

CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday 28 November 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 Pierre Doutreligne, Democratic Services Officer (Committees) on 01392 265486.

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

Membership -

Parkhouse (Chair), Rees (Deputy Chair), Begley, Darling, Fullam, Harding, Holland, Hussain, Miller-Boam, Moore, Patrick, Pole, Read and Wardle

Agenda

1 Apologies

2 Minutes

(Pages 5 -
16)

To approve and sign the minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 3 October 2024.

3 Declarations of Interest

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

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

It is considered that the Committee would be unlikely to exclude the press and public during the consideration of any 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(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.”

5 **Questions from 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 25 November 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 are:-

Councillor Bialyk – Leader of the Council

Councillor Asvachin – Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Customer Services

Councillor Vizard – Climate, Ecological Change and Communities

Councillor Williams – Place and City Management

Councillor Wright – Corporate Services and City Centre

Advance questions from Members relating to the Portfolio Holders should be submitted to Democratic Services at committee.services@exeter.gov.uk.

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|----|---|----------------------|
| 7 | Citizens Advice Exeter and Exeter City Council [<i>Officer Report</i>] | (Pages 17
- 22) |
| 8 | Citizens Advice Exeter: A Local Charity for the Whole Community [<i>External Report</i>] | (Pages 23
- 88) |
| 9 | Consultation Charter | (Pages 89
- 96) |
| 10 | Quarter 2 Budget Scrutiny | |
| | a) General Fund Revenue | (Pages
97 - 118) |
| | b) General Fund Capital | (Pages
119 - 132) |
| | c) Housing Revenue Account | (Pages
133 - 150) |

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|----|---|----------------------|
| 11 | Update on the Budget setting process, to include the Capital Budget and the consideration of options | (Verbal) |
| 12 | Scrutiny Work Plan and Proposals Received | (Pages
151 - 156) |

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee will be held on **Thursday 30 January 2025** at 5.30 pm in the Civic Centre.

Individual reports on this agenda can be produced in large print on request to Democratic Services (Committees) on 01392 265486.

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CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 October 2024

Present:

Councillor Catherine Rees (Chair)

Councillors Begley, Darling, Fullam, Harding, Holland, Hussain, Miller-Boam, Moore, Patrick, Pole and Read

Apologies:

Councillors Parkhouse and Wardle

In attendance:

Councillors Vizard, R Williams and Wright

Also present:

Strategic Director for Corporate Resources, Head of Service - Legal and Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer, Service Lead - Active & Healthy People, Head of Service - Finance, Senior Rates Officer and Democratic Services Officer (PMD)

24 **Apologies and Appointment of Deputy Chair**

Apologies were received from Councillors Parkhouse and Wardle. Councillor Rees assumed the Chair and Councillor Darling was appointed Deputy Chair for the meeting.

The Chair also announced that the agenda would be reordered due to unavoidable logistical constraints.

25 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 27 June 2024 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

26 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

27 **Questions from the Public under Standing Order No. 19**

The Chair reported the receipt of four questions from members of the public under Standing Order No. 19:-

Question from Ms Freya Searle

“In undertaking the Scrutiny of funding for Citizens Advice Exeter, proposed by Councillor Mitchell, will the Committee establish what steps Exeter City Council is taking to mitigate the impact of this funding cut on the most vulnerable in our City?”

The Chair asked Councillor Vizard, Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change

and Communities, to answer Ms Searle's question. Cllr Vizard gave the following response:

"The Council already provides its own services and promotes a wide range of other services like those provided by ECAB and will continue to do so. The Council already promotes and signposts to a wide range of local and national in-person and on-line services which offer similar support to that offered by ECAB to vulnerable citizens. Locally these in-person services include Inclusive Exeter and Ukrainian Connections who provide advice and information to individuals from culturally diverse communities. Other organisations such as Age UK provide advice and information specifically to older people. Partners within Colab Exeter provide a wide range of support to people at risk of homelessness, with drug and alcohol dependency and street attachment. Colab Exeter also provides information and advice to vulnerable women. Wellbeing Exeter Community Builders and Connectors also sign post to a wide range of information, advice and support services.

The Council employs teams of officers who provide information and advice to vulnerable people and those on low incomes in several ways: through signposting in our Customer Connect Centre; online and in-person access to, and processing of welfare payments through our Revenue and Benefits Team; in-person access to information, advice and support for those who are at risk of, or are homeless through our Homeless Prevention Team and for our social housing tenants through our Tenancy Support Services. We also contract for targeted advice services for people facing homelessness with an independent third party to ensure people have choice and this year's contract has been awarded, by competitive tendering, to ECAB.

Since the Covid 19 pandemic there has been a paradigm shift to the use of on-line services which provide trusted sources of information and advice. Amongst those we promote are the National Debt help line and Gov.UK Get free debt advice. We recognise there is always more we can do through our social media and other networks to promote trusted local, national, on-line and in-person sources of information and advice and will continue to expand our signposting activity."

In a supplementary question, Ms Searle asked if the Council had done any assessment of other agencies. Councillor Vizard replied that further consultations and assessments would be made.

Question from Ms Fiona Jane Willmott

"In undertaking the Scrutiny of funding for Citizens Advice Exeter, proposed by Councillor Mitchell, will the Committee establish whether it conducted an equality impact assessment of the impact of the funding reduction on Citizens Advice Exeter and the most vulnerable in our City?"

The Chair asked Councillor Vizard, Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities, to answer Ms Willmott's question. Cllr Vizard gave the following response:

"An EQIA was appended to the report to Executive of 22nd January 2024 on the Community Grants Programme Proposal 2024/25."

Ms Willmott remarked that she had been unable to find the EQIA. Councillor Vizard replied that it was attached to the report but offered to have a copy of it sent to her.

Question from Mr James Willmott

“What analysis has the City Council conducted on the impact of the withdrawal of funding to Citizens Advice in terms of additional costs to Exeter City Council from households being unable to meet their rent and council tax payments; and the likely increase in homelessness applications to the City Council?”

The Chair asked Councillor Vizard, Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities, to answer Ms Willmott’s question. Cllr Vizard gave the following response:

“Officer discussion took place and advice was sought from managers of critical frontline services, on the potential impacts in the termination of this contract which had exceeded its term. There was insufficient data to enable any objective assessment of potential impact on Council or other services. However there had been no discernible impact on Council services since the 59% reduction in funding for the final year extension to the original contract (March 2023/4).”

In a follow-up question, Mr Wilmott asked how this conclusion could be drawn without consultation with Citizens Advice, remarking that Citizens Advice were meeting the funding shortfall. Councillor Vizard replied that Exeter could only assess what it was able to from available information, adding that further wider consultations would take place.

Question from Mr Robin Campbell

“Prior to arriving at a decision that Exeter City Council withdraw funding from Citizens Advice Exeter, were ‘service users and the wider community’ able to ‘put forward options’ as required in the ‘Best Value Statutory Guidance’?”

The Chair asked Councillor Vizard, Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities, to answer Ms Willmott’s question. Cllr Vizard gave the following response:

“The current funding for ECAB is a one-off grant of £75,000 for non-specific activities to ‘allow officers to work with CAB on transitional arrangements’. Therefore, there were no specific services attached to this grant.”

Mr Campbell felt that this did not sound right and commented on the statutory guidance on the matter. The Monitoring Officer advised him that the Portfolio Holder had answered his question and that subsequent comments did not constitute a supplementary question.

28 **Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order No. 20**

In accordance with Standing Order No. 20, the following questions were submitted by Members:-

Question from Councillor Moore to Councillor Asvachin, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Customer Services:-

“In response to my enquiry over the summer, the Strategic Director People told me that between April 2019 - March 2024 there have been 35 homes investigated as potentially empty homes of which 17 were found to be not empty. There have been no compulsory purchases, issuing of an empty

dwelling management order or an enforced sale. The Council's Council Tax team are constantly investigating the status of properties proactively. Reports received from members of the public often involve other public health or nuisance matters which are responded to on a reactive basis by the appropriate team. Various staff involved across the council regularly liaise and share information.

What will you do as Portfolio holder to proactively ensure empty homes are sought out and brought back into use?"

Councillor Asvachin was not in attendance; Councillor Moore was advised by the Chair that a written answer would be provided.

Question from Councillor Read to Councillor Asvachin, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Customer Services:-

"Thank you for your answer to my question recently regarding the kitchens in the Great Western Hotel stating that they have been fitted out with microwaves but no ovens or hobs due to fire risk. Does the Council think it is acceptable for the two families living there to have no access to proper cooking equipment? How can people create nutritional low cost meals with only use of a microwave? What can be done about this please?"

Councillor Asvachin was not in attendance; Councillor Read was advised by the Chair that a written answer would be provided.

Question from Councillor Read to Councillor Vizard, Portfolio Holder for Climate, Economical Change and Communities:-

"In response to a question from the Marilyn Spurr, a member of the public, Cllr Vizard replied that he would reply in writing to Ms Spurr's follow up question in writing. Can he share his written response please?"

Also, can Cllr Vizard share his written response to another member of the public's question put by Chris Hill asking if Cllr Vizard agreed that the carbon footprint of a bank regarding fossil fuel exploitation should be taken in to account when choosing a bank.

Given the council invests with CCLA Property Fund that is underpinned by ESG principles, does he agree that it would be reasonable to extend such ethical investment across all of the council's investment approaches and have a policy on ESG such as other Councils such as Oxford have, in order to be progressing towards the Council's target of net zero by 2030?"

Councillor Vizard remarked that the questions had been sent particularly late – namely, 11.30pm the night before the meeting –, which did not allow for in-depth replies. He confirmed to Councillor Read that he had emailed Ms Spurr and Mr Hill on 22 July with identical answers to their supplementary questions. Following a request from Councillor Read, the Portfolio Holder read out the answer in question:-

"Thank you for raising your concerns in respect of the Council's investment in the Barclays 'Green' 65-day notice account. Investments with Barclays comply with the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy and counterparty list, as provided by our appointed external treasury advisors.

As presented to Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee, the Council seeks external treasury management advice from the Link Group. Link provide regular counterparty lists and suggested investment durations and notify us of any creditworthiness changes. These counterparty lists are based on credit ratings from the three rating agencies (Fitch, Moodys and Standard & Poors), and the rating agencies take Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) risk into account when they make their assessments.

With regards to Barclays, please find attached their latest Climate Change Statement, which sets out their position and approach to sensitive sectors and includes new restrictions on financing upstream oil and gas, as well as enhanced due diligence requirements for biomass.

Following discussion between myself, the Council Leader and Director of Finance, ECC will review options for its investments to identify what alternative products are available in the market, the ratings attached, liquidity and yield. We will consider non fossil fuel investing alternative providers while balancing our obligation to maintain treasury management practices in accordance with the Secretary of State Investment Guidance and CIPFA's Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice.

I have asked that a report be brought back to an appropriate councillor committee."

Replying to a supplementary question from Councillor Read, the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources advised that he had sent a notice to Barclays 68 days ago to withdraw the ECC funds but that the money hadn't been received yet. He also asked Councillor Read for a copy of Oxford City Council's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policy.

Question from Councillor Read to Councillor Wright, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and City Centre:-

"Given the announcement by the new Home Secretary about a set of measures to combat VAWG what can we expect in Exeter to flow from this? And can we expect improvement in the ASB around South Street and Cathedral Green? What measures do you expect to be put in place to achieve this?"

Councillor Wright responded as follows:-

On the Home Secretary's announcement

"The announcement that the Home Secretary will be spearheading a cross-government approach to tackling violence against women and girls is welcomed by survivors of domestic abuse, numerous charities and support networks and also by many of us working in local government and related fields.

To quote Farah Nazeer, Chief Executive of Women's Aid;

'Domestic abuse and male violence is a problem that requires collaboration across government and society. The involvement of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be particularly important due to the urgent need for sustainable funding to the specialist services that support survivors. The funding gaps that have been left from decades of chronic underfunding means that we need to see the Government committing at least £516 million every year to domestic abuse services, so that these lifesaving services can continue empowering survivors to heal from the trauma of abuse and rebuild their lives in safety.'

'Raneem's Law', is in memory of Raneem Oudeh and her mother Khaola Saleem, who were murdered by Raneem's ex-husband in 2018. There were 13 reports made to the police about concerns for Raneem's safety, with no arrests made. On the night she was killed, she rang 999 four times.

Under Raneem's Law, domestic abuse specialists will be embedded into 999 control rooms, where they will advise on risk assessments and work with frontline officers to ensure a fast and appropriate response. Almost 100 domestic abuse related offences were recorded by the police every hour on average last year. This new initiative will ensure calls for help are treated with the urgency needed and victims get the specialist support they need straight away. The government will fund this pilot in targeted police forces* from early 2025. These specialists will be backed up by dedicated teams to improve how the police respond to these kinds of calls, including using new technology to respond more quickly such as rapid video response. 'Raneem's Law' will be put on a statutory footing by issuing national guidance that police will be required to follow. Please note that we don't know yet whether Exeter will be one of the 'targeted police forces' but I will be raising this question with the Police and Crime Commissioner at tomorrow's Panel meeting.

Home secretary Yvette Cooper says;

'Through an expert-led, practical police response, we need to ensure that when victims and survivors of abuse have the courage to come forward it will be treated with the seriousness and urgency it deserves. Our mission is for the whole of government, agencies, organisations and communities to work together to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, and today is just one step of many towards tangible and long-lasting change.'

The new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) aim to go further than existing protective orders with the introduction of new features including electronic tagging. This compliments the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act (passed nearly 4 years ago). Effective protective orders demand close collaboration with specialist services who are able to help survivors access justice.

The orders will cover all forms of domestic abuse, including violence, stalking and controlling behaviour, and more agencies will be able to apply for them – not just the police and criminal courts but also family and civil courts, and third parties such as local authorities, charities and social services, with victims also able to apply directly for the order themselves. Breaching one of these new orders will be a criminal offence, punishable by up to 5 years in prison.

I would expect that there will be a directive to our local police force around this and also for ECC around joint tenancy law regarding our own housing. Our own housing team have always worked incredibly well within this area anyway and have just produced a new Domestic Abuse Policy which will be coming to Exec in November. My hope would be that alongside new legislation, new funding will also come forward to enable us to do more from within ECC and also for relevant partners such as Co-Lab women who are currently seeking to provide a Women's Centre in Exeter which would incorporate emergency shelter for victims of DV.

On ASB around South Street and Cathedral Green

The measures described around the Home Secretary's announcement about violence against women and girls is not directly applicable to the issue of anti-social behaviour around South Street and the Cathedral Green. However, I will address this question as a separate issue;

ECC in partnership with InExeter Business Improvement District and Devon and Cornwall Police have recently launched a new Community Safety Team. This is in collaboration with the policing Hot Spot initiative to target ASB across Devon & Cornwall. Exeter has been placed in Tier 1 for Hot Spot policing following crime data around ASB and the excellent partnership work between ECC and InExeter responding to businesses and members of the public. This team of four come from our own enforcement team and have enhanced responsibilities, training and scope. The team work closely with the police, local businesses, InExeter, partner organisations and the public to deal with ASB and to create a reassuring presence in the city centre. This is a pilot project which started in July so hard data around the impact will be presented to the Police and Crime Commissioner's panel in November. I will share this with all councillors.

This team also links closely with the homelessness prevention outreach team. The team are currently completing police training to enable them to action the Exeter Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) where needed. Soft data narrative from local businesses about the positive impact already seen by having the team in place is very good. This is being collated by InExeter and will be part of the reporting process to follow."

The Portfolio Holder placed on record her thanks to the Interim Director Community Services for his help in drafting this response and made further reference to:-

- the reopening of the Exeter Safe Space, with the help of a £10,000 grant from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner;
- the two shifts she had done at the Exeter Safe Space as a volunteer; and
- how the Exeter Safe Space was now a registered charity.

29 **Relocation of Council Services Based in the Civic Centre**

The Strategic Director for Corporate Resources gave a succinct summary of the salient points of the report submitted. He then answered Members' questions as follows:-

- all the affected tenants of the Guildhall Shopping Centre had breakable leases;
- the Children's Centre had a long lease but the Exeter City Council would be working with Devon County Council about this;
- it would take a minimum of two years for any move to take place;
- there hadn't been as many financially viable options as hoped;
- the possibility of renting office accommodation around Southernhay had been explored;
- Exeter City Council needed to make better use of its assets;
- the cheapest option was always to move into something you already own;
- the Guildhall Shopping Centre had good quality lifts and addressed accessibility issues for committees;
- it was recognised that the Guildhall itself was not comfortable for Full Council;
- different scenarios and options – such as the cost of moving vs the cost of staying in the Civic Centre) would be produced and included in a report; and
- while there was a range of options across the various parts of the city, the preference was for the city centre.

He made further reference to:-

- the benefits of increased footfall at the Guildhall Shopping Centre;

- how hot desking and a desk space booking system would be implemented in any new premises;
- consultations with the staff sounding board and the 'project group'; and
- the need for the RAMM to be part of the conversation.

Members agreed with the steps to be taken in accordance with the recommendations set out in the report to Executive and Council.

30 **Scrutiny Forward Plan - Budget Monitoring**

The Chair presented hers and Councillor Parkhouse's proposal for scrutiny around Budget Monitoring, namely "to scrutinise the reports for Quarter 2 and for Quarter 4 (or 'Outturn Report')". She called for cross-party consensus on this scrutiny proposal, advising that she and Councillor Parkhouse had already discussed it with the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources.

The Strategic Director for Corporate Resources explained the rationale behind Q2 and Q4, adding that:-

- the three reports that go to the Executive would be provided (General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Monitoring);
- the report would provide Members with an opportunity to understand variances; and
- for scrutiny to be impactful, getting the sequencing and timing right was essential.

Responding to a query from a Member, he clarified that one of the tangible results of this piece of scrutiny would be to identify trends.

It was moved by Councillor Read, and seconded by Councillor Patrick, that Scrutiny of the Budget at Quarter 2 and Quarter 4 be added to the Scrutiny Work Plan as a standing item. On a vote, the motion was CARRIED unanimously.

31 **Portfolio Holder Update - Climate, Ecological Change & Communities**

The Chair announced that the Portfolio Holder update would be taken as read and opted to go straight to questions.

Councillor Darling remarked that the company in charge of running the Exeter Community Lottery was based in Australia and felt that a company based in Devon or at least in the UK might be better suited. The Place Partnership Manager advised that an options appraisal had taken place and that the operator in question, Gatherwell, worked with over 100 local authorities. The Portfolio Holder added that the contract would be reviewed after two years from the start date of the Exeter Community Lottery.

The Portfolio Holder also made reference to the successful tender for homelessness outreach work.

Councillor Read commented on the underspend, remarking that more requests came at the end of the year. She suggested adopting a different approach, as under the current process, unspent money did not roll forward. She also felt that Members could be informed in advance of how much money would be left. Councillor Vizard replied that he was open to thoughts from Members on the matter; the Place

Partnership Manager added that proposals for the Grants Panel would be welcomed too.

Councillor Harding noted a reference to “more stringent targeting of the grants” in the report and called for consideration to be given to how grants would be promoted to wards that did not have Community Builders. This was also something on which the Portfolio Holder welcomed suggestions from Members. The Place Partnership Manager encouraged Councillors to flag community organisations they felt ECC ought to talk to.

During further discussion, reference was made to:-

- Strategic Needs Assessments for community buildings;
- progress on the Wellbeing Exeter contract being taken over by Exeter Community Initiatives;
- the merits of outsourcing vs insourcing for community buildings; and
- the work evaluation partner for the community building audit.

The Portfolio Holder also confirmed to Councillor Moore that ECC would be consulting with communities on neighbourhood CIL money after 2026.

Members noted the Portfolio Holder update.

32 Update on the Consultation Charter and Development of an Engagement and Consultation Policy

Members noted that no officer was in attendance to present this item. With the approval of the Chair, Councillor Wright explained that:-

- the report that had been submitted was only an interim update; and
- the November 28 meeting of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee would be a better forum to receive a fuller report.

The Committee formally requested that the item ‘Consultation Charter and Development of an Engagement and Consultation Policy’ be brought back to the next meeting (November 28), to be presented by the Strategic Director for People and Communities.

33 Box Shifting Practice, Business Rates and Empty Property Relief

The Head of Finance and the Business Rates Manager gave Members a summary of the report submitted and responded to questions as follows:-

- in terms of quantification, around 60 businesses currently benefit from Empty Property Relief (EPR);
- the Council could only work within the regulations;
- there was a lot that the (previous) Government could have done, but didn’t; and
- ‘box-shifting’ was indeed a loophole.

During debate, Members made the following comments:-

- maybe the EPR was sometimes used for positive purposes, as some properties were empty for valid reasons (rather than to exploit a loophole);
- clarity was needed about what the EPR was there for, as well as about who was being penalised ultimately; and
- sometimes it was a better option for a company to sell an empty property.

It was moved by the Chair, and seconded by Councillor Darling:-

1. that officers report to the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee in six months' time on the impact of the change in the law;
2. that senior Council officers consider writing to the Secretary of State and the Local Government Association to raise the issues concerning the practice of 'box-shifting'.

On a vote, the motion was CARRIED unanimously.

34 Scrutiny Work Plan and Proposals Received

Members discussed the Work Plan and Scrutiny Proposals submitted.

There was consensus that having fewer items on the agenda would allow for more efficient scrutiny and, consequently, it was agreed that the items 'Update on Exeter Community Lottery - First Year of Operation' and 'Tenants Energy Review of our Passivhaus Council Homes' were not time-critical and could be deferred. Also, in Councillor Parkhouse's absence, the discussion around Stagecoach South West was pushed back to the November meeting.

Citizens Advice in Exeter

Clarity was given to Members that Standing Order 18, under which Councillor M Mitchell had submitted this proposal, could trigger an item not only to be discussed for inclusion on the work programme but, if the matter was deemed urgent, to feature on the agenda for the next meeting.

Councillor M Mitchell, speaking under Standing Order 44, made particular reference to:-

- the context of Wellbeing Exeter;
- the financial position of Citizens Advice;
- how, to many people in the community, Citizens Advice was seen as an emergency service;
- conversations he had had with Citizens Advice.

He suggested the piece of scrutiny could take the shape of:-

- an officer report which considered the relationship between ECC and Citizens Advice;
- a presentation from Citizens Advice; and
- a Q&A session.

There was consensus for the item 'Citizens Advice in Exeter' to be put on the agenda of the November meeting but the Monitoring Officer reminded that clarity was essential for the scoping out of the report, remarking that Councillor M Mitchell had not yet submitted a detailed proforma.

Consequently, it was moved by Councillor Moore, and seconded by Councillor Fullam:-

1. that the item 'Citizens Advice in Exeter' be added to the agenda of the 28 November 2024 meeting of the Customer Focus scrutiny Committee; and
2. that the scoping of the item in question be delegated to the Scrutiny Programme Board at their 16 October 2024 meeting.

On a vote, the motion was CARRIED unanimously.

Members then discussed the budget scrutiny suggestions submitted to Councillors Parkhouse and Rees in the summer, as requested at the previous meeting. The suggestions had been collated and included in the agenda for the present meeting.

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members that submitting a proforma facilitated the scrutiny process and made the following further comments:-

- the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources wanted to enable scrutiny;
- it was sensible for the Section 151 Officer to present budget scrutiny items; and
- for the 2025-26 exercise, it would be possible to bring forward the January meeting of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee.

Proposal from Councillor Read (as submitted)

After discussion, it was moved by Councillor Read, and seconded by Councillor Miller-Boam, that the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee receive an Update on the Budget Setting Process, to include the Capital Budget and the consideration of options at the 28 November 2024 meeting.

On a vote, the motion was CARRIED unanimously.

Proposal from Councillor Moore (as submitted)

After discussion, it was moved by Councillor Moore, and seconded by Councillor Patrick, that Councillor Moore's budget scrutiny proposal be approved in principle subject to a detailed proforma being submitted.

On a vote, the motion was CARRIED.

Proposal from Councillor Miller-Boam

It was noted that Councillor Miller-Boam had submitted a second part to her proposal, which had been left off the agenda pack. This second part was tabled at the meeting; it suggested the following be covered:-

- the process for the budget public consultation (after the completion of the consultation);
- how many responses were received;
- availability and accessibility of the consultation; and
- demographics of the respondents.

After discussion, it was moved by Councillor Miller-Boam, and seconded by Councillor Read, that Councillor Miller-Boam's budget scrutiny proposal be approved in principle subject to a detailed proforma being submitted.

On a vote, the motion was CARRIED unanimously.

Key People Activity Across the Council

Councillor Miller-Boam suggested and moved that, in light of supportive comments from SMB about Councillor Palmer's proforma, discussion on this proposal should take place at the January 2025 meeting, with a potential date of March 2025 for the report to be presented to committee if approved. This was seconded by Councillor Rees and CARRIED.

It was moved by Councillor Rees and seconded by Councillor Darling that the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee approve the Work Plan as amended during the meeting. Following a vote, the recommendation was CARRIED unanimously.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 9.05 pm

Chair

REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 28th November 2024

Report of: Strategic Director People and Communities

Title: Citizens Advice Exeter and Exeter City Council

Is this a Key Decision?

Scrutiny is a non decision making committee

Is this an Executive or Council Function? Neither

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report has been compiled at the request of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee who have asked for an officer report to cover 3 areas:

- The history of the relationship between Exeter City Council and Citizens' Advice Exeter.
- Context of other voluntary-sector organisations funded by the Council.
- Any questions that officer feels are pertinent about the future of Citizens' Advice Exeter services once the Council funding ends.

2. Recommendations:

Not Applicable

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

Not Applicable

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources

Not Applicable

5. What are the legal aspects?

Not Applicable

6. Report details:

6.1 Like Councils up and down the Country ECC has a long history of providing grants to VCSE organisations including Citizens Advice Exeter (CAE). However, the austerity years resulted in councils no longer being able to afford to provide grant funds. Since 2006 the council had seen a 60% reduction in its formula grant from central government and whilst Exeter City Council had managed to sustain a very generous grants programme, in 2017 it became apparent that the approach was not only financially unsustainable but had not kept pace with modern practices.

6.2 In April 2018, the Council commissioned a review of its grants policy and practice due to the concerns about governance, decision making and affordability. This work was facilitated by Red Quadrant and their 2018 report stated that "*The current model creates dependency, is not aligned to ABCD approaches and is not sustainable. To*

the outsider, it is unclear what is available and how the money is spent". The listening exercise showed that there was a lack of trust and confidence in the process and approach and highlighted the need for the Council to end its core and rent grants as they were unfair and opened the Council up to potential legal challenges. Red Quadrant made several recommendations for a new, modernised approach which were developed, in the context of the requirement to achieve a reduction in spend of half a million against the General Fund elements of the grants programme. The new approach to grant giving and community development was drawn up, based on the recommendations in the original Red Quadrant Report and the need to reduce spend from the General Fund. A further formal public consultation was undertaken in 2019 with Red Quadrant again facilitating. Full details of the review process the grant programme proposals; consultation feedback, and final recommendations were considered at these committees:

- People Scrutiny 26th June 2019
- Executive 9th July 2019
- Council 23rd July 2019

¹ [\(Public Pack\) Agenda Document for Executive, 09/07/2019 17:30 \(exeter.gov.uk\)](#)

6.3 Council agreed to the proposals and the transitional arrangements put in place to enable organisations time to adapt to reductions in grant funding. These were informed by structured interviews undertaken in 2019 between council officers and 17 organisations identified as those most affected by the proposals, which including CAE.

6.4 As part of the new approach the Council set aside 2-year funding to award contracts for services through competitive tendering processes. The 2 new services identified through the independent research in 2018 and consulted on in 2019 were:

Independent Information, Advice and Advocacy Service

- Address the demands of development by increasing access to good quality information and advice service for residents.
- A particular focus on increased digital inclusion for people whose circumstances make it difficult for them to access services and the opportunities they could benefit from.

Exeter Voluntary and Community Sector Support Service

- To build capacity to develop a sustainable community and voluntary sector.
- A particular focus on supporting groups to use their skills, local knowledge and expertise to improve things for everyone in the city: individuals as well as geographic communities and communities of interest.

6.5 The history of the relationship between Exeter City Council and Citizens' Advice Exeter.

6.6 Procurement process for both these new contracts were commenced in 2019 with CAE being awarded the contract for the new Information, Advice and Advocacy Services in October 2019. This was a 2-year contract and included a 2-year Homemaker Southwest Contract with term due to end in September 2022 with option

to extend a further 12 months. Total annual value of CAE contract was £200,000. The Covid pandemic seriously impacted the mobilisation of the contract, because insufficient funding was available within the NHCIL reserve an extension for 12 months was agreed in September 2022 with termination in September 2023.

- 6.7 Between May and July 2024 an internal review of the grants programme was undertaken alongside an assessment of the legitimate use of the NHCIL reserve for these contracts for services. In line with good governance and procurement policy officers issued a final extension notice to 31/3/24 and termination of contract was 4th July 2024:

“The current existing contract is in Year 4 of delivery with funding committed to 30th September 2023. I am pleased to confirm additional funding for Citizens Advice Exeter of £100,000 to deliver the contract until 31st March 2024. This will be the final award for this contracted service with the contract terminating at 31st March 2024.

