

EXECUTIVE
(HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING)

Tuesday 2 June 2020

Present:

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

Apologies:

Councillor Wood

In attendance

Councillors Leadbetter, K. Mitchell and D. Moore

Also present:

Chief Executive & Growth Director, Director (DB), Director (J-PH), Chief Finance Officer, Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support, City Surveyor, Museums Manager and Cultural Lead, Democratic Services Officer (MD) and Democratic Services Officer (HB)

Councillor in attendance under Standing Order No. 44.

Councillor D. Moore speaking on items 8, 9, 10 and 11 (minutes 59, 60, 61 and 62 below).

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COUNCILLORS ATKINSON AND WOOD

The Chair passed on his and Members' condolences to Councillors Atkinson and Wood, whose fathers had recently passed away.

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MINUTES

Subject to the removal of Councillors Leadbetter, K. Mitchell and D. Moore from the list of those present and the inclusion of Councillor D. Moore in the list of those in attendance, the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2020, were taken as read and approved as a correct record, to be signed by the Chair at the earliest possible convenience.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

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GEORGE FLOYD AND THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

The Chair referred to the recent tragic death in Minneapolis of George Floyd and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic across the world and the impact both were having on those directly affected. He urged all to pause and reflect on these awful events and to respond in the appropriate manner, with respect for everyone.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A member of the public, Mr Keith Lewis (not in attendance) had submitted the following question, relating to Minute No. 60 below, which was read out in his absence.

Question

The Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan is very welcome, but it contains some aims that will be either impossible to achieve or are undesirable (examples 7.4 and 8.8 - this should be the case now; 9.4 - impossible within two years; 12.8 - Section 106's are not a general taxation). Will the Executive agree to review the aims to ensure that it does not adopt a Plan that is unlikely to be achievable?

Response

The Council Leader responded that the Council had set the question of how it sought to achieve a net zero Exeter by 2030. Many places had set an ambitious goal but few had mapped out what it will take to achieve the goal. A report by 'We Are Liminal', published this month, featured Exeter as one of only a handful of towns and cities to map out this journey. The Net Zero Plan was produced by Exeter City Futures and contained dozens of actions that needed to be pursued if the city wished to realise the goal in the time frame declared. Some of the issues raised were relatively minor in terms of their contribution to carbon. The scale of the challenge in delivering a net zero Exeter in a decade was massive. It was proven with Government policy that things which were deemed to be impossible can be achieved very quickly, e.g. seat belts, dog fouling, smoking in pubs, all show the power of policy led change.

Seeking to find a solution through the planning obligation mechanism for contributions to carbon off setting had some merit even if today this may not be the obvious route. For example, a CIL contribution towards the same purpose may be a route in the short term. Likewise whilst there may be practical considerations that challenge us in ensuring rainwater was recycled on all properties, the goal was still meaningful. Today nobody should think litter is a problem, but it was and that, when it came to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, at some point choices would need to be made on the challenges faced.

The Greater Exeter Strategic Plan was confronting the reality that 2,600 homes a year had to be built in the Greater Exeter sub-region over the next twenty years. The highway network could not cope, and residents should not have to put up with the air pollution consequences of continuing with the current approach. Somethings had to give and the Plan was saying, that to achieve the goal we may have to pursue a policy of all vehicles being ULEV. This seemed an unrealisable goal in the next ten years, however the blueprint, would indicate what had to change and what issues should be prioritised to realise the goal.

COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY RAMM (2020–25)

The Museums Manager and Cultural Lead presented the report which set out the requirement to approve a new Collections Development Policy for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery to cover the years 2020 to 2025. It was explained that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the policy had not

undergone the customary period of consultation with professional colleagues and may be subject to later amendment. Future amendment might also cover any necessary revisions arising from Arts Council England's current work to produce new guidelines for museums on restitution and repatriation.

RESOLVED that the new Collections and Development Policy be formally adopted by Exeter City Council.

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MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES PAID 2019/20

The Corporate Manager Democratic & Civic Support presented the report on the allowances paid to elected Members in 2019/20, the Council having a statutory obligation to publish all allowances paid and expenses claimed by Members each financial year.

RESOLVED that Executive Committee note the allowances paid and the expenses claimed by Members in 2019/20.

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EXETER'S RECOVERY PLAN

Councillor K. Mitchell declared an interest as an employee of the RD&E Hospital.

The Chief Executive & Growth Director presented the report which outlined the work that was being progressed to produce a recovery plan as the city emerges from the crisis stage of Covid-19 to ensure a co-ordinated response to the challenges the local economy would be facing.

In addition to the Council's involvement in strategic initiatives through the Devon County Council Local Resilience Forum including its Business and Economy Recovery Task Group and the Heart of South West Local Enterprise Partnership Recovery Plan, a City Council led place based response would be vital to be co-ordinated through the recently created Liveable Exeter Place Board, under the Chairmanship of the Vice Chancellor of the University, Sir Steve Smith. The Board would bring together all the major organisations in the city as well as private and community sector figures. The following seven key themes had been identified, details of which were set out in the report:-

- Construction and development;
- City Centre;
- Visitor economy;
- Transport;
- Education;
- Business Support; and
- Community wellbeing.

