

CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday 30 January 2025

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 Liz Smith, Democratic Services Officer (Committees) on 01392 265425.

Entry to the Civic Centre can be gained through 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 3 -
14)

To approve and sign the minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 28 November 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 Act 1972 - 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 27 January 2025.

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 & 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 notified to Democratic Services via committee.services@exeter.gov.uk

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|-----------|---|--------------------|
| 7 | Portfolio Holder’s Report - Cllr Wright | (Pages 15
- 20) |
| 8 | Update on Exeter Community Lottery first year of operation | (Pages 21
- 26) |
| 9 | Budget Public Consultation Process | (Verbal) |
| 10 | Annual Scrutiny Report July 2023 - April 2024 | (Pages 27
- 38) |
| 11 | Scrutiny Work Plan | (Pages 39
- 42) |

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee will be held on **Thursday 27 March 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.

CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 November 2024

Present:

Councillor Josie Parkhouse (Chair)

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

Apologies:

Councillor Begley

Present as Portfolio Holders:

Councillors Asvachin, Bialyk, Vizard and R Williams

Also present:

Councillor Jobson

Also present:

Chief Executive, Head of Service, Customers and Communities, Head of Legal and Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer, Strategic Director for Corporate Resources, Strategic Director for People and Communities and Democratic Services Officer (PMD)

In attendance:

Sue Julyan (CEO, Citizens Advice Exeter), Richard Willmott (Trustee, Citizens Advice Exeter), Lyndsay Jarman (Assistant CEO, Citizens Advice Exeter), Steve Barriball (former CEO, Citizens Advice Exeter)

35 Minutes

Councillor Read raised the following points with regard to Minute No. 28 (Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order No. 20):-

- she disputed the claim made by Councillor Vizard that her question had been submitted late, remarking that there was no deadline for Standing Order No. 20 questions; and
- she felt that her expression of horror that Exeter City Council had investments in Barclays had not been properly recorded.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that:-

- on the first point, while it was noted that Councillor Read disagreed with its substance, the comment in question had indeed been made by Councillor Vizard;
- on the second point, committee minutes were not a verbatim transcript of every comment made; instead, they were meant to capture the sense of the meeting.

The Democratic Officer reminded Members that standard Local Government procedure dictated that the only discussion allowed on the approval of minutes was about their accuracy. However, he confirmed to Councillor Read that her comments would be recorded in the minutes of the present meeting and would therefore constitute a public record.

Subsequently, the minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2024 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

36 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

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

The Chair reported no questions had been received from members of the public under Standing Order No. 19.

38 **Citizens Advice Exeter and Exeter City Council**

The two Citizens Advice Exeter items on the agenda were presented jointly. After the representatives from Citizens Advice Exeter had introduced themselves, the Chair:-

- encouraged all participants to avoid the divisive language of “sides”;
- reminded all attendees that this is not a Scrutiny of Council Officers, as the decision to halt the funding of Citizens Advice Exeter was a political one;
- explained that the Strategic Director – People and Communities was present to provide points of clarity if required; and
- requested that any Motions that Members wish to propose be formulated after the end of the debate.

She then invited Councillor Vizard, as Portfolio Holder for Communities, and Councillor M Mitchell, as originator of the Scrutiny proposal, to the table.

The Chair announced that the reports and appendices would be taken as read. She asked the originator of the Scrutiny proposal to open the debate. Councillor M Mitchell made the following comments:-

- it was important to move forward;
- the easy action for Members would be to take no action;
- Citizens Advice essentially wanted Exeter City Council to look at the matter again;
- the remit of this Scrutiny committee was to make a recommendation to the Executive;
- this issue would be revisited for the 2025-26 Budget;
- the present meeting did not mark the end of the conversation; and
- every District Council in Devon contributed financially to Citizens Advice except Exeter City Council.

During debate, Members expressed the following views:-

Councillor Fullam:-

- reminded Members of his current role working in social housing;
- noted media reports of rising demand for legal advice;
- wondered what capacity there was to fulfil such a role in the city; and
- wondered who people needing immigration advice and/or with a language barrier could turn to.

Councillor Harding:-

- raised the issue of the knock-on effect on ECC staff if people could no longer turn to Citizens Advice Exeter.

Councillor Moore:-

- raised the issue of data recording, remarking that Citizens Advice Exeter had sent regular updates to ECC;
- asked how the referrals had been monitored during the contract period;
- asked what contract management was in place; and
- asked if staff had been advised to stop issuing referrals.

Councillor Darling:-

- sought clarity regarding discrepancies around rent and service charges in the tables submitted by Citizens Advice Exeter; and
- asked why Citizens Advice Exeter had spent £75,000 on premises when premises had been offered to them by ECC.

Councillor Read:-

- felt that no overall monetary impact assessment on Council finances had been made; and
- wondered if it was likely to be plausible that there would be no impact.

Councillor Pole:-

- sought clarity and detail on the income and expenditure summary table submitted by Citizens Advice Exeter and queried why the figures Devon County Council, Exeter City Council and 'other' were presented jointly in a single column;
- raised the issue of performance indicators linked to the contract between ECC and Citizens Advice Exeter; and
- made reference to the work of the Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT) in Mid-Devon, whose services also included debt advice.

Councillor Wardle:-

- remarked that Citizens Advice Exeter had known about this issue for six and a half years; and
- noted that the costs of running the service had nearly doubled since 2018.

Councillor Rees:-

- reminded Members that supporting the vulnerable was at the heart of what a Council did; and
- asked Members if they agreed that early intervention was crucial to any long-term strategy.

Councillor Vizard:-

- agreed with Councillor Rees's last point, remarking that this was what Wellbeing Exeter did;
- reassured Members that none of the debate taking place was lost on the Executive;
- explained that, on the issue of data analysis, it was through the tendering process that such work could be done.

Councillor Patrick:-

- asked Citizens Advice if there were any current bids they felt confident about.

Councillor Miller-Boam:-

- asked Citizens Advice Exeter whether they would find a way to reduce their costs, should end funding be found.

