

SCRUTINY ECONOMY COMMITTEE

11 JUNE 2009

Sustainable Development and Transport Portfolio Programme for 2009/10

Long Term Spatial Strategy

As I previously reported, the key to a long term strategy for the City is the Secretary of State's decision on the Regional Spatial Strategy modifications. We are assured that these will be published at the end of June and based on her recent decision re the South East Regional Spatial Strategy, we might expect the South West's allocation to be towards the upper end of the range. If that is the case, the City will face a very challenging prospect of finding space for up to 15,000 dwellings within the City's existing boundaries. We will bring forward a revised Core Strategy by the end of this year and seek public views on that Strategy. In the length of time needed to take this through the approvals process, the Council will have to consider, during the latter part of this year, what interim measures it should take to ensure that a five year housing land supply is maintained.

The New Growth Point

Despite the impact of the recession on the housing market, progress is being made on the key projects which are being led by the New Growth Point. Given the combination of confirmed funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Department for Transport, the Homes and Communities Agency and the three local authorities, it is very likely that the infrastructure that is needed for these projects will be delivered over the next two years or so. The infrastructure enhancements include the passing loop at Axminster (to provide hourly train services to Exeter), the Clyst Honiton Bypass, the main local route at Cranbrook, the enhancement to Junctions 29 and 30 and a new Walking/Cycling Bridge over the M5 between Gypsy Hill and the Science Park. Negotiations continue with the New Community Partners on key funding issues; the County Council has announced its joint venture partner for Skypark; and the Science Park is likely to see the construction of the first building starting on site in 2010.

Affordable Housing

As previously outlined, we will include the enhanced 35% standard and the lower threshold in the revised Core Strategy to be published later this year. Achievement of full provision on each development will still be critically dependent on sufficient central government funding.

Climate Change

Research which was commissioned by the New Growth Point has highlighted the scope for, and costs of, delivering low and zero carbon development. The scope for Combined Heat and Power is being assessed as part of the delivery of the various projects in the New Growth Point.

Bus Station Site

We continue to work on the background studies for preparing a Master Plan for the Bus Station which include a Transportation Study, a Parking Study and an Archaeological Evaluation. This work will be completed in late 2009 enabling a full Master Plan to be prepared during 2010. It remains a commitment to provide a high quality public transport interchange at the heart of a mixed use, commercial scheme.

City Centre Enhancements

We have recently completed the re-paving of Martin's Lane and we are now developing proposals for the Gandy Street area. Following this work, we are looking at the Fore Street/North Street/South Street area that needs to be planned in conjunction with proposals for the High Quality Public Transport project on which Devon County Council are leading.

Pedestrian Signing in the City Centre

I am pleased to draw Members' attention to the completion of this very high quality scheme which has replaced the old finger posting system which was nearly 30 years old. It is a much more extensive, high quality signing system for pedestrians across the whole of the City centre. This work was completed in the early Spring and we are now installing City centre plans in our car parks.

Cowick Street Enhancement

Having completed work at Heavitree Fore Street we are keen to see a range of enhancements at Cowick Street and consultation on a number of options was completed before Easter. I am expecting to see detailed proposals put before Planning Member Working Group very shortly for implementation in 2010.

Long Term Transportation Strategy

We will continue to work with the County Council to find a package of measures that will limit the growth in car traffic and ensure reasonable air quality. We welcome the County Council's commitment to expand Park and Ride and we are working with them on the development of their High Quality Public Transport proposals. I continue to believe that the interests of the City centre are best served by effective traffic management which puts pedestrians and shoppers ahead of the convenience of motorists. We want to work with the County Council to ensure that this is achieved.

Concessionary Travel

This continues to be of very significant concern for the Council in that we have incurred costs in excess of £1.3 million during 2008/09, over and above the grant aid provided by government. In the current year we expect this cost to increase to £1.67 million, and thus we are engaged in continuing lobbying efforts to change the system in the longer term, but more crucially, to amend the grant formula in 2010/11 to overcome the inequity whereby there are some ten authorities with deficits in excess of £1 million and there are many other authorities who are receiving grant in situations where their costs have declined from previous years.

I am also pleased to say that we are about to sign the agreement with Stagecoach which caps the Council's liability for reimbursing the cost of the scheme to Stagecoach in return for a three year deal. In the light of two other authorities where Stagecoach have successfully appealed against the established reimbursement rate, this looks like a good outcome for Exeter.

Civil Parking Enforcement

The Council assumed responsibility for on-street parking enforcement in May 2008 and since then has been developing the service in response to the priorities of the County Council (as highway authority) and local residents. The response to the Council's running of the service has been largely favourable and there is ongoing dialogue between the service, the County Council and local residents on how further improvements can be delivered in the current year. One of the particular aspects of the service I hope to see developed in the coming year is extended evening enforcement.

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