In addition to the overarching, place-based recovery plan for the city, the Council would also focus on a number of internal priorities to ensure support for communities and the effective recovery of its operations, the key areas being:-

- Individual financial support;
- Homelessness;
- Council financial strategy;
- Council reinstatement; and
- Organisational change.

The Liveable Exeter Place Board would work through a number of themes and work streams some of which would be led by non-council members of the Board through sub groups such as the City Centre Group, chaired by John Laramy of Exeter College and the Visitor Economy Group chaired by Lord Courtenay as well as the Business Support Group. These work streams would help ensure there was one single recovery plan for the city and that it would be aligned to the regional work.

Councillor D. Moore, having given notice under Standing Order No. 44, spoke on this item.

The response of the Council Leader is attached as an appendix to the minutes.

Councillors Leadbetter and K. Mitchell, speaking as group leaders, welcomed the report. Councillor K. Mitchell asked for an assurance that all communities across the city would be involved in the recovery plan.

The Council Leader emphasised the role of the City Council in using its convening power to galvanise the key stakeholders and engage individuals, organisations and businesses to contribute to the plan of action to work collectively in putting together a plan. He also highlighted Exeter's strong place-making record with ambitious plans and programmes already in place to support the city and its communities. These included strong strategic and multi-sector collaboration, a garden City designation - Liveable Exeter, St Sidwell's Point, an UNESCO City of Literature designation, one of Sport England's twelve Local Delivery Pilots and the carbon neutral city roadmap.

He confirmed that all Members would be fully informed via Executive and Council through further reports and that there remained appropriate mechanisms for the plan to be considered through the Council's scrutiny process.

The Chief Executive & Growth Director concluded that, whilst the support for the recovery programme would need to have regard to the Council's financial position in light of the Covid-19 crisis and the income loss being experienced, the Council was in a position to build on longer term visions already established through the Exeter Vision 2040, Greater Exeter Strategic Plan, Liveable Exeter Transformational Housing Programme and Net Zero Exeter 2030, backed by the city's organisations working together to support all sectors. He referred to the important role of Members in bringing the city together and to the part to be played by Exeter on behalf of the region as a key driver of the wider economy and as an important advocate in seeking innovative funding mechanisms.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the draft recovery plan be approved and the work of council officers providing leadership and support to the recovery initiative be supported;
- (2) the progress made and the role of the City Council in the recovery programme through direct interventions in support of the Liveable Exeter housing programme and the Council's own development company Exeter City Living be reported back to Executive;
- (3) the request to the Liveable Exeter Place Board to adopt the Recovery Plan on behalf of the city as a whole be noted; and

- (4) Exeter City Council Officers leading on the recovery plan work and continuing to provide support to progress the individual work streams be noted.

NET ZERO EXETER 2030 PLAN

The Chief Executive & Growth Director presented the report which set out how the city of Exeter could achieve its ambition to be net-zero carbon by 2030. The Plan set out ways in which people could support in achieving the net zero ambition, and provide engagement across the city to support organisations, individuals and institutions in taking responsibility and contribute to achieving this goal.

The Chief Executive & Growth Director made the following points:-

- the Council had committed itself to a very ambitious carbon neutral goal before the Covid-19 crisis and lockdown and there was a need to build the Council's recovery plan around the net zero ambitions;
- during the last recession, goals for addressing global warming had been relaxed and, as such, it was important to ensure the highest standards would be incorporated within future policies, to include a significant shift away from global to local resourcing;
- given the unprecedented financial challenge, with a forecast loss of £10 million for the year against a £13.5 million net budget and the Council lacking sufficient organisational resources, a staged approach with alternative and innovative options was necessary to respond to the climate emergency, such as retrofitting of housing and initiatives around transport and mobility, as examples of a necessary mainstream approach; and
- it would be a city wide endeavour, Exeter City Futures having already established a network across the city with the Liveable Exeter Place Board identified as the appropriate body to adopt the plan on behalf of the city of Exeter as a whole. The Board had already amended the Exeter Vision 2040 with its commitment to a carbon neutral Exeter by 2030.

Councillor D. Moore, having given notice under Standing Order No. 44, spoke on this item.

The response of the Council Leader is attached as an appendix to the minutes.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- report of Exeter City Futures welcomed as an accessible road map for the public and stakeholders towards achieving carbon neutrality;
- regardless of Covid-19, it would be important to build on earlier consultations with communities on the carbon neutral goal as well as the Council's considerable ability to build effective partnerships with the private and voluntary sector and the business community. Responsibility should also be accepted on an individual basis;
- an extensive retrofit programme for homes should be progressed as it will significantly help to contribute towards carbon savings and can also be achieved through the council housing stock. In addition, it should also be extended to the private sector. Fuel costs will be reduced, especially for families suffering fuel poverty; and
- a valuable virtual forum had been held on 20 May – an Emergency Transport and Travel Roundtable - including discussion groups from across the wider community.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:-

- (1) the adoption of the Net-Zero Exeter 2030 Plan as Council policy to inform all policy documents, plans and corporate decision making in response to the Climate Emergency and in pursuance of the goal to make Exeter a carbon neutral city by 2030;
- (2) the Liveable Exeter Place Board as the appropriate body to adopt the Liveable Exeter Place Plan on behalf of the city of Exeter;
- (3) authorising the Chief Executive & Growth Director, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to explore opportunities to secure investment and to create mechanisms for funding the programmes set out in the Plan; and
- (4) the Chief Executive & Growth Director reporting to Executive on how the City Council will deliver the actions set out in the section “what Exeter City Council can do”, once the financial position of the City Council has been clarified with Government financial support as a consequence of the Covid-19 crisis.

