

EXETER CITY COUNCIL**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY
31 MAY 2012****PLACE MARKETING STRATEGY – EXETER ECONOMY 2012 – 2016****1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To seek Members comments on the draft Place Marketing Strategy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Increasingly cities and their surroundings are competing to attract investment and business. It is difficult for a place to stand out without proactive effort across a range of media.

2.2 The September 2011 report and initial draft Strategy for consideration by this Committee proposed the development of a city wide approach to proactively marketing Exeter that would establish and reinforce its reputation at the regional capital and attract investment, businesses and key workers. The formation of a marketing alliance was proposed that should consist of local key partners across the private and public sector whose support was required to help shape and subsequently implement an agreed Strategy.

2.3 Officers have established the Marketing Alliance. The revised draft Strategy which includes a proposed brand statement for use in promotional activity is attached for consideration.

3.0 DRAFT PLACE MARKETING STRATEGY

3.1 The Place Marketing Strategy's purpose is to attract and retain investment, new businesses, and skilled workers to help underpin the growth of the Exeter economy.

3.2 The aim of the Strategy is: "To establish and reinforce Exeter's reputation as the regional capital and principal economy south west of Bristol for attracting investment, successful businesses, and skilled workers".

3.3 The proposed Objectives, are to:

- 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 area's reputation for having a leading combination of retail, heritage and cultural experiences in an outstanding environment
- attract and retain skilled workers and graduates.

3.4 Research indicates that cities are viewed as the 'shop window' and a key point of reference, when they or their surrounding area is being assessed as a location for investment, for relocating and expanding employers or as a place of work.

3.5 As competition increases between cities those with tangible and credible opportunities are better placed to secure and convert interest, provided they proactively promote themselves in an effective manner.

- 3.6 Many investors, businesses, and skilled workers if made aware of the Exeter economy's track record of success and its future development plans could gain the confidence they need to make that crucial decision to share in the successful continued growth in the local economy.

4.0 SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTIONS

- 4.1 The Strategy proposes a marketing programme that seeks to raise awareness of the local economy's strengths and opportunities to key decision makers and influencers, initiate targeted marketing of key sectors to help the economy grow and challenge misconceptions about the area.

Promotional – raising awareness of Exeter's offer

- 4.2 The range of activities proposed to reach key decision makers and influencers are summarised below:

- using a range of media and 'vehicles' to raise awareness of Exeter economy including key strengths and characteristics:
 - developing and regularly updating an effective promotion and marketing website
 - an investment prospectus which can be adjusted to bespoke requirements
 - providing a regular stream of editorial and 'advertorial' across different media
 - seeking the agreement of local businesses for them to use key messages and facts about the Exeter economy as introductory aspects of their presentations and promotional literature when attending or leading trade shows, conferences and business seminars
- seeking to provide or attract national and/or international conferences on themes and subjects that reflect the Exeter economy's strengths and/or aspirations

Targeted Marketing – key sectors to help grow the economy

- 4.3 A proactive element of activity will be the targeted marketing of specific sectors and companies therein. The proposed sectors are as follows:

Professional Services, Science and Technology

- Promote the area's reputation as a regional hub for professional knowledge based services which support local businesses, relocating employers and also provides services to investors seeking to procure services outside of London or from overseas
- Source of potential occupiers and new businesses within the local economy including on Exeter Science Park and SkyPark
- Contributes to an increase in knowledge based employment
- Source of knowledge based entrepreneurs

Retail

- Significant contributor to the city's regional reputation
- Draws in visitors and contributes to the development of additional hospitality employment and offers potential to generate trade with local suppliers

Government Departments and Quangos

- Contribute to:
 - the area's regional reputation for public administration
 - an increase in knowledge based employment
- Potential source of:
 - opportunities for collaborative or commissioned research with the University of Exeter
 - business for local suppliers

4.4 The activities and indeed the successful implementation of this Strategy is predicated on the active involvement and support of key players, local businesses, and industry sectors, some of which are already members of the Exeter Marketing Alliance

4.5 Key decision makers and influencers will be reached by drawing upon the market intelligence available through networks utilised by the diverse range of local businesses within the Exeter economy. The activities proposed are summarised below:

