

**SCRUTINY ECONOMY COMMITTEE
8 NOVEMBER 2012**

Key Elements of the Programme for the Economy Portfolio for 2012/13

The importance of Exeter's economy as an economic hub and focus for growth within Devon and the wider South West is clear. The area provides a base for leading regional, national and international employers, attracting people with higher level skills and investors. Maintaining and improving the competitiveness of and confidence in the city for investment, promoting and helping people into employment and attracting more visitors have to remain high priorities

There are continued uncertainties in the economy. Therefore an absolute priority for the City Council must be to continue to support growth and recovery.

The key priorities for supporting growth and recovery in 2012/2013 are summarised as follows:

- We will continue to work with Land Securities and the Crown Estate to build on the City Centre Vision, and feasibility study undertaken with a view to bringing forward the development of the Bus & Coach Station site. If a viable scheme can be identified we will be looking to press ahead with the planning processes and seeking to agree Heads of Terms for a development agreement. In conjunction with these proposals we will undertake feasibility and initial planning for a new leisure facility.

Feasibility Study submitted by Land Securities and Crown Estates. Estates team evaluating the feasibility study.

2 Oct Executive considered the report on the assessment of need and business case for a new swimming and leisure complex in Exeter and resolved that we continue to progress the project.

- *A Project Manager is to be appointed*
 - *A capital funding plan is being prepared*
 - *A regular project team meeting is taking place with Land Securities*
 - *Design process has led to development principles and has informed masterplan approach*
 - *Development principles approved*
 - *£8 million of Regional Growth Funding has been secured which may assist with progress*
 - *Negotiations are progressing with Stagecoach regarding identifying a site for the relocation of bus depot.*
 - *Progress on traffic modelling of options for reducing cross town traffic*
- In the short term the arrival of John Lewis to the City Centre will be a major boost to the economy; we have a lot to do in terms of supporting this investment with improvements to the public realm.
- London Inn Square enhancement scheme has been completed. Cowick Street first phase railway bridge improvements have been completed and second stage due early 2013. Central Station – PMWG has agreed scheme. DCC Cabinet approved 12 Sept 2012. Network Rail now gives six months notice to the tenant.*

- A priority for this year will be to continue to work to capitalise on the investment that has been made in the “Growth Point” outside the city. We will continue to work with the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board to influence and secure support for priority actions and developments from the new Local Enterprise Partnership.

Cranbrook has now opened up and houses are selling well with up to 120 dwellings likely to be built by Christmas. Representation continues to be made to government to build on the current investment and to open up the phase 2 land. In a similar manner bids have been made to government to support a local infrastructure fund to capitalise on the investment made to date. Two successful bids have been made to the LEP for funding in relation to the Science Park and Matford.

- Continue to work with the Exeter and Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board to promote investment in relevant training provision for employers and progress projects which support local people to take advantage of job opportunities arising from the Exeter and East Devon New Growth Point projects.

The Skills Board has launched the first “Growth Club” programme supporting the development of management and leadership skills of 6 business owner manager, the aim being to promote the survival and growth of businesses with subsequent impact on jobs ; A new “My Exeter Business Guide” website is near launch as a portal for employers to access information and advice on skills issues including benefits, funding and providers; The” Step 2 Skills Initiative” has started, aiming to involve employers in services and programmes that improve the skills of unemployed people, increase take up of apprenticeships, provide opportunities for graduates to get into employment and reduce skills gaps - 2 large high street outlets have been engaged and at least 10 new un-paid work placements are to be generated, and a major new hotel is working with the Skills Board to coordinate vacancy advertising to focus on recruiting local people and using pre-employment training to support applicants; “Community Energy Fit Exeter” is being delivered in partnership with E.on and National Energy Action aiming to up-skill 160 unemployed people to improve their employability - 4 sessions held so far since training commenced in Aug 12, up-skilling 20 unemployed people

- Develop the Council’s approach to helping people into employment. The report before Scrutiny Committee sets out some proposals including the creation of a number of apprenticeship opportunities within the Council.

