

COUNCIL

Tuesday 9 December 2025

Present:

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor Councillor Jobson (Chair)
Councillors Asvachin, Banyard, Begley, Bialyk, Cookson, Fullam, Haigh, Harding, Holland, Hussain, Ketchin, Knott, Miller-Boam, Mitchell, M, Moore, Palmer, Parkhouse, Payne, Pole, Read, Rees, Rolstone, Sheridan, Vizard, Wetenhall, Williams, M, Williams, R and Wood

Apologies:

Councillors Atkinson, Bennett, Darling, Foale, Hughes, Mitchell, K, Patrick, Snow, Wardle and Wright

Also present:

Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Manager, Head of Service - City Centre and Net Zero, Head of Service - Finance and Democratic Services Officer

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MINUTES

The minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Council held on 14 October 2025 were moved by the Lord Mayor, taken as read, approved and signed as correct.

The minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 14 October 2025 were moved by the Lord Mayor, and taken as read, and following an amendment for accuracy, approved and signed as correct as amended.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

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OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Lord Mayor advised Members of the events she had attended. These included:

- the Sweepers lunch;
- Riding for Disable Exeter Evening Concert;
- the raising of the Polish Flag and exhibition;
- the remembrance procession to Northernhay gardens War Memorial;
- Exeter College Higher Graduation Awards;
- the Annual Trafalgar Service;
- the County Remembrance Service;
- the Civic, Women's Institute, and Exeter College carol services at the Cathedral;
- on Armistice Day she added a wreath to the Poppy Train and attended the service in Higher Cemetery;
- met with her Royal Highness, the Princess Royal at Luminous;
- she met with the Company of Communicators, the Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen, and the Royal Devon Cricket Club;
- joined the SWGL for their 25th Anniversary;
- attended the Garden of Eden Charity Lunch, and the St Johns Hospital Educational Foundation Trust Awards;

- opened both the Willow Grande Development, and the Cornish Bakery;
- attended the installation of the new Bishop of Plymouth, the Exeter Sea Cadets Royal Navy Parade, the RBL Festival of Remembrance, the Meet and Remember Club's 10th Anniversary, the launch of the Wilton Wat Mural, Exeter Symphony Orchestra's Winter Concern and the Let's Face It Immersive Exhibition at the Mint; and
- watched Exeter Otters Wheelchair Basketball, and Chance to Dance.

Members were also advised that the Lord Mayor had attended the funeral service of the former Chief Executive, Bernard Frowd, and that she had sent a letter of condolence following the fire in Hong Kong, to the Exeter Community.

The Lord Mayor also advised Members that a petition entitled Stop Exeter Heat Network had been received and that it would be responded to as a letter, by officers in line with the petition scheme.

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PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Lord Mayor informed Members that there were no public questions to receive in the meeting.

A public question had been asked but the member of the public was unable to attend the meeting so the question and response would be appended to the minutes.

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CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 25 SEPTEMBER 2025

The Minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee of 25 September 2025 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Rees, and taken as read.

During discussion Councillor Moore asked the Portfolio Holder to provide an update on what had been done regarding following up points made previously, and when the minutes of the Community Safety Partnership would be published.

Councillor Wright, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Community Safety and City Centre had sent her apologies, so the question was answered by Councillor Vizard, the Portfolio Holder for Climate, Ecological Change and Communities. Councillor Vizard informed Councillor Moore that Safer Exeter had not met since the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee on 25 September, but the issues were being picked up and would inform the work carried out with Safer Exeter partner organisations.

Councillor Read raised a question about the Scrutiny Annual Report and asked for a follow up on the box-shifting letter that had been sent to Government.

Councillor Rees advised that the Annual Scrutiny Report would be appended to the relevant minutes. Councillor Asvachin advised Councillor Read that the Box-shifting letter to the Government would be chased up by her.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 25 September 2025 be received

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STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 3 NOVEMBER 2025 (SPECIAL)

The minutes of the Special Strategic Scrutiny Committee of 3 November 2025 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Pole, and taken as read.

