

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 8 July 2025

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)

Also present:

Chief Executive, Strategic Director for Place, Strategic Director for Corporate Resources, Strategic Director of Operations, Strategic Director for People and Communities, Legal Advisor, Place Partnership (Sport England) Manager, Head of Service - Customers and Communities, Head of Service - City Centre and Net Zero, Net Zero Project Manager and Democratic Services Officer (LS)

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 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

There were no questions from the public.

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MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 3 July 2025 recommended that:

- the Executive send findings from work on Box-shifting to Government to consider as part of their review.

The Executive agreed to send findings from the work on Box-Shifting to the Government to consider as part of their review.

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CORPORATE PLAN REPORT

The Executive received the report delivered by the Chief Executive which sought Members' agreement to the draft Exeter City Council Corporate Plan for 2025 to 2028.

Particular reference was made to:

- the good timing of the report and the assistance in ensuring focus on Member's key priorities whilst developing the proposal for unitary status;
- the clarity provided for staff and stakeholders on priorities and outcomes;
- each service area would be developing their service plans and risk registers based on these priorities;
- a corporate performance framework would be developed to develop and report progress in achieving those priorities; and
- feedback provided by residents and stakeholders during the Corporate Plan consultations had been reflected in the report where possible.

The Head of Service Customer and Communities presented the consultation work that had fed into the Corporate Plan. The key points made were:

- the surveys highlighted key milestones in our consultation;
- insights fed into workshops with SMB that had helped shape the Corporate Plan;
- there had been over 2800 responses from the resident's survey, and the budget and corporate priorities consultation;
- there were concerns about safety at night;
- 77% were backing construction of new council homes;
- emphasis was placed on the importance of being kept informed;
- community and stakeholder engagement played a key role; and
- there was a continued commitment to listening with the next round of surveys beginning soon.

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

- 'carbon neutral city' should be replaced with 'net neutral city', as language and consistency were important;
- the report supported cross-service working by looking at outcomes, rather than service-delivery;
- both statutory and discretionary services were detailed within the report;
- the plan would be able to help us balance the needs of the city, what needs to be achieved, and what the residents want;
- measures and metrics of a well-run council are highlighted in the plan, how would the monitoring for that be communicated?
- Only 59% of residents felt safe after dark, hopefully work with community safety partnership would help change this;
- DCC would be approached regarding lighting, and this would give data that can be used when approaching them; and
- Net Zero received the most critical feedback and we need to hear them and make sure we were communicating positively about the environment with residents.

Opposition group leaders raised the following points and questions:

Councillor Moore was disappointed that the Leader had not reached out to other groups to collect their views, and that the views they had sent in had not been reported in the Corporate Plan. Councillor Moore asked for clarity regarding the nature outcome and hoped this would be addressed.

Councillor Mitchell praised the Corporate Plan and thought the aims were great. Raised concerns about the limited mention of the University of Exeter, and no one under 25 had taken place in the consultation.

In response to questions raised, the Strategic Director for People advised that:

- detailed work had been undertaken with directors and heads of service to identify suitable measures for the outcome metrics in the plan;
- user-acceptance testing for corporate performance framework draws data from a range of sources;
- testing would be able to be reported back and shared with other authorities;
- this was a complicated piece of work and the work that was being done was fantastic;
- all staff would be able to see how the work they do is related to the corporate plan;
- there would be a new dashboard that would enable tracking of objectives;
- clarity from Members about what was most important had helped shape this development;
- surveys used targeted market research, either over the telephone or face-to-face;
- residents survey launching this week was very important as it would be more inclusive of people of all ages, and it was valuable to compare this with data collected from individuals that completed survey themselves; and
- the University were invited to comment, and it was disappointing to receive so few responses from stakeholders

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

Agreed:

RECOMMENDED that Council:

- (1) approves the Exeter City Council Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and endorses the strategic priorities and intended outcomes identified in the plan; and
- (2) note the findings from the consultation report and previous surveys.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that Executive note the findings from the consultation report and previous surveys; and
- (2) that any necessary drafting amendments before publication be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

The Executive received the report which referred to an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) which identified a brief scope and timetable for the preparation of Council planning policy documents including the emerging Exeter Plan (the new Local Plan).

