

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY

31 May 2012

Present:

Councillor Crow (Chair)

Councillors Bialyk, Bull, Choules, Leadbetter, Mottram, Pearson, Prowse, Robson and Wardle

Apologies:

Councillors Brock, Crew and Lyons

Also present:

Strategic Director (KH), Strategic Director (MP), Assistant Director Economy, Principal Economic Development Officer and Member Services Officer (SLS)

In attendance:

Councillor Rosie Denham - Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism
Councillor Rachel Sutton - Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development and Transport

Sally Little - Job Centre Plus
Janet Sinclair - Job Centre Plus
Ian Hatt - Exeter College

20 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2012 were taken as read, and signed by the Chair as correct.

21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following personal interests were declared:-

COUNCILLOR	MINUTE
Councillor Choules	22 (employee of Exeter University)
Councillor Prowse	22 (student landlord)
Councillor Pearson	23 (employee at the Exeter Phoenix)
Councillor Prowse	24 (is a volunteer and a family member works in a local charity shop)
Councillor Wardle	24 (Member of Exeter Civic Society and the Devonshire Association)
Councillor Prowse	28 and 29 (Member of Devon County Council)
Councillor Bull	29 (Member of Devon County Council's Highways and Traffic Orders Committee)

22 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 19**

Councillor Choules declared a personal interest as an employee of Exeter University. Councillor Prowse declared a personal interest as a student landlord.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 19, a question from a member of the public, Mr David Knowles was put, in respect of issues raised by the 20% limit of Houses in Multiple Occupation, to which the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development and Transport responded. A copy of the question had been circulated to Members and was made available at the meeting. The question and the reply from the Portfolio Holder (in italics) are appended to the minutes.

Mr Knowles responded to the points raised.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy requested that a report to consider the issues raised by the question relating to the Council's Policy for the Threshold of Houses in Multiple Occupation be presented at a forthcoming meeting of the Planning Member Working Group.

23 **PORTFOLIO HOLDERS TO PRESENT THEIR PRIORITIES FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR**

Councillor Pearson declared a personal interest as an employee of the Exeter Phoenix.

Councillor Sutton presented the following priorities within the Sustainable Development and Transport Portfolio for 2012/13. A copy of the report is attached as an appendix to the minutes.

The following responses were given to Members' questions: -

- The enhancement of Central Station had progressed significantly and the City Council's contribution had been added to that made by Network Rail and Devon County Council. That element of the project had now been signed off.
- Work had been undertaken on behalf of a number of comparator authorities to ensure that an appropriate level of the Communities Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had been set. If the Levy was set too high, that could discourage house builders or if too low, insufficient funds would be available to deliver the infrastructure needed. Where possible the benefits of CIL would be kept local, though a certain level would go to Devon County Council to deliver local infrastructure such as roads and schools.
- The City Council was mindful of the need to encourage developers to employ local people, particularly on larger projects. Although, many of the volume house builders were nationally based, they had regional offices which employed local people, and local firms were often involved in some capacity. Many of these companies, as well as the City Council, promoted apprenticeship schemes.
- A web site had been developed though the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board and the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development and Transport would encourage the details of procurement to be included on the website, so that local people could also access the necessary information about forthcoming projects.

- The importance of ensuring that planned play areas included in new developments were in place as soon as houses were occupied, as well as the appropriate maintenance, was acknowledged. A suggestion that the developers should be required to provide these facilities before being able to start another development would be unrealistic to enforce.
- The significance of an active Park and Ride on the south side of the city was acknowledged.

Councillor Denham presented the following priorities within the Economy and Tourism Portfolio for 2012/13. A copy of the report is attached as an appendix to the minutes.

The following responses were given to Members' questions and comments:-

- A more targeted business support approach for the start-up of businesses made best use of a limited resource. There was additional support through coordinated activities at Exeter University's Innovation Centre to reach as many people as possible. The Assistant Director Economy added that whilst he accepted the Member's comments on widening the support, the thrust of the work remained to support new businesses during the vulnerable first few months of their new business.
- The City Council's commitment to progress apprenticeship schemes was acknowledged and every practical effort would be made to develop this further.

A response would be made to a Member who had enquired about the provision of super fast broadband across the city.

Councillor Denham wished to place on record the thanks and appreciation of Scrutiny Committee –Economy for the hard work by the Festival and Events Manager and her team during the Olympic torch celebrations. The event had been very successful and had showcased the city to a wide audience.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the achievements and priorities presented.

24 **BUS AND COACH STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES**

Councillor Prowse declared a personal interest as a volunteer and as a family member was employed in a local charity shop. Councillor Wardle declared an interest as a member of the Exeter Civic Society and the Devonshire Association.

