EXECUTIVE

Monday 22 June 2026

Present:
Councillor Bialyk (Chair)
Councillors Williams, R, Atkinson, Findlay MBE, Patrick, Pole and Wood

Also present:
Chief Executive, Strategic Director for Corporate Resources, Legal Services Manager, Head of Service - Customers and Communities, Head of Service - Commercial Assets, Head of Service - Finance, Head of Service - Executive Office and Democratic Services Manager

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2026, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

The Leader welcomed Councillors Atkinson, Pole and Findlay to the Executive as new portfolio holders and also asked that the Anniversary of Windrush be marked as it had been by the raising of a flag at County Hall, which the Chief Executive had attended. The Leader remarked that as a city of sanctuary this showed diversity and that all were welcomed to the city. He also noted that it was disappointing for the Exeter Chiefs not to win but they had done well in reaching the final.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

3 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 19

No questions from members of the public had been received.

4 MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no matters referred by scrutiny committees for this meeting.

5 CITIZENS ADVICE EXETER GRANT

The Head of Service – Customers and Communities presented the report making the following points:

- if approved this award would be made under the General Grants Policy;
- this award would allow Citizens Advice Exeter to continue to provide general advice, free, independent, confidential, online, in-person and by telephone;
- the award would also allow Citizens Advice Exeter to recruit, train and supervise volunteers;
- this award would have a positive impact on people with protected characteristics; and
- the financial commitment was set out and officer time would be identified to oversee and monitor delivery.

During discussion Executive Members raised the following points and questions:

- the positive difference timely advice could make had been seen previously;
- how would the measuring of the outlined outcomes and outputs be reported back to Members';
- Citizens Advice Exeter had provided a lot of information which demonstrated the good work they do; and
- were the Council still supporting with rent.

In response to questions and points raised, the Head of Service – Customers and Communities advised:

- that the General Grants Policy outlined a series of measures which would be put into an agreement with Citizens Advice Exeter;
- regular reporting to the Portfolio Holder would take place as well as a report to the committee; and
- a decision to extend the reduced rent and service charge had been agreed.

Opposition group leaders raised the following points and questions:

- the report was welcomed and would provide continuity for Citizens Advice Exeter but would this help embed them within the budget of a unitary authority;
- Citizens Advice Exeter were to be thanked for their valuable work in the city;
- as the additional budget had been agreed at Council it was enquired as to whether this decision would need to return to Council?

The Chief Executive and Strategic Director for Corporate Resources responded to those points raised by opposition group leaders in the following terms:

- the purpose of the report was to continue support to Citizens Advice Exeter until the end of the life of this council. Any decision about the future council would be considered by the shadow authority and Citizens Advice Exeter should be encouraged to generate any further funding they could and the Council would support where possible; and
- this decision did not require to return to Council, the Executive could allocate funds agreed under delegated powers.

The Leader moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Ruth Williams which following a unanimous vote was CARRIED.

RESOLVED that:

The award of a grant of £150,000 (one hundred and fifty thousand pounds) to Citizens' Advice Exeter be awarded in two tranches, namely the sum of £75,000 for the financial year 2026 to 2027 and the sum of £75,000 for the financial year 2027 to 2028 be approved.

6 PARKING PLACES ORDER

The Strategic Director for Corporate Resources presented the report making the following points:

- this was a request to amend and add to the Council's Parking Places Order (PPO) and undertake statutory consultation;
- there were two changes requested; one amendment and one addition;
- for Market Street Car Park, where NCP had been the leaseholders, the Council was the freeholder. NCP had ended the lease and handed back the keys and the Council would like to operate the car park;

- a proposal would be brought to Council in July to refurbish the Cathedral and Quay car park which had suffered anti-social behaviour for a number of years;
- in order to implement improvements to security and safety it was proposed to change from pay and display to pay on foot with the benefit that the car park would be staffed; and
- consulting on the amended PPO was a statutory requirement.

The Leader drew Members' attention to the fact that £100,000 to bring the car park back to serviceable use had been agreed at Council.