Particular reference was made to:

- the LDS being a legal requirement outlining planning policy documents, including the Exeter Plan;

- the need for a new update to reflect the later timescale for the Exeter Plan, which had been programmed for September; and
- work on St Luke's Campus being brought forward as a supplementary planning document (SPD).

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

- would going ahead with this plan prevent us from submitting any SPDs at a later date?

Councillor Moore as opposition group leader raised the following points and questions:

- was the Portfolio Holder for City Development planning to bring forward a policy on co-living?

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

- any policy in an adopted plan could have an SPD brought forward;
- he had been in touch with the chief planner at Bristol City Council and would be happy to share their draft on co-living with Members; and
- attracting investment in Exeter regarding co-living was complex so it would be worth obtaining more detailed guidance on the issue.

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

Agreed:

RESOLVED That Executive approves the updated Local Development Scheme (Appendix A) as the basis for preparing local planning policy.

NEWTOWN COMMUNITY PROJECT – TRIANGLE CAR PARK AMENDS

The Executive received the report which sought approval to improve walking and cycling infrastructure in Newtown, as well as changes to the Triangle Car Park.

Particular reference was made to:

- changes to the car park would be considered by Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC) on the 15 July;
- much consultation and engagement had been carried out and it was evident that this was wanted by the local community;
- the improvements would make it easier and prevent unnecessary cars travelling through the area;
- one street would be closed but it would improve the nature of the area;
- the changes would see a loss of 28 useable parking spaces, but there would be a dedicated walkway which would improve the car park;
- five new disabled spaces, and parent and child spaces would be created; and
- this was a good example of a public sector led partnership which had been carried out over a number of years.

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

- this would have real benefits for the community and would encourage the use of Belmont Park;
- closing Russell Street would help and it had had little use typically;

- the cycling campaign had provided great support;
- this was a great example of a community led project;
- the modest loss of parking spaces would be offset by other projects and the impact on residents and visitors outweighed the loss of car parking spaces;
- it was important to balance healthy living and getting about safely whilst also considering traders and car parking;
- 19 of the 28 spaces being lost were unusable due to tree roots; and
- the provision of disabled and parent and child parking was much needed.

Opposition group leaders raised the following points and questions:

- Cllr Holland warmly welcomed the project but was concerned about the loss of spaces and asked when the old bus station would be adopted as car parking; and
- Cllr Haigh raised concerns about the accessibility of the site and enquired as to why feedback from Guide Dogs had been ignored. She highlighted the lack of raised borders, confusing paths, and no tactile paving.

The Leader responded to Councillor Holland by saying he would speak with officers regarding the timeline for the development of the bus station and would let all councillors know.

In response to Councillor Haigh, the Leader stated that he would check that the plans were following Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA).

The Leader requested advice of the Deputy Monitoring Officer regarding the three Executive Members who also sat on HATOC. The Deputy Monitoring Officer clarified that there would be no issue with voting on this matter.

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

- there would be scope for minor landscaping and signage improvements to be carried out as a general upgrade to the highway; and
- the council were not contravening any DDA guidance as they were not proposing any changes to Western Way.

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

Agreed:

RESOLVED that the Executive approve a new layout, including walking & cycling infrastructure to the Triangle Car Park, resulting in a loss of 28 useable spaces.

RECOMMENDED that the Devon County Council Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC) be requested to consider these proposals concerning the Newtown Walking & Infrastructure Project at its meeting on 15th July 2025 with a view to implementation of the scheme.

The Executive received the report presenting a summary of the “Costed Organisational Carbon Footprint Projections to 2030”, study carried out by the University of Exeter.

Particular reference was made to:

- that this had been a truly groundbreaking study, and had been able to highlight the true cost of decarbonising put services;
- the report considered three scenarios- business as usual (BAU), Mid-term and Max-term net zero;
- scope 1 and 2 emissions were direct emissions such as fleet vehicles, and indirect emissions such as when buying electricity;
- business as usual were measures that were already being taken or committed to, to reduce carbon emissions. Retrofit within Council Housing was given as an example;
- the mid and max terms required much larger reductions to be considered. New technologies would be required for homes. Fundamentally it would be switching from gas to electric, this would cause energy prices to go up;
- most mid and max measures were unaffordable currently;
- the next stage would be to understand how the council could explore additional BAU measures;
- BAU would be challenging, and additional funding would be required; and
- to escalate to mid and max, significant capital investment would be needed.

