

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE PRIORITIES FOR 2012/13

Public Realm

- in line with the Administration's manifesto commitments around 'Quality of Life', and in recognition of the importance of providing free, high quality and year-round amenities, we will upgrade play facilities in St Thomas and Heavitree parks and progress the refurbishment of Flowerpot skatepark.

Heavitree Park works completed but unfortunately vandalised. We are monitoring ongoing security issues.

The upgrading of the St Thomas play facilities has been pushed back to summer 2013 to allow for consultation on the options for spending the budget available. Consultation is now underway.

Consultation around the skatepark is ongoing and progressing well. The estimated date for the opening of new the skatepark is Spring 2013.

- we will enhance the range of services provided by the Bereavement & Cemeteries team which will include extending Higher Cemetery Garden of Remembrance, developing natural burial options and organising a programme of memorial and other events in the city's three cemeteries throughout the year.

Work to extend the garden of remembrance at Higher Cemetery is at the final stage of preparation and it is anticipated the project will be completed by Christmas. The programme of events and memorial days is being delivered as planned and work on natural burial options ongoing. Feedback from the community regarding various events and tours of the cemetery continues to be extremely positive

- we will undertake a systems review of the parks & open spaces function to ensure it is meeting customer demands as efficiently and effectively as possible.

This is now being progressed alongside the "systems thinking" review into "keeping my City safe and looking good".

The review commenced at the beginning of October and is presently progressing. The aim is to provide the PH with high-level findings mid November, with redesign work commencing December and piloting of some of the recommendations to take place during the beginning of the following calendar year.

Environment

Sustainability & Environment

- We will proactively manage and reduce the amount of business miles our fleet operations carry out in order to reduce carbon emissions from our vehicles, promote more sustainable forms of transport and help reduce the impact on air quality.

Controls on fleet use out of office hours progressing. Consultation with Unions carried out - notice to staff given in September 2012.

Procurement of 2 RCVs with electric bin lifts scheduled. Demonstrator vehicle was provided from 15 - 19 October and results of the trial are being assessed. Electric bin lifts are claimed to reduce fuel consumption by avoiding the surge in engine revs

that occurs when a standard bin lift is operated. This is also quieter, reducing the nuisance to residents. The electric bin lift option has been included in our tender for the next replacement refuse collection vehicle.

Fuel economisers to be trialled on RCVs (engine and gearbox management system). This optimises the timing of gear changes on automatic RCV gearboxes, improving fuel consumption through the reduction in over- and under-revving.

Extension of trackers to fleet ongoing - to better analyse journey/fuel use. GPS trackers have been removed from 13 refuse collection vehicles, enabling the trackers to be fitted to other fleet vehicles. RCVs can be tracked on the Bartec system.

Online booking system (via Outlook) for pool cars and vans will be completed by March 2013, optimising the use of the existing pool fleet.

- In order to promote waste minimisation and enhance our recycling, we will survey a cross-section of Exeter citizens to establish attitudes to recycling and use this information alongside operational data, to help reduce the amount of rubbish produced and collected per household in the City.

Survey completed in June 2012 and final report received. Briefing report with action plan being developed for November. A draft copy of the survey report indicates a high level of recognition and use of the annual waste collection calendar, and a leaflet is the most popular form of communication for waste and recycling issues. This validates our current plan, annual leaflet + waste collection calendar, due to go to all households in Q4.

- At our Bring Banks, we will extend the range of items that can be recycled and diverted from landfill, such as small electrical goods and textiles, and seek to improve the attractiveness of such sites to users.

WeeeCare - SLA agreed for up to 6 banks (currently reduced to 4 pending outcome of Sainsbury providing banks on its own sites) . Additional textile bank at one major supermarket being negotiated. New driver/collector in post since August 2012 has one day per week dedicated to hot-washing of recycling banks, improving cleanliness. Tatty or damaged recycling banks are gradually being replaced by recently refurbished ones. Ongoing programme of changing bottle banks for clear glass from white to purple to look smarter.

- We will continue to support our successful 'Green Team' partnership initiative in schools, extolling waste minimisation and recycling, and build upon it to reach out to other groups, particularly the younger generation.

Green Team awards took place on 8 October. 200 school children and staff from 29 schools attended. Sponsorship covered the cost of the event and prizes. Next Green Team awards will take place in February 2014 (this suits the academic year better than the October date) and Express & Echo and Gregory Distribution are continuing as partners supporting the project. An additional 'Seeds In, Veg Out' project, offering a £1,000 prize to encourage school children to plant, grow, reap and cook a meal, will run until June 2013.

