

**MEMBER QUESTION TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER for Place Scrutiny Committee – 8
September 2016**

From Councillor Prowse (Business Case for Valley Parks Transfer)

At the Executive meeting of the 12 July 2016, a Business case for Valley Parks Transfer appeared on the agenda. This City's green spaces play a very important role in the well-being and health of Exeter Citizens.

- a) What views does the Portfolio have regarding the continued accessibility for people, particularly on bicycles, scooters and wheelchairs through the parks?**
- b) If it is the case that the Devon Wildlife Trust does take on the role of the transfer does the Portfolio Holder agree that an annual report is commendable to this committee?**

Response by Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for City Development on behalf of Councillor Philip Bialyk Portfolio Holder Sport and Health and Well Being

- (a) Councillor Rachel Sutton as Portfolio Holder for City Development responded to the question as Councillor Philp Bialyk was unable to attend the meeting as he had already agreed to attend another Council engagement. She referred to the reply giving to a public question and was very supportive of preserving accessibility to park for as many residents and visitors as possible. Again she reiterated that the Council valued its public green spaces for the enjoyment of all citizens, ensuring that these green spaces remained safe and accessible for a wide variety of users of all ages was of paramount importance, and something that the Council would safeguard. The importance of green spaces as venues to visit and enjoy for leisure, exercise and social activities was fully recognised, as was their importance in providing transport links for cycling.*

The Portfolio Holder for Sport and Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Bialyk, had prioritised the following actions for 2016:-

- Improve cycle routes and provide more cycle parking*
- Continue working with partners to make Exeter the most active city in the South West by 2018*

Details of how this would be delivered and measured were being developed across the city, including Exeter's greenspaces, by the City Council and its partners. Councillor Bialyk would report on the progress and programming of these linked priorities for 2016/17, which would be published.

- (2) Councillor Sutton also stated that she was not minded to recommend that the Council required an annual report from the Devon Wildlife Trust on the basis that it would require a level of reporting and committee attendance that had not featured in our negotiations to date.*

She referred Councillor Prowse to the answer given to the public question from Ms Wetenhall's question which also sought to address the issues which may arise from the loss of public control or 'democratic deficit' in the spirit of the new Community Strategy by engaging users and stakeholders on a regular basis, so that contacts can

be established. There was a precedent for this approach in the transfer of Exwick Flowerpot Playing Fields to Exeter College.

It was important to take the opportunity to get this right, as there had been a great deal of interest and she was certain that members of the public would continue to remain engaged through the Community Forum process as well as the Devon Wildlife Trust.