

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY

12 November 2015

Present:

Councillor Brimble (Chair)

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

Also present:

Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Director Public Realm, Service Manager Business and Commercial Operations, Service Manager Community Safety & Enforcement, Museums Manager, Economy and Tourism Manager, Economy Partnerships and Project Manager and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (SLS)

In attendance:

Councillor Rachel Sutton - Portfolio Holder City Development
Councillor Rosie Denham - Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture

58 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2015 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

A Member referred to the Council's governance arrangements relating to the presentation of minutes to the following meeting of the Committee. The Democratic Services Officer explained the current arrangement which included the minutes of all Council meetings being presented to Council to afford the opportunity for all Members to comment.

59 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of discloseable pecuniary interest were made.

60 Questions from Members of the Council Under Standing Order 20

In accordance with Standing Order No. 20, a number of questions were put by Councillor Newby on the outcome of the Rugby World Cup celebrations in Exeter. A copy of the questions had previously been circulated to Members, and these, together with the reply, were appended to the minutes.

61 Donations Campaign and Temporary Exhibition Admission Charges at the RAMM

The Museums Manager presented a report which focused on two new initiatives at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) designed to generate income to support the museum's 'core' costs and service delivery. These proposals were made in the context of the financial challenges faced by the local authority and the service review this had driven. The first initiative related to the introduction of admission charges for some temporary exhibitions, and in particular the International Garden Photographer of the year which would be taking place from 23 April to 28 August 2016. The

Museums Manager acknowledged that paying to view selected exhibitions would be a significant step change for the public, and the outcome of the trial would be reported to Members. The second initiative provided to Members for information, related to a new donations campaign to encourage increased levels of individual giving, and would be launched in late 2015.

In response to a Member's question, the Museums Manager confirmed that the Council's Communications team would ensure that the presentation of the proposal was handled with the appropriate sensitivity. The report included a 'Frequently Asked Questions' guidance to assist in any subsequent enquiries about this service change. A Member suggested that the trial should include the possibility of the introduction of a season ticket or even an 'a pay what you can afford' on selected days or even an occasional free day. The Museums Manager responded to a number of Members' concern on the attention paid to visitor surveys and studies, explaining that staff and volunteers would be collecting data, and gathering information relating to the visitors' experience of the exhibition; there would be no charge for children and young people less than 19 years, and that every effort would be made to ensure that any exhibition at the RAMM was not near neighbouring areas.

The Museums Manager also outlined the efforts that would be made to increase the opportunities to encourage voluntary donations. She welcomed a Member's comment that the donation boxes were too discreet and they should have more prominence which might increase the act of giving.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy requested Executive approve the following:-

- (1) introduction of a visitor admission charge in relation to a temporary exhibition at the RAMM with the first ticketed temporary exhibition of the International Garden Photographer of the Year which will take place 23 April – 28 August 2016;
- (2) that a follow up report be produced for Members to present the results and findings around charging for International Garden Photographer of the Year. Based on the findings of this first exercise, a stepped approach to charging for some exhibitions may be developed. At this stage it was considered likely that charges would be attached to selected and not all temporary exhibitions as detailed in paragraph 8.2 of the circulated report;
- (3) that subject to the outcome of this trial and a further report to committee, delegated authority to be given to the Museums Manager, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to decide when an admission charge should be applied to any of the temporary exhibitions at RAMM; and
- (4) the approach to be taken for the related donations campaign, which also invites visitor's financial contribution.

62 **Topsham Flood Alleviation Measures**

Councillor Baldwin attended the meeting and spoke Under Standing Order 44 on this matter.

The Assistant Director Public Realm presented a report which sought Members' consideration for funding towards the cost of flood alleviation and protection measures for two schemes in Topsham. The first scheme related to 120 properties in Ferry Road Topsham, north of St Margaret's Church, which was at particular risk from tidal flooding. Despite contributions having been identified, there remained a shortfall of up to £100,000 and one option would be the possibility to secure

contributions from householders who would directly benefit from the scheme. If funding for the shortfall could not be secured, then the scheme would not proceed. The report also included details of a second scheme and a request for the Council to underwrite the provision of enhanced protection to around 50 further properties to the south of the scheme above, at the lower end of Ferry Road and The Strand. Members were reminded that whilst the City Council had no statutory obligation to fund the flood scheme, nor, was there an available budget, staff resources would be absorbed to undertake the administration and co-ordination of the funding of the schemes. The Assistant Director Public Realm added that the two schemes were not dependent on the other.

