

## **REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 30 June 2022

Report of: The Director of Planning and Development

Title: The process for preparing the Exeter Plan: Community Engagement

### **Is this a Key Decision?**

No

### **Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Executive

### **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1. Following discussions with Members including at Planning Member Working Group, the report explains the community engagement process for preparing the Exeter Plan (the local plan).

### **2. Recommendations:**

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the content of the report and provide observations on the engagement process for the Exeter Plan.

### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

- 3.1. The discussion will provide useful input to shape future engagement processes organised for the Exeter Plan with a view to informing the delivery of high quality development and places.

### **4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources?**

- 4.1. Community engagement is an important part of the plan-making progress with various consultations being required by legislation. The report reflects the significant engagement activities proposed which will help to support the preparation of the Exeter Plan. Although additional specific engagement activity beyond that already planned is not detailed in the report, it should be noted that significant further public engagement would have implications in terms of staff time and expense.

## **5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

- 5.1. The report in itself contains no additional financial implications for Council to consider.

## **6. What are the legal aspects?**

- 6.1. This report summarises the consultation required as a minimum by the Town and Country Planning (Local Plan) (England) (Regulations 2012) in preparation for a new Local Plan for Exeter. How these consultations accord with the City Council's recently published Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (a statutory requirement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) are also set out. Additional steps being taken to consult members of the public which go above and beyond those statutory requirements are also set out.

## **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

- 7.1. This is an informative report giving Members the opportunity to make observations and noting the statutory requirements to be followed in formulating the Local Plan. The Deputy Monitoring Officer has no additional comments.  
Simon Copper (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

## **8. Report details**

### Introduction

- 8.1. The City Council is currently preparing a new local plan called the Exeter Plan. Community engagement is a key part of the plan-making process and therefore the Council is reviewing the engagement activities planned. This is also closely linked to the work on Liveable Exeter which is currently progressing via a number of work streams.

### The democratic process

- 8.2. The democratic process for progressing the Exeter Plan requires formal decisions at key milestones. Formal consultations require Executive approval while Council is required to approve the submission of the plan for examination by the Planning Inspectorate and the final adoption.
- 8.3. In addition, Planning Member Working Group receives updates on the progress being made in preparing the plan, evidence documents and plan content. The group is used as a sounding board for Members to discuss issues relating to planning policies and associated development projects.

### Statutory requirements and formal consultation

- 8.4. The process for preparing the Exeter Plan is strictly managed through legislation (the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Regulations 2012) which sets

out the need for consultation with specific groups at defined milestones in the preparation of the plan. These requirements are for consultation at an early stage in the process to define the scope of the plan and then once the plan has reached a final draft stage called publication.

- 8.5. The Council recognises the need to go beyond these requirements and therefore has already committed to organising three formal consultations on the preparation of the plan. In addition to the 'Issues' consultation which was held between September and November 2021, consultations will be held on a draft plan and a final publication draft in future. If at the Examination of the Plan the Inspector requires modifications, further consultation will also be held. The next formal consultation on the Exeter Plan is to be held in September of this year.

#### Informal engagement

- 8.6. In addition to the statutory consultations, further informal engagement will be undertaken on specific issues considered by the Exeter Plan. In many cases, these activities will be arranged in partnership with other Council departments or external partners. This approach enables the Council to make the most of opportunities to explore linkages between projects and also make best use of resources.
- 8.7. A key part of this will be through joint working with Liveable Exeter. As an example, the Council is currently working in partnership with the RAMM and Exeter Culture to stage workshops on the 'Future of the High Street' while a summer-long exhibition in the RAMM will be held to explain more about Liveable Exeter. These activities will be using Lego models and other interactive activities to engage in a different way. Also in July, the Council is launching a city-wide consultation on the 'Future Place' of Exeter, which will be asking local people about a vision for their future neighbourhoods and districts. This work will all feed into the Exeter Plan.

#### The Statement of Community Involvement and Consultation Charter

- 8.8. The way in which the Council will consult on the Exeter Plan is set out formally in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) – a statutory Council document. The Council has been working up a new SCI in the last year and the new document is scheduled to be considered for adoption by the Council in July. Although not a requirement, the Council held a consultation on the draft SCI last year.
- 8.9. The SCI provides a high-level framework for engagement and consultation on both planning policy preparation and planning applications. It sets out the need for a wide range of methods for consultation depending on the stage of work. This includes the use of both digital and in-person activities, methods for notifying interested people and specifically covers the need to involve under-represented groups. New ways of engaging innovatively and interactively are currently being investigated for the next round of the Exeter Plan consultation to be held in the autumn.
- 8.10. In addition to the SCI, the engagement activities planned for the Exeter Plan will also accord with the Council's Consultation Charter. This sets out a number of key

requirements for Council consultations relating to the visibility, accessibility, transparency, interpretation and publication of results from consultation activities. Following the Consultation Charter will help to improve the engagement of the community in the plan-making process.

### Summary

8.11. In summary, the process for preparing the Exeter Plan is clearly managed by a series of constitutional provisions to enable Member engagement in plan-making. This is supported by further statutory and local requirements to ensure community engagement. More informally, through links with the Liveable Exeter work streams, further engagement will be held to support the Exeter Plan. This will use varied and innovative ways to engage with the communities.

8.12. This discussion with Members will be helpful in forming future consultation activities to support the Exeter Plan as it progresses.

## **9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

9.1. The content of the report relates to three corporate priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan:

- Delivering Net Zero Exeter 2030;
- Promoting active and healthy lifestyles; and
- Building great neighbourhoods.

## **10. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)**

10.1. Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- Advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- Foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

10.2. In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

- 10.3. In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.
- 10.4. In making these recommendations no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report does not include specific proposals.

## **11. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications**

- 11.1. There are no direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations because the report does not include any specific proposals.

## **12. Are there any other options?**

- 12.1. There are no options for consideration because the report does not include any specific proposals.

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

Draft Statement of Community Involvement:

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Executive, 31/05/2022 17:30 \(exeter.gov.uk\)](#)

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