- We will introduce a greater range of domestic waste receptacles, encouraging householders to down-size their bins and minimise their waste, as well as providing sea-gull proof sacks to protect and contain bagged waste, and help prevent spillage and litter from rubbish.

New 'Standard' size black bin introduced (180 litre), which encourages more waste minimisation (138 delivered to date).

Sea-gull proof sacks being offered when changes in collection are made to bag collections, on individual request, and where we identify sea-gull issues (650 delivered to date).

- We will seek to reduce fly-tipped rubbish by better targeting resources and improved working with partners, landlords and residents to bring about sustainable resolutions.

The process for dealing with fly-tipping has been streamlined. A single point of contact for reporting fly-tipping has been set up and officers are using a single integrated computer system to manage fly-tipping reports. The system will also be used to provide the data for the Council to meet its obligation to report monthly to the Environment Agency. Single point data entry for fly-tipping now carried out, improving data capture.

The system will identify "hotspots" where further intervention and possible legal action may be required.

With over 400 households moved from back to front collection, we have seen a significant reduction in back-lane fly-tipping.

Number of reported fly tips Apr-Sep 2012 was 558, down from 588 for the same period last year.

- We will submit an Air Quality Action Plan to Defra which details actions to be taken to improve the air quality in Exeter and seek to increase awareness of the health impacts of poor air quality, as well as identifying synergies between improving air quality and other Council objectives, such as carbon management and sustainable development.

The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) has been drafted but officers are awaiting further input into the Plan from Devon County Council before submitting the document to Defra.

An application for an air quality grant has been made to Defra which will significantly impact on the outputs from the AQAP. The primary focus of the bid is a project to identify and implement measures that will reduce emissions of NO_x and contribute towards meeting the EU limit value for NO₂. The application has been accepted by Defra and the Terms and Conditions of the offer have been signed by the Assistant Director Environment. Officers are now working on preparing the Tender document for Consultants to bid for the work. The proposed start date for the project is February/March 2013.

The AQAP will be amended to reflect the successful bid for funding and submitted to Defra by the end of the year (2012).

- To support greener transport, we will introduce a policy that encourages taxi proprietors to replace their taxis with vehicles that have lower emissions.

Policy now approved by Licensing Committee in September with a rolling programme of implementation. From 7 January 2013 all new hackney carriages will be Euro Standard 5 or higher and all existing licensed Hackney Carriages to upgrade to Euro Standard 4 as a minimum on next renewal of licence. Policy to be reviewed 5 yearly to seek to upgrade to higher standards as they become available.

The policy could not be implemented in regard to Private Hire vehicles at this time as the effects of the Law Commission Review into taxis and Private Hire vehicles are not clear, but currently would appear to preclude any application to this sector. A policy could be introduced at a later stage when clarification on the review is available.

Support for Business

- Through the new Taxi Forum, we will seek to strengthen our policies in order to improve and enhance taxi provision for the travelling public in Exeter.

The Taxi Forum has been extended to include the Private Hire trade, and 2 forums have now taken place. Consultation is about to embark on the provision of taxi ranks and their respective siting.

The problematic situation with the location of ranks in Sidwell Street have now been resolved with the new John Lewis rank in place from 12/10/12; there has been positive feed-back from the trade.

- When regulating businesses we will seek to engage with them in a positive manner and assist them in achieving compliance to ensure that their premises are safe places for people to work and visit, and that their business processes do not harm the environment.

A large amount of work has taken place with swimming pool operators regarding the safe management of swimming and spa pools following routine water quality sampling.

Food Hygiene courses were organised for October in Bengali, Cantonese and Mandarin following requests from a number of businesses.

- Through training, advisory visits and production of guidance documents, we will provide businesses with the tools to assist them to meet their legislative requirements.

A revision has been made to the food safety handbook, which has been printed at no cost to the authority.

The authority is also working closely with other authorities in the county to develop sector specific awareness sessions and other compliance methods covering food and health and safety issues, to ensure that businesses meet their legislative requirements.

Staff from the service have also been involved in a number of safety and food awareness sessions at Exeter University, Exeter College and with a supported living provider.

- We will build upon the success of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, and work closely with businesses to engender a positive increase in the number of higher-rated food premises.

Currently 97% of businesses are rated 3 or above on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. This is compared to a national average of 88.9% published by the Food Standards Agency for the 2010/11 statistical return, which is due to be updated in November 2012 following the publication of the 2011/12 statistical return.