- generating warm leads from local businesses and key employers identifying potential firms/employers to approach to consider investment, expansion or relocation into the Exeter economy
- supporting property and site promotion by commercial agents
- delivering dedicated seminars to invited sector audiences to invest, relocate or expand in the Exeter economy
- working with local industry groups to promote investment, expansions and relocation and the securing of skilled workers into their sectors
- work with prominent local public sector employers to approach key government departments and contacts and generate opportunities to secure site visits for ministerial, VIP and senior civil servants

Perception Altering – challenging misconceptions

4.6 The Strategy proposes to use and build upon the connections of existing business relationships and aims to develop new working relationships, all aimed at influencing the perceptions and challenging misconceptions about the Exeter economy. This will be achieved by:

- use of social media – Exeter You Tube Channel, Exeter Facebook Page, Exeter Twitter Page to secure proactive 'chatter' within and across the networks about the Exeter economy (all interlinked with the new promotion and marketing website)
- hosting city and site visits
- work with the University of Exeter to capitalise on opportunities to create positive impressions of the Exeter economy at regular 'touch points' throughout the year with specific groups and visiting decision makers and influencers
- promoting the skills, supply chains and career opportunities of the Exeter economy
- parallel promotional activity by visitor and cultural marketing to demonstrate the quality of life and lifestyle on offer

5.0 LEAD MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

5.1 It is proposed that the Council's Economic Development Service co-ordinates the implementation of the Place Marketing Strategy, supports the activities of the Exeter

Marketing Alliance, establishes the proposed performance indicators to measure success and continues to handle enquiries through its established business relocation and investment handling service.

- 5.2 To track progress, measure success and evaluate the effectiveness of the approaches in this Strategy, a range of performance indicators are proposed. For example, to assess the: effectiveness of targeted marketing activity, nature and volume of jobs created by local firms and inward investing employers, amount of commercial and public sector investment secured, the nature of media coverage in terms of positive perceptions of the Exeter economy and the city's reputation.

6.0 BRAND STATEMENT

- 6.1 Some cities use single short strap lines and others such as Bristol appear to use several strap lines to promote different aspects of their offer. For example, Bristol's messages convey the city as progressive, science based and creative that is the right place to be, connected in an urban, coast, and countryside environ.
- 6.2 Exeter has been using a number of approaches with the strap lines of 'regional capital', 'it's a capital city', 'city of science'. It also relates itself to Exeter and the Heart of Devon and for visitors, the 'Heart of Devon'. In so doing it is important to avoid brand confusion whilst conveying the important multi-faceted nature of the "product".
- 6.3 The following brand statement is currently proposed as the main promise of value from the Exeter economy. The promotional statement draws on for example, the local economy's success, its forward looking research activity from the University of Exeter and the work of the Met Office, the growth point developments, the green capital vision and the presence of innovative businesses. Alternatives are welcomed during this consultation period.

'Exeter – successful, forward thinking, innovative.'

- 6.4 The proposed approach complements the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership promoting the quality of life and lifestyle of the area. It also avoids brand confusion, allowing both to sit together side by side and provides a rounded vision of Exeter and the Heart of Devon:

'Heart of Devon – city, coast, countryside.'

- 6.5 In addition, a range of strapline messages have been proposed in Appendix 5 of the Strategy. These underscore different aspects of Exeter's economy. They are set alongside existing imagery associated with 'Exeter it's a capital city' and also for 'Exeter and the Heart of Devon'.
- 6.6 The brand statement, imagery to be associated with it and additional strap lines have yet to be agreed.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Council will formally consult with the business community and key stakeholders to seek their views and support for the Place Marketing Strategy. Consultees will be drawn from those groups indicated in Figure 1 of the Strategy together key employers and the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership.

7.2 Consultation will run over a 4 week period. Officers will collate responses and present the final proposed Strategy to this Committee in September 2012.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The draft action plan identifies proposed budgets for each proposed activity across its 4 year time frame. Many of the actions listed are set at zero cost, relying on staff time and resources from within the Marketing Alliance.

8.2 The Economic Development Service currently has an annual marketing budget of £40,150. It is intended that the City Council contributes from this budget to the costs contained within the action plan

8.3 Members of the Marketing Alliance have indicated they might be able to provide in kind support through use of staff resources, skills, and access to some media networks. However, co-funding is required to support the implementation of the Strategy. The Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board have discussed this issue.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION that:

9.1 Members comment on the proposed priorities and approaches of the draft Place Marketing Strategy.

RICHARD BALL
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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

1. 'Development of a Place Marketing Strategy', Scrutiny Committee – Economy, 8 September 2011