Councillor Baldwin attended the meeting as she was concerned over the proposals in relation to Scheme 1, as just over 3,500 individuals would collectively have to find £80,000 to protect their homes. She felt that there was a moral obligation and commented on the City Council's recent contribution towards the £3 million flood alleviation scheme which would protect the homes of citizens in St Thomas from flooding. She thanked the City Council for their support in the past, which had included providing sandbags and assisting with the clear up operations and she hoped that would continue. Councillor Baldwin was also concerned about the detail of Scheme 1 to create an 'earth bund' or earth wall that would abut the River Exe. The scheme had recently been discussed by the Topsham Community Association which had expressed some concern over the maintenance of the scheme and questioned how the water would be reabsorbed into the river if there were exceptionally high winds and a tidal overflow. She suggested it would be more beneficial to place the flood barrier on the Ferry Road side of the recreation ground, which was a much shorter distance and would protect the houses rather than the recreation field, and that work could easily be covered by the £20,000. She asked for further work to be carried out to consider other engineering solutions.

A Member concurred with Councillor Baldwin and considered that there was every possibility that the earth bund would wash away and that at the very least a more permanent structure should be created to protect the houses. A Member referred to one of the recommendations to contact Hugo Squires MP to establish whether there was any available funding, and felt that was likely to be happening anyway.

Councillor Vizard proposed that recommendations 1 – 3 of the circulated report be deferred to allow further investigative work to establish the most appropriate solution. Councillor Bull seconded the motion, which was carried.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy requested Council to endorse and Council approve the underwriting of up to £15,000 by the City Council, of the cost of Scheme 2: Ferry Road South, Topsham described in paragraph 8.4 of the circulated report to enable the works to be commenced during the current financial year. This amount would be conditional upon suitable guarantees from the Topsham Emergency Group being in place for the repayment of the money.

63 **Marine CoastGuard Agency Audit 2015**

The Assistant Director Public Realm presented a report which advised Members of the outcome of the recent Maritime Coastguard Agency audit of the Port of Exeter. The Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) supported the legislation governing the operation of the Port of Exeter. Compliance was not a statutory requirement, however failure to comply would be taken into consideration should the Council be found responsible for an incident including loss, damage or personal injury sustained within the Port.

The Service Manager Business and Commercial Operations responded to a Member's enquiry and confirmed that the City Council's area of jurisdiction extended to approximately 1.4km off Exmouth to the Bridge on the River Clyst just below Darts Farm and then up to the River Exe weir at Countess Wear.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy noted the outcome of the Audit and requested Executive to endorse compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code.

64 **Interim Report on Parking Review**

The Assistant Director Public Realm presented an interim report on the findings of the work undertaken by WSP UK Ltd and their initial recommendations for a Parking Strategy for Exeter. The final report had been delayed but it was anticipated that the emerging strategic approach for the City Council's off-street parking offer and the development of an Action Plan to deliver it, would be presented to the January meeting of the Scrutiny Committee – Economy. The work to date had included a strategic approach for working with key partners, and the support by the Member Spotlight Review Group who have been fully engaged in the process.

A Member referred to the performance of the appointed consultants. The Assistant Director Public Realm acknowledged that there had been delays, but assured the Member that the detail relating to the contractual arrangement had not been finalised. The Member also referred to a number of car parks which should be a priority for refurbishment, and wished to make a plea for the Cathedral and Quay car park. The Assistant Director Public Realm referred to a survey of further work on all of the car parks which still had to be progressed, but she acknowledged the constraints of the Cathedral and Quay car park, and of work being considered to look at encouraging greater use.

A Member referred to the report and appreciated the proposed consultation with city centre residents over their parking requirements. The Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism also welcomed this inclusion and it would be useful to have Members' feedback, as there have been a number of changes in the city centre since the original scheme commenced. The Service Manager Community Safety and Enforcement acknowledged that information on resident's parking habits would help to inform their future work. A Member also made a request for consideration of a smarter approach to the tariff charged, with more innovative pricing as well as consideration of the dwell time in the city. The Portfolio Holder Economy and Culture agreed that this would be considered when they had assimilated all of the information.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy endorsed the following emerging strategic approach to parking, working with key partners:-

- (1) the demand for parking in the City Centre be managed in order to reduce congestion by encouraging drivers into other forms of transport and to change their parking behaviour in peak periods;
- (2) the Council implements policies that discourage parking in central car parks which are at or near capacity and encourage drivers to use the less popular car parks outside the central retail area where capacity exists;
- (3) a programme of works is identified so that the Council can invest in maintaining car parks, influencing parking demand and improving the customer experience; and

- (4) the Parking Review Spotlight Group remain involved in considering policy options around the final strategy and action plan

65 **Budget Monitoring - Quarter 2**

The Principal Accountant presented a report which advised Members of any material differences to the revised budget in respect of the Economy Services revenue and capital budgets. The current forecast suggested that net expenditure for the Scrutiny Committee - Economy would decrease from the revised budget by a total of £278,160, with a 28% variance after transfers and reserves and revenue contributions to capital as detailed in Appendix 1. This already included a supplementary budget of £837,460 already agreed by Council. The potential areas of budgetary risk were also highlighted in this report, so that Members would be aware that certain budgets had been identified as being vulnerable to factors beyond the control of the Council, which may result in potential deviations from budget, and were therefore subject to close monitoring.

