

## **STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date: Thursday 14 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 Liz Smith, Democratic Services Officer (Committees) on 01392 265425.

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

### *Membership -*

Pole (Chair), Mitchell, M (Deputy Chair), Atkinson, Ellis-Jones, Haigh, Hughes, Jobson, Knott, Moore, Palmer, Rees, Rolstone, Snow and Williams, M

## **Agenda**

### **1 Apologies**

To receive apologies for absence.

### **2 Minutes**

(Pages 5 -  
8)

To approve and sign the minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee held on 12 September 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 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

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

so, then the following resolution should be passed:

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

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

Details of questions should be notified to the Democratic Services via the [committee.services@exeter.gov.uk](mailto: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 8 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 reporting to this Scrutiny Committee are:-

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Councillor Bialyk -  | Leader   |
| Councillor Allcock - | Portfolio Holder City Development                              |
| Councillor Vizard -  | Portfolio Holder Climate and Ecological Change and Communities |
| Councillor Wood -    | Portfolio Holder Leisure Services and Healthy Living           |
| Councillor Wright -  | Portfolio Holder Corporate Services and City Centre            |

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

## 7 **Portfolio Holder Report - Leader, Councillor Bialyk**

(Pages 9 - 12)

To receive the report from Councillor Bialyk, the Leader of the Council.

## 8 **Portfolio Holders Report - City Development, Councillor Allcock**

(Pages 13 - 16)

To receive the report from Councillor Allcock, the Portfolio Holder for City Development.

## 9 **Exeter Plan Publication Process**

(Pages 17 - 24)

To receive the report of the Strategic Director for Place on the Exeter Plan Publication Process.

Please note the Background papers listed at the end of the report which give useful context.

## 10 Forward Plan of Business and Scrutiny Work Plan

(Pages 25  
- 28)

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

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

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

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

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee will be held on **Thursday 5 December 2024** 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 265425.**

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## **STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

12 September 2024

### Present:

Councillor Liz Pole (Chair)

Councillors Mitchell, M, Atkinson, Haigh, Hughes, Knott, Moore, Palmer, Rees, Rolstone, Snow and Williams, M

### Apologies:

Councillor Ellis-Jones

### Also present:

Head of Service - City Centre and Net Zero, Head of Service - Legal and Democratic Services & Acting Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services Officer (LS)

### Attending as Portfolio Holder:

Councillors Vizard and Wood

## **28 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2024 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

## **29 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

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

There were no questions submitted by the public.

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

In accordance with Standing Order No. 20, the following questions were submitted by Councillor Moore and responses were given by Councillor Vizard, Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities.

### **Question**

#### **1. The Royal Clarence Hotel Planning Application 22/0236/FUL**

1. What progress has the developer made in applying for and discharging the conditions for this granted permission?
2. When does the Council expect work to start onsite and to be completed?
3. What assessment has the council made of the effectiveness of the measures to protect the remaining historic fabric before the work commences?

### **Response**

1. **Progress on Applying for and Discharging Conditions:** The developer has made some progress following the conditional approval granted on 10 October 2022. Exeter City Council drafted the Section 106 agreement on 17 April 2023 and it was signed on 25 August 2023. However, no formal

applications have been submitted to discharge the specific planning conditions associated with the development. Several urgent works have been undertaken to stabilise the structure, including reducing the height of two chimneys under an Urgent Works Notice to prevent the risk of collapse and damage to neighbouring properties. Additional measures include introducing new internal structural scaffolding to provide stability and regular maintenance, such as pumping out standing water from the basement and removing vegetation. The site is inspected weekly by the owners' representatives to ensure the integrity of the scaffolding and check for structural defects.

2. **Expected Start and Completion Dates for Onsite Work:** The Council cannot currently provide a specific start date for the construction works. While the developer has indicated a potential start date in Spring 2025, this is contingent on completing the detailed design phase (RIBA Stage 4) and subsequent procurement of construction packages. Given that these elements are outside the control of the Council, we are cautious about setting public expectations. We continue to engage with the developer to encourage timely progression, but it is essential to note that these timelines may be subject to change.
3. **Effectiveness of Measures to Protect Remaining Historic Fabric:** In collaboration with Historic England, the Council has emphasised the importance of protecting the remaining historic fabric of the Royal Clarence Hotel site. Protective measures have been implemented, including installing new internal structural scaffolding for additional stabilisation and repairs to the lead valley between the Wellhouse and 15 Cathedral Yard. The site is subject to regular inspections and maintenance, such as replacing scaffold sheeting and hoarding as needed. These steps have been deemed adequate to prevent further deterioration of the structure while awaiting the commencement of construction. However, these inspections and maintenance works are carried out by the owner's representatives rather than the Council.