There are currently no plans or financial commitments beyond 31st March 2024 and the Council will be reviewing the current Community Grants Policy this year. Any further funding and procurement processes for delivering community services in 2024 onwards will be communicated to partners in due course.

- 6.8 The Executive reviewed the Community Grant Policy at its public meeting on 22nd January 2024. Full details of the internal review and its recommendations were made public on 17th January 2024 and can be found in this link [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Executive, 22/01/2024 17:30](#). As the minutes of this meeting show a motion was accepted that said:

“It is proposed to use an earmarked reserve in the General Fund which is no longer required for its original purpose to provide a one-off grant of £75,000 to CAB. This will allow officers to work with CAB on transitional arrangements”.

- 6.9 The recommendations in the report considered by Executive and the motion were adopted by Full Council in February 2024. The table below provides a summary of the grant and contractual agreements between the Council and CAE for the period 2018 to date.

	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Core Grant	£72,000						
Rent Grant	£39,500						£19,000
Transition Grant	N/A	£49,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	£75,000
Total Grants	£111,500	£49,000					£94,000
	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Information Advice and Advocacy 2-year contract Oct 19- Sept 22		£100,000 Contract start Oct 19	£160,000	£160,000 09/22 contract extended to 09/23	£100,000	£100,000 4/7/23 contract extended to 31/3/24	31/03/24 Contract terminated as per 4/7/23 notice

Homemaker Southwest Contract 2-year contract		Contract start Oct 19 £40,000	£40,000	£40,000 Contract ends 09/21			1 year contract awarded 09/24 £43,000
Total contract		£140,000	£200,000	£200,000	£100,000	£100,000	£43,000
Total ECC	£111,500	£189,000	£200,000	£200,000	£100,000	£100,000	£107,000

6.10 Context of other voluntary-sector organisations funded by the Council.

6.11 The Council does not currently provide grants to any other VCSE organisations outside of the Ward and City Grants Programmes. In 2024/25 there is £39,000 in the ward grants budget and £50,000 in the City Grant Fund. The funding for these grants is from the Neighbourhood Portion of the Community Infrastructure Level. The allocation of these grant awards is governed through the Member led Community Grants Panel.

6.12 The Council does award other contracts for services to VCSE organisations when it is appropriate to do so and there is the funding available. These contracts for services will be awarded through the deployment of the Councils procurement policy and practice. For example, as a result of specific grant funding from government contracts for services are periodically commissioned for homeless prevention and support services which are often provided by VCSE organisations. For example, Young Devon provides a Homelessness Prevention Service for 16, 17-Year-olds and Care Leavers. We also contract several VCSE organisations to provide supported housing services and rough sleeping outreach support and mental health support.

6.13 The Wellbeing Exeter Lead Organisation is another example of a service commissioned by the Council through its procurement policy. The Council awarded this contract for services in July 2024 to CoLab Exeter through a competitive tendering process. This is a jointly funded contract with Sport England; CoLab Exeter place subcontracts with other VSCE organisations who employ Community Builders, Connectors and Community Physical Activity Organisers. The ECC funding for this contract is from the Neighbourhood Portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy, a Wellbeing Exeter reserve and Sport England.

6.14 Comparative funding for the VCSE Devon Districts 24/25

6.15 The following information was provided in September 2024 by the Devon Districts

Local Authority	CAB (£/annum)	VCSE (£/annum)	Total VCSE (£/annum)
Torridge	0	16,500	£16,500
West Devon	32,900	5,100	£38,000
South Hams	70,867	10,000	£80,867
Teignbridge	52,130	71,360	£123,490
*East Devon	74,000	60,000	£134,000
Mid Devon	15,500	122,500	£138,000
North Devon	45,000	106,000	£151,000
**Exeter	75,000	550,503	£625,503

**Shared prosperity fund for VCSE but no detail provided*

***Plus £172k shared prosperity fund for VCSE*

6.16 Exeter continues to utilise both the New Homes Bonus Reserve and the Neighbourhood CIL to continue to offer ward and city grants alongside its on-going support to community building through Wellbeing Exeter. The council funding of Wellbeing Exeter also brings in additional funds from external sources, estimated to be in the region of £350,000 for financial year 24/25. For this financial year the council has also been able to allocate £172,000 of Shared Prosperity Fund through Exeter City College dedicated to the development of skills through the VCSE sector in the city. If we were to add these 3 elements up, in this financial year the council will have generated funding for the VCSE in Exeter in the region of £1.147 million.

6.17 To summarise the only grant allocated without an application or tendering process is the one-off grant to CAE of £75,000 made for 24/25 from a reserve fund that is now empty. The only rent rebate given to any VCSE organisation in the city is to CAE.

6.18 Any questions that officer feels are pertinent about the future of Citizens' Advice Exeter services once the Council funding ends.

Q1 CAE Trustees are the people responsible for securing a sustainable future for their organisations. In 2018 the Council signalled its clear intention to work with the VCSEs in the city to reduce reliance on council grants for core funding. The reasons for this were clearly set out and subject to extensive listening and consultation over an 18-month period. A question for the CAE Trustees is what strategies have they put in place over the last 6 ½ years to ensure their organisation did not continue to rely on ECC for core funding? Something all the other organisations affected by this change in 2019 have found a way through.

Q2 In 2019 when the CAE Trustees authorised the tendering for the Council new Information, Advice and Advocacy service and subsequently sign a legally binding 2-year contract, what due diligence and risk mitigation actions did they put in place to manage termination of the contract at the end of the 2-year period? What action did they take to prepare to reduce costs or seek alternative funding?

Q3 The same questions applies when the Trustees approved a 12-month extension to the contract in September 2022 and again in July 2023 when the Council issued its final termination notice giving CAE trustees 8 months unequivocal termination terms. What actions did they take to reduce costs or seek alternative funding?

Q4 On several occasions in recent years, Council officers have approached CAE officers with a view to sharing space within the Council Customer Contact Centre which have always been rejected, most recently in August 2024. CAE reports other offers from alternative organisations in the city would be more suitable to their needs, and they would progress them as and when the need arises. The motive behind these repeated offers by the Council has been to assist the CAE in reducing its back-office cost base. What serious attempts have been made by the trustees to reduce its cost base since the contract termination notice was issued in July 2023?

- Q5 Why have the CAE trustees waited until August 2024 to initiate a fundraising campaign?
- Q6 Why did CAE trustees accept a one-off transitional grant of £75,000 from Exeter City Council in April 2024 if it did not have a sustainable financial strategy in place to effectively utilise this grant for its intended purpose?
- Q7 Why are the CAE trustees claiming that without the Council continuing its £75,000 grant the CAE will go out of business 2 months after the grant ends i.e. in June 2025? What is this money paying for? Why is it costing £36,500 a month to run CAE when in 2019 the monthly run rate for the delivery of the Information, Advice and Advocacy contract was £16,667?
- Q8 If the Council were able to find funding to continue to support the work of CAE how much would this need to be to put the organisation on a secure financial footing?

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

Not Applicable

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

Not Applicable

9. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

Not Applicable

10. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

Not Applicable

11. Are there any other options?

Not Applicable

Strategic Director: Jo Yelland

Report Author: Jo Yelland

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

Background papers used in compiling this report: -

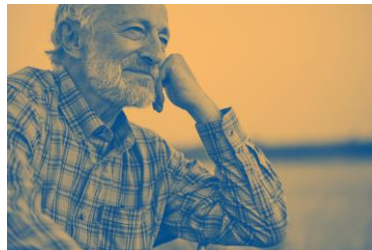
Links within the report

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

Citizens Advice Exeter

A local charity for the whole community

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee meeting
28th November 2024.



Citizens Advice
Proud to support the
LGBTQ+ community

Sue Julyan, Citizens Advice Exeter
November 2024

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Executive Summary

The next 15 months are crucial to the survival of CAE

Throughout the **77** years that the charity has been in the city, there has been collaboration, cooperation and trust between Citizens Advice Exeter (CAE) and Exeter City Council (ECC). We acknowledge however that the past 18 months has strained that relationship as both organisations have had to respond to their own financial challenges, whilst aiming to provide the best possible support for the people of Exeter, at a time when more and more people are falling into poverty.

This paper outlines CAE's present financial position, including income sources secured for 2025, the level of reserves we hold, and projected expenditure. **We welcome the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee's close attention**, looking at CAE's vital role in supporting the wellbeing of Exeter's citizens, and we look forward to the opportunity to reset our partnership.

CAE is the trusted front-door to quality, accredited information and advice for **any Exeter resident who needs us**. We deliver essential services that empower individuals and families to navigate a range of complex issues, from financial difficulties to housing challenges.

However, the next 15 months are crucial to CAE's survival. In 2024/25 **60%** of our income is **restricted project-based funding** and can only be used to deliver services supporting clients specified by the funder, such as Macmillan, Hospiscare, Exeter Foodbank and Devon Carers.

In September 2024, to reduce costs we restructured the generalist advice service. Generalist advice and casework is a **universal service** offering drop-in, outreach support and appointments, accessed by some of the most vulnerable people in Exeter. It is the portion of CAE previously funded by ECC.

And, in 2025/26 CAE will cost **£413k** to run. Our latest Fundraising Strategy forecasts that **£239k** will be sourced from other income streams (including a grant from Devon County Council), but the balance of **£174k has not yet been identified**. It should also be noted

that securing grant funding is becoming increasingly challenging in the current climate and funds we have previously been able to apply for are no longer available.

CAE has the unique ability to deliver advice to help Exeter’s citizens find a way forward across a wide spectrum of needs. That ability stems from years of investment in recruiting and retaining a highly trained, professional and dedicated group of volunteers and staff.

To support our **6,000** clients a year, our **11.5 FTE** paid staff, and **80** volunteers only require modest amounts of funding, especially when compared to the social value and savings to the public purse that CAE provides.

We hope that ECC will recognise the significant value that we bring to the community and the positive impact that supporting CAE can deliver for Exeter’s residents. Funders investing in CAE allows a trusted, high-quality service to help individuals navigate complex issues and access vital support, ultimately benefiting the entire community. In light of this, we hope you will consider our recommendations in this paper on page 9.

3 things to know about Citizens Advice Exeter



We are a charity.

We only work to support the people of Exeter and rely on donations, fundraising and contracts to maintain services

We are the leading generalist debt, housing & employment service in Exeter.

In the last 5 years, we’ve delivered high-quality advice to **20,000** Exeter clients with **90,000** distinct issues

Without advice to resolve issues with housing, financial situation, relationships, employment ...

people become more anxious, isolated, & less able to look after themselves.

We help people navigate these complex problems, preventing escalation & increased costs to public sector agencies, like ECC & NHS.

Summary of the current position

Citizens Advice Exeter (CAE) is facing a **precarious financial landscape**. Despite our efforts to secure new income streams, our funding remains insufficient to cover the rising demand and operating costs associated with delivering vital support to Exeter’s residents. Current reserves can only allow us to keep the doors open for a further 12 months, and relying on them leaves the charity in an increasingly vulnerable position.

In response to these financial pressures, CAE has implemented a series of mitigating actions aimed at **conserving resources while continuing to meet the needs of the community**. These actions include operational adjustments, staffing reductions, and strenuous efforts to access funding sources. However, these measures alone cannot address the full scope of CAE’s financial challenges.

Mitigating Actions:

Funding Bids	12 grant funding applications have been submitted so far this year, requesting support for 2024 and beyond.
ECC Money Advice Contract	Successfully secured a contract with ECC to provide a money advice service. This contract covers a full-time staff salary, with the role embedded within the council’s housing team . However, we are not able to back-fill the post, which means to manage our waiting list effectively, we have temporarily paused taking on new clients or referrals for money advice.
Crowdfunding Campaign	A match-funded campaign through Aviva has generated £25,000 . Similar matched funding opportunities won’t be available next year.
Local Businesses	Conducted a targeted campaign to engage 351 Exeter businesses for sponsorships and donations, delivering mailshots by hand.
Premises Downsizing	Reduced office space at Dix’s Field, to lower rent and service charges through occupying a smaller part of the building.
Weekly Crisis Meetings	Held strategic meetings with national Citizens Advice officials, advisers, trustees, staff, and volunteers, focussed on immediate financial strategies and long-term solutions for service sustainability.
Staff Hour Reductions	Staff voluntarily reduced hours to mitigate costs, affecting service availability. However, this saving necessitated:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-in services reduced from 3 to 2 mornings per week. • Telephone support is now funded Monday to Wednesday. • Money advice services intake is currently frozen, with no new clients being accepted. • Reduced capacity in the tribunal service.
Court Services	Thanks to two successful grant applications we can continue court services until March 2025.
Future Cuts	We are preparing to make further service and staffing reductions in January 2025, unless additional funding is secured.
Depleting our Reserves	Our reserves at 24/25 year-end are forecast to be £281k . We predict a deficit in 2025/26 of £174k . We are required to hold £104k to cover redundancy and closure costs . This means that by the end of 2025/26 our reserves will have been exhausted. In order to have an orderly closure the charity will need to commence winding up in late autumn 2025

Current and Projected Financial Overview

CAE operates with a **diverse funding base** comprising grants, contracts, and donations. This funding mix includes contributions from Exeter and Devon councils, project-based grants from various funders, and fundraising activities. However, a significant portion of CAE's income is restricted to specific projects and services, meaning these funds cannot be used to pay core operational expenses.

Many of these project-specific grants and contracts are subject to renewal on an annual basis, and some will end in 2025, leaving CAE's financial outlook uncertain beyond the current year. As a result, we face challenges in securing sustainable funding for essential core functions, such as infrastructure, staff development, and general operating costs, which are crucial to maintaining high standards of service and advice.

This funding model underscores the importance of continued support from local councils and community partners, as core funding provides CAE with:

- The flexibility to respond to emerging needs
- The ability to maintain services
- The ability to apply for additional grant funding
- Greater long-term sustainability.

Ongoing Community Projects (Restricted Grant Funding)

In addition to our core service, CAE works with a range of partners who fund specific pieces of work, with budgets that always cover staffing and project costs, plus a contribution towards organisational overheads and management costs.

We are currently funded to deliver the following projects beyond April 2025:

Project	Detail	Funding end date	Income*
Macmillan	Welfare benefits advice for cancer patients at FORCE	31.12.25	£52,100
Exeter and District Kidney Patients Association	Advice for kidney disease patients living in Exeter	31.03.27	£9,843
Exeter Foodbank	Welfare benefits and debt support	31.01.26	£23,366
Money Advice Service for ECC	Money advice for clients referred by the housing team at ECC	30.09.25	£21,553
Hospiscare	Generalist advice for patients, families, and staff.	31.3.26	£12,684
*project costs + contribution to organisational overheads			

Financial contribution to the core service across all these projects (to cover overheads and management costs): **£33,192.**

- **Advice 4 Life Educational Sessions**
 - Topics include energy savings, budgeting, wills, and preparing for employment.
 - **Partners:** Bicton College, Devon County Council, and the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital.
- **Court Service**
 - Our highly trained and skilled team of advisers attend the County Court on a Tuesday to support clients at risk of eviction.

Relationships with other bodies

Complementing Council Services

CAE provides essential support that enhances Council programmes, including **Wellbeing Exeter, poverty alleviation, and housing support**. Our expertise provides holistic, impartial advice on benefits, debt, housing, employment, and consumer rights, addressing complex, interconnected challenges beyond the scope of individual Council services. This helps people navigate multiple services, maximising the impact of Council initiatives and delivering a more cohesive support system for Exeter's residents.

Preventive Role

CAE's work plays a critical preventive role by helping people resolve issues before they escalate, thereby **reducing pressure on Council and other local services**. By providing early advice on managing finances, tenancy rights, and benefits, CAE helps prevent crises like housing evictions, social care emergencies, and financial hardship.

This early intervention approach alleviates demand for emergency and social services, allowing more effective use of Council resources. Additionally, CAE addresses underlying causes of distress, enhancing community wellbeing and resilience, for a healthier, more sustainable Exeter.

Strategic Partnerships and Community Links

CAE collaborates closely with a network of local bodies and strategic partners, promoting efficiency and comprehensive support for residents:

Partnership with Citizens Advice Torbay	Shared staffing roles enable both organisations to streamline costs, particularly in senior management, enhancing overall efficiency
Devon County Council	Close relationship with DCC who provide funding via Citizens Advice Devon to support the running of our core, generalist advice service
Part of Citizens Advice Devon	Devon's local Citizens Advice offices collaborate operationally and strategically. Together we provide a unified Adviceline service, enhancing access for clients. We routinely share resources and expertise, and we fundraise and deliver county-wide projects together. For example:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist Advice for Devon Carers: A project with Devon Carers offers targeted advice for working age and non-working age carers
Exeter Community Health and Wellbeing Alliance	As members, CAE contributes to the collective wellbeing initiatives for Exeter.
Co-Lab Resilient Women's Project	Co-partnering in projects focused on building resilience among women.
Exeter Communities Together	CAE has engaged in a dialogue about a joint funding bid to strengthen collaborative community support.
Connections with Age UK Exeter, St Petroc's, and ECOE (Exeter Community Energy)	Close links ensure holistic support for older residents, those experiencing homelessness, and eco-energy initiatives.
Potential new funding from the Legal & General Health Equity Fund	An expression of interest was submitted to reopen referral services with Co-Lab and Wellbeing Exeter.

These strategic links support **efficient, cost-effective service delivery**, while also making the most of our resources and opening funding opportunities that benefit city residents.

Skills-Building and Enhanced Employability

Citizens Advice offers **extensive training** for volunteers, equipping them with essential skills in legal rights, financial literacy, and housing issues to provide reliable advice to Exeter residents. Many volunteers **transition into paid positions** within CAE or other local organisations, enhancing their employability while positively impacting the community. Volunteering is cost-effective but it isn't free, it costs us approximately **£7,000** per year to train and support our new volunteers. This investment in 2023/24 supported our volunteers to contribute **23,500 hours** of their time to the service. The time they gave us equates to **£600,000**.

Training for Community and Council Staff - CAE offers specialised training for community groups, university students, and council staff:

- **Exeter University Law Students:** Prepares students for legal careers through law clinic experience.
- **Training for Wellbeing Connectors:** Regular training on benefits, debt management, and self-help resources for community connectors and enablers
- **Workshops for Inclusive Exeter and St Sidwell's Community Centre:** Training on completing Personal Independence Payment (PIP) forms, benefit appeals, and self-help strategies.
- **Training for ECC Staff:** Collaborations with CPAG and Shelter to provide training, including guest speakers on utility support and cybercrime prevention.

Mentorship and Support - CAE mentors and supports key roles in local organisations, assisting Age UK Exeter's Information and Advice manager, and Exeter Foodbank's support workers.

Recommendations for 2025/26 & beyond

CAE faces severe financial challenges that jeopardise its ability to provide essential advice services to Exeter residents next year.

With uncertain funding and depleted reserves, CAE may not be able to sustain its already reduced services, and indeed may have to close, leaving vulnerable residents without vital support.

To address these issues, we propose collaborative actions focused on strengthening partnerships, cutting operational costs, and exploring additional options with ECC. These measures aim to secure CAE's future and enhance its impact on Exeter communities.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Collaboration:** A working group or regular meetings between CAE and council representatives to ensure a cohesive approach to addressing resident needs and accessing advice services. This approach will emphasise the value of shared insights and mutual support in addressing Exeter's socio-economic challenges.
2. **Reduce Premises Costs:** Work with ECC to identify options for reducing CAE's premises expenses, e.g. subsidised rent, shared spaces, or rent-free arrangements.
3. **Joint Equality Impact Assessment (EIA):** Collaborate with ECC on a joint EIA to demonstrate the impact of advice services on diverse groups within Exeter, underscoring the importance of accessibility and equity in service delivery.

4. **Council Funding for Service Continuation:** We fully acknowledge ECC's current budget constraints but propose a phased or partial funding approach to help maintain CAE services. This could involve exploring alternative funding structures, such as specific grants, matched funding, or a shared cost model, to ease the financial burden on both parties. Our projected funding gap for 2025/26 is **£174k**. Support from ECC would help CAE to maintain an advice service for Exeter or restore it to 2023/24 levels. This would also prevent Exeter from being the only Citizens Advice charity in Devon not to receive grant funding from its local council. A breakdown of funding received by the other Devon offices can be found in **Appendix 2**.

Funding Proposal A: £100,000 Support to Close CAE's Funding Deficit

Funding Needs: Our annual projected funding gap is £174k. ECC support of £100k would enable us to:

- Reinststate a face-to-face drop-in service 3 mornings per week.
- Sustain our telephone advice line and ongoing community projects.
- Demonstrate to potential funders that we are financially stable.

Community Impact: This funding would stabilise CAE, reducing our overall fundraising target for 2025/26 to £74k, and allow the charity to maintain crucial advice services without further cuts.

Expansion Potential: If successful with other grant applications, we can expand services to meet growing demand and deepen our impact across the community. Funders invest in projects or services that will have a long-term, sustainable impact. If CAE is financially unstable, funders may reject our applications.

Funding Proposal B: £75,000 Support to Reduce our Funding Deficit

Funding Needs: A £75k grant from ECC would allow CAE to:

- Reduce its funding gap
- Maintain a face-to-face drop-in service for two mornings weekly.
- Keep the telephone service and community project commitments.

Conditional on Additional Funding: This grant would require supplementary funding to avoid further service cuts. If secured, CAE would still need to raise an additional £100k to meet 2025/26 needs.

Unique Services Provided by Citizens Advice Exeter

Navigating the Landscape of Support Services in Exeter

Residents in Exeter often report facing challenges when attempting to access support due to fragmented advice services in the City. Many local agencies have specific eligibility criteria, serve only particular populations, or operate without standardised quality assurance, potentially leading to confusion and inconsistency for those seeking help.

In contrast, CAE is widely recognised and trusted as a reliable, accessible point of support. Our longstanding brand is synonymous with **impartiality, confidentiality, and a quality** service, offering residents a single, dependable resource.

Unlike many smaller or specialised services, CAE is committed to serving **all members of the community**, ensuring that our advice meets rigorous national standards. This reputation for excellence is vital for Exeter’s most vulnerable, who may otherwise struggle to navigate a confusing system of disconnected services. While multiple organisations in Exeter provide varying levels of advice and information, none match the breadth, depth, or accredited quality of services offered by Citizens Advice Exeter. CAE holds the Advice Quality Standard (AQS) which must be applied for and accredited annually.

Comparison with Other Providers

Organisation	AQS	FCA	Services Provided
Citizens Advice Exeter	✓	✓	See wider document
Inclusive Exeter	X	X	Offers signposting only, limited to culturally diverse populations; does not employ qualified advisers.

Ukrainian Connections	X	X	Provides signposting services exclusively for the Ukrainian community; no qualified advisers.
Age UK Exeter	X	X	Serves clients over 50 years of age and operates to an in-house quality system.
Colab Exeter Partners	X	X	Supports individuals at risk of homelessness or facing drug, alcohol, or street attachment issues.
Exeter Colab	X	X	Offers advice to vulnerable women.
Wellbeing Exeter	X	X	Provides signposting but does not give advice.
Exeter City Council (ECC)	X	X	Provides general advice and information through the Customer Connect Centre; handles welfare payments, housing support, and tenancy services. ECC contracts with CAE for targeted homelessness prevention services.
ECOE	X	X	Provides energy advice to tackle fuel poverty.
Homemaker SouthWest	X	✓	Delivers FCA-regulated money advice.
Christians Against Poverty	X	✓	Offers money coaching workshops.
<i>Note: This table summarises findings based on Citizens Advice Exeter's research of publicly available information. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, services may have changed from those advertised.</i>			

Unique Services of Citizens Advice Exeter

Citizens Advice Exeter offers certified, high-quality, and broad-ranging support that other local organisations cannot provide:

- **Advice Quality Standard (AQS) Certified:** The Advice Quality Standard (AQS) is the leading hallmark of quality in organisations providing information, advice, and guidance on social welfare issues, especially in areas like debt, housing, employment, and welfare benefits. AQS ensures strict standards of quality are

met, providing clients with advice they can trust and that is accurate, confidential, impartial, relevant, and up to date; reducing the risk of misinformation.

- **Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) Regulated:** FCA oversight and regulation is critical for organisations offering financial advice and services. To be FCA-regulated, advice must be provided by trained and qualified advisers to ensure that financial advice is delivered fairly, transparently, and without bias. CAE is FCA-regulated, protecting clients, especially vulnerable clients, from exploitation or harmful advice.
- **Regular audits:** National Citizens Advice conducts monthly audits, sampling cases for advice and administration quality. Additionally, a comprehensive charity audit is carried out every three years, assessing all aspects of operations, including finances, governance, and advice quality.
- **Comprehensive Expertise Across Multiple Areas:**
 - **Debt and Money Advice** (FCA-regulated): Includes insolvency support, e.g., Debt Relief Orders, bankruptcy.
 - **Consumer Rights:** Guidance on consumer goods and services issues.
 - **Education, Employment, Health, and Community Care:** Information on rights and support options.
 - **Immigration and Asylum:** Basic advice on requirements and regulations.
 - **Legal Advice:** Guidance on small claims and referrals to full legal support.
 - **Family, Tax, Travel, and Transport:** Broad range of advice to support individuals in navigating these areas.
- **Inclusive Accessibility:** Offers face-to-face drop-in services for residents who are digitally excluded or vulnerable.
- **Community Integration:** On-site advice at Exeter Foodbank three days a week.
- **A local charity with a national voice:** We see a wide range of people with many kinds of problems, providing a unique insight into the challenges affecting Exeter residents. As a member of a national organisation, we amplify our data to advocate for social and policy change. Many of our clients come from seldom-heard communities and are empowered by the support they receive.

IMPACT



See case studies in **Appendix 4** for examples of how we support those living in poverty across the city.

CAE provides critical services that directly save ECC substantial costs and improve the lives of Exeter residents. Income gains in 2023/24 were £4m (estimated) and actual confirmed income gains were £1.7m. By preventing evictions, maximising incomes, addressing rent arrears, and helping residents manage debt and budgeting, CAE plays a crucial role in stabilising households and reducing the demand on ECC's services.

Eviction Prevention and Cost Savings: Since January 2024, CAE has assisted **18** Exeter residents in eviction courts, allowing them to stay in their homes, thereby saving **ECC an estimated £30,600** at an average homelessness prevention cost of **£1,700** per household. Without CAE's support, residents facing eviction might need temporary housing at **£75** per night, increasing council expenses further.

Debt Assistance and Housing Stability: In 2023/24, CAE supported **134** residents with rent arrears debt, helping them stabilise their finances and avoid eviction, potentially **saving ECC £227,800**. This assistance reduces homelessness risk and alleviates financial and social strain on council services.

Addressing Complex Needs Amidst Rising Poverty: CAE recorded a **9%** increase in debt-related cases in 2023/24. Cases are increasingly complex and urgent, often involving multiple issues impacting housing, income, and mental health. CAE's interventions not only alleviate immediate financial crises but also tackle underlying social determinants of health, enhancing the long-term wellbeing of Exeter's residents.

Community Reach and Demand: In 2023/24, CAE assisted over **6,000** clients with more than 20,000 distinct issues. Reducing or discontinuing CAE's services will leave a gap that local agencies, lacking similar quality and capacity, will struggle to fill. CAE's extensive expertise and reliable service quality uniquely position it to serve Exeter's diverse community.

Community and Partner Feedback

CAE's impact is recognised by community leaders, partners, and residents who rely on its services. Here's a sample of feedback received:

- *"What foodbanks do is mere 'firefighting'. What CAE does is 'fire prevention.'"* - **Exeter Foodbank**
- *"Exeter CA provides a valuable service allowing us to signpost and refer our clients that are over 50 but need advice on Debt, Universal Credit and Family issues."* - **Age UK Exeter.**
- *"Citizens Advice Exeter is a key service provision, and I am very concerned about changes to the service. As a Wellbeing and Support Lead at a community centre, my role is to connect people with organisations that have the knowledge and experience to best support individuals. By reducing this service, I feel that the hugely valuable knowledge held at CAB will become even harder to access and disseminate to the wider community."* - **St Sidwell's Community Centre.**
- *"Online information which keeps getting pushed cannot substitute 1 to 1 personalised advice on important matters such as housing and benefits, especially for people that struggle sourcing information online or have questions they can't find the answer to."* - **Colab.**
- *"Citizens Advice provides an invaluable service to the residents of Exeter. Their breadth of knowledge about enquiry areas such as benefit, or debt advice is crucial. Online support only is not appropriate for many people and an improved face-to-face provision would enable people to feel truly supported as they navigate their challenges."* - **Wellbeing Exeter.**

In support of the recent media campaign ...

