development of the walking and cycling infrastructure plan with Planning, the Parks and Open Spaces team, and the focus on walking and cycling as the first mode of transport. There was further consultation in this regard and he awaited the detail.
- he would ensure Members were included to the discussion with local stakeholders on the future of the changing rooms and wider Playing Pitch infrastructure at Bromhams Farm Playing Field.
- Cowick Barton Playing Field had been included in the survey. There was the potential to work with the community there, to improve activity levels, encouraging people to use the space for walking, cycling and informal recreation. An approach from local organisations in relation to the changing facility at Cowick Barton Playing Fields would be explored by both the Parks and Open Spaces and the Corporate Property teams.
- a further update would be provided in six months, and he would also continue to provide information on the data though the web site and the Scrutiny Bulletin.

Strategic Scrutiny Committee noted the progress made against the strategy, and its contribution towards key priorities in the City Council's Corporate Plan.

75 **Forward Plan of Business and Scrutiny Work Plan**

It was noted that the Scrutiny Programme Board would be considering the work plan of future business for Scrutiny.

Members noted the Forward Plan and draft Scrutiny Work Plan.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.55 pm

Chair

REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 25 January 2024

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Councillor Josie Parkhouse – Lead Councillor for Climate & Ecological Crisis

1. Issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities

Net Zero Carbon City

There is a significant risk and challenge that the net zero budget is temporary. Once the £1m budget is spent in March 2026, the roles and activities will cease unless further funding can be found. The Service Lead for Net Zero & Business is researching opportunities to develop an ongoing revenue stream for this work to continue, as well as sourcing external funding.

City Wide Net Zero 2030

Since the closure of Exeter City Futures, no one organisation has been coordinating and facilitating the Exeter Net Zero 2030 Plan. A way forward for facilitating and delivering city wide net zero was the subject of a report to Executive 6 January 2024. The report detailed the City Council taking on the role of coordinating and facilitating city wide net zero, utilising an existing budget to employ a temporary 2 year funded post, as well as utilising existing resources, both internally and externally.

Exeter City Council Net Zero 2030

Residential food waste has been rolled out to 21,300 domestic properties collecting 687 tonnes of food waste between 1 April to 30 September 2023. Early December an additional 600 properties starting collections, additional collections will be on hold until a new food bay is constructed.

The City Council currently have 3 electric refuse vehicles in circulation. The diesel fleet will be replaced with electric refuse vehicles when they become available and are economically viable to do so.

A decarbonisation plan for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum is due for completion in 2024.

3 decarbonisation plans have been completed for the leisure estate, the remaining sites are to be completed in 2024.

City Council emissions for 2021/22 were 36,631 tCO₂e, which represents a reduction of 2,293 tCO₂e (6%) on the previous year. Services with the highest emissions are:

- Social Housing 60% of our footprint
- Procurement 20% of our footprint
- Non-Domestic Buildings 18% of our footprint
- Transport 3% of our footprint
- Offsets 1% of our footprint (positive contribution)

Corporate carbon emissions fluctuate each year, this is a result of strategic decisions and the current formula for procurement.

Ecological Crisis

There is a high demand for sports and mixed leisure use across City Council green spaces, this presents conflicting land use priorities. Resource and space restrictions mean that ecology enhancement potential is limited across City Council owned land.

Enhancements are therefore reliant on developments, private landowners, or across existing sites of biodiversity interest. Here the implementation of statutory planning frameworks and council policy can ensure the protection, enhancement, and restoration of biodiversity on behalf of the city.

In addition, space restrictions mean that additional canopy cover targets will need to be achieved across developments and/ or private landowners ostensibly. This limits the ability of the Council to directly influence canopy levels and carbon reduction progress through Exeter's Treescape.

Ongoing resource and budget constraints mean that development projects require external funding. The capacity of operational teams to secure and deliver ecology based projects, alongside core workloads, is limited.

Leading a Well-Run Council

The City Council's solar estate has increased to **3.4MW** which reduces energy consumption and costs for a number of service areas. £418,870.31 has been generated to date this year solely from our Feed In Tariff (FiT) and export to the grid network.

2. Update or commentary on any major ongoing programmes of work

City Wide Net Zero 2030

The following major infrastructure improvements will improve public transport:

- Marsh Barton Train Station
- Okehampton Train Station
- Government is providing funding to re-introduce rail services from Wellington & Cullompton

Along with the Net Zero Project Manager I have recently visited Bristol to learn from the **Bristol City Leap** initiative <https://www.bristolcityleap.co.uk/> I have also had discussions with Oxford and Plymouth City Council to learn about structures, lessons learnt and challenges they have encountered. These will be drawn into developing a programme of works on reducing city wide carbon emissions.

