

COUNCIL

Tuesday 17 December 2024

Present:-

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor, Councillor Kevin Mitchell
Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Paul Knott

Councillors Asvachin, Atkinson, Banyard, Bennett, Bialyk, Darling, Ellis-Jones, Fullam, Haigh, Harding, Holland, Jobson, Ketchin, Knott, Miller-Boam, Mitchell, K, Mitchell, M, Moore, Palmer, Parkhouse, Pole, Read, Rees, Sheridan, Snow, Vizard, Wardle, Wetenhall, Wood and Wright

Apologies:-

Councillors Allcock, Hughes, Patrick, Williams M. and Williams R.

Also Present

Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer, Head of Service - Finance, Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer(LS)

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MINUTES

The minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Council held on 15 October 2024 were moved by the Lord Mayor, taken as read, approved and signed as correct following clarification from the Leader that in Minute No. 59 in response to Question 3, new plans would follow the planning process.

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STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader made the following statement:

“Lord Mayor and colleagues; It has been now 14 months since the war in Gaza commenced, this council called for a ceasefire, sadly nothing by way of a permanent ceasefire has come about. The continued loss of life throughout the region is I am sure something that we all find profoundly sad and simply unacceptable. We all hope and trust that all world leaders are working towards a peaceful resolution in the middle east, allowing for a settlement to be determined by the people of that region.

Our thoughts also continue to be with all those who are suffering because of the ongoing conflict in Palestine and Israel, and the further conflicts now in the Lebanon and the political uncertainty in Syria. There are many people in our city with connections to these areas and also those without any connection who continue watch the situation with horror and distress.

Our city is - and must continue to be - a safe, welcoming, and diverse community of residents, visitors, students, and workers. People of many different nationalities, faiths and beliefs as well as none, have made their home here. Many of these have come over the decades from war torn countries. They have grown up alongside Exeter-born residents and indeed now have families of their own, born in our wonderful city.

As a council, we continue to be proud and celebrate the diversity of our city. Indeed, it is the pride that we all feel in being part of this great city that forms the glue that binds us together. We therefore will always welcome people of all nationalities, faith, no faith and all diverse backgrounds.

As Councillors, we are elected representatives for our ward communities and for the city. As such, we will continue to support individuals, families, and all communities wherever we can and I know we remain committed to continue to keep Exeter a place for everyone to feel safe and supported and part of a community.

It is important to recognise that many people including ourselves, will be wanting to express their feelings but must do this without causing harm or distress to others. These continue to be challenging times, and we continue to be deeply affected by the brutality and suffering that we are witnessing in the middle East and other conflicts throughout the world.

I am sure you will agree that it is vital we continue to stand together, to treat each other with respect and care, and keep our city and community a safe and welcoming place for all whilst hoping and perhaps praying for a fast and peaceful end to all conflicts”.

In response to a question the Leader reassured Members that he was committed to ensuring that pension funds would not benefit from organisations which invested in the sale of arms and that there was ongoing work to this end.

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OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Lord Mayor advised that he had attended the following:

- Sweepers Lunch;
- Enthronement of the 72nd Bishop of Exeter;
- Remembrance Services including City service, Football and Rugby and Royal British Legion and the Deputy Lord Mayor attended the County service;
- 307 Squadron Polish Flag-raising Ceremony;
- Carol Services
- Graduation Ceremonies
- Business events including Unity 5's new offices, Go Outdoors and The Entertainer stores;
- South Street Baptist Church and Brampford Speke Anniversary Service; and
- Cultural and Faith events including Nigerian Community Celebration, Diwali, International café.

The Lord Mayor conveyed news of the death of former Councillors Saxon Spence and Jill Palmer and a one-minute silence was observed.

The Leader expressed great shock at the death of Saxon Spence who had given wise counsel and had a great role in shaping education within the city and that Jill Palmer had been a formidable councillor. The Leader hoped that both families could see how well respected they were and conveyed condolences on behalf of the Council.

Councillors Vizard, Atkinson and the Lord Mayor spoke of their great personal respect for former Councillor Saxon Spence.

