

## COUNCIL

Tuesday 21 July 2020

### Present:-

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor Councillor Peter Holland (Lord Mayor)  
Councillor Mrs Yolonda Henson (Deputy Lord Mayor)  
Councillors Atkinson, Begley, Bialyk, Branston, Buswell, Foale, Foggin, Ghusain, Hannaford, Harvey, Henson, D, Lamb, Leadbetter, Lyons, Mitchell, K, Mitchell, M, Moore, D, Moore, J, Morse, Newby, Oliver, Owen, Packham, Pattison, Pearson, Martin, A, Quance, I, Sheldon, Sparkes, Sutton, Vizard, Wardle, Warwick, Williams, Wood and Wright

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### MINUTES

The minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Council held on 21 April 2020 were moved by the Leader, seconded by the Deputy Leader Councillor Sutton, taken as read and approved for signing as correct at the earliest possible convenience.

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### APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Sills.

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### OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Lord Mayor passed on his condolences, and those of Council Members, to Councillors Atkinson and Wood, whose fathers had recently passed away.

The Lord Mayor also:-

- reported that Alderman Landers had recently celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and had been presented with a clock as a mark of the Council's appreciation for his work when a Councillor and his continued service to the city in his role as Alderman;
- advised of the cancellation of the annual Exeter Armed Forces Day Parade scheduled for 20 June because of Covid-19, the celebration having being held virtually through the City Council's social media pages on Facebook with messages sent to various dignitaries, affiliated Armed Forces, cadets and veterans. A total of 18 video clips were received, which had been broken down into three videos and placed on Facebook reaching 13,171 people;
- reported his attendance, and that of the Leader of the Council, at both St James' Park, and Wembley, in the form of life-size cut-outs, supporting Exeter City in the playoff matches. This initiative had provided fans with the means virtually to attend the games being broadcast on Sky TV and helped generate much needed revenue for the club. Unfortunately, Exeter City had failed to gain promotion on this occasion; and
- receipt of a letter from the new Commanding Officer of HMS Defender, Vincent Owen, writing to advise of his wish to continue the valuable affiliation with Exeter City Council. Commander Owen had referred to the new phase of the ship's operational life and forthcoming deployments and of hopefully meeting in the not too distant future.

## **PETITION - SAVE OUR HISTORIC EXETER**

The Lord Mayor invited Andy Robinson, the petition organiser, to present a petition of 2,081 signatories on "Save Our Historic Exeter".

Mr Robinson stated that:-

- more than 4,200 people have signed a petition titled "Please help us stop developers destroying the city centre" with more than 2,000 having also signed from the EX area which is why this petition qualifies for discussion here;
- the petition asks Exeter City Council to put on hold any significant new developments that effect heritage assets that are not governed by existing policy and for which the City Council has not conducted a needs assessment until the appropriate research and policies are in place;
- it also asks that the Council urgently puts additional resources into the research and development of these polices and to ensure that the approval of historic bodies is gained before buildings are validated for public consultation;
- these policies are needed as, without them, developers will find it far easier to build something that maximises their own profits at the expense of the city, its heritage and citizens;
- the research and policies that are needed are a Housing Needs Assessment, backed by detailed in depth research, research backed policies for every kind of development, including co-living, detailed policies for development in conservation areas including maximum height and mass of buildings, detailed policies for permanent, affordable, sustainable housing and a detailed assessment of the need for a range of student accommodation from affordable to luxury, urgent assessment of infrastructure levies and policies for the protection of green spaces and trees;
- during the process of the Harlequins planning application, it became clear to Exeter residents that there are huge gaps in planning policy and we have seen many buildings going up without any respect for historic Exeter, bringing no public benefit and only benefiting investors who are, in most cases, not based in our city and many not even in the UK. Developers have money to pay for the historic assessments, light surveys, noise surveys and sustainability surveys and Exeter City Council, it seems, does not have the resources to give them proper scrutiny;
- developers' claims and conclusions therefore have to be taken at face value and, inevitably, what is proposed is overwhelmingly about profit. It is not concerned about protecting Exeter, its heritage and its long term vision and it certainly is not about benefitting the people who live here;
- thousands of people who signed the petition want to say – "Stop and find out what is needed, find out what is wanted, create policies to take control of what is allowed and what is not, listen to the people who live and work here and those who visit. We have a right to influence our own environment and we expect it to be improved and not destroyed. Do not build more short term developments that make money for those who already have it and brings nothing to those who have real needs";
- the city's prime real estate should be used to create structures with flair and imagination, with world class architecture and visionary thinking worthy of a historically important city;
- it is believed that the Council lacks the resources to deal with the threat of international developers taking advantage of poor polices, so applications in