Scrutiny Committee in September received an update on measures being taken by the city council and others to help people into employment. In addition to the training related measures just outlined the report referred to the Council’s recruitment of 6 apprentices and its intention through the planning process to promote local employment and workforce skill development. Three work clubs are being supported to offer help for unemployed people to find training, apprenticeships, employment or self employment.

- We will continue to progress the development of Exeter Science Park with a particular focus on progressing the first buildings on site and its promotion.

Members will be aware from previous reports that the proposed first building, the Science Park Centre, is the key to supporting the overall development of highly important strategic employment sites. Now that the infrastructure works have largely been completed, the science park is also available for development. The Centre is to provide a high quality suite of incubation space for scientific based businesses requiring “start up” or “grow on” space and itself create some 250 jobs. In the current climate, funding is tight

and there are few opportunities from sales of plots to generate the funding to build the Centre in the short term. An application to the Growing Places Fund for £4.5 million as a contribution to the total cost of £7.25 million is the subject of final negotiation. In anticipation of a successful outcome a planning application has been submitted and approved. Marketing of the science park has started and the Council will be supporting this activity.

- We will maintain our support for measures to promote business formation and survival through a programme of activities coordinated by Exeter Business Support which is based on a partnership with the University of Exeter Innovation Centre.

The Council continues to support measures to help new business formation coordinated through this partnership. A report reviewing progress will be made to this committee in January

- Support for the formation and survival of social enterprises.

Likewise a report reviewing progress will be made in January

- Agree and implement a place marketing strategy differentiating the city from others focussing on promoting and securing investment in the Exeter economy.

This Committee supported the direction and approach of the strategy at its meeting in May this year. Officers have worked with marketing specialists in the city to determine a branding strapline and are preparing to use "Exeter – be part of the energy" in order to dispel the perception of sleepy Devon and relate the momentum and success being enjoyed through individual organisations and partnership effort. The strapline would not be used in isolation from imagery and messages designed to clarify and portray Exeter as a successful and attractive location for investment, and relocation of people and organisations. The planned improved website and promotional activity will now be implemented.

- Provide a responsive and proactive commercial property and investment support service to facilitate investment and the finding of suitable accommodation.

Over the past 12 months the service has handled over 970 enquiries of which 120 were from new start up businesses. The Council Property Register contains over 800 vacant properties and sites in and around the city and is kept up to date through close contact with commercial agents. The vast majority of enquiries are received via the City Council website

- Work with the Cultural Partnership to prepare a cultural strategy to develop the breadth and quality of activity in the city and to realise the contribution culture can make to the life of residents and the city's economy.

The proposed framework, strategic goals and way forward for the preparation of the cultural strategy is the subject of a report to this Committee today for your comments.

- We will continue to support key festivals in the city including Respect, Animated Exeter and the Exeter Festival of South West Food and Drink. Recognising the importance of events and festivals to the image, attraction and enjoyment of the city, we do recognise a gap at the moment in the spread and nature of events across the year. We will, with

partners, be looking to develop either a new kind of event, or variation of an existing one, where resources allow.

Members received a detailed review of the programme of festivals supported by the Council last Scrutiny Committee. The report also referred to the intention to develop a new major festival for the city focussing on commissioned outdoor arts performance and arts in hidden or unusual places across the city, indoors and outdoors. Work is progressing to develop the first phase of the festival linking with Animated Exeter in February 2013. The second phase – a 10 day festival featuring commissioned work is being planned for September 2013.

- We will seek to support district shopping centres in local communities to ensure they continue to be vibrant and vital. This will require attention through the planning process, and consideration of approach to support communities through the New Homes Bonus.

Works are underway in relation to St Thomas district centre and proposals for use of S106 funds towards improvements to Heavitree and Magdalen Road will be discussed with traders/businesses.

**Councillor Rosie Denham
Portfolio Holder Economy and Tourism
November 2012**