

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY
5 SEPTEMBER 2013

EXECUTIVE
17 SEPTEMBER 2013

CITY CENTRE STRATEGY FOR EXETER 2013-2022

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on the preparation of a new City Centre Strategy to cover the period 2013/22.
- 1.2 To seek support from Members for the City Centre Strategy document as drafted.
- 1.3 To seek approval of the draft strategy from Executive.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The case for a new City Centre Strategy received the backing of the City Centre Management Partnership Board (CCMPB) in 2012 and, following initial consideration of a draft Strategy framework in early 2013, there has been an extensive consultation and listening exercise with a wide range of City Centre stakeholders.
- 2.2 The extensive listening exercise undertaken in relation to the City Centre Strategy has:
 - provided an opportunity to strengthen engagement with the City Centre community – this will be developed through a broadening of the City Centre Management Partnership membership base.
 - taken a fresh look at a range of policy areas – building new partnerships to move forward a range of practical projects designed to enhance the City Centre offer (an example of this is the recent multi agency/business workshop on the night-time economy).
 - provided an opportunity to reflect on key City Centre strengths and how to build on these.
- 2.3 A wide range of views have been expressed during the Strategy consultation exercise, but key themes that have emerged can be summarised as follows:
 - the importance of strengthening the focus on the evening and night-time economy – ensuring it's lively, that it offers attractions for all and that the City Centre feels like a safe place.
 - celebrating and further strengthening the cultural vibrancy of the city and City Centre and delivering a City Centre reputation for exciting and unique events throughout the year and during day and night.
 - delivering ease of access into the City Centre.
 - ensuring the city's car parks and transport infrastructure support the City Centre's vibrancy & economic wellbeing and encourage both visitor numbers and customer dwell time.
 - the importance of street maintenance and cleanliness.

- celebrating and promoting the diversity of the Exeter retail offer as effectively as possible.
- the importance of a City Centre accessible to all.
- realising the full potential of the Cathedral as a major tourist attraction, with the development of a new Cathedral visitor strategy taken forward alongside the City Centre Strategy.
- ensuring that the city's position at the heart of one of the best food producing regions in the country is recognised within the City Centre offer.
- using the uniqueness of the City Centre's layout as a key marketing tool to benefit the city.

2.4 The Strategy has been drafted within the difficult parameters of:

- 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;
- limited availability of City Council capital expenditure;
- 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.

2.5 Once finally agreed, 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, as well as 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:

3.1.1 A brief contextual analysis of the City Centre as it currently stands, 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 brief summary of the proposed delivery framework and an Action Plan.

3.1.2 The purpose of the Strategy is 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);
- present a positive case for City Centre inward investment (and re-investment by existing businesses);
- 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;
- clearly set out partners and lead agency responsibilities for the implementation and delivery of the Strategy Action Plan.

- 3.1.3 Action Plan targets are summarised under the following key aims:
- A sustainable, resilient and competitive City Centre.
 - A vibrant City Centre that offers attractions for all.
 - A welcoming and safe evening and night-time environment.
 - A better first impression.
 - A clean, well maintained and safe environment.

3.1.4 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.

3.1.5 The Strategy Action Plan does not seek to provide an exhaustive list of projects, rather the objective is to highlight key areas for action and to provide a framework for further detailed dialogue and debate.

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.

4.2. Draft projects carry a clear indication of lead agency/organisation/business, lead individual, timescale and, where identified, likely funding streams. A number of projects will develop over the lifespan of the Strategy and in a significant number of cases the Strategy is about ‘putting a marker’ down on the need to make progress against a number of policy areas.

4.3. The intention is to publish the City Centre Strategy in a more attractive format than its current draft text-based presentation during Autumn 2013 and with an appropriate level of publicity.

5. **RECOMMENDED that**

5.1 Scrutiny Committee – Economy Members comment on the final draft of the City Centre Strategy.

5.2 Executive approve the draft City Centre Strategy.

JOHN HARVEY
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ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ECONOMY

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None