

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 10 December 2019

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)
Councillors Sutton, Foale, Ghusain, Harvey, Morse, Pearson, Williams, Wright and Wood

Councillors in attendance under Standing Order 44

Councillor M Mitchell speaking on items 6 and 10 (minutes 108 and 112 below)

Also present:

Chief Executive & Growth Director, Director (BA), Director (J-PH), Chief Finance Officer, City Solicitor & Head of HR, Active & Healthy People Programme Lead, Service Lead for Commercial and Procurement and Democratic Services Officer (MD)

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2019, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairs as a correct record.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There was one question received from Mr Cleasby, which related to Minute No. 117:-

Question

Why is the Statement of Community Involvement for the GESP still a draft, more than 2½ years after consultation on it ended, and when is it to be finalised?

Response

The Portfolio Holder for City Development & Planning explained that the draft Statement of Community Involvement, set out how the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP) authorities intended to involve local residents, businesses and other key organisations and stakeholders in the development of the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan. The consultation period had been between 27 February 2017 and 10 April 2017 and also included the consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

The comments received during the consultation were available to view on the GESP website and would contribute toward the final version of the Statement of Community. The statement would be published at the same time as the GESP Site Options and the Draft Policies consultation document in June 2020.

Supplementary Question

Mr Cleasby, on putting a supplementary question, thanked the Portfolio Holder for City Development & Planning for his response and requested clarification that the next opportunity for public to comment would be in June 2019 and, given the delays, was the current process suitable?

Supplementary Response

The Portfolio Holder for City Development & Planning responded that there were four separate Local Authorities involved in the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan and the process would take time. Although there could also be potential delays following leadership changes at three of the authorities, there would be an opportunity for consultation in June 2019.

108

MOVE MORE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY: BUILT FACILITIES OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE WONFORD HEALTH AND WELLBEING CENTRE

The Executive received the report which outlined the progress for the potential flagship Health & Wellbeing Centre in Wonford, which was a key priority of the revised Exeter Live Better and Move More Built Facilities, Playing Fields, Pitches, Play Areas, Parks and Green Spaces Strategy. The facility would be a focal community point for community based health and wellbeing activities and services. The report also provided the results from stakeholder engagement projects, which were funded from the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot.

Councillor M Mitchell, having given notice under Standing Order No. 44, spoke on this item. He spoke on the transfer from community management to a private operator for the Wonford community centre and whether it was compatible with the Council's commitment to asset based community development and whether the community had been asked about the future ownership. He commented on car parking at the community centre, its impact on the Council's commitment to a carbon neutral future and what actions were being proposed to mitigate the issues arising from the community interaction.

During discussion, reference was made to the process being in an early development stage and was continuing to engage with the community to understand their needs and develop trust between them and the Council. More than 600 members of the community had previously attended various events to contribute into the process, and a local Sounding Board will continue to work with the Council.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The Director be authorised to progress the outline business case for a new Health and Wellbeing Centre in Wonford to the Design Brief Stage to include:
 - (a) On-going co-design with residents, the community and key stakeholders developing the ideas set out in this report into indicative sketches, layouts, designs and building and running costs;
 - (b) Development of a Wonford area recreational cycle investment plan;
 - (c) Further work with Wonford Green Surgery Partners to establish options for generating a suitable capital receipt for the current Wonford Green Surgery site and principles around a long-term affordable rent commitment and reimbursement from the National Health Service England (NHSE); and
 - (d) Improvements to the Wonford playing pitches utilising the Section 106 money set aside for this purpose ensuring that these developments are

aligned with the emerging priorities within the Playing Pitch Strategy and Football Association Local Plan.

- (2) The inclusion of the Wonford Village in the Liveable Exeter Garden City Programme be endorsed; and
- (3) The continued financial and professional support from Sport England through the Local Delivery Pilot for the engagement and co-design process be noted.

109

EXETER GRANTS PROGRAMME CHANGES TO THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Executive received the report on the Exeter Grants Programme, which had been approved by Council in July 2019 and required the scheme of delegation to be amended to reflect the new policy and operate under the proposed terms of reference, for potential amendments during the pilot year, where changes may be required.

Particular reference was made to the receipt of a number of applications from local communities for the grants fund and that more than one £1million had been invested into community grants and strategic services by the Council.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:-

- (1) The amended Scheme of Delegation to delegate approval of grants to the Director for Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities;
- (2) The Terms of Reference for the operation of the Grants Panel with delegated authority to the proper officer to review and amend the Terms of Reference as necessary; and
- (3) The decision to open an ad-hoc Strategic Grant Fund be delegated to the Director for Communities in consultation with the Council Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Equalities, Diversity & Communities.