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

Councillor Moore asked when enforcement would be put in place and Councillor Vizard answered that deadlines would be in place as with any planning application.

### **Question**

#### **2. NPPF consultation**

In the Council's response to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation will the Portfolio Holder ask the Government to remove the provision for viability assessments (i.e. guaranteeing developer's profit) and request that Government work with developers to finance risk in other ways, so the expectations of local planning authorities for developers to meet obligations such as affordable housing can be assured?

### **Response**

The Council will provide a response to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation. In doing so it will set out the importance of delivering development that complies with local plan policy and delivers appropriate contributions towards infrastructure and affordable housing. The emerging Exeter Plan will also provide for robust approaches to viability assessment in order to achieve such development.

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

Councillor Moore asked that the option for funding viability in other ways be included in the response to Government and Councillor Vizard responded that Councillor Allcock had initiated discussion and he will refer to her for a written response.

### **32 Portfolio Holder report - Councillor Vizard**

The Portfolio Holder and the Head of Service, City Centre and Net Zero responded to Members' questions making the following points:

- That 22,797 homes were now part of the food waste scheme;
- That 2,438.8 tonnes of food waste had been collected;
- Calculating the carbon reduction of food waste was in progress;
- Challenges of overall budget were included in the report;
- Scrutiny would be welcomed in looking a ways to find net gains;
- All areas are priority but that some were within the Council's gift and others not;
- That the Leader had called on DCC to engage regarding opportunities for a different model of bus service;
- Existing ECC EV charging was not tied to the existing devon scheme; and
- That revenue covers electricity and small surplus which is used for maintenance.

### **33 Working Towards Net Zero:ECC Corporate Carbon Footprint Report & Carbon reduction Action Plan**

Head of Service, City Centre and Net Zero provided a verbal update on the Council's Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Action Plan making the following points:

- Recruitment challenges from the South West Energy & Environment Group, from the University, had now been overcome;
- That SWEEG was now in its final stages of reporting to the Council;
- A breakdown of the spend of the net zero budget would be provided within the next report; and
- That the report would be presented in November.

### **34 City Wide Net Zero Programme and update on delivery**

Head of Service, City Centre and Net Zero provided a verbal update on the Citywide Net Zero Programme making the following points:

- that the Net Zero City Wide Programme Manager had been recruited;
- actions from the Exeter Net Zero 2030 plan were being updated;
- the Exeter Net Zero 2030 plan was being cross-referenced with the Devon Carbon Plan and the Devon and Cornwall Adaptation Plan to create a work programme for the Programme Manager;
- that a full list of additional actions were contained within the Portfolio Holder update; and
- that the report would be presented in November.

The Head of Service, City Centre and Net Zero answered a question from a Member stating that the work programme will cross-reference with the Climate Change Committee and National Action Plan.

### 35 **Progress Report Shared Prosperity Fund update**

Head of Service, City Centre and Net Zero presented the Progress Report of the Shared Prosperity Fund making the following points:

- The Council had spent or allocated all of year 2 funding thereby releasing 100% of year 3 allocation, £892,000;
- For year 3 projects, 50% of funding had been paid to the major projects with the remaining 50% due to be paid this month;
- Year 3 focussed on support people with 3 major projects funded which include the Urban Learning Academy, the Exeter Youth Hub and Exeter College's Retrofit Academy.
- That there was a watching brief on the Prosper Project that may result in a small underspend on that project, but if that was the case existing projects would be reviewed and if they were unable to utilise the underspend then it maybe offered to projects which weren't successful in achieving SPF funding;
- That all funds must be spent by 31 March 2025;
- No projects could roll into the next financial year; and
- That it was anticipated that all funds would be spent within the timeframe.

The Head of Service, City Centre and Net Zero answered Members questions making the following points:

- That they will link with the Urban Learning Academy regarding possible links between E5 and People and Skills;
- Would link with project lead regarding biodiversity; and
- Feasibility study outcomes and whether these were met would be brought to committee.

### 36 **Forward Plan of Business and Scrutiny Work Plan**

Members commented on the work plan.

Councillor M Mitchell moved and Councillor Palmer seconded that the two Air Quality items be merged and following a vote this was not carried.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that SMB comments would mean the Strategic Scrutiny Committee would be fully informed and ensure the best report from officers. Councillor Hughes stated for the minutes that had additional information been available they would have voted differently.