- *"I am very concerned about changes to the service, as it's a key provision in Exeter."*
- *"Over 27 years as Exeter's MP, I saw what a vital service Citizens Advice provides... Please give them support." - Ben Bradshaw, former Exeter MP*
- *"Citizens Advice Exeter offers a brilliant service... Please support this campaign." Acting Bishop of Exeter.*

Comments from members of the public ...

- "No other service will be able to support citizens in the same way Citizens Advice does."
- "If CA was not here, it would be a significant loss."
- "The support from CA changes lives."

How ECC money has and is being spent

Timeline

Initial Funding (1947)	Exeter City Council granted £200 to establish the Citizens Advice Bureau in Exeter
Annual Grants (2011 - 2014)	Citizens Advice Exeter received annual grants totalling approximately £111,635 to £114,466 , including core services, Court Desk, and rent grants
Move to Dix's Field Premises (2014 - 2019)	ECC facilitated CAE's move to Dix's Field, covering most of the rent and service charge. Annual funding included grants for core services, the Court Desk, and a rent grant, with rent set at £31,500 and an additional service charge of £18,250 .
Transition to Contract Funding (2019)	ECC transitioned to a contract model, allocating £200,000 annually with specific service requirements, including city-wide advice, a full-time Housing Options worker, and a Court repossession service. The Council discontinued rent grants , requiring CAE to independently cover rent and fluctuating service charges. The contract was funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL) . The reduction in CiL and the fact that we were no longer deemed to meet the criteria for CiL were the reasons we were given for no longer being able to receive ongoing funding

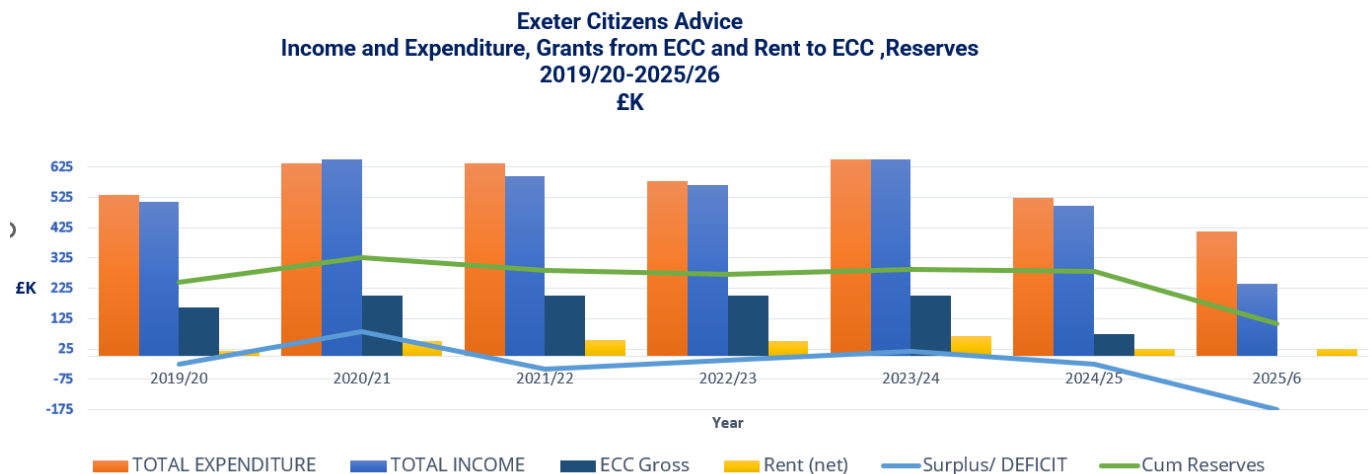
Recent Budget Strain (2023/24)

Due to an **unexpected increase in service charges**, CAE faced heightened financial pressure.

A one-time ECC grant of **£75,000** for 2024/25 allowed the charity to cover ECC rent and service charges of **£67,817**, leaving just **£7,183** for core services.

This led to us entering discussions with ECC to reduce office space to lower rent and service charges.

This chart illustrates CAE income and expenditure over time and plots our reserves level and ECC funding each year



Budget for 2024/25 – (ECC One-Off Grant included)

ECC provided CAE with a one-off grant of **£75k** for 2024/25. This alleviated CAE’s funding crisis but 2024/25 remains challenging despite efforts to reduce costs and secure additional funding. Without similar support in 2025/26, the service is not sustainable.

- **May 2024:** A projected **deficit of £108k** for 2024/25 necessitated a budget amendment that included cost reductions from vacating the back office at Dix’s Field, effective April 2024. While CAE has left the space, confirmation of costs and a new lease are still pending.
- **September 2024:** After a service review and staff voluntarily reducing their hours, we were able to maintain a service three-days per week; the deficit was lowered to **£57k**.
- **October 2024:** New short-term funding and a successful fundraising effort further cut the deficit to **£24k**, but much of this funding consists of one-time grants and donations that will not carry into 2025/26.

From 2019 to 2023 With ECC funding our work ...

**89,890
issues**

We saw **20,262** clients and helped to resolve **89,890** issues.

**c£17m
income gains**

Exeter residents gained **£16,989,000** from access welfare benefit entitlements or debts managed

**9 out of
10**

Clients said we helped them find a way forward. With 9 in 10 **saying their** problem affected their lives, including **anxiety**.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Business Development Plan - one page summary (*see separate document for full Business Development Plan*).



Helping people in Exeter to live happier and more productive lives



Vision Statement

☑ All members of the community can solve the problems they face and, as a result, live happier and more productive lives.

Mission Statement

☑ To provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities valuing diversity, promoting equality and challenging discrimination.

Strategic Outcomes

- A. Reduced social and financial deprivation
- B. Improved mental health and wellbeing for the community
- C. More equitable and cohesive society
- D. Stronger and more resilient communities

Strategic Aims

- A. Be accessible for anyone in the community regardless of any barrier
- B. Develop our knowledge and understanding of the complex needs of our clients
- C. Design our services so that they are more reflective of and relevant to the communities we serve
- D. Campaign for change at a local and national level

Appendix 2: Comparison of grant funding provided to other Devon LCAs in the year 2024/25 from District/Borough and Parish Councils

Local CA office	Grant funding	Rent and service charges	Number of residents served (2021)
Exeter	£75,000 (ECC)	£26,000	130,800
Teignbridge	£52,130 (TDC) £27,500 (Parish Councils)	£29,300 (for main office and one outreach location)	134,800
East Devon	£75,000 (EDC) £25,000 (Parish Councils)	£30,000 (for two offices)	150,800
Torrige, North, Mid and West Devon	£38,000 (TDC) £45,000 (NDDC) £42,500 (WDBC) £15,500 (MDDC) £43,000 (Parish Councils)	CIRO £60,000 (5 main offices and 3 outreach locations)	68,100 98,611 57,100 82,852
South Hams	£60,000 (unconfirmed) £2,000/£3,000 (Parish Councils)	£35,500	88,600

Appendix 3: An example of the data which is shared quarterly with councillors. The examples below are for Quarter 2 (1st July 2024 to 30th September 2024):

1. Key statistics for the whole of Exeter
2. Key statistics for the Priory ward
3. Client feedback

Key Statistics

Exeter Citizens Advice Bureau (member)

01/07/2024 27/09/2024



Summary

Clients	1,095
Quick client contacts	237
Issues	4,324
Activities	3,151
Cases	1,129

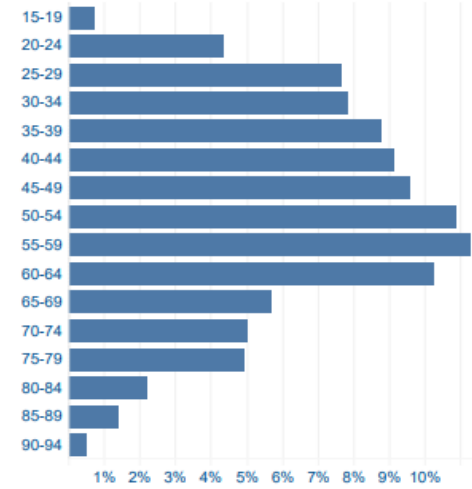
Outcomes

Income gain	£1,078,693
Re-imbursments, services, loans	£1,774
Debts written off	£145,434
Repayments rescheduled	£648
Not recorded/not applicable	£31,654

Issues

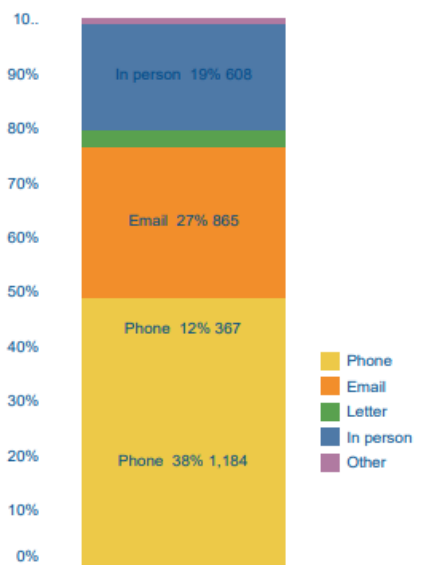
	Issues all	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	1,912	595
Benefits Universal Credit	389	176
Charitable Support & Food Ban..	112	90
Consumer goods & services	90	64
Debt	403	124
Education	18	10
Employment	141	77
Financial services & capability	69	41
GVA & Hate Crime	6	6
Health & community care	54	38
Housing	317	162
Immigration & asylum	76	43
Legal	67	53
Other	117	112
Relationships & family	104	64
Tax	17	16
Travel & transport	71	56
Utilities & communications	361	116
Grand Total	4,324	

Age

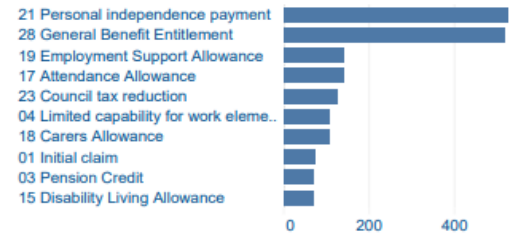


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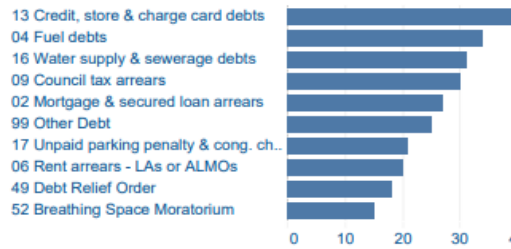
Channel



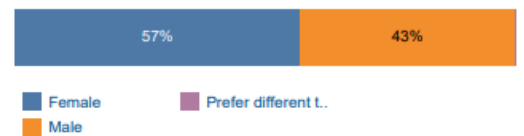
Top benefit issues



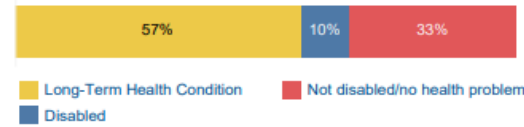
Top debt issues



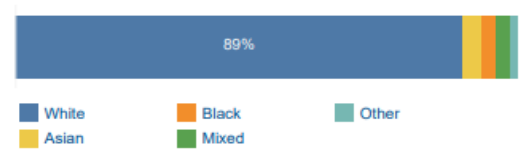
Gender



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity



Key Statistics

Exeter Citizens Advice Bureau (member)

01/07/2024 30/09/2024



Summary

Clients	74
Quick client contacts	
Issues	220
Activities	317
Cases	47

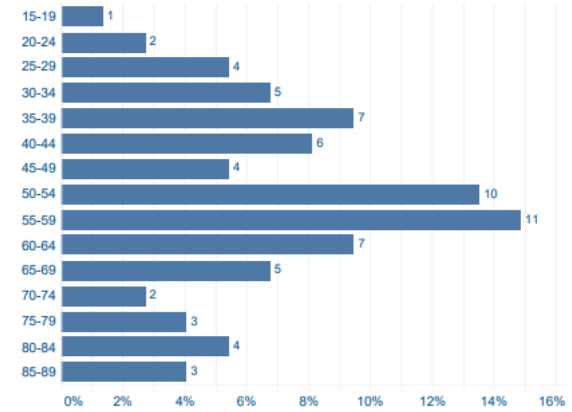
Outcomes

Income gain	£110,387
Re-imbursments, services, loans	£48
Debts written off	£4,925
Other	£1,933

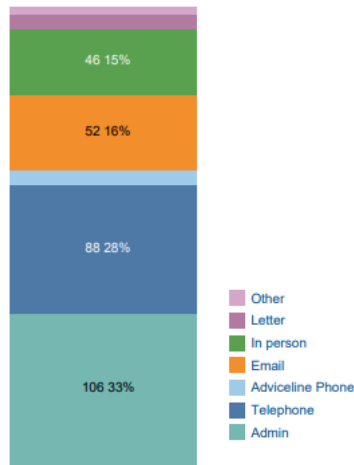
Issues

Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	27
Benefits Universal Credit	13
Charitable Support & Food Ban..	2
Consumer goods & services	2
Debt	6
Employment	5
Financial services & capability	4
Health & community care	3
Housing	5
Immigration & asylum	1
Legal	4
Other	7
Relationships & family	2
Travel & transport	2
Utilities & communications	7
Grand Total	220

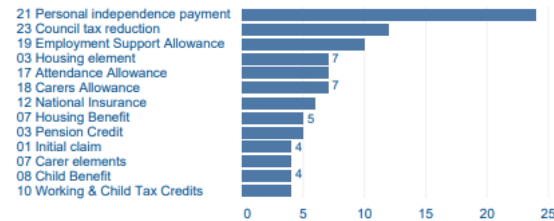
Age



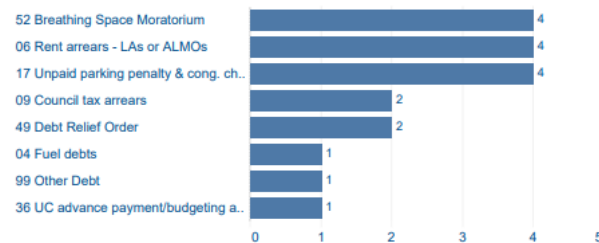
Channel



Top benefit issues



Top debt issues



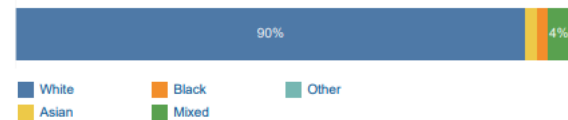
Gender



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity



An extra pair of supportive and experienced hands.

Your service was excellent. I appreciate your help.

It is imperative that such this advice service remains supported by government funding.

You listen to you without judgement. An essential service for all.

We need more people like the volunteers who work for Citizens Advice.

Invaluable support. Job well done! Sympathetic.

Help given at a time in my life when I needed it most.

I cannot express the thankfulness with words about CAB.

Very pleased. Calming advice and unbiased help.

I have appreciated your help enormously.

We felt very relaxed with our adviser on hand to help.

Patient and understanding.

Appendix 4: Case Studies

Client from St DAVID'S WARD

A client came to us as the holder of a work visa for the UK. She approached us because her original sponsor dismissed her when she informed them that she was pregnant. The client has managed to find alternative employment for 20 hours per wk. for another care agency who have suggested that they may become her new sponsor. The client and her baby have no recourse to public funds. The baby is now 4 months old, so now is no longer eligible for free healthcare. The client became aware of this when she took her baby to the emergency department at RD&E hospital. She has a form to fill out and return to hospital. Until her baby is registered, she will not get any state help.

We explained to client that her immigration situation is complex. The client understands this.

We looked at gov.uk with the client and showed her where to apply to register her child on her existing visa. The client was advised to do this as soon as possible.

We also looked at health charges in the UK and how to apply to pay a health surcharge of £776.

The client was very distressed and unclear about how she will find the money to pay the health surcharge. We can help with this by trying to get a repayment scheme in place. The client is now getting support via the Foodbank. The client has been urged to firm up on the arrangements with her current employer about her immigration status.

The client is now aware that she needs to register her child, she needs to secure her visa via her new employer and that she needs to ensure she pays her NHS bill.

If Citizens Advice Exeter had not be there to give the client advice and support, the outcome could have been:

- The client not registering her child, and then incurring unaffordable NHS costs

- The client reluctant to take, or not taking a poorly client to hospital for fear of unaffordable costs
- The client could have lost her accommodation due to the loss of her visa, immigration status and therefore income
- The client may have presented to ECC as vulnerable and in urgent housing and financial need

Client from PINHOE WARD

The client has difficulty reading, writing and information processing. The client's sibling attends the appointments with her to support. The sibling supports her in many areas and with money issues. Previously, the client was supported by her Mum, however she now has dementia. The DWP are of the view that the client has a benefit overpayment. CAE are helping her to challenge this and are supporting the client and her sibling to take the case to a Benefits Tribunal. The client has revealed that she is in a financially abusive relationship; her partner has income and savings which he will not allow her to access. He will not provide information to any agencies which creates real difficulties when dealing with any claims for benefits and this overpayment issue. We hope to enlist help from other agencies for the client regarding her domestic situation.

Our help and support are invaluable for this client to ensure that the DWP fully understands the complexity of her situation to ensure that her situation is fully explained to all involved. The client would not be able to do this without our help.

If Citizens Advice Exeter had not be there to give the client advice and support, the outcome could have been:

- The client would have to pay back a benefit overpayment she may well not owe
- The client would be in further financial difficulties
- The client may not have revealed her personal circumstances to a third party (whom she now trusts) and the financially abusive relationship she is in, which may have escalated
- The client may have presented to ECC as vulnerable and in urgent housing and financial need

Client from PINHOE WARD

The client is deaf, cannot speak and does not read English. She does not use BSL but a mix of signs and symbols and gestures. She is a regular service user with complex needs and is vulnerable. We often use a BSL interpreter (at cost) when this client attends advice interviews.

The client is in her 40s, born outside the UK and married a British citizen 20 to 30 years ago. She came to the UK and lived with her husband but has since divorced. The client communicated that she had her British passport taken away by her husband 20 years ago. She does not have any details of her passport. The client indicated that the most important thing was for her to get her passport renewed, and that she wanted her name to be her birth name, which is what is on the expired passport.

The client also had two letters, which showed her council tax liability (she is receiving council tax support) and a letter showing that a council tax repayment plan had been agreed paying a total of £22 per month with the first payment due on 1st August. The council tax arrears are £198. The client did not understand this. The client's bank account that she showed us on her phone included no payments in August and she did not know how to make the payments.

The client has had issues with utility bills and with South-West Water (SWW) payments.

Citizens Advice Exeter have supported this client through a long and complex journey to obtain a passport. We helped her to set up a payment plan for the client regarding her Council Tax. We have supported her with issues around utility bills and with SWW.

If Citizens Advice Exeter had not be there to give the client advice and support, the outcome could have been:

- Various agencies would have used up time trying to resolve multiple issues
- The client would not have obtained her passport
- The client would have incurred Council Tax arrears, even though she wanted to pay them
- The client would not have been able to communicate effectively with either her utility company or SWW.

Client from ST DAVID'S WARD.

The client is a disabled single male in his 60s who lives in Housing Association rented accommodation. He has several health issues including having a pacemaker fitted, walking with a stick, wearing two hearing aids and visual problems. He is claiming Universal Credit (UC). He informed the DWP that he has one share worth £6.00. He was unable to find the paperwork relating to this – he had not realised the importance of keeping paperwork for such a tiny asset. Until he can provide the evidence of his “asset” the DWP have suspended his UC, so he has had no benefit for several months. He has had to borrow money from a family member but cannot borrow anymore. He came to see us as he needed help explaining his circumstances to UC. We assisted by drafting a letter which we then helped him to enter in his UC journal.

If Citizens Advice Exeter had not been there to give the client advice and support, the outcomes could have been:

- The client would not have been able to word a clear explanation of his situation, and would have had difficulty entering this information into his UC journal, so the DWP would not have had the information they needed to unsuspend his UC
- He would be facing severe financial hardship now that he cannot borrow any more money from family
- He would soon have been unable to buy food and pay bills, so could have got further into debt, and need further external help with managing this
- The client may have presented to ECC as vulnerable and in urgent housing and financial need

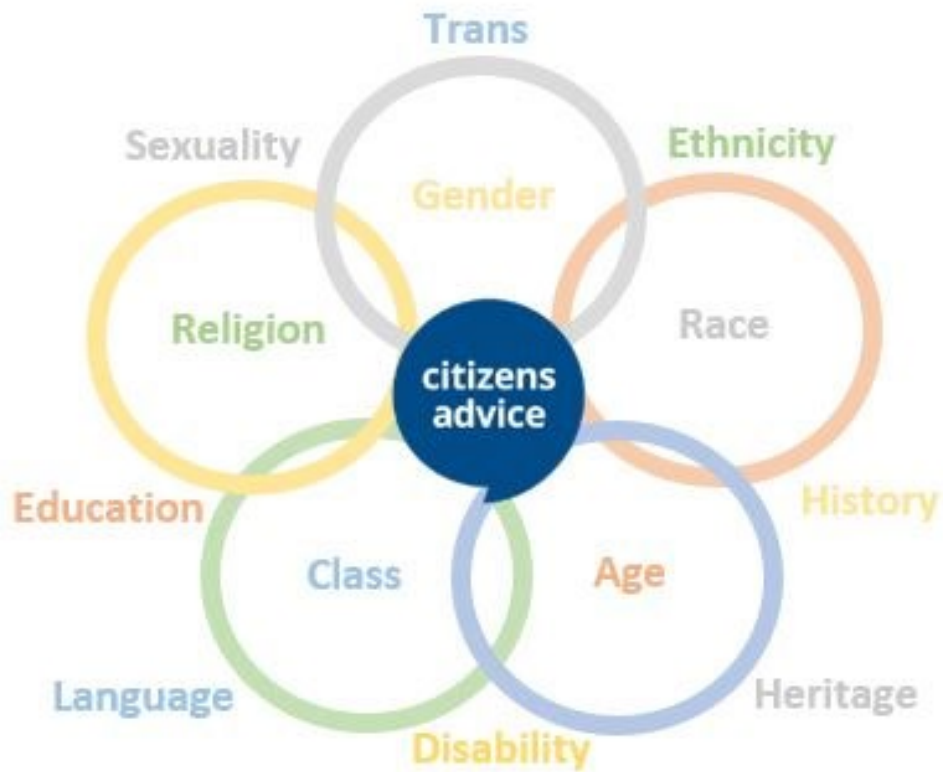
Client from ST DAVID'S WARD

The young client came out of care six years ago and has since lived in supported accommodation. She is a vulnerable adult with a Social Worker, and carers attending to her every day. A local charity helps her with managing her money and budgeting. She gets approximately 19 hours of care per week to help with shopping (someone goes with her) and cooking. She came to Citizens Advice Exeter because she is unhappy about the way her accommodation is managed. She feels it is controlling and does not allow her to have friends over. They were unhappy about her trying to get a part time job as a cleaner. She doesn't know who her Social Worker is and is not allowed to contact her Social Worker to try and resolve the issue, as the accommodation provider liaises with social services. The young woman wanted to move, so has registered with Devon Home Choice, but her banding has deemed her as adequately housed. She

has been to ECC and got some advice on housing. The client said ECC sent her to Citizens Advice. Her situation is having a negative impact on her mental health. The client says that she does not have any family or friends who can help her now.

If Citizens Advice Exeter had not been there to give the client advice and support, the outcomes could have been:

- The client would remain in her unhappy situation and her mental health could deteriorate further
- She may present to her GP or mental health services with deteriorating mental health
- She could have been stuck in a situation that she was unable to resolve, with no access to her Social Worker
- She could have had nowhere to go when the ECC adviser was unable to help her and suggested she contact CA
- The client may have re-presented to ECC, as vulnerable and in urgent housing need



**Citizens Advice Exeter
Business and Development Plan
2024-2026
(Approved by Board of Trustees 27.3.24)**

**Charity Registration No. 1091143
Company Limited by Guarantee No. 4334063 England
Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.
FRN: 617604**

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1. Introduction

We owe it to the legacy of each and every family and individual still recovering from the effects of the pandemic and now struggling with the Cost of Living Crisis to build a Business Development Plan that supports those most affected; be it through increased levels of debt, job loss, housing issues or in their relationships.

This Plan aims to make some sense of the challenges the country faces as we continue to deal with the many challenges faced by society.

We are mindful of the challenges that we face having had a significant reduction in funding from Exeter City Council and this Business Development Plan aims to maintain an effective and sustainable service which will value the contribution of our staff and volunteers, and offer high quality service to the residents of Exeter to ensure that they have the information and advice needed to move forward.

The contributions of our paid staff and volunteers over the last few years have been simply incredible and we must do all we can to recognise their contribution and support their well-being to ensure we have a committed, resilience and valued workforce.

The Plan, therefore, aims to tackle the themes of

- Supporting our people,
- Maintaining the current level of service, and
- Securing the future of existing services

Whilst the future remains uncertain, we are hopeful that the flexibility and 'can do' attitude demonstrated by our people over the last few years makes us well placed to respond to whatever challenges the future throws our way.

2. Vision Statement

- ✔ To be accessible to everyone in Exeter city to provide advice to find a way forward.
- ✔ To influence and improve the policies and practises that affect people's lives

3. Mission Statement

- ✔ To provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities valuing diversity, promoting equality and challenging discrimination.

4. Strategic Outcomes

- A. Reduced social and financial deprivation
- B. Improved mental health and wellbeing for the community
- C. More equitable and cohesive society
- D. Stronger and more resilient communities

5. Strategic Aims

- A. Be accessible for anyone in the community regardless of any barrier
- B. Develop our knowledge and understanding of the complex needs of our clients
- C. Design our services so that they are more reflective of and relevant to the communities we serve
- D. Campaign for change at a local and national level

6. Our Strategic Priorities April 2024 - March 2025



1. **Advice:**

We will improve the experience people have when they come to us for help, so *everyone* leaves with the knowledge and confidence they need to find a way forward.

2. **Advocacy:**

We will be a stronger voice on the issues that matter most to *all* who come to us for help

3. **Technology:**

We will use technology to improve the experience for *all* who come to us for help, while freeing up resources that will allow us to meet more demand.

4. **Sustainability:**

We will secure our future as a service through a more collaborative and proactive approach to service delivery with a focus on 3 key areas: *finance, people* and *premises*.

5. **Culture:**

We will be a collaborative, innovative and high-performing service that *promotes equity, diversity and inclusion, and challenges discrimination*.