I have attended a number of local, regional and national events to share best practice on what Exeter has achieved, but to also learn successes, including:

- The British Science Festival
- The Net Zero Nations Project Conference in November
- The Labour party Conference to attend numerous net zero events

The reconvened City Council **Transport Working Group** have met and at the first meeting received a presentation on the Sustainable Transport & Communication chapter of the draft Exeter Plan. The Group have submitted a response as part of the consultation. New Terms of Reference are being developed.

To support city wide net zero, the City Council have committed budget from our **Shared Prosperity Fund** to a number of carbon reducing projects. Regular updates on activity is provided to Strategic Scrutiny every 6 months, next is March 2024:

- EPC Advisors (either residential or commercial) - 2024/25
- Greening Your Business (business support) - Prosper is now live and providing specialist support to businesses in Exeter
<https://www.heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk/prosper-sign-up/>
- Exeter Innovation Hub (high growth business support) – Hub has opened in Princesshay
- Exeter College Retrofit Skills Centre - 2024/25

The Net Zero team are working closely with Devon County Council on a funding submission to **LEVI**, to rollout EV charging across the city, both on-street and off-street utilising our car park estate.

1Energy approached 4 city institutions in the latter part of 2022 concerning their ambitions to install a **District Heat Network** in Exeter. 1Energy made a bid for funding through the Green Heat Network Fund <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-heat-network-fund-ghnf> and were successful in achieving a grant of £44m. City institutions are not procuring a DHN, but may consider connecting to a DHN if the business case stacks up. A member briefing is due imminently.

Once the report on City Wide Net Zero has been endorsed by Executive and Council, discussions will take place with City Council services in how existing services can positively contribute to reducing city wide carbon emissions.

Ecological Crisis - Recovery, Enhancement and Net Gain

As a supporting Authority, the City Council will continue working with the Responsible Body (Devon County Council) on the creation of the **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** (LNRS), which is due to be published summer 2024. A requirement under the 2021 Environment Act, the strategy will outline a joint authority framework of objectives, supporting the delivery of nature recovery and biodiversity net gain within Devon.

The City Council is investigating the potential use of Suitable Alternative Natural Greens Spaces (SANGS) to mitigate the impact of the Exeter Local Plan and future development, on sites of significant international biodiversity interest. A report titled 'Recognising and capturing the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) potential of the Valley Parks' has been completed and will form part of the evidence informing the emerging Joint Mitigation Strategy. Footprint Ecology have been commissioned to undertake this work and a final draft version of the strategy is expected next year.

Work continues on the implementation of mandatory **Biodiversity Net Gain** (BNG) arrangements. This statutory requirement will see a 10% BNG requirement implemented (either onsite or offsite) across unexempted developments and following the biodiversity gain mitigation hierarchy. The City Council's planning teams continue to develop processes in accordance with evolving guidance and regulation, and this includes working with third-party private landowners and Devon County Council to secure legal agreements for offsite 'habitat banks' in Exeter.

The City Council have an enhanced biodiversity duty under the Environment Act 2021 which requires LAs to communicate what they are doing to improve the environment and to show the positive change they're making through statutory biodiversity reports. BNG, the LNRS and the Exeter Plan will be the primary contributors, as well other projects such as Exeter Wild City, Northbrook Arboretum, and the potential re-naturalisation of Exeter's waterways. The first report must be published by March 2026 and work in 2024 will begin ensuring we are recording the positive changes from these projects.

Exeter City Council Net Zero 2030

The Water Lane Smart Grid and Storage project is completed and includes:

- a ground mounted 1.2 MW array at Water Lane with energy storage technology
- a private wire connection providing a renewable energy supply to the Council's Operations Depot at Exton Road to support the electrification of the Council's fleet
- battery storage at three further sites where solar energy is generated
- 140kw solar installation at the Riverside Leisure Centre

The City Council were a finalist in the first edie Net Zero Awards for “Renewable Energy Project of the Year” for the Water Lane Smart Grid and Storage. Sadly the Net Zero team weren’t successful in winning the top prize, but continue to deliver innovative projects to reduce our corporate carbon emissions.

To Net Zero team continue to deliver **Carbon Literacy** training for officers and Cllrs continue with 190 completing the training and 85 being certified as being carbon literate. Bronze status has been achieved, silver is the goal.

The Net Zero team is leading a Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funded project for heat decarbonisation for RAMM & Riverside Leisure Centre.

