

## **STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

21 September 2023

### **Present:**

Councillor Councillor Yvonne Atkinson (Chair)  
Councillors Mitchell, M, Asvachin, Ketchin, Knott, Leadbetter, Moore, D, Read, Snow and Vizard

### **Apologies:**

Councillors Allcock, Branston and Williams, M

### **Also present:**

Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management, Service Lead Net Zero & Business,  
Assistant Service Lead – Local Plan and Democratic Services Officer (SLS)

### **In attendance:**

Councillor Bialyk	Leader
Councillor Morse	Portfolio Holder City Development
Councillor Parkhouse	Portfolio Holder Climate and Ecological Crisis
Councillor Wood	Portfolio Holder Leisure Services and Physical Activity
Councillor Wright	Portfolio Holder Culture, and City Centre Strategy

### **59 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2023 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

### **60 Declaration of Interest**

Councillor Ketchin declared a Discloseable Pecuniary Interest, as in submitting a question under Minute 62 (Questions from Members to the Portfolio Holder), he inadvertently had an interest as the intended response included a reference to his place of work. He withdrew from the room for this item whilst the matter was discussed.

### **61 Questions from Members of the Public Under Standing Order No.19**

No questions from members of the public were received.

### **62 Questions from Members of the Council Under Standing Order No.20**

In accordance with Standing Order No.20 a number of questions were submitted and circulated in advance to Portfolio Holders, and asked at the meeting. The questions were grouped together and set out in bold and responses in italics as below -

#### **Questions to the Portfolio Holder Climate and Ecological Crisis Councillor Parkhouse**

#### **Councillor M Mitchell**

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm whether she was asked to submit a Portfolio Holder Report to this Committee Meeting, and if so why has no report been submitted for scrutiny.

*The report covering her Portfolio would have included much of the information in the Net Zero six monthly update. There was also a report being presented to the October meeting of the Executive that relates to much of her portfolio area.*

### **Supplementary Comment and Response**

The was disappointment that a report had not been produced, which would help the Committee in assisting the Portfolio Holder as well as the Executive in relation to portfolio matters.

*In my previous portfolio of Leisure and Physical Activity there had been a delay in reporting but she was happy to come back to a future meeting in a following month. The deferral was in relation to the timing of this meeting and she understood that it had not been possible to seek a report from another Portfolio Holder for this meeting.*

### **Councillor Moore**

The City needs to have a renewed focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and have a serious dialogue about the need to and adapt to the impact of climate change - with deep consideration to the impacts on our people - especially in light of the widening inequality in the city and the impact on the local environment - both on land and water.

How do you think the work on Net Zero as a city can be made more transparent and accountable?

### **Response**

*A report on city wide Net Zero is being brought to the Executive in October and that is the appropriate forum for this to be discussed.*

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

Do you have a view on how work on the city wide Net Zero can be made more transparent and accountable?

*It was premature to have that discussion and after the report to the Executive there will be the opportunity to have a more informed discussion.*

Do you view the Exeter Net Zero 2030 plan is fit for purpose, covering both carbon reduction, adaptation actions and giving consideration of the impacts on the most vulnerable and least well off in the city?

### **Response**

*The Exeter Net Zero 2030 provides a roadmap to reduce city wide carbon emissions with many of the recommendations and actions still really relevant to the city. It was designed in consultation with residents and councillors through a consultation process. A report on city wide Net Zero is being brought to the Executive in October where the Net Zero city ambitions will be discussed. She added that as with every document it should be made more of a living document, it was written during the Covid pandemic, and it does lack that adaptation.*

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

The roadmap was adopted at the start of the Covid outbreak and the follow up event and consultation was not able to take place. There was also no detailed analysis of this. Will you ensure that the document is updated and fit for purpose?

*At the moment, there is work taking place on what the next step will be, in respect of the city wide Net Zero Strategy and this document will certainly be considered as part of that.*

The Climate Change Committee have highlighted the importance of understanding risk. Do you think the city needs a risk register - covering both mitigation and adaptation - which will then inform policy and investment decisions?

### **Response**

*The Devon Climate Emergency produced a Climate Change Risk Register for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The risk register identified a range of climate impacts that the South West is facing, and scored them depending on their likelihood and potential impact. RSK environmental consultants were appointed to work with the Devon Climate Emergency team to progress an Adaptation Strategy covering Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and we are a part of this work.*

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

The Met Office produced an analysis of risks including Exeter and being part of the wider more strategic work, do you feel that there is a need for an understanding locally, particularly as there has been recent extreme weather and heavy rain that almost flooded houses. So in terms of the need to understand the implications for Exeter would the Portfolio Holder agree?

