

EXECUTIVE

Date: Tuesday 28 April 2026

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Guildhall, High Street, Exeter

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business.

If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Mark Devin, Democratic Services Officer - democratic.services@exeter.gov.uk

Entry to the Civic Centre can be gained through the Customer Service Centre, Paris Street.

Membership -

Councillors Bialyk (Chair), Wright (Deputy Chair), Asvachin, Foale, Patrick, Vizard, Williams, R and Wood

Agenda

Part I: Items suggested for discussion with the press and public present

1 **Apologies**

To receive apologies for absence from Committee members.

2 **Minutes**

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2026.

(Pages 3 -
14)

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 consideration of any of the items on the agenda, but if it should wish to do so, the following resolution should be passed:-

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

5 **Questions from the Public Under Standing order No. 19**

To receive questions relating to items on the Agenda from members of the public and responses thereto.

Details of questions should be notified to the Democratic Services Manager by 10.00am at least three working days prior to the meeting. Further information about speaking at a committee can be found here: [Speaking at a Committee](#)

6 **Matters referred by Scrutiny Committees**

To consider recommendations made to the Executive from Scrutiny Committees.

7 **Exeter City Centre Vision and Strategy 2026 – 2031 Public Consultation**

To consider the report of the Strategic Director for Place.

(Pages 15
- 28)

8 **Exeter Cultural Strategy 2026 – 2031 Public Consultation**

To consider the report of the Strategic Director for Place.

(Pages 29
- 42)

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Executive will be held on **Tuesday 30 June 2026** at 5.30 pm in the Civic Centre.

A statement of the executive decisions taken at this meeting will be produced and published on the Council website as soon as reasonably practicable.

Find out more about Exeter City Council services by looking at our web site <http://www.exeter.gov.uk>. This will give you the dates of all future Committee meetings and tell you how you can ask a question at a Scrutiny Committee meeting. Alternatively, contact Democratic Services at democratic.services@exeter.gov.uk

Individual reports on this agenda can be produced in large print on request to Democratic Services democratic.services@exeter.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 17 March 2026

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)

Councillors Wright, Asvachin, Foale, Patrick, Vizard, Williams, R and Wood

Also present:

Councillor Haigh (as an opposition group Leader);

Councillor Holland (as an opposition group Leader);

Councillor M. Mitchell (as an opposition group Leader);

Councillor Moore (as an opposition group Leader); and

Councillor Payne (as an opposition group Leader).

Also present:

Chief Executive, Strategic Director for Place, Head of Service - Finance, Head of Service - HR, Workforce Planning and Organisational Development, Benefits & Welfare Lead, Head of Service - Customers and Communities, Head of Service - City Centre and Net Zero, Head of Legal and Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services Officer

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2025, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

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QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 19

No questions from members of the public were received.

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MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no matters referred from the Scrutiny Committees for this meeting.

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LORD MAYORALTY

The Leader proposed, and Councillor Wright seconded, that Councillor Gemma Rolstone be nominated as Lord Mayor Elect for the 2026/27 Municipal Council year, and that Councillor Lucy Haigh be nominated as the Deputy Lord Mayor Elect for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED that Councillor Gemma Rolstone be nominated as Lord Mayor Elect for the 2026/27 Municipal Year and that Councillor Lucy Haigh be nominated as the Deputy Lord Mayor Elect for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

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EXETER CITY COUNCIL'S CARBON REDUCTION PLAN

The Executive received the report which summarised the Council's response to research undertaken by the University of Exeter, which for the first time estimated

the full cost of carbon emissions across its services. Using this, the Council had developed a carbon reduction plan. Particular points raised included:

- the plan showed positive current trajectory measures in line with the recommendations and included business as usual measures to reduce greenhouse emissions which had been built into all service delivery plans for all Council services;
- known costs, were included and each action had performance metrics for monitoring progress;
- additional mid-term and maximum scenario measures had been incorporated;
- some projects were currently unfunded but had been included to demonstrate ambitions, if funding became available;
- there were funding constraints highlighted as a key challenge to delivery;
- there were seven service areas covered, with housing, buildings, and transport identified as having the highest impact;
- the Carbon Action Plan would be a live document, which would be reviewed and updated every six months, with regular progress reports submitted to the Strategic Scrutiny Committee every six months, starting in June 2026; and
- numerous projects had already been completed or were underway, with a full list included in the report and appendix.

During the discussion, Executive Members raised the following points and Questions:

- the high-quality work undertaken was commended;
- the contribution of the South West Energy and Environment Group and partnerships with other local authorities was important;
- the report was pioneering in estimating Council-wide carbon impacts;
- the service-wide approach and inclusion of measurable metrics to track progress was welcomed;
- the range of projects underway, included the Riverside initiatives and retrofitting of Council properties were highlighted;
- the overall direction of travel, showed how the Council was on a positive trajectory;
- additional funding would be required to go further;
- further detail from Strategic Directors and Service Leads on funding challenges would be required for future projects;
- the Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities indicated his intention to engage with the local MP's and government ministers regarding funding opportunities, which would be carried forward as an action arising from the report;
- the report helped bridge the gap between ambition and delivery, providing a clear roadmap and outlined challenges;
- the Council had set a challenging target and was working towards it;
- the Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services & Healthy Living highlighted the progress made within the leisure portfolio, including St. Sidwell's Point which demonstrated strong carbon reduction performance;
- improvements at Riverside leisure centre, included energy efficiency works and an ongoing funded roof project and further opportunities, including heat recovery and solar panels were highlighted;
- upcoming works at Wonford were referenced and clarification was sought on associated environmental benefits and carbon savings;
- the Isca Centre was noted as a site with potential for future carbon reduction improvements;

- the report was clear, accessible, and a helpful summary of current and future actions;
- some items marked red including procurement data investigation could be reclassified as amber to better reflect progress;
- the impact assessment was commended for clearly highlighting positive benefits for residents and communities; and
- the importance of the plan's real-world benefits was highlighted, including reduced fuel bills, improved wellbeing, and better health outcomes for residents.

The Leader noted importance of wider assets and referenced risks seen elsewhere, such as Councils considering museum closures. He highlighted the alignment with the corporate plan and planning policy, particularly around housing retrofitting and welcomed the local development of 92 homes with 35% affordable housing using heat source systems instead of gas.

In response to questions raised by Executive Members, the Strategic Director for Place advised that:

- an example of a cost challenge would be in fully converting all Council homes from gas boilers to air source heat pumps (maximum scenario) would cost approximately £51 million;
- this transition would significantly reduce carbon emissions but could increase short-term energy costs for residents;
- the long-term ambition was for more sustainable and ultimately cost-effective heating solutions;
- the benefits of external funding, citing Riverside as an example was where government funding enabled roof replacement and installation of solar panels;
- the importance of identifying and bidding for available funding opportunities was highlighted;
- the carbon reduction measures would be considered in all future capital projects, including Wonford, with further details coming in a forthcoming Council report;
- he clarified that "red" ratings in the action plan indicated areas where work had not yet started, rather than severity or cost; and
- explained the RAG colour coding system: Red = not yet started, Amber = in progress, and Green = completed.

An opposition group leader raised the following points and questions:

- welcomed the report as helpful and informative but highlighted concern that RAG ratings may not reflect actual carbon reduction outcomes;
- highlighted the importance of procurement data in driving genuine environmental change;
- raised awareness of methane emissions from landfill sites as a relevant issue and the report may be missing consideration of greenhouse gas sources like methane;
- requested clarification on whether the RAG rating measures showed progress of KPI implementation or actual impact on greenhouse gas reduction;
- enquired how procurement data reporting linked to meaningful carbon reduction if responses did not reflect real change;
- enquired on the shift from electric vehicles to Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel for fleet, including reasons and environmental implications; and
- asked why methane emissions were not included in the report.