A Member referred to the Estates Service's budget and what steps were being taken in the long term to address the declining income from South Street tenancies. The Deputy Chief Executive referred to the short term solutions, and confirmed he would speak to the Member to provide a brief update on the longer term solutions that could be considered. The Principal Accountant responded to a Member's comment on the reasons for the income achieved from off-street car parking and the need to study the data more closely. The Assistant Director Public Realm advised that she would obtain the individual breakdown of car parks. The Principal Accountant would provide further information on the anticipated income from the car storage and lettings at the Livestock Centre. The Deputy Chief Executive clarified the contractual arrangements to ensure that the roof of the Livestock Centre was completed on time.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the report.

66 **Exeter Pound Update**

Councillor Brock declared an interest as her business in Magdalen Road had signed up to the Exeter Pound.

Daniel Hillier and Adam Rich attended the meeting and presented an update on the Exeter Pound. They confirmed that the Exeter Pound had been launched on 1 September 2015 with over 100 traders. There had been a good level of positive local as well as national press coverage. They had regular new traders signing up to using the Exeter Pound and had reached a total of 126 active traders. They were keen to ensure that Exeter Pound users were able to make purchases for almost everything they might need, and they continually monitored which businesses used the Exeter Pound, and focused their recruitment on any area not covered. They had worked hard to encourage the independent sector in Exeter, particularly Fore Street, Magdalen Road and the Quay, and were now reaching out to other areas of the city such as Heavitree, Cowick Street and Topsham. They involved stakeholders directly and were due to hold their first Trader Member's Assembly which would give an opportunity to receive direct feedback on the practicalities of the scheme.

Daniel Hillier confirmed the number of Exeter Pounds in circulation in the local economy, with nine exchange points. They were now going forward with a digital launch, to enable the service sector businesses to become more involved. They had also been working with Stagecoach to look at opportunities for a city wide marketing campaign to continue to raise the profile. Adam Rich responded to a Member's comment on the security features on the notes, which included a gold foil strip,

special ink, hologram images and logo. He confirmed that they would continue to feedback on their progress and their aspirations for the long term roll out of the Exeter Pound to encourage local spend that will stay in the local economy. Members welcomed this initiative, and asked if future links could be developed with the Federation of Small Businesses or the Chamber of Commerce and include the main shopping areas as well as Marsh Barton and Sowton.

Members thanked Daniel and Adam for the informative presentation.

67 **Rugby World Cup Update 2015**

The Economy and Tourism Manager presented an update on the Rugby World Cup 2015, which had been a very successful event overall and showcased much of Exeter. The city saw through the tournament from start to the finish, with arrangements including the dressing of the city, a Five Nations Parade, volunteers and the Fanzone which included the matches being shown on a large screen. The Fanzone provided an opportunity to showcase local bands and artists on a large stage. The Fanzone attracted a total of 30,094 people which took place in Northernhay Gardens. The matches at Sandy Park were overseen by England 2015 and performed exceptionally well, with no major issues to report. Each match was classified as a sell out. There had been some minor issues with transporting people from Sandy Park back to Westpoint and the city centre after the matches, but additional park and ride buses were laid on with additional buses from Digby and Sowton to take people back into the city. The media supported Rugby World Cup 2015 with excellent local and national press coverage, as well as social media coverage relating to matches at Sandy Park and Exeter Fanzone. England 2015 surveys indicated that Exeter was one of the best performing host cities, with welcome and transport the highest rankings. A follow-up report to the Ernst and Young Economic impact report would be undertaken. The Economy and Tourism team were working to establish occupancy levels of local hotels during the three match days at Sandy Park.

In terms of the legacy, the Economy and Tourism Manager confirmed that all projects had a minimum three year sustainability criteria, which will be monitored by Active Devon, RFU, and Exeter City Council. The following projects were continuing:-

- Rugby 7's league being worked on, also developing a centre of excellence for Rugby 7s.
- Development of participation of more women in rugby has resulted in the formation of the Exonians ladies team who are now part of a league structure and have a second team.
- Active Exeter Cycling Project launched October half-term and have been working with Wessex RFC to encourage community led cycle rides, identifying locations near rugby clubs and engaging wide participation.
- ParkRun/Junior ParkRun – with events at Exeter Riverside and Heavitree.
- Rugby Fitness – 4 satellite 'mums' clubs now set-up and running with an average of 14 participants weekly.
- REEP, which has now evolved into Business Empowering Employment Programme or BEEP, with 14 of the 15 participants who took part now have a pathway, either in employment, full-time education or apprenticeship. The Economy and Tourism team will continue to work with the business community to encourage sponsorship of this proven successful programme.
- Exeter Hawks Wheelchair rugby team launched in partnership with St Luke's and Westcountry Hawks. Taster sessions had taken place in October as part

of the Fanzone activity. They hoped to progress to links with Tag/Touch and compete in national league.