*There had been an extreme variance in the weather and it was important to look at this in terms of a Net Zero Strategy for the city, and moving forward there may need to be consideration to look at this more locally.*

What can you do as Portfolio Holder to support accurate and transparent information about the City's work on climate change and communicate the implications of the science and the necessity for action?"

### **Response**

*As part of what is coming next in terms of Net Zero for the city, she would discuss this at an Executive level and with the Chief Executive and Senior Management team.*

### **Councillor Read**

Will Councillor Parkhouse be able to meet with Members of the Progressive Group to discuss Net Zero matters?

### **Response**

*Councillor Parkhouse suggested that once more proposals were formulated she would be happy to meet.*

## **Questions to the Leader – Councillor Bialyk**

### **Councillor Read**

“Embedding Net Zero in all services and planning activity was an ambitious plan and as a local authority powers in relation to Net Zero were minimal. Exeter City Futures was being wound down, but Exeter still intended to work with a number of partners including the University of Exeter. The Council had signed up to a Civic University agreement and there was a meeting with the Vice Chancellor”. Assuming this meeting has happened when is the report from it to be published? What was the outcome of how the work will be taken forward and will there be coordination with the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (RD&E) who are also making significant proposals to meet Net Zero.

### **Response**

*The City Council was a member of the Civic University Partnership Board, together with representatives including Chris Tiedeman from the NHS, John Laramy Exeter College and Lisa Roberts from the University. They were working on a number of work streams including Net Zero. The Civic Partnership had been in place for a year with discussions reflecting the principles that were adopted with partners in the city. He had agreed with the Vice Chancellor to make a report to the Executive, and he was happy to provide an update on the work being carried out by the Partnership to the Scrutiny Committee.*

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

Was there any news in relation to the RD&E Hospital?

*The RD&E Hospital are one of the key partners and institutions that the Partnership hope to work with, but he was not aware of the relationship with the Partnership Agreement. They attend the meetings but perhaps that is a question of the NHS Trust. The Director Net Zero confirmed that officers liaised with the University, College and the RD&E Hospital very closely including on the proposals for a District Heating Network. He meets with both the Sustainability Leads and Directors to consider ways to work collaboratively. A further debate on Net Zero would be appropriate to see how the proposals post Exeter City Futures affect the City Council have been discussed at the Executive. The Council continued to work on a number of large collaborative projects.*

“Exeter City Living (ECL) had no targets for social and affordable housing. The Chief Executive stated that the Council have set a target for the delivery of 500 homes over 10 years and significant progress has been made in that area, but it was not for ECL to determine how the Council delivered social or affordable housing.”

Given the target of Exeter City Council (ECC) to build 500 council homes over 10 years (commitment in 2020), is ECL the best delivery mechanism, given that it does not propose to build affordable homes, and therefore not propose to build the “balanced communities” that ECC states its target is to provide.

### **Response**

*The delivery of 500 homes for social and affordable housing are part of a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) commitment and ECL were not responsible for delivering the Council's Affordable Housing. A list of those projects coming forward through the HRA was previously presented to the Executive.*

## **Supplementary Question and Response**

How does that relate to the City Council's policy to build balanced communities if there are major new developments if no affordable housing was included.

*The 500 homes to be built under the HRA will be affordable rented homes and not for private rent. Exeter City Living were like any other developer and Planning Committee and officers would always seek a 35% affordable housing allocation or what was viable. The question of a balanced community was not linked to the 500 homes.*

## **Questions to the Portfolio Holder City Development – Councillor Morse**

### **Councillor Moore**

Has the local Plan team agreed to progress the recommendation of the Customer Focus Committee in December 2022 for the Local Plan team to lead the production of a biodiversity status report, nature recovery plan and tree canopy cover action plan to be included within the Local Plan?