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PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Lord Mayor reported the receipt of two questions from members of the public.

1. Question from FW

Please explain why NHCIL can be used for Wellbeing Exeter and not for Citizens Advice Exeter and why Citizens Advice Exeter will not be included as an option when consulting the public on the use of the NHCIL going forward?

Councillor Vizard, Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities gave the following response:

“When deciding on how to spend the neighbourhood portion of the CIL, the Council must do so within the statutory provisions of the CIL Regulations 2010 and its underpinning Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The neighbourhood portion of CIL must be spent in accordance with the statutory criteria set out in Regulation 59F and Paragraph 73 of the PPG as summarized below.

Regulation 59F of the CIL Regulations states: “...the charging authority (i.e. Exeter City Council) may use the CIL...to support the development of the relevant area by funding-

- (a) the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or
- (b) anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.”

Providing core funding for Citizens Advice Exeter does not meet these criteria.

The consultation proposed for next year on how the Council proposes to spend the neighbourhood portion of the CIL has not yet been planned in detail but all residents and other stakeholders, particularly from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector will be encouraged to participate.”

In a supplementary question FW asked why Citizen’s Advice didn’t meet the criteria and why the Council is prioritising Wellbeing Exeter over Citizen’s Advice? The Portfolio Holder stated that the criteria was bound by strict, specific regulation and Citizen’s Advice did not qualify but Wellbeing Exeter showed positive impact on community activity.

2. Question from Mr N

Without some core funding from the Council, Citizen’s Advice is likely to close. Residents, assuming entitlement to free advice, will approach councillors. Where will councillors send 6000 people annually expecting advice on issues including employment, immigration, neighbour disputes, family, health, tax and energy, as well as debt, benefits and housing?

Councillor Vizard, Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities gave the following response:

“The Council has not been a core funder of Citizens Advice Exeter for some years. The contract for Independent Information, Advice and Advocacy Services awarded to Citizens Advice Exeter through an open tendering process has come to an end and the council is no longer contracting for this type of service. Full details are contained in the committee report pack considered by Council in January 2024.

Alongside the services provided by Citizens Advice Exeter there are a wide range of online and in person advice services available locally and nationally.

Citizens Advice Exeter have reported to Customer Focus Scrutiny that, although this is difficult work, they have a fund-raising strategy and are in the process of applying for funding from a wide range of organisations. I hope they will be successful. The process will be followed for consultation and tender process. I agree that Citizen's Advice provides incredible value to the city."

In a supplementary question Mr N asked which organisations are able to give benefits advice as other organisations signpost to Citizen's Advice? Councillor Vizard responded that there was acceptance that Citizen's Advice had undertaken fantastic work and budget setting would be considered in the coming months.

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PLANNING COMMITTEE - 7 OCTOBER 2024

The minutes of the Planning Committee held on 7 October 2024 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Knott, and taken as read.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee 7 October 2024 be received.

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CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 3 OCTOBER 2024

The minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 3 October 2024 were presented by the Deputy Chair, Councillor Rees who had chaired the meeting, and were taken as read.

In respect of Minute No. 33 Box Shifting Practice, Business Rates and Empty Property Relief Councillor Read asked if the Portfolio Holder believed this practice was appropriate. The Leader responded stating that a recommendation had not been made to the Executive and he would discuss with officers.

In respect of Minute No. 34 Scrutiny Work Plan and Proposals Received Councillor Mitchell thanked the committee and the Chair for how the proposal he put forward had been handled which demonstrated how urgent items could be dealt with and asked whether the Chair agreed. Councillor Rees confirmed that she agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee 3 October be received.

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STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 14 NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee held on 14 November 2024 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Pole and taken as read.

Councillor Moore asked for clarification of the term 'zero carbon ready'. The Leader agreed to respond once he had spoken to the relevant Director.

In respect of Minute No. 43 Exeter Plan Publication Process Councillor Read asked what action the Council could take with regard to the statement that more allotments would be needed, proportional to additional demand. The Leader responded stating that the Allotments Department were doing a good job and that the Plan would go before the Inspector.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee 14 November 2024 be received.