The Citizens Advice Exeter representatives made the following comments:-

- the impact of the end of the Citizens Advice Exeter funding on the city of Exeter would be significant;
- there was no way of currently knowing where the people needing immigration advice and/or with a language barrier would go;
- Citizens Advice Exeter recommended a full EQIA;
- Citizens Advice Exeter had negotiated smaller premises;
- nobody had suggested to them that they could have free accommodation;
- moving into the ECC Customer Centre was not a practical solution when it had first been suggested, because of costs linked to the move but also because of the perceived stigma attached to coming into Council premises;
- Citizens Advice Exeter would be prepared to explore moving into a customer hub going forward;
- while it was currently impossible to assess the impact that the end of the funding would have on the city of Exeter, the plain facts were that Citizens Advice Exeter had reduced their services and that the demand was still there;
- the figures in the first column of the income and expenditure summary table were for Exeter alone;
- the Citizens Advice Exeter member of staff based at Exeter City Council was purely doing money advocacy;
- Citizens Advice Exeter shared some of their leadership costs with other Devon branches;
- Citizens Advice Exeter currently had a worker based at Trussell three days a week;
- there was nothing Citizens Advice Exeter could do about Local Authorities pulling funding, but by the same token CA could not change their services;
- all of Citizens Advice Exeter's funding other than crowdfunding had been in place for years;
- while Wellbeing Exeter did indeed play a part in early intervention as alluded to by Councillor Vizard, it did not replace the vital role played by Citizens Advice Exeter;
- over the last year, Citizens Advice Exeter had submitted bids totalling £56,000 and had expressed an interest in the Legal & General grant (worth max. £75,000 over three years);
- larger 'bidding pots' were becoming increasingly rare;
- Citizens Advice Exeter had already reduced their overheads, including reducing staff hours to avoid redundancies;
- the next step was to offer voluntary redundancy;
- stripping their offer back to just a telephone service with no premises would allow Citizens Advice Exeter to keep the project going; and
- constructive debates around Council funding issues were taking place in Devon and nationwide.

The Strategic Director – People and Communities made the following comments:-

- the ECC Housing & Homelessness Advice service contract had been awarded to Citizens Advice Exeter through a tendering process in the summer;
- referrals for this service come from Exeter City Council Housing Advisors;
- the Council was keeping track of all referrals made under the Housing & Homelessness Advice service contract;
- a lot of detail went into the officer reports presented to Executive and to Council last year which members may wish to refer back to;

- there was no mechanism for ECC to make any objective judgement about what may or may not happen in terms of overall impact caused by any future reductions in Citizens Advice Exeter services; and
- ECC had been unable to identify any discernible impact on Council services from earlier reductions in Citizens Advice Exeter service levels.

The Chair invited Members to formulate any recommendations they may wish to put forward.

Councillor Moore remarked that information and guidance were becoming segmented and proposed the following recommendations:

- 1. To recommend that the Executive consider an annual grant to support the general work of Citizens Advice Exeter, based on the report presented to the Executive in January 2024;**
- 2. To recommend that the Executive consider working with the voluntary community sector to develop an information and guidance strategy to reduce inequality and poverty in Exeter.**

The Strategic Director – Corporate Resources & S.151 Officer explained that, if such a recommendation was put forward, its authors would need to identify how it would be funded.

Councillor Vizard, invited to speak by the Chair, made the following remarks:-

- the Executive would consider everything put in front of them;
- it was important to bear in mind the limited funding available; and
- by singling out Citizens Advice Exeter for exceptional treatment over other VCSE organisations, Members would be setting a precedent and expectations that the council could not meet should other organisations then come and ask the council for the same treatment. .

Councillor Pole proposed an amendment to Councillor Moore's recommendation. However, the Chair deemed it to be a wrecking amendment and consequently dismissed it.

During discussion on Councillor Moore's proposal, particular reference was made to:- the statutory duty of a Council to offer support to people in a vulnerable position; the need for Members to identify a budget line if they wished Citizens Advice Exeter funding to be re-examined.

Councillor Moore explained that her proposal was linked to the report from January 2024 Executive, which referred to reputational risk to the Council. The Strategic Director – People and Communities clarified that:-

- the point in her report Cllr Moore was referring to was in the "What are the risks?" section and did not constitute a recommendation to either Executive or Council; and
- the report submitted to Executive in January 2024 had formed the basis of the Executive decision.

Councillor Moore remarked that the risk in question had now happened and felt that the decision should be reconsidered.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Read, put to the vote and DEFEATED.

Councillor Patrick proposed the following recommendation:-

To recommend that the Executive revisit options for Citizens Advice Exeter to reduce their premises expenses with Exeter City Council.

She also clarified that it did not necessarily mean the Civic Centre, reminding Members that ECC owned various premises. During debate on this recommendation, the following comments were made:-

- the Exeter City Council Chief Executive remarked that every offer of accommodation made to Citizens Advice Exeter so far had been turned down;
- on the same point, Councillor Wardle asked what had made Citizens Advice Exeter change their mind;
- the Citizens Advice Exeter Chief Executive Officer explained that the costs of moving premises had always been an obstacle, but that they now found themselves in a situation where something had to be done;
- the Citizens Advice Exeter CEO explained the shared leadership arrangements with Citizens Advice Torbay (namely Torbay paying for half of the costs), clarifying that the two entities were separate charities and she happened to be the CEO of both;
- responding to a question from Councillor Miller-Boam, the Strategic Director – People and Communities explained that all business cases were considered and that, while she could not comment on cost specifically, there was a willingness to continue to work with Citizens Advice Exeter to help them find a solution; and
- Councillor Fullam said he understood the issue of the stigma attached to walking into Council premises but welcomed the fact that both parties were working in the same direction and expressed gratitude to the Leader of the Council for attending the discussion.

Councillor Parkhouse proposed from the Chair that the Committee vote on the recommendation. This was agreed unanimously and, consequently, the recommendation was moved by Councillor Patrick, seconded by Councillor Harding, voted upon and CARRIED.

A further two proposals were made by Members; however, both were dismissed by the Chair for being too similar to an earlier unsuccessful proposal.

The Chair gave Councillor M Mitchell the opportunity to offer his closing comments, which were as follows:-

- a step forward had been made as a result of the discussion;
- all parties had to be mindful of the fact that ECC may vacate the Civic Centre in two years' time;
- the present meeting was a good example of the power of scrutiny.

39 Consultation Charter

The Chair took the report as read and opened the floor to questions.

The Strategic Director – People and Communities responded to questions from Members as follows:-

- there would be opportunities for Councillors to input into the consultation and engagement strategy to be produced in 2025;
- results of all consultations are published on the Exeter City Council website;

- with the recruitment of a Consultation and Engagement Manager there will be staff resources to better analyse consultation feedback and report on the impacts on council decision making and service improvements;
- it was possible to report on the costs of consultation; as an annual consultation plan was developed, ECC would be able to consolidate some consultation exercises into single processes such as an Annual Residents Survey;
- if relevant, environmental impact assessments of undertaking consultation exercises could be conducted in a similar way to Equality Impact Assessments; and
- it was not appropriate for the Council to provide guidance to other organisations on their consultation activity.