Programme of free training sessions for newcomers and low compliers in place with 41 business representatives attending over the 3 sessions held since April 2012.

Due to the positive feedback received this pilot has been extended and these seminars will now be open to established businesses.

Further continuation of a targeted intelligence led sampling programme focusing on areas identified at inspection. Officers are also using their Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) meter to analyse the effectiveness of cleaning in food establishments, and where deficiencies are found are able to demonstrate corrective action to ensure that food business operators are aware of the level of cleaning required and how effective it can be.

- We will use Exeter City Council's expertise to support businesses in complying with relevant legislative requirements. Operating nationally, on behalf of signed up businesses, as the Primary Authority.

The partnership with Lloyd Maunder is going well, with managers from across the business receiving Level 3 Award in Food Safety training as a result of a training deficiency being identified

The Primary Authority Partnership application with Abode Hotels is still under consideration with the Better Regulation Office due to the legal complexities of the company structure. This is likely to be resolved through a legislative change currently making its way through the parliamentary process.

There are a number of businesses that have expressed an interest in pursuing a Primary Authority partnership.

- We will work with partner agencies and businesses to help reduce the negative impact of alcohol-fuelled anti-social behaviour and disorder, and ensure that existing and new licensing tools are used proportionately and effectively.

The Exeter Night-time Economy Forum has been one channel of progress in relation to this priority. Notable advances include the potential provision of taxi marshals through University Officer Training Corps (OTC) volunteers.

The Licensing team now hold bi-monthly meetings with the Licensed Victuallers Association (LVA) and Police – the issue of late night levy and early morning control orders have been discussed.

From 31 October 2012 the Government will have introduced two new discretionary tools to help control negative impacts of late night alcohol consumption; these are the Late Night Levy (NVL) and Early Morning Restriction Order (EMRO). In essence, one is a blanket 'tax' on those premises opening after midnight, and the other a curfew on opening, and as such are quite draconian tools. As such their application has to be carefully considered, and fully justified with evidence.

The licensed trade are worried about the implications of the Late Night Levy (LNL) as a four fold increase in licensing fees for those opening after midnight, is likely to see the demise of a number of premises and a potential stigma for the City and its Evening and Night Time Economy if it is identified as having an out of control alcohol related disorder problem. It is likely that challenges from the organisations representing the licensed trade will arise wherever such tools are being implemented.

During the October meeting with the Exeter Licensed Victuallers Association and Police, the trade very much see these tools used as a last resort when all other

options have been used and failed; in addition there is a concern that imposing such tools will have a negative effect on the partnership working that takes place currently.

Leisure

- Drive forward the feasibility and project planning work for a new swimming pool, leisure centre and quality public space as part of the redevelopment of the bus station.

Executive have considered the recommendations arising from an assessment of need and the business case for a new swimming and leisure complex as part of the bus station redevelopment. It was agreed to continue to progress proposals for the replacement of the existing Pyramids Swimming and Leisure Centre with a new facility on the Bus and Coach Station site, and that detailed capital cost estimates for the facility be obtained. The Assistant Director Economy is addressing project management capacity and modeling capital funding options.

- Leisure contract - develop a level of service and customer experience which exceeds that as set out in the contract with Parkwood Leisure.

The Working Group set up by Scrutiny Committee is working well in looking at specific customer related issues with Parkwood staff. In addition to ensuring that the terms of the contract were being met, that day to day issues were being dealt with promptly and that equipment was being replaced as agreed, it was important to identify and work towards longer term aspirations and goals in terms of continuous improvement. The importance of commercial considerations were recognised but developing the leisure product on offer to the people of Exeter is most important. New themes and targets need to be identified and these could be developed following analysis of the recent customer survey as well as action plans to address the outcomes from the Quest assessments (industry quality standards) at each site. Initial Improvement Plans for each site had been prepared by Parkwood and these are to be taken further forward to be agreed by the Working Group.

There are encouraging signs that the number of paying members joining to use the facilities was increasing and that complaints were being monitored more effectively.

- RAMM - look to gain as much benefit for the city following the very successful first months of its operation from continued high numbers of visitors, and its contribution to the image and cultural life of the city.

Visitor numbers continue to be high - reaching 310,106 to date. RAMM is continuing to attract people to the city encouraging longer and repeat visits and provides opportunities for reference to the city in many different ways. An economic impact study is nearing completion and will be reported to Members once received.

Cllr Greg Sheldon
26 October 2012