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 27 NOVEMBER 2024

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

Councillor Moore asked how the Chair would ensure that issues raised by the auditor were actioned. The Leader responded stating that the Chair would work on the agenda with officers and that detailed work would not be the role of committee.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee 27 November 2024 be received.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 5 NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the Executive of 5 November 2024 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

In respect of Minute No. 116 Housing Residents' Vulnerabilities Policy the Leader moved, Councillor Wright seconded the recommendation and following a vote was CARRIED.

In respect of Minute No. 117 Housing Domestic Abuse Policy the Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendation and following a vote was CARRIED.

In respect of Minute No. 118 Exeter City Council Housing Services Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy and Policy the Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendation and following a vote was CARRIED.

In respect of Minute No. 119 Community Grants Programme 2025/26 Councillor Mitchell moved and was seconded by Councillor Fullam an amendment to recommendation (6) in the following terms:

(6) and grant delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder and the Strategic Director to carry out a public consultation with residents on the use of the Neighbourhood Portion of the CIL beyond 2026/27 including funding Wellbeing Exeter and the Community Grants Programme.

The Leader accepted the amendment.

Councillor Jobson moved and was seconded by Councillor Sheridan an amendment that there be an additional recommendation in the following terms:

When allocating the Neighbourhood portion of CIL that sufficient resources should be made available to Citizen's Advice to enable them to continue to provide their service.

The Leader did not accept the amendment and following a vote it was NOT CARRIED.

Councillor Vizard spoke in support of the original recommendation as amended making the following points:

- Wellbeing Exeter would go forward and consultation would be wide-ranging;
- there would be a two-stage process including feedback from Councillors followed by formal consultation;
- Neighbourhood CIL came from development in the city;

- £50,000 city grants were highly valued; and
- timing for consultation could be towards the middle of 2025 but clarity would be given in due course.

In summing up the Leader asked Members to be mindful of the achievements since the Community Grants Programme had been introduced and that it continued when other authorities had withdrawn funding.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendations as amended and following a vote were CARRIED.

In respect of Minute No.120 The Final Report of the Devon Housing

Commission, Councillor Moore asked what the Leader might be doing to promote community land trust and prioritising more affordable homes within the housing group or just the building of homes. Councillor Mitchell asked when a report could be expected with regards to the implementation of the recommendations to district councils held within the report. The Leader responded making the following points:

- he had met with stakeholders and a report on what the housing commission would mean for the Council would come forward;
- the Housing Advisory Group would take a strategic view across the county; and
- social and affordable housing would be prioritised.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendation which following a vote was CARRIED.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive 5 November 2024 be received.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 3 DECEMBER 2024

The minutes of the Executive of 3 December 2024 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

In respect of Minute No. 124 Members' Allowances 2025/26 the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel stated that a review would go ahead next year although devolution may impact this.

Councillor Moore moved and Councillor Mitchell seconded, a recommendation in the following terms:

‘That any underspend from Members’ Allowances be given as a one-off grant to Citizen’s Advice to support their transition.’

During debate the Leader, Councillors Vizard, Wood and Wright spoke in opposition of the motion making the following points:

- that budgets were reviewed monthly, some had over- and others under-spend;
- there were other budgetary considerations to be given thought;
- there were many pressures on budgets;
- this recommendation would not solve the issue Citizen’s Advice faced; and
- budget setting was not what was being discussed here.

Councillor Mitchell as seconder spoke in support of the motion stating that other authorities contribute to Citizen’s Advice, that it had been clear at the beginning of the year that all allowances would not be spent and that this could be a creative solution.

Councillor Moore summed up stating that throughout the year amendments to budgets were requested and reliance on underspends was not good.

Following a vote the recommendation was NOT CARRIED.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendations which following a vote were CARRIED.

In respect of Minute No. 125 Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Exeter City Council Area, the Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendations and following a vote, were CARRIED unanimously.

In respect of Minute No. 127 Overview of General Fund revenue Budget 2024/25 – Quarter 2, the Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendations which following a vote were CARRIED.