Councillor Read wished to formulate a recommendation about ensuring that outcomes and complaints would be published; however, the Monitoring Officer felt that this would not be relevant as it had already been established that publication would take place.

Councillor Moore stressed the importance of the output of any consultation and remarked on a line in the report about the publication of complaints about consultations. The Chief Executive advised that Exeter City Council accepted that it had not been compliant with regard to the publication of complaints about consultations, adding that these would be published.

Members were unanimously satisfied with the report and answers provided by the Strategic Director – People and Communities and the Chief Executive.

40 **Quarter 2 Budget Scrutiny**

The Chair took the report as read and opened the floor to questions.

The Strategic Director – Corporate Resources replied to Members' questions as follows:-

- temporary accommodation was an area of significant budgetary pressure;
- homelessness impacted on several budgets;
- in terms of income, Q2 was similar to Q1;
- property income was down, but the new Interim Head of Service would be addressing outstanding debts;
- funding was now available for debt recovery with the Legal department;
- a standardised approach was required for debt recovery as there were too many types of property debt;
- commercial property debt was only a debt once the tenant had moved;
- the Government had introduced a significant uplift in planning fees in the past year. Consequently the number of planning applications had dropped, although it was important to note that one or two major applications would make a noticeable financial difference;
- a new interim Head of Culture had been appointed and would be addressing the RAMM underspend and look at a number of ideas;
- 'unapportionable overheads' were pension strain payments and were not budgeted at the start of the year; and
- setting the budget and reporting on it no carbon impact in itself, it was what was done with the budget that had an impact.

On the subject of General Fund Capital, Councillor Moore called for a more strategic approach to investment. She asked if it was possible to change the reporting format

to see what was active and what was possible. The Strategic Director – Corporate Resources explained that all the reports being presented were produced for Members, adding that he was always available to provide clarity if needed and would welcome views on how to make the reports more usable.

On the subject of the Housing Revenue Account, Councillor Moore remarked that she had not seen anything from the Council Housing and Development Advisory Board (CHaDAB) being fed back to the Executive. The Strategic Director – Corporate Resources informed that he would speak to the Monitoring Officer about CHaDAB reporting back.

Responding to final question from Councillor Moore about how Scrutiny could be the most impactful about the Budget, the Strategic Director – Corporate Resources noted that:-

- this was the first instalment of the budget monitoring exercise; and
- Democratic Services were working on a new table of meetings and Scrutiny as a whole was being recalibrated.

Members noted the reports from the Strategic Director – Corporate Resources.

41 Update on the Budget Setting Process

The Strategic Director – Corporate Resources gave the following update to Members:-

- Exeter City Council was currently out to consultation ;
- officers had identified a range of options totalling £6m for Members to consider;
- no final decision would be taken until February 2025;
- no initial decision would be taken until the end of the consultation;
- the local authority funding settlement was expected the week before Christmas; and
- a Members Briefing on the Budget would take place in January or February.

He also provided the following points of clarity:-

- when the Capital Programme came back next year, he would not expect significant changes, but the biggest change would be over the purchase of IT equipment and possibly vehicles;
- statutory repayment of debt happened the year after and would impact on future years but was factored in nonetheless.

Councillor Moore remarked that the Capital Programme hadn't been delivered because of lack of capacity and asked for Members to be kept updated on this. She also enquired which Councillors would be considering the range of options for the Budget. The Strategic Director – Corporate Resources replied that the tradition was that the ruling party or group had priority.

42 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 Read to Councillor Bialyk, Leader of the Council:-

“At the last meeting of this committee the Leader said that in conjunction with the Director of Finance he would “review options for Council investments to identify what alternative products are available in the market” and would consider “non fossil fuel investing alternative providers”. What has been the extent of this review, and what suitable alternatives have been identified and what progress has been made regarding ensuring all Council investments are assigned to such suitable investment vehicles? Which committee will this information be brought to and when?”

Councillor Bialyk responded as follows:-

“The update for Councillors is contained in the Treasury Management Half Year update, which is on next week’s Executive agenda. We were able to identify 3 products, two of which had a higher minimum deposit than the maximum Council have set as a Counterparty limit, therefore we cannot use them. We already place deposits in the third.”

Councillor Bialyk also assured Councillor Read that this was a matter of importance for the Executive, adding that the Council did have a duty to the taxpayers.

Question from Councillor Read to Councillor Bialyk, Leader of the Council:-

“Also at the last meeting of this committee we were advised that the Council had sent a notice to Barclays advising them of complete disinvestment from Barclays and requiring the full return of funds from Barclays. This was particularly welcome news as Barclays are notorious for their investments in fossil fuels, which is contrary to the Council’s sustainability agenda. So my question is can we have confirmation that the Council is entirely disinvested from Barclays and that there are no plans for the Council to reinvest in Barclays? Additionally, what progress has the Council made in formulating an ESG policy, when can we expect this to come to Committee?”

Councillor Bialyk responded as follows:-

“The Council no longer has funds placed with Barclays and there is a draft ESG policy appended to the Treasury Management Half Year update, which is on next week’s Executive agenda. It is recommended to Council for approval and adoption. If this is adopted by Council then this will drive future strategy, although in extreme circumstances, there may be a need to place funds in institutions that would not meet the criteria set in order to minimise risk to the taxpayer and comply with your legal obligations. This would be a last resort and only instigated in circumstances where the Council had surplus funds and all eligible products were at the maximum level allowed by the Strategy.”

Councillor Bialyk commented that this was not an issue of importance just for the Green Party but that several Labour Councillors felt strongly about this issue, too. He also reminded Councillor Read of the Council’s fiduciary duty to the taxpayers.

In a supplementary question, Councillor brought up the issue of bundling and asked what the timeframe was for the Council to understand how much was invested in fossil fuel. The Leader replied that the Council would not be doing an analysis as such, adding that he was looking at the issue in terms of direction of travel. The Strategic Director – Corporate Resources clarified that the Council did not invest: it placed money.

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

"I asked at the last meeting of this committee if alternative methods could be used to allocate funds to community projects so that there wasn't yearly underspends of ward grants. Cllr Vizard replied that he was open to ideas on the matter and requested that I make suggestions of alternative methods to the Grants Panel. I have done so, so I would like to know what has been the upshot of these and any other proposals? Do we have plans for ensuring there will be less underspend this coming end of budget year in April given the very high level of overall demand for funding? If we don't yet have a workable plan in this area what more can be done to ensure we will have one?"

Councillor Vizard responded as follows:-

"The funding for community grants comes from the Neighbourhood CIL. Any in year budget "underspends" remain within the NH CIL reserve and are allocated on an annual basis back into the next iteration for the grants programme. If ward councillors do not spend their annual grant budget this funding is still available for the grants programmes the following year. I strongly encourage all members use their ward grants for this purpose to support local communities.