- the pipeline should be put on hold where there is not enough independent evidence or information about whether these developments are actually needed or coherent with the Local Plan;
- in respect of co-living, Manchester has quickly responded with a report saying that it will not support it as a response to the housing crisis. There are at least two applications of co-living pending in Exeter but no report into the issue;
- it is assumed that the Council has detailed evidence that co-living will work in Exeter, evidence which should be shared; and
- with a petition of over 4,000, with support on Facebook, it is requested that a group of Exeter residents, historians and local business representatives from Save Our Historic Exeter be formed to be kept up to date on the activities associated with this debate.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr Robinson for clarifying that there were only 2,081 signatories with an Exeter postcode. The Lord Mayor stated that it was not appropriate for the Council to debate the petition due to the reference to the live Harlequins planning application and proposed that the petition be referred to the Planning Committee in accordance with the Council's petition scheme. The proposal was supported.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr Robinson for the presentation.

**RESOLVED** that the petition be referred to the Planning Committee.

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## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Lord Mayor reported the receipt of three questions from the public.

**Mr Thompson to Councillor Bialyk, Leader.**

Mr Thompson was not present and his question was read out by the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support.

Could the Leader confirm if Planning Applications, for example Planning Application 19/1105/FUL, would have consent reviewed if such applications were presented at Internal Briefings (public excluded), rather than the Planning Committee (open to the public), if it was subsequently considered this procedure had breached the City Council's Planning Code of Conduct.

**Response**

It is not possible to give a specific response to a general question. Each case would be dealt with based on the relevant facts.

**Marilyn Spurr to Councillor Sutton, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate and Culture**

Given the Council acknowledges the climate emergency, will it give the same prominence on your web site as the Coronavirus information? This would be an inexpensive way to inform the public, encourage them to take action and prepare them for the policies you will need to pursue to achieve your goals.

**Response**

Yes. Considerable prominence had to be given on social media platforms in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council website and social media platforms will be utilised to promote the Council's response and ambitions to the Climate Emergency in order for all citizens and visitors to Exeter to respond positively to the challenges ahead.

**Mrs Spurr asked a Supplementary question.**

Can a timescale be provided?

**Response**

The website will shortly be updated as part of the Council's Net Zero Carbon ambitions.

**Adrian Sargood to Councillor Bialyk, Leader.**

Whilst the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan is not on the agenda it will be discussed at a 'Place Board'. In view of Exeter declaring a climate emergency, what priority will the Council and Place Board give to the Plan in relation to other plans the Council has, or will, develop?

**Response**

The minutes of Executive held on the 2 June are being considered by Council tonight with a recommendation that Council adopt the net-zero Exeter 2030 Plan. It should be self-evident that, having adopted the Net Zero Plan, it will inform all priorities of the City Council. It is also recommended that, because the City Council cannot require other organisations to adopt the Net Zero Plan, the Liveable Exeter Place Board be requested to adopt the Plan on behalf of the city as a whole. This would potentially leverage in many more of the city's key organisations and businesses and increase the influence and impact of the Council's decision to adopt the Plan.

**Mr Sargood asked a Supplementary question.**

Is there any budget being proposed for the implementation of the Plan?

**Response**

This is a very important issue but, because of the huge financial pressures the Council is under as identified in the Emergency Budget being considered this evening, there is no explicit budget for this purpose. The Council however is committed to working with organisations and communities in the city to achieve its aspirations in the Plan and to address this emergency and is one of only five local authorities in the country with such a Plan. Reports will be made to future meetings of the Executive on progress.

The minutes of the Planning Committee of 16 March 2020 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Lyons, and taken as read.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 16 March 2020 be received.

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### **PLANNING COMMITTEE - 27 APRIL 2020**

The minutes of the Planning Committee of 27 April 2020 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Lyons, and taken as read.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 27 April 2020 be received.

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### **PLANNING COMMITTEE - 4 MAY 2020**

The minutes of the Planning Committee of 4 May 2020 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Lyons, and taken as read.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 4 May 2020 be received.

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### **PLANNING COMMITTEE - 1 JUNE 2020**

The minutes of the Planning Committee of 1 June 2020 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Lyons, and taken as read.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 1 June 2020 be received.