In respect of Minute No. 128 2024/25 General Fund Capital Monitoring Statement – Quarter 2, Councillor Read asked if there was enough money set aside for all urgent repairs to the city wall. The Leader responded that a new Director had been appointed and would begin their role in the near future and that money wasn't the only issue but also identifying and engaging appropriate specialists.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendations which following a vote were CARRIED.

In respect of Minute No. 129 2024/25 HRA Budget Monitoring Report – Quarter 2, Councillor Moore asked for an update on the state of the budget for housing repairs. Councillor Asvachin, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Customer Services, responded stating that a response would be provided outside the meeting.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendations and following a vote were CARRIED.

In respect of Minute No. 130 Treasury Management 2024/25 Half Year Update, Councillor Read moved an amendment which the Leader accepted, to the recommendations in the following terms:
(2) and make provision for policy revision bi-annually.

Councillor Read asked the Leader to ensure that the Council's account with Barclays was permanently closed. The Leader responded that as this was an operational issue and he would speak to the s151 Officer.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendations as amended and following a vote were CARRIED.

In respect of Minute No. 131 City Point Update, Councillor Harding asked how the Council would be talking to communities. Councillor Palmer asked what support would be provided to independent traders in Paris Street and Councillor Wetenhall asked if the Leader agreed that it would be better to have a stakeholder forum for the area.

In response the Leader stated that there would be no direct support as leases were in place and that it was necessary to engage with large organisations due to the projected cost to develop the area which 5 years ago stood at £350 million and was

unlikely to be within the scope of the independent traders. The Leader also informed Members that officers would make proposals early next year and that those would come to Council at the appropriate time.

In respect of Minute No. 132 The Exeter Plan: Publication, Councillor Darling put a question to the Leader in the following terms:-

“We know that the Draft National Planning Policy Framework identifies three types of sites for development: green belt, grey belt and brownfield sites. Can the leader explain the difference between these types of sites and the impact this may have in Exeter?”

The Leader responded stating that the updated National Planning Policy Framework was released last Thursday, 12 December. The NPPF referred to different categories of land and Green belt was highly protected land which was defined to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Exeter did not have a green belt. Grey belt was a newly defined type of land which was within a green belt but was of lower environmental quality, for example an area of hardstanding. As Exeter did not have any green belt, it followed that it also had no grey belt. Brownfield sites were those which have been developed previously by buildings or other development and Government and the emerging Exeter Plan policy prioritised the majority of development on brown field land.

Councillor Darling put a second question to the Leader in the following terms:-

“The Exeter Plan stipulates that social housing allocation in Exeter will be developing 35% greenfield sites and 15% brownfield sites. Why is this?”

The Leader responded that policies in the Exeter Plan had to be based on appropriate evidence and had to be practically deliverable - factors which were tested by an independent examination. The affordable housing policy in the Draft Exeter Plan included a requirement of 35% affordable housing on green field sites and 15% on brown field sites. This reflected evidence in the local housing needs assessment and the viability appraisal.

During debate Councillor Jobson spoke against the recommendation due to concern over the impact of the recent changes to the NPPF.

During debate Councillor Mitchell spoke making the following points:

- that officers were to be thanked for their work on the Plan;
- he understood the legal process to follow;
- that the content had not been scrutinised as requested;
- no vote of motion had been put with regard to the Plan;
- process only had been available to Members;
- Planning Member Working Group had seen the content; and
- he felt that Members were consultees.

During debate Councillor Palmer drew attention to a statement about Supported Living being supported if it did not result in unacceptable harm to amenity and residents. Councillor Palmer raised concern over the possibility that this could breach public sector equalities and should the city not foster good relations with vulnerable people and welcome those with protected characteristics. The Leader in response made the following points:

- that he would follow-up the Supported Living query;
- targets were important and evidence-based;
- the Inspector would look for evidence;
- the Council did not want to be non-compliant;
- the Plan ensured that policies were in place;
- homes were required; and
- the risks were greater if the Plan did not go through.