7. Objectives

Objective 1: Advice

To ensure that *everyone* using our service leaves with an accurate knowledge and confidence they need to find a way forward

Performance Measure:

By the 31st March 2025, we will:

- Achieve at least an 80% client experience satisfaction score from those completing our client survey
- Be achieving 'green green' consistently in 'advice' in Quality of Advice Assessments

In year one of this Plan we will take the following actions:

Action	Output – amount produced Outcome - changes occurred	Responsible
1. Undertake review of our involvement with the Single Q and look at other options to ensure we are engaged with the best offer available for our clients	Data collected shows best option Work has begun on shared Adviceline	CEO, Operations Manager
2. Redesign the service delivery model in line with the reduction in funding	5000 clients are helped At least 80% client satisfaction score	Leadership Team
3. Ensure we maintain enough resource to support our most vulnerable clients who are likely to need a f-2-f service	5000 clients are helped At least 80% client satisfaction score	Operations Manager and Advice Service team
4. Ensure all supervisors have completed the supervisor level debt training	All supervisors have supervisor level debt training	Operations Manager, Training Lead

	Advisors give accurate debt advice	
--	------------------------------------	--

In year two of this plan we will consider the following actions and initiatives:

⇒ Offer more community outreach locations which offer both technological advice access as well as face to face

⇒ Have a plan for a shared premises where people focused VCSE organisations in Exeter have a shared front door

Objective 2: Advocacy
 To use evidence we gather as a result of *all* clients' experiences to campaign for change in policies and services

Performance Measure:

By the 31st March 2025, we will:

- Have produced two reports and used these to raise awareness at a local and national level
- Have taken part in a national campaign around scams awareness

In year one of this Plan we will take the following actions:

Action	Output – amount produced Outcome - changes occurred	Responsible
1. Improve the quality of the evidence by training the workforce in the accurate recording of AIC codes	Fewer than 100 issues are recorded as 'other' AIC recording is focused and accurate	Research and Campaigns Strategy Group Team Leader and Operations Manager

2. Use evidence forms to prepare a report about the quality of the private rented sector in Exeter	One report Awareness will be raised at a local and national level	Research and Campaigns Strategy Group & CEO
3. Use client stories to prepare a report about the impact of government policy on families with children	One report Awareness will be raised at a local and national level	Research and Campaigns Strategy Group & CEO
4. Undertake at least one campaign this year to highlight key areas of concern raised at a national level – scams awareness	One campaign has taken place Awareness will be raised	Research and Campaigns Strategy Group & Operations Manager

In year two of this plan we will consider the following actions and initiatives:

- ⇒ Using data and statistics collated from our evidence forms produce an annual impact report on issues facing our clients

Objective 3: Technology

To use digital technology to create new ways to help *all* clients and improve the experience for those using our service

Performance Measure:

By the 31st March 2024, we will:

- Have 5,000 unique visitors to our new website
- Have begun to explore the capabilities of AI and how this can enhance our service delivery

In year one of this Plan we will take the following actions:

Action	Output – amount produced Outcome - changes occurred	Responsible
--------	--	-------------

1. Commission a new website that is user friendly and supports self-help	5000 visitors to website Clients can access the website for self-help resources	Leadership Team Executive Admin Assistant
2. Explore secure and practical options for increased use of emails for communication with 3 rd parties in relation to core service and client information	Emails are being sent securely	Leadership team, Operations Manager, Advice Service team
3. Using guidance from national CA consider how best AI can be used to support the day to day running of the organisation and service delivery and implement	AI is being used where it enhances the service	Leadership Team, Operations Manager

In year two of this plan we will consider the following actions and initiatives:

- ➔ We will investigate the potential for wider use of IT technologies to support our advice and information giving, i.e. email, webchat, social networking, text messaging

Objective 4: Sustainability

To secure our future as a service through a more collaborative and proactive approach to service delivery with a focus on 3 key areas: Finance, *People* and Premises

Performance Measure:

By the 31st March 2024 we will:

- Have secured grants/funds to avoid the need for redundancies
- Be involved in partnership work and, if feasible, have submitted bids with other agencies
- Have established affordable premises, which suits a redesigned service delivery model
- Have grown the volunteer workforce

In year one of this Plan we will take the following actions:

Action	Output – amount produced Outcome – changes occurred	Responsible
1. Review and enhance our fund-raising strategy to ensure that we prioritise income generation as a core focus for the year 2024-2025.	£100,000 is raised and grants from ECC and DCC are sustained. Service delivery is maintained.	CEO
2. Work with VCSE partners to submit a partnership bid.	Funding is secured for partnership work. Partnership working increases our capacity to help clients.	CEO
3. Secure more cost-effective premises and make this fit for purpose for now and into the future.	Premises are secured. The organisation is delivering an appropriate service from the new premises.	CEO and premises working group
4. Increase the capacity of the training team and therefore increase the volunteer workforce	12 new volunteers join the workforce. Current numbers of clients helped are sustained	

In year two of this plan we will consider the following actions and initiatives:

- ⇒ Develop volunteering opportunities to assist with peer support, mentoring and supervision
- ⇒ The Charity will reduce its carbon footprint and support the City-wide carbon neutral ambitions
- ⇒ Undertake a review of the suitability of our current premises in the context of potential future service delivery models

Objective 5: Culture

To provide a supportive environment for *all* people to be who they are and value *all* unique contributions.

Performance Measure:

By the 31st March 2025, we will:

- have recruited volunteers through different channels and places in line with our EDI strategy
- have pro-actively reached out to marginalised groups to develop a stronger relationship and access to our service
- Have clear procedures in place for staff support and how to access it

In year one of this Plan we will take the following actions:


Action	Output - amount produced Outcome - changes occurred	Responsible
1. Ensure that our volunteer base, including trustees, is diverse and representative of the local community by positive action and promotion	Diversity audit completed and report made to Resources Committee Gaps will be narrowed	Chief Executive and EDI group
2. Working with local minority community groups, increase access to our service by completing an accessibility audit. This will include canvassing the public and asking an open-ended question, "What would you like CA Exeter to know?"	Accessibility audit completed showing areas of concern The service will be accessible to more minority groups in the community	Chief Executive and EDI group

In year two of this plan we will consider the following actions and initiatives:







- ⇒ In light of learning from our year one plans we will build on these initiatives and identify additional items for consideration in future years.

8. Service Delivery





Core Generalist Advice Service

 The service is operated from ground floor premises in Dix's Field, Exeter, EX1 1QA.

The core generalist service is available through:

-  Telephone assessments (advice line/ Single Q national telephone service)
-  Advice appointments (telephone and face-to-face),
-  Face to face drop in sessions – for the most vulnerable clients
-  Referral pathways for external agency partners
-  Existing client message line
-  Mail@ email address for incoming correspondence from existing clients

Furthermore, we offer a range of self-help resources available during opening times, including:

-  IT information kiosks
-  Telephone access points
-  Leaflets system, and
-  Signposting to other agencies

Out of core service hours, the following additional services are available:

- Access to www.citizensadvice.org.uk

The service opening times are as follows:

	Information services	Drop in assessments	Helpline
Monday			09.00 - 16.00
Tuesday	10.00 - 13:00	10.00 - 13.00	09.00 - 16.00
Wednesday	10.00 - 13.00	10:00 - 13:00	09.00 - 16.00
Thursday	10.00 - 13:00	10.00 - 13.00	09.00 - 16.00
Friday			09.00 - 16.00

A paid Supervisor (or equivalent) is present for advice sessions at all times. Our Operations Manager is responsible for the core generalist advice service. An Advice Session Supervisor provides holiday and sickness cover for our Team

Leaders. Our Assistant Chief Executive provides support, together with our Executive Assistant and Administrative Assistant. The Executive Assistant also provides support across our operations. The Chief Executive line manages the Operations Manager and Assistant Chief Executive



Money advice service

Our debt work is managed by our Money and Energy Team Leader who has overall oversight of the debt and energy cases. Volunteer advisers will carry out an initial debt appointment to explore the situation and to deal with any emergencies. The next stage is to send a 'debt pack' to a client to encourage their involvement and engagement with the process. Once the pack has been returned with appropriate documentation, the client will be offered a debt option appointment with an experience debt adviser. All advisers are supported by experienced supervisors. The money advice system is supported by our advice service team administrator. There are 2 volunteers and 2 paid staff members who are qualified as Debt Relief Order intermediaries.



Social Security tribunal support

The core generalist advice service also supports some clients with social security tribunal appeals. Cases are progressed by a small number of highly motivated and competent advisers with an interest in this area of our work. Our Session Supervisor oversees this area of our work.



County Court Outreach

The core generalist advice service also operates a County Courts Outreach each Tuesday morning. This is staffed on a rota basis shared across trained volunteer advisers. The lead Team Leader supervises this outreach. The service is targeted at clients who have repossession hearings scheduled in the County Court on the day.



Research and campaigns

Individual responsibility for research and campaigns work of the Charity is mainstreamed across all services, projects and contracts, led by one of our team leaders and overseen by the Operations Manager. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility, co-ordinating and leading on publicity; such as press releases, corresponding with elected members, and wider national campaigning.

A Strategic Research and Campaigns Group consisting of the lead trustee, lead Team Leader, Operations Manager, Chief Executive and research and campaigns volunteer/s; considers local, regional and national intelligence and agrees overarching research and campaigns priorities for the charity. The lead Team Leader has day-to-day responsibility for research and campaigns work. A team of

research and campaigns volunteers provide support to the lead Team Leader. We are represented on the Citizens Advice Devon Research and Campaigns (DRAC) Cluster Group.

REFER TO SEPARATE OPERATIONAL RESEARCH AND CAMPAIGNS PLAN



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

A Strategic EDI Group consisting of the lead trustee, lead Team Leader, Operations Manager, Chief Executive and EDI volunteer/s; considers local, regional and national issues which impact on our people and our clients. EDI is a key element of Citizens Advice aims and principles and this group aims to keep it at the forefront of what we do. Our aim is ensuring that no-one is disadvantaged due to their protected characteristics. While we aim to embed good practice, we also want to remain vigilant to areas for improvement.

REFER TO SEPARATE OPERATIONAL EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PLAN



Specialist Project and Contracts

In addition to the core generalist advice service described above, the Charity has the following specialist projects and contracts:

- Devon Carers Support Services
- Children's Centre Advice Service – Action for Children
- Carbon Monoxide, Energy Advice and Energy Outreach Programmes
- Exeter & District Kidney Patients' Association project
- Exeter & District MS Society Outreach
- FORCE / Macmillan Cancer Charity Outreach
- Exeter Foodbank
- Support for Ukraine project

***Carers Support Services
(ends 31st March 2024+ 3 months)***

We act as lead for Citizens Advice Devon for the delivery of this contract, funded by Devon Carers. The service supports carers to maximise their household incomes. The service is delivered by a mixture of telephone access from our offices, supported by occasional face-to-face appointments in local offices across Devon.

***Children's Centre Advice Service
(ends 31st March 2026)***

This service provides advice on social welfare law issues to young families with young children in either the local Children's Centres, or in our own office.

***Carbon Monoxide, Energy Advice & Energy Outreach Programmes
(runs until 31st March 2025)***

Helping clients with fuel issues, income maximisation or utility debt issues.

***Exeter & District Kidney Patients' Association
(ends 31 March 2026)***

This project provides a welfare benefits service for pre-dialysis, dialysis and transplant patients and their carers, delivered from our own premises.

***Exeter & District MS Society Outreach
(ends 31 March 2026)***

Our adviser provides a one day per week welfare benefits service to people living with multiple sclerosis. The service is delivered from our own premises.

***Exeter Foodbank
(runs until 5th February 2027)***

Our adviser provides a three day per week welfare benefits service to people who present at the Foodbank in Exeter

Macmillan Cancer Charity + FORCE outreach (ends 31st March 2025)

Our 2 welfare benefit workers provide telephone advice and an outreach service to people living with cancer based at FORCE Cancer Support Centre, Corner House, Barrack Road, Exeter, EX2 5DW.

Support for Ukraine income maximisation / Benefits Worker (ends October 2024)

Helping Ukrainians new to the UK, apply for benefits and understand the benefit system.

9. Communication with stakeholders

Effective communication is vital to ensure that the charity is striving to achieve its vision.

External:

Better engagement with stakeholders to secure and retain funding and increased partnership working. Extend reach of client base, become more accessible and demonstrate value. Increased engagement with policy influencers and decision makers such as MPs to demonstrate the impact of our research and campaigns work and make society fairer for disadvantaged groups.

Internal:

Our people feel supported, valued, well informed and part of a team. Ensure staff and volunteers have the opportunity to contribute and that their voices are heard.

We acknowledge that not all information can be shared all of the time - there may be commercially sensitive or personally confidential information that cannot be open to all, but through this plan we are demonstrating our commitment to transparency where and when appropriate.

Who do we need to reach?

Who's going to be influential in helping us to meet our objectives? Who needs to be kept informed?

Audience 1: External: Stakeholders (all funders including local authorities and councils), clients, local community groups and organisations, policymakers)

Audience 2: External: Clients

Audience 3: Internal: Trustees,

Audience 4: Internal: Volunteers

Audience 5: Internal: Paid staff

There are also times when our communications approach may flex to reflect particular situations, changes, challenges or opportunities. The plan will be updated as appropriate to reflect any changes in circumstances which need to be communicated internally, to ensure that communications are effective, timely, accessible and transparent.

What are our key messages?

- 🔑 We are a local charity
- 🔑 Our impact to include clients' stories
- 🔑 Appreciation/value of our workforce
- 🔑 Importance of quality/ regulation and accreditation/ policies and procedures
- 🔑 Importance of our Equality and Diversity values

10. Resourcing strategy

10.1 The workforce

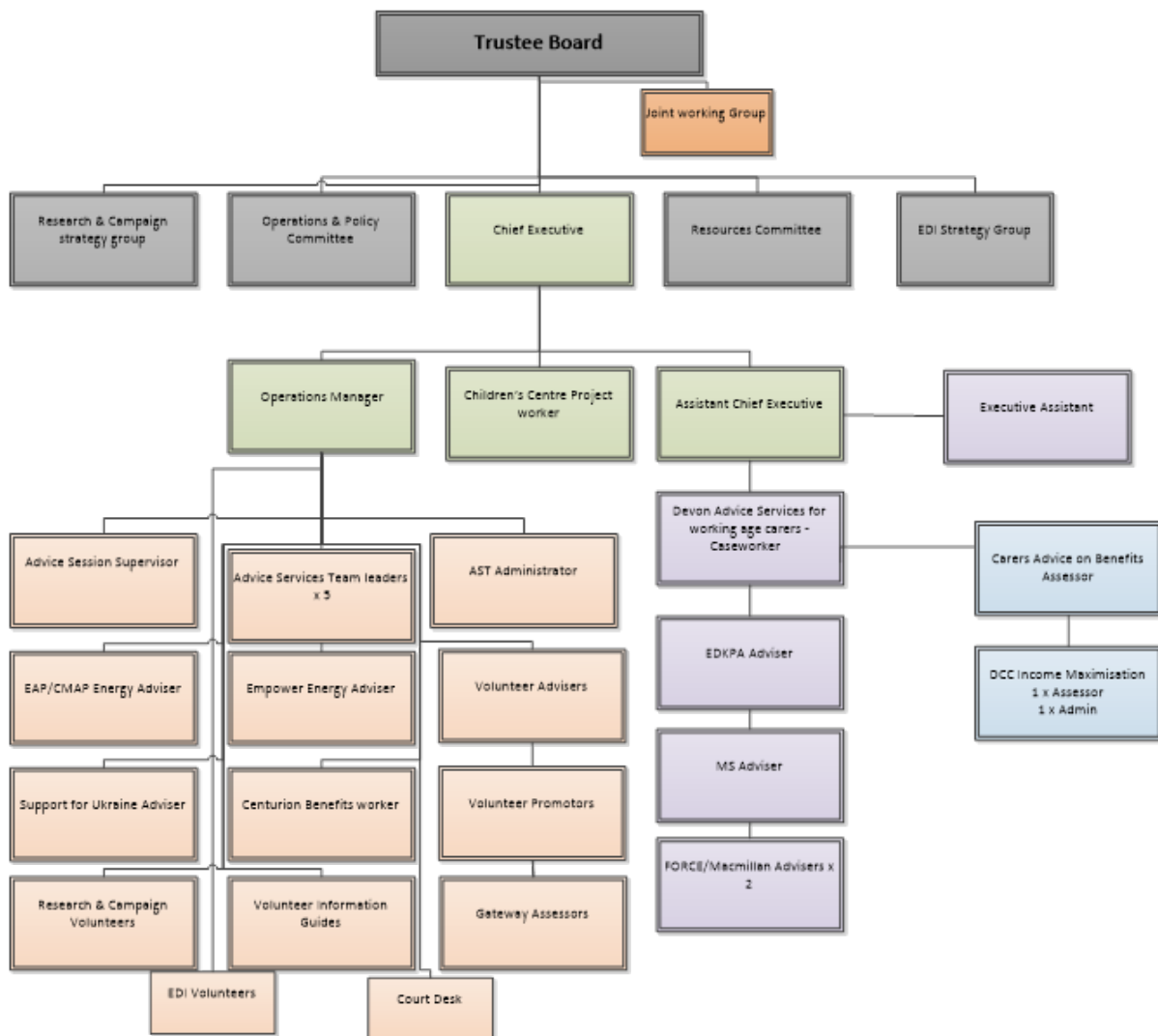
Citizens Advice Exeter operates as a small team of paid staff, supplemented by a larger team of volunteers. All staff are treated equitably, regardless of whether they are a paid member of the team or a volunteer.

The workforce ensures that Citizens Advice Exeter is a client-focussed organisation and that clients will be given as much time as they need, but it is recognised that this may not be as much time as he or she wants.

Staff target services towards those who are most in need

The quality of services offered to clients must remain demonstrably high.

The Trustee board ensures that the charity stays true to its vision and mission and that it operates in line with the Articles of Association.



10.2 Funding

We receive our core funding from Devon County Council and Exeter City Council. We participate in pan-Devon projects through Citizens Advice Devon, the consortium of Devon Citizens Advice offices.

There has been a significant cut in funding from Exeter City Council, meaning that we are relying on reserves until we can secure funding from other sources.

This year, the Charity will continue to work with its partners on developing projects. A careful balancing act will be required ensuring that project work enhances our core service instead of putting pressure on it. The financial and structural viability of the organisation shall be considered when introducing any new services. It is recognised that new services and initiatives should be directed primarily at strengthening the core of the service, either structurally or financially.

We will remain in a dialogue with both Devon County Council (through Citizens Advice Devon) and Exeter City Council regarding future funding.

We will continue to provide demonstrable benefits and outcomes for existing funders to secure existing income and to build relationships for potential continuation of funding.

We will continue to apply for community and charitable grants, which align with our vision and mission.

Financial summary:

Over the next two years the Charity estimates the following costs of delivering the services outlined in this Plan.

	DCC/ ECC/Other	Macmillan	MS	EDKPA	Torbay	Action for Children	Foodbank	CAB	EAP	DASWAC	2024/25 Total	2025/26 Total
Income	153,250	46,898	15,880	9,556	43,050	10,900	27,385	11,892	27,040	20,723	366,574	148,685
Salaries	220,138	35,100	14,110	7,854	16,613	10,425	18,739	10,026	27,040	17,476	377,521	255,490
Partner	0										0	
Other staff and	11,540	8,856	25	102	26,437	475	6,088	1,866		1,647	57,036	9,643
Office	35,160	1,635	1,745	1,500			1,215			1,600	42,855	21,427
Premises	65,766	1,307									67,073	33,536
Governance	2,104			100							2,204	2,760
Other	4,376						1,343				5,719	2,000
Total	339,084	46,898	15,880	9,556	43,050	10,900	27,385	11,892	27,040	20,723	552,408	324,856
Surplus/Defi	-185,834	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-185,834	-176,171

Year 2 predictions reflect current contract/project expiry dates.

11. Community and client profiles

CLIENT PROFILE January 2023 - January 2024

Age

Profile: Age

Age Group	Grand Total
15-19	29
20-24	162
25-29	337
30-34	424
35-39	486
40-44	494
45-49	407
50-54	496
55-59	529
60-64	532
65-69	348
70-74	262
75-79	255
80-84	141
85-89	86
90-94	17
95-99	5
Not recorded/not applicable	127
Grand Total	5,137

Gender

Gender	Grand Total
Female	2,979
Male	1,880
Not recorded/not applicable	120
Prefer different term (Other)	5
Prefer not to say	36
Unknown	117
Grand Total	5,137

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Clients	%
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	23	1%
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	17	0%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	45	1%
Asian or Asian British - Other	46	1%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	22	1%
Black or Black British - African	62	2%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	25	1%
Black or Black British - Other	14	0%
Mixed - Other	44	1%
Mixed - White & Asian	12	0%
Mixed - White & Black African	14	0%
Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	23	1%
Other - Any Other	62	2%
Other - Arab	51	1%
White - British	2,447	68%
White - English	352	10%
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	4	0%
White - Irish	25	1%
White - Other	297	8%
White - Scottish	15	0%
White - Welsh	8	0%
Grand Total	3,608	100%

Disability

Disability	Clients	%
Disabled	272	7%
Long-Term Health Condition	2,095	54%
Not disabled/no health problems	1,505	39%
Grand Total	3,872	100%

Occupation

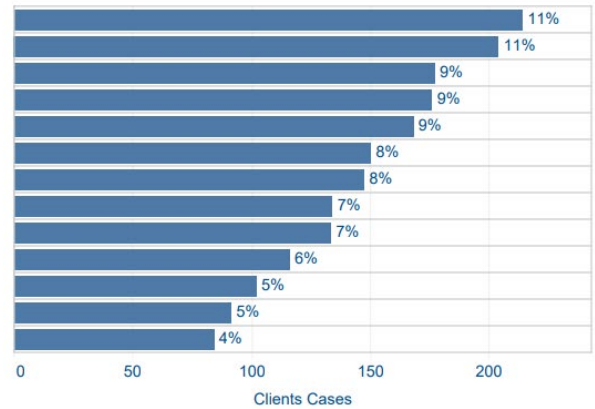
Occupation	Grand Total
Employed >= 30hrs p/w	387
Employed between 16hrs p/w and 29hrs p/w	151
Employed < 16hrs p/w	152
DO NOT USE - Employed < 30hrs p/w	15
Self Employed	128
On Govt Scheme For Employment	1
Unemployed - seeking paid employment	278
Permanently Sick/Disabled	503
Carer - Children	102
Carer - Elderly/Disabled	154
Looking After Home - Dependents	62
Looking After Home - No Dependents	5
Retired	369
Student	18
Volunteer	4
Other	81
Not recorded/not applicable	2,634
Casual/Seasonal work	2
Prefer not to say	17
Semi-retired	22
Temporarily Sick	52
Grand Total	5,137

Reason for Contact

	2022-23			2023-24										Grand Total
	Q4			Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4	
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	Septemb..	October	November	December	January	
Benefits & tax credits	36.7%	39.1%	41.2%	44.5%	36.4%	40.9%	48.9%	43.3%	42.0%	32.6%	39.4%	37.0%	100.0%	40.0%
Benefits Universal Credit	16.4%	13.3%	9.0%	9.7%	14.5%	12.6%	10.7%	13.7%	8.5%	12.7%	10.6%	8.3%		11.6%
Charitable Support & Food Ban..	2.7%	2.1%	2.1%	2.6%	1.9%	2.4%	2.3%	3.0%	2.5%	2.3%	2.9%	3.5%		2.6%
Consumer goods & services	2.1%	2.2%	2.1%	2.3%	2.5%	2.0%	2.0%	1.3%	2.0%	1.9%	2.3%	2.4%		2.1%
Debt	7.9%	8.8%	9.0%	7.0%	7.5%	8.2%	7.8%	9.4%	7.3%	11.3%	7.6%	10.7%		8.4%
Education	0.3%		0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%			0.2%
Employment	2.9%	3.3%	3.2%	2.1%	1.9%	2.6%	2.2%	1.8%	2.9%	2.7%	3.4%	2.7%		2.7%
Financial services & capability	1.4%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	2.2%	1.5%	1.2%	1.5%	1.2%	1.3%	1.2%		1.1%
GVA & Hate Crime		0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%	0.3%	0.7%		0.4%
Health & community care	1.0%	1.1%	1.7%	0.8%	2.7%	1.6%	1.2%	0.7%	1.2%	1.6%	1.4%	1.2%		1.3%
Housing	7.0%	6.1%	6.3%	6.2%	10.7%	6.8%	5.5%	6.7%	9.7%	10.2%	6.8%	7.3%		7.5%
Immigration & asylum	0.6%	0.8%	1.0%	1.2%	1.1%	1.2%	1.4%	0.9%	0.7%	1.2%	1.3%	1.1%		1.0%
Legal	1.8%	1.1%	1.8%	1.5%	2.0%	1.8%	1.4%	1.8%	2.4%	1.6%	1.7%	0.9%		1.7%
Other	3.5%	2.4%	3.2%	3.6%	3.3%	3.7%	1.8%	2.3%	2.7%	2.7%	2.5%	1.6%		2.9%
Relationships & family	2.8%	1.9%	3.1%	2.5%	2.7%	3.6%	3.1%	2.9%	4.3%	1.8%	2.0%	2.1%		2.8%
Tax	0.4%	0.5%	0.7%	1.6%	0.7%	0.8%	1.2%	1.0%	0.8%	1.3%	0.8%	0.3%		0.8%
Travel & transport	1.0%	0.7%	1.3%	1.5%	0.6%	1.1%	1.5%	1.5%	2.2%	2.0%	1.8%	2.7%		1.5%
Utilities & communications	11.6%	14.9%	12.2%	10.6%	9.0%	8.0%	7.1%	7.9%	8.1%	12.1%	13.7%	16.2%		11.2%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Client location

Local Authority Ward	Local Authority	
St. David's	Exeter	214
Mincinglake & Whipton	Exeter	204
Priory	Exeter	177
Exwick	Exeter	176
Newtown & St. Leonard's	Exeter	168
St. Thomas	Exeter	150
Pinhoe	Exeter	147
Pennsylvania	Exeter	134
St. Loyes	Exeter	133
Topsham	Exeter	116
Alphington	Exeter	102
Heavitree	Exeter	91
Duryard & St. James	Exeter	84



Client Nationality

Nationality	Clients	% Clients
Not recorded/not applicable	3,659	71.2%
UK - British	1,192	23.2%
Poland	26	0.5%
Other Europe EU	6	0.1%
Italy	7	0.1%
Portugal	5	0.1%
Other Africa	3	0.1%
Romania	11	0.2%
Lithuania	2	0.0%
Iran	7	0.1%
Nigeria	8	0.2%
Other Asia	1	0.0%
Spain	4	0.1%
India	8	0.2%
Hungary	9	0.2%
France	4	0.1%
Pakistan	1	0.0%
Eritrea	1	0.0%
Netherlands	2	0.0%
Czech Republic	4	0.1%
Jamaica	1	0.0%
Bulgaria	4	0.1%
Bangladesh	2	0.0%
Slovakia	3	0.1%
Ghana	1	0.0%
Germany	2	0.0%
Iraq	2	0.0%
Other America	2	0.0%
Afghanistan	2	0.0%
Zimbabwe	2	0.0%
China	5	0.1%
Greece	1	0.0%
Philippines	6	0.1%
Turkey	3	0.1%
Brazil	4	0.1%

South Africa	1	0.0%
Syria	6	0.1%
Albania	2	0.0%
Algeria	1	0.0%
Australia/New Zealand	3	0.1%
Morocco	1	0.0%
Ethiopia	1	0.0%
Thailand	2	0.0%
Other West Indies	1	0.0%
Kenya	1	0.0%
Mauritius	1	0.0%
Russia	1	0.0%
Egypt	2	0.0%
Estonia	1	0.0%
Ukraine	90	1.8%
Cyprus	1	0.0%
Zambia	1	0.0%
Saudi Arabia	3	0.1%
Azerbaijan	1	0.0%
Belgium	1	0.0%
Cuba	1	0.0%
Ireland	8	0.2%
Japan	1	0.0%
Mexico	1	0.0%
Mongolia	1	0.0%
Norway	1	0.0%
Switzerland	1	0.0%
Trinidad and Tobago	1	0.0%
United States of America	1	0.0%
Grand Total	5,137	100.0%

COMMUNITY PROFILE January 2023 - January 2024

The Census and associated other data provide the following statistical analysis of the community of Exeter. For comparison purposes, where available, data is also provided for a travel to work area known as Exeter and Heart of Devon (EHOD) covering Exeter, East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge.

Population (2021 Census)

Exeter 130,800

EHOD 499,200

Age Range (2021 Census)

	Exeter	EHOD
Under 16 years of age	14.7%	17%
Working age	68.6%	60.6%
Retirement age	16.7%	22.4%

Gender (2021 Census)

	Exeter	EHOD
Female	51.1%	51.1%
Male	48.9%	48.9%

Ethnicity (2021 Census)

	Exeter	EHOD
Asian/Asian British	4.9%	2.8%
Black/Black British	0.9%	1.2%
Mixed Race	2.5%	2%
White - British	90.3%	93.1%
Other ethnic group	1.4%	0.9%

Disability (2021 Census)

	Exeter	EHOD
Disability / Long term health condition	18.9%	17.8%
Not Disabled	81.1%	82.2%

Employment (source: www.nomisweb.co.uk)

	Exeter	South West
Economic activity rate	52.4%	57.4%
Claimant Count rate	1.9%	2.1%

Average Annual Income (source: www.nomisweb.co.uk)

	Exeter	South West
Gross full-time earnings	£34,529	£31,339

House Prices (source: www.landregistry.data.gov.uk)

	Exeter	South West
Average house price	£334,925	£330,601
Ratio (salary/house price)	9.2	10.2

12. Community Advice Needs analysis

There are several districts of Exeter where advice needs are greater because of the greater levels of social exclusion faced by the people living there. Indicators are levels of benefits claimed, amount of social housing and private rented accommodation in the area and levels of unemployment, disability and educational attainment.

The ward areas in Exeter where advice needs are highest are St David's, Mincinglake, Whipton, Priory, Exwick, and Newtown. This is consistently proved by the indices of deprivation and an Exeter City Council analysis of Super Output Areas (www.exeter.gov.uk).

There are also advice needs in the wealthier districts of Exeter. If poverty is relative then the networks that informally grow in poorer areas do not grow in the wealthier ones and the experiences of those in poverty can be more marked and subsequently more difficult to address. With an ageing population and caring requirements, this may be as relevant in the most deprived communities as it is in affluent areas

One way of meeting community advice needs is in the form of an 'on line' advice referral system where the referrer determine that the client has an advice need. This, of course, requires resources to implement, monitor and manage the service. We have this service in place and currently have up to 25 agencies that refer into us. However before embarking on any expansion, we would need ensure sufficient resources are in place to manage any referrals and then even more resources to provide the advice that will be needed. Working with agencies who know their community and their needs is the best way forward, as is working in partnership together on prevention work. However, any expansion of current services, 'opens the door' to unmet need and whilst enhancing our offer, will mean accommodating for the advice needs of those who may not have previously accessed our service.

Over the last few years we have been committed to doing community 'pop-up' events and services in the most deprived areas of our City. We have worked with other partner agencies and have co-ordinated or attended shared community events (ECOIE, Age UK, Exeter Private Renters Forum, Co-Lab and DCC Covid immunisation community teams) to reach out to our communities. We also give talks and have provided some localised training to other Exeter agencies to expand the knowledge of their workers.

