

COUNCILLORS' INFORMATION BULLETIN (FORMERLY SCRUTINY BULLETIN)

The papers attached are primarily for Councillors' information but will be made publicly available on the internet, with the exception of Part 2 items. They may relate to work in progress or updates on reports which have already been considered by the Scrutiny Committees.

The provision of this information does not override the authority of the Standing Orders as set out in the Council's Constitution. For example, Councillors remain entitled to ask for a specific item to be placed on a Scrutiny agenda, request a call-in or to ask questions of a Portfolio Holder.

If require further information please contact Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer at committee.services@exeter.gov.uk

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SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD

16 October 2024

Present:

Councillor Matthew Williams (Chair)

Councillors Mitchell, M, Parkhouse, Pole and Rees

Also present:

Head of Legal and Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services
Manager, Democratic Services Officer (PMD) and Democratic Services Officer (LS)

47 **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

48 **Scrutiny Note of 5 September 2024 Meeting**

The Scrutiny Note of the previous meeting held on 5 September 2024 was agreed as a true and accurate record.

49 **Scrutiny Proposals Submitted by Members**

The following proposals were received and discussed where appropriate:

- A. The work of Citizens Advice in Exeter and how the Exeter City Council can support its ongoing work and activities (Cllr Mitchell)
Report to CFSC 28 November 2024 alongside a report from CAB(Exeter), scoping as set out below:

1- An officer report, to cover:-

- the history of the relationship between Exeter City Council and Citizens' Advice;
- key questions about Citizens' Advice and about the end of the funding; and
- context of other voluntary-sector organisations funded.

2- An appendix, written by CA, covering:-

- business plan;
- summary of current position;
- work in the community currently taking place;
- relationship with other bodies;
- any recommendations they may have;
- what services do they provide that no one else does?; and
- how ECC money has been – and is being – spent.

- B. Scrutiny discussion around key people activity across the council with following aims: to widen general knowledge of elected members in this area; To have a focussed look at opportunities and challenges around People; Ensure we are able to offer support to the portfolio holder for this area and officers working within HR with their review and strategy moving forward; To

determine key people data that we would like to see presented as part of budget scrutiny moving forward (Cllr Palmer).

50 Draft Scrutiny Annual Report July 2023 - April 2024

The Draft Scrutiny Annual Report July 2023-April 2024 was received and the Democratic Services Officer explained that this was an interim report and a new format would be implemented with more opportunity to demonstrate impact.

The report would be presented to each committee once signed by Councillor Allcock as Chair for the period covered.

51 Draft Scrutiny Work Plan

During discussion Members noted the following:

- that a Golden Thread from scoping to outcome would be desirable;
- the addition of a case study could be helpful;
- that work planning was key to keep agendas manageable;
- that budget monitoring could come before budget setting; and
- Portfolio Holder areas no longer align with the two scrutiny committees.

Members noted the Draft Scrutiny Work Plan.

52 Any Other Business

During discussion the following points were made:

- although the constitution does not require Members to submit questions to Scrutiny in advance it would be helpful to Portfolio Holders and officers alike if questions were submitted with sufficient notice;
- written responses to questions could be included in the minutes; and
- a suggestion of a standing agenda item on Executive agenda of 'Matters referred by Scrutiny Committees'.

Date of next meeting week commencing 6 January 2025.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.40 pm

Chair

Councillors' Information Bulletin: 13 January 2025

Title of Update: RAMM Highlights Report 2024-25 (Q3)

Relevant Officers: Helen Hartstein, Audience Development Manager
Julien Parsons, Collections and Content Manager

Contact for general enquiries:

Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Corporate Resources

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1. What is the update about?

This is the quarterly highlights report for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, showing museum activity for the period October to December 2024.

2. Background

The quarterly highlights report, along with other reports showing activity against targets, is taken to RAMM's Oversight Panel and reported to Arts Council England as part of its National Portfolio Organisation funding agreement. The oversight panel consists of six councillors and two external representatives.