In response to questions raised by opposition Members, the Strategic Director for Place advised:

- the RAG ratings reflected progress of individual projects or initiatives, rather than their overall impact on carbon reduction;
- ratings were based on delivery status such as the number of homes retrofitted;
- measuring the actual carbon reduction impact would require a separate analysis;
- further detail on the shift to HVO fuel for vehicles would be provided at a later date but advised that electric vehicle transition remained a success, supported by solar-generated electricity; and
- HVO was being explored as an additional measure to further reduce emissions, with trials already underway.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the Carbon Reduction Plan, as set out in Appendix A, be approved; and
- (2) the work undertaken to incorporate Positive Current Trajectory measures into Service Plans, and to align these with Corporate Plan outcomes and the Corporate Performance Dashboard, be noted.

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ADOPTION OF REVISED NON-INFRASTRUCTURE HABITAT MITIGATION (SAMM) CONTRIBUTIONS

The Executive received the report which sought approval to adopt a revised non-infrastructure habitat mitigation contributions (Strategic Access Management and Monitoring – SAMM) for residential development within the designated habitat mitigation zone. Particular reference was made to:

- the report presented measures to mitigate the impact of new housing developments in Exeter on sensitive wildlife habitats, with a focus on protecting the Exe Estuary and Pebblebed Heaths from increased recreational pressure;
- there were a range of measures, described as “non-infrastructure”, which included warden services and biodiversity monitoring;
- these actions formed part of a wider toolkit to preserve and manage habitats;
- partnership working with neighbouring District Councils, Devon County Council, and Devon Wildlife Trust was important in helping to preserve habitats;
- funding was collected via Section 106 agreements and was pooled across authorities through a shared governance structure; and
- there were many benefits for a coordinated, cross-boundary approach to habitat protection and highlighted the urgency to adopt the updated rates, as all other districts had done so, with implementation required by 1 April 2026.

During the discussion, Executive Members raised the following points and Questions:

- the importance of allowing public access to green spaces for wellbeing while ensuring environmental protection was highlighted;
- index-linked contributions to maintain funding stability without frequent revisions was supported;

- there was a need for collaboration with other Councils for planning, maintenance, and protection of natural environments and in safeguarding those habitats for current and future generations;
- funding administration was undertaken through the Habitat Regulations Executive Committee, represented by Exeter, East Devon, and Teignbridge Councils;
- the current model had been recognised by Natural England as good practice; and
- the Southeast Devon Wildlife Joint Habitat Site Mitigation Strategy 2024 was highlighted which detailed protections for the Exe Estuary, Dawlish Warren, and East Devon Pebblebed Heath.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the revised Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) contributions be adopted for all qualifying residential planning applications received on or after 1 April 2026; and
- (2) delegated authority be granted to the Head of City Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to apply annual index-linking and publish updated contribution rates.

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DEVON LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

The Executive considered a report regarding the publication of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for the geographical area covering Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, which was a legal requirement led by Devon County Council, with Exeter City Council acting as a supporting authority. Particular reference was made to:

- the recommendation sought agreement for the strategy to be published;
- the strategy mapped important habitats, species, and provided opportunities for biodiversity enhancement across Devon, including Exeter's valley parks;
- a public consultation was undertaken by Devon County Council and was considered positive;
- an interactive online GIS mapping platform had been developed to allow easy public access and exploration of biodiversity assets;
- the significance of Exeter's urban contributions to county-wide biodiversity and potential for biodiversity net gain (BNG) was highlighted;
- an all Member briefing had previously been held which showcased the website and explained its use with guidance from the county ecologist; and
- the strategy was an example of successful cross-council collaboration across Devon.

During the discussion, Executive Members raised the following points and Questions:

- it was enquired how the public would access the interactive Local Nature Recovery Strategy website and whether a link could be provided via the City Council website or directly to Devon's site; and
- what was the officer involvement in the working group and had they been engaged throughout the strategy's development?

The Leader having sought confirmation, advised that Exeter City Council could not make changes to the Strategy itself and was only in a position to endorse its publication.

An opposition group leader raised the following points and questions:

- raised concern over significant local nature depletion, both on land and in water and what was being done about this;
- identifying sites for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) locally was important to improve nature in Exeter rather than elsewhere;
- highlighted the need for a connected network of habitats, not just isolated units, to enable wildlife to thrive;
- the reliance on developer contributions alone was insufficient and local biodiversity strategy needed to be developed, with clear, proactive actions involving the community; and
- the mapping tool was welcomed, but there was a need to translate priorities into actions to protect wildlife species.

The Leader clarified that the report was endorsing publication only and did not require the Council to take further action at this stage. He emphasised that the Council was not being asked to decide what it should be doing locally regarding biodiversity. Other processes existed for addressing the actions and concerns raised, and those should be directed to the Portfolio Holders Strategic Directors.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously.

RECOMMENDED that Council confirm its agreement, as a Supporting Authority, for Devon County Council, as the Responsible Authority, to publish the Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

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CRISIS AND RESILIENCE FUND: HOUSING PAYMENTS AND CRISIS PAYMENTS

The Executive received the report which sought agreement on the proposed policy for Housing Payments under the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) as part of the local government finance settlement. Particular reference was made to:

- the CRF had two objectives: providing financial support to those in crisis and helping residents build long-term financial resilience;
- the report focused on the first objective, which would deliver support through housing payments or crisis payments;
- it was intended to be put into effect from April 2026;
- the new housing payments policy was a rebranded version of the existing discretionary housing payment scheme, which maintained the current eligibility criteria;
- funding for housing payments would come directly to the Council and the crisis payment funding would be received from Devon County Council, pending confirmation of allocation;
- a recommendation sought to grant delegated powers to the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Leader, to approve the final Crisis Payment scheme once the funding allocation and agreement from Devon County Council had been confirmed;
- the new scheme was replacing the previous Household Support Fund arrangements, but with a greater focus on emergency crisis payments; and

- a recent Government announcement advised that additional £50 million funding was being made available to support families using oil for home heating, which would be incorporated into the crisis payment policy.

During the discussion, Executive Members raised the following points and Questions:

- the team was thanked for their work on bringing the report forward;
- enquired on the number of local homes using oil heating and the potential impact on Crisis and Resilience Fund allocations, noting the particular issue in rural areas;
- clarification was sought on the red indicators in the crisis payment application criteria, questioning whether there were different tiers of considerations;
- confirmation was sought on the additional government funding for households using oil would be included under the current recommendations and not require a separate approval; and
- did the Council now know the exact funding allocation from Devon County Council, noting uncertainty had complicated the policy development.

The Leader observed the impact of rising heating oil costs, noting prices had increased several times in a short period, potentially pushing households into crisis. He noted that many affected residents may not normally meet eligibility criteria for support, but sudden cost spikes created financial emergencies.

In response to questions raised by Executive Members, the Head of Service – Finance and the Benefits and Welfare Lead advised that:

- the £50 million government funding for households using oil would largely address rural areas, with limited impact in Exeter;
- census data from 2021 showed that 135 households in Exeter relied on heating oil, compared with 6,000 in East Devon and 4,500 in Teignbridge. This information would determine how Devon County allocated the £1.3 million for the region;
- the red indicators in the crisis payment policy reflected that the draft policy was still being finalised, which the delegated powers being sought would complete it;
- the recent government announcement on oil payments would be factored into the final Crisis Payment scheme and therefore covered under the current recommendations and would be incorporated into the final scheme through delegated powers, with no further committee approval required; and
- final applications for the crisis payment scheme totalled around £586,000, similar to previous Household Support Fund allocations, with an additional £50,000 suggested for the oil top-up element, pending confirmation.

The Leader noted that the report would go to the April Council meeting for approval and could include updated funding allocation information at that time.

Opposition group leaders raised the following points and questions:

- enquired whether the eligibility criteria for the scheme required receipt of benefits;
- enquired about any learnings or trends from the seven previous Household Support Schemes and how the Council and partner organisations could improve preventative measures to reduce emergencies and crises, within current system limitations;

- enquired about the financing changes to a consolidated grant instead of the previous refund mechanism for the DHP and whether any unspent funds could be carried forward to the following year; and
- enquired if oversubscribed funds could be drawn into the next year's allocation in advance?