The charity can only provide a service to those in work if they take time off work or try and utilise electronic means of access. Ideally, we need to enhance our

website to provide more focused and detailed self-help to accommodate for advice needs outside of our general opening hours

Some work has taken place at a national work trying to identify “hard to reach” groups. These are potential clients who through reasons of age, disability, ethnicity, language barriers, learning barriers, sexuality or other forms of social exclusion find it difficult to access mainstream services. There is no indication that national factors do not apply in Exeter and therefore the aim of the Charity should put some of its resources in trying to access these hard-to-reach groups and offer an appropriate level of service. It is recognised that much of this work would need to be project funded.

Through the work of our EDI group we are also reaching out to minority groups within the city and offering additional support and informal networking opportunities.

The Pandemic and the Cost of Living Crisis will have affected many households which don't necessarily feature in deprivation data or other indicators. It is role to give these clients a voice when it comes to the issues that may hamper a recovery for many of them.

12.1 CLIENT SATISFACTION 2023

Our latest survey of clients confirmed the following (previous year in brackets):

All clients

Access

- 68% (76%) very satisfied with access to the service
- 17% (15%) fairly satisfied with access to the service

Service

- 67% (74%) very happy with the service provided
- 15% (14%) fairly happy with the service provided

Advice and information

- 51% (59%) very satisfied with the advice and information provided
- 17% (17%) fairly satisfied with the advice and information provided
- 84% (89%) of clients would **recommend our services** to someone else.

Summary

This Plan aims to continue or improve on the high levels of client satisfaction, whilst also aiming to develop services that are tailored to the needs of individual clients who have widespread variances in their preferred advice methods.

12.2 EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In accordance with the national Citizens Advice Future of Advice strategic framework, our Equity Diversity and Inclusion goals are that:

- Our **advice** services will be accessible and relevant to all our diverse clients whose experiences and outcomes will be more positive
- Our **advocacy** services will speak up for those who face intense disadvantage, detriment or harm to their wellbeing and we will improve how we identify and consider those needs
- Our **technology** will respond to user needs and will improve access to our services, including face to face

- In terms of **sustainability**, our services will be designed and costed, taking account of the needs of those facing disadvantage, detriment or harm
- Our **culture** will be more inclusive and we will continue to make our whole service more diverse with better equality of opportunity for all

Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Group leads on this area of our work.

13. Risk Register

CITIZENS ADVICE EXETER: RISK ASSESSMENT

6th March 2023

Risk Areas	Net risk rating
Financial Management Core Funding Budget Reserves Projects Financial controls Pensions Social Enterprise	High
Governance Board structure Board engagement with the planning process	Low
Strategic Business Planning Business Plan Community Advice Needs Financial Resources Scenario Planning Client and Community Profile Business Continuity Performance review SWOT/PEST User involvement	Low

<p>People Management</p> <p>Recruitment processes Internal communications Management Structure Learning and Development Conflicts and staffing issues People policies Supervision and appraisal Succession planning</p>	<p>Low/ Medium</p>
<p>Operational Performance Management</p> <p>Service delivery methods Quality Business Continuity Equality and diversity Client perception Service development Complaints</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Premises</p> <p>Security of tenure Suitability</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Research & Campaigns</p> <p>Priority Campaigning Communication</p>	<p>Low</p>
<p>Partnership Working</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement Communication with Stakeholders Profile Engagement with other local offices Engagement with national Citizens Advice Support from Citizens Advice Service</p>	<p>Medium</p>

Risk Management	Medium
Casebook Hardware / systems Support Security Information Assurance/GDPR Risk Register Risk Strategy Asset Register Risk Governance FCA registration Confidentiality DBS checks	
Equality	Low
Access Addressing need	
Other	High
Welfare policy changes Public sector funding cuts	

14. External Factors

External Factors

14.1 SWOT ANALYSIS [Available on Request]

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experienced and dedicated paid staff ▪ Well trained and dedicated volunteers ▪ High quality advice ▪ Reputation for quality ▪ Diversity of expertise ▪ Relationship with core funders 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity to meet the demand for our services ▪ Wait times for f-2-f appts ▪ Telephone call answer rates ▪ Lack of clients who are willing to tell their stories to the media
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides value for money ▪ Experienced and varied trustee Board and governance structure ▪ Location of Premises ▪ Time/respect given to clients ▪ Long established relationship with projects and contracts ▪ Brand/Name recognition ▪ Tribunal/Court assistance and outcomes achieved ▪ Partnership with other organisations ▪ Free dedication telephone service ▪ Continual high level of client satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resourcing tribunal assistance and debt advice capacity ▪ Resources to support to more vulnerable clients ▪ Resources to support unmet need for debt clients ▪ Website in need of modernisation ▪ Limited engagement with digital platforms for clients and 3rd parties ▪ Lack of specialist support services for clients with English as 2nd language ▪ Lack of provision of immigration advice in the South West
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased availability of Self-help resources for clients ▪ Trading arm – scope to increase trading opportunities ▪ Grant applications ▪ Working with private sector ▪ Tendering for the delivery services ▪ Data collection provides opportunity to show the economic and social impact of our advice ▪ Ability to recruit good quality paid staff and volunteers ▪ Email and webchat channels ▪ Opportunity for collaboration and shared services ▪ Trusted and recognised brand 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retaining volunteers and advisers ▪ Increasing complexity of advice needs ▪ Financial uncertainty ▪ Tendering agenda ▪ Short term contracts culture ▪ Funding horizons ▪ Unpredictability of funding sources ▪ Paid staff leaving for alternative work ▪ Competition from other not-for-profit/commercial advice providers ▪ Centralisation of service delivery ▪ Reduced lottery, trust and LA funding ▪ Demand for services outstrips resources available

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shrinking statutory and other charity agencies ▪ Rising costs due to cost of living crisis |
|--|---|

14.2 PEST ANALYSIS

Political

- **Government policy:** Reductions in local government funding and scaling back of council services, along with increasing levels of community demand, causing pressure within the charitable sector.
- **Citizens Advice:** Development of 'national services' means local office now interdependent – risk to local Citizens Advice
- **Partnership working** seen as the major development for service providers
- **Cost of Living Crisis:** impact on public finances and ability to fund / support advice sectors
- **General Election** – due in early 2025 – potential for changing government – means potential for change in policies leading to uncertainty

Economic

- **Local authority funding** is under pressure given budget settlements, cost of living costs, and resulting economic pressures
- **Economy** Uncertainty public sector funding pressures

Social

- **Job insecurity and GIG economics** may mean that we see demand for core advice services on the increase
- **Emphasis on moving from benefits to work** puts vulnerable clients at risk of unsuitable remedies
- **Urban regeneration** means that client numbers seeking advice from local office increase due to expanding city boundaries with no corresponding funding or L.A. boundary change
- **Customer choice agenda** means that clients want individual tailored services that does not fit a one size fits all approach
- **Unforeseen emergencies, disasters or pandemics** which cause disruption to the wider public and our ability to meet advice needs (e.g. Coronavirus, cost of living crisis, fuel costs increases)

Technological

- **Email/webchat advice** needs of clients out pace available resources or expertise
- **Website** means that more people are able to access self-help materials and information about the Charity and our services
- **Client IT/telephone access in Reception** provides greater opportunities for client self-help
- **IT server and cloud-based solutions** provide opportunities for more efficient communication and diary sharing across the charity

REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 28th November

Report of: Strategic Director People and Communities

Title: Consultation Charter

Is this a Key Decision?

Scrutiny is a non decision making committee

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee have asked for an officer report

2. Recommendations:

It is recommended that Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee notes the contents of the report.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

The report is narrative, as requested by members.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources

Not applicable. Scrutiny is not a decision-making committee

5. What are the legal aspects?

Not applicable. Scrutiny is not a decision-making committee

6. Report details:

- 6.1 The Consultation Charter introduced by members was reviewed and updated in September 2023. This document has been used by officers to guide consultations.
- 6.2 The Senior Leadership Restructure has created a new department and Head of Service for Customers and Communities under the new Directorate of People and Communities. Whilst there are many examples of good practice in relation to public consultation and engagement this new designation has come about in recognition of the need to increase and better co-ordinate formal consultation and engagement work with residents and communities.
- 6.3 The importance of increasing this activity was highlighted in the Digital Customer Strategy approved in November 2023 and in feedback from external auditors who have highlighted opportunities for improving consultation to aid budget setting.
- 6.4 The new Strategic Director took up post in July this year and has introduced a Consultation Gateway to start to co-ordinate consultation activity and to improve the quality of proposed engagement and consultation exercises. Over time this process will also enable the collation feedback so insights can be better utilised at a strategic level.

- 6.5 In line with the consultation charter all formal council consultation activities are promoted on the Council website. Prior to commencement officers need to complete a consultation charter checklist to aid them in adhering to the principles set out in the Consultation Charter. So far this year we have completed 9 public consultations. 10 were completed in 2023; 3 in 2022; 5 in 2021 and 3 in 20220. Details can be found in the appendix.
- 6.6 Whilst no additional resources for consultation activity have been allocated the Director has remodelled a vacant post to create a Consultation and Engagement Manager. This post alongside the vacant Head of Service, Customer and Communities is being recruited to externally and are expected to be filled early in the New Year. The Consultation and Engagement Manager will have responsibility for drafting a consultation strategy and annual delivery plan alongside co-ordinating and advising on engagement and consultation exercises across the council. In future members can expect to see an annual report on the insights gained from this activity.
- 6.7 Since the appointment the Director has worked with SMB and the Executive to commission an expert market research agency to undertake a local version of the Local Government Association's Residents survey. The field work completed in September and the findings have been discussed informally with the Executive to aid their thinking about a new Corporate Plan. A series of themed briefings for communications with members and other stakeholders is now being planned to disseminate the findings.
- 6.8 A further public engagement and exercise will commence in November 2024 facilitated by an expert market research agency to seek feedback on the areas that residents would like to see invested in the next budget alongside their priorities for potential dis-investment or the introduction of charging for several services, all of which will be under consideration by the Executive as it plans the budget for 25/26. This exercise will also seek resident and stakeholder views on the longer term priorities being considered for a new Corporate Plan to be published in 2025.

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

Not applicable: Scrutiny is not a decision-making committee

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

Not applicable. Scrutiny is not a decision-making committee

9. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

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

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

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

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

11.4 No potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report is for noting only

10. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 Important to complete this section in light of the Council declaring a Climate Emergency. Consider whether the recommendations you are making in the report will help, hinder or have no direct impact on delivering our carbon reduction target (carbon neutral by 2030).

12.2 You should think about things like:-

- Travel (and, if travel is unavoidable, whether lower carbon options will be pursued e.g. walking, public transport, electric car);
- Infrastructure (e.g. LED lighting, energy efficient heating/hot water, solar panels, electric car charging points);
- Waste (e.g. recycling, composting, reducing non-recyclable waste); and
- Any other specific carbon reduction initiatives.

12.3 If there are no direct carbon/environmental implications for the decision please state:

No potential impact because the report is for noting only.

11. Are there any other options?

Not applicable. Scrutiny is not a decision-making committee

Director Jo Yelland Strategic Director People and Community

Report Author: Jo Yelland

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

Consultation Charter December 2023

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

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Appendix 1: List of Consultations

1. **Parking Places Order 2024: Closed November 2024**

We are amending some aspects of car parking across the city. The proposed changes support the delivery of our Corporate Plan, in supporting a Balanced Budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Car park income supports the delivery of a wide range of our services that attract people to live, work and visit Exeter, as well as keeping Council Tax low for residents of the city.
2. **Residents' survey: Closed August 2024**

As part of our ongoing commitment to improving resident engagement and insight, we have asked Enventure Research to conduct research into residents' perceptions of the Council and the local area. Research is likely to take place over the summer.
3. **Public open space disposal - Land at Exwick Playing Fields: Closed August 2024**

Exeter City Council is considering the leasehold disposal to the Exeter College of two parcels of land totalling 2.68 and 1.96 acres at Exwick Playing Fields, Exeter to facilitate a programme of investment in the facilities on that land. The land will remain accessible to the public.
4. **Public open space disposal - Land At King George V Playing Fields: Closed June 2024**

Exeter City Council is considering the leasehold disposal to the Exeter City Community Trust of a parcel of land totalling 39.85 acres of land at King George V Playing Fields, Exeter to facilitate a programme of investment in the facilities on that land. The land will remain accessible to the public.
5. **Draft Street Trading Policy: Closed May 2024**

We are carrying out a consultation on the draft Street Trading Policy and we would appreciate your views to shape the new proposed policy. The draft policy is seeking to replace the current regulations which the Council adopted in 2015.
6. **Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy & Policy: Closed April 2024**

This strategy sets out our approach to preventing, tackling and resolving Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in our homes and communities. Your answers will be useful in shaping the strategy and will help us respond to the wishes and aspirations of residents wherever we can.
7. **Allotment Fees and Charges Review: Closed March 2024**

We are inviting existing allotment holders and Allotment Associations to feedback proposals to supplement allotment income or reduce allotment costs to help achieve a cost-neutral budget.
8. **Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter Consultation: Closed February 2024**

We will be inviting views on a new Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter. We will be seeking feedback from developers, planning agents, architects, community groups and other interested parties.
9. **Full Draft Exeter Plan consultation (autumn 2023): Closed January 2024**

The Exeter Plan is the new name for the Local Plan. It will shape the future of Exeter for the next twenty years, to 2040, and will be the main planning policy document for Exeter.
10. **Householder's Guide: Design of Extensions and Alterations planning consultation Closed December 2023**

The Householder's Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is well established having been in existence since 2008. It provides a clear set of principles that guide Exeter homeowners and planning agents to design their planning proposals for extensions and alterations in a way that will help their planning application succeed.
11. **Liveable Water Lane planning consultation: Closed December 2023**

Water Lane, near Exeter's historic canal and quayside, is a one of the largest strategic brownfield redevelopment sites proposed in the City Council's Liveable Exeter initiative and Exeter Plan.
12. **Council Tax Support Scheme 2024-25 Consultation: Closed December 2023**

We want you to share your views on a proposed plan to give care leavers a 100 per cent discount on their council tax. The aim of the plan is to financially support them whilst they develop independent lives and life skills.
13. **Green Circle Survey: Closed December 2023**

We are asking for your views on Exeter's Green Circle – a 12 mile circular route of footpaths and cycle paths around Exeter. By understanding how the Green Circle is currently used, we can ensure that more people know about it and are able to use it in the future.
14. **Council Housing Strategy: Closed October 2023.**

The Housing Strategy will set out our vision and plans for our **Council Housing Service** over the next 5 years.

15. **Digital Customer Services: Closed September 2023.**

We would like your feedback on the Council's proposed new Digital Customer Service Strategy.

16. **Draft Article 4 Direction and Houses In Multiple Occupation (HMO) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Consultation: Closed July 2023**

The consultation will enable local residents, business and other stakeholders to have their say on proposed revised versions of an Article 4 Direction that restricts permitted development rights from dwellings to HMOs and a related HMO SPD. The consultation will predominantly be online, but there will be two public exhibitions.

17. **Live and Move: Local Active Lives Survey: Closed April 2023**

We are asking residents in Exeter and Cranbrook to take part in a voluntary survey so that we can learn more about physical activity levels and health & wellbeing.

18. **Taxi penalty point scheme proposal: Closed April 2023**

Proposed Penalty Point procedure proposed to deal with minor breaches, infringements of legislation or unacceptable behaviour committed by those licensed as drivers and operators and vehicle proprietors.

19. **Proposal to vary maximum fees: Closed March 2023**

It is proposed to vary the maximum fees specified in Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 section 70(2).

20. **Community Infrastructure Levy review: Closed January 2023.**

21. **The Exeter Plan outline draft consultation: Closed December 2022.**

22. **Homelessness and rough sleeping prevention strategy consultation: Closed December 2022.**

23. **Neighbourhood Strategy Consultation: Closed July 2022.**

We have recently produced a brand new Neighbourhood Strategy. This draft strategy is based on the responses we had from the first survey and consultation. At its heart this strategy is a comprehensive plan to guide us in how we manage and invest in the neighbourhoods in which we have our council homes. It is about communities and how we can best support them to create positive, healthy and enjoyable environments in which to live.

24. **New Exeter Local Plan - Issues Consultation: Closed November 2021.**

We are starting work on a new Local Plan. This plan will shape the future of Exeter for the next twenty years and will be the basis for how the city continues to evolve and meet the needs of the community. It will be the main planning policy document for Exeter, setting out where development should take place and it will be vital in making decisions on planning applications. We will use your comments to shape the first draft of the plan which will be consulted on in 2022.

25. **New Exeter Statement of Community Involvement – Draft Consultation: Closed November 2021.**

We have produced a draft consultation version of the Exeter Statement of Community Involvement. This is your opportunity to send us your initial feedback.

26. **Heavitree Pools & Play Area Refurbishment: Closed September 2021.**

The paddling pools and play facilities in Heavitree Pleasure Ground are set to get an exciting new make-over! The popular pools are nearing the end of their life and Exeter City Council is planning to carry out a full refurbishment of the pools and play area to provide new, modern facilities. The plan is to keep the pools open throughout this year and next summer and start construction in the autumn of 2022, minimising disruption.

27. **Community Asset Transfer: Closed August 2021.**

We are running a Community Consultation Survey to gather feedback on our proposed Community Asset Transfer Policy and Process.

28. **Northbrook Approach consultation: Closed May 2021.**

Northbrook Approach is an important part of the network of green spaces in Exeter; not only is it a 'green corridor' along Northbrook stream but it also connects Ludwell and Riverside Valley Parks. The golf course closed in October 2019 and we now want your views on the future of the area. Exeter City Council and Devon Wildlife Trust have presented a joint vision for Northbrook Approach as a wild arboretum and community space, a crucial link between the city's largest Valley Parks, for wildlife and for people. We want to know what you think about our proposed

vision. In addition, we want to hear your ideas so that everyone can shape the future of this special site.

29. Tree and Woodlands: Closed December 2020.

In our role as a landowner, we are one of the largest tree owners in Exeter. Through our planning controls, the public sees us as the guardian of the city treescape. As such, the council is the key organisation in developing a framework to protect and sustain the city's trees.

30. Play Strategy: Closed December 2020.

The ability and opportunity to play outside is something that is often taken for granted. Yet, for many people, those opportunities are limited. We want our children to be active, but in a safe environment. We have to decide how we are going to provide play opportunities for the future.

31. Parks and Green Spaces: Closed December 2020.

We are determined that valued community greenspace will not be lost to development, and that biodiversity and climate change management need to be central to measures to manage greenspace within Exeter and beyond. As Housing density increases and garden space decreases, especially for those families that are most in need, the value of public greenspace increases.

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REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 3 December 2024

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 17 December 2024

Report of: Director Finance

Title: Overview of General Fund Revenue Budget 2024/25 – Quarter 2

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

To advise Members of the overall financial position of the General Fund Revenue Budgets for the 2024/25 financial year after six months.

2. Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members of the Executive note the report and Council notes and approves (where applicable):

- (1) The General Fund forecast financial position for the 2024 financial year;
- (2) The supplementary budgets and budget transfers as detailed in paragraph 8.9 and Appendix 3;
- (3) The outstanding Sundry Debt position as at September 2024;
- (4) The creditors payments performance; and
- (5) The One Exeter programme update

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

To formally note the Council's projected financial position and to approve additional expenditure required during the financial year.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources?

The impact on the General Fund working balance is set out in section 8.8.

The General Fund Working Balance is projected to stand at £3.693 million at year end.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

6. What are the legal aspects?

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 2003 imposes a statutory duty on the Council to monitor during the financial year its expenditure and income against the budget calculations. If the monitoring establishes that the budgetary situation has deteriorated, the Council must take such action as it considers necessary to deal with the situation. This might include, for example, action to reduce spending in the rest of the year, or to increase income, or to finance the shortfall from reserves.

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 places a legal requirement on Council to approve not only the budget but also any changes to the budget proposed during the year. Council has a legal duty to ensure that the budget is balanced and that any changes to the budget are fully funded.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the overall financial position of the General Fund Revenue Budgets for the 2024/25 financial year as at Quarter 2. Members will note the statutory duty imposed on the Council to monitor expenditure and income against the budget calculations as set out in the legal aspects above

8. Report details:

Overview of General Fund Revenue Budget 2024/25 – Quarter 2

8.1 Financial Summary

FUND	Planned Transfer To / (From) Working Balance £	Budget Variance (More) / Less £	Outturn Transfer 2024/25 £
General Fund	(2,862,201)	672,681	(2,189,520)

8.2 General Fund (Appendix 1 & Appendix 2)

During the year, a restructure of the Senior Leadership of the Council has taken place. The restructure was projected to reduce costs by £388,110, which would be used to strengthen areas of the Council requiring investment to meet members' priorities. In 2024/25, the actual reduction totals £350,946 as there are some interim arrangements in place to cover vacant posts. Once these posts are filled on a permanent basis the reduction will rise to £389,580 in line with the original estimate. As agreed, some of the funds have been used for additional posts and therefore in the current financial year, a net saving of £266k is expected from the senior leadership review (£243k within General Fund Services and £23k within the Housing Revenue Account) after the interim arrangements and new posts. The

Appendices have been updated to reflect this new leadership structure that is now in place.

For the 2024/25 financial year, the current forecasts show an overall projected overspend of £461,915 against a revised budget of £23,036,350. This includes supplementary budgets of £6,285,570 already agreed by Council. Variances of more than +/- £30,000 are detailed below:

8.3 Operations

Budget Heading	Over / (Underspend)
Environmental Health & Licensing	(£318,400)
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Environmental Health & Waste</p> <p>Vacancies across the service are proving difficult to fill with a forecast of £160,000 underspend. The services are beginning to make use of the funding issued in respect of the significant disruption that occurred whilst staff were diverted on to working on the Homes for Ukraine initiative, but some £74,000 is still expected to be available at year end to further the recovery. Another year of higher-than-expected funding for Disabled Facilities Grants has also increased the administrative burden rechargeable to the grant allocation above budgeted levels by £65,000.</p>	
Domestic Refuse Collection	(£310,590)
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Environmental Health & Waste</p> <p>There is a delay to further roll out of the doorstep food waste programme until the construction of the food waste bay, so there will be savings in the year due to roles not being filled and vehicles not yet being leased until such time as the service is in a position to roll out to the remaining two thirds of the city. These savings will more than offset the income the service is unable to claim from DCC's Share Scheme saving fund, to which we have no eligibility until the scheme achieves 100% coverage. We have been advised that the scheme will cease after next year, leaving the service with an unachievable future year target of £280,000 which will require addressing. The spend on agency staff is expected to reduce by £50,000 from last year's outturn of just under £300,000.</p>	
Public Conveniences	£52,230
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Operations</p> <p>The service has suffered due to a serious leak at the Matford Park and Ride facility, bills having exceeded £40,000 since February this year, which the Council is looking into claiming back through our insurance. There is no fault on the part of Corporate Property or Operations as the leak was recognised and actions taken to address with immediate effect. No assumption is made as to the level of any recovery achievable within forecast.</p>	
Waste Chargeable Services	(£97,930)
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Environmental Health & Waste</p> <p>Following an internal realignment of income targets within this Management Unit, the Trade waste budget in particular is performing strongly, and all services are contributing to the over-achievement of the target surplus at year end.</p>	

Materials Reclamation Facility	£153,110
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Environmental Health & Waste</p> <p>The use of secondary reclamation facilities is frequently necessary due to the age of the site, which is due to undergo refurbishment. The level of usage is dependent on the date of closure of the facility for the start of this work, but the overspend could increase if the facility fails before the anticipated closure and takes a significant time to bring back into use.</p>	
Engineering Services	(£308,850)
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Operations</p> <p>The team have had some success in recruiting to the vacancies seen over previous years and can continue to look forward to pursuing both revenue and capital schemes more actively as a result. There remain a number of vacancies which have been difficult to fill, where an underspend of £170,000 is predicted after allowing for the possible pay offer costing, this will be partially offset by not having the 3rd Capital Delivery officer which will reduce the recharge to capital by around £70,000. The use of sub-contractors across the service remains subdued with a forecast underspend of £80,000. Funding associated with demolition costs for a footbridge will not be spent releasing £134,180 of one-off budget this year.</p>	
Waterways	(£131,340)
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Operations</p> <p>The Exeter Port Authority operates a mooring repairs service, purchased by the Council several years ago. The intention was for this to be self-financing, but costs had risen significantly whilst workload and income had not. The opportunity is still available but, without the introduction of the Harbour Revision Order (HRO) which is currently being progressed, improvement will be slow – the current forecast is that the service will be very near to breakeven at year end, depending on the ongoing demand for the services it provides. The presently unoccupied Waterways Engineer post, funded for a 3-year period from historic vacancy underspending within Engineering (at £120,000) has been transferred to the service which is looking at how best to use this resource. There is a contingency fund available for any inquiry that might follow the application for the HRO, but that will not take place in the current year and the £80,000 will be required to roll over to the next financial year.</p> <p>Canal licences represent the one area of concern – income levels have stagnated in the opening quarters with few new vessels being kept in the canal. The forecast is for there to be a reduction in income in comparison with 2023/24, due to vessels being scrapped or leaving. Income will likely be some £76,000 below budgeted level.</p>	
Corporate Property – Assets	(£354,620)
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Asset Maintenance</p> <p>£200,000 underspend has been forecast against property maintenance to reflect the budget for the Leisure services not being used this year; the actual costs sit in the individual Leisure centres. The remaining underspend of £154,620 is from savings against the establishment budget and this will continue until vacant posts are filled. This forecast figure includes £27,000 in redundancy costs which will be covered by reserves so the actual underspend is £181,620</p>	

Corporate Support	£196,890
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Asset Maintenance</p> <p>The shortfall in rental income continues to create this adverse variance, with a loss of £230,000 expected by year-end. Savings of £60,000 has helped mitigate this slightly but the situation is unlikely to materially change by year-end. The mail room continues to show an overspend against postage – now forecast at £20,000 - after the budget was reduced in 2022/23. Measures are being explored in how these costs may be reduced and if implemented, the impact will be reported in quarter three.</p>	

8.4 Corporate

Budget Heading	Over / (Underspend)
Corporate Property – Estates	£382,940
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service (Interim) – Commercial Assets</p> <p>Estates continue to have several vacant properties, which will reduce rental income and increase vacant property charges. The reported adverse variance also reflects higher business rates payable in respect of St Georges Retail Units as well a forecast overspend on property maintenance. The total overspend includes redundancy costs which will be covered by reserves.</p>	
Parking Services	£156,080
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – City Centre & Net Zero</p> <p>The resolution of where Global Payment Bank Charges should fall was completed only after budgets had been set for the current year and these were not within the agreed budget book values. It is anticipated that the full year cost of these charges will be around £85,000. The Council’s contract with Ring-Go is of a cost and volume nature; we are hitting the point of additional charges being levied earlier and earlier each contract year due to the switchover to cashless payments, which is also creating pressures on the card charges budget. The re-zoning of some car parks has significantly increased a number of site rateable values, some up by almost 50% - the budget pressure is £164,000 which has substantially been offset by lower electricity charges (£155,000).</p>	
Revenues & Benefits	£141,640
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service - Finance</p> <p>A £60k overspend is forecast in respect of unrecoverable housing benefits. The budgets factored in a reduction in the level of unrecoverable housing benefits relating to the spot purchases of B&B accommodation. However, this is no longer expected to be realised in 2024/25 due to the time required to purchase or lease additional temporary accommodation, to reduce the need for B&B accommodation.</p> <p>Alongside this, an £81k overspend in the Revenues Service is forecast, which is predominantly due to additional agency staff covering vacant posts in Council Tax. Plans to address the reliance on agency staff are being progressed as a priority.</p>	

The senior leadership restructure resulted in unbudgeted redundancy costs, which are matched by a saving in employee costs following deletion of the former Service Lead post within this management unit.	
Unapportionable Overheads	£771,450
Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Finance	
The overspend is the result of pension strain payments incurred after the senior management restructure. This cost will be covered by reserves.	

8.5 People and Communities

Budget Heading	Over / (Underspend)
Housing Needs and Homelessness	£350,000
Responsible Officer: Head of Service - Housing	
Nationally the number of households in Temporary Accommodation (TA) has increased; in Exeter over the past two years there has been an increase of 20%, with a corresponding increase in costs of £364k over budgeted levels.	
Due to the necessity of using contracted hotels to meet this increase in demand there have been additional costs for providing security services to ensure safety of all residents. This is forecast to cost £200k more than budgeted by the end of the year.	
It is anticipated that some of these costs may be offset through the in-year provision of supplementary central government grants such as the Homelessness Prevention Grant. Officers are reviewing the current operating model of the service to look for any efficiency including providing long leases with the aim of reducing unit cost of temporary accommodation.	
GF Housing – Property	(£30,000)
Responsible Officer – Head of Service - Housing	
Over the past 12 months we have been actively handing back the Private Sector Leasing properties to their owners, considering any mandatory reimbursement required under the terms of their lease agreements. This has now effectively stemmed the deficit in rental income against the costs being paid out under the lease agreements. This represents a £30,000 saving on the overall budget at this time.	
Transportation	(£60,000)
Responsible Officer – Interim Head of HR Workforce Planning & OD	
This surplus to budget will be transferred to reserves at year-end and will be used to facilitate initiatives under the new Sustainable Travel Policy.	
Central Support	£61,560
Responsible Officer – Interim Head of Digital & Data	
This overspend includes redundancy costs which will be funded from an earmarked reserve. Alongside this savings are forecast due to a short delay in recruiting an Interim Head of Service.	