3. Current position

Activity plan

Visitor Experience (Activity 1)

- Opening hours were extended to incorporate the museum into the city centre late night Christmas shopping events for the first time. A successful financially sustainable initial trial which we hope to grow in future years.

Exhibitions and Events (Activity 2)

- Dartmoor: A Radical Landscape opened on 19 October. It is a major new contemporary art exhibition exploring Dartmoor's evocative landscape through photography, film and Land Art. Showing artwork from 1969 to 2024, this exhibition demonstrates Dartmoor's attraction to artists who, through photography, explore current issues including the interconnected ecological and climate crises and access rights.

- Pressing Images: prints from Exeter's fine art collection was refreshed and re-opened on 24 October. It explores the history of printmaking through a selection of around 45 works on paper and print plates, woodblocks and other printing tools that lead audiences on a captivating journey through time, from 16th-century woodcuts to the cutting-edge creations of the 21st century.
- October half term saw RAMM welcome families to take part in felt Dartmoor pony badge making, the chance to create a Dartmoor wonderland with Nature make and dressing up in historical costumes. A popular night at the museum event named Hairy hands and howling hounds saw 250 children's and adults explore the museum by candlelight whilst they solved riddles themed around Dartmoor myths and legends.
- The November RAMM Lates event was sold out. Again themed around Dartmoor visitors watched morris dancers, musical performances, talks around the moor and its future as well as having opportunities to get creative with cyanotype and collage workshops. We also ventured out of the museum with two walks on Dartmoor with artists from the exhibition, sharing their inspiration.
- A new and unique experience was had by an intimate group of visitors when the English Touring Opera performed in RAMM's galleries.

Digital (Activity 3)

- In December the GLAM-E Lab, a partnership promoting open access including RAMM and led by the University of Exeter, launched a new toolkit and resources for institutions wanting to develop their own open access policies.
- RAMM is now undertaking the soft launch of Bloomberg Connects to provide additional museum content for on-site visitors through smart phones.
- RAMM installed Civic Cookie Control on its core website (rammuseum.org.uk). This makes RAMM's site fully GDPR compliant.

Contemporary Art (Activity 4)

- In October, two new acquisitions by Céline Condorelli were exhibited at RAMM. Condorelli was the National Gallery's Artist-in-Residence in 2023, a partnership between the National Gallery and RAMM. It provided the artist an opportunity to respond to one of the greatest collections of paintings in the Western European tradition, as well as RAMM's rich collections. RAMM subsequently acquired two works courtesy of the Contemporary Art Society.
- In October two of RAMM's commissions were launched in Dartmoor: A Radical Landscape. These were by internationally renowned artist Alex Hartley and filmmaker Ashish Ghadiali both works were inspired by RAMM's Dartmoor-related collections. Hartley's takes the form of images of granite standing stones on recycled solar panels, while Ghadiali's film reflects on the climate emergency.

Children and Young people (Activity 5)

- 757 additional KS2 pupils have visited RAMM to participate in Time Odyssey. The feedback from schools was positive stating that the experience added significantly to the children's enrichment and cultural capital as well as enabling them to practise and develop their critical thinking skills. In December representatives from RAMM attended a Time Odyssey event in London, organised by Art Explora, the funder. Attendees included the British Museum and other partner museums as well as representatives from Art Explora and Clore Duffield foundation. The event was a chance to reflect on the programme, share experiences and provide feedback for future development.
- The home education programme continues to be a success with three monthly sessions fully booked within hours of advertising. These offer home-educated students a chance to take part in the same museum visit as school attenders, as well as a more creative offer designed to appeal to child-led interests within the education curriculum.
- 32 A level students on Exeter College's Art, Craft & Design (film & video) course made short video creations inspired by their visit to RAMM's Dartmoor: A Radical Landscape exhibition. Their videos will be projected in RAMM's courtyard space in January for two weeks.
- Young people with mental health needs co-created a year-long exhibition for the café area, linked to Dartmoor: A Radical Landscape. The Frame of Mind project – using mindful photography and creative skills to lay stepping stones for young people to regain mental health, meaningful activity and social engagement – was also selected as a case study for a museum sector conference showcasing best practice nationally.
- Primary school children from a state school choir joined older visitors with dementia and their paid and unpaid carers and companions for a Midwinter Morning themed around Arctic objects, sharing jokes, song, and simple craft-making together. This encourages creativity within the school, as well as wellbeing across generations.