Ecological Crisis

Exeter’s **Tree and Woodland Strategy 2023-33** will be released in 2024. The strategy outlines a framework for protecting the biodiversity and biosecurity of Exeter’s Treescape. It identifies objectives that will support canopy cover increases where space allows across City Council owned land, and through development and private land stakeholders. The recent ‘Valuing Exeter’s Urban Forest Report’ indicates that Exeter’s holistic canopy levels reduce City Carbon by as much as 1,500 tonnes per year. With the implementation of strategy objectives this figure is anticipated to gradually increase as canopy levels do, although the benefits will not be fully realised till the maturation of new planting schemes closer to 2033.

3. Issues that may impact service delivery/financial performance/future budget requirements

As previously mentioned, there is a significant risk and challenge that the net zero budget is temporary. There is budget remaining for activity to continue until March 2026. The Service Lead for Net Zero & Business is researching opportunities to develop an ongoing revenue stream for this work to continue, as well as sourcing external funding.

Over the past month, the Service Lead for Net Zero & Business has spoken with all Service Leads to talk through the challenges they face to reduce service carbon emissions. Service Leads have been incredibly honest in the challenges they face and the support they have received to date from the Net Zero team.

In spring 2024, the Net Zero team will commission **SWEEG** to update the City Wide Green House Gas report, to enable a review of the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan and an action plan to be developed to address areas that have high carbon emissions. This will be used to develop a work programme for the new Programme Manager City Wide Net Zero.

A study to determine the full financial cost of achieving city wide net zero by 2030 will be commissioned.

Due to the sale of **Mary Arches Street Car Park**, the Net Zero team are researching alternative locations for the solar located on the top floor of the car park.

I have been discussing with the Communities Portfolio Holder a proposal to establish a climate change group through **Exeter Connects**, as engagement with our communities and residential associations will be key to deliver change across the city.

If successful, the County wide **LEVI** funding may have a small impact on income streams, as EV charging will be provided by an external provider. If the funding bid is successful, existing charging points (PodPoint) located in City Council car parks will be used for City Council use only – which would support the electrification of our fleet network.

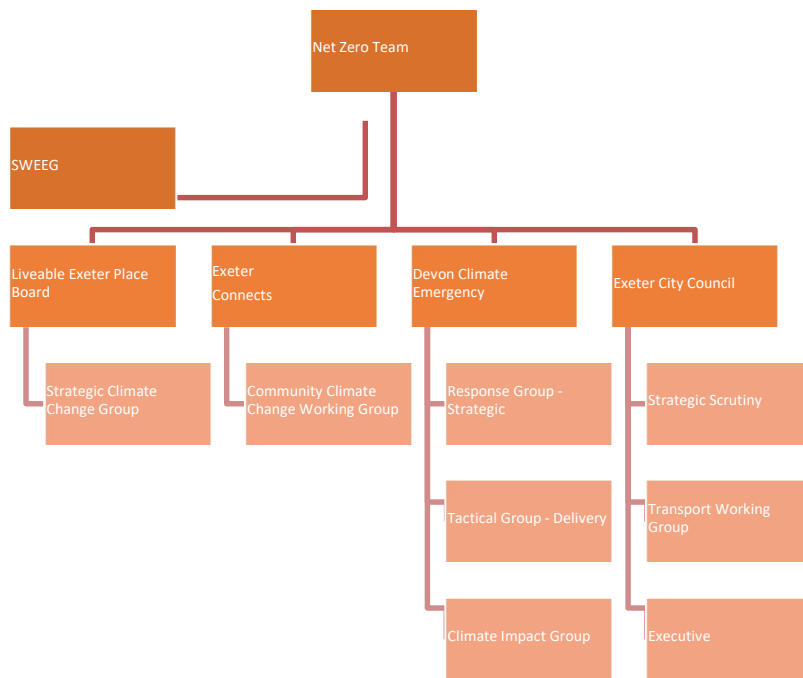
The Service Lead has started to **review City Council policies**, to determine a positive or negative impact they may have on reducing city wide or corporate carbon emissions. This review is extensive and will take some time to determine impact, the results will be reported back to Executive in the future.

4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered

City Wide Net Zero 2030

Since the closure of Exeter City Futures, no one organisation has been coordinating and facilitating the Exeter Net Zero 2030 Plan in regards to its delivery, monitoring and evaluation. A way forward for facilitating and delivering city wide net zero was the subject of a report to Executive 6 January 2024. The report detailed plans for the City Council to coordinate and facilitate city wide net zero, utilising an existing budget to employ a temporary 2 year funded post (Programme Manager City Wide Net Zero) and utilising existing resources, both internally and externally. As there is an existing team that focuses on net zero activity, it is proposed this team takes on the City Wide Net Zero, with delivery overseen by the Service Lead for Net Zero. The wider Net Zero team are currently working at capacity, so opportunities to support will be limited initially.