In response to questions raised by opposition Members, the Benefits and Welfare Lead advised that:

- the Crisis Payment scheme targeted low-income households, but eligibility was not restricted to benefit recipients;
- low income was assessed based on individual circumstances, using benefits as a benchmark;
- the Household Support Fund previously focused on short-term cost-of-living payments with little wraparound support. The new scheme highlighted resilience, combining financial help with support services, advice, and signposting to reduce future crises;
- payments were now delivered through grant funding rather than a reimbursement system, providing a use or lose budget for the year;
- flexibility existed to move funds between different strands locally and across Devon, allowing reallocation if some areas were overspending while others were underspending; and
- the new scheme was responsive and adaptive, to uncertain demand and adjustments would be made throughout the year and in future iterations based on experience.

The Leader requested a Councillor briefing on the fund to provide an overview of its operation, eligibility, trends, and learning points and to provide guidance to Members on how Councillors could assist residents, including signposting and support.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously

RECOMMENDED that Council:

- (1) adopt the draft Crisis and Resilience Fund: Housing Payments policy; and
- (2) grant delegated authority to the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness Prevention & Customer Services, to agree the scheme for disbursing Crisis and Resilience Fund: Crisis Payments.

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CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY

The Executive received the report to approve the revised Corporate Complaints Policy, which set out a single, consistent framework for managing all non-housing complaints received by the Council. Particular reference was made to:

- the policy introduced a single, consistent corporate complaints policy for all areas outside housing ombudsman cases;
- it aligned with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's new complaint handling code which would be effective from April 2026 and the Housing Ombudsman code;

- the policy updates included clearer standards, aligned weight scales, stronger oversight, and improved definitions and would provide greater consistency for customers and clearer expectations for staff;
- the policy also enhanced transparency and accountability through annual self-assessment and reporting on all complaints, not just those referred to the Ombudsman;
- the policy established a cross-council complaints learning group to use complaints to drive service improvement and organisational learning; and
- Member responsibility for corporate complaints would be formalised which would strengthen oversight.

During the discussion, Executive Members raised the following points and Questions:

- the alignment between housing and non-housing complaint processes with ombudsman codes was commended;
- it was enquired whether all customer issues were now treated as stage one complaints or if some could be handled as concerns before entering the formal complaint process;
- what was the role of Councillors when residents approached them, including how to explain the process and how issues raised through the Councillor portal were treated;
- a concern was raised about complaints being closed if residents did not respond to emails and whether there was a process to ensure communications reached residents if emails were missing;
- the policy was clear, clean, and easier to understand and the update/status box was commended; and
- clarification was sought on the term partners in section 2.1 of the policy and how it differed from contractors.

In response to questions raised by Executive Members, the Head of Service - Customer & Communities advised that:

- the policy clarified the distinction between service requests and complaints, and it was confirmed that stage one complaints would still be recorded and treated as such, while encouraging resolution at the first point of contact where possible;
- Member enquiries were generally managed through the member inquiry process but Councillors may submit complaints on behalf of constituents with their consent;
- when closing complaints, the preferred contact method was used, and investigations were concluded with a solution even if a complainant did not respond, which was in line with Ombudsman guidance;
- partners were included in the policy only where formal agreements existed; and
- complaints relating to partner delivered programs were handled under the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints code.

An opposition group leader raised the following points and questions:

- concerns were raised regarding the member enquiry portal, noting that it remained a work in progress and was not currently considered fit for purpose by the Member.
- concerns were raised about the member enquiry portal, noting it was still a work in progress and was not currently considered by the Member fit for purpose;

- there was a need for a clear mechanism for Councillors to raise complaints on behalf of residents;
- the policy lacked explicit consideration of vulnerability, despite Ombudsman guidance recommending that complexity and vulnerability be factored into complaint handling; and
- it was enquired whether the process included direct engagement with complainants, noting that residents may only receive an email without dialogue or reassurance, and how could this be handled better.

In response to questions raised by opposition Members, the Head of Service - Customer & Communities

- complaints from vulnerable individuals would receive tailored support, with adaptations made to the handling process to reflect their needs;
- all adjustments and support provided would be recorded and anonymised, with annual reporting on those measures; and
- regardless of vulnerability, further clarification would be sought from complainants when needed, and any extensions to complaint timelines would be clearly communicated with reasons provided.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the revised Corporate Complaints Policy.

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GENDER PAY GAP REPORT

The Executive considered the report which outlined the statutory requirement under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 for local authorities employing more than 250 staff to publish annual gender pay gap information. Particular reference was made to:

- Exeter City Council demonstrated a strong gender balance, with no structural disadvantage for women, with women earning more than men on both mean and median hourly rates (gender pay gap of - 6.68%);
- women were well represented in senior roles, particularly in the upper-middle quartile (62.3% women), showing a strong progression pipeline;
- the lower quartile showed an under representation of women, largely in operational roles such as waste and recycling, reflecting job family composition rather than inequality;
- Exeter City Council had no bonus payments and a transparent, consistent pay and grading framework, which supported equitable outcomes; and
- efforts were being made to reduce the gender pay gap, with a focus on removing barriers rather than overcorrection, with the negative gap reflecting workforce composition rather than unfair pay practices.

The Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Community Safety and City Centre noted positively that women in the workforce were encouraged and supported to progress to higher responsibility and pay levels, and this achievement was commended.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously

RESOLVED that Executive note:

- (1) the findings of the Gender Pay Gap analysis, including:
 - a) the average rate of pay for females remains higher than for males;
 - b) the mean gender pay difference has increased from 5.07% to 6.68%;
 - c) the median gender pay difference has decreased from 14.03% to 11.85%;
and
 - d) there are nearly three times more males than females in the lowest earnings quartile.
- (2) that the Council would publish its Gender Pay Gap Report on the Exeter City Council website and on the national gov.uk database; and
- (3) that the report would be reviewed annually to track the relationship between female and male earnings.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.48 pm)

Chair

The decisions indicated will normally come into force 5 working days after publication of the Statement of Decisions unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. Decisions regarding the policy framework or corporate objectives or otherwise outside the remit of the Executive will be considered by Council on 7 April 2026.

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REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 28 April 2026

Report of: Strategic Director Place

Title: Exeter City Centre Strategy 2026 – 2031 Public Consultation

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

1.1 The draft City Centre Strategy 2026 - 2031, entitled 'Exeter: Our City Centre' is in its final stages of development, with the final stage seeking feedback from residents and the business community. This report is seeking authorisation from Executive to go out to public consultation on the draft Exeter City Centre Strategy.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That Executive approves the publication of the draft City Centre Strategy 2026 – 2031 for public consultation from 18 May 2026 for six weeks.

2.2 That Executive gives delegated authority to the Strategic Director for Place, in consultation with the Relevant Portfolio Holder to change the consultation date if required.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 To gain feedback from residents and the business community on prioritising themes within the City Centre Strategy.

3.2 Approval to go out to public consultation will enable an evidence-led development of a long-term strategy through engagement and partnership working.

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

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation. Officer resources have been identified to lead on and deliver the consultation.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 There are no additional financial implications for Council to consider.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations. The public consultation will be carried out in accordance with the council's Consultation Charter.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 The Monitoring Officer has no additional comments.

8. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

8.1 In recommending this proposal, potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act. An Equality Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention. A further EQIA will be completed for the final version of the City Centre Strategy is completed.

9. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

9.1 As a result of this report and its recommendation, there are no direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

10. Background and development of the Strategy:

10.1 Exeter City Council commissioned LDA Design to assist with the development of the new City Centre Strategy.

10.2 To gain insight from the business community and elected members on issues and opportunities for Exeter's city centre, four engagement workshops were held with the business community July 2024 at Positive Lights and a joint workshop with City Council and relevant Devon County Council Ward Councillors in November 2024. The following questions were asked of both groups:

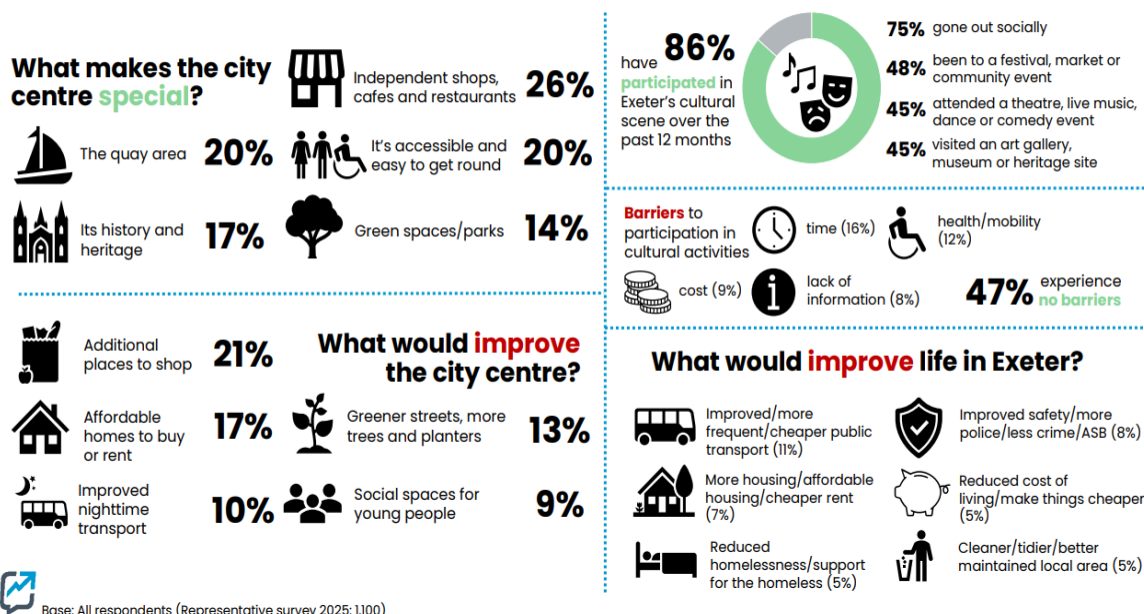
- 1) What are the key issues and challenges the city centre faces?
- 2) What makes the city centre a special place?
- 3) Which are the priority development sites within the city centre?
- 4) What uses or activities are missing from the City Centre?
- 5) How can city centre streets and spaces be improved?
- 6) Which city businesses and partners should be involved with the delivery of the Action Plan?
- 7) From what has been discussed do far, how can it be paid for?

10.3 As part of the 2025 Exeter residents survey, several questions, like the questions asked above, were included in the survey to gain viewpoints on resident's use of the City Centre, as well as culture. 1,100 telephone interviews were completed during July and August 2025. An online survey was also available for residents and business to complete at the same time; 782 responses were received. The infographic below, provides some of the highlights from the 2025 residents survey.

10.4 The results of the City Centre, as well as the Culture questions, have been analysed and incorporated into the draft Strategy. The results of the resident survey have been uploaded onto the City Council website, which can be viewed:

<https://exeter.gov.uk/media/cn0qfoiy/exeter-resident-survey-2025-report.pdf>

Exeter city centre and cultural scene



10.5 As part of the research stage, LDA undertook extensive desktop research on regional and national strategies that play a role in management and development of City Centre's, as well as analysing locally available data sets. This work helped to develop the City Centre Strategy.

10.6 The title of the document is, 'Exeter: Our City Centre'. The City Centre is defined as an area within a 10-minute walk from Exeter Cathedral. It includes the arrival gateways of Exeter Central, Exeter St David's and St Thomas Train Stations, as well as the valuable green spaces of Belmont Park and Bury Meadow Park, and the historic Quay and Piazza Terracina.

10.7 To provide a basis for delivery of the final Strategy document, an Action Tracker is being developed. The Action Tracker will list each Theme and Priority Action, which organisation supports delivery, potential funding streams, measures of success and how progress will be monitored. The Action Tracker will be a 'live' document and will be regularly reviewed and updated, as and when projects evolve and are completed. Themes will be prioritised from the results of the public consultation.

10.8 The ownership of the City Centre Strategy sits with Exeter City Council. However, delivery will lie with a range of different partners and stakeholders who share common objectives. The City Centre Strategy will be an important tool to foster collaboration to ensure activities can be aligned. The Strategy is about prioritising interventions that ensure the wellbeing and prosperity of communities. As well as attracting new businesses to the City Centre, the strategy supports public space improvements, the feeling of safety, jobs, housing, leisure, culture, tourism and infrastructure.

10.9 The City Centre Strategy includes the following vision statement:

Exeter: Our City Centre

“A city centre buzzing with talent, where dynamic startups create ideas and energy, sometimes re-using empty buildings.

Tired buildings and sites are revitalised with high quality architecture and spaces accommodating a vibrant mix of new uses.

The culture, history and commerce of Exeter is brought to life for everyone.

Streets and spaces feel alive morning, noon and night, with independent and national shops serving the needs of our residents, students and visitors.

From the High Street to the Quay, there are homes for families, professionals and students.

A stone's throw from the Roman Walls and Cathedral, musicians, artists and comedians make people move, think and laugh.

The City Centre excites and inspires, with culture, events, public art, unique shops, food, urban nature and leisure experiences.

People can hop onto a bus or taxi, easily and safely. Waterways and parks are connected by walkable, safe, green streets.

Buildings and spaces are adaptable making Exeter City Centre resilient to changes in our climate”.

10.10 Exeter: Our City Centre is structured under six themes, which have been drawn from the business and member engagement, the results of the residents' survey and the evidence base:

- **Appearance and Cleanliness** - first impressions and lasting memories of the city will be improved through maintaining and enhancing the attractiveness of the city. The quality of the city centre environment will be raised, fostering local pride and attracting investment from business.
- **Safety, Accessibility and Wellbeing** - the city centre will be an inclusive, welcoming environment that is safe to be in, by day and night. Anti-social behaviour will be addressed positively and with compassion, ensuring people feel safe and businesses thrive. Inclusivity will be enhanced through the diverse, multi-use offering of the city centre that caters to a wider range of needs of its existing and future population.
- **Vibrant Daytime and Night-time Economy** - the city centre will be vibrant and resilient, characterised by the diversity of businesses, clustered along key streets. Vacant shops will be brought back into use, the evening economy offer will be more varied, making the city centre feel animated during both the day and night-time. The city will be a magnet for businesses attracting and retaining entrepreneurs, students and young people, fostering innovation and entrepreneurialism.
- **Destination Offer** - the city's quarters will define a range of cultural and heritage activities which are well publicised through city branding. A new network will connect renovated historic assets and improved public realm.
- **City Centre Living** - the city will be recognised nationally and globally as a liveable city that puts well-being centre stage. Exeter will meet the needs of all our residents;

there will be a greater choice of housing options and improved affordability. Major development sites will deliver housing and a diversity of uses.

- **Connectivity of the City Centre** - Exeter will be easy and pleasurable to move around. The city will capitalise on its compactness with attractive pedestrian and cycle connections between our green and blue spaces, key city centre locations, public transport hubs and where residents live and work.

10.11 Next steps include the Head of Service City Centre & Net Zero working with the Arts & Events Lead and the Consultation and Engagement Manager in developing the online consultation for both the City Centre Strategy, and the Cultural Strategy, which is due to go live week commencing 18 May 2026 for 6 weeks.

10.12 The final City Centre Strategy will be reported back to Executive and Council late Summer for adoption, with implementation starting early Autumn.

10.13 Whilst the City Council owns the City Centre Strategy, delivery will be across organisations and institutions, including but not limited to: the City Council, Devon County Council, InExeter, Devon and Cornwall Police, the University of Exeter, Exeter College, public transport providers; as well as our voluntary, community and social enterprise community.

10.14 The Exeter Partnership will play its role in supporting and delivering the City Centre Vision and Strategy. Through the Exeter Partnership, a Business, Economy and Growth Group has been established. Whilst the focus of the group is on the local economy, one area of activity is to support the delivery of the City Centre Strategy.

10.15 A new officer led City Centre Task and Finish Group has been established. This group will play an important role in the delivery of the Action Tracker, ensuring key actions and initiatives align with Service Plans.

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

11.1 The City Centre Strategy works towards delivering the Local Economy priority. This priority has a focus on a thriving economy, attracting new businesses, our business community, culture, tourism, regeneration and more specifically; the development of a new City Centre Strategy.