Individual Creativity (Activity 6)

- As part of its Dartmoor-themed programme, RAMM held two creative workshops – weaving and needle felting – creating moor-inspired pieces and introducing these skills to people for the first time.
- Museum Meet-Up kicked off monthly sessions with National Lottery funding, building quickly to an average of 20 participants, often accompanied and encouraged by community mentors among RAMM's citywide wellbeing contacts. Visitors, aged 50-75, are invited to a low-pressure, cultural and social space for people coping with anxiety, low mood and/or isolation. It includes participants living with mild dementia and their partners. The sessions – which, along with the name, were determined by pilot project participants – ranged from a relaxed history curator's tour with handling; a gallery visit on the autumn theme of time and light, with clay lamp-making; object-handling around a winter theme.
- RAMM's age-friendly programme continues to provide regular multisensory outreach sessions at hospitals, care homes, older people's social housing common rooms. These focus on the theme of the seasons, or food, and sometimes include a

craft element, led by a trained artist-facilitator. The programme's charging model covers its costs, while targeting subsidised sessions at NHS wards and Age UK.

Skills Development (Activity 7)

- 20 Liberal Arts students completed a 'think tank' challenge based on how to attract people to the museum who don't usually visit.
- 14 people joined the Youth Panel (aged 18-25).
- 2 students have started a paid Access to Internship in connection with the University of Exeter.
- 6 people have joined the Future Skills Programme.
- 6 students have started a student placement in Engagement, Marketing, Contemporary Art and Collections.

Dynamic Collections (Activity 8)

- Workshops for the first community project have been delivered. We worked with artist Simon Lee Dicker to deliver a series of 6 workshops with participants from Hikmat. 109 people from a variety of backgrounds (including Southeast Asian, Chinese, Arab, Libyan, Egyptian) took part in the project. We received excellent feedback on the workshops from attendees particularly in relation to skills building and connection with others.
- A wide variety of outputs have been created as a result of the project, including over 100 community-produced ceramic pieces; a collection of community comments relating to ceramic pieces (and food) from RAMM's collections; photogrammetry (3D scans) of 6 of the ceramic pieces produced in the workshops and a series of artworks, inspired by the workshops, created by Simon Lee Dicker which will be included in the Food: Beyond the Plate exhibition at RAMM in 2025.

Community engagement and university collaboration (Creative Arc) (Activity 9)

- The Tastes Like Home project held community conversations around the city on the theme of food, meeting around 80 residents from Beacon Heath, Wonford, Summerway, and St Thomas. Collaborations with community hub LOVEfood and colleagues in ECC social housing included older residents through coffee mornings and lunch clubs. Comments are being woven into an artists' representation to decorate the RAMM café space. Another element of the project is a collaboration with multiple researchers within the Exeter Food Network at University of Exeter, to compile a digital map of food activism around Exeter. This will feature in RAMM's upcoming exhibition, Beyond the Plate, and be passed on to community researchers in Food Exeter to maintain as a legacy.

Investment principles plan

Ambition & Quality

- Impact & Insight toolkit results for RAMM's summer transport exhibition had high scores of 86 for enjoyment and 82 for captivation. Also 96% of those surveyed rated their experience good or excellent.
- The age demographic who responded to the survey indicates we reached a good spread of ages (more than previous summer exhibitions of Lego and GTH). 25% of those attending came with children and 96% of those attending particularly wanted to see this exhibition. Those who came to the exhibition wanted to bring their children and had a good experience when they were here.

