

# REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 6th October 2022

## PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

### COUNCILLOR RUTH WILLIAMS, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR RECYCLING, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND WATERWAYS

#### 1. Issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities

**Recycling and Waste** - Recruitment of qualified drivers continues to be problematic with respect to 7.5 tonne and 26 tonne refuse collection vehicles (RCVs), as is the case nationally. In order to maintain our statutory services, the garden waste collection service was suspended in August, and delays to the emptying of glass recycling banks and further roll out of food waste collection.

However the service has been embarking on an internal development programme giving opportunity to a number of staff within the service the opportunity to qualify as drivers. Whilst this is not a quick fix and completion of the various tests required can take a number of months, it will improve the number of drivers and business continuity of the service going forward.

The service has also revised the advert and requirements for the driver role to additional target those that may hold a relevant licence but have had a career break and/or do not have all the required parts of the licence in place. The service is seeking to attract those who are seeking part time or casual working, which will benefit the service in dealing with absence and give a greater business continuity going forward.

**The Exeter Port Authority** - still working towards compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code. Compliance with this code will give added protection to the Council in matters of maritime safety regarding both the river Exe and the Exeter Ship Canal. Currently the Council do not have the correct powers to manage the waterways effectively. To obtain the correct powers of Special and General Direction, a Harbour Revision Order needs to be sought through the Department for Transport. By having the correct powers the Council would be able to regulate the waters of the river and canal, make proper charges for harbour dues and have better control of anti-social behaviour afloat

#### 2. Update or commentary on any major ongoing programmes of work

**Recycling and Waste** - Continuance with the Electric Fleet programme is progressing well with the first three 26 tonne refuse collection vehicles (RCV) having gone operational in July, which is 20% of the fleet. These vehicles will each save up to 27,000kg of carbon per year and will be powered by the Council's own solar farm. Each of these vehicles will save 10,500 litres of diesel per year each, a total of a 1/4 million litres of diesel over their eight year lifespan. The aim is to replace all of our diesel RCVs with electric powered ones within the next six years, saving us 157,500 litres of diesel per year.

**Waterways** - The clearance of wrecks in the river continues, with eight wrecks have been removed in the last 12 months. Recently five wrecks were cleared in one 24 hour period at Topsham. It is a statutory obligation to remove wrecks that may become a hazard to navigation. The main navigation channel leading into the River Exe was moved at the start of the sailing season because the shifting nature of the sandbanks at the mouth of the river had blocked the marked channel. This work which needed seven navigation buoys to be moved was done in one day by

the team with the assistance of contractors. Surveys of the navigation channel are completed annually to indicate any changes. The Port of Exeter has now been awarded Historic Harbour status thanks to the work done by the Friends of the Exeter Ship Canal group.

The Exeter Canal and Quay Trust have commissioned a consultant to submit a routemap report on the potential of the Canal and Quay. The Trust have embarked on an ambitious plan to bring historic vessels up the canal and to the Quay for a festival at Easter 2023. Navigation buoyage in the river has now been extended as far as the M5 Motorway bridge. At Trew's Weir lagoon the build-up of accumulated driftwood has been cleared.

### **3. Issues that may impact : services delivery/financial performance/future budget requirements**

#### **Recycling and Waste -**

1. Recruitment of RCV drivers – as detailed above.
2. Inflationary increases to supplies and services which could have an impact on budgets.
3. Supply of new vehicles is becoming increasingly difficult due to manufacturers not accepting new orders or a significant wait for when vehicles can be supplied. This will have an impact on delivery across the Council, especially where specialised vehicles are required.

#### **Waterways -**

1. Currently we are looking to recruit a team member to work at the canal but without success so far. One other member of the team is off work recovering from surgery and in the meantime there is a casual worker to assist.
2. The infrastructure in the canal is aging and in particular the lock gates which control the water levels are in need of repair. Similarly, the banks of the canal are wearing down in places and will need shoring up and leak stopping to prevent erosion.

The craft that are used as part of the work to maintain the navigation aids in the river are not compliant with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency Code of Practice for workboats that we must have as part of the compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code. Currently, because the main vessel used for servicing the navigation aids outside of the river is not compliant with the code, contractors have to be brought in to carry out that work for us at considerable cost.

### **4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered**

#### **Waterways –**

Working towards compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code.

Obtain a Harbour Revision Order

### **5. Other matters the Portfolio Holder wishes to raise with the Scrutiny Committee**