Councillor Atkinson proposed and Councillor Knott seconded that the tabled Air Quality item be taken to SMB and returned to the committee with comments and following a vote was carried.

Councillor Knott proposed and Councillor Mitchell seconded that another meeting date be added in December for the Environmental items and following a vote was carried unanimously.

Members noted the Council's Forward Plan and draft Scrutiny Work Plan.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.27 pm

Chair



## REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 14 November 2024

### PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Councillor Phil Bialyk, Leader**

| 1. Issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities  |
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| <b>One Exeter Programme</b> – The One Exeter programme is the council's internal improvement programme and contributes to the corporate priority of Leading a Well-Run Council. Much of the work included in the programme is summarised in the remainder of this report.   |
| <b>Digital Customer Strategy</b> – Work continues with our ICT partner Strata to develop the infrastructure to enable us to deliver on the 10 goals in the Digital Customer Strategy. The first phase of the roll out of Microsoft 365 has been completed along with improved audio-visual facilities in the Civic Centre meeting rooms to aid hybrid working. Detailed work across the 3 councils has been completed on the procurement of a new telephony system to replace the soon to be obsolete Skype system. The new telephony will also offer better customer relationship management and monitoring customer service. Officers are now working on detailed implementation plans to ensure successful roll out in the New Year. A new type of laptop has been designed and is currently being piloted with the aim of rolling this out to staff as line of business systems move to the Cloud. This new technology will provide quicker and more reliable access to business applications. Work is underway through the Contract Centre to introduce "my Accounts" to residents which will, over time, allow people to bring all their transactions with the council into a single account making it much easier. |
| <b>Residents Survey</b> – We undertook a Residents Survey over the summer based on the LGA approach. The results from the survey are extremely encouraging with most residents reporting satisfaction with waste, recycling, parks, street cleaning, museum and leisure services and over half of residents trust the council and are satisfied with how the council runs things. The results also highlight areas of concern to residents such as car parking, homelessness and anti-social behaviour in some parts of the city. Officers will be working with their portfolios on the details of the findings and using these to agree priorities for service improvements.   |
| <b>Strengthening Strategic Partnerships</b> – as part of the Senior Leadership Review, a new Executive Office has been created. This team will report into the Chief Executive and one of its primary roles will be to have oversight of all strategic partnerships ensuring that partnership work is co-ordinated, delivery plans are in place and that milestones are achieved.   |

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| <b>2. Update or commentary on any major ongoing programmes of work</b>   |
| <b>Corporate Plan</b> - The Executive have been working with SMB on developing a new, more streamlined Corporate Plan setting out our priorities for the next few years and the outcomes we want to see delivered. We will be consulting with the public on our priorities and aim to publish a new plan in February 2025. Directors are working with their team on identifying key performance metrics for services in the context of the new Corporate Plan. This will form a key part of a new Corporate Performance Dashboard. |
| <b>HR Review</b> – An independent review of our people functions was completed and there is now an HR Improvement Plan in place setting out clear actions for improving the service and our work on equalities, diversity and inclusion.   |
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| <b>3. Issues that may impact : services delivery/financial performance/future budget requirements</b>  |
| <b>MTFP update</b> – Following on from the budget, work is being undertaken to understand the implications for the council from the announcements made. Work has continued in respect of options available to balance the budget and a draft consultation document has been developed. It is intended to consult on the budget during November and December to allow responses to be considered prior to the budget being set in the New Year. |

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| <b>4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered</b>   |
| <b>Senior Leadership Review</b> - The Senior Leadership Structure is in the final stages of its completion with final interviews for the remaining Strategic Director and Heads of Service posts taking place in mid-November following a national recruitment campaign. The majority of staff have now moved across to their new directorates and the finance team are working with Directors and Heads of Service to align budgets to the new structure.  |
| <b>Office relocation</b> - The Civic Centre is now too big for the needs of the City Council. With the advent of hybrid working, the Council has moved into a single block and presently this is underoccupied. Efforts to lease out the other two buildings have had some limited success, but it is by no means full and is not achieving the rental income projected. Empty space requires the Council to pay the business rates on buildings it is not occupying as well as heating costs. As a result of this outline plans have been developed to look at alternative workspaces across the city including the Guildhall Shopping Centre, Bradninch Place and Exton Road. This would include a new Customer Service Centre located in the Guildhall Shopping Centre. On 3 <sup>rd</sup> September, Executive agreed to allow detailed plans to be drawn up for the necessary works to be carried out. A project team will be established to take this work forward. |