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### **PLANNING COMMITTEE - 29 JUNE 2020**

The minutes of the Planning Committee of 29 June 2020 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Lyons, and taken as read.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 29 June 2020 be received.

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### **LICENSING COMMITTEE - 26 MAY 2020**

The minutes of the Licensing Committee of 26 May 2020 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Owen and taken as read.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 26 May 2020 be received and, where appropriate, adopted.

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### **CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 6 FEBRUARY 2020**

The Lord Mayor advised that the minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee of 6 February 2020 had already been received at the previous meeting of the Council on 25 February 2020.

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### **CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 25 JUNE 2020**

In respect of **Minute No. 16 (Presentation on Covid-19 by Portfolio Holders and Questions from Members and Answers)** the Portfolio Holder for Supporting People, in response to a query from a Member, advised that there were currently six individuals accommodated in the Junction and that Government guidance on social distancing was being followed with strict adherence to safety requirements.

The minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee of 25 June 2020 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Vizard and taken as read.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 25 June 2020 be received.

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### **STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 12 MARCH 2020**

In the absence of the Chair, the minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee of 12 March 2020 were presented by the Deputy Chair, Councillor Newby and taken as read.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee held on 12 March 2020 be received.

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### **STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 2 JULY 2020**

In the absence of the Chair, the minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee of 2 July 2020 were presented by the Deputy Chair, Councillor Newby and taken as read.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Strategic Scrutiny Committee held on 2 July 2020 be received.

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### **STRATA JOINT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 16 JUNE 2020**

The minutes of the Strata Joint Executive Committee of 16 June 2020 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 21 (Strata Business Plan 2020/21 and beyond)**, the Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendation and it was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Strata Joint Executive Committee held on 16 June 2020 be received and, where appropriate, adopted.

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### **EXECUTIVE - 2 JUNE 2020**

The minutes of the Executive of 2 June 2020 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 60 (Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan)**, the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate and Culture:-

- commended the Plan to Council as Exeter's visionary approach to the Climate Emergency, being one of the few authorities in the country to have identified the need to respond vigorously at an early stage;
- referred to the many initiatives already being implemented by the Council to reduce its own carbon footprint including the installation of solar panels to generate electricity which, as well enabling the charging of its own vehicles, also provided electricity to the general grid;
- emphasised the city wide objectives of the Plan in conjunction with the Council's many partners in the city;

- the financial challenge the Plan presented in light of the Covid-19 pandemic was recognised but that, nevertheless, the Plan would be front and centre of the Council's future aspirations and would be progressed as part of the Council's post Covid-19 Recovery Plan; and
- in responding to a Member's suggestion for the Council to support the newly created South West Mutual Bank and to lead on the creation of a Community Wealth Fund for local people to buy in and to keep the city's wealth in the communities by creating jobs, establishing a training programme and supporting green businesses to grow and support a sustainable future, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council's Recovery Plan was aimed at helping the city's economy recover as quickly as possible from the pandemic through job creation and support for all businesses;
- responding further to the Member's suggestion, she agreed that it was important not to delay initiatives seeking to reduce the carbon footprint and that encouraging green businesses was an element of this;
- she commended the initiatives put forward by Exeter Community Energy although, in many cases, the Council was already taking a lead in these areas; and
- in conjunction with Exeter City Futures all options would be considered and South West Mutual had briefed lead Councillors.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 61 (Priority Asset Investment Programme)**, the Leader stated that six individual schemes totalling over £2.7 million had been identified prior to the outbreak of Covid-19 but had now been put on hold in order to bring forward the Emergency Budget in response to the crisis. Should it be decided to proceed with any of the schemes under the delegated powers sought in the recommendation, Members would be informed.

Councillor J. Moore, in moving the following amendment, made the following points:-

- referred to recent problems caused by travellers and gypsies accessing sites around the city;
- expressed the view that, rather than proceeding with anti-intrusion measures intended to prevent such incursions, safe, temporary sites should be identified for such groups;
- it would also be important to assess the health and wellbeing of these groups and to help meet a public sector equality duty; and
- this approach would make illegal encampments less likely.