- Distributing the locally authored 'My First Rugby Ball' book to all Reception/yr1&2 pupils in Exeter schools. This included a CPD teachers' programme/assemblies package/interactive web development and links with local rugby clubs and schools to run tots programmes. This was now a commercially driven project which looks to roll out across key stage 2 children and has national literacy grant support, delivering to 23 primary schools.
- The RAMM Photographic exhibitions have now ended, Michelle Sank and Kate Green both reporting high numbers of visitors and engagement. The project worked with local rugby clubs and had a strong social media presence during the tournament.
- Cash for Communities: £10,000 launched in January 2015 through the Express & Echo for community groups to bid for grants from the Legacy Fund based on detailed criteria. Ten projects were now in operation and would be reviewed and reported on via the Express & Echo newspaper.

The Chair thanked the Economy and Tourism Manager and the RWC 2015 team for contributing towards such a successful event.

68 Update on the Exeter and Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board

The Employment and Skills Board Partnerships and Projects Manager updated Members on the activities and progress of the Exeter and the Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board (ESB) in promoting the value of skills development, supporting business growth and getting local people into work. The report explored some of the skill issues affecting the local economy, set out the ESB's priorities and plans, and provided examples of where the Board had made a difference over the last 12 months. Some of the work included linking local people to local job creation, growing the number of apprentices, addressing low levels of progression into High Education, graduate retention and higher level and technical skills to support smart specialisation.

The Partnership and Projects Manager referred to the value of the Board and the significant success which had added value to the business case for its existence, including £68,000 of funding achieved to enhance skills within Exeter and the Heart of Devon related to Rugby World Cup 2015. She expanded on the detail of learners who had been offered support and referred to a number of successful case studies. She also responded to a Member's comment on the quality of the University's data on graduate retention, and considered that local business could also commence their recruitment process earlier to encourage local graduates to remain.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy noted the following:-

- (1) progress made and priorities set by ESB in prioritising, planning and implementing interventions designed to better skill a more productive workforce in support of a sustainable and thriving economy; and
- (2) funding for the post of ESB Partnerships and Projects Manager's role to be extended post March 2016 for a further three years.

69 Exeter and the Heart of Devon Visitor Research

The Economy and Tourism Manager presented the report on the annual volume and value of tourism data for the Exeter and the Heart of Devon area, the results of the Visit England visitor satisfaction tracker, research relating to "The Gove Effect" and

general trends within the visitor industry. Members were advised of the number of visitors to the area, visitor spend and trends within the visitor economy.

A Member referred to the methods of capturing data, and suggested that not all of the population used the internet and if that data could be captured. He also made a request for some record to be kept on the tourist coaches coming to the city. The Economy and Tourism Manager would make enquiries, but she also referred to an online survey and a database register which could be used. A Member commented on the need for transport links including public transport to be improved. The Economy and Tourism Manager referred to her role as Vice-Chair of Visit Devon and the opportunity she had to lobby a variety of organisations.

Scrutiny Committee - Economy noted the report.

70 Legacy Leisure Working Group Minutes

The minutes of the Legacy Leisure Group meeting held on 13 October 2015 were presented for Members' information.

Scrutiny Committee – Economy noted the minutes.

71 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.

72 Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board Minutes

A Member sought clarification as to why consideration of the Exeter & Heart of Devon Board minutes was in the confidential part of the agenda. He had previously raised this with the Chief Executive and Growth Director, as he was keen to ensure there was transparency. Councillor Sutton, Portfolio Holder for City Development spoke as one of the two members of the City Council on the Board. She confirmed that the minutes were a useful source of information for Members of the City Council. The membership was made up of representatives from local authorities including Exeter City and Devon County Council, as well as a wide range of other partners from the private sector, including volume home builders. The Board offered the opportunity for robust and meaningful discussion, which had enabled a number of major infrastructure projects to come forward, and which inevitably had involved the sharing of sensitive information. The Board felt that it remained appropriate for their debate to remain confidential.

The minutes of the Exeter and Heart of Devon Growth Board meetings held, on 8 September 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.

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 8.15 pm

Chair