

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY

18 June 2015

Present:

Councillor Brimble (Chair)

Councillors Lyons, Branston, Brock, Harvey, Henson, Prowse, Robson, Vizard, Wardle and Williams

Apologies:

Councillors Bull, Crew and Sutton

Also present:

Chief Executive & Growth Director, Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Director Finance, Economy and Tourism Manager, Scrutiny Programme Officer and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (SLS)

In attendance:

Councillor Denham - Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture

31 Minutes

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2015.

32 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of discloseable pecuniary interest were made.

33 Portfolio Holders' Statements

The Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture, Councillor Denham presented an update on the work programme and broad priorities relevant to her portfolio for 2014/15. Portfolio Holders would be working closely with officers to refine and develop these priorities over the coming months. The refined list of priorities for 2015/16, which would also include outcomes and targets, would be published in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Councillor Sutton, the Portfolio Holder for City Development, had made her apologies for the meeting, but, any questions on the City Development portfolio would be directed to her.

The following responses were given to Members' questions by Councillor Denham in respect of the Economy and Culture portfolio:-

- she would contact Councillor Hannaford, Portfolio Holder for the Housing Revenue Account, seeking the total number of new Council houses being built. She was aware that in addition to the 20 houses which had recently been built, 26 houses were due to be started on site, subject to planning. The Authority continued to engage with other partners, particularly Devon County Council to identify suitable sites;
- the City Council was currently awaiting the recommendations and advice from County Highway officers with regard to the flow of traffic in Paris Street and

when received would consider the need for any alternative routes, but until then it was difficult to speculate the outcome.

- she would speak to Councillor Owen, the Portfolio Holder for Health and Place, who would be able to provide the most up to date position on recycling rates at the University. She advised that a Task and Finish Group was being set up and the remit was to consider the city's relationship with all aspects of the University including the handling of waste management. The Chair confirmed that this topic would be considered at Scrutiny Committee - Community.
- a planning application for the swimming pool complex and bus station site was anticipated in the autumn. Councillor Sutton as Portfolio Holder Economy and Culture would be able to provide a more detailed reply. The Deputy Chief Executive added that the date was dependent on the procurement and design activity. The new bus station would meet the requirements of Stagecoach and only the bus laying up area to be sited at Matford. He added that there were currently no proposals in respect of the future of the Pyramids Leisure Centre site, nor would they be pursued until the new facility was built and fully operating.
- there was a great deal of work required to develop the knowledge economy but officers were working with the Exeter and Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board. They were also offering careers advice in schools to counterbalance the loss of the careers function. Business involvement would be sought to develop mentoring opportunities in schools and colleges.

34 **Annual Scrutiny Review Report 2014/15**

The Scrutiny Programme Officer provided an update on the progress and work of scrutiny within the City Council's political framework for the period 2014/15. The report included a synopsis of the Task and Finish Group investigations, a review of the proposals for the Scrutiny system and timetabling/plans for 2015/16.

It was noted that the Parking Review Task and Finish Group were due to meet again on 15 July. An invitation would be extended to all Scrutiny Committee - Economy Members to attend and participate. It was anticipated that the Task and Finish Group report would be made to the September meeting of this Committee, alongside the final Parking Review report.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the report and were content with the progress and direction of Scrutiny over the past year, together with the proposals on direction for the forthcoming year, and approved the Annual Scrutiny report for publishing on the Council's web site.

35 **Rugby World Cup 2015 Update**

The Economy and Tourism Manager presented a report which updated Members on the preparation for Exeter being a 'Host City' for Rugby World Cup 2015 tournament taking place between 18 September and 31 October 2015, including the work being undertaken to ensure that there was a longer lasting legacy from the city's involvement.

Councillor Denham, following an invitation by the Chair to speak, congratulated the officer team on the impressive work to date, whilst working within a relatively small budget. The legacy element was a clear goal of the RWC 2015 event as this would

be the most effective communication of a successful aftermath. The Chief Executive & Growth Director also referred to his participation as a member of the national Rugby World Cup Legacy Board promoting legacy schemes through a national fund.

The Economy and Tourism Manager referred to a Member who had congratulated the whole team who had worked hard and also responded to his comment on specific legacy activities. The Member welcomed initiatives such as the Rugby Empowering Employment Programme (REEP) where the City Council had taken an active leadership role.