The Member Led Grants Panel term of reference does not include reviewing the grants programme itself, however I welcome members suggestions for improvements to the process which I can be fed into the public consultation to be undertaken next year on our use of NH CIL (which will include ward and community grants) which was agreed at Executive in October."

In a supplementary question, Councillor Read asked if it was the case that grant money that hadn't be used would be lost. Councillor Vizard replied that unused grant money would remain within the grants programme fund.

Question from Councillor Read to Councillor R Williams, Portfolio Holder for City Management:-

"The Exeter Port Authority operates a mooring repairs service, purchased by the Council several years ago which was hoped to be self-financing, but costs had risen significantly whilst workload and income have not. The report says that without the introduction of the HRO improvement will be slow – what difference exactly can we expect the HRO to make and why? The Council has stated that it does not anticipate levying any charges for use of the canal or river following the HRO so what difference could passing an HRO make to the income of a mooring repairs service, unless in fact the Council does propose to introduce charges following the introduction of the HRO?"

Councillor R Williams clarified that fees were already being charged in the canal and that these had already been published. She then gave the following response:-

"The HRO consultation and establishment has no direct bearing on mooring repair income. In the HRO pre-consultation summary of responses, the Council identified that considers it important to the Port's future viability, that port users should contribute to the cost of the management and maintenance of the port and introduction of the HRO supports that. Although the Council does not currently levy goods dues at the Port or ship dues outside of Exeter Ship Canal, it has the power to levy such ship, passenger, and goods dues as it thinks fit under section 26 of the Harbours Act 1964. In extension, under article 10 of the HRO, there is the modern

power to levy the equivalent of ship, passenger and goods dues in relation to vessels which are not 'ships' (such as jet bikes or jack-up barges). The HRO will enable the introduction of harbour dues on all vessels within the Port limits. When setting charges in for the port the future, the Council will consider the level of charges set by other statutory harbour authorities."

She thanked the Interim Director – Environment, Waste and Operations and the Harbour Master for their help with drafting the answer.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Read asked if it was correct that the HRO would make a difference through levies. The Portfolio Holder replied that Exeter City Council could actually charge now but chose not to, adding that any raising of fees would be a matter for Full Council.

Question from Councillor Read to Councillor R Williams, Portfolio Holder for City Management:-

"Regarding the report stating that canal licences represent the one area of concern because income levels have stagnated in the opening quarters with few new vessels being kept in the canal, and so there is a forecast of a reduction in income in comparison with 2023/24, due to vessels being scrapped or leaving, and that income will likely be some £76,000 below budgeted levels – are proposals for income generation being pursued? In collaboration with the Harbour Master I have suggested locations where the Council could offer permanent moorings to bar or restaurant boats which could raise income for the Council, how are these being pursued? What are the plans to communicate the locations identified for such moorings to the hospitality industry to encourage businesses to apply? How can this be more widely communicated? Additionally we have identified locations for kayak storage rental which could also raise income, when will these be developed as income generation opportunities for the Council?"

Councillor R Williams responded as follows:-

"The HRO will provide the powers to pursue income generation through port dues, however opportunities will remain limited until such time as HRO has been introduced. Service has committed to a review of Harbour income over the next 12 months, a timeframe set to allow for the introduction of the HRO. The review will consider income opportunities and the sustainability of income forecasts under the light of the HRO consultation outcome and subsequent implementation.

Kayak storage is not currently considered a value-income opportunity because the costs of delivering the service, when balanced against the low levels of income forecasted, are expected to fail in providing a reasonable return on the initial investment."

In a supplementary comment, Councillor Read remarked that other councils provided that service. Councillor R Williams advised that there would be a review and that one of the items on the agenda of the Visioning Day on 1 February 2025 was exploring options.

43 **Scrutiny Work Plan and Proposals Received**

The Chair proposed, to the approval of the Committee, that:-

- the item “The Budget Public Consultation Process and Results for 2025/26 Budget Consultation” be put on the January 2025 agenda;
- the item “Tenants Energy Review of our Passivhaus Council Homes” also be put on the January 2025 agenda; and
- the item “Performance and Service Provided to Customers and Stakeholders of Stagecoach South West in Exeter” be put on the March 2025 agenda.

It was consequently moved by Councillor Parkhouse and seconded by Councillor Moore 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 5.31 pm and closed at 8.41 pm

Chair

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

REPORT TO STRATEGIC and CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Date of Meetings

Strategic Scrutiny: Thursday 23rd January 2025

Customer Focus Scrutiny: Thursday 30th January 2025

Report of COUNCILLOR Laura Wright, Lead Cllr for Corporate Services (including Digital Transformation) & City Centre Strategy.

Council Committees: Executive and Council

Board member/Trustee (council appointments): InExeter, Exeter Canal and Quay Trust

Member of: Devon and Cornwall Police & Crime Commissioner's Panel

Member of: Vision Zero South West Board

Member of: Exeter Community Safety Partnership including working groups; ASB and Gender Safety

Devon & Cornwall Police Cllr Advocate

Relevant training and CPD undertaken this year;

LGA Conference, Harrogate, October 2024

Completion of LGC Next Generation Leadership programme

ECC online certified training; County Lines, Domestic Abuse, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, GDPR, Introduction to Safeguarding Thematics, Misogyny and Incel subculture, Risk Assessment, Serious violence and Knife Crime, FGM.

Other relevant training: Level 2 Safeguarding, Prevent

1. Delivering our strategic priorities: as per our published Corporate Plan 2022-26 which is under revision for updating

1. Contributing to the aspirations of the Exeter Vision 2040

2a Prosperous local economy

City Centre Strategy

The development of a new City Centre Strategy is continuing, the first round of consultations with local businesses and key stake-holders and then with ECC and DCC elected Members has concluded.

Once the City Council Corporate Priorities are in the final stages a public consultation will take place using the same framework as the consultation with business and Members.

The strategy will address many areas – including (but not limited to) a prosperous local economy. The strategy will be finalised by ECC after involving input from key stakeholders who will take ownership of aspects of the resulting Action Plan.

InExeter (the Business Improvement District, also referred to as 'the BID') had a successful vote November 2024, with 90% of participating businesses supporting the BID's renewal. Businesses voted overwhelmingly in favour of renewing InExeter for a third five-year term, allowing for continued investment in city centre improvements and initiatives until March 2030. A total of 334 businesses participated in the vote, achieving a 48% turnout. Of those who voted, 90% supported the BID by number, and 96% by rateable value.