During discussion Members of the Executive raised the following points and questions:
- it was good to see the speed at which this matter had come forward;
- how long would it take to have the Order drawn up and in place;
- it was pleasing to see that existing equipment could be relocated and reused which would save money as well as improve sustainability;
- as the proposed system was the same as at the Guildhall would there be learning from issues encountered there; and
- both car parks played a vital role in the city centre cultural offer and it would be key to have them open beyond 8pm. Local businesses would be pleased as well as residents and visitors.

The Strategic Director for Corporate Resources and Head of Service – Commercial Assets responded to the questions raised in the following terms:
- Market Street car park would be pay and display, utilising machines from Harlequins which would be closing imminently;
- the PPO was subject to statutory consultation; and
- the process would take eight to ten weeks and included advertisements in local press, receiving responses and responding to those.

Opposition group leaders raised the following points and questions:
- would the toilets in Market Street car park be reopened and would they be public or for the welfare of staff;
- as Market Street lay in a police city centre hot spot and had a history of ASB, had pay on foot been considered;
- it was questioned whether there was a chance of predetermination ahead of the Cathedral and Quay report coming to Council in July;
- as rent income could be lost from NCP, what income would the car park generate for the Council; and
- was payment required to NCP as had been the case for leaseholders elsewhere in the city.

In response to the questions raised by opposition group leaders, the Strategic Director for Corporate Resources and Head of Service – Commercial Assets made the following points:
- this report sought permission to consult, if after consultation Members' chose not to go ahead with the works then pay on foot would not be introduced which would not render Members predetermined;
- rent would have been £55,000 and the estimated income from the car park would be £425,000. Business rates and other costs would require to be paid but income would be substantially more than £55,000;
- there was nothing to pay to NCP as they had surrendered the lease rather than being asked to leave;

- the toilets would be a welfare facility within the car park. The intention would be to upgrade these alongside some office space to allow greater presence of car parking officers. The toilets would not be available to the public; and
- pay and display had been chosen following discussion with the car parking team. This was deemed the better option given the turnover of customers at the site coupled with the proposed enhanced on-site staffing arrangements.

The Leader moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Ruth Williams, which following a unanimous vote, were CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

(1) To amend the Parking Places Order 2014 as follows:

(a) To incorporate Market Street car park into the Council's Off-Street Parking Places Order as a 'Pay and Display' car park within the Central Zone parking tariff structure.
(b) In respect of the Cathedral & Quay multi storey car park, to introduce 'Pay on Foot' arrangements into the Council's Off-Street Parking Places Order.

(2) To delegate authority to consider the responses to the consultation and determine whether to implement the Order (or parts thereof) to the Head of Service Commercial Assets in consultation with the Strategic Director Corporate Resources and Leader of the Council.

7 CORPORATE DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Strategic Director for Corporate Resources presented the report making the following points:

- the Council had not previously had a single approach to debt management;
- there were many types of debt, including but not limited to council tax, business rates, housing rent, commercial rents and general sundry debt;
- this policy provided an overarching corporate debt management policy supported by service specific appendices;
- an internal audit report had driven this work but it was good practice to have a single policy in place.

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

- this policy brought clarity;
- where possible automated and electronic methods were used rather than paper letters;
- had other methods of debt recovery been looked into as some people may ignore a brown envelope;
- was the Port Authority included;
- what difference to the Council's ability to chase council tax debt would the government proposals to increase the amount of time before action may be taken, a proposed increase from 3 weeks to 63 days;
- what steps would this policy make towards more pre-action work;
- this policy would bring consistency and fairness but how would it align with wider commitments to vulnerable residents;
- would there remain a way for those most vulnerable to make a human connection when handling their debt; and

- were households and businesses provided with clarity of payment terms in order to plan ahead and prevent debt in the first instance.

The Head of Service – Finance responded to questions from Members of the Executive in the following terms:

- electronic communications were used where possible but as customers weren't obliged, but were encouraged, to give an email address or telephone number this was not always possible. A service improvement included digital reminders via MyExeter;
- pathways detailed in the proposed policy reflected regulatory frameworks for each type of debt;
- Invoices relating to the Waterways Service were included in sundry debt;
- the proposed policy reflected current practice with a short review period suggested to take into account upcoming legislative changes and the team were currently appraising the impact these may have;
- regarding vulnerable customers the second recommendation would see ten Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations approached who were likely to be advising vulnerable customers or those experiencing financial difficulties to seek their feedback and help ensure the policy provided clear guidance when dealing with vulnerable customers, supporting customers experiencing financial difficulty or problem debt; and
- council tax and business rates had instalments set out on the annual notices, rents were payable in line with tenancy agreements, commercial rents are payable in line with lease agreement and payment terms were included with all invoices for sundry debt.