11.2 The intended outcomes of this priority will be as a direct result of the City Centre Vision and Strategy:

- A thriving, diverse and resilient city which can adapt to changing conditions.
- An increase in independent shops and a low level of empty shops.
- A vibrant cultural and tourism offer.
- A safe and thriving night-time economy.

11.3 A new City Centre Strategy for Exeter supports the three other Corporate Plan priorities for the **People, Homes and Sustainable Environment**. To achieve this the Council's strategic efforts will focus on partnership work to deliver a City Centre Strategy to support regeneration and investment across the city.

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

12.1 There is the risk that residents do not engage with and respond to the consultation. The Head of City Centre & Net Zero is engaging with the communications team, to ensure that messages are included in City Council media channels, so that residents and the business community comment on the document.

12.2 A second risk is failure to act on engagement outcomes. This can be mitigated by carefully considering responses, ensuring robust monitoring, and maintaining transparent communication with communities.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 There is the option of not consulting on the draft City Centre Strategy; this would be counter to the Council's Consultation Charter.

Strategic Director Place, Ian Collinson

Author: Head of City Centre & Net Zero

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

List of Appendices:

- EQIA

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Please refer to the [Equality Impact Assessments \(EQIAs\)](#) form for details on how to complete.

The aim of an equality impact assessment is to consider the equality implications of any decision (e.g. new or revised policy, process, project, function, or service) on different groups of people including employees and customers. This document helps to evaluate whether the decision may inadvertently disadvantage groups of people and identify ways to avoid discrimination and proactively advance equality.

1. Details of the proposal

Name of the proposal:	Exeter City Centre Strategy 2026 – 2031 Public Consultation
Version number:	V1
Does this proposal impact on people?	Choose an item: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Explain your answer whether 'yes' or 'no'	The City Centre Strategy
Is this a new or existing policy/project/service?	Choose an item: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing
Person responsible for the proposal:	Victoria Hatfield
Person responsible for the EqIA (if different to above)	Victoria Hatfield
Proposal start date:	01/10/2026
When will this proposal be implemented?	01/10/2026
Briefly describe the aims and objectives of the proposal	The report is seeking authorisation from Executive to go out to public consultation on the City Centre Vision and Strategy.

What are the anticipated outcomes of the proposal?	To gain feedback from residents and the business community on the City Centre Vision and Strategy.
Who is likely to be affected by the proposal?	You can select multiple options: <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service users <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wider community
How are they likely to be affected?	Many people who live in Exeter visit the city centre for either work, to shop and to enjoy the City Centre's hospitality and cultural offer.
Is this proposal going to be approved by SMB, Executive or Council?	Select: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SMB <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Executive <input type="checkbox"/> Council
When is the proposal going to SMB, Executive or Council?	28/04/2026

3. [Consultation & Engagement](#)

You will nearly always need to involve and consult with stakeholders during your assessment. The extent of the engagement will depend on the nature of the proposal. This should include the individuals/groups who are affected by your proposal. Any proposal for consultation or engagement must be done via the [Consultation and Engagement Form](#).

<p>How are you communicating with the individuals/teams who are affected by your proposal?</p> <p>You can select multiple options:</p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social media <input type="checkbox"/> Focus groups <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Website <input type="checkbox"/> Mail drop <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Via community group <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe):
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4. Impacts on People

How will the proposed change affect people with protected characteristics? Make sure that you assess the impact based on evidence.

- Who will benefit, who won't, who can access, who can't access, who is at an advantage, who is at a disadvantage?
- What evidence has been used for this assessment? For example, employee diversity data, national statistics, customer survey, feedback etc. [Sources of equality data](#) are available on Sharepoint. (Please don't include any information that risks identifying people such as names, or the diversity data, if less than six people).

Note: You can copy and paste more rows underneath each protected characteristic if there is more than one impact

How will this proposal affect people with protected characteristics?	Identify Impact:	Why will it have this effect? Use the evidence collated, any engagement or consultation to inform your thinking and record it here. Have you identified any gaps in evidence, if so, what are the gaps? Does this need to be incorporated in the action plan?
Age	Positive (Is an improvement)	<p>Some age groups have highlighted the feeling of safety within the city centre, which is being addressed within the Strategy and Action Tracker.</p> <p>Links to the public consultation will be sent to the Ted Wragg Trust, Exeter College, the University of Exeter, as well as VCSE groups supporting this protected characteristic.</p> <p>For those aged 0-24, there are 4,023 people living in the city centre. For those aged 50+, there are 2,702 people living in the city centre.</p> <p>The population density of the City Centre is 4,239.3 (residents per sq kilometer)</p>
Disability: including sensory, mobility, mental health, neurodiversity, long term ill health	Positive (Is an improvement)	<p>Links to the public consultation will be sent to VCSE groups supporting this protected characteristic</p> <p>Some disability groups have indicated that the City Centre is difficult to access and to move around.</p> <p>Themes identified, and supporting priority actions address accessibility and the connectivity of the City Centre.</p>

How will this proposal affect people with protected characteristics?	Identify Impact:	Why will it have this effect? Use the evidence collated, any engagement or consultation to inform your thinking and record it here. Have you identified any gaps in evidence, if so, what are the gaps? Does this need to be incorporated in the action plan?
		Of those living within the City Centre, 28.8% have a disability or a long term physical or mental health condition. 5% have either bad or very bad health.
Gender reassignment	Positive (Is an improvement)	Some protected characteristics have highlighted the feeling of safety within the city centre. Themes identified, and supporting priority actions address accessibility and the connectivity of the City Centre. For 2026, the Community Safety Partnership, Safer Exeter, will have a focus on addressing Hate Crime in Exeter. Of the whole population of Exeter 0.6% have a different gender identity different from sex registered at birth.
Marriage and Civil partnership (work related only)	No Impact	No impact identified
Pregnancy & Maternity	No Impact	No impact identified
Race: including ethnic origin, nationality/national origin	Positive (Is an improvement)	This protected characteristic may not engage with the online public consultation. The residents survey, which has formed part of the evidence base in developing the Strategy, was representative of the population of Exeter. For 2026, the Community Safety Partnership, Safer Exeter, will have a focus on addressing Hate Crime in Exeter. Links to the public consultation will be sent to VCSE groups supporting this protected characteristic. Of the population of Exeter, 90.3% are white. 4.9% are Asian, Asian Black or Asian Welsh. 0.9% are Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African. 2.5% are Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups. 1.4% are other ethnic groups.

How will this proposal affect people with protected characteristics?	Identify Impact:	Why will it have this effect? Use the evidence collated, any engagement or consultation to inform your thinking and record it here. Have you identified any gaps in evidence, if so, what are the gaps? Does this need to be incorporated in the action plan?
		10.2% of the Exeter population identify as Non-UK identity.
Religion or Belief	Positive (Is an improvement)	<p>Some groups have highlighted the feeling of safety within the city centre.</p> <p>Themes identified, and supporting priority actions address accessibility and the connectivity of the City Centre. For 2026, the Community Safety Partnership, Safer Exeter, will have a focus on addressing Hate Crime in Exeter.</p> <p>Of the 10,531 people living in the city centre, 52.6% have no religion. 31.3% classify themselves as Christian, 1.1% as Buddhist, 1.1% as Hindu, 0.2% as Jewish, 3.5% as Muslim, 0.2% as Sikh and 1.1% as other religion.</p>
Sex	Positive (Is an improvement)	<p>Females have highlighted the feeling of safety within the city centre. For 2026 the Community Safety Partnership, Safer Exeter, will have a focus on addressing Violence Against Womens and Girls.</p> <p>Themes identified, and supporting priority actions address safety within the City Centre.</p>
Sexual Orientation	Positive (Is an improvement)	<p>Some groups have highlighted the feeling of safety within the city centre, as well as venues welcoming for the LGBTQ community.</p> <p>Themes identified, and supporting priority actions address safety within the City Centre.</p> <p>Of the whole population of Exeter 86.2% identify themselves as heterosexual. 1.9% as Gay or Lesbian. 2.8% as bisexual. 0.2% as Pansexual. 0.1% as Asexual. 0.1% as Queer. 0.2% all other sexual orientations.</p>
Intersectionality: Could this proposal have an impact on people who have a	No Impact	No impact identified

How will this proposal affect people with protected characteristics?	Identify Impact:	Why will it have this effect? Use the evidence collated, any engagement or consultation to inform your thinking and record it here. Have you identified any gaps in evidence, if so, what are the gaps? Does this need to be incorporated in the action plan?
combination or intersection of two or more characteristics?		