110

COUNCIL TAX LONG TERM EMPTY PREMIUM FOR THE 2020/21 AND 2021/22 FINANCIAL YEARS

The Executive Committee received the report which sought to increase the current 100% Council Tax Long-Term Empty Premium, on properties which had been empty for two or more years. The premium increase would help encourage owners of empty homes to bring their properties back into use and support the Council's commitment to reducing the number of empty homes in the city.

Particular reference was made to there being 78 empty homes in Exeter, despite the hard work made by officers to fill them. There were too many people who were homeless, on waiting lists or had no access to appropriate housing in Exeter, and the report recommendations were an incentive to bring the properties back into use. Members were assured that the premium would be applied, provided that the properties were not up for rent or for sale. Officers would also take home owner's circumstances into consideration for each case.

The Leader of the Council noted that the empty homes premium was a good step forward to bring homes back into use to support the 1.6 million people who were on the social housing waiting lists.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the increase in the Council Tax Long-Term Empty Premium from:-

- 100% to 200% from 1 April 2020 for properties empty for 5 years or more; and
- 200% to 300% from 1 April 2021 for properties empty for 10 years or more.

111

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2020-21

The Executive Committee received the report for the local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for working age residents for 2020/21 and beyond, which required agreement from Members on an annual basis. There were no recommend changes to the scheme for 2020-21, however officers would be preparing proposals for a simpler discount -style scheme for Members' consideration for the 2021/22 Scheme. The implementation of a simple banded scheme would require major changes to the rules and processes of the scheme and Member input would be sought through a Working Group.

Members were presented with an overview of the local Council Tax Support scheme, which was designed to support households who could not meet their Council tax liability.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:-

- (1) The Scheme for 2020-21 to continue as per the current Scheme without substantive changes; and
- (2) The work being commenced by Officers to develop options for Members' consideration for a simple banded scheme to be introduced from April 2021 at the earliest.

112

APPROVAL OF PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

The Executive Committee received the report which sought approval for the adoption of the proposed Procurement Strategy, which would provide a further corporate approach to procurement and enhance the collaboration opportunities within the Council. The Devon District Procurement Authorities (DDPA) who had been collaboratively working to the third version of a joint Devon District Procurement Strategy (DDPS), had identified four key themes for the DDPS, which were outlined in the report. A priority setting for actions and outcomes was established in the action plan, but each Council was responsible for implementing their own outcomes.

Councillor M Mitchell, having given notice under Standing Order No.44, spoke on this item. He noted that reference should be made within Procurement policy for Exeter City Council's and other Council's in the partnership, to their commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030 and contain a definite commitment to ending the use of single use plastic. The policy needed to show definite commitments to environmental issues.

Members were informed, that each contract was picked up on a case by case basis through the commercial endorsement process and were defined by their nature and scope. The commitment to being carbon neutral would be a part the overall policy and procedures in terms of carrying out procurement.

The Council Leader stated that the Council had declared a climate emergency and was committed to being carbon neutral by 2030. The Council's Corporate Strategy 2018-2021 would be amended following the 2019 General Election.

RECOMMENDED that Council:-

- (1) Adopt the Devon District Procurement Strategy (DDPS) 2019-2022; and
- (2) Agree to Executive establishing any Council specific priorities or objectives which need to be incorporated into the strategy (jointly or individually).

113 **GENERAL FUND CAPITAL MONITORING STATEMENT 2019/20 - QUARTER 2**

The Executive Committee received the report on the 2019/20 General Fund Capital Monitoring Statement which reported the current position in respect of the Council's revised annual capital programme and advised Members of the anticipated level of deferred expenditure into future years. The report also sought Member approval to amend the annual capital programme in order to reflect the reported variations.

Particular reference was made to the £19.138 million spent from the revised capital programme during the first six months of the year from the £61.767 million budget. This equated to 31% of the revised programme, which was a good improvement over the previous year's expenditure. Members were referred to the newly refurbished play area at Pinhoe Station Road and the purchase of the long leasehold office building in Senate Court, which had been completed during the second quarter of 2019/20. The purchase of the office building would provide an expected net income of £591,000 per annum before costs were taken into account.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the revision to the annual capital programme to reflect the reported variations detailed in 8.5 and Appendix 1 of the report presented to the meeting.

114 **OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2019/20 - QUARTER 2**

The Executive Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer which advised Members of the overall projected financial position of the General Fund Revenue Budgets for the 2019/20 financial year after six months.

Particular reference was made to the supplementary budget of £52,360, which would be taken from the S106 funds and earmarked reserves. Members noted that there would be a projected reduction in the transfer from the working balance for the remainder of the financial year. The projected working balance would stand at £3.75 million, which was above minimum level of reserves.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:-

- (1) The General Fund forecast financial position for the 2019/20 financial year;
- (2) The supplementary budgets of £52,360 and budget transfers as detailed in paragraph 8.9 of the report presented to the meeting;
- (3) The outstanding Sundry Debt position as at September 2019; and
- (4) The creditors' payments performance.