Councillor J. Moore moved and Councillor D. Moore seconded the following amendment:-

- (1) the first of the six individual schemes identified as an urgent asset maintenance priority – Parks Anti-intrusion measures - be removed; and
- (2) the Council be requested to undertake an assessment of the needs of the traveller and gypsy communities in Exeter.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- both this Council and Devon County Council have adopted positive policies in respect of the traveller and gypsy communities. Although sites had been

identified in the city, such as Haven Banks recently and, previously on Haldon Hill, they had been rejected, although a permanent site is located on the Sowton industrial estate. Devon County Council employ a gypsy/traveller liaison officer and other assistance has included educational support for the children of these communities;

- a number of problems have occurred following occupation of sites in the city, including Pinhoe (with three incursions in four years), Stoke Hill, Countess Wear and West Exe. Whilst the rights of these communities should be protected, the groups themselves have responsibilities to the wider community whose rights should also be respected;
- the occupation of open space prevents residents from walking and exercising which has been of particular relevance with the Covid-19 outbreak; and
- the Council has a responsibility under Equalities legislation to work positively with both communities and providing alternative sites could prevent such intrusions in the future, as the travelling community require somewhere to stop before moving on to other destinations.

The amendment was put to the vote and LOST.

The Leader, in responding to queries from Members advised:-

- Members would be notified as and when any of the schemes were implemented; and
- a budget is not available for the installation of solar panels on the Riverside Leisure Centre and any such provision would delay the completion of the refurbishment further.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 62 (Exeter City Group – Request for Funding for New Company Business Cases and additional financial support)**, a Member in welcoming the high priority being given to providing energy efficient homes and the Council's commitment to providing homes to Passivhaus standards, expressed her concerns that the proposals would not adequately address the need for affordable rented accommodation in the city. She referred in particular to the wage levels of many and to the concentration of rented accommodation in particular wards of the city.

The following responses were provided by the Leader:-

- the feasibility study would examine a number of options for expanding the Exeter City Group's range of subsidiaries, the results of which would be reported back to Members;
- the appointment of a Commercial Finance Manager was important to ensure dedicated support to Exeter City Group and the other Council owned Companies; and
- the goal was to provide good quality rented accommodation for Exeter citizens and that this would be achieved through offering a number of accommodation options including social rented, affordable rented, private rented as well as shared ownership.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Executive held on 2 June 2020 be received, and where appropriate, adopted.

## EXECUTIVE - 7 JULY 2020

The minutes of the Executive of 7 July 2020 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 68 (Post-Pandemic Recovery of Leisure Services)**, the Leader reported that, to secure a long term future for the Council's leisure services, a commitment was to be made to permanently in-source the service to ensure a viable and sustainable long term future. The impact of the pandemic on the leisure industry nationally had been devastating and the in-sourcing model proposed provided more direct control and was considered to be a safer approach given the high level of uncertainty caused by the pandemic. Many other authorities had expressed their admiration that the Council was able to commit to this policy change. He was particularly pleased that the staff would transfer to the Council under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) and they would have new benefits including access to the council staff pension scheme. The Leader also covered the cost implications as set out in the recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Physical Activity, in responding to a query from a Member on the implications of recent Government guidance on the re-opening of leisure facilities, confirmed that it was the intention to re-open facilities from September when it would be safe and practical to do so. No dates could be confirmed at this time as detailed health and safety risk assessments were required to ensure all aspects of the facilities are Covid-19 secure. Any necessary changes would be implemented as soon as possible but that public health and safety would always be paramount. There would be many issues to address including meeting new ventilation and air quality requirements, ensuring safe customer flows throughout facilities and some layouts may have to change within the Leisure Centres to ensure social distancing for both staff and customers.

The Portfolio Holder stated that, bringing the service in-house was an exciting development for the city and that it provided the opportunity to align with the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot as well as the work around the Physical Activity and Built Facilities Strategies for leisure. He referred to the flagship St. Sidwell's Point Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre and the refurbishment of the Riverside Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre, both of which could operate in a Covid-19 secure way.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- the allocation of £1.5 million was required for the fit out costs for St. Sidwell's Point;
- bringing the Leisure Service in-house was a significant defining step for the City;
- the alignment with the Sport England pilot was important to encourage people to become more active and this encompassed activities in parks and open spaces supported by the City Council;
- the move to bring the service in-house was welcome as it provided greater control for the Council and presented the best opportunity for securing a quality service; and
- the opening of the Riverside Leisure Centre on the completion of the refurbishment would be welcomed by residents west of the River.