The Strategic Director (KH) referred to the previous approval of the draft Development Principles for a public engagement exercise. The report considered the responses received, and now sought approval for proposed changes to the document, as well as the endorsement of the amended document for development management purposes. The proposed principles were set out in Section 8 of the report and Members were advised that there would be other opportunities to consider the future development of the Bus and Coach Station Development,

The Development Principles had been drawn up to guide preparation of a potential development scheme and potential planning application for this area by a prospective

developer, allowing a degree of flexibility whilst ensuring that key principles would be delivered. The Strategic Director (KH) confirmed that the 'principle' offered a clear statement regarding the detail, but that any planning application would ultimately be considered by Full Council.

Members were supportive of the forthcoming development and the proposed amendments to the main principles of development. A Member welcomed the proposed mix of both retail and leisure use. It was requested that consideration be given to ensuring there was adequate parking or stopping off facilities for visiting coaches.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy endorsed the contents of the report and supported Executive approval of the proposed response to the public consultation and the amendment to the Bus and Coach Station Development Principles as detailed in Section 8 of the circulated report.

(Report circulated)

25 **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

It was agreed that Councillor Prowse act as Chair for the remainder of this meeting of the Scrutiny Committee – Economy, following the departure of the appointed Chair, Councillor Crow.

26 **PLACE MARKETING STRATEGY - EXETER ECONOMY 2012 - 2016**

The Assistant Director Economy presented the report which contained a draft of the Place Marketing Strategy. An outline of the proposal to proactively market Exeter, was considered at the September meeting of Scrutiny Committee - Economy. A copy of the draft Strategy which had subsequently been prepared was circulated with the report.

The Council will formally consult with the business community and key stakeholders to seek their views and commitment to deliver the Strategy. Following a period of consultation, a final Strategy will be presented to the September meeting of the Scrutiny Committee - Economy.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy supported the proposed priorities and approach of the draft Place Marketing Strategy.

(Report circulated)

27 **UNEMPLOYMENT IN EXETER**

The Assistant Director Economy presented a report on the level of unemployment and the nature of support available to help people back into work in Exeter. The report included a snapshot of employment trends, an analysis of Job Seekers Allowance claimants and detailed the range of activities carried out through partnership working with key agencies. A presentation on addressing unemployment was made by Sally Little, Devon Senior Operational Partnership Manager, Janet Sinclair, Devon Partnership Manager from Job Centre Plus and Ian Hatt, Assistant Principal from Exeter College.

Job Centre Plus had a targeted approach to reducing unemployment, using contract providers offering practical help with obtaining employment. They also run a range of pre-work programme measures as part of the Get Britain Working Initiative. They

hope to develop their partnership working to further influence major employers, as well as working more closely with the City Council. Exeter College have been working to address unemployment, including a long term commitment to develop apprenticeships and initiatives to help NEET learners (students not in education, employment or training). Ian Hatt welcomed any opportunity to develop good quality work experience placements particularly around professional as well as the more traditional practical services. A Member commented on the College's aspirations to develop apprenticeships and suggested there was a perception that a formal apprentice scheme did not necessarily lead to a permanent job and whether there were enough positive outcomes in terms of skills and experience. Ian Hatt stated that a formal apprentice scheme offered a structured approach to dealing with youth employment, with many apprentices gaining permanent employment. It was acknowledged that more intensive support and guidance was needed for some young people to develop their educational needs and skills. Job Centre Plus and the College had been working with Careers Advisors in schools and local employers to enable young people to explore the available options.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the report and particularly the activities detailed in section five of the circulated report.

(Report circulated)

28 **CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING**

Councillor Prowse declared a personal interest as a Member of Devon County Council in relation to forthcoming road works due to take place in the city centre. Councillor Bull declared a personal interest as a Member of the Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC).

The Strategic Director (KH) advised Members of the final position with regard to the 2011/12 capital programme for the Economy and Development Directorate. The details of the final expenditure on projects for the year were set out. A complete list of capital projects was circulated with the report. A discussion took place on the implementation of the enhancement scheme including works to York Road. It was acknowledged that people did not necessarily behave as predicted by transport models and this issue would need careful monitoring.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the report.

(Report circulated)

29 **SCRUTINY ECONOMY REVENUE FINAL ACCOUNTS 2011/12**

Councillor Prowse declared a personal interest as a Member of Devon County Council.

The Strategic Director (KH) advised Members of the overall financial performance of the Economy and Development Directorate for the 2011/12 financial year ended 31 March 2012. He also highlighted the major differences by management unit from the approved annual budget. Regular reports had been made to this Scrutiny Committee on the estimated revenue outturn. He responded to a Member's comment on the shortfall in car parking income over the last two years. A number of measures had been taken to address this, with a number of initiatives suggested by the Car Parks Task and Finish Group, including the restructuring of car parking charges, with a

series of reports to the Executive. The surplus of income from the city's residential parking scheme was noted.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy noted the report.

(Report circulated)

30 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

31 **EXETER AND HEART OF DEVON GROWTH BOARD MINUTES**

A copy of the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Point Board minutes was circulated for Members' information, and to inform Members of a number of issues that the City Council will need to consider and take forward as appropriate.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the content of the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board Minutes.

(Minutes circulated to Members)

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.20 pm

Chair