

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY
17 JANUARY 2013**

**EXECUTIVE
22 JANUARY 2013**

DRAFT CITY CENTRE STRATEGY FOR EXETER 2013-2022

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on preparation of a new City Centre Strategy to cover the period 2013/22.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The case for a new City Centre Strategy received the backing of the City Centre Management Partnership Board (CCMPB) in May 2012 and initial consideration has been given to key strategic themes and potential project strands during the course of the year.
- 2.2 The current City Centre Strategy (covering the period 2007/12) has reached a conclusion and a framework is needed to maintain the momentum of City Centre change, renewal and investment for the coming 5-10 year period. The new City Centre Strategy needs to relate to the Exeter Vision and to map out timescales for key developments and activities. An outline timetable for development of this strategy is attached.
- 2.3 The draft Strategy is very much a discussion document which will inevitably change to reflect the realities of resource availability and the capacity to deliver proposed actions. In short the context for the Strategy is difficult:
- The most significant squeeze on the public finances in decades,;
 - A decade of major economic progress for the City Centre – which, in spite of the major contribution to the economic welfare of the city, now provides the challenge of complacency with a widespread view that continued economic progress is a given;
 - A likely focus of City Council capital expenditure on the swimming pool element of Bus Station site redevelopment;
 - The need for a re-gearing in the relationship between business and public authorities on the funding of ‘city centre management’ initiatives. A Business Improvement District will be an essential pre-requisite for moving forward many of the project strands envisaged in the draft City Centre Strategy.
- 2.4 A draft City Centre Strategy is attached. It is envisaged that this will provide the basis for in-depth dialogue with a range of stakeholders and key partners. Development of the strategy document will be an iterative process as the views and comments of the key agencies, business community and the City Council are collated during the consultation phase. The Strategy will be overseen by a reconstituted City Centre Management Partnership comprising active

representation from the business community covering the relevant sectors and areas of the City Centre, from Princesshay and Guildhall centres, the City Council, Police and County Council. Once agreed each body will need to account for progress on those aspects of the Strategy for which they are responsible.

3 STRATEGY CONTENT

3.1 The City Centre Strategy has been drawn together with the following structure:

- A brief introduction on the current City Centre offer, a summary of progress during the last five year period, an assessment of the city centre's current competitive position (including a City Centre SWOT analysis), a summary of key development aims during the next 5-10 years and an Action Plan.
- Strategy purpose – which can be identified as four-fold:
 - (1) To provide a clear timetable for the Strategy (to cover the ten year period – up to 2022, although the primary focus is initially on the first 5 years);
 - (2) To present a positive case for City Centre inward investment (and re-investment by existing businesses);
 - (3) To set out clear aims and project objectives for the CCMP and its partners, including the delivery of a City Centre Business Improvement District which is a critical element of providing the necessary resources for achieving desired progress during the coming 5 year period;
 - (4) To clearly set out partners and lead agency responsibilities for the implementation and delivery of the Strategy Action Plan.
- Action Plan targets are summarised under the following key aims:
 - (1) Securing and building on Exeter City Centre's competitive advantage.
 - (2) Giving a better first impression.
 - (3) Delivering a vibrant centre which offers attractions for all.
 - (4) Achieving an even safer environment.
 - (5) Securing a vibrant, welcoming and safe evening economy.
- A series of projects have been identified that will help deliver progress against the above. Action Plan projects, and indeed the Strategy as a whole will have to strike a balance between aspirations that are challenging yet realistic and priorities which are essential and the means has to be found to deliver them.

4. OWNERSHIP & DELIVERY

4.1 For the City Centre Strategy to be successful it must have widespread ownership – and this will need to include a clear commitment to the aims and project delivery from not only City Council units, but also from partners to include Devon County Council, the Police, the business community and Chamber of Commerce. By definition, some project streams have the potential to be challenging to the City Council.

- 4.2. Draft projects carry a clear indication of lead agency/organisation/business, lead individual, timescale and likely funding streams. Project details at this stage remain very much work in progress.

- 4.3 The projects list contains a number of aspirations that can be identified as 'kite flying' – it's hoped that this will help secure a period of robust debate and dialogue amongst partners prior to finalisation of the City Centre Strategy in Spring 2013.

5. **TIMESCALE & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The objective will be to secure a published City Centre Strategy by June 2013 although it will be important that the finished document has had sufficient consultation and support before finally being signed off.

6. **RECOMMENDED that**

6.1 Scrutiny Committee – Economy

- (i) Members note progress on City Centre Strategy development to date and comment on proposed themes and proposed project work streams.
- (ii) Members support development of the City Centre Strategy development on the timetable proposed.

- 6.2 Executive approve the draft City Centre Strategy as the basis for public engagement and consultation with key stakeholders.

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None