The Leader of the Progressive Group expressed his support for bringing the Leisure Service in-house and the Council Leader re-iterated the benefits of the City Council assuming direct control of this valuable service.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 69 (Overview of General Fund Revenue Budget 2019/20)**, the Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 70 (Capital Monitoring 2019/20 and Revised Capital Programme for 2020/21 and Future Years)**, the Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 71 (2019/20 HRA Budget Monitoring Report – Outturn)** the Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 72 (Treasury Management 2019/20)**, the Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendation and it was carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 73 (Emergency Budget 2020/21)**, Councillor D. Moore moved, and Councillor J. Moore seconded, the following amendment:-

*To introduce parking charges at all Leisure Centres and public open space car parks in the City, where a charging structure is not currently in place. All income generated after covering the costs associated with introducing the measures are to be earmarked for Housing Needs and Homelessness services.*

In moving the amendment, Councillor D. Moore made the following points:-

- in the face of an unprecedented financial crisis, the most vulnerable in society were being hit the hardest and the additional funds from car parking charges would help address the homelessness and housing need situation in the city;
- a charge of £1 or £2 for a three hour period could be appropriate;
- a modal shift away from car use could be an offshoot, as residents would be encouraged to walk or bike to the facilities;
- the proposal would tie in with both the Council's Net Zero Carbon goal and the Sport England pilot and help reduce air pollution; and
- given the uncertainty of Government support in the future, the need to supplement the housing needs and homelessness budget was particularly important.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- many on lower incomes in less affluent areas do own cars and will not be able to afford the suggested charges and therefore lose the motivation to exercise and enjoy the open spaces. Those without cars could be discouraged in accessing the facilities by bus because of the high fares in the city;
- the suggested total increase for the housing and homelessness service of £20,000 would not achieve a great deal;
- such a move would be contrary to the existing City Council initiatives such as the Sport England pilot and Wellbeing Exeter;
- an additional cost could be incurred in resurfacing the car parks;

- the service has suffered a reduction in its budget of £117,460 and, with the existing number of homeless, the Council cannot afford to cut the budget. Additional funding should be welcome and could be used, for example, to appoint a Complex Needs Officer; and
- guide-lines have been followed in putting forward the amendment, the implications of which have been thoroughly researched.

The amendment was put to the vote and LOST.

Councillor M. Mitchell moved, and Councillor K. Mitchell seconded, the following amendment:-

*That any financial assistance from the Government this financial year to compensate for loss of income be allocated to restore the cuts proposed in the pending budget (July 2020). The Executive Committee should determine as funds become available the priorities for restoration within the original approved 2020/21 Budget. That the proposed £1million delegated fund should only be used in regard to reducing the impact of budget reductions or Covid-19 and not be used to fund the development of new projects.*

In moving the amendment, Councillor M. Mitchell stated that its intention was to enable the Council to revisit proposals put forward within the original budget should the Government allocation enable it to do so and Councillor K. Mitchell, in seconding the amendment, confirmed the intention to ensure the integrity of the existing agreed budget would be upheld, with the potential for it to be reinstated as agreed earlier in the year.

The amendment was put to the vote and LOST.

The Leader presented the Emergency Budget which set out the proposals to ensure that, despite the unprecedented damage to the city's economy resulting from Covid-19, the huge losses of income and the additional budgetary pressures arising in responding to the pandemic, a revised and balanced budget could still be set. He thanked the Portfolio Holders and Directors for bringing forward the package of measures before the Council to ensure that, unlike some authorities, the City Council would not be facing the possibility of issuing a Section 114 Notice under the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

The Leader highlighted the following:-

- Exeter had received nearly £1.4 million of funding from the Government in two tranches but this would not meet the gap of £11.19 million being faced and which should be viewed in the context of income lost and the need for additional spend;
- some £8.56 million would be lost in the financial year 2020/21. Projected income losses up to June 2020, included lost car park income up to the end of June of £1.9 million, £426,000 from commercial waste and a reduction of £468,000 in income from visitor attractions together with losses also in commercial income;
- the additional spend requirement of £2.62 million included support for rough sleepers, creation of the Exeter Community Wellbeing hub, the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and safe working arrangements in respect of Cleansing Services;
- the net additional cost of re-housing rough sleepers had been £180,000 (up to July), yet the Government grant received for this purpose had been £23,250;