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

**County Combined Authority** – Central Government has agreed to the proposal for the establishment of a Combined County Authority for Devon and Torbay. As part of the agreement, Devon and Torbay has received £16 million in capital funding to support the delivery of local housing priorities, drive net zero ambitions and support green skills, and accelerate wider low carbon business transition across the Devon and Torbay. The council has been allocated £2m from this funding to decarbonise its housing stock. A Devon and Torbay Housing Advisory Group is also being established to recommend annual priorities, secure investment and design appropriate programmes to address the housing needs of communities across the Devon and Torbay area. The council will nominate a Member to sit on this group.

**Programme of disposals** – the council has entered into a head of terms for Mary Arches Street Car Park. Bids have been submitted and due diligence has been undertaken at Clifton Hill. Work is progressing on CityPoint through a meeting with council officers and new owners and options are being developed to determine the best method to proceed. A report on CityPoint is going to December Executive. The council is still actively seeking a site for the Open Space depot.

**Key Cities – Portfolio Holder for Transport** – Key Cities is a cross-party network of 24 local authorities representing cities and urban areas from across England and Wales. In my role as Key Cities Portfolio Holder for Transport, I lead the development of the wider network's position and priorities for transport. This is done by bringing transport items to Key Cities' Executive and Full Group meetings and via other activities such as information-sharing within the network. Each year, the Key Cities Chair asks their portfolio holders to identify their priorities for their portfolio to ensure that Key Cities activity is aligned to the interests of members. For the year 2024-25, my priority is for members of the network to gain a clear understanding of the Buses Bill which will allow local transport authorities to take control of bus services in their area. Over the course of the coming year, Key Cities will provide additional information on the changes proposed by bringing speakers and allowing members to discuss their views on bus franchising. Feedback from members will be used to inform future lobbying on local buses and transport policy more broadly.

### Portfolio Holder's Responsibilities:

- ◇ Corporate Plan
- ◇ Corporate Risk Strategy
- ◇ MTFP and Budget Strategy
- ◇ Fees & Charges
- ◇ Combined Authority Agreement
- ◇ Working with Devon Leaders
- ◇ Exeter Civic University Agreement
- ◇ Partnerships and the Sub Regional Growth agenda
- ◇ Commercial, Social Housing Assets & Property Assets (includes redevelopment of Paris Street/Sidwell Street, Exeter City Centre, Car Parks and Matford Centre)
- ◇ Strategic Communications
- ◇ Business Rates Discretionary Grants
- ◇ Procurement Policy
- ◇ Strata Joint Executive Committee



## REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 14 November 2024

### PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

#### **COUNCILLOR NAIMA ALLCOCK- PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CITY DEVELOPMENT**

| <b>1. Issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities</b>   |
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| <b>Number of major planning applications determined</b> – to date, the City Council has determined 23 major planning applications in 2024. Of these, 6 were refused.  |
| <b>Appeals won/lost</b> – In 2024, to date 33 appeals were dismissed and 5 were allowed.  |
| <b>Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter</b> - the City Council adopted the Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter in May 2024, reaffirming our commitment to ensuring that all new development within the city achieves the highest standards of quality and design. This Charter outlines a series of practical measures aimed at elevating design standards, with a focus on fostering collaborative planning processes that encourage design excellence. It prioritises principles of sustainable development, emphasising the importance of creating inclusive public spaces that enhance community well-being. Additionally, the Charter commits to continuous improvement and innovation in development practices. By promoting active stakeholder engagement and ensuring accountability, the Charter supports development that aligns with Exeter's Vision 2040, guiding the city towards a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future. |
| <b>CIL/S106 monies</b> – since the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) introduction in 2013, CIL collection has amounted to £31.68m in CIL receipts. In 2023/24 alone, the city received £4.75 in CIL receipts. In the same period, the Council received £1.06m secured through the Section 106 process.  |

| <b>2. Update or commentary on any major ongoing programmes of work</b>   |
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| <b>Exeter Plan</b> – Work on the Exeter Plan has continued. This work has included site assessment, additional evidence gathering, discussions with stakeholders and plan drafting. The Council is now working towards the Publication stage of the Exeter Plan in December 2024. A series of monthly Planning Member Group meetings have been held throughout 2024 to enable each chapter of the emerging Exeter Plan to be discussed in detail with Members. |

