

REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 19March 2026

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Ruth Williams: Portfolio Holder for City Management

1. Issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities

Food Waste roll out – the whole of the city of just under 61,000 residential properties now has kerbside food waste collections, with weekly collections taking place. This has been a challenging project due to the works required at the depot in order to make temporary arrangements to handle all of the city's waste prior to the depot project being completed, sourcing vehicles and food waste caddies at a time when many other local authorities are trying to complete the same project. Also, the recruitment and training of staff has presented additional challenges. According to a recent BBC report, one in four councils in England are going to miss the deadline of 31 March 2026 and I am proud and grateful that the hard work and dedication of the team has enabled Exeter to complete the roll out before the deadline.

2. Update or commentary on any major ongoing programmes of work

MRF Depot Hub Programme – we are in the process of purchasing the Envirohub building that was agreed at Council on 10 February 2026. Both parties are working to a potential completion in May. In addition to the purchase work, work has already started on drawing up detailed designs to convert the current MRF as well as detailed procurement specifications to launch the procurement exercise for the specialist MRF equipment in April / May.

Air Quality – the creation of the Air Quality Strategy and revision of the Air Quality Action Plan is underway which will shape how we manage and improve air quality in the city over the coming years. To help us with this, we are working with Ricardo, who bring over 60 years of specialist air quality expertise and support cities and governments to understand, manage and improve air quality.

A community engagement survey launched on 2 March is an important first step and helps ensure that the Strategy and Action Plan are informed by a wide range of local perspectives. The survey will close on 13 April 2026. Responses will help:

- Build a clear picture of how people understand air quality in Exeter
- Identify key concerns or priorities
- Shape the direction of the draft Strategy and Action Plan

This survey is part of the early engagement stage. No decisions have been made yet. The outline programme timeline will be:

- March 2026: Community survey (this engagement)
- April – June 2026: Draft Air Quality Strategy and Air Quality Action Plan prepared, based on the information that you provide
- Summer 2026: Formal public consultation (following Exeter City Council's Consultation Charter)
- Autumn 2026: Final documents published, shaped by the consultation feedback.

The Harbour Revision Order (HRO) remains subject to ongoing confidential processes associated with the statutory consultation, and no further detail can be released until respondents have formally received their consultation responses. Once that stage is complete, updates will be provided through the Exeter Harbour Board as part of the established governance and reporting arrangements.

Heavitree Paddling Pool refurbishment project is currently progressing through a formal public procurement process. The tender remains open until the end of the month, and until it closes and evaluation is complete, the project remains subject to procurement related risk. Assuming a successful outcome and subsequent award of contract, a confirmed programme of works will then be developed. Based on current timelines, the refurbishment is expected to take place either by the end of 2026 or in early 2027, ahead of the seasonal reopening period, subject to the final tender outcome and contractor availability. Suppliers are expected to carry out public consultations on designs as part of the project deliver process.

Play Area Development programme: The recent tender process for the play area development received no applications, meaning the project cannot lawfully be progressed through the original procurement route. As compliance with public procurement legislation is mandatory, officers are now investigating alternative, fully compliant procurement options to enable the proposed development to proceed while ensuring adherence to legal and financial requirements.

Minor works and repairs can and will be carried out where budgets allow.

Trews Weir Development Project: A technical issue relating to flood risk during major events—particularly those occurring close to the top of the flood defences—combined with significant cost increases meant that delivery of the Capital project could not proceed this year. We are now exploring additional funding opportunities through the Environment Agency (EA) as well as alternative approaches to the required repairs. The public consultation has been postponed until we have greater clarity on the preferred delivery route. Work is ongoing with our designer, contractor, and the EA to review both technical and funding options, and once we are confident that a deliverable solution is in place, we will carry out consultation.

3. Issues that may impact: services delivery/financial performance/future budget requirements

Recruitment – remains a challenge to the service across all roles, but particularly specialist roles in Environmental Health and Licensing as well as LGV drivers in waste.

Capital programmes remain inherently subject to procurement risk, and the successful delivery of projects is dependent on the timely and compliant award of contracts. Where a procurement exercise does not attract suitable bids, fails to meet required standards, or cannot be awarded, this can result in unavoidable delays to project mobilisation and delivery programmes. Until tender processes are concluded and contracts are formally awarded, timelines should therefore be considered indicative rather than confirmed.

Bowling Green Marsh Remedial Project: The previously approved capital programme for the site has now been superseded following the part failure of a section of the flood defence bank, requiring an urgent reassessment of scope and delivery. Although minor stabilisation works have been completed to reduce the immediate risk of further failure, an expedited programme of more substantive works is now necessary. This accelerated approach will inevitably result in additional costs. Technical investigations and condition assessments remain ongoing to determine the full extent of the required intervention.

4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered

Introduction of mechanical weed rippers spring 2026 – as per service update Street Cleansing 20-26.

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

ECC have signed up for Great British Spring Clean 13-29 March.

Proposal being prepared for submission to the Gum Task Force for a gum removal programme for Sidwell Street.

We will consider how the new *Statutory guidance Litter enforcement powers – when and where to use them* might be applied in Exeter.

Extension of Teignbridge pilot using smart watches to record food waste bin presentation is under consideration for Exeter.