

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY ECONOMY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting: Scrutiny Economy Committee – 18th June 2015
Report of: Cllr Denham,
Chair of the Future of Exeter Quay Task and Finish Group
Title: The Future of Exeter Quay Task and Finish Group Report

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

To report the findings and recommendations of this Task and Finish Group to the Scrutiny Economy Committee.

1. Approach Ring and Ride providers to enquire whether they could provide a circular transport route linking the City and the Quay during the weekends/school holidays.
2. Obtain a costing, subject to the recommendations of the Parking Review, as to fundamental improvements to the Cathedral and Quay Car Park.
3. Explore the opportunity to establish a formal partnership for management of the Quay involving stakeholders and traders, bearing in mind wider ongoing discussions around the future management of the waterways.
4. Support a formal partnership for management of the Quay involving stakeholders and traders.
5. Investigate opportunities, in the long term, for externally funded improvements to the Quay area.
6. Request that the Planning Members' Working Group review the Master Plan for the Quay area to establish whether it requires updating and whether it meets with the Council's current aims and priorities.
7. Monitor the progress of these recommendations with an update to be provided to this Committee in 12 months' time.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

- To recognise the work of this Task and Finish Group and to provide the Scrutiny Economy Committee members with an opportunity to comment.
- To promote tourism of the Quay and the wider Canal Basin area.
- To enhance economic development and increase the prosperity of the Quay area in general and the City of Exeter overall.
- To make the Quay and the wider Quay area a place that more people will want to visit.

- To address the current difficulties faced with access to the Quay area, signage and the car park.
- To encourage effective and collaborative working between the Council, stakeholders and Quay Traders in order to improve the area and provide a “joined up” approach.
- To investigate internally and externally, funding options which may be available to improve the Quay and Canal Basin areas in the long term.
- To determine, on a practical and operational level, what could be improved upon or changed and to assess what could be done by the Council internally and what could possibly be achieved externally with the cooperation and assistance of stakeholders.
- To work with stakeholders, traders and local charities to improve transport links between the City and the Quay, to encourage an increase in visitor numbers to the Quay and surrounding areas whilst also supporting local charity organisations which could provide transport services.
- To review the Master Plan for the Quay area to ensure that it is still fit for the purpose for which it was intended and to consider whether it requires updating to reflect the wider Quay area and the Council’s current aims and priorities.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources:

None at present as all proposals/recommendations are purely investigatory.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

Although the report contains no financial implications, any funding requirements identified as part of the reviews recommended above will need assessing against other funding priorities owing to the current financial climate of the Council

6. What are the legal aspects?

None.

7. Monitoring officer Comments

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring officer to consider.

8. Report Details:

The “Future of Exeter Quay” was identified as a high priority topic for Task and Finish Group investigation at the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme Meeting which took

place in July 2014. The start of this Group was seen as timely given that the Council was starting to look at the Future of Waterways through consultation.

Membership of the Group consisted of:-

Councillors:-

Cllr Denham (Chair)
Cllr Branston
Cllr Brimble
Cllr Brock
Cllr Bull
Cllr Donovan
Cllr Henson
Cllr Holland
Cllr Lyons
Cllr Williams

Council Officers:-

Mark Parkinson (Deputy Chief Executive)
Richard Ball (Assistant Director, Economy)
Sarah Ward (Assistant Director, Public Realm)
Mike Carson (Corporate Manager, Property)
Roger Crane (Service Manager, Public Realm)
Anne-Marie Hawley (Scrutiny Programme Officer)

The key objectives of the Group were:-

- (a) To promote tourism, development and commercialisation of the Quay area.
- (b) To explore ways of improving accessibility to the Quay and between the Quay and the City Centre.
- (c) To ensure that the recommendations contained within the Master Plan for the Quay area have been acted upon;
- (d) To continue to work with stakeholders and local businesses, where possible, to achieve these key objectives.

The Group met on six occasions, one of which involved a site visit to the Quay incorporating a meeting with Quay traders to obtain their views. Another meeting involved a visit and presentation by Philip Ardley FRICS, Consultant, Asset Management Service, Regeneration & Economic Development, Gloucester City Council as to the re-development of the waterways in the Gloucester area and a further meeting involved a visit from the Commercial Director of Stagecoach to discuss possible solutions to the transport problems in getting to and from the Quay by bus from the City Centre and the outskirts of the City.

The Group identified the following main issues:-

- Appearance
- Maintenance and cleanliness
- Access, signage, car parks

- More events to be held at the Quay

A brief summary of the Group's main investigations are set out below to provide the Scrutiny Economy members with a flavour of the areas and depth of enquiries rather than an exhaustive list of every area discussed.