Councillor Pole advised that she would be raising an amendment at the next meeting of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee before the minutes would be signed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Strategic Scrutiny Committee held on 3 November 2025 be received.

108

PLANNING COMMITTEE - 10 NOVEMBER 2025

The minutes of the Planning Committee of 10 November 2025 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Knott, and taken as read.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 10 November 2025 be received.

109

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 4 NOVEMBER 2025

The minutes of the Executive Committee of 4 November 2025 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute 84 – Air Quality Annual Status Report and Revision of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)**, the Leader moved, and Councillor Wood seconded the recommendation and following a unanimous vote were CARRIED.

Councillor Banyard asked the Leader if he would, while he still could, work with Officers at Devon County Council and local MPs to deliver greater active travel and clean transport investment. The Leader advised that he would.

In respect of **Minute 85 – Proposed Policy of the Council for an Indemnity to Members and Officers**, the Leader moved, and Councillor Wood seconded the recommendations, which following a unanimous vote were CARRIED.

Councillor Moore asked the Leader what provision there would be to protect partisan decisions that would leave Members open to liabilities. The Leader advised Councillor Moore that any Councillor acting within the Constitution would be protected and that he would support the recommendations of the Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive Committee 4 November 2025 be received.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 26 NOVEMBER 2025 (SPECIAL)

The minutes of the Special Executive Committee of 26 November 2025 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Executive Committee 26 November 2025 be received.

111

INVESTMENT APPROVAL FOR NEW SOLAR PV SITES

The Leader moved the recommendations of the report, seconded by Councillor Wood, and invited the Head of Service – City Centre & Net Zero to present the report.

The Head of Service – City Centre & Net Zero presented the report, making the following points:

- this would deliver 511,000kw of solar power;
- it was expected to be operational by 2026; and
- the budget for this project was £1,000,000.

The Head of Service – City Centre & Net Zero responded to Members' questions in the following terms:

- there would be a more in-depth discussion about the Senate Court building in January;
- this had required a large business case for each building, and comments would be provided after the meeting regarding the differences in cost;
- a response regarding the provider of the loan would be given outside of the meeting;
- grid capacity and connection agreements with the National Grid had already been confirmed;
- works were being aligned with those for Wonford Community Centre;
- there was a working group considering development of the Mary Arches Car Park; and
- the solar panels had not yet been procured but the length of the warranty would be taken into consideration when they were.

During debate Councillor Vizard thanked the Head of Service – City Centre and Net Zero for her hard work on this project. He was delighted that this was moving forward and felt it was crucial partnership work with South West Net Zero Park, and that it was an investment in Exeter's future.

Councillor Moore thanked the Net Zero Team and hoped this would have a significant impact on the emissions at St Sidwell's Point. She felt it very important to clarify where the funds were coming from as soon as possible and asked the Portfolio Holder to provide information about the impact this would have on gas boiler use.

The Leader advised that a response to Councillor Moore would be given after the meeting.

Following a vote the recommendations of this report were CARRIED.

112

OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL FUND BUDGET Q2

The Leader moved the recommendations of the report, seconded by Councillor Wood, and invited the Head of Service – Finance to present the report.

The Head of Service – Finance presented the report, making the following points:

- this was an update after six months of the financial year;
- the Section 151 Officer recommended that council take no action at this stage;
- the General Fund working balance was expected to return to the required level soon; and
- the Council would continue to receive a recovery grant.

The Head of Service – Finance responded to Member's questions in the following terms:

- an answer would be provided regarding the RingGo charges outside of the meeting; and

- the underspend on the Civic Centre relocation had been carried forward to pay an instalment of the compensation payment next financial year.

Following a vote the recommendations of this report were CARRIED.

113

GENERAL FUND CAPITAL MONITORING Q2

The Leader moved the recommendations of the report, seconded by Councillor Wood, and invited the Head of Service – Finance to present the report.