An opposition group leader asked if this policy met internal audit requirements to which the Head of Service – Finance and Strategic Director for Corporate Resources responded in the following terms:

- the policy had been sent to South West Audit Partnership who were satisfied and had closed the relevant audit actions; and
- last year the annual audit opinion identified sundry debt and the management of as an organisational risk. Work had been undertaken which meant that this was no longer the case.

The Leader moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Ruth Williams which following a unanimous vote, were CARRIED.

RECOMMENDED:

(1) that Council approve the revised Corporate Debt Management Policy.

(2) to delegate authority to the Leader, Section 151 Officer and Portfolio Holder to agree amendments to the Policy after targeted engagement with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.

8 **CORPORATE PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

The Head of Service – Executive Office presented the report making the following points:

- this report was the first half yearly update against the Corporate Plan which had been agreed last year;
- there were a series of intended outcomes and measures against each of the five priorities set out in the Corporate Plan;
- the report provided a summary of the detail contained in the two appendices;

- it was positive that 85% of the measures were on track or exceeding target; and
- areas which were below target had plans in place to address them.

During discussion Members of the Executive raised the following points and questions:
- the work of the CCTV and Community Safety Teams was impressive, it was asked whether there were any ideas on how this could be shared more widely than internally;
- the report was well presented, and the traffic light system user friendly meaning portfolio holders could easily see their areas;
- could more information be provided regarding the red against Being a Welcoming and Inclusive city;
- there had been a drop in spend of ward grants, however, with six out of thirteen wards fully spent, was there any learning which could be shared in order that councillors could support those areas which were not spent;
- how would the council be taking forward the increase in the new homelessness prevention grant from government;
- whilst leisure services were discretionary it was important to maintain their performance and it was good to see how much this Council did over and above its statutory obligations;
- were funds for solar panels on leisure buildings and car parks from operational budgets or an investment which would lead to savings, leading to lower operating costs; and
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could be monitored through this report.

The Chief Executive, Strategic Director for Corporate Resources and Head of Service – Executive Office responded to questions and points raised by Members of the Executive in the following terms:
- learning from ward grant spend would be looked at outside the meeting by the Head of Service - Customers and Communities and Democratic Services Manager;
- how best to use the homelessness prevention grant would be addressed in consultation with the portfolio holder;
- whilst this report would be half yearly the Strategic Management Board would be monitoring on a quarterly basis to ensure focus was on the areas in need of attention;
- CIL was in place to deliver other strategic priorities and progress should be able to be monitored through key projects;
- Council had agreed a capital programme of funding for the solar panels which would be invest to save. The cost would more than be offset by that generated;
- ideas to celebrate what was contained in the report would be worked upon; and
- the inclusive city comments had been taken from the residents' survey and it was possible that the target had been set too high as there was an expectation of 5% improvement.

Opposition group Members raised the following points and questions:
- regarding page 127 of the report, were there any figures, particularly demographics or other known factors for those who felt unsafe at night;
- as the administration had moved away from the 2030 net zero ambition what were the current ambitions;
- the report was accessible and commentary on the right-hand side particularly useful;

- could links to portfolio holders be included in the report; and
- could change be shown as well as markers of current situation.

The Chief Executive responded to opposition group Members in the following terms:

- further detail would be provided with regard to safety at night;
- the Council had not moved away from the Net Zero 2030 ambition; and
- if helpful portfolio holders could be identified within future reports along with direction of travel.

The Leader stated that the Net Zero ambition had not changed.

The Leader moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Ruth Williams which following a unanimous vote, were CARRIED.

RESOLVED that the Executive notes the progress that has been made against the priorities and objectives in the Corporate Plan 2025-2028.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.38 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 21 July 2026.

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