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| <b>Article 4 Direction</b> – The revised Article 4 Direction has now been 'made' by the Council and will come into effect in December 2024. The accompanying supplementary planning document was adopted in December 2023. |
| <b>Liveable Water Lane SPD</b> – the Council adopted the SPD in July 2024.   |
| <b>Householder's guide to extension design SPD</b> – the Council adopted the SPD in April 2024.  |
| <b>Custom and Self-Build Register</b> – the Council has continued to update the Custom and Self-Build Register.  |
| <b>Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement</b> - The Council has published the Infrastructure Funding Statement.   |
| <b>CIL and s106 monitoring software</b> – significant progress continues to be made in establishing the new Exacom software.   |
| <b>Pre-application charges for major applications</b> were introduced in May 2024.   |

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| <b>3. Issues that may impact services delivery/financial performance/future budget requirements</b>   |
| <b>Recruitment</b> – There are 36 establishment posts in City Development. Currently, there are 2 vacancies; where needed they are being covered by agency staff.   |
| <b>Economic impact</b> – Building Control and Land Charges are reporting a reduction in case work, but there currently is no cause for concern about fee income. Planning application submissions are also showing signs of slowing down. Major applications, in particular, are being received at a lower level than previous years. The Service is reliant on the fees submitted for major applications. A recent national increase in the fees has failed to offset the impact. The ongoing decrease in application numbers 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. |
| <b>Brownfield land challenges</b> – Delivering development on brownfield land in Exeter presents several challenges. Brownfield sites often require significant investment in infrastructure, such as utilities and transport connections, to make them viable for housing development. Additionally, these sites may have complex land assembly needs and existing structures or contamination that increase upfront costs and delays. Viability is a recurring issue due to the higher expenses involved, which can hinder  |

achieving the desired density and quality of development. Furthermore, balancing the needs of the local community with increased housing density can lead to challenges in securing local support. Addressing these barriers requires collaborative efforts among developers, local authorities, and government agencies to provide targeted investment and a supportive planning framework. Despite these challenges, focusing on brownfield sites aligns with Exeter's strategic priorities, including reducing urban sprawl, supporting the city centre, and contributing to sustainable urban growth.

**Registration of Building Inspectors** – the introduction of a new registration requirement for Building Control Officers marks a significant shift in regulatory standards, ensuring that professionals in this field meet stringent competency criteria. In response to these requirements, Exeter City Council's Building Control team successfully completed the rigorous registration process. This achievement demonstrates the dedication and professionalism of our officers, who have met the new standards under challenging conditions. Their success places Exeter City Council ahead of several neighbouring authorities still progressing through this transition, reaffirming our commitment to maintaining safety, quality, and leadership in the built environment.

#### **4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered**

**Charging for pre-application enquiries** – as discussed above we introduced pre-application charges for major applications in May. We are considering proposing the introduction of charges for other types of application in due course.

**Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter** – as referred to above, the Charter was published in May following Full Council endorsement. The Charter includes a commitment to introduce a forum for those in the development industry involved in delivering major developments in the city. Officers are currently working on the format of this forum. The Charter also includes a commitment to monitor the ongoing success of completed developments. Officers are exploring the most effective way to do this.

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## REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 14 November 2024

Report of: Strategic Director for Place

Title: Exeter Plan Publication

### 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?

1.1. The report sets out the progress made on the Exeter Plan since the last Strategic Scrutiny discussion in March 2024 and explains the next stages in progressing the plan.

### 2. Recommendation:

2.1. That the work undertaken on the Exeter Plan, and the next stages in its preparation, are noted and discussed.

### 3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1. To provide an opportunity to reflect on the preparation of the Exeter Plan.

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

4.1. There are no resource implications of the recommendation to note and discuss the work undertaken on the Exeter and its next stages; budgets for the Exeter Plan were set in 2020.

### 5. What are the legal aspects?

5.1 When preparing the Exeter Plan (a Local Plan), the Council must comply with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as well as the provisions set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The work being undertaken continues to adhere to these legal requirements.

### 6. Report details:

#### Background

6.1 The City Council has been working on the Exeter Plan since 2020. The work has included preparation of evidence, site assessment, policy writing and liaison with stakeholders and partners.

6.2 Significant efforts have been to engage with the public and other interested organisations throughout the preparation of the plan to date. This has included three public consultations:

- Issues consultation: September to November 2021
- Outline Draft Plan: September to December 2022
- Full Draft Plan: October 2023 – January 2024

The analysis of the consultations has been fed back to Members via meetings of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee and Executive as appropriate.