The Head of Service – Finance presented the report, making the following points:

- this update came after 6 months of the financial year;
- the Chief Executive had set up a meeting of the Capital Programme Board on the 15th of December;
- the maintenance fee was close to being finalised;
- there had been a budget increase in 5 areas; and
- this proposal would be able to see through to the new unitary council.

The Head of Service – Finance advised Members that she would answer all their questions outside of the meeting.

During debate Members made the following points;

- they were pleased that the Chief Executive was taking action on the capital budget;
- what specific improvements were they looking for; and
- thanked Officers for their work on the playing fields in Pinhoe.

In summing up the Leader stated that they were focusing on the Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) and information would be brought to meetings of the Executive and Full Council in due course.

Following a vote, the recommendations were CARRIED.

114

HRA BUDGET MONITORING REPORT – Q2

The Leader moved the recommendations of the report, seconded by Councillor Wood, and invited the Head of Service – Finance to present the report.

The Head of Service – Finance presented the report stating that there was nothing significant to highlight.

The Head of Service – Finance advised Members that their questions would be answered outside of the meeting.

In summing up the Leader highlighted that this work was being done on top of the retrofitting work.

Following a vote, the recommendations were unanimously CARRIED.

115

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT 2026/27

The Leader moved the recommendations of the report, seconded by Councillor Wood, and invited the Head of Service – Finance to present the report.

The Head of Service – Finance presented the report, making the following points:

- the base rate was steadily reducing; and

- the Council were avoiding borrowing where possible using cash balances.

During debate Councillor Moore was interested to hear the Leader's opinion and understand the cautious approach to borrowing. She was concerned that this could put the Council at risk in the short to medium term.

The Leader felt that it was responsible to not borrow and clarified the reasons why.

Following a vote, the recommendations were unanimously CARRIED.

116 **UPDATE OF EXETER CITY COUNCIL'S COMPANIES, ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY MODELS AND CHARITIES.**

The Leader moved the recommendations of the report, seconded by Councillor Wood, and invited the Head of Service – Finance to present the report.

The Head of Service – Finance presented the report and advised that this report was to update Members and that 2 dormant subsidiaries had been dissolved. She advised Members that she would respond to their questions outside of the meeting.

During debate the Leader felt that it was beneficial that this report had come to Council and it had provided an opportunity for understanding and transparency.

Following a vote, the recommendations were unanimously CARRIED

117 **NOTICE OF MOTION BY COUNCILLOR WOOD UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 6**

Councillor Wood moved, and Councillor Miller-Boam seconded a Notice of Motion in the following terms:

"This Council notes:

The increasing use of private management companies on new residential estates in Exeter to maintain roads, open spaces and shared facilities.

That many residents experience poor service, rising costs and a lack of transparency, while having limited rights to challenge or change their management company.

That the planning system can shape how estates are designed, adopted and maintained, and therefore has a key role in reducing reliance of private management arrangements.

Key reports and evidence on the performance and of management companies, including:

- **The findings of the *Competition and Markets Authority's Residential Property Management Services Market Study***, highlighting issues with poor transparency, high charges, and lack of leaseholder control.
- The ***Leasehold Advisory Service's National Leasehold Survey (2016)***, which found that 68% of leaseholders had little or no confidence in their managing agents.
- The ***Law Commission's Commonhold and Leasehold Reform reports***, identifying the need for stronger homeowner rights and fairer management structures.

- The ***Housing Ombudsman's Learning from Severe Maladministration*** reports, which detail systemic failings in housing management and governance.

That this is a national issue, and ***Exeter MP Steve Race*** has been working extensively with other Labour Members of Parliament to challenge poor performance and lack of accountability under the current system.

The Labour government's commitment to modernise housing law through the ***Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill*** and welcomes its plans for further radical reforms to address ongoing issues faced by homeowners and deliver essential change through the upcoming Commonhold White Paper and ***planned Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Bill***.

[Beginning of the end for the 'feudal' leasehold system - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/beginning-of-the-end-for-the-feudal-leasehold-system)

This Council Believes:

That public areas on new developments, wherever possible, should be designed and built to adoptable standards, so they can be maintained by the City or County Council (or their successor). Where appropriate this may require the provision of a commuted sum to fund ongoing maintenance.

