

SCRUTINY ECONOMY COMMITTEE 11 NOVEMBER 2010

Sustainable Development and Transport Portfolio Programme for 20010/11

Long Term Spatial Strategy

The Regional Spatial Strategy is to be abolished, enabling the Council to proceed with its proposals for 12,000 additional homes for the period to 2026.

A revised Local Development Scheme was agreed by Executive on 28 September for submission and agreement with the Government Office.

The pre-submission Core Strategy was subject to public consultation that concluded on 24 September. Representations have been received from 44 parties. These will be considered by PMWG and Executive before Council is asked to agree submission of the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State in December. The examination in public should take place in the Spring. The evidence base continues to be developed.

Funding of essential infrastructure to support development in a context of significant public sector cuts is now a major challenge.

The abolition of the RSS reduces the risk of early shortfalls in five year housing supply. The Council considered representations on the draft Monkerton/Hill Barton and Newcourt masterplans and adopted amended documents for development management purposes enabling housing land in these strategic allocations to come forward as soon as possible.

The challenge of delivering strategic sites

Work on delivering plans and the viability of proposals at the strategic sites continues and on seeking to establish agreed equalisation mechanisms between the various owners. The Interim Director of Economy & Development is engaging with the local development industry on ideas for funding infrastructure and a national debate is taking place on the challenges of funding infrastructure in a period of cuts.

Quality of residential development

The Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document was adopted by Executive on 28 September.

The New Growth Point

The Section 106 Agreement for Cranbrook has been signed and planning permission issued on 29 October. All remaining funding agreements are being completed and contracts for the building of the Clyst Honiton Bypass and the main local route to the new railway station should be set to enable construction work in the February/March 2011. The key affordable housing package of £16.6m appears

to have been agreed in principle. This will provide Exeter with nomination rights on 25% of the first 300 affordable housing dwellings. It is anticipated that house building will start in 2011.

Affordable Housing

The Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document was adopted by Executive on 28 September.

Single Conversation

The HCA's guidance on the Local Investment Plan has been subject to significant change in the light of changes in the national picture. The focus is now very much on the affordable housing programme. The funding for this programme is significantly reduced. A draft LIP has been submitted to the HCA following consideration by the Growth Point Steering Board.

Climate Change

The Interim Director will report to Executive in November on the principles of a strategic partnership with a major energy provider to deliver sustainable energy initiatives. A study of the viability of a local energy network for the north east city centre/Heavitree Road corridor focused on the Bus Station will be reported to Members towards the end of the year. Local energy network contributions have been agreed for proposed developments at Matford Park and Waitrose and are subject to ongoing negotiations and investigations on other sites.

Bus Station Site

The City Centre Vision, transport study and feasibility study should be concluded by the end of 2010

We continue to work with the Planning team to deliver a concept masterplan for the site and with Land Securities with a view to them reporting on scheme viability by Christmas 2010. A two year Exclusivity Agreement has been agreed in principle with Land Securities/Crown Estate to provide comfort to all parties during this process.

City Centre Enhancements

Further consultation and design development of proposals for Gandy Street were reported to PMWG on 19 October. Work on Northernhay Gate must await completion of work to the RAMM.

The capital programme budget for Cowick Street was frozen; a scheme for 2011/12 will be considered as part of the next budgetary cycle. Work to King William Street Car Park was agreed by PMWG in June and is now underway. Proposed improvements to the public realm outside the former Debenhams building are intended for 2011/12.

Long Term Transportation Strategy

Uncertainties over DfT funding would suggest we need to have a dialogue following the CSR on how the Highway Authority envisages delivering the key elements of the Transportation Strategy. I believe it is entirely appropriate that Scrutiny push ahead with its Task 2 Finish work to explore the Devon Metro proposals. It is unlikely that for the high quality public transport route and improvements within the Principal Urban Area will be funded by the Department for Transport; both schemes represented a £90m bid and therefore I have asked the Interim Director Economy and Development to explore a pragmatic way forward with Devon County Council. Clearly this is a major issue for the City and one that we must focus our attention on.

Concessionary Travel

Funding and responsibility for concessionary travel will transfer to upper tier authorities (in our case the County Council) with effect from 1 April 2011. The government has consulted on the mechanism for transferring funding which involves choosing between different options for removing special grant and adjusting levels of formula grant. The options are complex and the implications difficult to follow, but there is a risk that the option finally chosen by government to transfer funding will in effect perpetuate the financial inequities which have caused so many problems for the City Council in recent years, namely by removing more funding than we have in fact received. This would clearly add to the financial pressures the Council is already facing. Officers have responded to the consultation paper making these points and we will continue to lobby government and others to press our case which, I am sure, all parties on this Committee would be happy to support.

Civil Parking Enforcement

This function continues to be very high profile and consumes a considerable amount of management time. The revenue stream from civil parking enforcement reverts to the County Council and no financial benefit accrues to the City Council from running it efficiently and effectively. The management resources devoted to CPE, including dealing with large numbers of enquiries, Freedom of Information requests and high levels of media interest, are inevitably being diverted from other areas of parking operations. It is important for Members to recognise that the Council's own parking service is a complex multi-million pound business which is essential to the Council's overall budget strategy, and that senior managers must have the necessary capacity to focus on this business rather than constantly responding to the demands of the civil parking enforcement regime. Accordingly, I have asked senior officers to meet with the County Council at the earliest opportunity to review the way in which civil parking enforcement is operating and I will report the outcome of this meeting to Scrutiny Committee members in a future report.

Much of the publicity surrounding the CPE function has been unsatisfactory and I will pursue with DCC a number of the issues that have been publicly around. Exeter is the only agency that generates a surplus of income back to DCC and I am not entirely satisfied that everything is being done by DCC to address the arguments over enforceability.

1-11 Sidwell Street (former Debenhams)

An Agreement for Lease has been entered into with Land Securities under which they will refurbish the lower floors of these premises for a new retail occupier. A new lease will be granted once agreed pre-conditions have been discharged by the developer. It is hoped that the new retailer will be open for trade in October 2011.

Canal Basin

The developer for the Old Electricity Building has agreed a package of works to seek to protect the fabric of the building whilst we await favourable conditions for a redevelopment commencement. Negotiations with Sutton Harbour for a start on the second new build site at the head of the Basin are well advanced and a Development Agreement may be drawn down shortly. Although provisional terms have been agreed between DCC and ECQT for a site for the new Haven Banks Outdoor Education Centre, the County Council is reviewing the position. We should know shortly whether they intend to proceed. In the light of that eventual decision, an update on the overall Delivery Strategy will be submitted to Executive.

Livestock Centre

We are in the process of reviewing the future of the Livestock Centre and a report on this review will be presented to Executive in due course.

Councillor Rachel Sutton
Portfolio Holder Sustainable Development and Transport