### **Progress since the Full Draft Plan consultation**

6.3 The Full Draft Plan consultation ended in January 2024. Analysis of the responses was reported to Strategic Scrutiny Committee in March 2024 and Executive in April 2024.

6.4 Since the analysis of the Full Draft Plan consultation responses, the local plans team has been focusing on progressing the plan towards its next key milestone; the Publication Draft Plan which will comply with Regulation 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

6.5 Work has continued to include evidence gathering. Additional evidence which is currently being prepared and is informing the Publication Draft Plan is listed below. When concluded this will be added to the evidence base for the plan.

- Local housing needs assessment update;
- Gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment;
- Student housing needs assessment;
- Viewpoints, density and heights study;
- Strategic flood risk assessment level 1 and 2;
- Emergency access and egress study;
- Embodied carbon evidence;
- Evidence relating to delivering adaptive and resilient development;
- Heat network study;
- Evidence for built sports facility strategy;
- Updated transport modelling;
- Updated infrastructure delivery plan;
- Sustainability Appraisal;
- Habitats Regulation Assessment; and
- Viability appraisal.

### **Member engagement**

6.6 In order to ensure ongoing involvement of Members in the preparation of the plan and to provide regular opportunities to feed into the process, the local plans team has provided near monthly presentations to the Planning Member Working Group throughout 2024. These discussions have covered all chapters in the plan.

- January 2024: Spatial strategy (overarching policy direction);
- March 2024: Homes;
- April 2024: Economy and jobs;
- May 2024: Natural environment;
- July 2024 (1): Sustainable transport and communications;

- July 2024 (2): Heritage and culture;
- August 2024: Climate change;
- September 2024: High quality places, health and infrastructure; and
- October 2024: Planning reforms, housing requirements and site allocations.

6.7 These meetings were open to all Members and, for the discussions on the Exeter Plan, all Members were able to ask questions.

### **Plan updates**

6.8 The Exeter Plan is currently being updated to take account of the consultation responses, new evidence, additional site assessments, stakeholder discussions and Members' feedback. Various assessments of the emerging plan content are also currently underway. The writing of the Publication Draft Plan is not yet completed and so it is not possible to present it here, however there are some revised elements to note.

### Plan period

6.9 Previous versions of the Exeter Plan have covered the years 2020 to 2040 (2020/21 – 2039/40). However, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that plans should have a further 15 years to run on their adoption.

6.10 On this basis, the plan period for the Exeter Plan will move forward by one year to 2021 to 2041 (2021/22 – 2040/41).

6.11 This change will ensure that the plan period accords with national policy but also that it will have a post-adoption lifespan of one extra year.

### Housing requirements

6.12 The Government sets a formula for local authorities to calculate the minimum number of homes that should be built in an area each year in order to meet local needs. Based on this formula, the City Council must plan for at least 642 new homes to be built in Exeter each year.

6.13 During the summer the Government consulted on national planning reforms covering revisions to the NPPF and revised housing requirements for each local authority. Under these proposals, the housing requirement for Exeter could increase to 815 homes per year.

6.14 However, because the City Council is currently progressing towards the Publication Draft Plan in December, we will continue preparing the Exeter Plan under transitional arrangements which mean the current NPPF and existing housing requirements – the 642 homes per year.

6.15 To accommodate 642 homes annually over 20 years means an overall requirement of at least 12,840 homes. However, to allow for choice and competition in the housing market and to ensure that the Exeter Plan will be resilient to uncertainties such as a delay in developing a particular site or changes to housing needs or Government policy, it is necessary to include headroom in the overall housing requirement. This means that the

plan will provide for just over 14,000 homes. When completions, commitments and windfalls are taken into account around 5,400 homes will be required on new allocations.

### Spatial strategy

6.16 The first policy in the Exeter Plan is policy S1: Spatial Strategy. This policy sets out the key principles behind how the city will evolve over the plan period and the nature of development.

6.17 Policy S1 covering the Spatial Strategy has been updated following the Full Draft Plan. It retains a strong emphasis on brownfield development and now includes additional reference to:

- The economic role of the city in its wider functional catchment area;
- Further reference to development density in the context of local character and heritage;
- Stronger reference to enhancing biodiversity; and
- Climate change adaptation and resilience.