7. Outcome of Assessment

Select one of the following options:	Tick the relevant box
No barriers identified, proceed with proposed change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adjust the proposal/policy to remove barriers identified by the EQIA.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continue with the proposal/policy despite potential for adverse impacts.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stop the proposal/policy as there are adverse impacts that cannot be prevented/mitigated or justified.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please explain why the option has been chosen: The City Centre Action Tracker will evolve over time, addressing barriers for residents, visitors, students and workers with a protected characteristic to visit and enjoy our city centre.	

8. Action Plan

Considering the impacts, you have identified above, please detail any actions you will need take to remove barriers, eliminate negative impacts or maximise opportunities. (Add more rows if required). If an action is to meet the needs of a particular protected group please specify this. These actions should be included in your Service Plan.

Action(s) to be taken.	Expected Outcomes	Responsible Person	Timescale	Progress	Complete
Over and above the comms plan to highlight the consultation, an email will be sent to known groups that support and work with protected characteristics with links back to the consultation.	Greater engagement from residents of Exeter, as well as the business community	Victoria Hatfield	11 May 2026		
A hard copy of the strategy will be made available at Civic Centre Reception, for those that are not able to access the online consultation	For those that are not online, they are still able to participate within the City Centre Vision and Strategy consultation	Victoria Hatfield	11 May 2026		
This EQIA will be updated once the results of the consultation has been analysed	Any concerns highlighted from the consultation are addressed within the City Centre Action Tracker, limiting the impact on protected characteristics	Victoria Hatfield	July 2026		
Once the consultation is complete, review the priority of priorities within the Action Tracker	Priorities and actions of most to be priorities within year 1 of the delivery of the action tracker	Victoria Hatfield	July 2026		

9. Monitoring

How will you monitor the impact of your proposed change once it has been implemented? Once the activity has been implemented this equality impact assessment should be periodically reviewed to make sure your changes have been effective and your approach is still appropriate. Include the timescale for review in your action plan above.

A new officer led City Centre Task and Finish Group has been established. This group will play an important role in the delivery of the Action Tracker, ensuring key actions and initiatives align with Service Plans.

As results of the annual residents survey will be used to monitor the effectiveness of the Action Tracker, as well as metrics developed specifically to monitor impact and progress.

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 28 April 2026

Report of: Strategic Director Place

Title: Exeter Cultural Strategy 2026 – 2031 Public Consultation

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

1.1 The Cultural Strategy is in the final stage of its development, and the Council is seeking feedback from residents and the cultural sector. This report is seeking authorisation from Executive to go out to public consultation.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That Executive approves the Publication of the draft Cultural Strategy 2026 - 2031 for public consultation from 18 May 2026 for six weeks.

2.2 That the Executive gives delegated authority to the Strategy Director for Place, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to agree a change to the consultation date if required.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 To gain feedback from residents and the cultural sector on the draft Cultural Strategy.

3.2 Approval to go out to public consultation will enable an evidence-led development of a long-term cultural vision and strategy through engagement and partnership working.

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

4.1 Officer time will continue to be spent supporting the development of a new Cultural Strategy from existing resources and budget.

4.2 Officer resources have been identified to lead on and deliver the consultation.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 There are no additional financial implications for Council to consider.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 The consultation supports compliance with statutory consultation requirements and the Equality Act 2010.

6.2 There are no legal implications because of the recommendations. The public consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Consultation Charter.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 The Monitoring Officer has no additional comments.

8. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

8.1 In recommending this proposal potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act and an Equality Impact Assessment has been included in the background papers for Member's attention.

9. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

9.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations. However, as part of the strategy Environmental Sustainability has been considered.

10. Report details:

10.1 The draft Cultural Strategy 2026-2031 has been designed to:

- 10.1.1 Establish a clear vision which can address the needs of Exeter's residents and communities.
- 10.1.2 Align with Exeter's ambition to be recognised nationally and internationally as a 'City of Culture' as set in Exeter's 2040 Vision and included in the Corporate Plan 2025-28.
- 10.1.3 Reflect Exeter's current cultural, social and economic landscape, identifying existing cultural assets, community needs and opportunities for cultural development.
- 10.1.4 Reflect the importance of culture as a catalyst to connect communities to Exeter's unique natural environment, heritage, literacy and learning, health and economy, ensuring that cultural growth is at the heart of sustainability and placemaking in Exeter.

10.2 Exeter's Place-Based Cultural Strategy launched in 2019 and ended in 2024. Exeter City Council recognised the importance of updating the Strategy to set a new strategic direction that reflected the city's evolving ambitions and priorities.

10.3 Exeter City Council committed to updating the previous strategy to ensure it is reflective and supports the city as outlined in Exeter's draft City Centre Strategy, Exeter (Local) Plan, Corporate Plan and Liveable Exeter principles.

10.4 In October 2025, Exeter City Council commissioned InPlace Consulting Ltd to assist with the development of the new Cultural Strategy.

10.5 The Vision and Key Themes of the draft Cultural Strategy have been drawn from three key areas:

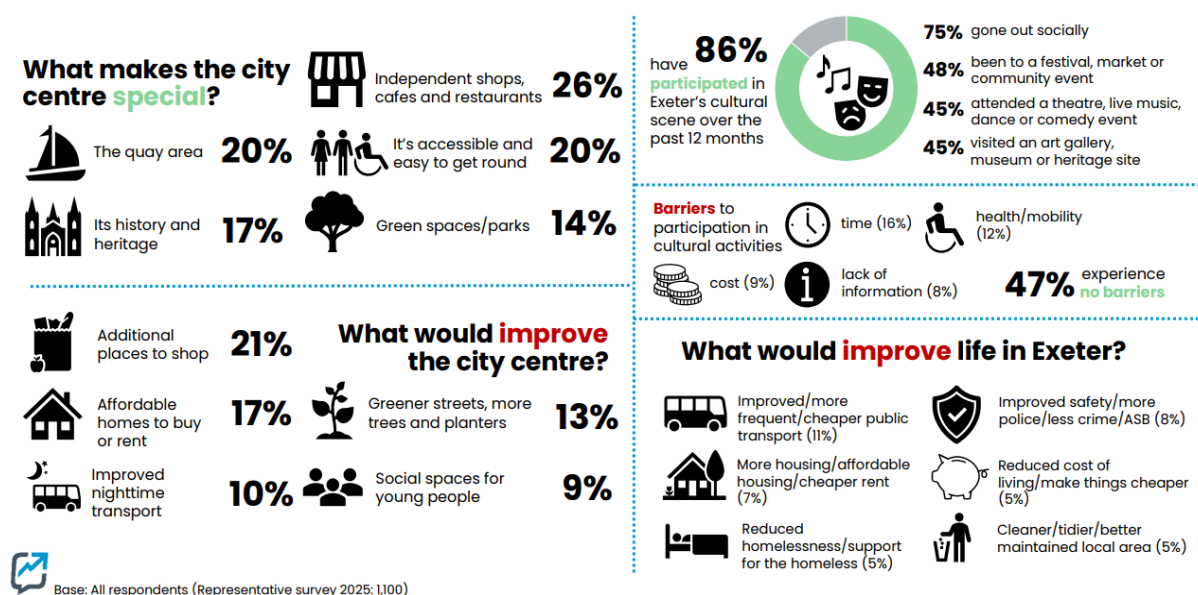
10.5.1 **A Baseline Study:** InPlace Consulting Ltd carried out an initial assessment of scope, key strategies, reports, cultural assets and audience, together with

For enquiries please contact: democratic.services@exeter.gov.uk

benchmarking and sector trends analysis. From this work they were able to build an initial picture from the depth of work already carried out.