Customer Service Centre	£79,145
<p>Responsible Officer – Interim Head of Customer and Communities</p> <p>£42,700 of this forecast overspend is attributable to the senior leadership restructure, the costs of which are offset elsewhere and include a redundancy cost that is funded from an earmarked reserve.</p> <p>The rest of the projected overspend is a result of the long-term use of agency staff within the customer contact centre. These contracts arose from post covid demand increases, including the introduction of discretionary schemes such as the household support fund. All contact centre agency staff contracts ended on 31st October.</p>	

8.6 Place

Budget Heading	Over / (Underspend)
Net Zero and Business	(£82,240)
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – City Centre & Net Zero</p> <p>A combination of Net Zero Admin and Business Projects project work budgets, carried forward from last year, are the source of this underspend. Staff have been recruited to fixed-term roles that will utilise the underspend over the course of the next 2 years.</p>	
Culture	(£107,990)
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Culture</p> <p>The Arts & Events cost centre are showing an underspend of £56,590 – this is due the supplementary budget for the Women’s Rugby World Cup not being fully utilised this year. The majority of the spend will be in 2025/26, in the lead up to the event itself, so any outstanding balance will be requested as a supplementary in the new financial year.</p> <p>At the Corn Exchange, the forecast underspend is £51,400; this includes a redundancy payment of £20,000 which will be covered by reserves making the actual underspend £71,422. Income from events continues to be strong, with a forecast surplus to budget of £31,000. There is also a forecast saving against premises - mainly due to a reduction in utility costs – and establishment savings due to the recent senior management restructure. The full impact of the restructure has not yet been fully realised and the loss of the Facilities & Markets Manager may affect current staffing forecasts; for instance, there may be a greater reliance on casual staff. This will be monitored closely over the coming months and any material impact will be recorded at quarter three.</p>	
Planning	£204,200

Responsible Officer: Service Lead, City Development

There is a forecast reduction in fee income of £450,000, primarily attributed to a continuing decline in the overall number of planning applications submitted. In the 2022/23 financial year, we processed 1,482 applications, whereas in 2023/24 this number dropped to 1,289—a reduction of approximately 13%. Notably, householder applications, which are the most common type we receive, fell from 403 to 311. This downward trend has continued into the 2024/25 financial year. If this trend persists, fee income will fall short by £450,000 by the end of the financial year.

The ongoing decrease in application numbers, particularly in the householder category, is offsetting the increase in planning fees, resulting in a net reduction in overall fee income. The reduction is likely influenced by broader economic factors, including persistent economic uncertainty and the cost-of-living crisis. Rising interest rates, inflation, and the increased costs of materials, labour, and energy have made developers and homeowners more cautious about embarking on new projects. Furthermore, the housing market slowdown, characterised by fluctuating property values and demand, continues to deter potential applicants from proceeding with developments or home improvements.

The timetable for the Exeter Plan continues to respond to complex consultation responses, evidence requirements and national planning policy reforms meaning the projects is extending into multiple financial years. Significant evidence has been commissioned which continues to support the Exeter Plan, although the project is likely to be underspent by £250,000 in 2024/25. A supplementary budget will be requested for 2025/26 when the plan is scheduled to go through its examination and substantial costs will be incurred.

Museum Service

(£174,910)

Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Culture

Savings against the utilities budgets continue to be made, driven by the efficiencies identified by the energy consultant (a similar exercise is now being carried out across the Council's leisure facilities). There may be further savings in supplies & services but these will become more apparent at quarter three. Venue hire income is also expected to rise as bookings have started to increase so the second half of the year should show some improvement in revenue. This year's charged for temporary exhibition begins in Quarter 3 and the level of interest expressed pre-opening suggests it is likely to be successful in ticket sales. Income from solar panel arrays is now likely to increase as the Ark array has just been repaired and extended and a new array on the RAMM roof is shortly to be commissioned.

The underspend continues to offset an income shortfall in relation to the shop, which is expected to be under its target income for 2024/25 by £47,500.

Leisure & Sport

(£175,420)

Responsible Officer: Head of Service – Culture

Leisure centres continue to operate at maximum capacity. Salary savings have decreased to around £160,000 reflecting the successful recruitment of several permanent posts, including a second Centre Manager.

Income is still healthy with a surplus to budget of £158,500 expected. As is still the case, premises costs are showing an overspend which reduces the savings but this overspend is offset with a £200,000 underspend reported in the Assets Maintenance budget.

CCTV & Home Call	£136,100
<p>Responsible Officer: Head of Service – City Centre & Net Zero</p> <p>Home Call income remains an issue within this Management Unit due to previous unrealistic income targets continuing to be set. Despite recent marketing campaigns generating new customers, sadly valued service users have passed away which means that numbers have remained static, with income continuing to fall short of budget by some £135,000 including the recharge to HRA. The introduction of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) grants this year has offset around half of this (£65,000) but the cost of the units is creating a £20,000 pressure on the Equipment budget. In addition, the service is trying to mitigate the shortfall in Home Call income with new CCTV Monitoring contracts for other locations in Devon, but there is a significant delay between expressions of interest and contract sign-up by third party clients, restricting the growth this year. Non-contractual overtime is currently high to maintain minimum operational staffing levels which is forecast to be some £42,000 over budget at year end and will need review for the new year budget.</p>	

8.7 Other Financial Variations

Budget Heading	Over / (Underspend)
Net interest	(£20,129)
<p>Interest payable remains on target. Interest receivable is expected to be £20k slightly higher than budgeted as interest rates were elevated for the first part of the year although rates are now reducing.</p>	

8.8 General Fund Balance

In 2024/25 it is projected that there will be an overall net contribution from the General Fund Balance of £2,189,520. The minimum requirement for the General Fund working balance which was approved by Council in February 2024 at £3 million.

Movement	2024/25
Opening Balance, as at 01/04/24	£5,882,563
Net	(£2,189,520)
Projected Balance at Year End	£3,693,043

8.9 Supplementary Budgets

It is proposed that the supplementary budget and budget transfers identified in Appendix 3 are approved and added to the 2024/25 budget. The supplementary budget request will have no impact on the projected General Fund working balance.

8.10 Outstanding Sundry Debt

An aged debt analysis of the Council's sundry debts is shown in the table below:

Age of Debt	March 2023	March 2024	Sept 2024
Up to 29 days (current)	£1,436,904	£1,411,457	£1,257,434
30 days – 1 Year	£1,697,735	£2,738,947	£1,085,309
1 – 2 years	£1,645,793	£299,265	£745,419
2 – 3 years	£199,426	£273,541	£276,392
3 – 4 years	£539,002	£78,227	£90,849
4 – 5 years	£254,721	£290,834	£82,913
5 + years	£1,186,130	£340,009	£562,577
Total	£6,959,711	£5,432,280	£4,100,893

In November 2023 aged debt totalling £1.7m in respect of overpaid Housing Benefits was transferred from the ASH Sundry Debtors system to the IMAN system, a new system specifically to manage the recovery of overpaid Housing Benefits. The aged debt analysis in the above table therefore reflects outstanding sundry debtors.

8.11 Debt Write-Offs

The following amounts have been written-off during 2024/25:

	2023/24 Total	2024/25 (Qtr 2)
• Council Tax	£236,172	£183,608
• Business Rates *	£38,096	£0
• Sundry Debt	£2,238	£0
• Housing Rents	£93,187	£43,526
• Non-HRA Rents	£63,376	£25,102
• HB Overpayments	£191,856	£15,534

* Business Rate write offs dealt with annually

8.12 Creditor Payments Performance

Creditors' payments continue to be monitored in spite of the withdrawal of statutory performance indicator BVPI8. The percentage paid within 30 days was 96.11% for the first six months of 2024/25 compared with 95.45% after the first six months of 2023/24.

9. One Exeter Update

As Members will be aware, One Exeter is the Council's transformation programme and is a critical priority for the council.

A progress report was presented to Executive in February 2024. The report provided an annual summary of progress against the One Exeter Programme and set out a series of proposed outcomes for the following 12 months. Alongside this, work has started to identify cost reduction proposals for 2025/26.

Appendix 5 sets out how the Council is performing against the 2024/25 cost reductions. At the end of Quarter 2, it is forecast that £264k of the £1.402m will not be

achieved, of which £157k relates to planning fee income and £80k relates to delays in achieving reductions in B&B accommodation costs. Both planning fee income and costs of the Housing Needs and Homelessness Service will therefore be subject to close monitoring by officers as areas of budgetary risk.

The Council's medium term financial plan anticipates reserves being reduced to the minimum required by the end of 2024/25 and further budget reductions of £3.5m are required in 2025/26. Work has now started on identifying cost reduction proposals, which includes the cost reductions identified through the service reviews undertaken in December 2022.

Since the last update, work continues on reviewing the council's Corporate Plan to ensure that it is focussed on outcomes. An organisational Performance Dashboard is currently being developed to clearly show how the council is performing against the measures set out in the updated Corporate Plan. This work is due for completion by April 2025.

A pilot has started in the Digital and Data team to store council information within Sharepoint. Shifting the council's information to Sharepoint will deliver a number of benefits including access to all M365 applications and good data governance which will help to ensure that information accurate, up to date and protected from unauthorised access.

As part of the work taking place within the People and Communities Directorate, a number of policies have been created or updated. These include an updated Flexitime Policy, Grievance Policy, Sustainable Travel Policy and a new policy for employing people who are under 18.

The Strategic Management Board and Operational Management Board (known as the Extended Leadership Team) are working together to develop proposals for making cost reductions in 2025/26.

Work continues with the implementation of the new Senior Leadership Structure. The internal recruitment process has been completed, the Executive Office has been established and a new Manager has been appointed and interviews for the remaining unfilled positions are currently being arranged.

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

This is a statement of the projected financial position to the end of the 2024/25.

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

The risks relate to overspending the Council budget and are mitigated by regular reporting to the Strategic Management Board and Members. Members have a legal responsibility to take action where balances are projected to reach an unsustainable level and the Strategic Management Board are working to address the current projected shortfall in reserves.

Areas of budgetary risk are highlighted in this report. The key areas of budgetary risks are attached as Appendix 4, for reference.

12. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

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

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

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

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

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

11.4.1 There are no significant equality and diversity impacts associated with this decision.

13. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

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

14. Are there any other options?

Not applicable.

Director Finance & S151 Officer, Dave Hodgson

Authors: Nicola Morley, Bridget Kendrick and Mark Neville-Smith

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:
None

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

2024/25 GENERAL FUND BUDGET MONITORING - SUMMARY

QUARTER 2

	Original Budget	Budgets & Transfers	Revised Budget	Year End Forecast	Variance to Budget
	£	£	£	£	£
Chief Executive	827,800	1,257,400	2,085,200	2,102,780	17,580
Operations	11,934,600	605,710	12,540,310	11,373,320	(1,166,990)
Corporate	(6,063,790)	999,450	(5,064,340)	(3,632,480)	1,431,860
People and Communities	6,719,430	1,928,070	8,647,500	9,039,805	392,305
Place	8,472,940	1,539,660	10,012,600	9,799,760	(212,840)
less Notional capital charges	(5,140,200)	(44,720)	(5,184,920)	(5,184,920)	0
Service Committee Net Expenditure	16,750,780	6,285,570	23,036,350	23,498,265	461,915
Net Interest	1,406,000		1,406,000	1,385,871	(20,129)
Revenue Contribution to Capital	0		0	198,470	198,470
Minimum Revenue Provision	1,831,020		1,831,020	1,904,733	73,713
General Fund Expenditure	19,987,800	6,285,570	26,273,370	26,987,339	713,969
Transfer To/(From) Working Balance	(1,313,430)	(1,548,771)	(2,862,201)	(2,189,520)	672,681
Transfer To/(From) Earmarked Reserves	337,000	(4,610,439)	(4,273,439)	(5,660,089)	(1,386,650)
General Fund Net Expenditure	19,011,370	126,360	19,137,730	19,137,730	0
Formula Grant	(6,291,000)		(6,291,000)	(6,291,000)	0
CIL Income	(781,000)	(126,360)	(907,360)	(907,360)	0
Business Rates Growth / Pooling Gain	(4,283,880)		(4,283,880)	(4,283,880)	0
New Homes Bonus	(485,920)		(485,920)	(485,920)	0
Council Tax	(7,169,570)		(7,169,570)	(7,169,570)	0
	0	0	0	0	0

Working Balance March 2024

£ 5,882,563

£ 3,693,043

March 2025

2024/25 GENERAL FUND BUDGET MONITORING - DETAIL

QUARTER 2

ACTUAL TO DATE			YEAR END FORECAST				
PROFILED BUDGET	ACTUAL TO DATE	VARIANCE TO DATE	APPROVED BUDGET	CURRENT OUTTURN FORECAST	FORECAST VARIANCE	QTR 1 FORECAST VARIANCE	
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
12,859,316.76	12,555,587	(303,730)	TOTAL GENERAL FUND NET EXPENDITURE	28,221,270	28,683,185	461,915	(866,870)
Chief Executive							
800,333	794,134	(6,199)	ACTIVE & HEALTHY PEOPLE	1,338,760	1,338,760	0	0
441,821	622,217	180,396	STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	746,440	764,020	17,580	(232,630)
1,242,154	1,416,351	174,197	NET EXPENDITURE	2,085,200	2,102,780	17,580	(232,630)
Operations							
395,574	197,273	(198,301)	ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & LICENSING	830,630	512,230	(318,400)	(192,010)
0	0	0	LICENSING, FOOD, HEALTH & SAFETY	0	0	0	0
965,583	852,769	(112,814)	PARKS & GREEN SPACES	2,004,314	1,974,500	(29,810)	(25,490)
44,427	45,049	622	BEREAVEMENT SERVICES	118,370	137,070	18,700	(1,660)
0	6,200	6,200	AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT	4,940	4,940	0	9,080
0	0	0	SUNDRY LANDS MAINTENANCE	112,300	112,300	0	0
61,230	57,209	(4,021)	CORPORATE HEALTH & SAFETY	105,740	101,950	(3,790)	(3,340)
1,417,025	1,214,619	(202,406)	DOMESTIC REFUSE COLLECTION	3,634,990	3,324,400	(310,590)	(355,270)
839,778	808,935	(30,843)	STREET CLEANING	1,694,410	1,681,060	(13,350)	18,430
96,065	128,588	32,523	PUBLIC CONVENIENCES	226,130	278,360	52,230	13,570
(298,040)	(409,173)	(111,133)	WASTE CHARGEABLE SERVICES	(430,390)	(528,320)	(97,930)	(23,850)
186,750	176,805	(9,945)	WASTE STRATEGY & FACILITIES	355,540	336,300	(19,240)	(59,980)
310,110	378,157	68,047	MATERIALS RECLAMATION FACILITY	689,090	842,200	153,110	113,430
406,167	131,466	(274,701)	ENGINEERING SERVICES	857,140	548,290	(308,850)	(186,070)
285,500	238,990	(46,510)	WATERWAYS	656,480	525,140	(131,340)	(52,010)
751,669	465,373	(286,296)	CORPORATE PROPERTY - ASSETS	1,091,690	737,070	(354,620)	(389,370)
270,694	463,901	193,207	CORPORATE SUPPORT	588,940	785,830	196,890	148,820
5,732,531.74	4,756,159	(976,373)	NET EXPENDITURE	12,540,310	11,373,320	(1,166,990)	(985,720)
Corporate							
(2,935,767)	(2,035,982)	899,785	CORPORATE PROPERTY - ESTATES	(5,228,130)	(4,845,190)	382,940	401,900
(2,557,240)	(2,408,391)	148,848	PARKING SERVICES	(6,295,540)	(6,139,460)	156,080	6,830
463,225	802,764	339,539	MAJOR PROJECTS	926,450	926,450	0	0
(345,595)	(300,283)	45,312	MARKETS	(511,220)	(534,340)	(23,120)	16,270
1,234,643	1,132,380	(102,263)	REVENUES & BENEFITS	2,238,700	2,380,340	141,640	0
194,325	140,104	(54,221)	ELECTIONS & ELECTORAL REG	390,180	410,960	20,780	59,490
154,533	169,196	14,663	CORPORATE	227,400	257,390	29,990	51,650
334,749	315,114	(19,635)	DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION	671,130	641,860	(29,270)	(21,780)
711,285	1,065,068	353,783	UNAPPORTIONABLE OVERHEADS	1,278,500	2,049,950	771,450	0
426,910	369,997	(56,913)	FINANCIAL SERVICES	682,570	682,570	0	0
72,366	79,772	7,406	INTERNAL AUDIT	117,780	126,170	8,390	8,390
330,630	312,634	(17,996)	LEGAL SERVICES	306,950	277,360	(29,590)	(21,950)
113,079	92,171	(20,908)	PROCUREMENT	130,890	133,460	2,570	2,420
(1,802,856.9)	(265,456)	1,537,400	NET EXPENDITURE	(5,064,340)	(3,632,480)	1,431,860	503,220
People and Communities							
577,144	723,920	146,776	HOUSING NEEDS & HOMELESSNESS	2,637,200	2,987,200	350,000	350,000
97,540	87,407	(10,133)	GF HOUSING - PROPERTY	199,800	169,800	(30,000)	0
0	(31,618)	(31,618)	TRANSPORTATION	0	(60,000)	(60,000)	(60,000)
184,137	223,573	39,436	CENTRAL SUPPORT	370,680	432,240	61,560	(17,260)
454,989	449,504	(5,485)	HUMAN RESOURCES	775,920	794,670	18,750	(74,670)
1,479,962	1,456,234	(23,728)	IT SERVICES	2,443,940	2,430,500	(13,440)	0
388,596	357,842	(30,754)	EXETER COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME	937,200	937,200	0	0
485,953	510,524	24,571	CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE	922,770	1,001,915	79,145	0
100,000	64,746	(35,254)	ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE PROGRAMME	243,020	243,020	0	0
17,870	2,941	(14,929)	PRIVATE HOUSING	116,970	103,260	(13,710)	(75,400)
3,786,191.04	3,845,073	58,882	NET EXPENDITURE	8,647,500	9,039,805	392,305	122,670
Place							
281,430	168,609	(112,821)	NET ZERO AND BUSINESS	977,160	894,920	(82,240)	(32,420)
260,481	(121,383)	(381,864)	CULTURE	503,160	395,170	(107,990)	(59,840)
(115)	25,601	25,716	TOURISM	0	0	0	0
(17,684)	22,115	39,799	BUILDING CONTROL & LAND CHARGES	65,520	65,520	0	0
569,948	581,312	11,364	PLANNING	1,195,310	1,399,510	204,200	0
1,051,542	705,106	(346,436)	MUSEUM SERVICE	2,656,510	2,481,600	(174,910)	(172,510)
897,950	600,810	(297,140)	LEISURE & SPORT	2,816,810	2,641,390	(175,420)	(129,000)
29,925	0	(29,925)	ST SIDWELLS POINT	59,850	59,850	0	0
50,894	37,777	(13,117)	VISITOR FACILITIES	86,000	76,870	(9,130)	(8,840)
138,038	123,083	(14,955)	CIVIC CEREMONIALS	356,370	352,460	(3,910)	920
161,083	168,075	6,992	COMMUNICATIONS	226,330	246,120	19,790	25,890
338,680	339,819	1,139	LIVEABLE EXETER GARDEN CITY	677,360	677,360	0	0
136,625	167,766	31,142	CCTV & HOMECALL	387,220	523,320	136,100	122,520
2,500	(15,230)	(17,730)	COMMUNITY SAFETY	5,000	(14,330)	(19,330)	(21,130)
3,901,296.84	2,803,460	(1,097,837)	NET EXPENDITURE	10,012,600	9,799,760	(212,840)	(274,410)

PROPOSED SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGETS & BUDGET TRANSFERS - QUARTER 2

Supplementary Budgets

Description	£	Funded by:
Reduce Household Support Fund - Staffing Costs	(54,460)	Earmarked reserves
	(54,460)	

Budget Transfers




Drugs & Alcohol Testing - New HR budget	15,000
Drugs & Alcohol Testing - budget contribution from Street Sweeping	(2,500)
Drugs & Alcohol Testing - budget contribution from P&GS	(2,500)
Drugs & Alcohol Testing - budget contribution from Refuse Collection	(5,000)
Drugs & Alcohol Testing - budget contribution from Leisure	(5,000)
Engineering Pay to Harbour Designated Person Funds	(20,000)
Harbour Designated Person Funds	20,000




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2024/25 BUDGET MONITORING
AREAS OF BUDGETARY RISK


The table below notes service-areas that, based on either experience last year or market factors this year, have been identified as having significant budgetary risk within the 2024/25 revenue budgets.

The revenue budget areas of risk are:




Service	2024/25 Approved Budget	Risk Rating	Risk and mitigation
Chief Executive			
Strategic Management (Revenue)	£794,660		The quarter two forecast includes £256,000 of redundancy payments which will be covered by reserves. The actual outturn is forecast to be a £253,530 saving, which reflects the reduction in Directors after the recent senior management restructure.
Operations			
Corporate Property – Assets (Revenue)	£1,091,720		Two factors continue to determine the forecast underspend of £354,620 at quarter two. The new Assets team restructure is on-going and until completed, there are vacancies within the team. £200,000 has also been reported as a saving; this figure represents the budget that was added in 23/24 to manage the Leisure estate but which currently is not being utilised due to lack of resources. The risk is that the non-Leisure maintenance will overspend and some of this underspend will disappear.
Corporate Support (Revenue)	£591,410		As in previous years, vacant space in Phase 1 of at the Civic Centre has caused a significant reduction in rental income. A savings against premises costs slightly mitigates this risk but the reported adverse variance is unlikely to materially change this financial year. Current plans to redevelop the Civic Centre may also potentially impact the forecast; however, it is too soon to identify the extent of this impact.
Corporate			

Service	2024/25 Approved Budget	Risk Rating	Risk and mitigation
Corporate Property – Estates (Revenue)	(£5,206,580)		There are a number of vacant properties within the Estates commercial portfolio, leading to a forecast deficit of rental income against budget. However, the current concern is the high value of bad debt provision that has been posted in the first six months of this financial year (£1.1m). An exercise will be carried out to determine if this is likely to continue and whether any of it can be recovered by year-end.
Revenues and Benefits Housing Benefit Subsidy	£27,641,930		The Council currently administers over £27 million of Housing Benefit payments for rent allowances and rent rebates. Not all expenditure can be claimed back as subsidy. Certain supported and temporary accommodation costs are not eligible for full subsidy; these claim types will remain in Housing Benefit and not move to Universal Credit. As more Housing Benefit claims move onto Universal Credit the amount of unsubsidised expenditure will be an increased proportion of total expenditure. Errors made by ECC officers are not subsidised in full if they go over a set percentage of total expenditure. As total expenditure reduces due to Universal Credit rollout, the margins within which error payments are subsidised will reduce, increasing the risk of a subsidy loss in this area.
Place			
Planning Services Revenue	£937,590		<p>Several recent planning decisions have been appealed this year, some of which are very significant. Additionally, at least one case relating to a judicial review of a decision to grant planning permission remains unresolved, and at least one major planning inquiry is expected. This typically necessitates external consultancy and legal advice, which has historically led to significant expenditure in previous financial years.</p> <p>Moreover, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of planning applications submitted, resulting in a forecasted reduction in fee income by £450,000. This drop reflects the broader economic challenges currently faced, including economic uncertainty, rising interest rates, and increased materials and labour costs. This reduction in income poses an additional financial risk, requiring close monitoring and potential adjustments in budget planning.</p>

Service	2024/25 Approved Budget	Risk Rating	Risk and mitigation
Museum Service (Revenue)	£2,435,350		The energy consultant continues to identify improvements in the Museum's environmental systems, helping toward reducing energy costs; the forecast savings of £174,910 at quarter two is predominantly due to this project. There is likely to be further savings in supplies & services but these won't become apparent until quarter three. The Museum still faces challenges such as reduced sales income from the shop and a current vacancy for a café tenant.
Leisure & Sport (Revenue)	£2,800,430		All leisure centres continue to operate at maximum capacity and recruitment to permanent positions is gradually improving, including the recruitment of a new centre manager. The underspend against establishment is being used to cover the use of casual staff and currently, there is no indication that casual use will exceed the underspend due to vacancies. Income is forecast to exceed budget at this time; however, ongoing work on correct VAT recognition may reduce this surplus. The Leisure estate also continues to recognise the costs of premises maintenance, despite the Asset Maintenance team holding the budget. This situation is unlikely to change this financial year.
Net Zero Exeter and City Management			
Trade Waste Fees & Charges	(£1,184,880)		Realignment of Income for Trade Waste this year, coupled with a reallocation of £100,000 budget from Trade to Garden Waste has brought this budget back into balance. The Q2 forecast is for an over achievement of £75,000 or 6% of budget, compared to a 4% underachievement, equivalent to £50,000 in Q1.
Car Parking Fees & Charges	(£9,397,320)		Realignment of Income, both for Season Tickets and Car Park Charges has meant that this risk has been mitigated in full based on performance in Q1 forecast through to the end of the year.

Service	2024/25 Approved Budget	Risk Rating	Risk and mitigation
Control Centre Operations covering CCTV and Home Call Alarm Service Fees & Charges	(£453,730)		The Control Centre Operations, which covers the CCTV and Home Call Alarm Services, has been merged to a single risk area this year. Increased uptake of the CCTV monitoring service has seen expected income rise from £43,000 to £94,000, but this is still not sufficient to balance out ongoing issues with the Home Call Alarm Service where income from all sources, including the Housing Revenue Account, is now projected to come in at last year's £230,000 outturn. Performance overall is expected to be at 72% of budget, down from 74% at Q1, but still up from 66% across the same areas last year.

Risk Rating Key:

	Current forecasts indicate either a favourable variance compared to the budget or no variance at all
	Current forecasts indicate an adverse budgetary variance of between 0% and 5% that will be kept under review
	Current forecasts indicate an adverse budgetary variance of more than 5% and will be monitored closely

Monitoring Budget Reductions - 2024/25 Quarter 2 Update

Service	Description/Proposal	2024/25 Budget Reduction/ (increase)	Quarter 2 forecast	Variance (shortfall)	Comment
Public and Green Spaces	Allotment fee increase	£20,450	£15,380	(£5,070)	Agreed to phase in full increase in fees over 2 years rather than 1; uplift in fees kicks in from 29th September rather than 1st. Full recovery will be achieved in 2025/26.
Public and Green Spaces	Street cleansing agile service delivery; saving profiled 50% in 2023/24 and 50% 2024/25	£101,850	£101,850	£0	Rounds have been reorganised and saving will be achieved
Procurement	Shared service with Teignbridge, South Hams and West Devon District Councils	£27,000	£4,000	(£23,000)	Only recharging TDC for maternity cover until the end of Sept 24. No other work planned.
Markets and Halls and Visitor Facilities	Additional income at Matford Centre	£8,500	£8,500	£0	Income will achieve budget so saving will be achieved
Revenue & Benefits	Move HRA Rent Collection back to Housing Tenancy Services. Reduce team to level required for HRA/or in-line with recharge level; delete 1 x Income Collection Team Leader 5 x Senior Collection Officers, 1 x Support (effectively removing officer costs met from the GF)	£172,920	£172,920	£0	Expenditure on budget at quarter 2
Revenue & Benefits	EDDC Hosted Council Tax Administration. Delete vacant Local taxation Lead and 3 hours from Post 5089	£55,680	£55,680	£0	Post deleted
Corporate Property	Estates functional review; remove Assistant Estates Surveyor post	£20,230	£20,230	£0	Post removed therefore saving achieved
Housing Needs and Homelessness	Reduction of spot purchase B&B accommodation; relating to unrecoverable HB in Welfare and Benefits	£80,170	£0	(£80,170)	Saving unlikely to be achieved as continued use of B&B necessary due to delays in long lease arrangements .
SUB TOTAL SERVICE REVIEW REDUCTIONS		£486,800	£378,560	(£108,240)	
Marketing	Additional income	£25,000	£25,000	£0	Revenue is forecast to achieve budget so saving achieved
Leisure	VAT ruling Leisure is non-business for VAT	£600,000	£600,000	£0	Officers are working with external tax advisors to collate and submit a claim to HMRC for VAT previously paid over in respect of leisure income that can be reclaimed. The total claim value is still being calculated but is expected to achieve £600k, at this stage
Corporate	Reduction in Pension Added Years budget in line with reduced spending	£60,000	£60,000	£0	No overspend forecast so saving achieved
RAMM	Restructure per Council approval	£73,000	£73,000	£0	Restructure implemented so saving achieved
Planning	Additional income resulting from Central Government fee increase	£157,000	£0	(£157,000)	Fee increases have not led to the expected increase in income. Under-recovery of income forecast at quarter 2.
OTHER PROPOSALS		£915,000	£758,000	(£157,000)	
TOTAL		£1,401,800	£1,136,560	(£265,240)	

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REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 3 December 2024

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 17 December 2024

Report of: Director Finance

Title: 2024/25 General Fund Capital Monitoring Statement – Quarter 2

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

To report the current position in respect of the Council's revised annual capital programme and to advise Members of the anticipated level of deferred expenditure into future years.