The Economy and Tourism Manager responded as follows to Members' queries :-

- the release of £50,000 from the Unexpected Festival budget, which had also levered in additional funding from the Arts Council and England 2015, would help fund events and a spectacular within the Fanzone. The Unexpected Festival would still take place, and would tie in with Fanzone activity, and the combining of the two to be closely monitored to ensure transparency;
- although a budget had not been specifically allocated for city dressing, Devon County Council and England 2015 had offered support and both the Exeter business sector and wider community were heavily involved in city dressing including the creation of handmade bunting and knitted 'yarn bombing', (street art creating colourful displays of knitted or crocheted yarn) for installation at the same time as the official RWC2015 dressing. Care would be taken to protect the handmade dressing from vandalism;
- a further allocation of match tickets for Sandy Park had been announced last week and this included 500 tickets released for the City Council's use for specific community and educational activities, nominations had been sought for the ticket allocation. Five VIP tickets for each match at Sandy Park had been offered to key organisations within Exeter. There would also be a final tranche of 40 tickets to be used over the three matches, for economic development and investment purposes;
- the distribution of the 'My First Rugby Ball' book, an initiative to introduce rugby into primary schools had been very successful. The next stage would be to take the process one step further and develop that relationship with more hands on activities introducing greater local participation by Exeter Chiefs and students from the University of Exeter and Exeter College. It was anticipated that the scheme would be rolled out nationally, funded by England Rugby, with the aim of increasing school participation in rugby in a more structured way. Efforts would be made to ensure that the interest likely to follow would be sustainable and ensure that the necessary resources, which may not be financial, were in place. She added that there were also additional legacy schemes funded through England Rugby for young women and girls to play rugby and for young people not in employment funded through the Rugby Premiership League. Assurances were given that a structure and more coaches were in place to deal with the additional numbers likely to be attracted to rugby.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded to Members' comments on ensuring the city was looking its best, including the city's green infrastructure. He was aware that both Exeter City Council and Devon County Council leaders had made a firm commitment to ensure that the city was fit for purpose through the duration of the RWC2015 events. He would also enquire about the state of the pathway in the lead up to Digby Station and the awning on the frontage of Central Station.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy supported the report and recommended Executive endorse the programme of legacy projects, the preparations for the Fanzone and activities to promote the city leading up to the Tournament.

36 Scrutiny Committee - Economy - Final Accounts 2014/15

The Assistant Director Finance advised Members of the overall financial performance for the Economy and Development Directorate for the 2014/15 financial year ended 31 March 2015. The report highlighted any major differences, by management unit, from the approved annual budget after adjusting for supplementary budgets and excluding the variance on capital charges. The total variance for the financial year 2014/15 showed a surplus of £743,912, after transfers from reserves and revenue contributions to capital as set out in the report. The main variations by management units were detailed and highlighted with Parking showing a significant increase in the income budget achieved. The capital programme detailed a total spend of £5,119,893, with £515,861 of the programme deferred until 2015/16. The report also identified a number of areas of budgetary risk within the Economy revenue and capital budgets.

Councillor Denham responded to a Member's enquiry and provided an explanation that change was not given by the City Council's car parking machines, but that additional parking time was credited in such cases. Efforts were being made to reduce the number of cash transactions to reduce the costs associated with processing, in favour of promoting the pay by phone option. An element of promotion to encourage greater card use to pay for parking would be carried out over the coming months. She also responded to a comment on the decision to resurface the running track at Exeter Arena to create a regional quality venue.

The Assistant Director Finance advised that he would obtain the detail relating to the 2nd Exeter Scouts and Park Life hut, but he understood the allocation was part of funding from the New Homes Bonus. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that he would make enquiries about the current position of the proposed swift tower, but he anticipated that work would commence shortly.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy noted the report.

37 The Future of Exeter Quay Task and Finish Group Report

Councillor Denham, as Chair of the Future of the Exeter Quay Task and Finish Group reported the findings and recommendations of the Group to the Scrutiny Committee – Economy.

A Member referred to the suitability of Cathedral and Quay car park which was seen as the suggested car park when using the Quay area, the lack of public transport to the Quay particularly in the evenings and on Sundays. He also commented on the poor surface of the pathway from Duckes Marsh Bridge back into the city, and if there was any possibility of securing any funding for improvements. The Member was pleased to see that the City Council was tackling graffiti throughout the city, and was making every effort to keep on top of the cleanup operation. Councillor Denham responded confirming that contact had been made with Devon County Council to include the path from Duckes Marsh Bridge as part of the cycling infrastructure. The recent opening of the Custom House as the new visitor centre, as well as working with local traders and, hopefully, improved signage and access to the Quay and Cathedral and Quay Car Park were all contributing to a welcome increase in activities and use of the Quay area. Dialogue with Stagecoach to improve the service to the area would also continue.

A Member felt that the canal and basin were an underused resource compared with other cities. It would be good to encourage more boats, but it was acknowledged that there were a number of issues with free passage for boats through the canal and into the estuary, or being able to offer appropriate services including overnight berthing facilities. There was still a great deal of work to do to promote the uniqueness of the offer, which would fall under a separate piece of work on the future of the waterways and a report would be made to this Committee in September.