115 **HRA BUDGET MONITORING 2019/20 - QUARTER 2**

The Executive Committee received the report which advised Members of the overall financial position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue and Capital Budgets for the 2019/20 financial year after the first six months. The report also highlighted budgetary areas of risk for factors beyond the Council's control that may result in potential deviations from budget.

Specific mention was given to the projected reduction in the need to take funds from the Housing Revenue Account working balance for the financial year. The projected working balance would stand at £9.6m, which is above minimum level of reserves.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:

- (1) The HRA forecast financial position for 2019/20 financial year; and
- (2) The revision of the HRA Capital Programme to reflect the reported variations detailed in Appendix 4 of the report presented to the meeting.

116

TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2019/20 HALF YEAR UPDATE

The Executive Committee received the statutory report, which advised on the current Treasury Management performance for the 2019/20 financial year and the position regarding investments and borrowings at 30 September 2019.

Particular reference was made to the £49.5 million of long term borrowing, taken by the Council to cover its future finances. The estimated projected interest of the year was £77,000 against a budget of £216,000, which highlighted the positive impact from the lower interest rates received by the Council.

RECOMMENDED that Council note the Treasury Management report in respect of the first six months of the 2019/20 financial year.

117

REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Executive Committee received the report on the revised Local Development Scheme, which provided Members with an update on the discussions that had taken place between the leaders of the partner authorities involved in the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP) regarding the future scope and timetable for production of the GESP. The report also sought agreement for a draft scope and timetable to progress the work on the GESP and provided a revised timetable for preparing the Development Delivery Plan and Code for Sustainable Homes SPD by the City Council for Exeter.

During the discussion, Members welcomed the work that had been undertaken, and noted the importance of the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP) and how it would support housing and infrastructure development in Devon.

RESOLVED that the proposed scope and timetable for the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP), Development Delivery Plan, Code for Sustainable Homes SPD and Planning Obligations SPD, as detailed in Appendix A of the report presented to the meeting be agreed.

118

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

119

BUSINESS CASE FOR THE REVIEW OF STAFF STRUCTURE IN HOUSING ASSETS

The Executive Committee received the report which set out the final business case for the re-structuring of the Housing Assets service area. Following the completion of consultation with employees and Trade Unions, the final business case would re-align existing staff resources and add a number of key posts to resource all business critical areas. Reference was made to the improved position in the Housing Service around Health & Safety and Compliance and Procurement, including contract management.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The HRA had a ring-fenced budget for within the Council and could only be used for services for council tenants.
- The proposed structure would align the team to meet Member expectations around Social Housing Development.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:-

- (1) The Final Business Case proposal for the restructuring of the HRA Development and Assets Team;
- (2) The conclusion of a period of meaningful engagement with the HRA Development and Assets staff Team and Trade Union and note the feedback provided to staff as part of the process; and
- (3) An additional budget of £165,856 in respect of the proposed permanent establishment and an additional budget of £124,614 for temporary staffing, both to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account Working Balance.

120

EXETER SCIENCE PARK GUARANTEE

The Director (J-PH) declared an interest and left the meeting room for the duration of this item.

The Executive Committee received the report which sought Council approval to provide a guarantee for lease payments payable by Exeter Science Park Ltd to the University of Exeter. This would be in line with the percentage of shareholdings by Exeter City Council for the total value of the lease payments due.

Particular reference was made to the amendments of the report recommendations to remove the second recommendation listed in the report and to increase the guarantee value to £950,054.76. Members were presented with a summary on the ownership and overview for the reasons to provide a guarantee to Exeter Science Park, with it being confirmed that the risk for any call in, on the guarantee was low.

During the discussion, it was confirmed that the owners of Exeter Science Park were public sector organisations, who held control of the business plan. The other owners had agreed that with the low risk chances of the guarantee being called in, they had agreed to provide a guarantee.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the provision of a guarantee to Exeter Science Park Ltd for a total value of up to £950,054.76.

121

COMMUNICATIONS, TOURISM AND CULTURE - MINOR RESTRUCTURE

The Executive Committee received the report, which requested final approval to proceed with a minor restructure within the Communications, Tourism and Culture function, as part of the Councils Organisational Change Policy. The restructure sought to amend the existing Communications, Tourism and Culture budget to

increase the establishment by 1.8FTE, rather than contract work. The report also sought to re-evaluate the existing Project Officer Job description and person specification.

Particular reference was made to the two long term roles currently delivered by external contractors, which amounted to full time employment and would generate income on behalf of Exeter City Services.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the virement of funds as set out in Section 4 of the report presented to the meeting.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.41 pm)

Chair

The decisions indicated will normally come into force 5 working days after publication of the Statement of Decisions unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. Decisions regarding the policy framework or corporate objectives or otherwise outside the remit of the Executive will be considered by Council on