The report seeks Member approval to amend the annual capital programme in order to reflect the reported variations.

2. Recommendations:

It is recommended that Executive Committee supports and recommends to Council to approve:

- (1) The overall financial position for the 2024/25 annual capital programme.
- (2) The further funding requests to the Council's annual capital programme for 2024/25, as detailed in paragraph 8.6.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1. Local authorities are required to estimate the total of capital expenditure that it plans to incur during the financial year when it sets the prudential indicators for capital expenditure. This shows that its asset management and capital investment strategies are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

Capital expenditure is a significant source of risk and uncertainty since cost variations, delays and changing specifications are often features of large and complex capital projects.

In order to manage the risks associated with capital programming the annual capital programme is updated every three months to reflect any cost variations, slippage or acceleration of projects.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

The financial resources required are set out in the body of this report.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

6. What are the legal aspects?

Monitoring of capital expenditure is required in order to comply with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2003.

The requirements imposed on the Council by the Act are set out in section 3 of the report.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

The Monitoring Officer has no additional comments.

8. Report details:

8.1. REVISIONS TO THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The 2024/25 Capital Programme, including commitments brought forward from 2023/24, was last reported to Executive on 1 October 2024. Since that meeting the following changes have been made that have increased the programme:

Description	£	Approval/Funding
Revised Capital Programme, as reported to Council 15 October 2024	31,816,260	
Disabled Facility Grants	441,420	Approved by Council 15 October 2024
Parks Infrastructure	62,560	
Revised Capital Programme	32,320,240	

8.2. PERFORMANCE

The revised capital programme for the current financial year is £32.32 million. There are some schemes where the timing of the spend is uncertain, these schemes have a budget of £7.588 million, of the remaining £24.732 million budget the spend during the first six months of the year the Council was £2.899 million, which equates to 11.72% of the revised programme. This compares with £2.199 (5.22%) that was spent in the first six months of 2023/24.

The current programme is detailed in Appendix 1. For the schemes where the timing of the spend is within the control of the Council the Appendix shows a total forecast spend for 2024/25 of £11.774 million with £8.083 million of the programme potentially being deferred to 2025/26 and beyond.

Appendix 2 shows the approved budgets for 2025/26 with the proposed 2024/25 budget to be carried forward to 2025/26 and beyond for Executive and Council to consider for approval.

8.3. AVAILABLE CAPITAL RESOURCES

The available capital resources for the General Fund for 2024/25 are £5.240 million. An estimated spend of £11.791 million is required of which £7.200 million will be funded from borrowing with no capital receipts remaining to be carried forward to 2025/26.

Appendix 3 sets out the forecast use of the resources available for the General Fund and the likely amounts of borrowing that will be necessary to fund the capital programme over the next three years.

The value of actual capital receipts received for 2024/25 to the end of quarter in respect of the General Fund are:

	General Fund £
Balance as at 1 April 2024	851
New Receipts	94,000
Balance as at 30 September 2024	94,851

8.4. EXPENDITURE VARIANCES

The main (greater than +/- £30k) variances and issues concerning expenditure are as follows:

Scheme	Variance £
Farm Hill Retaining Walls (23 no.)	(£35,000)
Countess Wear Retaining Wall Rebuild	£35,000
Officer Responsible: Head of Service – Operations	
The Farm Hill scheme will underspend this year to compensate for an overspend that will come through on the Countess Wear Retaining Wall project.	

Riverside & RAMM Decarbonisation Projects	(£4,860,850)
Officer Responsible: Head of Service – City Centre and Net Zero	
As per the report that was presented to Executive on 1 October on the Public Decarbonisation Scheme 3b Project which sets out the reasons for this scheme not going ahead. The budget was to be grant funded so this is not a saving of ECC funds.	

8.5. SCHEMES TO BE DEFERRED TO 2025/26 AND BEYOND

Schemes which have been identified as being wholly or partly deferred to 2025/26 and beyond are:

Scheme	Budget to be Deferred £
Waste Infrastructure	250,000
Improved Recycling Containers	50,000
Depot Enhancement Works	5,500,000
Food Waste Collections	857,140
Officer Responsible: Head of Service – Environment & Waste	
The waste depot improvement works including the MRF has been re-profiled in-line with estimated project spend.	
The full introduction of food waste collections is dependent on the food waste bay being constructed as part of the depot improvement works, so this scheme has also been profiled accordingly as commissioning cannot take place until the majority of the work is completed. The reprofiling to both Waste Infrastructure and Recycling containers are also linked to the depot development work, as spending is linked to the works.	
Parks Infrastructure	132,580
Heavitree Paddling Pools	500,000
Officer Responsible: Head of Service - Operations	
Park Infrastructure works have not been required at the level assessed when the budget was set; the service extends life as far as is feasible, but ultimately repairs or replacements will become necessary over the coming years. Additional funds received last quarter will be allocated to projects that fall within the s106 remit, but schemes are unlikely to commence in the current financial year given planning lead-in times.	
The Heavitree Paddling Pools plans were unsuccessful at tender. The project will progress with a second consultation on site design given this outcome, but works are not now expected to progress significantly in the current year.	

Scheme	Budget to be Deferred £
Bowling Green Marshes Coastal Defence Scheme	50,000
Farm Hill Retaining Walls (23 no.)	115,000
Bonhay Rd/Andlaw House Footpath	69,810
St James' Weir & Ducks Marsh Meadow banks	75,000
Landfill Gas Extraction Systems	46,750
ECC Bridge Repair Programme	100,000
Oxford Road Car Park Retaining Wall	200,000
Canal Basin Bridge Refurbishment	50,000

Officer Responsible: Engineering & Assets Manager

Following an unsuccessful procurement exercise for the Bowling Green Marshes Coastal Defence Scheme an alternative approach has been selected that will increase the programme time into the net financial year.

The scope of the Farm Hill retaining walls project has significantly reduced since the budget was requested, we are currently awaiting tender process.

The Bonhay Road footpath project has been delayed due to uncertainty over land ownership / responsibilities. Investigations are ongoing.

The St James' Wier and Ducks Marsh budget is precautionary, there is no current need to spend but the asset is being monitored.

The landfill gas extraction system works are postponed due to need for wintertime monitoring of boreholes before the works scope can be finalised.

Resourcing issues have reduced capacity to deliver the bridge programme at the anticipated rate, fewer works planned in this financial year.

The budgets for both Oxford Road wall and the Canal Basin Bridge refurbishment are precautionary with no current need to spend at present, but the asset is being monitored.

Scheme	Budget to be Deferred £
Guildhall Shopping Centre Enhancements	4,982,350
St Nicholas Priory Roof	88,120
<p>Officer Responsible: Interim Head of Service – Commercial Assets It is unlikely that there will be any spend on the above programmes this financial year. However, if there is any spend, the budgets can be accelerated from 25/26 to cover it.</p>	
Green Space Depot Site	2,500,000
Cathedral Green Display Cases	35,000
<p>Officer Responsible: Head of Service – Asset Maintenance It is unlikely that there will be any spend on the above programmes until the restructure and recruitment of the Assets team has been progressed.</p>	
Fire Risk Assessment Works	(2,300)
Backlog Maintenance	(7,010)
Commercial Property Ancillary Accommodation	(57,820)
<p>Officer Responsible: Head of Service – Asset Maintenance The budgets for these three programmes were reprofiled into 2025/26. However, this spend has been incurred this financial year so some of the budget needs to be accelerated into 2024/25. A review will be undertaken to forecast spend for the rest of the year so these figures may change.</p>	

8.6 FURTHER FUNDING REQUESTS

Disabled Facilities Grant (£141,140)

The Council has ring-fenced reserves of £141,140 built up during previous years which need to be released this year to support the increase in levels of spend coming through.

Topsham Museum (£100,000)

Removal of the existing render has uncovered unforeseen structural issues that if left unrepaired will affect the structural stability of the asset. The Council has obligations to address these issues due to the asset being both listed and leased. Addressing these issues now whilst the contractor is already on site, will save time and resource and negate the need for a further road closure. It would be unsafe to leave the asset in this condition.

Harbour Workboat (Port Constructor) (£165,000)

The Port Authority has been renting this vessel to enable its functions to be carried out and believed it would have a 5 year contract signed shortly. The owner now wishes to sell and has offered it to the Authority. Providing, as it does, a vital support function for the Waterways service there is a need to, either acquire this vessel, or find another one to replace it of a similar specification.

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

The Capital Programme contributes to all of the key purposes, as set out in the Corporate Plan.

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

Areas of budgetary risk are highlighted to committee as part of the quarterly budget monitoring updates.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

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

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

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

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

11.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the impact of each scheme is considered prior to approval. Any significant deviation from this will be noted within the body of this report.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

We are working towards the Council's commitment to carbon neutral by 2030. The impact of each scheme is considered prior to approval.

13. Are there any other options?

There are no other options.

Director Finance, Dave Hodgson

Author: Nicola Morley, Mark Neville-Smith and Bridget Kendrick

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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

2024/25 CAPITAL MONITORING - QUARTER 2

Service	Scheme	Total 2024/25	2024/25 Spend	2024/25 Forecast	2024/25 Budget to	2024/25
		Capital Programme				
		£	£	£	to 2025/26 and	Variances
					Beyond	(Under)/Over
					£	£
Operations						
Environment & Waste	Waste Infrastructure	411,750	1,107	161,750	250,000	0
	Improved recycling containers	123,470	64,032	73,470	50,000	0
	Depot Improvement Works	6,170,870	5,155	670,870	5,500,000	0
	Food Waste Collections	857,140	0	0	857,140	0
	Noise Monitoring Equipment	28,760	28,476	28,760	0	0
	DEFRA Air Quality Grant	13,000	0	13,000	0	0
Operations Service	Capitalised Staff Costs	150,000	43,730	150,000	0	0
	Bowling Green Marshes Coastal Defence Scheme	100,000	13,406	50,000	50,000	0
	Parks Infrastructure	182,580	1,200	50,000	132,580	0
	Cemeteries & Churchyards Infrastructure Improvements	50,000	13,978	25,000	25,000	0
	Bank Repairs & Stabilisation to Watercourses	20,000	0	1,000	19,000	0
	Pinhoe Playing Field Upgrades	42,050	0	42,050	0	0
	Parks Anti-Intrusion Measures	12,560	113	12,560	0	0
	Cricklepit Bridge	100,000	36,660	70,000	30,000	0
	Trews Weir refurb	130,000	71,310	130,000	0	0
	District Street Lighting	150,000	0	150,000	0	0
	Exeter Quay Cellars cliff face	282,810	246,842	282,810	0	0
	Ash Die Back Tree Replacement	100,000	48,364	100,000	0	0
	Fleet Lease costs	910,290	0	910,290	0	0
	Rent for Exmouth Buoy Store / St Thomas Arches	129,010	0	129,010	0	0
	Bromhams Farm Playing Fields	313,840	234,018	299,360	14,480	0
	Longbrook Street wall behind 30-38	5,000	0	0	5,000	0
	Northbrook Wild Arboretum	272,480	50,917	272,480	0	0
	Farm Hill Retaining Walls (23 no.)	200,000	0	50,000	115,000	(35,000)
	Mallison Bridge	64,670	2,504	64,670	0	0
	Bonhay Rd/Andlaw House Footpath	144,810	0	75,000	69,810	0
	St James' Weir & Ducks Marsh Meadow banks	75,000	0	0	75,000	0
	Heavitree Paddling Pools	526,680	0	26,680	500,000	0
	Play Areas	200,000	29,084	200,000	0	0
	Landfill Gas Extraction Systems	100,000	3,250	53,250	46,750	0
	Mincinglake Valley Park Reed Beds & Pipe Inlet	50,000	5,069	25,000	25,000	0
	Exeter Canal Bank Repairs	76,890	22,186	76,890	0	0
	ECC Bridge Repair Programme	350,000	10,689	250,000	100,000	0
	Countess Wear Retaining Wall Rebuild	135,120	5,525	170,120	0	35,000
	Oxford Road Car Park Retaining Wall	200,000	0	0	200,000	0
	Canal Basin Bridge Refurbishment	50,000	0	0	50,000	0
	Leisure Complex - Build Project	15,750	0	15,750	0	0
	Riverside Leisure Centre	29,000	0	29,000	0	0
Fire Risk Assessment Works	0	2,297	2,300	(2,300)	0	

Service	Scheme	Total 2024/25	2024/25 Spend	2024/25 Forecast	2024/25 Budget to	2024/25
		Capital Programme				
		£	£	£	£	Variences
						(Under)/Over
Asset Maintenance	Leisure Complex - Fit Out	442,670	0	442,670	0	0
	Riverside Sports Hall Roof	60,870	0	60,870	0	0
	Civic Centre Phase 3 Roof Rep	263,380	247,676	247,680	0	(15,700)
	City Wall	85,000	2,218	85,000	0	0
	Backlog Maintenance	0	7,005	7,010	(7,010)	0
	Guildhall roof replacement	0	3,653	3,650	0	3,650
	Cathedral Green Display Cases	35,000	0	0	35,000	0
	Topsham Museum	142,680	5,072	142,680	0	0
	Leisure Property enhancements	1,047,440	6,292	1,047,440	0	0
	Commercial Property Ancillary Accommodation flat roof recovering	0	57,821	57,820	(57,820)	0
	RAMM Roof Repair & Insulation	711,170	522,750	711,170	0	0
Corn Exchange Lift	50,000	0	50,000	0	0	
TOTAL		15,611,740	1,792,397	7,517,060	8,082,630	(12,050)
Corporate						
Commercial Assets	Bus Station Construction	207,710	46,500	207,710	0	0
	Improved Car Park Security Measures at King William Street & Arena Park	19,670	0	19,670	0	0
TOTAL		227,380	46,500	227,380	0	0
City Development						
Digital & Data	Customer Contact Platform	161,030	0	161,030	0	0
	Annual Contribution to Strata	53,910	53,904	53,900	0	(10)
	Idox System for Planning	60,680	0	60,680	0	0
	Financial Management	239,040	41,121	239,040	0	0
	AV Equipment - Hybrid Meeting Rooms	48,800	3,869	48,800	0	0
	IT Replacement Programme	10,000	14,228	10,000	0	0
	Contact Centre Telephony	17,970	0	17,970	0	0
	Core telephony	17,970	1,123	17,970	0	0
	EUC model staff	14,370	2,750	14,370	0	0
	EUC model equipment (replacement laptops)	242,310	0	242,310	0	0
	Booking	17,970	0	17,970	0	0
	Sharepoint resource	21,560	16,117	21,560	0	0
	Chatbot	17,970	0	17,970	0	0
	Print & post review	7,190	0	7,190	0	0
	PSTN Replacement	40,370	733	40,370	0	0
	ECC Civic Centre HFX Door Access Replacement	85,060	0	85,060	0	0
	System Upgrade Cost 2012 Server replacement	3,480	0	0	0	(3,480)
	GIS Cloud Migration	230	0	0	0	(230)
	Microsoft Purview	9,000	0	9,000	0	0
	Microsoft Power Apps	35,930	3,594	35,930	0	0
Software Upgrade	28,750	0	28,750	0	0	
Sharegate	5,750	0	5,750	0	0	

Service	Scheme	Total 2024/25 Capital Programme	2024/25 Spend Quarter 2	2024/25 Forecast spend	2024/25 Budget to be Carried Forward to 2025/26 and Beyond	2024/25 Programme Variances (Under)/Over
		£	£	£	£	£
Housing	GF Housing Rents	160,350	0	160,350	0	0
	Disabled Facility Grants	1,439,250	585,046	1,439,250	0	0
TOTAL		2,738,940	722,484	2,735,220	0	(3,720)
Place						
City Centre & Net Zero	CCTV improvements	97,110	0	97,110	0	0
	Shared Prosperity Fund	178,550	37,440	178,550	0	0
	Riverside & RAMM Decarbonisation Projects	5,170,850	276,860	310,000	0	(4,860,850)
Culture & Leisure	Council Signage Improvement	9,850	10,777	10,780	0	930
	Rent - Haven Road Storage	36,040	0	36,040	0	0
	Leisure Equipment Replacement Programme	661,660	12,289	661,660	0	0
TOTAL		6,154,060	337,366	1,294,140	0	(4,859,920)
SUB TOTAL PLANNED CAPITAL PROGRAMME		24,732,120	2,898,748	11,773,800	8,082,630	(4,875,690)
APPROVED COMMITTED SCHEMES WITH EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT ON DELIVERY TIMESCALES						
Asset Maintenance	Green Space Depot Site (Belle Isle)	2,500,000	0	0	2,500,000	0
Commercial Assets	Guildhall Shopping Centre Enhancements	5,000,000	17,648	17,650	4,982,350	0
	St Nicholas Priory Roof	88,120	0	0	88,120	0
TOTAL		7,588,120	17,648	17,650	7,570,470	0
GENERAL FUND SERVICES TOTAL		32,320,240	2,916,396	11,791,450	15,653,100	(4,875,690)

BUDGETS CARRIED FORWARD TO 2025/26 AND BEYOND

Service	Scheme	2025/26 Budget as	Proposed	Total 2025/26	2026/27 Budget as
		per Budget	Budget to be	Capital Programme	per Budget
		Book/Council	Carried Forward		Book/Council
		Approvals	to 2025/26 and		Approvals
			Beyond		
		£	£	£	£
Operations					
Environment & Waste	Waste Infrastructure		250,000	250,000	
	Improved recycling containers		50,000	50,000	
	Depot Improvement Works	1,675,000	5,500,000	7,175,000	
	Food Waste Collections		857,140	857,140	
Operations Service	Capitalised Staff Costs	150,000	0	150,000	150,000
	Bowling Green Marshes Coastal Defence Scheme	150,000	50,000	200,000	217,870
	Parks Infrastructure	99,390	132,580	231,970	
	Cemeteries & Churchyards Infrastructure Improvements	84,790	25,000	109,790	
	Bank Repairs & Stabilisation to Watercourses		19,000	19,000	
	Cricklepit Bridge	53,750	30,000	83,750	
	Trews Weir refurb	300,000	0	300,000	3,099,510
	District Street Lighting	796,140	0	796,140	
	Piazza Terracina		0	0	158,560
	Ash Die Back Tree Replacement	147,910	0	147,910	
	Bromhams Farm Playing Fields		14,480	14,480	
	Longbrook Street wall behind 30-38		5,000	5,000	
	Farm Hill Retaining Walls (23 no.)	646,040	115,000	761,040	
	Bonhay Rd/Andlaw House Footpath		69,810	69,810	
	St James' Weir & Ducks Marsh Meadow banks		75,000	75,000	
	Heavitree Paddling Pools		500,000	500,000	
	Play Areas	200,000	0	200,000	166,900
	Landfill Gas Extraction Systems	159,350	46,750	206,100	
	Mincinglake Valley Park Reed Beds & Pipe Inlet	131,510	25,000	156,510	
	ECC Bridge Repair Programme	200,000	100,000	300,000	200,000
	Oxford Road Car Park Retaining Wall		200,000	200,000	
	Canal Basin Bridge Refurbishment		50,000	50,000	
Outdoor Leisure Facilities - Newcourt	121,270	0	121,270		
Riverside Walls at Quay	50,000	0	50,000		
Asset Maintenance	Leisure Complex - Build Project	650,000	0	650,000	
	Civic Centre Air Conditioning Replacement	25,000	0	25,000	
	Fire Risk Assessment Works	1,626,810	(2,300)	1,624,510	
	Exmouth Buoy Store	212,720	0	212,720	
	Guildhall MSCP	883,400	0	883,400	
	John Lewis MSCP	357,760	0	357,760	
	Princesshay 2 MSCP	424,400	0	424,400	
	Leighton Terra & KW St MSCP	618,000	0	618,000	
	City Wall	477,740	0	477,740	
	Backlog Maintenance	530,030	(7,010)	523,020	
	BLRF - Exeter Canal Basin	591,240	0	591,240	
	BLRF - Mary Arches Car Park	1,289,460	0	1,289,460	

Service	Scheme	2025/26 Budget as	Proposed	Total 2025/26	2026/27 Budget as
		per Budget	Budget to be	Capital Programme	per Budget
		Book/Council	Carried Forward		Book/Council
		Approvals	to 2025/26 and		Approvals
			Beyond		
		£	£	£	£
	BLRF - Belle Isle	663,940	0	663,940	
	BLRF - Clifton Hill	225,000	0	225,000	
	BLRF - Lower Wear Road	293,390	0	293,390	
	Cathedral Green Display Cases		35,000	35,000	
	Leisure Property enhancements	1,000,000	0	1,000,000	
	Commercial Property Ancillary Accommodation flat roof recovering	104,540	(57,820)	46,720	
TOTAL		14,938,580	8,082,630	23,021,210	3,992,840
Corporate					
Commercial Assets	Wat Tyler House - resolving ongoing water ingress with new rainwater	272,270	0	272,270	
	Commercial Properties - capital improvements to enable ongoing income (compliance with EPC legislation)	120,000	0	120,000	
TOTAL		392,270	0	392,270	0
City Development					
	Annual Contribution to Strata	53,910	0	53,910	53,910
	Datacentre Relocation	35,940	0	35,940	
Digital & Data	NCSC Zero Trust	53,910	0	53,910	
	IT Replacement Programme	10,000	0	10,000	10,000
	EUC model equipment (replacement laptops)	150,000	0	150,000	150,000
Housing	Disabled Facility Grants	800,000	0	800,000	800,000
TOTAL		1,103,760	0	1,103,760	1,013,910
Place					
City Centre & Net Zero	Riverside & RAMM Decarbonisation Projects	900,150	0	900,150	
Culture & Leisure	Leisure Equipment Replacement Programme	100,000	0	100,000	100,000
	Pinhoe Community Hub	1,276,470	0	1,276,470	
TOTAL		2,276,620	0	2,276,620	100,000
SUB TOTAL PLANNED CAPITAL PROGRAMME		18,711,230	8,082,630	26,793,860	5,106,750
APPROVED COMMITTED SCHEMES WITH EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT ON DELIVERY TIMESCALES					
Asset Maintenance	Green Space Depot Site (Belle Isle)	375,970	2,500,000	2,875,970	
Commercial Assets	Guildhall Shopping Centre Enhancements	5,884,280	4,982,350	10,866,630	
	St Nicholas Priory Roof		88,120	88,120	
TOTAL		6,260,250	7,570,470	13,830,720	0
GENERAL FUND SERVICES TOTAL		24,971,480	15,653,100	40,624,580	5,106,750

GENERAL FUND AVAILABLE RESOURCES

GENERAL FUND	2024-25 £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £	FUTURE YEARS £	TOTAL £
CAPITAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE					
Capital Receipts Brought Forward	851				851
GF Capital Receipts	1,300,613	4,000,000	0	0	5,300,613
Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay	163,470	88,756	0	0	252,226
Disabled Facility Grant	1,439,250	800,000	800,000	800,000	3,839,250
Community Infrastructure Levy	1,077,389	7,626,024	166,904	0	8,870,317
Other - Grants/External Funding/Reserves/S106	1,258,730	4,725,210	767,380	0	6,751,320
Total Resources Available	5,240,303	17,239,990	1,734,284	800,000	25,014,577
GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME					
Capital Programme	32,320,240	24,971,480	5,106,750	1,263,910	63,662,380
Overspends/(Savings)	(4,875,690)				(4,875,690)
Slippage	(15,653,100)	15,653,100			0
Total General Fund	11,791,450	40,624,580	5,106,750	1,263,910	58,786,690

UNCOMMITTED CAPITAL RESOURCES:					
Capital Receipts Brought Forward	851	0	2,800,100	2,486,190	851
Resources in Year	5,239,452	17,239,990	1,734,284	800,000	25,013,726
Less Capital Receipts used to finance past debt	(648,958)	0	0	0	(648,958)
Less Capital Receipts to carry forward	0	(2,800,100)	(2,486,190)	0	0
Less Spend in Year	(11,791,450)	(40,624,580)	(5,106,750)	(1,263,910)	(58,786,690)
Borrowing Requirement	7,200,105	26,184,690	3,058,556	(2,022,280)	34,421,071

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 3 December 2024

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 17 December 2024

Report of: Strategic Director Corporate Resources

Title: 2024/25 HRA Budget Monitoring Report – Quarter 2

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 To advise Members of the financial position of the HRA Revenue and Capital Budgets for the 2024/25 financial year after six months.

In addition to the budgetary over/under-spends reported to this committee, Appendix 1 also highlights areas of risk, so that Members are aware that certain budgets have been identified as being vulnerable to factors beyond the control of the Council, which may result in potential deviations from budget, and are therefore subject to close monitoring by officers.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 It is recommended the Executive note the report and Council notes and approves (where applicable):

- the HRA forecast financial position for 2024/25 financial year; and
- the revision of the HRA Capital Programme to reflect the reported variations detailed in Appendix 4.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 To formally note the HRA's projected financial position and to approve the reported variations to the HRA Capital Programme.

The Housing Revenue Account is a statutory account and local housing authorities have a duty to keep a HRA in accordance with proper accounting practices and to review the account throughout the year. Members are presented with a quarterly financial update in respect of the HRA and this is the second update for 2024/25.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

4.1 The financial resources required to deliver both housing services to Council tenants and to invest in new and existing housing stock during 2024/25 are set out in the body of

this report. The impact on the HRA's available financial resources are set out in Appendix 3.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 The statutory requirement for a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is set out in Part VI of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Section 74 of the Act sets out the duty to keep a Housing Revenue Account as a ring-fenced fund and sets out the structure within which the HRA operates. Part VI of the Act sets out the detailed statutory provisions on the operation of the HRA, including credits to the account (income) and debits to the account (expenditure). Section 76 sets out the duty to prevent a debit balance on the HRA. The authority must implement proposals that will secure that the account for each financial year will not show a debit balance. Members will also note the provisions of Schedule 4 of the Act which sets out the requirements concerning 'The Keeping of the Housing Revenue Account'.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 As set out in the introduction to this report, Members will note the budgetary over/under-spends and will particularly note the areas of risk set out at Appendix 1 to this report. Members will be alert to the fact that certain budgets have been identified as potentially resulting in deviations from budget. This report makes it clear that these budgets will be subject to close monitoring by officers. The key issue is that the authority must ensure that the HRA for the financial year does not show a debit balance.

8. Report details:

HRA BUDGET MONITORING – QUARTER 2

8.1 Background to the HRA

The HRA records expenditure and income relating to council dwellings and the provision of services to tenants. Housing authorities have a statutory duty to maintain a HRA account, which is primarily a landlord account, in order to account to their tenants for income and expenditure on council housing separately from other functions and services of the Council. This includes tenancy management, repairs and maintenance, council house building and council house retrofits.

8.2 Projected transfer from the working balance

	£
Approved Budgeted transfer from the working balance	208,360*
Supplementary budgets – Council approved 16th July 2024	50,000
Virement - Council approved 15th October 2024	23,828

Revised Budgeted transfer from the working balance	282,188
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*2024/25 Approved Budget Represented By	£
85A1 MANAGEMENT	2,114,770
85A11 EDWARDS COURT	(131,410)
85A2 TENANCY SERVICES	1,863,110
85A3 SUNDRY LANDS MAINTENANCE	507,430
85A4 REPAIR & MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME	7,062,000
85A5 REVENUE CONTRIB TO CAPITAL	2,500,000
85A6 CAPITAL CHARGES	3,745,650
85A7 HOUSING ASSETS	2,709,130
85A8 RENTS	(21,633,420)
85B2 INTEREST	1,471,100
85B4 MOVEMENT TO/(FROM) WORKING BALANCE	(208,360)

The HRA has working balances of £5,669,065 as at 31st March 2024. This is higher than the £4 million contingency resolved to be retained.

The revised budget deficit position of £282,188 for 2024/25 includes a revenue contribution of £2.5 million to capital.

