

MEMBER QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER at Executive Committee, Under Standing Order 44 – 10 September 2019

From Councillor D Moore

Response by the Council Leader

Question 1

Over our busy summer holiday, how many city centre businesses welcomed visitors who were not customers to use their toilet facilities and how many of these toilet facilities are fully accessible?

Response 1

The Council Leader explained that the toilet facilities, were not owned or maintained by the Council and consequently there was no available information on their usage. The only way to collect this information would be to individually survey every business in the City and check whether their facilities were fully accessible. The Council would then need to ask the businesses to record who used their facilities and for them to assess whether they thought they were customers or not.

The Council Leader suggested contacting the Business Improvement District (BID) to see if any of their members had records of this information. However the information may be difficult to obtain, due to the issue for stores with multiple floors, in defining who was and was not a customer.

Question 2

With threat of a No Deal Brexit still a real and dangerous risk how much money has the Government seen fit to give to Exeter to manage this and how will the Council allocate these funds?

Response 2

The Council Leader stated that the Council had received £35,000 as an Exit Preparation Grant and were currently confirming whether an additional £28,000 would also be made available. In terms of how the funding would be spent, currently the work of local authorities in Devon was being co-ordinated by Phil Norrey and his team, which all the local authorities were participating in and liaising with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnerships.

This work was informing where the major issues are likely to be and the Council wished to give some funding towards that work which was taking place and that Exeter City Council were currently looking to host some workshops with the Federation of Small Businesses. The Council was mindful that it may be called upon to help out other local authorities who may face acute pressure, such as Ports and that it may be expected to provide temporary support and assume a level of backfill to help out.

Question 3

Would the Leader agree with me that as a city based in the heart of a rural county we should be celebrating the best of Devon and that a covered market square in the redevelopment could play a valuable role for a permanent farmers/producers market, space for small and new business to set up and for a wider range of cultural activities?

Response 3

The Council Leader explained that Exeter City Council ran a successful Farmers Market, and had done for many years. It was kept under review and officers regularly have conversations with interested parties, including traders, those interested in food security, developing the circular economy, eradicating food poverty and improving the city centre itself through the Business Improvement District (BID). It was a successful market that independent traders in South Street and Fore Street covet and the Matford Centre continued to act as a flagship asset as a city based in the heart of a rural county.

The Council Leader stated that cultural activities in the city, and a report commissioned by Members would be brought back to Council later this year and that with regards to workspace, Members had already commissioned marketing to attract investors to create office space as part of the wider CityPoint site.

Councillor D Moore requested the Leader to comment on the negotiations to agree a joint venture and confirm that the Council have the opportunity to input on the terms for joint working and to discuss the potential risks involved.

The Leader reassured Councillor Moore that Members would be kept updated on all matters. He referred to Councillor D Moore to the response from the Chief Executive & Growth Director, on the potential risks involved. He confirmed that these would be included in the minutes.