- 10.5.2 **Engagement Activity**; The Strategy has been drawn from the results and analysis of an extensive and inclusive engagement programme carried out over five months.
- 10.5.3 **2025 Exeter Residents Survey**: Some questions were included in the survey to gain viewpoints from residents on Culture in Exeter. The infographic below, provides highlights from the 2025 residents survey. The results have been analysed and incorporated into the draft Cultural Strategy. The full results of the resident survey have been uploaded onto the City Council website, which can be viewed: <https://exeter.gov.uk/media/cn0gfoiy/exeter-resident-survey-2025-report.pdf>

Exeter city centre and cultural scene



10.6 The **Inclusive Engagement Plan** comprised of four key stages of engagement in line with the Council's Consultation Charter, between November 2025 and March 2026:

10.6.1 Stage 1: Stakeholder and Community Engagement.

This comprised of a public online survey which received over 500 submissions linked to a visual activity pack. Two workshops were held with young people at Exeter College and one workshop with over 30 representatives from the creative sector. InPlace also conducted over twenty one-to-one interviews with key partners and stakeholders.

10.6.2 Stage 2: Cultural Summit

The initial findings from the above engagement phase were shared at an event held at Exeter College on the 26 January 2026. This enabled the Council to test the Vision and Themes and gain an understanding of what needed to be changed.

10.6.3 Stage 3: Additional Workshops

From the above Cultural Summit, InPlace held an additional three workshops with the creative sector in early March to help shape the emerging vision, themes and strategic actions.

10.6.4 **Stage 4** is the Formal online Public Consultation, carried out through a survey. The final Cultural Strategy will be reported back to Executive and Council late Summer 2026 for adoption, with implementation starting early Autumn.

10.7 InPlace Consulting has also provided a framework for a detailed action plan, investment plan and monitoring and evaluation plan which will be developed in partnership with the City's key stakeholders and partners once the Cultural Strategy is adopted.

10.8 The draft Cultural Strategy 2026-2031 has the strapline, 'The city of creative confidence', and includes the following vision statement:

Exeter will be a place where everyone feels more creative confidence - included and connected to culture, environment, heritage and exploring new ideas.

10.9 There are four key Themes, which have been drawn from the engagement and evidence base. Each Theme has a list of Strategic Actions and Strategic Outcomes.

10.9.1 Theme 1: How we think and act

Aim: Exeter to grow into its role as a confident regional cultural capital.

This will be achieved by fostering a culture of ambition and joined-up leadership across Exeter's cultural sector, together with effective partnership working.

10.9.2 Theme 2: Connecting the eco-system

Aim: To grow sustainable cultural and creative structures that join the dots.

This will be achieved by nurturing our grass-roots communities of artists, creatives and makers by unlocking spaces, providing affordable facilities, supporting talent development and creating opportunities for people at the early stages of first or new careers.

10.9.3 Theme 3: Unlocking accessibility and wellbeing

Aim: An accessible, inclusive and engaging cultural offer providing benefits for all our communities and audiences.

This will be achieved by investing in our cultural offer, support the sector delivering it, advocate for continued funding, and consult with audiences to develop the continued relevance of the offer.

10.9.4 Theme 4: Encouraging innovation where environment meets culture

Aim: Connect climate science, arts and literature, heritage, and sustainability with learning and innovation.

This will be achieved by using Exeter's strengths in Research and Development (R&D) and creative industries, as well as its wealth of heritage, as anchor points to inform and direct strategy, programme development, connection with communities and bids for investment.

10.10 The ownership of the Cultural Strategy sits with Exeter City Council and will be used to establish a council-wide strategic approach to facilitating and delivering a City of Culture, with the commitment to culture a core aim running through the whole organisation.

10.11 Delivery of the Cultural Strategy will also lie with a range of different partners who share common objectives. The Cultural Strategy will be an important tool to foster collaboration between stakeholders, partners, residents and the City Council, to ensure activities can be aligned.

10.12 The Exeter Partnership will play its role in supporting and delivering the Cultural Strategy. Through the Exeter Partnership, a Connected Culture Group has been established. The aim is for the Connected Culture Group to become the sectors strategic leadership and advocacy body, as well as facilitating a cultural sector forum to share best practice, expertise, and forge partnerships, which support culture in the city. One of its tasks will be to develop the key themes, principles, and high-level actions in the Cultural Strategy, into a detailed action plan, which is jointly owned by the sector.

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

11.1 A new Cultural Strategy for Exeter supports all four Corporate Plan priorities for the **Local Economy, People, Homes and Sustainable Environment**. Culture and Heritage are recognised as part of the city's economic drivers and supports regeneration. Cultural participation is essential to enhancing health, inclusion, and community spirit, supporting objectives related to civic pride and social cohesion.

11.2 The important role that culture plays in life of the city, including community cohesion, diversity and inclusion, regeneration and economic growth is highlighted in the Council's Final Submission for Local Government Re-Organisation.

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

12.1 Risks include low participation and unrepresentative feedback. Officers will engage with the communications team, to ensure that messages are included in City Council media channels, so that residents and the business community comment on the document.

12.2 A second risk is failure to act on engagement outcomes. This can be mitigated by carefully considering responses, ensuring robust monitoring, and maintaining transparent communication with communities.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 Members could choose not to approve the public consultation of the Cultural Strategy or delay this decision until later in 2026. However, this would have a significant impact on the delivery and implementation of the Strategy. This would also be counter to

the Council's Consultation Charter.

Strategic Director Place, Ian Collinson

Author: Arts and Events Lead.

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

List of Appendices:

- Appendix One - Draft Cultural Strategy EQIA

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Please refer to the [Equality Impact Assessments \(EQIAs\)](#) form for details on how to complete.

The aim of an equality impact assessment is to consider the equality implications of any decision (e.g. new or revised policy, process, project, function, or service) on different groups of people including employees and customers. This document helps to evaluate whether the decision may inadvertently disadvantage groups of people and identify ways to avoid discrimination and proactively advance equality.

1. Details of the proposal

Name of the proposal:	Exeter Cultural Strategy 2026 – 2031 Public Consultation
Version number:	V1
Does this proposal impact on people?	Choose an item: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Explain your answer whether 'yes' or 'no'	Exeter Cultural Strategy 2026-31
Is this a new or existing policy/project/service?	Choose an item: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing
Person responsible for the proposal:	Sophie Constant
Person responsible for the EqIA (if different to above)	Sophie Constant
Proposal start date:	01/10/2026
When will this proposal be implemented?	01/10/2026
Briefly describe the aims and objectives of the proposal	The report is seeking authorisation from Executive to go out to public consultation on Exeter's Cultural Strategy 2026-31.

What are the anticipated outcomes of the proposal?	To gain feedback from residents, businesses and the creative sector on the Cultural Strategy 2026-31.
Who is likely to be affected by the proposal?	<p>You can select multiple options:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Staff</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service users</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wider community</p>
How are they likely to be affected?	<p>Many people who live in Exeter and visit the city engage in cultural activity. According to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Arts Council England (ACE) Participation Survey, reflecting adult engagement observed between May 2023 and March 2024, Exeter showed a high rate of physical arts engagement at 94.37%, significantly higher than the England average of 90.42%.</p> <p>In Exeter City Council’s 2025 Residents Survey, over 86% residents said they have participated in Exeter’s cultural scene over the past 12 months. 47% of Exeter’s residents experience no barriers to participation in cultural activities.</p> <p>A vast majority of people in and around Exeter also work in the Creative Sector. Exeter has five Arts Council funded National Portfolio Organisations (Exeter Northcott Theatre, Exeter Phoenix, RAMM, Exeter UNESCO City of Literature and Libraries Unlimited).</p> <p>Through the evidence collated for the strategy, there are also some 3,000 people working for cultural organisations or as creative freelancers in Exeter and more than 3,300 people who work in tourism in Exeter who will be affected by the strategy.</p> <p>Arts, Entertainment and Recreation accounted for 2,000 Employee Jobs (PAYE) in Exeter in 2024 (2% of jobs in the city, in comparison with 2.3% in the South West and 2.5% in Great Britain).</p> <p>We are also aware there are a significant number of residents who don’t think culture is for them. This is being addressed through the strategy.</p>
Is this proposal going to be approved by SMB, Executive or Council?	<p>Select:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SMB</p>

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Executive <input type="checkbox"/> Council
When is the proposal going to SMB, Executive or Council?	28/04/2026

3. [Consultation & Engagement](#)

You will nearly always need to involve and consult with stakeholders during your assessment. The extent of the engagement will depend on the nature of the proposal. This should include the individuals/groups who are affected by your proposal. Any proposal for consultation or engagement must be done via the [Consultation and Engagement Form](#).