A Member was impressed how active and vibrant the Quay felt. Councillor Denham confirmed that Members had met with Quay traders and were in the process of compiling a detailed response to them, which would be circulated to this Committee.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy supported the recommendations to:-

- (1) encourage the formation of a Quay Traders Association;
- (2) ensure that promotional material covers the wider Quay area and the Basin.
- (3) support a meeting of Councillor Denham (Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture), Councillor Owen (Portfolio Holder for Health and Place) and the Assistant Director, Public Realm to discuss the different areas of the Quay and the feedback obtained from Quay Traders;
- (4) liaise further with Stagecoach and Devon County Council to ensure that the new promotional branding for the Quay, once available, is featured and advertised through the local public transport system and promotional literature;
- (5) 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;
- (6) obtain a costing, subject to the recommendations of the Parking Review, as to fundamental improvements to the Cathedral and Quay Car Park;
- (7) 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;
- (8) support a formal partnership for management of the Quay involving stakeholders and traders;
- (9) investigate opportunities, in the long term, for externally funded improvements to the Quay area;
- (10) 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, and
- (11) monitor the progress of these recommendations with an update to be provided to this Committee in 12 months' time.

38 Exeter Cultural Action Plan 2015 - 2018

Councillor Denham, as Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture and a Member of the Exeter Cultural Partnership (ECP), presented the report on behalf of the Museum Manager and provided a progress update on the Exeter Cultural Action Plan. Interviews had been held for the position of Director of the ECP, but an appointment had not been made. The position would be reviewed and readvertised imminently.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy supported the progress made in taking forward the Cultural Action Plan and endorse the approach adopted by Exeter Cultural Partnership.

39 Unemployment in Exeter

The Economy and Tourism Manager presented a report, updating Members on the levels of unemployment in Exeter, comparing the city with its neighbours and against regional and national trends. The report also provided an update on the support available to people who were currently unemployed in Exeter.

A Member referred to regular events at the Sidwell Street Community Centre where participants could attend courses as part of the returning to work process, but there was an issue in terms of future funding by the Job Centre. The Chief Executive & Growth Director advised that he would invite representatives from the Job Centre to attend a future meeting to discuss their support for the unemployed in Exeter. The Economy and Tourism Manager referred to the Partnership and Projects Manager and her work on addressing the shortage of skills in some sectors within Exeter. The Chair referred to the importance of raising the level of skills in Exeter to secure more skilled jobs for which employees would be appropriately remunerated.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy supported the following that:-

- (1) Members endorse a watching brief be made through an annual update on unemployment within the city, unless trends change;
- (2) going forward, data would be collected and reported on for the wider area of Exeter, East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge;
- (3) a report be brought back to Scrutiny Committee - Economy detailing trends in employment, salary levels, skills and qualifications for Exeter and the wider area, with comparisons nationally, and
- (4) representatives from the Job Centre be invited to attend a forthcoming meeting of this Scrutiny Committee to explore the support provided for the unemployed in Exeter.

40 Invest in Exeter Marketing Activity

The Economy and Tourism Manager presented a report, informing Members on marketing activity, promoting Exeter for inward investment and business relocations under the name of 'Invest in Exeter'. Exeter, in this context, was not just the local authority area, but included approximately a 5-6 mile radius of the city, which incorporated Exeter Science Park, Skypark Exeter and the main industrial sites surrounding the city.

A Member referred to the promotional work encouraging more businesses to relocate to Exeter, but suggested that there was an issue over higher levels of traffic and

congestion making locating on the outskirts of the city more attractive. The Economy and Tourism Manager responded that maintaining a positive message was important and that overall, Exeter had a great deal to offer, including the Science Park, Skypark, Marsh Barton and Sowton Estates as well as promoting those public sector opportunities, new public transport links, park and ride and cycling. The Chair confirmed that public transport matters would be considered at a future Scrutiny Committee - Economy meeting and this would provide a better platform for discussion.

The Economy and Tourism Manager also responded to a Member's comment on the availability of promotional literature for musical events and advised that the Exeter and the Heart of Devon Tourism Partnership and Visit Exeter listed all such events on their respective websites which were regularly updated. This helped to promote city events and was part of the cultural offer and would help services or businesses consider relocating to Exeter.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the activity undertaken to promote Exeter for inward investment and business relocations and recognised the activity undertaken to promote the city.

41 Legacy Leisure Working Group Minutes and Nominations

The minutes of the most recent meeting of Parkwood Leisure Working Group (now known as Legacy Leisure) Working Group were circulated, to enable any issues of interest or concern to be raised.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy noted the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February and the membership of the Legacy Leisure Working Group of Councillors Morris, Brimble, Denham, Henson, and Robson.

42 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting of the following item, on the grounds that it involved the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

43 Exeter and Heart of Devon Board Minutes

The minutes of the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board meetings held, on 23 February and 21 May 2015 were circulated for Members' information, and referred to a number of issues that the City Council may need to consider and take forward as appropriate. The Chief Executive & Growth Director referred to the importance of investment in public transport and upgrading of the infrastructure. He highlighted recent successful strategic improvements including investment in rail, cycle and walking projects in the city. It was important to continue the dialogue with Devon County Council and the Heart of Devon Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure that the need for public transport growth in Exeter was acknowledged. Every effort was being made to take any opportunity to link the ambition for improvement across the county, working with other district councils, to develop the travel to work corridor to enable greater access to Exeter jobs.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the content of the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board minutes.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.45 pm

Chair