6.18 The updated policy is included below for information.

### **S1: Spatial strategy (Strategic policy)**

The spatial strategy will deliver on Exeter's Vision 2040 and the city's ambitions for net zero, climate change adaptation and resilience, high quality development, health and wellbeing, the vitality of the city centre, the natural environment, heritage and cultural diversity. The City Council will work with partner Authorities and other stakeholders to deliver these ambitions.

The spatial strategy for delivering development in Exeter has 15 elements:

1. Providing good quality homes of a variety of types in the city to meet Exeter's various needs.
2. Working with neighbouring Councils to ensure that the employment needs of the wider functional economic area are met.
3. Enabling traditional and new forms of employment provision in the city, developing the transformational sectors and supporting improvements to education and skills to ensure employment needs are met.
4. Focusing the majority of development on strategic brownfield sites, particularly in locations close to the city centre to support its ongoing vitality and access to public transport hubs.
5. Enabling the development of smaller brownfield sites as they become available.
6. Considering modest greenfield development as a supplement to the overall focus on brownfield sites.
7. Providing high quality, mixed-use development at optimal densities appropriate to the characteristics, heritage and function of the local area to minimise the need to travel and maximise walking, cycling and public transport.
8. Locating development near enough to key services and facilities to allow residents to meet most of their daily needs easily on foot or inclusive equivalent.
9. Protecting the landscape value of the sensitive hills which provide the vital setting of the city.

10. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity throughout the city and improving the ecological value of the River Exe, its estuary and wildlife networks.
11. Conserving, enhancing and improving access to, and interpretation of, Exeter's outstanding historic environment.
12. Steering development to avoid areas of higher flood risk where possible and managing residual flood risk as appropriate.
13. Enabling development in locations which link effectively to the Valley Parks as vital green infrastructure whilst ensuring their protection and enhancement.
14. Reflecting local identities, providing for diverse neighbourhoods and delivering high quality public realm and community spaces to grow the city's cultural offer and drive regeneration.
15. Delivering the range of infrastructure and services needed in a timely manner to support high quality development and our communities.

### **The Exeter Plan Publication process**

6.19 The Publication Draft of the Exeter Plan is scheduled to be considered by Executive on 3 December. Subject to approval, the Draft will be published in mid-December for a period of eight weeks. This timeframe meets statutory and City Council requirements.

6.20 It is important to note that the publication process is extremely tightly defined by statutory requirements. Although it is a public process into which anyone can provide input, it is not a consultation in the traditional sense. This will affect the way in which the publication process is organised.

6.21 A key part of the process is the way in which interested parties can provide responses to the plan. Responses, or representations as they are known, can only be provided in relation to whether it is considered that the plan is:

- Legally compliant;
- Sound; and
- In compliance with the duty to cooperate.

6.22 Soundness is also clearly defined in terms of specific tests which are set out in the NPPF. These are whether a plan is:

- Positively prepared;
- Justified;
- Effective; and
- Consistent with national policy.

6.23 This means there is no scope to ask open questions seeking general comments or to ask simple, more accessible survey-type questions which have been used to widen response rates for the earlier rounds of consultation. This will mean there will be significantly less engagement activity than has been organised previously.

6.24 It is also important to note that there is no requirement for the City Council to amend the plan itself following the Publication stage. Instead, the regulations require the City Council to submit the Publication Draft Plan and all the formal representations to the

Planning Inspectorate for formal examination. The potential to make amendments to the plan in response to the representations are usually considered through the examination process.

### **Steps after Publication**

6.25 As alluded to above, the next stage of preparing the plan will be its submission to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination. The timetable for these stages of work is set out in the Local Development Scheme which was approved by Executive in September 2024.

- Submission to Planning Inspectorate: June 2025

Indicative timetable (determined by Planning Inspectorate)

- Examination including hearings: November/December 2025
- Adoption: November 2026

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

7.1. The recommendation in the report is that the work undertaken on the Exeter Plan, and the next stages in its preparation, are noted and discussed. No formal decision is sought. However, the content of the emerging Exeter Plan will support all five of the Council's strategic priorities through the Exeter Vision 2040, the overarching spatial strategy for the city and a series of specific thematic policies:

- Prosperous local economy;
- Healthy and active city;
- Housing & building great neighbourhoods and communities;
- Net zero carbon city; and
- Thriving culture and heritage.

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

8.1. The recommendation is that the work undertaken on the Exeter Plan, and the next stages in its preparation, are noted and discussed. On this basis, there are no risks associated with the recommendation.

