

REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 17th November 2022

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

COUNCILLOR Laura Wright, Deputy Leader and lead Cllr for Corporate Services, Arts & Culture

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

1. **One Exeter** – work is ongoing with this major work and I have been kept up to date by the Deputy Chief Executive. As well as transformation of services to improve customer service, work is ongoing with staff members and service leads on staff wellbeing and annual reviews.
2. **Medium Term Financial Plan.** The impact of the energy crisis on the Council combined with the pay award and increase in interest for borrowing continues to give a challenge for budget setting for the next three years. The work through One Exeter is contributing to the savings that need to be found and Portfolio Holders are all working with their Directors on investigating further potential savings. The impacts of any potential savings are being further investigated by Service Leads, SMB and Portfolio Holders. This work is ongoing and further feedback to all Members will take place early in the new year.

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

1. Work with our city's National Portfolio Organisations (NPO's) is underway following the announcement from Arts Council England last week as to their next 3-year funding. Five of our NPO's were successful in securing another three years of funding (with conditions). These are; the RAMM, the Northcott Theatre, Libraries Unlimited, Exeter Phoenix and our UNESCO City of Literature which is a new NPO. Whilst we are relieved and delighted that these five NPO's have received funding, one of our organisations, Theatre Alibi is now in a financial critical condition. We hope to work with the other NPO's to find ways to support. The other former NPO not to receive funding this year is Kaleider.
2. Working with Devon Housing Task Force (Leaders from across the eleven Devon authorities working strategically on the housing crisis in the SW), we have contributed to a letter sent to Rt Hon Michael Gove MP. In September we responded to the DCMS call for evidence on a licensing scheme for holiday lets, and are now working on an in depth piece of work on the housing crisis in the SW. This will look at housing of all tenures and provide statistical evidence of the situation we know we are experiencing in order to lobby the Government for support, recognition and funding in this area.

3. **Safer Streets and Safety of Women at Night:** I accompanied Mr Tony Cox and his son and daughter-in-law to a visit of the CCTV control room last week. The work that has been done in partnership with the University via the Safer Streets funding bids is incredibly impressive. New cameras and infrastructure and increased staffing are already showing positive changes in city centre safety and will continue to do so on a wider patch as more cameras are placed in the new year. A new 'safe space' is being launched in the city centre as part of the Safer Streets initiative.

4. **Police and Crime Commissioners Panel:** the last time this body met (In September) was to approve the appointment of the new Chief Constable for DCP, Will Kerr OBE. This was approved unanimously after a rigorous Q&A session with him. I raised the issue of trust in the Police following the Met Police force issues last year. The report that DCP has failed its inspection wasn't released until October. The next meeting is 24th November and discussion around the report will be on the Agenda. One of the reported failings of the force is around response to 111 and 999 calls. I continue to raise the issue around the ineffectual 111 reporting issues at almost every meeting and will do so again on the 24th.

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

1. Arts & Culture funding - service cuts across the board will have an impact on this area. Work is ongoing.
2. Democratic Services – the extra work and resources required to be ready for the May local elections due to now have photo ID requirements in place will have an impact upon service and budget. Council approved a £50k figure for these costs, which we hope will be re-imbursed by the Government but as yet, the percentage/figure of re-imburement is not specified.
3. As already mentioned in MTFP and One Exeter section, work is ongoing to find savings whilst balancing potential impact in all areas of service, including those within my own portfolios.

4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered

1. This work is currently ongoing with Directors and Service Leads.

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

1. Online Cllr training – a reminder that this is now available and email links have been sent.