The Leader publicly thanked the Planning Team for their important work.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendations which following a vote were CARRIED.

In respect of Minute No.133 The use of Body Worn Video Cameras, Councillor Moore asked if there would be a review given that the project was a trial. Councillor Parkhouse asked how the data was managed and who would be wearing the cameras. Councillor Wright responded that the project would be reviewed alongside CCTV and that she would seek a clear date. The report contained the CCTV control room Data Policy detailing clear policy for the data.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendation and following a vote was CARRIED.

NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR REES UNDER STANDING ORDER**NO. 6**

Councillor Rees moved and was seconded by Councillor Banyard, a Notice of Motion in the following terms:

“School Streets are car-free areas outside schools. Roads are closed to vehicles (or they have severely restricted access) for a short period at the start and end of the school day. School streets put children first. They provide space for children to talk, scoot, play or pause on the way to school. These schemes are overwhelmingly popular with parents, teachers and pupils.

The Labour Government has brought in stronger guidance for School Streets which will make them effective, as now they must be supported by enforcement and monitoring. The guidance gives the benefits of School Streets as follows:

“School Streets can improve the experiences and safety of schools’ pupils, staff, visitors, and neighbours at peak school arrival and departure times. Schemes can support the delivery of a range of benefits at the individual, school, neighbourhood and broader local authority level, including:

- removal of congestion and reduction in emissions outside schools
- reduced instances of dangerous driving, parking and turning outside schools at times of day when many children and families are present
- fewer road safety issues and improved perceptions of road safety
- increased levels of walking, wheeling and cycling to school
- enhanced opportunities for social interaction
- improved physical and mental health amongst pupils
- increased pupil independence
- developing early active travel habits which can be carried into later life.”

The Council notes that:

1. Many schools in Exeter have significant problems with cars and road safety issues at school run time.
2. Creating more School Streets will help to deliver on City Council policies of Net Zero, reduced air pollution and increased active travel.
3. The City and County Councils are both committed to increasing active travel. The Live and Move Everyday Active Strategy 2022 has a practical focus on active travel to and from schools in Exeter and Cranbrook.
4. The Devon & Torbay Draft Transport Plans includes School Streets as a new measure.
5. The Child Health Initiative underlines the impacts of transportation and urban planning policies on the health and basic rights of children. It highlights the serious and costly health impacts of unsafe roads and air pollution on young people.

The Council resolves to:

1. Call on Devon County Council to work with schools and communities to increase the number of School Streets in Exeter, where schools are willing to explore this option.
2. To provide a progress report on this activity to the ECC Transport Member Working Group in six months’ time.”

In presenting the motion Councillor Rees made the following points:

- Cleaner, safer streets for all and reduced air pollution was wanted by all;

- The motion focusses on children and families but does not ignore other vulnerable groups;
- Having been a Headteacher she was aware that working in isolation would not work;
- Transport was a county responsibility but the Council had a voice regarding active travel, net zero and clean air; and
- Government new School Streets could help achieve the Council's targets.

Councillor Banyard as seconder reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Parkhouse proposed an amendment to the motion in the following terms, which Councillor Rees accepted:

"1. Call on Devon County Council to work with schools and communities to increase the number of School Streets in Exeter, where schools are willing to explore this option and to ensure full consultation with residents."

Councillor Holland spoke against the motion making the following points:

- school staff rely on cars and there would not be enough parking for them;
- school streets would cause gridlock and the city would shut down; and
- carers would have nowhere to park; and
- in order to support he would need to feel sure that all residents were consulted.

Councillor Palmer spoke in support of the motion citing personal examples of involvement in another authority including impact of particulate matter on children's lungs and the myth that being inside a car was any better.

Councillors Vizard, Harding and Read spoke in support of the motion.

Councillor Banyard as seconder spoke in support of the motion citing an example from within the city where a primary school Headteacher had successfully negotiated with a local church to facilitate parking and encouraged the school community to scoot and walk where possible.

Councillors Wetenhall, Atkinson and Pole spoke in support of the motion.

