

REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 22nd June 2023

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR PHIL BIALYK, LEADER

1. Issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities
<p>One Exeter - Since the appointment of the new Chief Executive there has been a shift in focus to deliver on the strategic priority of 'Leading a Well-Run Council'. This will focus on the core functions of the council and transformational work identified through the One Exeter programme. Going forward, the programme will be structured around the six pillars of Leading a Well-Run Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A balanced budget• Good governance• Value-for-money services• Customer-focussed services• Supported and developed staff and members• Well-managed assets <p>Over the next three months, an Improvement Plan will be developed around these six pillars and the Strategic Management Board will be accountable for the delivery of the plan.</p>
<p>Digital Customer Service Strategy – a draft strategy is nearing completion, which outlines our plans for excelling at customer and digital service and ensuring that customer needs guide how services are developed and delivered. This draft strategy will be going to public and partner consultation over the summer with a report back to Executive and Council in November. To improve our understanding of customer needs, we are working with external experts to learn how to utilise existing customer data and address any gaps in our understanding of our customers. This will allow us to ensure that service design, across all channels, takes into account the varied needs and experiences of users, including those who may face barriers to using digital services. With a director now taking a lead on digital and ICT we are working more collaboratively with partner councils and Strata and the full roll out of Microsoft 365 has now begun. This is a critical foundation for modernising our ICT systems.</p>
<p>Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) – A full update will be reported to Executive on 27th June 2023.</p>
<p>Embedding Net Zero in all services, planning and activity – The council has achieved Bronze Status through the Carbon Literacy Project, with 105 officers and councillors attending training, resulting in 46 achieving their Carbon Literacy Certificate. Net Zero Ambassadors meet on a regular basis to share learning & best practice on reducing carbon emissions within their own service and across the council. The Green Accord has re-launched to support Procurement and services in reducing their carbon emissions.</p>
<p>Exeter City Living - The shareholder representative has instigated a review of ECL with a view to sharing the outcome with members in the summer and bringing forward any appropriate proposals for consideration thereafter.</p>
<p>Exeter City Futures - The Exeter City Futures Board has resolved that the time is right for the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan to move to delivery by the founding partners collaborating to create a greener, healthier future for local communities. The Exeter City Futures Community Interest Company will close at the end of June and the goals will be delivered through the strategies of Exeter City Council, Devon County Council, the University of Exeter, Exeter College and the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.</p>

Exeter Development Fund – Southgate has been identified as a ‘flagship’ project and a stage 2 feasibility study is being commissioned. Consultants are developing a full business case.

Liveable Exeter - Six Liveable Exeter principles have been developed as tools to deliver outcomes of the Exeter Vision 2040. These principles are embedded in the draft Exeter Plan, which also identifies the 8 strategic Liveable Exeter sites where the majority of new homes will be built. Each of the principles are being developed into a design code for Water Lane as a pilot project. Work is continuing to progress each Liveable Exeter site as part of the Exeter Plan.

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

Corporate Plan – A review of the priorities and actions in the Corporate Plan will commence in July.

Risk management – The Strategic Management Board has completed a review of the council’s Risk Management Process to assess priorities in the corporate plan and ensure that appropriate risk mitigation is in place. A report will be presented to the next Executive and Audit & Governance committees which will outline the new process with an updated Corporate Risk Register being presented to members for agreement in September.

Devolution and the County Deal – In March, the Levelling Up Minister Dehenna Davidson gave written confirmation that the Government wishes to agree a landmark Devolution Deal with Devon, Plymouth and Torbay local government partners by the end of this calendar year, 2023. Joint work with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to finalise a draft Deal for formal consideration and approval by local authority partners is continuing. A members briefing on the Devolution Deal is being arranged.

Shared Prosperity Fund – Year one has focused on ‘Designing out Crime, replacing old analogue CCTV cameras for the city centre and the purchase or body-worn Cameras for officers engaged in enforcement. Confirmation of year two allocation awaited from Government.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - Following consultation, The CIL Examination will be held on 4th July for one day. When concluded, the new Charging Schedule can be implemented in the second half of 2023.

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

Economic outlook – An update will be included in the Medium Term Financial Plan report to Executive in June.

4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered

Council structure - The Local Government Association has completed its Decision Making Accountability review, which has assessed how and where decisions are made across the council and how this might be improved. The findings will inform the design of a new organisational structure.

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

Cost of living support given in 2022-23 - An extension to the Household Support Fund enabled the Council to give over £360k in support between 1 April 2022 and 30 September 2022 to low income households struggling with the increased costs of essential goods and services. A further £363k in funding was provided from October 2022 and directed to low income households. 44,061 households (£6.6m) have been supported through the Government’s Energy Bills Rebate. 1,452 households (£187,179) were supported through an additional discretionary scheme.