Inclusivity & Relevance

- Mental Health First Aid training was carried out in October 2024.
- A process for monitoring how RAMM's accessibility materials are being used has been implemented.

Environmental Responsibility

- Events and engagement around Beyond the Plate and Tastes Like Home have highlighted and collaborated with sustainable initiatives around the city, including surplus food projects, foraging and food-growing initiatives. They have also connected with community groups sharing skills around low-cost, low-energy cooking.
- Craft activities are planned with sustainability in mind, avoiding single-use plastic and non-recyclable materials, and sourcing from low-carbon suppliers as much as possible.
- Exhibition materials are procured with sustainability as well as restrained budgets in mind, re-using items whenever possible.
- The Environmental Forum for Action group continues to meet, discussing how RAMM might communicate its ongoing decarbonisation with external audiences.
- AECOM, the third-party consultant working with ECC on a city-wide decarbonisation plan, produced their final report in November 2024 outlining current energy usage, sustainable/suitable alternatives, and projected energy/cost savings.

Dynamism

- The AI team is meeting regularly, and the digital officer has attended a seminar entitled How AI will Transform Museums. The team has engaged with the new Head of IT at ECC, asking to be kept informed about the council's AI policy as RAMM's approach will have to be governed by this. A survey was sent to all staff, to assess understanding of and attitudes to the use of AI in the museum and the results show common themes. Most respondents are interested in learning more and do see potential uses for AI but want to understand it better before trying it out. 92% of respondents expressed concerns, over RAMM losing its "personal touch" as well as the ethics of AI, copyright issues, deskilling/job replacement and the environmental implications.

- RAMM's community panel met to discuss the museum's commercial offering and some useful feedback was received.
- A new model of venue hire (large scale ticketed events) was piloted at the museum 'Night at the museum - a Halloween Silent Disco'. Following the success of the event two further years have been booked. Reviews are ongoing to adapt the terms and conditions of hire, invest in low level event infrastructure from the profits, and improve event management plans. A working group is exploring similar events and provider/organisers to grow this area of commercial activity.
- With the launch of Dartmoor: A Radical Landscape the team is now delivering point of sale ticketing in the exhibition itself. It is hoped that this new approach will improve the visitor journey and encourage further customers to visit paid exhibitions. It has also provided further training and development opportunities for the front of house team.
- RAMM's Volunteer Engagement Lead is participating in a conversation between a number of organisations, led by the National Trust Volunteer Engagement Lead. The aim is to deliver a changed experience of volunteering in the UK and build strong civic participation for our communities.

4. Future position

n/a

5. Are there any other options?

n/a

6. Conclusion

RAMM continues to deliver a varied, inclusive and ambitious programme of activities to its audiences in the city and further afield. It is performing well against its targets and KPIs

Councillors' Information Bulletin: 13 January 2025

Title of Update: Treasury Management Quarter 3 Report

Relevant Officers: David Hodgson, Strategic Director – Corporate Resources

Claire Hodgson, Finance Manager – Corporate Resources

Contact for general enquiries:

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1. What is the update about?

The CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Code of Practice for Treasury Management 2021 recommends that members be updated on treasury management activities at least quarterly. The Treasury Management Strategy for the coming year, the annual Treasury Management outturn, and the mid-year review are presented to Executive and Council. Other quarterly updates are not required to be formally presented to Council. This report provides an update on the third quarter of 2024/25 in compliance with the Code.

2. Report Details:

2.1 Interest Rate Forecasts

The Council has appointed MUFG Corporate Markets (formerly Link Group) as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The following table gives MUFG Corporate Markets forecast to December 2027.

Link Group Interest Rate View	11.11.24												
	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27
BANK RATE	4.75	4.50	4.25	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
3 month ave earnings	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
6 month ave earnings	4.70	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
12 month ave earnings	4.70	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
5 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	4.00	3.90
10 yr PWLB	5.30	5.10	5.00	4.80	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.10
25 yr PWLB	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.50
50 yr PWLB	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.30

2.2. Treasury Management Strategy

The Council approved the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy Statement, including the Annual Investment Strategy, at its meeting on 20 February 2024. In accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice it sets out the Council's investment priorities as being; Security of capital, Liquidity, and Yield. Officers review the creditworthiness of counterparties when making investment decisions, and our treasury advisers provide updates of changes to credit ratings.