Councillor Sheridan spoke against the motion and stated concerns that this would be a re-introduction of the LTN by stealth, about the Equality Act and if there would be exemptions and how this would be enforced.

In summing up Councillor Rees stated that most shared the same vision but that concerns regarding exemptions could be found in the Guidance as these were already built into the scheme. School Streets would create a safe space and the guidance also laid out myth-busting information.

Following a vote the motion as amended was CARRIED.

NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR READ UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 6

Councillor Read moved and was seconded by Councillor Moore, a Notice of Motion in the following terms:

“The purpose of this motion is to ask Exeter’s two MPs, Steve Race and David Reed, to support the Climate and Nature Bill currently progressing through Parliament. The Bill aims to:

- require the United Kingdom to achieve climate and nature targets;
- give the Secretary of State a duty to implement a strategy to achieve those targets;
- establish a Climate and Nature Assembly to advise the Secretary of State in creating that strategy;
- give duties to the Committee on Climate Change and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee regarding strategy, targets and connected purposes.

The second reading of the Bill will take place in the House of Commons on 24th January 2025.

This Council notes that:

- Exeter City Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and passed a further motion declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency on 27th April 2021 resulting in the Council declaring an “Ecological Emergency to supplement and strengthen the Climate Change Emergency declaration of July 2019 by this Council”.
- Exeter City Council also resolved to “continue to work with partners, both locally and regionally, including DCC, to achieve net zero carbon objectives, and to conserve and support the recovery of the natural environment. To support community consultation with respect to identifying solutions to address both climate and ecological emergencies. To request that our two MPs support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill.”
- On 21st March 2024 the Climate and Ecology Bill (CE Bill) was renamed the Climate and Nature Bill (CAN Bill).

Therefore this Council resolves to:

- “Write to Exeter’s two MPs, Steve Race and David Reed, to ask them to support the Climate and Nature Bill as it progresses through Parliament, in particular at its second reading in the House of Commons on 24 January 2025.”

Councillor Vizard, as Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities welcomed debate on the climate emergency making the following points:

- there was not yet a published Bill;
- the Private Members Bill contained no detail;
- he was committed to urgent action but wouldn’t be supporting as the Government had actions in place including the Water Special Measures Bill and a new public company for power; and
- he had confidence in the Exeter MP.

Councillor Moore as seconder spoke in support of the motion making the following points:

- she hoped that private members bills would come forward;
- MPs would inform the detail of the Bills during the second reading;
- The Environment Act would require the UK to achieve climate and nature targets;
- a CAN assembly would be created, informed by evidence; and

- policies and targets would be brought forward as a result.

In summing up Councillor Read stated that policies and strategies did not yet have detail but there appeared to be consensus but not on asking MPs to support the Bill and that 100 MPs were needed to support and 80, mostly Labour were already showing support.

Following a vote the motion was NOT CARRIED.

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COUNCIL APPOINTMENT TO THE TEAM DEVON JOINT COMMITTEE

The Leader presented the report making the following points:

- The committee sat alongside the constituent members; and
- Devon Districts group had put him forward for the role.

In response to questions from Member the Leader made the following points:

- that he did not believe in postponing democracy;
- as consultees it was not clear if the committee would have a say in the Terms of Reference;
- Council would be involved in decisions;
- the aim would be to protect Exeter;
- that Monitoring Officers had discussed the Terms of Reference; and
- the first meeting would be on the 8 January 2025.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that he had received the Terms of Reference but no meeting of Monitoring Officers had taken place and the Committee would review these.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded the recommendations which following a vote were CARRIED unanimously.

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

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

“The Council opened the Junction night shelter in 2018, funded as part of a £481,600 (1) grant to provide support to people living on the streets and help them back into accommodation. The Shelter has since closed and I have twice been told that plans to reopen it in some way are being looked into. How much is the council paying for the lease and when will it be opened in some form to offer much needed accommodation for people currently sleeping rough?”