### **Response**

*The Local Plans team has reviewed this recommendation. These pieces of work link closely to other projects which are covered elsewhere. Devon County Council has now been confirmed as the lead authority for the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy which will identify networks of ecological importance for improvement in future. The Council, including the City Development Team, is feeding into this work. A specific aim of this piece of work is to provide a strategic view on local ecology to inform the local planning process. This project effectively covers the suggested need for a biodiversity status report and nature recovery plan. The emerging Exeter Plan will include a suite of policies on the natural environment. In terms of tree canopy, this topic is covered in other studies. The Council is providing input into the preparation of a Devon Tree Strategy whilst work on a Tree and Woodland Strategy is underway. The Council has already set out a corporate goal of 30% tree canopy cover. This aspiration will be translated into policy in the emerging Exeter Plan.*

It was noted that a question had been received from Councillor Ketchin, and in noting the anticipated response from Councillor Morse, Portfolio Holder for City Development that this would raise a Declaration of Interest for him in relation to his place of work. He withdrew from the room only whilst the question was asked and answered. Councillor Moore asked the question at the meeting.

In response to enquiries by the St David's ward Councillors it has been confirmed that the Section 106 agreements have been agreed with the developer of the Clarence Hotel so planning permission can be granted. Please can you present the details of those agreements -

### **Response**

*The Section 106 agreement in relation to the Royal Clarence Hotel has now been completed and the planning permission has been issued. In summary, the obligations are as follows:*

- *Prior to the occupation of 23 (i.e. the last residential unit) pay:*
- *£13,425 towards patient space at local GP surgeries.*

- £22,661 to provide additional healthcare services at Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.
- £2,173,238.07 affordable housing financial contribution.

*These contributions are subject to a deferred contributions mechanism. Three months after practical completion, the developer will be required to submit viability information to us. Depending on profits, build costs etc. will depend on how much money will be available for the health contributions and then if there is still money left over – affordable housing. The detail of this mechanism is set out in the Section 106 Agreement.*

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

Are the negotiations about the ramp over the cobbles between the shop and Cathedral Close to make the area more accessible proceeding?.

#### **Response**

*A response would be obtained for the Member.*

Could you explain when you expect work to start onsite?

#### **Response**

*At present there was no further details on when the applicant intends to commence the development.*

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

Would the Council consider using a notice of works to ensure that the work will progress and not have the building deteriorate further.

*Both the Leader and she were aware of how important this building is and to get the Cathedral Green back but she was not able to guarantee when the works will commence.*

### **Councillor Ketchin**

Reports in the media and residents refer to the haste to complete the Gorge development for the start of the University term. This development was principally Co Living accommodation and not a Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA). He asked if the City Council would consider carrying out an audit and publish the habitation statistics for the Gorge in the first year of occupation.

#### **Response**

*Councillor Morse invited the Assistant Service Lead (Local Plan) to contribute to the response. The Assistant Service Lead (Local Plan) would ask the Principal Project Manager (Local Plan) who said that the Gorge development had been completed and that monitoring could be carried out by the wider Planning team in terms of habitation information, and to assess the information that we may wish to secure.*

## **Supplementary Question and Response**

He wished to propose that an audit of occupation be carried out, and if it showed that the predominant resident pattern was students, would the Council reconsider the recent changes to CIL, to group Co Living with PBSA accommodation.

### **Response**

*A review of the CIL charging schedule was part of a long process. This could be looked at in the future, if it becomes more of an issue.*

*The Leader added that he understood Councillor Ketchin's concerns and his comments on the CIL rates for Co Living and PBSA accommodation. Any assessment of the CIL schedule would have been made at a point in time.*

*The Assistant Service Lead (Local Plan) provided an explanation of the CIL charging regime and for Co Living, the regular CIL rate would apply. There were now different rates of CIL contributions for Co Living, but consideration had to be given to PBSA, Section 106 and Affordable Housing contributions which would all have an effect on the rate paid. The delivery of PBSA was monitored.*

*Councillor Morse acknowledged the proposal and advised it was for the Executive to consider that request.*

*Councillor Ketchin moved a request for an audit of Co Living accommodation to establish if there was a pattern of occupation that was beginning to occur. Councillor Morse suggested that an audit would be possible, but that the Leader oversaw the CIL charging regime.*

*The proposal was seconded and following a vote was carried.*

### **Councillor M Mitchell**

If the occupation of a Co-living developments was entirely occupied by students and they were claiming a council tax exemption, was the development still classed as a Co-Living development.

### **Response**

*Councillor Morse would obtain a written reply.*

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holders for attending the meeting.