Existing promotion of the Quay

The Council's Visitor Facilities Officer gave a brief outline as to the current promotion of Exeter and the Quay area and leaflets/literature were made available so that the Group could fully appreciate what is currently in place. Some of the literature and leaflets are provided by Exeter City Council and some are provided by others such as Devon County Council which includes the Exe Estuary, Explorer and Heritage leaflets. The Council are already liaising with the Quay traders to see if the literature and leaflets could be improved.

The leaflets and literature are currently placed around businesses at the Quay, the Tourist Information Centre, Underground Passages and the Museum and the Council's leaflets are also available in PDF form on the Council's website but those provided by other organisations are not.

Transport

Transport issues considered related to routes (on foot, by bus and by car) and promotion of routes and public transport to and from the Quay area, particularly in respect of linking the City with the Quay area. It was established that the G and Park and Ride (Matford) are the only buses which run around the vicinity of the Quay area but there is no bus available from the commercial quay area after 3.30 pm and this was viewed as a major concern.

The G service runs between 10 am and 3 pm and is an hourly off peak service. Stagecoach indicated that it is an off peak service in order to keep running costs to a minimum. There is not a lot of existing use on the current G service and Stagecoach commented that extra service would require extra funding.

The Park and Ride (Matford) service allows people to alight at Haven Banks and cross over the bridge to access the Quay. Stagecoach runs this route on the basis of how many people the route carries – they do not receive funding for the Park and Ride. The last bus runs at 6.45 pm.

The Group discussed with Stagecoach the possibility of branding the G and Park and Ride buses in respect of the Quay promotional material and it was decided that discussions could be resumed once ECQT has settled on suitable branding, signage and logos.

Signage

ECQT are currently looking at branding/logo options and are seeking views from local traders to see if they have any major objections to current proposals. It was agreed that signage needs improving from the City Centre and that the Council could possibly share the branding with Stagecoach.

It was discussed whether it would be possible to put together a PDF branded document showing the bus route options to the Quay area and display this on existing routes and timetables. Stagecoach agreed that this could be a viable option and that the Green Park and Ride route could display the branding.

The Group agreed that once ECQT had decided on a final version of the branding the Council could then contact Stagecoach to take this suggestion further. The Council could also arrange for the branding to feature on the Heart of Devon and ECQT websites. In addition to this promotional material could be displayed at bus stops indicating that the Quay is only 5 minutes away together with signs and information to show where the public could catch buses to the Quay area.

Stagecoach indicated that they could also put promotional material in the form of maps and branding at St Thomas if there is the space to do so.

It was established that there needs to be more promotion of the Park and Ride service in relation to the Quay. It would be sensible to have information at the bus stops on the Haven Bank side signposting people to cross over the bridge to access the Quay.

Events

It was agreed that Quayside events and particularly the food markets attract lots of visitors and are highly popular. It was also noted that Jazz events were also incredibly popular and the Visitor Facilities Officer confirmed that there is already a schedule of regular events for the Quay area in place for this year to capitalise upon the popularity.

Visit from Gloucester City Council

The Group asked many questions including:-

1. What transport links are there between the City and the Quay area?
2. How far away is the Quay from the City Centre?
3. Have Gloucester regenerated their old existing warehouses or have they built any new properties specifically developing new areas?
4. What kinds of activities and attractions are available at the Quay and what is the main focus?
5. What are the night time and seasonal trade patterns like?
6. How do Gloucester manage to attract visitors to the Quay all year round?

A map and promotional literature was provided to show what Gloucester waterways used to look like and what it looks like now and how the area is promoted so that the Group could see what had been achieved.

Salient points from the meeting with Gloucester:-

- Management of the docks is dealt with by a management company consisting of 6 directors. The Council appoint 2, the Trust 1 and the Residents 3. This

acts as a voice for all stakeholders as to how the Quay and Docks area is run and how it is budgeted for. One management agent looks after all the blocks so there is only one point of contact and less room for confusion.

- It is important to get the stakeholders involved and separate meetings are held with stakeholders for this purpose.
- Links between the Cathedral and Docks are seen as important and are promoted heavily.
- It is important to ensure easy, user friendly access for walkers and this is something in which the Public Realm at Gloucester have invested quite heavily.
- A lot of money is spent on public transport links.

Philip Ardley's observations in relation to Exeter Quay:-

Philip Ardley visited Exeter Quay earlier in the afternoon before the Group meeting and the points he made were as follows:-

- He spoke with a leaseholder at the Quay who said that he liked the location and it is lovely in the summer but absolutely dead in the winter.
- The car park is dire. It is dark and shabby. The staircase is not good because of its design and people using the car park after dark probably feel uncomfortable and unsafe using the stair case. There were at least 5 skateboards using it as a skate park at the time of his visit and it is generally not welcoming to visitors.