## **9. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)**

9.1 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:**

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

## **11. Are there any other options?**

11.1. It is appropriate to note and discuss the work undertaken on the Exeter Plan, and the next stages in its preparation. There are no other options.

**Strategic Director for Place, Ian Collinson**

Report Author: George Marshall: Assistant Service Lead – Local Plans

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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**WORK PLAN FOR SCRUTINY ITEMS 2024/25***Working Draft for November 2024*

| Strategic Scrutiny Committee | Item  | Director/   | Portfolio Holder  | Origin of Business   | Status |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|--|--------|
| 14 November 2024             | Portfolio Holder's Report (Cllrs Bialyk & Allcock)  |   | Leader (Cllr Bialyk) and Portfolio Holder City Development                |  |        |
| 14 November 2024             | Exeter Plan Final Version   | Strategic Director for Place (IC), Assistant Service Lead City Development (Local Plan) | Portfolio Holder for City Development (Cllr Allcock)                      | Scrutiny Proposal - Cllr Moore<br><br>Review findings of the Car Parks Strategy report<br>Workstream to tackle social and affordable housing crisis – (Scrutiny proposal Cllr Atkinson)<br>Both items above now incorporated into Local Plan |        |
| 5 December 2024              | Working Towards Net Zero - Exeter City Council's Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Action Plan | Strategic Director for Place (IC) Service Lead Net Zero & Business (VH)                 | Portfolio Holder Climate, Ecological Change and Communities (Cllr Vizard) | Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2022 half yearly report  |        |
| 5 December 2024              | City Wide Net Zero - Programme of work and update on delivery   | Strategic Director for Place (IC) Service Lead Net Zero & Business (VH)                 | Portfolio Holder Climate, Ecological Change and Communities (Cllr Vizard) |  |        |
| 5 December 2024              | Air Quality Performance   | Interim Joint Director Environment, Waste and Operations (SL)                           | Portfolio Holder Climate, Ecological Change and Communities (Cllr Vizard) | Scrutiny Proposal - Cllr Moore<br>NB Yearly report to Executive  |        |

| Strategic Scrutiny Committee | Item  | Director/  | Portfolio Holder  | Origin of Business  | Status |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|---|--------|
| 23 January 2025              | Portfolio Holder's Report (Cllrs Wood & Asvachin)   |  | Portfolio Holder Leisure Services & Healthy Living (Cllr Wood), Portfolio Holder Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Customer Services (Cllr Asvachin) |   |        |
| 23 January 2025              | Live and Move Programme Update  | Strategic Director for Community Services (tbc)  | Portfolio Holder Leisure Services & Healthy Living (Cllr Wood)  | Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 16 March 2023 half yearly            |        |
| 23 January 2025              | Scrutiny Programme Annual Report  | Strategic Director Corporate Resources (DH)  |   | Yearly report   |        |
| 13 March 2025                | Portfolio Holder's Report (Cllr Wright & Foale)   |  | Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder Corporate Services & City Centre (Cllr Wright), Portfolio Holder Arts, Culture & Tourism (Cllr Foale)                  |   |        |
| 13 March 2025                | Working Towards Net Zero - Exeter City Council's Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Action Plan Progress Report | Strategic Director for Community Services (tbc), Service Lead Net Zero & Business (VH) | Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Vizard)  | Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2022 half yearly report |        |

| <b>Strategic Scrutiny Committee</b> | <b>Item</b>                                     | <b>Director/</b>   | <b>Portfolio Holder</b>  | <b>Origin of Business</b>   | <b>Status</b> |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|---------------|
| 13 March 2025                       | Progress Report Shared Prosperity Fund - Update | Strategic Director for Community Services (tbc)<br>Service Lead Net Zero & Business (VH) | Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Crisis (Cllr Vizard)     | Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2022 half yearly report |               |
|                                     |   |  |  |   |               |
| 5 June 2025                         | Portfolio Holder's Report (Cllr tbc)            |  |  |   |               |
| 5 June 2025                         | Presentation on the Role of Scrutiny            | Strategic Director Corporate Resources (DH)  |  | Timetabled report   |               |
| 5 June 2025                         | Live and Move Programme Update                  | Strategic Director for Community Services (tbc)  | Portfolio Holder Leisure Services & Healthy Living (Cllr Wood) | Report from Strategic Scrutiny Committee 16 March 2023 half yearly            |               |

| <b>Combined Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus</b> |                        |                       |        |  |  |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|--------|--|--|
| 5 February 2025                                       | Budget Setting Process | Director Finance (DH) | Leader |  |  |

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