8.3 Revenue Monitoring

The budget variances anticipated at Quarter 2 indicate that £1,563,118 will be taken from the working balance in 2024/25 – See appendix 2. This represents a movement of £274,200 compared to the projected outturn at Quarter 1. Variances of +/- £30,000 are detailed below:

Budget Heading	Forecast Outturn Budget Variance (Under) / Overspend	
	Quarter 1	Quarter 2
Repairs and Maintenance Programme	£1,187,000	£1,448,100

Officer Responsible: Head of Asset Maintenance

- **General Maintenance £700k** – the response budget continues to experience high demand with the projected overspend being in part due to an increase in stock condition surveys highlighting issues which need to be addressed. The service is also experiencing larger numbers of tenants transferring from/to properties which have had major repairs refused previously and this necessitates increased investment and corresponding repairs. Additionally, the service is receiving requests for more expensive works, including roofing and window repairs which

whilst extensive, do not qualify as capital investment so the costs for such fall to this budget area.

- **Damp and Mould £300k** – a separate budget of £100k has been set aside for damp and mould monitoring and works. Whilst in the past 2 years this has been sufficient to cope with required interventions, we are experiencing increased demand as a result of intensive pro-active surveying (from all staff or contractors visiting properties). Consequently, spend to the end of Qtr 2 is 175% of the budget. It is anticipated that measures taken to date should help address existing issues experienced by tenants, however problems can recur, and the winter months are likely to see higher pressures.
- **Service contracts £149k** – following changes in compliance legislation, there is pressure on the fire risk assessment and fire door inspection and maintenance contracts due to increased testing requirements and frequencies, and the start of a new contract which had been previously delayed. A separate budget for radon testing has been created and funded from managed savings in other contract areas. There has been little spend on the mechanical heating maintenance programme during the year so there are savings in this area, however the programme is being re-started and then will be done six monthly.
- **Repairs to void properties £400k** – there has been an increase in spend on voids in the second quarter of the year, which includes a number of properties with a significant amount of work required before re-letting. We are finding more properties in these conditions, that have had elderly tenants who it seems have not pushed for repairs and have declined upgrade work as they felt it would be too much disruption.
- Projected savings in **Re-pointing (£70k)** and **planned Asbestos surveys (£29k)** will partly offset the increases elsewhere within Repairs and Maintenance.

Interest	(£175,800)	(£140,800)
Officers Responsible: Heads of Service – Housing & Asset Maintenance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The budget includes interest cost for additional £3.9m approved borrowing. To date this has been funded internally and no external borrowing has been arranged, resulting in a saving in interest and repayment costs in the year. However, this also means that balances available for investment are lower, and along with lower interest rates this is also reducing the likely interest receivable on balances. 		
Total budget (underspend)/overspend	£1,030,558	£1,280,930
2024/25 HRA Deficit / (Surplus)	£1,288,918	£1,563,118

8.4 Impact on HRA Working Balance

The HRA Working Balance represents amounts set aside to help facilitate service improvements, repay debt or to provide investment in the stock in future financial years.

The forecast balance, as at 31 March 2025, is set out below:

Movement	2024/25
Opening HRA Working Balance, as at 1 April 2024	£5,669,065
Forecast transfer (from) / to the working balance for 2024/25	(£1,563,118)
Balance resolved to be retained (HRA contingency)	(£4,000,000)
Forecast Balance Available, as at 31 March 2025	£105,947

The transfer from the working balance anticipated for 2024/25 brings the working balance as at 31 March 2025 close to the HRA balance resolved to be retained of £4m.

8.5 HRA Available Resources over the Medium Term

The forecast HRA available resources for delivering both housing services and capital investment are set out in Appendix 3 for the period to 2027/28.

The total available resources are made up of several reserve balances; the HRA working balance, the Useable Capital Receipts reserve and the Major Repairs Reserve.

The HRA working balance is the movement on revenue budgets, contributions can be made from this reserve towards financing capital budgets in the form of 'Revenue Contributions to Capital'. The useable capital receipts reserve is made up of both the Right-to-Buy (RTB) receipts reserve and the non-RTB receipts reserve; these reserves are available to finance capital spend; some restrictions apply. The Major Repairs Reserve is increased each year by the HRA depreciation charge to revenue, this reserve is then available to spend on the HRA capital programme.

The total forecast HRA available resources is impacted by variances in both revenue budgets detailed in section 8.3 above and variances in capital budgets detailed in section 8.7 below.

The forecast total available resources over the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) have reduced by £204,134 since last reported at 2024/25 Quarter 1.

Total available reserves over the MTFP are now expected to be £2,568,031 after deducting the £4 million balance resolved to be retained (HRA contingency).

8.6 HRA Debt

In October 2018 the Government formally removed the HRA debt cap, which restricted the amount of borrowing stock-holding local authorities could have for the purposes of the HRA. The lifting of the 'debt cap' means that local authorities are now able to borrow for housebuilding in accordance with the Prudential Code.

Executive on 8 October 2019 approved the first Council House Building Programme to deliver 100 new homes into the HRA at a cost of £18 million. On 5 April 2020, the Council

took out a loan of £15.36 million from the PWLB to support this programme, with the remaining £2.64 million to be funded by capital receipts.

As at 31 March 2024, the HRA's borrowing stood at £73.242 million. The total of the £15.360 million new loan and the former 'debt cap' level of £57.882 million. The HRA currently has approval to borrow a further £7.7 million, this has been deferred but will likely be required in the next two years.

8.7 HRA Capital Programme

The 2024/25 HRA Capital Programme was last reported to Council on 15th October. Since that meeting the following changes have been made that have decreased the 2024/25 programme.

Description	2024/25	Approval / Funding
HRA Capital Programme	£24,703,891	
Q1 budgets deferred to future years	(£1,369,190)	Council 15 th October
Q1 programme variances	(£115,055)	
Laings (balance of £2.5m in 25/26)	£50,000	
Revised HRA Capital Programme	£23,269,646	

The current approved HRA Capital Programme is detailed in Appendix 4.

The appendix shows a total forecast spend in 24/25 of £22,675,062. The details of key (greater than +/- £50k) variances from budget are set out below.

Scheme	Overspend / (Underspend)
Balcony Walkway Improvements	(£139,736)
Communal Door and Screen Replacements	£59,570
Re-roofing Flats	£724,350
Re-roofing Houses	(£902,134)
Structural Repairs	£63,245
Window Replacements	£326,657
Officer Responsible: Head of Asset Maintenance	

The programme of planned works has been re-profiled to reflect current levels of demand.

Balcony walkway improvements are under budget as works have been put on hold pending further investigation.

Communal doors are likely to overspend as additional doors have been identified as being required at a number of properties which were initially only expected to be re-decorated.

The Flats' re-roofing budget is likely to spend higher than budget due to variations at Prospect Place / Cowick Street, and re-roofing works at Abbeville and Hamlin which were not originally budgeted. However not as many house roofs are needing full replacement.

Structural repairs have had additional works identified during the retrofit programme which need addressing.

Costs for window replacements have been higher than expected and additional properties are being added to the current program. Windows are under scrutiny by the Housing Ombudsman.

Bathroom Replacements	(£250,000)
Kitchen Replacements	(£300,000)
Plastering	£150,000

Officer Responsible: Head of Asset Maintenance

There have been delays in spending on the kitchens and bathrooms replacement programme as getting and retaining sub-contracted fitters has been and continues to be a challenge. Some of the budget has been earmarked for work required for void properties as increasingly this is required when properties become void.

Spend on plastering has exceeded the budget for the year, and demand is not likely to reduce over the winter months due damp and mould activity.

Investigating damp and mould often highlights degraded plaster issues.

Rennes House	(£383,045)
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Officer Responsible: Head of Asset Maintenance

A grant has been received which will cover the majority of the demolition costs of Rennes House, on the condition that the Council is in contract by the end of the financial year. It is anticipated that £100k will be required in 24/25 to include removal of balconies closer to the ground, and £1m in 25/26 for the demolition.

Schemes identified as being wholly or partly deferred to 2025/26 and beyond, or brought forward from later years, are:

Scheme	Budget deferred to/(brought forward from) future years
Electrical Rewires - Domestic	(£382,905)
<p>Officer Responsible: Head of Asset Maintenance</p> <p>Additional domestic re-wire upgrades are being completed in the current financial year, but this will be met by reducing the amount required in future years.</p>	
Vaughan Road – Phase A	£412,810
<p>Officer Responsible: Head of Asset Maintenance</p> <p>The scheduled completion for Phase A is now projected to be the summer of 2025, so in addition to the £1.2m reported in Q1 a further £412,810 has been re-profiled to 25/26.</p>	

Historic Council own build Final Accounts to 31 March 2025

The Council's own build properties at Rowan House and Knights Place form part of the overall Housing Revenue Account, but separate income and expenditure budgets are maintained in order to ensure that they are self-financing.

As the 21 units were built using HCA funding in conjunction with borrowing (£998k), they are accounted for separately in order to ensure that they are self-financing. A separate COB working balance and Major Repairs Reserve are maintained until such time as a sufficient balance has been accumulated to repay the debt attributable to these properties, at which point the units can be accounted for with the wider HRA stock.

Key Variances from Budget

The capital charges will be £330 lower than budgeted, and salary costs are projected to reduce by £380 as a result of the Senior Management Board re-structure. This will reduce the projected transfer from working balance to £15,420 during 2024/25.

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

9.1 The Housing Revenue Account contributes to a key purpose, as set out in the Corporate Plan; Building great neighbourhoods.

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

10.1 For clarity, these are specific financial risks, alongside the risks captured in the corporate risk register.

It is not permissible for the HRA to go into an overall financial deficit position, it is therefore important to ensure that an adequate level of HRA balances is maintained as a

contingency against risks. The HRA resolve to retain a working balance at no less than £4 million to mitigate against financial risks.

Areas of budgetary risk are highlighted to committee as part of the quarterly budget monitoring updates.

10. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

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

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

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

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

11.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because there are no significant equality and diversity impacts associated with this decision.

11. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 We are working towards the Council's commitment to carbon neutral by 2030. The impact of each scheme is considered prior to approval.

12. Are there any other options?

13.1 None.

Strategic Director Corporate Resources, David Hodgson

Author: Claire Hodgson

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




Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None




Contact for enquires:

Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 4.36
01392 265275

A number of areas of budgetary risk have been identified within the HRA, as follows:

Budget Title	2024/25 Approved Budget	Risk Rating	Risk and mitigation
General Maintenance	£2,545,320 (revenue)		<p>The volatility of the level of requested repairs due to factors beyond the control of the Council, for example adverse weather conditions, represents a budgetary risk. The impact of property inspections undertaken by the Tenancy Services Team may also lead to the identification of additional repairs. This budget includes spend on damp and mould. Spend to month six is ahead of profile and will be closely monitored for the rest of the year, however at this point a £1m overspend is projected.</p> <p>Mitigation measures include contract meetings with the Contractor which include budget review and work in progress updates. Other supporting measures include weekly Surveyors meetings to highlight repair demand pressures.</p>
Repairs to Void Properties	£1,346,000 (revenue)		<p>Property turnover and the varying condition of properties when returned to the Council represent a budgetary risk. As at Quarter 2 spend has increased compared with the budget profile.</p> <p>Mitigation includes property inspections by Housing Officers which highlight sub-standard property conditions wherever possible and are an early alert to issues.</p>
Rental Income from Dwellings	(£21,633,420) (revenue)		<p>Right to Buy sales, number of new tenancies set at convergence rent levels, number of days lost through major works, rent lost in respect of void properties and the decant of Rennes House all impact on the annual rental income.</p> <p>Rental income after the first 6 months is broadly in line with profile.</p>

Risk Rating:

	Potential for a favourable variance compared to the budget or no variance at all
	Potential for adverse budgetary variance of between 0% and 5% that will be kept under review
	Potential for an adverse budgetary variance of more than 5% and will be monitored closely

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HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNTS BUDGET MONITORING 2024-25

APPENDIX 2

QUARTER 2

ACTUAL TO DATE			YEAR END FORECAST				2023/24 ACTUAL	
PROFILED BUDGET	ACTUAL TO DATE	VARIANCE TO DATE	SERVICE	APPROVED BUDGET	Q1 FORECAST VARIANCE	Q2 FORECAST VARIANCE		CURRENT OUTTURN FORECAST
£	£	£		£	£	£	£	
			PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES - HRA HOUSING					
136,975	64,311	(72,664)	RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT	315,980	0	(380)	315,600	175,748
619,870	676,445	56,575	MANAGEMENT	1,798,790	0	(3,490)	1,795,300	1,673,019
(86,930)	(224,923)	(137,993)	EDWARDS COURT	(131,410)	10,000	10,000	(121,410)	(187,740)
930,550	768,076	(162,474)	TENANCY SERVICES	1,886,938	6,500	3,060	1,889,998	1,441,789
(11,718,103)	(11,360,918)	357,185	RENTS	(21,633,420)	0	0	(21,633,420)	(21,037,638)
			HRA ASSET MAINTENANCE					
1,484,000	1,785,776	301,776	- GENERAL MAINTENANCE	2,545,320	1,000,000	1,000,000	3,545,320	3,069,622
673,000	1,110,584	437,584	- REPAIRS TO VOID PROPERTIES	1,346,000	0	400,000	1,746,000	2,010,534
690,720	584,229	(106,491)	- SERVICE CONTRACTS	1,278,440	187,000	149,000	1,427,440	1,107,003
946,120	999,829	53,709	- OTHER	1,942,240	0	100,900	1,841,340	1,703,372
3,793,840	4,480,418	686,578	REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME	7,112,000	1,187,000	1,448,100	8,560,100	7,890,531
307,090	100,787	(206,303)	SUNDRY LAND MAINTENANCE	507,430	0	0	507,430	501,224
0	0	0	REVENUE CONTRIBUTION TO CAPITAL	2,500,000	0	0	2,500,000	4,000,000
0	0	0	CAPITAL CHARGES	3,745,650	(20,970)	(20,970)	3,724,680	3,745,646
1,169,315	1,172,644	3,329	HOUSING ASSETS	2,709,130	0	(14,590)	2,694,540	2,686,495
735,550	975,530	239,980	INTEREST	1,471,100	(175,800)	(140,800)	1,330,300	684,966
			MOVEMENT TO/(FROM) WORKING BALANCE	(282,188)	(1,006,730)	(1,280,930)	(1,563,118)	(1,574,040)
			Net Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
			Working Balance 1 April 2024	5,669,065	31 March 2025	4,105,947		

COUNCIL OWN BUILD SITES

PROFILED BUDGET	ACTUAL TO DATE	VARIANCE TO DATE	SERVICE	APPROVED BUDGET	Q1 FORECAST VARIANCE	Q2 FORECAST VARIANCE	CURRENT OUTTURN FORECAST	2023/24 ACTUAL
£	£	£		£	£	£	£	£
49,040	34,820	(14,220)	MANAGEMENT	98,080	0	(380)	97,700	82,789
(6,600)	(7,948)	(1,348)	ROWAN HOUSE	(13,200)	0	0	(13,200)	(13,834)
(39,350)	(45,580)	(6,230)	KNIGHTS PLACE	(78,700)	0	0	(78,700)	(82,705)
0	0	0	INTEREST	(7,510)	0	0	(7,510)	(13,532)
0	0	0	CAPITAL CHARGES	17,460	(330)	(330)	17,130	17,456
			MOVEMENT TO/(FROM) WORKING BALANCE	(16,130)	330	710	(15,420)	9,826
			Net Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
			Working Balance 1 April 2024	322,144	31 March 2025	306,724		

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APPENDIX 3

HRA AVAILABLE RESOURCES 24/25 Qtr 2

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	2024-25 £	2025-26 £	2026-27 £	2027-28 £	TOTAL £
CAPITAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE					
Usable Receipts Brought Forward					7,745,744
Major Repairs Reserve Brought Forward					12,455,749
Other HRA Sales	0	500,000	500,000	250,000	1,250,000
RTB sales	610,595	875,000	875,000	875,000	3,235,595
Surrender back to DLUHC - pending investment in replacement affordable housing				0	
Major Repairs Reserve	3,724,680	3,745,650	3,745,650	3,745,650	14,961,630
Revenue Contributions to Capital	2,500,000	2,900,000	2,925,000	3,200,000	11,525,000
BLRF grant	860,500	-	-	-	860,500
Local Authority Housing Fund s106	18,803				18,803
Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund	833,102				833,102
Commuted sums	0				0
Borrowing	0	5,000,000	2,748,380		7,748,380
Total Resources available	8,547,680	13,020,650	10,794,030	8,070,650	60,634,503
CAPITAL PROGRAMME					
HRA Capital Programme	24,703,891	10,758,111	10,767,358	10,087,896	56,317,256
Q1 - Slippage / Re-profiling	- 1,369,190	1,369,190	0	0	0
Q1 - Overspends / (Savings)	-115,055				-115,055
Q2 - Slippage / Re-profiling	-29,905	29,905			0
Q2 - Overspends / (Savings)	-564,679	750,000	-250,000	-250,000	-314,679
Laings approval	50,000	2,150,000			2,200,000
Total Housing Revenue Account	22,675,062	15,057,206	10,517,358	9,837,896	58,087,522
UNCOMMITTED CAPITAL RESOURCES:					
Usable Receipts Brought Forward	7,745,744	1,556,243	1,356,243	2,481,243	7,745,744
Major Repairs Reserve Brought Forward	12,455,749	4,517,868	2,681,312	1,832,984	12,455,749
Resources in Year	8,547,680	13,020,650	10,794,030	8,070,650	40,433,010
Less Estimated Spend	(22,675,062)	(15,057,206)	(10,517,358)	(9,837,896)	(58,087,522)
Uncommitted Capital Resources	6,074,111	4,037,555	4,314,227	2,546,981	2,546,981
WORKING BALANCE RESOURCES:					
Balance Brought Forward	5,669,065	4,105,947	3,999,378	3,984,427	5,669,065
HRA Balance Transfer - to/(from) Working Balance	(282,188)	(106,569)	(14,951)	36,623	(367,085)
Q1 forecast under/(over)spend 2024-25	(1,006,730)				-1,006,730
Q2 forecast under/(over)spend 2024-25	(274,200)				-274,200
Balance Carried Forward	4,105,947	3,999,378	3,984,427	4,021,050	4,021,050
Balance Resolved to be Retained	(4,000,000)	(4,000,000)	(4,000,000)	(4,000,000)	(4,000,000)
Uncommitted HRA Working Balance (after balance resolved to be retained of £4m)	105,947	-622	-15,573	21,050	21,050
TOTAL AVAILABLE CAPITAL RESOURCES (after balance resolved to be retained of £4m)	6,180,058	4,036,933	4,298,654	2,568,031	2,568,031

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**2024-25
CAPITAL MONITORING - QUARTER 2**

	2024-25 Capital Programme	2024-25 Spend	2024-25 Forecast Spend	2024-25 Budget to be Carried Forward to Future Years	TO 2025-26	TO 2026-27	TO 2027-28	2024-25 Programme Variances Under ()
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
HRA CAPITAL								
EVERYONE HAS A HOME								
Adaptations	965,164	384,968	965,164					-
Balcony Walkway Improvements	670,986	80,223	531,250					- 139,736
Bathroom Replacements (inc. Communal)	1,000,000	284,175	750,000					- 250,000
Boiler Replacement Programme & Central Heating	1,016,723	466,024	1,016,723					-
Common Area Footpath & Wall Improvements	198,000	89,464	198,000					-
Communal Area Improvements - New Flooring	50,000	45,550	56,410					6,410
Communal Door and Screen Replacements	100,000	105,170	159,570					59,570
Door Replacements (inc. Outbuildings)	416,000	276,198	457,090					41,090
Electrical Central Heating	10,000	11,893	12,000					2,000
Electrical Rewires - Communal	166,140	39,484	199,709					33,569
Electrical Rewires - Domestic	666,360	295,357	1,049,265	382,905	(382,905)			-
Energy Conservation	2,479,580	1,195,727	2,479,580					-
Fire Risk Assessment Works - Compliance	802,706	58,510	802,706					-
Fire Risk Assessment Works - Planned	333,340	73,550	333,340					-
Fire Safety Storage Facilities	109,462	0	109,462					-
Kitchen Replacements (inc. Communal)	1,659,762	630,655	1,359,762					- 300,000
LAINGS Refurbishments	350,000	307,275	350,000					-
Lift Upgrades	237,400	25,375	237,400					-
Reroofing - Flats	122,000	299,273	846,350					724,350
Reroofing - Houses (outbuildings, chimney, gutters, downpipes, fascia)	1,505,774	303,223	603,640					- 902,134
Porch Canopies	103,924	825	103,924					-
Rennes House	483,045	13,504	100,000					- 383,045
Soil Vent Pipe Replacement	18,487	0	18,487					-
Structural Repairs	671,045	759,187	734,290					63,245
Window Replacements	913,393	652,336	1,240,050					326,657
Plastering	75,000	109,421	225,000					150,000
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT TOTAL	15,124,291	6,507,365	14,939,172	382,905	(382,905)	0	0	(568,024)
COUNCIL OWN BUILD CAPITAL								
Social Housing Acquisitions - Open Market	466,323	365,500	466,323					-
St Loyes Extracare Scheme	19,739	0	19,739					-
Local Authority Housing Fund	18,803	18,778	18,778					- 25
Council House Building Programme - Bovemoors Lane	32,345	5,000	32,345					-
Council House Building Programme - Hamlin Gardens	1,294,248	1,079,902	1,297,618					3,370
Council House Building Programme - Vaughan Road Phase A	4,843,482	2,675,963	4,430,672	(412,810)	412,810			-
Council House Building Programme - Vaughan Road Phases B and C	1,470,415		1,470,415					-
COUNCIL OWN BUILD TOTAL	8,145,355	4,145,143	7,735,890	(412,810)	412,810	0	0	3,345
OVERALL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT TOTAL	23,269,646	10,652,508	22,675,062	(29,905)	29,905	0	0	(564,679)

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WORK PLAN FOR CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY ITEMS 2024/25

Working Draft for November 2024

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee	Item	Director	Portfolio Holder	Origin of Business	Status
28 November 2024	Portfolio Holder's Report				Withdrawn at 3 October meeting to allow for a lighter agenda
28 November 2024	Review of Consultation Policy	Strategic Director for People and Communities (JY)	Leader (Cllr Bialyk) and/or Communities (Cllr Vizard)	Scrutiny proposal - Cllr Atkinson	
28 November 2024	Citizens Advice in Exeter	Strategic Director for People and Communities (JY)	Communities (Cllr Vizard)	Scrutiny proposal - Cllr Atkinson – Cllr M Mitchell	Scoping agreed by SPB on 16 October 2024
28 November 2024	Quarter 2 Budget Scrutiny	Strategic Director for Corporate Resources (DH)	Leader (Cllr Bialyk)	Scrutiny proposal – Cllr Parkhouse	
28 November 2024	Update on the Budget setting process, to include the Capital Budget and the consideration of options [verbal]	Strategic Director for Corporate Resources (DH)	Leader (Cllr Bialyk)	<i>various scrutiny proposals</i>	
28 November 2024	Tenants Energy Review of our Passivhaus Council Homes	Strategic Director for Place (IG)	Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Support Services (Cllr Asvachin)	Scrutiny proposal Cllr Atkinson	to be rescheduled as deemed non time-critical at 3 October meeting

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30 January 2025	Portfolio Holder's Report (Cllr TBD)				
30 January 2025	Update on Exeter Community Lottery first year of operation	Strategic Director for Corporate Resources (DH)	Leader (Cllr Bialyk - tbc)		Moved from 28 November 2024
30 January 2025	Six-monthly update on Homelessness Strategy	Strategic Director for Place (IC)	Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Support Services (Cllr Asvachin)	Proposed by Councillor Denning – half yearly report	Moved from 28 November 2024
27 March 2025	Portfolio Holder's Report (Cllr TBD)				
27 March 2025	Update on Street Cleansing and Bin Collection – Recycling and Food Waste Collection	Interim Joint Director Environment, Waste and Operations (SL/CC)	City Management (Cllr Williams)	Yearly report	To include glass collection and grass cutting regime

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To be timetabled and scoped on 28 November 2024:

- **Performance and service provided to customers and stakeholders of Stagecoach South West in Exeter (agreed on 27 June 2024)**

To be rescheduled on 28 November 2024:

- **Tenants Energy Review of our Passivhaus Council Homes**

To be timetabled on 28 November 2024 subject to proformas being submitted [see October 3 minutes]:

- **Budget proposal from Cllr Moore**
- **Budget proposal from Cllr Miller-Boam**

To be timetabled and scoped if approved on 30 January 2025:

- **Anti-Social Behaviour in the City Centre – its causes and possible solutions (Cllr M Mitchell)**
- **Key People Activity Across The Council (Cllr Palmer)**

SCRUTINY
Consideration of an Item at Scrutiny Committee

Please complete this form to provide information about your proposal for consideration by the Scrutiny Programme Board or request for a review to be undertaken on a topic or issue of concern. You may attach any other supporting information you feel might help the Board in considering your proposal. The Strategic Management Board will be advised of any proposal, to help advise on the timetable and any resource implications.

Please complete the following form which will be presented to the Scrutiny Programme Board (SPB)

Issue to be Considered	<i>The budget public consultation process and results for 2025/26 budget consultation</i>
Proposer (s)	<i>Cllr Mollie Miller-Boam</i>
Scrutiny Committee (to be determined by the SPB)	<i>Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee</i>
Lead Portfolio Holder	
Identification of Lead Officer	<i>To be completed by SMB</i>

Areas for consideration:
<p>1. What is the specific topic area you want considered/reviewed?</p> <p>The public consultation on the proposed budget is a crucial step in the budget setting process. Following the conclusion of the consultation I would like the committee to examine the process for the public consultation of the budget and outcomes.</p> <p>I would suggest, but this is not limited to, the following areas for consideration as part of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The process for the public consultation including the format and platforms for responding, the accessibility of the consultation such as to those with English as their second language, or those facing additional barriers to participation. - The outcome of the consultation including how many people responded and whether the questions in the consultation yielded responses which could be utilised to inform the budget setting.
2. What are the main issues you feel need to be addressed?

As above.
<p>3. Please identify which of the Council's key priorities your topic relates to? (If any)</p> <p>The budget setting process is core to achieving all of the council's strategic priorities. Ensuring a balanced budget is delivered, which supports the priority areas of the council as set out in the corporate plan, is crucial.</p> <p>In particular, as set out in the corporate plan 2022-26, leading a well-run council rests on six pillars first of which is a balanced budget. Key to this priority is good governance, including active communication and consultation with residents. Reviewing the budget setting consultation process links to all of these priorities.</p>
<p>4. What outcome are you aiming to achieve with this consideration/review?</p> <p>I believe this review will help improve future budget consultations and therefore increase our resident's ability to participate in the democratic processes of the council, and have their voices heard.</p>
<p>5. Do you consider this review urgent and if so why?</p> <p>I believe that this review is timely, given the new process being established and used for public consultation of the budget. Reviewing the public consultation process, any barriers, pitfalls and successes will ensure as a council we give the residents and stakeholders in our city the best opportunity to input into budget decision making. It will mean that there can be learnings from this process which can then be implemented for the next budget consultation.</p>

Date of Request	14 November 2024
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Please note that the Programme Board will consider the following matters (if relevant) when determining the request. *Please tick any that are appropriate.*

Potential Criteria for Selecting Topic (NB This is not an exhaustive list)	Please tick
The issue has potential impact on one or more sections of the local population	

The issue is strategic and/or significant	✓
Scrutiny of this matter will add value to the Council's and/or its partners' overall performance	✓
The review will lead to effective outcomes	✓
This will improve service outputs	✓
The issue is of concern to partners and stakeholders	
The issue is a key issue for the public (as identified through contact with constituents or meetings of local organisations)	
This will be of benefit to the community	✓
Poor performing service (evidenced from performance indicators)	
Service/issue ranked as important by the Council's community (via market surveys/annual residents' survey/consultation with tenants, local business community)	
High level of user/general public dissatisfaction with service (via market surveys/complaints)	
Public interest issue (e.g. covered by local media)	
High level of budgetary commitment to the service or policy area	
Pattern of budgetary overspends	
Council key priority area	
Central Government priority area	
Issue poses significant or potential risk to the Council (can be financial, reputational or other risk)	
Issue raised by external auditor	
Issue raised by Council or one of its Committees	
Issue arises from new legislation or Government guidance	

Key reports or new evidence (provided by external organisations on key issue)	
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FOR SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD USE ONLY

The following will be used if the Proposal/Topic is rejected	Please tick
The timing of this review is inappropriate	
The review will duplicate other work within the Council or elsewhere	
The issue is already under examination by Council	
The issue is already under examination by an Officer Group and changes are imminent	
Issue being examined as part of a service review	
New legislation/guidance expected within a year	
There is an alternative, more effective, route the Member can take to address the issue	
The issue is outside the scope of the Scrutiny Committee	
The issue would not bring about any sustainable and on-going revenue savings	
The issue does not meet any of the Council's corporate priorities	

Comments from SMB	<i>to be tabled at Customer Focus on 28 November 2024</i>
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Overall recommendation of Scrutiny Programme Board Please tick relevant box)	Review Supported	Review not supported
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Confirm approval of review by Committee	Yes/No (<i>Delete as appropriate</i>) Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee or Strategic Scrutiny Committee
Date	