- together with the Government grant of £1.4 million, measures to balance the budget included using £1.2 million from the General Fund Working Balance, repurposing Earmarked Reserves, offsetting repayment of debts against previous voluntary re-payments, recognising the saving of £300,000 in respect of the successful RAMM business rate valuation appeal and reductions in service expenditure totalling over £1.6 million;
- the Council would still need to make further savings of £5.8 million over the next three years; and
- it remained this City Council's intention to maintain front line services. Exeter was in the top 10 of local authorities predicted to experience a quick recovery. This Council would therefore continue in its role as a driver for the local and regional economy and, crucially, promote job creation and economic growth.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- the City Council has a record of sound financial management;
- in respect of the Housing Revenue Account, no cuts in services to Council tenants were proposed as money had been saved by putting on hold works during the Lockdown period but, without further Government support, the position would need to be reviewed regularly;
- it is a regret that no additional funding has been identified by the Government to meet the additional costs incurred by the Environmental Health, Licensing and Community Safety Services in response to Covid-19;
- the first tranche of Government support in the sum of £72,737 together with money made available from repurposing the housing budget was utilised to accommodate the homeless;
- Government funding to combat any local outbreaks of the virus will be utilised by Devon County Council as the upper tier authority;
- the Government undertaking to reimburse local authorities 75% of lost income incurred during the crisis should be honoured; and
- it was hoped that, as a result of the crisis, the Government would recognise the vital roles undertaken by local authorities and the misguided stance of successive Governments in underestimating the role of Local Government in supporting their communities.

Both Leaders of the Opposition Groups supported the Emergency Budget.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 74 (Review of the General Buller Statue)**, the Leader reported that the continued appropriateness of the statue of General Buller and his horse Biffen would be considered by a Task and Finish Working Group comprising Councillors Ghusain, Foggin, Mrs Henson, D. Moore and Quance for report to the Strategic Scrutiny Committee.

In respect of **Minute No. 75 (Council Development Programme)**, and in response to a query from a Member regarding a Government announcement that additional funding would be made available to enable Councils to build Council homes, the Portfolio Holder for Council Housing Development and Services advised that, when the detail was announced, the City Council would be well placed to bid for this, as well as the Government's additional funding opportunity, "green funding", because of the innovative work already commenced within the Housing Assets and Development Team to retrofit the Council's Housing stock. The Council was also working closely with Homes England as part of the development programme.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 76 (The Introduction of a Council Housing and Development Advisory Board)**, Members noted the importance of engaging with tenants through the proposed Board.

The Leader moved and the Portfolio Holder for Council House Development and Services seconded the recommendations and they were carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 77 (Greater Exeter Strategic Plan: Draft Policies and Site Options Consultation)**, the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for City Development emphasised that the sites within Exeter identified in the Strategic Plan were those set out within the Liveable Exeter initiative and that these, together with all sites identified in neighbouring authorities, would now be put out to public consultation in the Autumn.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendation and it was carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 78 (Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP) : Joint Statement of Community Involvement)**, and in response to a Member's query regarding the availability of resources, the Portfolio Holder for City Planning and Development confirmed the Council's commitment to continue supporting the GESP process as well as developing the Local Plan in parallel. Central to the work was the identification of potential sites for development to support the Council's desire to bring forward purpose built shared accommodation and affordable public sector housing in line with the Council's green agenda and Covid-19 Recovery Plan.

In respect of **Minute No. 81 (Resources Required to Develop Exeter's Local Plan)**, and in response to a reference by a Member to the petition as set out in Min. No. 26 above, the Leader confirmed that a report on the matter would be presented to the Planning Committee.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendation and it was carried.

In respect of **Minute No. 83 (Exeter City Living Ltd. Business Plan 2020/21)**, the Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations which were carried.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Executive held on 7 July 2020 be received, and where appropriate, adopted.

#### **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 8.**

- (a) In accordance with Standing Order No. 8, the following questions were put by Councillor D. Moore to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate and Culture.

*Please can the Portfolio Holder set out the baseline year being used to measure progress for the Exeter Net Zero Exeter 2030 plan and the*

1. *Net Exeter emissions of carbon dioxide for that year, and*

2. *Net Exeter emissions of each of the other targeted greenhouse gases for the year that is the base year for that gas.*

*Can the Portfolio Holder ensure that this baseline and benchmark is publicised by Exeter City Council and Exeter City Futures alongside the Plan?*

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder responded that a detailed spreadsheet containing the baseline data and assumptions of the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan could be downloaded from this page (by clicking the 'Net Zero Exeter Detail' button further down the page) <https://www.exetercityfutures.com/insights/net-zero-exeter-plan/>.