The new temporary post will be the main point of contact for city businesses, community group in delivering net zero for Exeter, acting as a co-ordinator and facilitator for a wide range of carbon reducing projects. The chart below highlights how existing structures will be utilised.



5. Other matters the Portfolio Holder wishes to raise with the Scrutiny Committee

A submission to the Exeter Plan has been submitted, in relation to its impact in reducing city wide carbon emissions. I look forward to working with City Development in how Building Control and the planning regime can act for good in reducing city wide emissions.

I am working with the Service Lead for Net Zero in how our car park estate can have a positive impact on reducing city wide emissions, whilst continuing to deliver an income stream to deliver a wide range of discretionary and statutory services.

WORK PLAN FOR SCRUTINY ITEMS 2023/2024

Working Draft January 2024

Strategic Scrutiny Committee	Item	Director/	Portfolio Holder	Origin of Business	Status
25 January 2024	Portfolio Holders Report Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Parkhouse)			Yearly report	
Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus 7 February 2024	Budget	Director Finance (DH)		Yearly report	
14 March 2024	Portfolio Holders Report Portfolio Holder for City Development (Cllr Morse) and Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Culture and City Centre Strategy (TBC)			Yearly report	
14 March 2024	Working Towards Net Zero - Exeter City Council's Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Action Plan	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB) Service Lead Net Zero & Business (VH)	Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Parkhouse)	Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2022 half yearly report	
14 March 2024	Progress Report Shared Prosperity Fund - Update	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB)Service Lead Net Zero & Business (VH)	(Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Parkhouse)	Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2022 half yearly report	

Strategic Scrutiny Committee	Item	Director/	Portfolio Holder	Origin of Business	Status
14 March 2024	Exeter Plan Consultation Outcomes (New)	Director City Development (IC)	Portfolio Holder for City Development (Cllr Morse)		
14 March 2024	Ethical and Low Carbon Advertising Policy (Moved from Jan 24)	Director Culture, Leisure and Tourism (JP)	Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Parkhouse)	Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Parkhouse)	Notice of Motion by Councillor Sparling Council 18 April 2023 (report to Strategic Scrutiny Committee 22 June 2023)
14 March 2024	Commercial Property Portfolio (Proposed Date)	Director Finance	(Leader) Cllr Biaylk	Scrutiny proposal Cllr M Mitchell	
6 June 2024	Presentation on the Role of Scrutiny	Director Corporate Services (BAK)		Timetabled report	
6 June 2024	Live and Move Programme Update	Director Culture, Leisure and Tourism (JP)	Portfolio Holder Leisure & Physical Activity (Cllr Wood)	Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 6 March 2023 half yearly	
12 September 2024	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				
12 September 2024	Working Towards Net Zero - Exeter City Council's Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Action Plan	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB) Service Lead Net Zero & Business (VH)	Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Parkhouse)	Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2022 half yearly report	
12 September 2024	Progress Report Shared Prosperity Fund - Update	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management	Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Parkhouse)	Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2022 half yearly report	

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Strategic Scrutiny Committee	Item	Director/	Portfolio Holder	Origin of Business	Status
		(DB)Service Lead Net Zero & Business (VH)			
12 September 2024	Scrutiny Programme Annual Report	Director Corporate Services (BAK)		Yearly report	
12 September 2024	Air Quality performance	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB)	Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Parkhouse)	Scrutiny Proposal - Cllr Moore NB Yearly report to Executive	
14 November 2024	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				
14 November 2024	Live and Move Programme Update	Director Culture, Leisure and Tourism (JP)	Portfolio Holder Leisure & Physical Activity (Cllr Wood)	Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 16 March 2023 half yearly	
23 January 2025	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				
Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus February 2025 Date TBC	Budget	Director Finance (DH)		Yearly report	
13 March 2025	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				
13 March 2025	Working Towards Net Zero - Exeter City Council's Corporate Carbon Footprint	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management	Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Parkhouse)	Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2022 half yearly report	