The Business community voted in support of the 2025-2030 InExeter Business Plan, which will guide activity going forward: https://inexeter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/InExeter_Business_Plan_2025-30_D.pdf

Private sector events relevant to the City Centre and local business

1. The purchase of Princesshay by The Fraser Group provides confidence in Exeter, the City Centre and its long term economic success. <https://frasers.group/press/news/frasers-group-acquires-over-1-million-sq-ft-retail-assets> The Fraser Group also have control over the shops in Paris Street and some in Sidwell Street which form part of the City Point regeneration opportunity, identified in the emerging Exeter Plan. There will be further discussions between the Fraser Group now that Crown Estate are no longer involved.
2. The purchase of the Royal Clarence by Nooko, provides additional confidence in the city centre and Exeter <https://nooko.co.uk/news/press-release-nooko-acquires-historic-royal-clarence-in-exeter-for-exciting-residential-and-commercial-development/> . Nooko is also developing Paternoster House and Concorde House, in the city centre, for high quality urban living apartments.
3. Prior to Christmas there were a number of retail openings within the city centre including ProCook and Knoops.

2b. Healthy and active city: *including safety*

Community Safety & Anti-Social behaviour

The Exeter City Centre PSPO is due for renewal June 2025 <https://exeter.gov.uk/clean-safe-city/community-safety/safer-exeter/pspo/> Work has started in consulting with local statutory bodies.

A new **Community Safety Team** has been established, with 4 officers temporarily employed to patrol the city centre, supporting D&C Police in their hotspot policing initiative. The team also cover city parks and green spaces, as well as collecting and addressing stray dogs. The team have recently undertaken community safety accreditation scheme (CSAS) training. This gives them a range of powers usually only available to police, such as the authority to issue fixed penalty notices for certain offences. The main purpose of the scheme is to contribute to community safety, to combat crime and disorder, public nuisance and other forms of antisocial behaviour in co-operation with the police.

The areas covered by the hotspot policing include; Sidwell Street, High Street, Cathedral Yard, Queen Street, South Street and Mary Arches Street.

Outputs & outcomes for the month of November 2024

- Community Safety Team patrols delivered: 30
- Police intelligence submitted: 4
- Premise visits: 355
- Individuals engaged: 735
- ASB incidents attended: 24

CCTV and Control Room

There have been many notable successes in the increase in safety and in aiding the police in bringing perpetrators of crime to justice. The Control Room team have recently been awarded a commendation from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall, for their work. Just one example of many, is detailed here [News Article - Devon & Cornwall Police \(devon-cornwall.police.uk\)](https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/news/news-article-devon-cornwall-police)

Community Safety Partnership

ECC is the convenor of this statutory partnership, and with the support of partners we will continue to tackle priorities related to community safety and ASB.

The work of the partnership so far has been to bring key stakeholders together to share information, create specific focus groups to bring forward objectives, and to facilitate bids for relevant Home Office Funding for community safety. Through this, we have been able to attain funding for the new CCTV cameras and infrastructure and associated projects such as the 'Need help?' signage around the city centre.

2c. Housing and building great neighbourhoods and communities - N/A

2d. Net zero carbon city – N/A
2e. Thriving culture and heritage – N/A
3. Leading a well-run council Internal Audit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWAP have begun rolling out AuditBoard, the Audit Management system used to track actions and progress in addressing internal control weaknesses; • the Audit Plan is on track for completion; • the s151 Officer and Head of Service – Finance meet monthly with SWAP to discuss progress and highlight any issues; and • a new process for monitoring action plans and progress has been introduced at a Senior Management level. HR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A successful recruitment process completed in November 2024 resulting in the appointment of Strategic Director and Head of Service roles. • A further campaign commenced for Head of HR and other Head of Service roles, all planned to be completed by end of January 2025. • A detailed review of HR processes has been requested by Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee, which will be forthcoming within 6 months, following the appointment of the new Head of Service and allowing time for the implementation of the HR Improvement Plan (of October '24). • A comprehensive review and updating of policies has begun, prioritising the core policies and procedures. This has included the launch of the new Drug and Alcohol Policy and roll out of training and testing equipment. • EDI Improvement Plan in place following recommendation from mini peer review with senior management task and finish group overseeing delivery. Briefing note on mini peer review recommendations and action plan provided to all members. • Development of Sexual Harassment Training in line with Equality Act 2010, roll out planned January 2025. • Employee focused campaign to update emergency contact details, and EDI information via iTrent, strong level return rate across all areas. • iTrent data cleanse - across Council in line with new operating model and hierarchy structure: work agreed within Strata 25/26 Business Plan for replacement/upgrade of ITrent in 25/26 • Occupational Health Audit commenced December 2024 • Payroll Audit to commence February 2025 • Development of Leadership Competency Framework - to support identification and priorities in relation to Leadership Development: external partner to be secured by February 2025 to support the CEX in the Senior Management Leadership Development Legal Services: <i>No updates at present</i> Democratic Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A firm timeline for the Constitution review will be forthcoming, with an expectation for completion by July this year. • Administrative improvements to the accessibility of the current Constitution are being made removing duplication, updating named officers to provide job title only, and to include digital links to each section and other relevant documents. • Work on amendments to the Constitution content will take place initially with the Director and Head of Service and Portfolio Holder, and then be brought to a sounding-board/working group before coming to the relevant committees and then Council for adoption. • Other non-constitutional improvements to the service – a list of ideas and suggestions that have been made by Members to myself, has been compiled and has been brought forward to the Director for Corporate services for consideration with the Head of Service and Monitoring Officer for inclusion in the constitution review (where applicable). Some examples are;

- I. Aligning the timings of Audit & Governance and Scrutiny Committee agenda content with Executive Committee meetings to improve the process of recommendations reaching Executive to aid decision making.
- II. Monitoring the number of agenda items for Committee meetings (particularly Planning) to avoid evening meetings lasting for more than 3 hours. When decisions are time sensitive, an extra meeting may be called.
- III. To provide refreshments for evening meetings.
- IV. To cap speeches to an agreed timing (as is done in many other councils) with exceptions being at the discretion of the Chair.

AV committee room project - Following feedback from members and staff in the Democratic Services and SMB teams, the new Head of Service, Digital and Data commissioned Focused Vision to carry out an audit of the equipment in the Bad Homburg and Rennes committee rooms. Changes will be made to the AV equipment, with the installation of new speakers, amp, hearing loop, and a camera to record meetings. This will be installed between the 5 and 18 March 2025. The Democratic Services Team have relocated any meetings due to take place in these rooms between those dates. These improvements will improve the experience for Members and those attending committee meetings in Civic Centre.