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

- the Council were very lucky to have this incredible knowledge on their doorstep;
- BAU was a misnomer and suggested that nothing was being done which was not the case;
- integration across the council was needed;
- the opportunity for scrutiny to look at this report in September was welcomed;
- the report was extremely useful to be able to refer to and provided a sounding board;
- would the next report go into the detail of service-led prioritisation?
- BAU was dismissive of the amount of work which had been carried out by officers;
- Exeter had the first Passivhaus swimming pool in the country;
- could officers provide more information about decarbonisation of the national supply?
- carbon footprint could indicate running cost, and the cost of running a swimming pool was high, how can we decrease?
- it was incredibly difficult to retrofit and bring down the carbon footprint of a building such as the RAMM;
- the Leader was interested to know if the report should have provided more information on investment in trees.

Councillor Moore as an opposition group leader raised the following points and questions:

- she hoped government would be lobbied for funding to undertake this work;
- would the next report set out the savings to the council in terms of the return on the investment being made?
- would there be benefits for taxpayers and residents as bills to the Council would decrease?
- when looking to continue BAU route, there were many areas which either did not show reductions or they were minimal by 2030;
- if BAU was pursued, when would reductions in carbon emissions be evident? and
- would the Executive include investment in nature as one of their priorities?

In response to questions raised, the Strategic Director for Place and the Net Zero Project Manager advised that:

- the next report would cover in detail the service-led prioritisation;
- there were a range of things which could be done under BAU, such as building more council houses, if these were built to a certain standard it would reduce the carbon footprint;
- St Sidwell's Point was a groundbreaking project, but it was a large building and did consume a lot of energy;
- there was an aspiration to add Solar PV at the site; and
- at Riverside a large amount of emissions were from the gas heating and the swimming pool which the heat pumps would remove and therefore show a huge improvement;
- trees related to sequestering or off-setting carbon emissions.

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

Agreed:

RESOLVED that

- (3) The Carbon Footprint Projections, study including associated challenges and cost to the City Council, are noted and this information will be reported to Strategic Scrutiny Committee in September 2025.
- (4) Members note progress to date and further carbon reduction potential under the assessment of Scope 1 and 2 carbon reduction scenarios available to achieve net zero.
- (5) A further report is considered by Executive, which identifies options for how Business as Usual (BAU) carbon reduction measures can be incorporated into annual Service Plans, to enable prioritisation of service led GHG emission reduction measures.
- (6) The Net Zero team works in collaboration with relevant Services to plan future funding bids to secure additional resources, prioritising social housing, buildings and transport services to support emission reductions.

Particular reference was made to:

- this being a successful partnership between Exeter City Council, East Devon District Council, and Teignbridge District Council to protect the Exe Estuary, East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, and Dawlish Warren;
- the new strategy would cover the period from 2025 to 2030 and would introduce a range of measures to protect these areas;
- it would be funded through CIL due to the direct impact from housing developments on these environments; and

- the report had been produced jointly by officers across the three districts and the same report had been presented to all three districts.

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

- this strategy would enable key developments to progress and would assist ECC with meeting housing targets;
- can the Director provide an understanding of how ECC interests would be protected when creating and managing any new Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs), as well as planning and delivering strategic access management and monitoring projects such as the potential new SANG in Whipton/ Beacon Heath area and how that collaboration would work?
- this partnership had been held up by Natural England as an exemplar;
- the two partner councils had already passed this strategy; and
- where CIL wasn't chargeable, a contribution could be made through section 106.

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

- SANGs were used to deflect people away from the important greenspaces by providing an alternative option for recreational purposes;
- a joint approach had to be taken due to the strategic nature;
- there was a joint committee called Habit Mitigation Executive Committee and Councillor Williams was our representative on it; and
- work was being done to look at Valley Parks for SANGs but also biodiversity net gain.

The Leader moved the recommendation and Councillor Wright seconded, were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

Agreed:

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the adoption of the Southeast Devon Wildlife Joint Habitats Sites Mitigation Strategy 2025 – 2030 attached at Appendix A.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.05 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 22 July 2025.