NB : (The Group recognised that the Parking Review would look at the Quay car park as part of the review process. There is a resource issue but the general consensus of the Group was that something needs to be done).

- There aren't any boats!
- The walkway down to the Quay is downhill and quite steep with overgrown bushes to the side and this is not welcoming to visitors walking to and from the Quay.
- **Access and transport are obviously Exeter's biggest challenges in respect of the Quay area.**

The Group suggested that an Asset Management Company could be of benefit in developing a strategy and action plan which could be kept under constant review and that this should be considered.

An Asset Management Strategy could help Exeter to determine what should be created at the Quay.

Filming/Waterways

Philip Ardley of Gloucester City Council was able to provide various contact details and it was agreed that it would be of benefit for Exeter City Council to contact Creative England and the British Film Commission (concerning possible filming opportunities at the Quay) and also the River and Canal Trust. The Economy Department have established contact with the former whilst the Assistant Director, Public Realm has established contact with the River and Canal Trust who are due to provide a presentation to the Scrutiny Economy Committee in June 2015 detailing their expertise and functions.

Access Routes

The Group identified that there is a need to look at the Quay area in relation to accessibility from the cycle routes and Haven Banks and not just from the City. Access via these routes is generally much better.

Site meeting/meeting with the Quay Traders

Quay Traders had already completed a form which had been sent to them by ECQT entitled "What is not happening at the Quay but should be". The completed forms were shared with the Council and circulated amongst the Task and Finish Group prior to the site meeting. Some of the suggestions and questions were touched upon at the meeting but it became apparent that further information was required. It was agreed that the Council would put the questions and suggestions into a tabular form and provide responses on the points and suggestions raised. The document is due to be circulated to the Quay Traders very shortly.

The Group were particularly interested to hear Traders views as to:-

- a) What are their top priorities for the area?

In response, the Traders identified the following issues:-

- Cleanliness of the area and problems with the car park
- Signage
- Where will this go if ECC drive it forward?

In response to the above point, the Group suggested that it would be really helpful if the Traders formed a Traders Association so that the Council had a specific point of contact and could have regular meetings to address issues and discuss ideas for ongoing improvements.

- What is ECQT's role?

The Chair of ECQT who was present at the meeting explained.

- b) Did they wish to become more involved in plans for the area?
c) How did they think they could be involved in the management of the area?

Broadly speaking the Traders welcomed the opportunity to meet with the Group, were keen to become involved where they could and meet with the Council in the future to discuss possible improvements and any issues. The Group asked the

Traders to provide contact/details for their spokesperson once they had formed a Traders Association, following which arrangements could be made to initiate regular meetings.

Update on the Master Plan

Please see Appendix A attached to this Report.

Issues identified and resolved ancillary to Group's main objectives:-

As a result of discussions with the Traders, the following information has been sourced and provided at their request:-

- Contact details for the Council's Service Manager, Public Realm and for Devon County Council's Street Lighting Department responsible for lighting at the Quay car park and surrounding areas respectively.
- Direct contact details for the Environment Agency to improve communication over queries, enquiries and works.
- Direct information from the Environment Agency as to the timetable for the Flood Defence work, the stage it is at and the envisaged completion date.
- A map of the Quay and surrounding areas clearly showing which organisation is responsible for which area so that Traders know who to contact in the event of a problem within a specific area.
- Contact details for ECC's Projects Officer, Economy and Tourism in relation to the Rugby World Cup 2015 so that Traders may obtain further details and assist with promotion (at their suggestion).
- Contact details for the local police Neighbourhood Beat Manager and PCSO's in the event of any specific problems involving anti social behaviour on both the City side of the Quay and Haven Banks side, which do not merit an emergency call.
- Confirmation that the Council's SHOT team has added further early morning outreach checks to the Quay Car Park and that the Cleansing and Housing Team will continue to liaise in relation to any homelessness issues which may arise within the Quay area.
- In so far as current resources allow, increased random visits to the Quay area by the Community and Safety Enforcement officers to monitor dog fouling issues and act as a deterrent in respect of uncooperative dog owners.

9 What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, Economy safety and the environment?

Not applicable.

**CLlr Denham, Portfolio Holder for Economy and
Chair of the Future of Exeter Quay Task and Finish Group**

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None

Contact for enquiries: Anne-Marie Hawley, Scrutiny Programme Officer, Democratic Services and Civic Support

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