Digital Transformation

Digital Customer Strategy implementation: A detailed report on progress towards the goals set out in the Digital Customer Strategy approved in November 2023 is being prepared for February/March committee cycle. This will set out progress to date both within the council and through the digital enabling work of Strata. This will also set out the priorities that are being focused on for delivery in 25/26 and 26/27 which will form the basis of the workplan for One Exeter. This will be led by the Head of Service Digital and Data and the Corporate Digital and Data team.

Data Strategy: The draft Data Strategy will also be coming for formal approval in the Feb/March committee cycle. This is a crucial enabling strategy that sets our principles for effective use and management of data. These principles will underpin how we implement new data architecture through critical projects such as SharePoint.

Cllr Training and IT:

- The Councillor Development Steering group will meet on 13 February 2025. Attendance statistics for councillor development sessions will be provided at that meeting.
- To date, a total of 33 training and briefing sessions have been held since May 2024.
- We continue to enforce the mandatory training requirements as set out under Article 8 of the Constitution.
- Cllr training and briefing sessions have been broad and comprehensive this year. Although sometimes there seem to be a lot of briefings, feedback is that members are appreciating training and briefing sessions.

Equality and Diversity

- EDI and Safeguarding Policy Office has been transferred to sit within the HR department.
- A new policy/guidance on corporate parenting for Members will be undertaken soon, following some cross-party member talks I have held (notably with Cllr Palmer).
- EDI Improvement Plan in place following recommendation from mini peer review with senior management task and finish group overseeing delivery.
- Briefing note on mini peer review recommendations and action plan provided to all members.

Corporate Health & Safety:

- Bespoke, onsite accredited Health and Safety at Work training for OMB is being undertaken in January 2025
- Strategic Director for People and Communities and Operations have jointly commissioned an expert external review of H&S at work strategy, policy and delivery resourcing to aid further organisational change linked to implementation of the Senior Leadership restructure.

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

covered in the sections above

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

Devolution and LGR

CCTV

A tender is being worked on to develop a maintenance contract for the CCTV network, as the current warranty ceases in 2025.

A new commercial income generating contract has been signed, for the Control Room to monitor an external CCTV network. Additional contracts are in negotiation.

Homecall is starting to show an increase in customer numbers following a two-year slow decline. This is a result of a marketing campaign to create better awareness of the service.

The new **Community Safety Team** are funded until 31 March 2025 by the City Council, InExeter and D&C Police. Funding has been confirmed by InExeter from April onwards, we are awaiting funding confirmation from D&C Police. Having this team in place has impacted on the car park service, as some of the officers have moved over from car parking.

4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered

1. Digital transformation – *as per the Digital Transformation report*
2. Staffing levels review in the CCTV Control Room: to ensure sufficient provision 24/7 to respond to calls, city centre incidents, monitoring the CCTV network and fulfilling external commercial contracts. This 'pinch point' was expected to come when the tension between accepting new external CCTV monitoring contracts and staff workload reached a point of investing in new posts.
3. As part of senior management review, support for the Exeter CSP is moving from the Head of Service Environment and Waste to the Head of Service for City Centre & Net Zero, with oversight from the Strategic Director, Place

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

1. **ECQT** - Governance review. Following an independent report and recommendations to the Trust, a full trust meeting was scheduled to discuss. Due to the publication of the Government White paper on Devolution, this has been postponed for the near future.
2. **Devon & Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner Panel**
There has been an uplift in funding for the UK Police forces, and Devon & Cornwall will benefit from additional Home Office funding (6.9% increase), including funding to off-set the rise in National Insurance contributions.
The rise in council tax base across Devon & Cornwall as a result of the new 2nd homes council tax legislation will bring an increase of approximately 4.64% for the council tax base across Devon & Cornwall (Exeter at 2.07%).

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REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 30th January 2025

Report of: Director for People and Communities

Title: Exeter Community Lottery update

Is this a Key Decision?

Not applicable: Scrutiny is not a decision-making body.

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Not applicable: Scrutiny is not a decision-making body.

1. What is the report about?

1.1 Update on Exeter Community Lottery first year of operation and amount raised for good causes.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 To note the update.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 To give an update on the work of the Exeter Community Lottery over the first year of operation.

3.2 To note the amount raised for good causes in the city.

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

4.1 Staff within the Communities Team administer the lottery which includes monthly authorisation of payments to good causes, quarterly returns, and vetting and support for good causes wishing to register. This is supported by weekly social media and news posts by the Communications Team. Based on this activity, staff administration costs are estimated at around £4,000 a year.

4.2 Non-staffing costs in year one:

Marketing	£3,994.00
Lotteries Council Membership	£410.00
Gambling Commission Licence	£352.00
Gambling Commission Membership	£796.00
Gambling Commission Annual Fee	£597.00
Total	£6,149.00

4.3 External Lottery Manager set up fees were waived as we achieved targets set for the launch in May 23.

4.4 The licence fees and marketing costs have been met through the income raised so far from ticket sales and the income to the central community fund.

4.5 Going forward annual fees are expected to be in the region of £1200 to £1300 which includes the Lotteries Council Membership and the Gambling Commission annual fee.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

Not Applicable Scrutiny is not a decision-making body.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 The Gambling Act 2005 creates eight categories of permitted lottery, one of which is a local authority lottery. Local authority lotteries are promoted by the relevant council and the net proceeds can be used for any purpose for which the authority has the power to incur expenditure.

6.2 Exeter Community Lottery is run under an operating licence issued by the Gambling Commission and needs to comply with the specific licence conditions and relevant codes of practice.

6.3 We have appointed Gatherwell to manage the lottery on our behalf in accordance with Section 257 of the Gambling Act. However, Exeter City Council remains responsible for ensuring that the lottery operates lawfully. To this end, we are required to have a least one, preferably two, Personal Management Licence (PML) holders at Strategic Director and Head of Service level. Following the senior leadership restructure the Chief Executive is working with Senior Management board to ensure officers are appointed to these roles appropriately.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

Not Applicable: Scrutiny is not a decision-making body.

8. Report details:

8.1 Council agreed in December 2022 to support the establishment of a local community lottery for Exeter to be managed by an 'External Lottery Manager' to deliver the scheme on the council's behalf. Gatherwell were appointed as the External Lottery Manager (ELM) in January 2023. Gatherwell have experience of managing around 110 lotteries for local authorities across the UK. Gatherwell manage the lottery on the council's behalf, this includes website management, administration of ticket sales and payments, prize management, and marketing.