The Leader asked Councillor Asvachin as Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services to respond. In responding Councillor Asvachin stated that Officers were looking at future options for the property which included potentially subletting to other agencies or terminating the lease early. Once an options appraisal had been completed discussions would take place with SMB and the relevant Portfolio Holder. The current annual rental for the property was £22,500.

In a supplementary question Councillor Moore asked what viable options there would be for those on the streets given that this facility was unlikely to re-open. In

response Councillor Asvachin stated that one pod was unoccupied but work was being done to ensure that others had somewhere over Christmas and that this facility would only be closed for one week.

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

“What coordinated action is Exeter City Council as Local Planning Authority doing to proactively work with Devon County Council as Transport Authority, all the interested developer parties and community to agree a plan to manage the access to the Water Lane SPD development sites through the existing Haven Banks area for both construction logistics and long term use once built out.

With its very constrained access/egress point to the area a lack of action at this stage will bake in unacceptable long term negative impacts on the area in terms of road safety, excessive traffic, air pollution and inappropriate use of residential roads for through traffic.”

The Leader requested that Councillor Asvachin as Portfolio Holder respond and in doing so she stated that the **Liveable Water Lane SPD (2024)** set out a long-term access strategy for the area, developed in collaboration with Devon County Council as the local highway authority. The strategy prioritised sustainable access including:

- **Minimising car traffic** and encouraging active travel (walking, cycling, and micromobility).
- Designating **Haven Banks Road** as a priority route for pedestrians and cyclists.

Haven Road itself was **not suitable for general vehicle access** for new developments, as confirmed in **Code A03** of the SPD. Relevant planning applications reflect this approach:

- **Application 22/1145/FUL** (Haven Banks Retail Park) included servicing via Haven Road but removes the existing car park access, relocating all parking to Water Lane.
- **Application 23/1007/OUT** did not include any vehicular access to Haven Road.

Further discussions would take place with developers, Devon County Council, and stakeholders as proposals progress. Standard conditions would also be applied for **construction traffic management** and **site operations** to minimise disruption.

In a supplementary question Councillor Moore asked if the measures above were sufficient and would the Portfolio Holder work with her and the Planning team to ensure plans were adequate for the community? The Leader responded that this would be a showcase development and there would be teething problems but the relevant Portfolio Holder and Director would work together.

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

“I am worried about news that the bollard at the South Street entrance to Cathedral Green is out of service and requiring such an extensive repair that it is unclear if it will ever be repaired. With this in mind, can the leader advise how much has been spent on the bollard to date and what plans are in place to prevent the current open season on free parking on the cobbled and pedestrianised areas every weekend evening?”

In response the Leader stated that he would provide a written response outside the meeting.

In a supplementary question Councillor Read asked if the quote of £15,000 could be found and the Leader stated that he would investigate.

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

“ECC resolved an action on 21st February 2023 to ask the water company in planning consultation responses for major developments to clarify which treatment works will be managing the sewage and whether it has the information available to assess the impact on the number or duration of sewage discharges into local rivers and seas and to share that information. After nearly 2 years of this action being resolved by ECC and despite my repeated questions on the matter we still don't know whether or not ECC has a policy to routinely ask this information of SWW. Does ECC have a policy on the matter, if so where is it published, and what has the answer been from developers to this question put by ECC?”

In responding the Leader stated that Exeter City Council did not currently have a **formal policy** requiring South West Water (SWW) to identify specific treatment works for sewage management in planning consultations. However:

- Regular meetings were now held with SWW to ensure their input into the **plan-making process** and to discuss capacity and infrastructure matters.
- SWW's **Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans (DWMP)** provided the strategic framework for managing future growth and sewage impacts. The **Level 2 plan for the Exeter catchment**, published in June 2022, outlined SWW's approach to managing flows and infrastructure needs.

While South West Water did not routinely provide site-specific treatment details, their assessments and feedback inform the planning process, ensuring infrastructure capacity is appropriately considered.

In a supplementary question Councillor Read asked if a policy could be created and the Developer Questionnaire be updated to include relevant questions? In response the Leader agreed to write to both Exeter MPs raising the Council's concerns with regard to this subject.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 10.11 pm)

Chair