How are you communicating with the individuals/teams who are affected by your proposal?

You can select multiple options:

- Social media
- Focus groups
- Website
- Mail drop
- Via community group
- Other (please describe):

4. [Impacts on People](#)

How will the proposed change affect people with protected characteristics? Make sure that you assess the impact based on evidence.

- Who will benefit, who won't, who can access, who can't access, who is at an advantage, who is at a disadvantage?
- What evidence has been used for this assessment? For example, employee diversity data, national statistics, customer survey, feedback etc. [Sources of equality data](#) are available on Sharepoint. (Please don't include any information that risks identifying people such as names, or the diversity data, if less than six people).

Note: You can copy and paste more rows underneath each protected characteristic if there is more than one impact

How will this proposal affect people with protected characteristics?	Identify Impact:	Why will it have this effect? Use the evidence collated, any engagement or consultation to inform your thinking and record it here. Have you identified any gaps in evidence, if so, what are the gaps? Does this need to be incorporated in the action plan?
Age	Positive (Is an improvement)	<p>As part of the engagement to develop the strategy, workshops were held with Exeter College students. Young people were also able to have their say through an online public survey.</p> <p>Exeter is a youthful growing city with an international student diaspora as shown through the evidence base of the strategy. Young people have expressed the lack of opportunities to pursue creative careers without moving out of the region as well as a lack of affordable spaces to perform. These concerns are being addressed in the Cultural Strategy.</p> <p>Exeter College students readily identify with arts and culture being about wellbeing and “feeling part of something”. They often focus on inclusivity in their individual creative experiences, and how creativity can foster this anywhere. This has been reviewed in the strategy’s priorities.</p> <p>Links to the public consultation will be sent to the Ted Wragg Trust, Exeter College, the University of Exeter, as well as VCSE groups supporting this protected characteristic.</p>
Disability: including sensory, mobility, mental health, neurodiversity, long term ill health	Positive (Is an improvement)	<p>Links to the public consultation will be sent to VCSE groups supporting this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Theme 3 of the strategy is to unlock accessibility and wellbeing. The aim is to provide an accessible, inclusive and engaging cultural offer providing benefits for all our communities and audiences through a list of Strategic Actions and Outcomes.</p> <p>Of those living within the City Centre, 28.8% have a disability or a long term physical or mental health condition. 5% have either bad or very bad health.</p>

How will this proposal affect people with protected characteristics?	Identify Impact:	Why will it have this effect? Use the evidence collated, any engagement or consultation to inform your thinking and record it here. Have you identified any gaps in evidence, if so, what are the gaps? Does this need to be incorporated in the action plan?
		Over the past five years, cultural activity has moved from being seen as a soft, complementary service to being a formal component of public health and NHS frameworks – it’s now becoming a mainstream health intervention: WHO’s global review shows strong evidence that arts participation improves mental health, supports rehabilitation and reduces loneliness.
Gender reassignment	Positive (Is an improvement)	Links to the public consultation will be sent to VCSE groups supporting this protected characteristic Of the whole population of Exeter 0.6% have a different gender identity different from sex registered at birth. As per the above, Theme 3 of the strategy addresses this.
Marriage and Civil partnership (work related only)	No Impact	No impact identified
Pregnancy & Maternity	No Impact	No impact identified
Race: including ethnic origin, nationality/national origin	Positive (Is an improvement)	This protected characteristic may not engage with the online public consultation. The residents survey, which has formed part of the evidence base in developing the Strategy, was representative of the population of Exeter. Theme 3 of the strategy is to unlock accessibility and wellbeing . The aim is to provide an accessible, inclusive and engaging cultural offer providing benefits for all our communities and audiences through a list of Strategic Actions and Outcomes.

How will this proposal affect people with protected characteristics?	Identify Impact:	Why will it have this effect? Use the evidence collated, any engagement or consultation to inform your thinking and record it here. Have you identified any gaps in evidence, if so, what are the gaps? Does this need to be incorporated in the action plan?
		<p>Links to the public consultation will be sent to VCSE groups supporting this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Of the population of Exeter, 90.3% are white. 4.9% are Asian, Asian Black or Asian Welsh. 0.9% are Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African. 2.5% are Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups.</p> <p>1.4% are other ethnic groups. 10.2% of the Exeter population identify as Non-UK identity.</p>
Religion or Belief	Positive (Is an improvement)	<p>Theme 3 of the strategy is to unlock accessibility and wellbeing. The aim is to provide an accessible, inclusive and engaging cultural offer providing benefits for all our communities and audiences through a list of Strategic Actions and Outcomes.</p> <p>Of the 10,531 people living in the city centre, 52.6% have no religion. 31.3% classify themselves as Christian, 1.1% as Buddhist, 1.1% as Hindu, 0.2% as Jewish, 3.5% as Muslim, 0.2% as Sikh and 1.1% as other religion.</p>
Sex	Positive (Is an improvement)	Links to the public consultation will be sent to VCSE groups supporting this protected characteristic
Sexual Orientation	Positive (Is an improvement)	Of the whole population of Exeter 86.2% identify themselves as heterosexual. 1.9% as Gay or Lesbian. 2.8% as bisexual. 0.2% as Pansexual. 0.1% as Asexual. 0.1% as Queer. 0.2% all other sexual orientations.
Intersectionality: Could this proposal have an impact on people who have a combination or intersection of two or more characteristics?	No Impact	No impact identified

7. Outcome of Assessment

Select one of the following options:	Tick the relevant box
No barriers identified, proceed with proposed change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adjust the proposal/policy to remove barriers identified by the EqIA.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continue with the proposal/policy despite potential for adverse impacts.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stop the proposal/policy as there are adverse impacts that cannot be prevented/mitigated or justified.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please explain why the option has been chosen:</p> <p>The Cultural Strategy Action Plan will evolve over time, addressing barriers for residents, visitors, students and workers with a protected characteristic to engage with cultural activity in Exeter.</p>	

8. Action Plan

Considering the impacts, you have identified above, please detail any actions you will need take to remove barriers, eliminate negative impacts or maximise opportunities. (Add more rows if required). If an action is to meet the needs of a particular protected group please specify this. These actions should be included in your Service Plan.

Action(s) to be taken.	Expected Outcomes	Responsible Person	Timescale	Progress	Complete
Over and above the comms plan to highlight the consultation, an email will be sent to known groups that support and work with protected characteristics with links back to the consultation.	Greater engagement from residents of Exeter, as well as the creative sector.	James Bogue	11 May 2026		

A hard copy of the strategy will be made available at the Civic Centre Reception, for those that are not able to access the online consultation.	For those that are not online, they are still able to participate in the Culture Strategy consultation.	James Bogue	11 May 2026		
The EQIA will be updated once the results of the consultation have been analysed.	Any concerns highlighted from the consultation are addressed within the Cultural Strategy Action Plan, limiting the impact on protected characteristics.	James Bogue	July 2026		
Once the consultation is complete, review the priorities within the Action Plan.	Review the priorities of the Action Plan and the timescale for delivery.	James Bogue	July 2026		

9. Monitoring

How will you monitor the impact of your proposed change once it has been implemented? Once the activity has been implemented this equality impact assessment should be periodically reviewed to make sure your changes have been effective and your approach is still appropriate. Include the timescale for review in your action plan above.

The Connected Culture Theme Group of the Exeter Partnership has been identified as the cultural sectors strategic leadership and advocacy body. One of their tasks will be to develop the key themes, principles and high-level actions in the Cultural Strategy into an Action Plan. A monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed to ensure activities and actions stay on track, objectives are met, evidence and data are collected for accountability, measuring impact and for future learning ensuring that the above protected characteristics are taken into account.