The Key Facts 2019 document, could be downloaded here: <https://www.exetercityfutures.com/insights/exeter-key-facts-2019/>. This was a summary document that collated existing data and statistics about Exeter (as of the end of 2019) and presenting them under the four key themes of the city's 12 Goals (Energy, Mobility, Sustainability and Capability) in order to identify areas Exeter might improve on.

The Key Facts 2019 document showed the figures around average CO2 emissions in Exeter from the Devon Climate Emergency Recovery Group (DCERG) report commissioned from the University of Exeter's Centre for Energy and the Environment. Their methodology used to generate this figure was available here: <https://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/devons-carbon-footprint/>. It was important to note that the Council had not carried out its own analysis on the data included in this DCERG report.

Having robust data was critical to measuring progress towards the city's Net Zero goals, yet carbon accounting, especially for a whole city, was a difficult task. In this sense, Exeter City Futures was consciously and consistently exploring ways in which this could be achieved on a more detailed level for Exeter.

It was confirmed that work was underway with the University of Exeter to establish the City Council's CO2 base line data, taking 2018 as the baseline for the measurement and that, whilst it was important to establish the scientific data as the basis, the key was to attain the goal of becoming net zero Carbon by 2030.

*Councillor D. Moore asked a supplementary question on which Body, Board or authority should be tasked to keep account and reporting on the city's annual Carbon budget?*

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder responded that this information would be obtained through the work being undertaken by Exeter City Futures and the University of Exeter for the City Council, with all proposals to come back through the Council's democratic processes.

(b) In accordance with Standing Order No. 8, the following question was put by Councillor Hannaford to the Portfolio Holder for Supporting People.

*Does the Portfolio Holder agree that the Government's untimely re-imposition of benefit sanctions will cause great stress, anxiety, and financial hardship for many of our most vulnerable residents? Furthermore, does the Portfolio Holder agree that, in the midst of a global pandemic, with all the public health pressures and resultant economic depression, with potentially huge job losses, that this is a massive waste of public servants' time that could be much better spent on these other matters of greater significance?*

*How do these measures comply with the Government's stated aim to do nothing that increases child poverty? Can the Portfolio Holder please confirm what scoping work is being done by the Council with other key partners, to mitigate the detrimental effects on the residents, their families, and the Council, in terms of debt, council tax payments and rent arrears if welfare payments and frozen, cut or ceased?*

The Portfolio Holder replied that her day job and her role as Portfolio Holder involved working with those on benefits many of whom had been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic with many who had been furloughed receiving only 80% of their salary entitlement and with some facing redundancies where business are unable to restart. The Government's decision was bad timing as we are still in the pandemic and there will also be an impact on child poverty.

The Department for Work and Pensions, in dealing with the pandemic, is now moving from response to recovery phase. Normally a claim for Universal Credit (UC) would involve working with a Work Coach, signing up to a claimant commitment to look for work, and keeping a journal of progress. However with 3.2 million new claims being received, those steps were omitted initially as the focus of the response phase was to get those claims into payment as quickly as possible to prevent hardship.

Now that volumes of new claims for UC have dropped back to pre-March levels, Work Coaches are returning to their normal role of helping people back into work. Online journals are being created for those still claiming UC and I have been assured that the only reason that sanctions have returned is because they form part of the conditionality for Universal Credit.

The Council works closely with colleagues at Job Centre Plus and they have shared that a reasonable approach to conditionality will be followed as no-one can be sanctioned for not applying for jobs that don't exist.

Officers have been working closely with the other Devon Districts, Plymouth and Torbay Unitary Authorities and Devon County Council to monitor collection and debt levels across all areas of debt. No formal recovery action has been taken against households to date, the focus instead being on outbound calling to offer support to those appearing to struggle.

The Council has always been able to offer support to those in need through the use of discretionary funds including the local welfare support fund which continues to operate, although funding ceased in 2013. The formation of the Exeter Community Wellbeing Hub strengthened the Council's ability to tap into a wealth of support within the City, in order to help residents, and this has been further enhanced by the recent creation of the Exeter Wellbeing Support Fund. The City Council previously put in place a One View of Debt approach to help people pay their bills realistically as well as other support mechanisms. The Council is doing everything it can to prevent this situation.

*Councillor Hannaford welcomed the tolerant ethos and climate within the Council and requested an update report to a future Scrutiny Committee.*

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 10.12 pm)

Chair

DRAFT