

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY**  
**8 SEPTEMBER 2011**

**DEVELOPMENT OF A PLACE MARKETING STRATEGY**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek Members views on a proposal to draft a Place Marketing Strategy.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Members received a report in June 2011 on the activities of the Economic Development Service in relation to the economic development strategy. The June report to Committee set out a number of actions for 2011-2012 including the activity to:

“Develop a marketing strategy for the city which will include identifying and reinforcing a distinctive brand identity for the city, differentiating it and securing the reputation as the second city in the South West only behind Bristol.”

- 2.2 The city through its development programme and stated ambition is looking to build on its strength as the “regional capital” south west of Bristol. This is underpinned by its focus on infrastructure developments across the Exeter and East Devon New Growth Point and the increasing stature and research capability of the University of Exeter. This coupled with other science-based assets such as the Met Office supports the more recent promotion of Exeter as a city of science. Exeter’s attraction as a place for successful businesses, investment, for employment and in which to live, will also continue to be founded on the city’s substantial presence in the professional and business service sectors, the city’s significant and growing retail offer and, its renowned quality of life.
- 2.3 Overall, to secure Exeter and the sub-region’s future competitiveness, its strategic medium to long term priorities lie in maintaining a focus on investment in infrastructure, business support, encouraging organizations involved in knowledge based activities including research and development, and in the workforce.
- 2.4 Many cities/locations in the UK will have come to the conclusion that in anticipation of an economic upturn there is a need to be proactive in promoting themselves to secure investment and much needed growth. The competition for investment will be such that those locations with real, tangible opportunities, rather than those relying purely on their aspirations will be in the best position to capitalize on them.
- 2.4 A draft proposal to develop a city wide approach to marketing the city is attached for consideration.

**3.0 DRAFT PLACE MARKETING STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The Place Marketing Strategy will set out to reinforce Exeter’s image and perception as the principal economy west of Bristol which has outperformed most locations across the UK for job creation, featuring in the top 2% for employment growth.
- 3.2 Investors, businesses and skilled workers will consider a number of characteristics of a location when assessing the merits of investing time or resources or moving or remaining there. However in an increasingly complex and competitive world, many

people and businesses are digitally or otherwise connected and often overloaded with information. They have little time to pay attention to information and messages which do not come over persuasively and consistently. It is difficult for a place to stand out without proactive effort.

- 3.3 Importantly, to be in the rankings, the city needs to be perceived and establish its reputation as having an environment that stimulates development opportunities, a diverse and dynamic business structure, a knowledge base that is still growing, underpinning commercial growth and a policy environment which provides leadership, guidance and particularly supporting and welcome investment.
- 3.4 The draft document proposes the following aim and objectives which are for debate, amendment and agreement as necessary to provide the focus for effective and collective effort:-

#### **Aim**

“To establish and reinforce Exeter’s reputation as the regional capital and the principal economy south west of Bristol for investment, successful businesses and key workers”

#### **Objectives**

- secure commercial and public sector investment to reinforce Exeter’s position as one of the main “power houses” of the South West economy
  - attract new employers and particularly more knowledge based businesses and entrepreneurs into the city’s economy
  - reinforce the city’s reputation for having a leading combination of retail, heritage and cultural experiences
  - attract and retain skilled workers
- 3.5 To achieve these objectives, the document has proposed a series of actions, based around the formation of a Marketing Alliance involving the City Council working proactively and hand in hand with other key organisations in the city. The Alliance will work together to develop an agreed marketing strategy and drive and deliver a range of actions, each of which raises the city’s profile and contributes toward Exeter being recognised as a place for investors, businesses and key workers and as such, the undisputed regional capital and principal economy south west of Bristol.
- 3.6 Members of the Marketing Alliance will be drawn from key partners and influencers who will formally commit to developing and implementing the strategy:-
- City Council and neighbouring local authorities
  - The University of Exeter, Exeter College and Schools (State and Private)
  - Business, cultural and environmental leaders
  - Developers, commercial and retail agents
  - The media
- 3.7 The initial actions proposed as set out in the action plan in the attached document include:
- to establish a Marketing Alliance to drive and co-ordinate a one city approach to promotion and marketing

- to review the current city branding approach, to determine and agree the range of key messages to project and to agree an appropriate core brand and the most effective strap line(s) based on achieving a sound and credible portrayal of the city's relevant strengths.
  - to commit resources to produce and deliver a Communication Plan to be developed through shared activities including developing effective media relations, social networking and events, marketing and budgets
  - to establish with partners across the city economy, effective PR at local, regional, national and international levels
  - to develop, produce and maintain a city wide promotion and marketing website and social media campaign.
  - to establish specific sector marketing groups from across the city economy to determine the benefits, opportunity and approach to raising the profile of each sector
  - to establish a task and finish group to target and attract major national and international events to raise Exeter's profile and boost the city economy
  - to establish a task and finish group to identify and test the feasibility of delivering an iconic project beneficial to the city economy
- 3.8 The Marketing Alliance will need to agree and adopt the Place Marketing Strategy and further develop the detailed content, proposed key characteristics of the brand and set out and coordinate its activities within a Communication Plan. The Communication Plan will set out a series of steps to achieve positive perceptions of the Exeter economy and will need, for example to:
- provide the basis for agreeing a "story" that differentiates the city and sets out the key messages to be used as the focus of promotional activity
  - contain consistent and credible facts and statements that portray the city's assets, its appeal and the benefits of being here
  - adopt a joined up approach to avoid gaps in promotion and avoid duplication of effort
  - rely on the individual and collective commitment of local organisations to actively promote and market the city's brand and cultural assets as one voice
  - be reviewed regularly and adjusted and updated as appropriate

#### **4.0 CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The proposed approach needs to have the input and views of key organisations and individuals within the Exeter economy in order to shape, agree and obtain commitment to the development of the strategy.
- 4.2 An initial workshop will take place as the embryonic Marketing Alliance with relevant, experienced senior representatives from the University, business organisations and leading businesses to seek their views and suggestions about taking the process forward. If supported a working group will be set up from those who have agreed to be "lead" organisations to draw up the strategy in more detail. The consultation will seek to identify potential barriers to implementation and resources e.g. time, knowledge, staff and finances available. The draft strategy will be brought back to Scrutiny Committee Economy and Executive for comment and endorsement.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from the report. Following consultation, Officers will brief Members and seek their views on co-financing recommended for the implementation of the Place Marketing Strategy.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATION that**

- 7.1 Members comment on the report
- 7.2 Officers consult on the Draft Place Marketing Strategy.

**RICHARD BALL**  
**HEAD OF ECONOMY AND TOURISM**

**ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE**

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**  
**Background papers used in compiling this report:**

1. 'Economic Development Update', Scrutiny Committee – Economy, 9 June 2011