Strategic Scrutiny Committee	Item	Director/	Portfolio Holder	Origin of Business	Status
	Report and Carbon Reduction Action Plan Progress Report	(DB) Service Lead Net Zero & Business (VH)			
13 March 2025	Progress Report Shared Prosperity Fund - Update	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB) Service Lead Net Zero & Business (VH)	Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Parkhouse)	Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2022 half yearly report	
5 June 2025	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				
5 June 2025	Presentation on the Role of Scrutiny	Director Corporate Services (BAK)		Timetabled report	
5 June 2025	Live and Move Programme Update	Director Culture, Leisure and Tourism (JP)	Portfolio Holder Leisure & Physical Activity (Cllr Wood)	Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 16 March 2023 half yearly	

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Items to be timetabled

Review findings of the Car Parks Strategy report - Report to be progressed following further work Date TBC

Workstream to tackle social and affordable housing crisis – (Scrutiny proposal Cllr Atkinson) Report to be incorporated into future Local Plan work/reports Date TBC

Budget Preparation Scrutiny (scrutiny proposal Cllr M Mitchell)

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee	Item	Director	Portfolio Holder	Origin of Business	Status
1 February 2024	Portfolio Holders Report Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Democratic Services & Environmental Health (Cllr Foale)			Yearly report	
1 February 2024	Presentation on Waste, Recycling and Fleet	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB)	Portfolio Holder Place and City Management (Cllr Williams)	Yearly report	
1 February 2024	Litter Bin Review <i>TBC</i>	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB)	Portfolio Holder Place and City Management (Cllr Williams)	Cllr Atkinson scrutiny proposal	
1 February 2024	Allotment Service Review	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB)	Portfolio Holder Place and City Management (Cllr Williams)	Cllr Harvey scrutiny proposal	
Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus 7 February 2024	Budget	Director Finance (DH)		Yearly report	
28 March 2024	Portfolio Holders Report Portfolio Holder for Communities & Homelessness Prevention (Cllr Pearce)				
28 March 2024	Six monthly update on Homelessness Strategy	Director City Development (IC)	Portfolio Holder Communities & Homelessness	Proposed by Councillor Denning – half yearly report	September 2021 Homelessness Strategy approved Executive 7

			Prevention (Cllr Pearce)		February 2023 and Council 21 February 2023
28 March 2024	Report on tackling violence against women and girls (support) (TBC)	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB)	Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development and Support Services (Cllr Denning)/ Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Culture and City Centre Strategy (Cllr Wright)	Scrutiny proposal - Cllr Atkinson	
28 March 2024	Update on Street Cleansing/Bin Collection	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB)	Portfolio Holder Place and City Management (Cllr Williams)	Yearly report	
27 June 2024	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				
27 June 2024	Review of consultation policy TBC	Director (JY)	(Leader) Cllr Biaylk	Scrutiny proposal - Cllr Atkinson	
3 October 2024	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				
3 October 2024	Update on Street Cleansing and Bin Collection – Recycling and Food Waste Collection TBC	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB)	Portfolio Holder Place and City Management (Cllr Williams)	Yearly report	
3 October 2024	Six monthly update on Homelessness Strategy	Director City Development (IC)	Portfolio Holder Communities & Homelessness Prevention ~ (Cllr Pearce)	Proposed by Councillor Denning – half yearly report	September 2021 Homelessness Strategy approved Executive 7 February 2023 and Council 21 February 2023

3 October 2024	Scrutiny Programme Annual Report	Director Corporate Services (BAK)			
27 November 2024	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				
27 November 2024	Tenants Energy Review of our Passivhaus C/Homes – (Date TBC)	Director City Development (IC)	Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development and Support Services (Cllr Denning)/	Scrutiny proposal Cllr Atkinson	
30 January 2025	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				
Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus February 2025?	Budget	Director Finance (DH)		Yearly report	
27 March 2025	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				
27 March 2025	Update on Street Cleansing and Bin Collection – Recycling and Food Waste Collection	Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management (DB)	Portfolio Holder Place and City Management (Cllr Williams)	Yearly report	
27 March 2025	Six monthly update on Homelessness Strategy	Director City Development (IC)	Portfolio Holder Communities & Homelessness Prevention ~ (Cllr Pearce)	Proposed by Councillor Denning – half yearly report	September 2021 Homelessness Strategy approved Executive 7 February 2023 and Council 21 February 2023
26 June 2025	Portfolio Holders Report (Cllr TBC)				

2024-25

Items to be timetabled

MRF /glass collection to include in report to CFSC February (Scrutiny proposal Cllr Atkinson)

Local Government Devolution (scrutiny proposal Cllr Atkinson)

Review of grass cutting regime –to be discussed with Portfolio Holder - Place and City Management (Cllr Williams)

Budget Preparation Scrutiny (scrutiny proposal Cllr M Mitchell)

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