Council also approved a Treasury Management Environmental, Social and Governance policy in December 2024 which includes consideration of ESG issues as part of its Treasury Management activity, provided that the key priorities of security, liquidity and yield are met.

The Council's investment strategy was to continue to hold small surplus funds and to seek to utilise its Call Accounts, Money Market Funds, use the Government's Debt Management Office and use short-dated deposits which would be placed with Local Authorities, Banks or Building Societies in-line with the Council's counterparty list.

The Council's stated borrowing strategy was to defer borrowing until later years, where possible, and to reduce the size of the Council's investment balance instead, however some targeted long-term borrowing may be undertaken where the costs will be offset against future income streams.

3. Investments

- 3.1 The Council had access to four Money Market Funds during the period. The money market funds allow immediate access to our funds and spreads risk as it is pooled with investments by other organisations and invested across a wide range of financial institutions.

Amount	Investment	Interest rate*
£7,000,000	Federated Investors	5.07%
£0	CCLA - The Public Sector Deposit Fund	5.08%
£4,000,000	Black Rock Asset Management	5.01%
£10,000,000	Aberdeen Investments	5.06%
£21,000,000		

* Interest rate is variable (therefore rates quoted are an average to 31 December 2024)

- 3.1 The Council made investments in the CCLA's LAMIT Property Fund in 2016. It should be noted that investments in property funds are a long-term commitment which means that there can be fluctuations on the return from the investment.

Amount	Investment	Dividend Yield 24/25 Q2
£5,000,000	CCLA – LAMIT Property Fund	5.20%

4 Borrowing

- 4.1 When the 2024/25 budget was set the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) at 31st March 2024 was expected to be £235.120m, rising by £6.522m to £241.642m by 31st March 2025 to fund the capital programme. The Council is in an under-borrowed position, meaning that the CFR has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as borrowing costs remain high.
- 4.2 The Council's long-term borrowing is currently £163.680m (£91.436m General Fund and £72.244m HRA) and there is no short-term borrowing. No further external borrowing has been undertaken during the quarter.
- 4.3 Details of loans are set out below:

Principal Amount outstanding as at 31 st December 2024	Lender	Interest rate	Loan type	Date of repayment
£56,884,000	PWLB maturity (HRA)	3.48%	Maturity	28/03/2062
£1,819,348	PWLB 25 year annuity	2.34%	Annuity	11/01/2044
£1,767,489	PWLB 25 year annuity	2.08%	Annuity	04/04/2044
£4,021,672	PWLB 30 year annuity	1.61%	Annuity	26/09/2049
£7,840,191	PWLB 35 year annuity	1.71%	Annuity	26/09/2054
£33,672,366	PWLB 50 year annuity	1.80%	Annuity	26/09/2069
£15,360,000	PWLB maturity (HRA)	1.31%	Maturity	14/04/2070
£42,314,696	PWLB 50 year annuity	1.78%	Annuity	24/12/2071

- 4.4 The ongoing borrowing requirement will be monitored and a decision of whether to take further borrowing will be made in light of need and current and forecast interest rates. If additional borrowing is required advice will be sought from the treasury management advisors in order that the most cost-effective form of borrowing can be secured. The decision of whether to take external long-term borrowing is delegated to the Section 151 Officer and Leader of the Council.

5 Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits

The Council sets in February each year prudential indicators for Treasury Management to ensure that proper control of borrowing and investing is maintained. These indicators can be found in the Council's budget book. At Quarter 3 2024/25 there is no projected significant deviation from these indicators.

During the quarter ended 31 December 2024, the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25. No difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices. The approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the quarter.