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PRIORITY ASSET INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

The Director (DB) presented the report which contained a number of urgent asset maintenance priorities, which had been identified as a result of the ongoing asset inspection programme. The report summarised the various projects to provide an overview of the scale of the investment required. It was important to ensure that Council owned assets were safe and maintained to maximise their longevity and value, however the coronavirus crisis had significantly impacted the Council's income, and it was not possible at the current time to commit to further expenditure.

The individual schemes identified were:-

- Parks Anti-intrusion measures;
- Riverside Sports Hall Roof;
- Corn Exchange Roof Replacement;
- Exmouth Buoy Store;
- Pines Gardens Gate House; and
- CCTV.

The total cost of the schemes would be £2,723,000, the Chief Finance Officer explaining that the annual capital costs from long term borrowing would be £117,597 which would add to the medium term reductions of £3.7 million identified before the Covid-19 crisis.

Councillor D. Moore, having given notice under Standing Order No. 44, spoke on this item.

The response of the Council Leader is attached as an appendix to the minutes.

Councillor K. Mitchell, speaking as a group leader, stated that the prioritisation of schemes identified and their relative importance in relation to other needs across the city should be considered at the same time as the emergency budget to be presented to the meeting of the Council on 21 July 2020.

Members noted that all the above schemes required long term investment to address the urgent needs and it was therefore important to highlight these at an

early stage notwithstanding the requirement to balance this year's budget, the shortfall having now been significantly exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis.

RECOMMENDED that Council:-

- (1) recognise the priorities of the programme, the importance of good asset management and approve the budgets identified for each project in the report presented to the meeting, when funds are available; and
- (2) delegate authority to the Chief Executive & Growth Director, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer (or Deputy) and Leader of the Council (or Deputy), to give final approval to proceed once the Council's financial position is secure.

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**EXETER CITY GROUP - REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR NEW COMPANY
BUSINESS CASES AND ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report which sought funding to develop three business cases to explore the feasibility of expanding Exeter City Group's range of Subsidiaries to include a Company providing market rent properties to let, a Consultancy Company and a Company to provide retro-fit solutions for existing housing. The report further sought approval for a Commercial Finance Manager to provide dedicated support to Exeter City Group and the other Council owned Companies, which would be funded by Exeter City Group along with funds received from the other Companies.

Councillor D. Moore, having given notice under Standing Order No. 44, spoke on this item.

The response of the Council Leader is attached as an appendix to the minutes.

The Chief Finance Officer explained that there was an immediate need for £300,000 to fund the creation of the business cases, to be funded from the balance left on the Business Rates Pilot and General Fund reserves. Extensive work was necessary to ensure viability prior to the establishment of the companies. The £60,000 required for the additional member of staff would ultimately be funded by the expanded Group of Companies, with the post predominantly seconded to the Exeter City Group to provide strategic financial support.

The Council Leader and another Member welcomed in particular:-

- a market rent housing company which would purchase property from Exeter City Living to provide good quality rented accommodation; and
- a company to support the Council in its ambitions to deliver retrofit solutions to existing properties and to encourage Passivhaus developments as part of the goal of becoming a carbon neutral city.

RECOMMENDED that Council approve:-

- (1) £300,000 for the development of three business cases to explore the feasibility of creating the new subsidiaries as set out in the report;
- (2) £60,000 for a new Finance Manager - Commercial to support Exeter City Group and the wider Council Companies, to be funded by the Companies themselves; and

- (3) delegating authority to the Chief Executive & Growth Director, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer (or Deputy) and Leader of the Council (or Deputy), to give final approval to proceed once the Council's financial position is secure.

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CITYPOINT – UPDATE ON PARIS STREET AND SIDWELL STREET REGENERATION

The City Surveyor presented the report, which provided an update on the progress of plans to bring forward the comprehensive development of the CityPoint site, comprising the former Bus and Coach Station and adjoining areas of Paris Street and Sidwell Street.

Members noted the progress made in discussions with interested parties and recognised the importance of sustaining the momentum in bringing forward the Council's ambitions for this area of the city whilst recognising the changed economic circumstances and the impact on the property market.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the current progress for bringing forward the CityPoint site, as set out in the report, be noted;
- (2) the provisionally agreed Memorandum of Agreement with the principal land owners to facilitate the next steps towards the comprehensive redevelopment be progressed; and
- (3) the City Surveyor be authorised to explore, in conjunction with partners, potential routes for an early appointment of development partner(s) to deliver the scheme and objectives in a timely manner.

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APPENDIX

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.33 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