8.2 The launch of the lottery to the community and voluntary organisations in the city took place in May 2023. Over 70 groups attended the online launch, and 76 groups registered ready for the first draw which took place on the 22 July.

8.3 In the first 12 months of the Exeter Community Lottery there has been a steady increase in new causes registering to take part. 121 causes registered in the first

year. Of these 121, 97 are active with more than one supporter. Gatherwell prompts registered causes with regular emails to offer support and ideas for promoting their cause to potential supporters.

8.4 The amount raised for all causes in year one, including the City Council Community Fund, is £47,492.40. The total amount raised for the (City Council) Community Fund is £17,416.40. As stated, a proportion of this went to year one set up fees and annual costs

When players register for the lottery, they have the option of choosing a cause to support. They can choose from one of the many registered organisations in the city or alternatively choose to support the Exeter Community Fund and see the funds distributed to many groups across the city as part of the city council grants programme.

Year One Revenue

Good Causes – Non ECC	£30,076.00
ECC Community Fund	£17,416.40*
Prize Fund	£15,830.80
Total to External Lottery Manager (inc. VAT)	£15,830.80
Total Income	£79,154 (number of paid ticket sales)

*Year one Costs of £6,149 were deducted from this. These should reduce to around £1,200 to £1,300 in year two. Now we are clear on the commitment, staffing costs estimated at around £4,000 will be deducted from the revenue into ECC.

Year One Top Good Causes

Sylvania Community Store and Cafe	£1,725
Exeter Strollers Walking Football Club	£1,457
Southwest MS Therapy Centre	£1,410
FREEMOOVEMENT	£1,261
Devon Family History Society	£1,168
Heavitree Bowling Club	£1,030
Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) Development Trust	£896
Parental Minds CIC	£804
Age UK Exeter	£634

Recent feedback from the South West MS Centre included the following observations:

- We like how easy it is to manage/administer – these things don't need to be over-complicated
- We like how its local money raised which stays locally – this helps us sell it even more
- The marketing tools, although basic, are just right for what we need to use it for
- The additional monthly prizes help us promote the opportunity to buy more tickets
- The payments we receive are regular with no hassle

- It's easy for players to sign up and manage their accounts
- Its income generated with little input from us which is a huge plus for any charity – it trickles in month by month and adds to our overall annual fundraising total
- We particularly liked being a part of the good news stories you shared a few months ago and would be very happy to be used as an example charity in any future promotions.

Prizes

8.5 Over the first year a total of £5,950 was awarded in cash prizes. This includes 128 people who have won £25 and 11 people who won a £250 cash prize. As part of the launch of the lottery we were able to offer a prize of a Guildhall Shopping voucher and a spa voucher worth £150 kindly donated by the Indigo Hotel.

Breakdown of takings

8.6 60% of proceeds go to good causes; 50% to the chosen good cause and 10p to the Operator (Exeter City Council) community fund. 20% goes towards prizes for players and 20% to the ELM for administration and VAT:

Local Good Causes (inc. ECC)	50%
Operator (ECC)	10%
Prizes	20%
External Lottery Manager (Gatherwell)	17%
VAT (inc. in payment to Gatherwell)	3%

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

9.1 The Exeter Community Lottery directly impacts key council corporate strategic priority of

- Building Great neighbourhoods.

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

10.1 In terms of ethical considerations, community lotteries are classed as low risk by the Gambling Commission; they are considered a form of 'incentivised giving'. There are procedures in place to mitigate the risks of problem gambling, which include;

- Maximum of 20 tickets per supporter;
- No instant reward or gratification when purchasing;
- Direct debit and recurring payments (no cash); and
- Unable to buy single tickets, or tickets for a draw on the same day.

10.2 The Gambling Commission considers it best practice to have two Personal Management Licence Holders in place. As a minimum, there should be one who has overall management responsibility for promotion of the lottery. As a result of the senior leader restructure, changes in responsibilities and the departure of senior

leaders mean that these PML responsibilities are under review, in line with the new structure.

10.3 The last 6 months have seen a slight decline in ticket sales when compared to the previous 6 months, from 41,557 tickets to 39,151. It is difficult to ascertain the cause. For 25/26 the Customer and Communities team will work with the Communications team to draw up a plan for promotion that will be delivered within existing resources. Ongoing engagement with Gatherwell and local charities to promote the lottery with community groups linked to the grants programme, and through the Council website will be undertaken.

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. The report is for information only.

12. 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 direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the report.

13. Are there any other options?

Not Applicable: Scrutiny as report is for noting only

Director: Jo Yelland

Author: Stephen Clayton

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

Background papers used in compiling this report: -

None

Contact for enquiries:

Democratic Services (Committees)

Room 4.36

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SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

(July 2023 – April 2024)

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Foreword from the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board

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

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

The Scrutiny Programme Board was set up to meet on a bi-annual basis but have continues to meet quarterly to provide oversight and direction on the work of scrutiny. The meetings are attended by the Chairs and Deputy Chairs with the aim to develop a future programme of work, review any Scrutiny Proposals submitted by Members on our pro-forma and support best practice for both of the scrutiny committees.

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

**Councillor Naima Allcock,
Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board (2023/24)**

November 2024

Introduction

The Annual Scrutiny Report for Exeter City Council provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Strategic Scrutiny Committee and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee during the 2022/23 year, July 2023 to April 2024.

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

The aims of the Scrutiny process are to:-

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

The two Scrutiny Committees of Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus discharge the functions conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 or regulations under section 32 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Continuing to highlight the role of scrutiny, the following training and resources are in place:-

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

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

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

Terms of Reference and Membership

Scrutiny Programme Board (SPB)

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

Role of the Scrutiny Programme Board:-

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

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

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

General role of the Scrutiny Committees

The relevant scrutiny committee will:

- hear call-ins, Councillors' call for action and petitions;
- monitor performance against the relevant corporate priorities;
- receiving finance and performance reports;
- agree recommendations to Executive, Council and partner organisations;
- agree appointments of co-opted representatives;
- monitor the forward plan;
- review new and developing legislation to assess its impact on the city;
- consider and introduce schemes to involve the public in developing policy;
- working with national, regional and local organisations to promote the interest of local people;

Strategic Scrutiny Committee

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

- Relevant policies in the Exeter Plan
- Corporate Health & Safety
- Response to Central Government's Policy Making
- Climate change and sustainability
- Council wide/strategic matters
- Hear call-ins relevant to the role of the committee

Partnership Links

- Growth Board
- Joint Committee for Heart of the South West
- Heart of the South West local Enterprise Partnership

Committee Membership

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

Note: Membership and Chair is proposed by the majority group and Deputy Chair is proposed from the opposition groups.