That when private management companies are proposed, residents should be fully informed at about future costs and responsibilities and accountability of services before any homes are sold.

That developers must provide sufficient financial safeguards, including bonds, to ensure essential infrastructure works are completed even if the development or the management company ceases trading.

That stronger regulation is required at a national level to protect homeowners where management companies are unavoidable.

This Council resolves to:

1. Strengthen the use of the planning system to seek adoption by local authorities of roads, play areas, open spaces and other infrastructure where possible, and to consider the provision of a commuted sum for the ongoing maintenance and management of such facilities, in order to limit reliance on private management arrangements.
2. Ensure due diligence in the in the planning process so that developers have sufficient bonds or other financial guarantees in place to cover the completion of essential infrastructure works.
3. Require developers, through planning conditions or legal agreements, to set out clearly the costs and responsibilities of any proposed management company before homes are sold.
4. Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government calling for stronger national regulation of residential management companies.
5. Work with the Local Government Association and other councils to campaign for reform and highlight the experiences of Exeter residents.
6. Publicise advice and support available to residents who face difficulties with their management companies.
7. The matter of monitoring the implementation of the resolutions be referred to the relevant Scrutiny Committee."

In presenting the motion, Councillor Wood made the following points:

- people buying homes on new developments were facing rising charges;

- there was a lack of transparency and accountability under the current system;
- some responsibility sat with Devon County Council, but reform was needed at a national level;
- this motion sought the maximise adoption of roads and play areas, and ensure that promised infrastructure was delivered;
- this motion encouraged ongoing maintenance funding, in a fair and sustainable way; and
- would work towards improving outcomes for residents today and in future for buyers.

As Seconded, Councillor Miller-Boam spoke in support of the motion making the following points:

- there had been a rapid increase in the rise of private management companies;
- costs were often not made fully clear to residents when they were buying their homes and it was often not clear who was responsible for maintenance;
- Exeter City Council was working hard to support residents but local and national policy needed to be reformed;
- tools that existed already within the planning process could be used;
- this motion was calling for strong safeguards and clear information for residents; and
- it was recommending that this could go to Scrutiny Committee to benefit current and future residents.

Councillor Parkhouse:

- in her ward there were several City Council owned public spaces and parks that were well maintained;
- she was going back and forth with a private company regarding the maintenance of a private park without much success; and
- it was not really possible to hold private companies accountable.

Councillor Knott:

- some houses that had been built by housing associations had their service charges increase 4 times;
- roads serving homes needed to meet standards for public use; and
- this motion was the start of highlighting this problem and protecting residents.

Councillor Harding:

- this was an excellent motion;
- residents were signing up for estate management fees without knowing what their level was; and
- residents should be offered protection and be told exactly what they're signing up for.

Councillor R Williams:

- this motion had been sense checked by the Strategic Directors and Heads of Service;
- Exeter City Council had 85 parks;
- some residents were paying more for access to parks, some of which were closed;
- Exeter City Council carried out regular safety checks on their parks; and
- it was unfair for residents to pay council tax for private services.

Councillor Vizard:

- it was clear that there were cases in all wards;
- he welcomed the opportunity for the Council to help with this;
- he also welcomed the fact that the government were underway in creating relevant legislation for this; and
- the Secretary of State for MHCLG was listening.

Councillor M Williams:

- there had been lots of development in Pinhoe and Topsham;
- what was happening to the unfinished roads and green spaces on new estates;
- when he was campaigning one of the key issues he addressed was overflowing dog bins in a privately owned park; and
- residents were not bothered with how things got done or who did them, just that they were being done.

Councillor Moore proposed an amendment to the motion but was advised by the Lord Mayor that this would not be possible as it was an amendment to the Local Plan which had been submitted and therefore could not be amended.

Councillor M Mitchell:

- wanted to emphasise item 6 in the motion and hoped that Exeter City Council would be willing to promote the ability for tenants to work for themselves.

