

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 4 October 2022

CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 6 October 2022

Report of: Director Corporate Services

Title: Operation London Bridge - Expenditure

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

This reports sets out the details of an urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive and Growth Director, in consultation with the Director of Finance, the Leader of the Council and Chair of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee, relating to the expenditure on the Council's response to Operation London Bridge. The Constitution requires officers to present this to the next available meeting of the Executive for noting.

2. Recommendations:

That the Executive note the urgent decision.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 To comply with the Constitution, any decision which has been taken as a matter of urgency and which includes the incurring of expenditure, needs to be reported to the next available meeting of the Executive.

3.2 At the time of writing the report, expenditure of £31,000 had been incurred in the Council's response to Operation London Bridge.

3.3 The Chair of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee in agreeing to the urgency of the matter, has requested that a breakdown of the costs be presented to that Committee. This report will also therefore be considered at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 6th October 2022.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

A breakdown of the costs incurred is set out below. These costings do not include staff time.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 The costs set out in the report will be funded from the General Fund Balance. This will have only a small impact on the level of reserves available to protect the Council.

6. What are the legal aspects?

There are no identified legal issues.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

This report meets the constitutional requirements that urgent decisions need to be reported to the Executive at the earliest opportunity.

8. Report details:

8.1 As is the case with many other matters, plans have long been in place for the passing of the Monarch – these have been known as London Bridge.

8.2 Whilst not a mandatory requirement as to exactly what needs to be done to mark this occasion, there are many details within the Plan that all authorities need to follow – for example timetables for proclamations, flag raising/lowering etc.

8.3 Exeter's version of the London Bridge protocol has been developed over a number of years principally by the Lord Mayor's Support Officer as it is primarily seen as a civic responsibility. This has been developed in conjunction with many partner organisations across the City. These include:-

- The Lord Lieutenant of Devon's Office;
- The Dean of Exeter and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral;
- Exeter City Football Club;
- Exeter Chiefs Rugby Club;
- The University of Exeter; and
- The Police

8.4 However, and as can be expected, many other parts of the City Council are also included in these preparations to deal with their particular areas of responsibility. These include:-

- Communications;
- Arts and Events;
- Parks and Open Spaces; and
- Environmental Health & Community Safety.

8.5 When the announcement that Her Majesty the Queen had died was made late on 8th September 2022, these plans were immediately implemented in accordance with the timetable given, and preparations were made for:-

- The opening of Books of Condolence at The Guildhall, RAMM (as well as other locations across the City) as well as on-line from 8am the following day, and throughout the 10 days of the mourning period. It is noted that in the region of 4,000 signed the condolence book at the Guildhall, with a further 700 signing the book at the RAMM;

- Appropriate messages being posted on-line by the Lord Mayor and Leader of the Council on the evening of the announcement;
- The immediate lowering of union flags on all Council establishments, as well as the timetabling of other flag requirements at appropriate times in the mourning period;
- The announcement of the agreed location and arrangements for the laying of floral and other tributes by civic dignitaries, as well as the public;
- The local proclamation of the new Monarch on Sunday 11th September (attended by an estimated 2-3,000 people); and
- The public viewing of the state funeral on Monday 19th September – this was following national guidance aimed at keeping crowds away from London as much as possible (see paragraph 8.10 below).

8.6 Whilst plans for all of these (and many other elements) had been drawn up, and approval had been given as to the level of response the City should undertake, no budgetary provision had been made to cover the associated costs.

8.7 In accordance with the constitution, the Chief Executive and Growth Director, in conjunction with the Director of Finance, the Leader of the Council and Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee (in this case, Cllr Vizard as Chair of Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee) agreed for all necessary and reasonable costs to be incurred to meet the local requirements.

8.8 At the time of writing the report, these costs amount to some £31,000 which can be broken down into:-

Large screen hire for showing of the state funeral	£18,755
Security (for Cathedral Green during the mourning period, and Northernhay Gardens for the state funeral)	£3,520
Marquee for invited guests at Northernhay Gardens	£1,880
Temporary toilet provision at Northernhay Gardens	£1,725
Public address system at the proclamation	£1,565
First aid cover (for proclamation and state funeral)	£570
Other ancillary costs	£3,000

8.9 As stated in section 4 above, these costs do not take account of staff costs associated with City Council staff who implemented the protocol, or worked at any of the events.

8.10 As can be seen in 8.8 above, the vast majority of these costs were associated with the showing of the state funeral via a large screen in Northernhay Gardens. It is understood that Exeter was one of only a few authorities who undertook this commitment, particularly in the South West and it was pleasing to note that the public appreciated this with just over 1,000 people choosing to watch it together. Additional screenings were made available at St James' Park (estimated 150 viewing), Sandy Park (estimated 300 viewing) and the University of Exeter (estimated 450 viewing).

8.11 Due to this, the City became of local and national media interest, boosting the City's reputation and standing in the local community.

8.12 The level of public engagement shown for all of these events, recognises the hard work that many within the Council, as well as its partners in the City, put in to support Exeter's long tradition of delivering high standards of events.

8.13 It has also raised the issue about what will be expected of the City for King Charles III's coronation, once His Majesty has decided what he wants, as well as when it will take place, as a date has yet to be announced for that. It is suggested that appropriate budgetary provision be made at the earliest opportunity, so that plans can be tailored accordingly.

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

It ensures that the Council is a well-run Council.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

There are no risks associated with the proposals.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

13. Are there any other options?

None

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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