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

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

- Corporate Performance Monitoring
- Financial Performance Monitoring
- Annual Budget Setting Process
- Service specific/operational matters
- Hear call-ins relevant to the role of the committee

Partnership links

- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Exeter Community Safety Partnership
- Strata

Committee Membership

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

Note: Membership and Chair is proposed by the majority group and Deputy Chair is proposed from the opposition groups.

Year in Review: Scrutiny 2023/24

Strategic Scrutiny Committee

The Strategic Scrutiny Committee has met on four occasions between July 2023 and April 2024.

21 September 2023

- Member Questions and Answers
- Ethical and Low Carbon Advertising: Planning Policy considerations
- Working towards Net Zero: ECC's Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Plan
- Shared Prosperity Fund Progress Report – Update 3

16 November 2023

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Wood on Portfolio for Leisure and Physical Activity
- Draft Exeter Plan Consultation
- Live and Move Programme Update

25 January 2024

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Parkhouse on Portfolio areas of Climate and Ecological Crisis

14 March 2024

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Wright on Portfolio for Culture and City Centre Strategy
- Update from Councillor Morse on Portfolio for City Development
- Share Prosperity Fund Progress Report – Update 4
- Working Towards Net Zero – ECC's Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan
- Draft Exeter Plan - Initial Reporting on Consultation responses
- Ethical Advertising and Low Carbon Framework

There were no call-in requests during this period.

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

The Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee has met on four occasions between July 2023 and April 2024.

5 October 2023

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Williams on Portfolio areas for Place and City Management
- Progress Report Homelessness Strategy
- Update on street cleansing, bins and litter following the changed approach

- Healthy Homes

30 November 2023

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Denning on Portfolio areas Council Housing Development and Support Services
- Council Housing Strategy
- Tenancy Policy

1 February 2024

- Update from Councillor Foale on Portfolio for Corporate and Democratic Services and Environmental Health
- Waste Recycling Fleet
- Street Cleansing Litter Bin Review
- Allotment Service Review

28 March 2024

- Member Question and Answer
- Update from Councillor Pearce on Portfolio for Communities and Homelessness Prevention
- Progress Report on Homelessness Strategy

No call-in requests were received during this period.

Combined Customer Focus and Strategic Scrutiny Committee

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

7 February 2024

Budget 2024/25 – Annual briefing for Members prior to the Council Tax Budget Council in February.

Looking Ahead to 2024/25

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

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

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

Introduction of Councillor Sharepoint Hub in 2024 has brought all information for Members together in one place and has replaced the Intranet.

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WORK PLAN FOR CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY ITEMS 2024/25*Working Draft for January 2025*

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee	Item	Director	Portfolio Holder	Origin of Business	Status
30 January 2025	Portfolio Holder's Report (Cllr Wright)				
30 January 2025	Update on Exeter Community Lottery first year of operation	Strategic Director – People and Communities (JY)	Communities (Cllr Vizard)	Scrutiny proposal Cllr Moore	
30 January 2025	Six-monthly update on Homelessness Strategy	Strategic Director – People and Communities (JY)	Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Support Services (Cllr Asvachin)	Proposed by Councillor Denning – half yearly report	Deferred to March 2025 at the request of the Head of Service – Housing
30 January 2025	Tenants Energy Review of our Passivhaus Council Homes	Strategic Director – People and Communities (JY)	Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Support Services (Cllr Asvachin)	Scrutiny proposal Cllr Atkinson	Deferred to March 2025 at the request of the Head of Service – Housing
30 January 2025	The Budget Public Consultation Process and Results for 2025/26 Budget Consultation	Strategic Director for Corporate Resources (DH)	Leader (Cllr Bialyk)	Scrutiny proposal Cllr Miller-Boam	“Results” part of the item not yet available and therefore is deferred. Chair notified by DH on 22/1.
30 January 2025	Annual Scrutiny Report	Strategic Director for Corporate Resources (DH)	Corporate Services (Cllr Wright)	Statutory duty	
27 March 2025	Portfolio Holder's Report (Cllr R Williams)				

27 March 2025	Update on Street Cleansing and Bin Collection – Recycling and Food Waste Collection	Head of Operations (CC)	City Management (Cllr R Williams)	Yearly report	To include glass collection and grass cutting regime
27 March 2025	<i>Tenants Energy Review of our Passivhaus Council Homes*</i>	<i>Strategic Director – People and Communities (JY)</i>	<i>Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Support Services (Cllr Asvachin)</i>	<i>Scrutiny proposal Cllr Atkinson</i>	<i>Moved from 30 January 2025. * “we currently don’t hold detailed information in regards of this but plan to undertake an independent survey in 2025 - LB”</i>
27 March 2025	Six-monthly update on Homelessness Strategy	Strategic Director – People and Communities (JY)	Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Support Services (Cllr Asvachin)	Proposed by Councillor Denning – half yearly report	Moved from 30 January 2025
27 March 2025	Performance and Service Provided to Customers and Stakeholders of Stagecoach South West in Exeter	Strategic Director for Place (IC)	Communities (Cllr Vizard)	Scrutiny proposal Cllrs Snow, Parkhouse and Hughes	Scoping to take place on 30 January 2025
26 June 2025*	Portfolio Holder’s Report (Cllr TBD)				
26 June 2025*	Quarter 4 (“Outturn Report”) Budget Scrutiny	Strategic Director for Corporate Resources (DH)	Leader (Cllr Bialyk)	Scrutiny proposal – Cllr Parkhouse	
2 October 2025*	Portfolio Holder’s Report (Cllr TBD)				
27 November 2025*	Portfolio Holder’s Report (Cllr TBD)				

27 November 2025*	Six-monthly update on Homelessness Strategy	Strategic Director – People and Communities (JY)	Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Support Services (Cllr Asvachin)	Proposed by Councillor Denning – half yearly report	
27 November 2025*	Quarter 2 Budget Scrutiny	Strategic Director for Corporate Resources (DH)	Leader (Cllr Bialyk)	Scrutiny proposal – Cllr Parkhouse	
29 January 2026*	Portfolio Holder's Report (Cllr TBD)				
26 March 2026*	Portfolio Holder's Report (Cllr TBD)				
26 March 2026*	Update on Street Cleansing and Bin Collection – Recycling and Food Waste Collection	Head of Operations (CC)	City Management (Cllr R Williams)	Yearly report	

To be scoped on 30 January 2025:

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

To be timetabled on 30 January 2025 subject to proformas being submitted [see October 3 minutes] :

- **Budget proposal from Cllr Moore**
- **Budget proposal from Cllr Miller-Boam (“Results” part only – see above)**

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)**

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