Councillor Palmer:

- asked why was this not included in the local plan, and felt that it was not focusing on the cause;
- there needed to be changes to government planning policy to address the cause; and
- it was disappointing that there was not anything included about purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA).

Councillor Fullam:

- was supportive of the motion;
- the issue of transparency was vital;
- this would cut costs to the lease holder;
- the price of providing services was high and getting higher;
- there were issues with a current Exeter City Council property where the charge had increase but the maintenance was not being done; and
- this motion was about transparency, realism and putting the onus on the landowner rather than the tenant.

Councillor Rolstone:

- it was known that more houses were needed in Exeter; and
- better support needed to be provided for residents.

Councillor Pole:

- this was the privatisation of profit and socialisation of loss; and
- thanked the Parks and Green Spaces teams for their hard work.

Councillor Read:

- was concerned that this had not been written into the local plan; and
- could this not have been done earlier and included into the local plan.

In summing up, Councillor Wood as seconder made the following points:

- this motion was focused on residential management companies;
- this had been stress tested to ensure it was achievable; and
- sending it to Scrutiny Committee would make sure the intentions were achieved.

Following a vote, the motion was CARRIED.

118

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 8

In accordance with Standing Order No.8, the following question was put by Councillor Moore to the Leader, Councillor Bialyk:

“Will the leader commit to meeting with local ward and division councillors and relevant officers to discuss options and actions for improving the flow of pedestrians, cyclists and wheelers around the Quay?”

The Leader, Councillor Bialyk, responded to this question stating that this was a Devon County Council function, but he would ensure that Officers attended relevant meetings to deal with these things and he was happy to go to any meeting he was invited to but it was up to Devon County Council to initiate.

In a supplementary question Councillor Moore stated that Exeter City Council was a significant landowner in the area and needed to be committed to working with Devon County Council. She also felt that the Leader needed to work with the Leader of Devon County Council to identify issues and asks.

The Leader advised that he would contact the Leader of Devon County Council but it had to be dealt with through officers with the relevant expertise.

In accordance with Standing Order No.8, the following question was put by Councillor Read to the Leader, Councillor Bialyk:

“As the Deputy Leader knows there have been discussions between significant stakeholders in the city about the concept of a community toilet scheme, would the council give consideration to working with organisations in the community to reopen the public toilets in Musgrave Row?”

Councillor R Williams, Portfolio Holder for City Management responded to this question in the following terms:

“The Council agreed in principle to the potential of a community toilet scheme in 2019.

If a community or other organisation wishes to take on the running of the toilets and can lead on, and demonstrate a business case with community support, then we can work with them to achieve that outcome.

There are significant challenges the group will need to overcome, not least the significant remedial work needed to bring facilities - such as the Musgrove, which have been closed since 2019 and were already in poor condition prompting their closure — back into operation. Officers have informed me that in 2019, at the point Musgrove was closed, annual running costs were approximately £14,000 per year. Those costs will be higher now, whilst that is in no way meant to put anyone off, it's merely to be open and honest about the true costs and risks of running a public toilet.”.

In a supplementary question Councillor Read stated that she wanted to enable cafes and restaurants to be part of the scheme, and if that did happen would Exeter City Council be happy to do that?

The Leader advised that he would speak to Councillor Wright, the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Community Safety, and City Centre and provide a response outside of the meeting.

In accordance with Standing Order No.8, the following question was put by Councillor Read to the Leader, Councillor Bialyk:

“Since the Council passed the plant-based policy in December 2022 is the council satisfied that it is being adhered to in letter and in spirit? Has there recently been an audit of the offerings at council run events and venues to ensure a good range of plant-based options are always on offer?”

The Leader advised that he was not aware of any audits taking place, nor aware of any that were expected to take place and felt that the Council would be carrying out the terms as agreed.

In a supplementary question Councillor Read asked if the Council were aware of the plant-based policy at the university, and if they were happy for her to make arrangements for meetings.

The Leader responded saying that it was not for Members to arrange meetings with the university and that he would discuss this with the Chief Executive.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 8.10 pm)

Chair

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