## **63 Ethical and Low Carbon Advertising: Planning policy considerations**

The Chair advised that further consideration of the financial implications was required by SMB of any change in the policy relating to the Council's digital equipment. It was suggested the report be presented to the March meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

The Assistant Service Lead (Local Plan) referred to discussion at the June meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on corporate advertising matters. This report considers planning policy in relation to advertisements and consents and the scope of the emerging Exeter Plan policy relating to advertisements. The City Council determine planning applications relating to advertisement consent, but it is subject to specific and limited planning legislation on public safety and the effect on amenity.

In the existing adopted Local Plan First Review, a policy covers advertising consent. The emerging Exeter Local Plan will include a follow up policy which will replace the content of the current plan. The draft policy is proposed to consider location, scale, materials and lighting as well as the characteristics of historic buildings and the amenity factor. In relation to public safety, the highway network, the transport network and security systems could all be considered. Consultation on the Exeter Plan will take place in the autumn and will include the draft policy on advertising consent for comment.

The Assistant Service Lead (Local Plan) responded to Members' comments in the following terms:-

- the current policy in relation to the frequency or cumulative impact of advertising is not specifically mentioned, but should be implicit in terms of the scale, location and materials.
- he had no information in relation to the bus shelter contract as this is not a planning matter, but he was aware that it was separately managed by Devon County Council and involved the City Council. He would check to establish if some bus shelters required planning permission and, similarly, whether some adverts may or may not require planning consent.
- the Exeter Plan could in future provide more information in relation to the style of lighting, down lighting or glare, and that was a legitimate consideration in terms of amenity.
- the scope of advertising stops in terms of the nature of the product being advertised, and the planning system could not control the product which was being advertised.
- the current policy does not just relate to the city centre but could be applied across the city. The location and proximity to vulnerable groupings could be a consideration.
- the policy should not be too prescriptive. Many councils do not have a policy because the controls to advertising are set out so strictly at a national planning level.
- consideration of the impact of advertisements would differ depending on the hierarchy of the listed building. Impacts on non-listed buildings would still be a consideration in terms of the wider heritage factor.
- the sustainability appraisal was also part of a wide ranging assessment of the draft policies including advertising, but not on the number of digital advertisements that appear in the course of the Plan period. It includes carbon and many other sustainability indicators.
- Illuminated adverts would be a consideration in relation to amenity.

The Chair responded to a Member's question and confirmed that there was no break clause in the contract with the County Council contract, but they did have to comply with highway and planning requirements. The arrangements did include two free bus shelters in the city a year.

The Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management, responded to a Member and undertook to ask the City Surveyor about the criteria and positioning of illuminated bus shelters.

A Member sought clarification on the process in relation to the report and referred to the previous suggestion of a Spotlight Review to consider any feedback on the policy. The Chair referred to the Director's report on the Advertising Policy and stated that SMB would consider the financial implications relating to the Council's digital equipment and so negate the need for a Spotlight Review. Councillor Morse as



Portfolio Holder for City Development also confirmed she would liaise with the Assistant Service Lead (Local Plan) in relation to the planning policy matters in the Local Plan.

Strategic Scrutiny Committee noted the report having discussed the scope of a potential advertisement policy for the emerging Exeter Plan.

64 **Working Towards Net Zero - Exeter City Council's Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Plan**

The Service Lead Net Zero and Business presented the six monthly update on the work of the Net Zero Team to reduce the City Council's carbon emissions and delivery of the City Council's Carbon Reduction Plan, working toward the 2030 target. The updated Carbon Reduction Action Plan (v3.0) contained a combination of actions set out in the City Council's Achieving Net Zero Report (2022), and further corporate decarbonisation measures in progress across the Council. The report also included an update of the City Council's latest Carbon Footprint and GHG Inventory results for 2021/22. The Action Plan was used as the team's work programme. Of note was the 6% reduction of 2,000 tonnes of co2 on the previous year.

The following work and projects were highlighted:-

- the relaunch of the environmental accreditation scheme, Green Accord to help the business community reduce their own carbon emissions. The Green Accord has been adopted by the UK Business Climate Hub and are working with Devon LA's for adoption across the county.
- the team continue to support a number of groups in respect of the Devon Climate Emergency sharing best practice with other public sector organisations across the County.
- carbon literacy training continues to be rolled out for officers and Members, and will mandatory for members.
- an electric vehicle strategy was being developed for the Council to enable a bid for funding to install EV charging points in the Council's car parks from the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund (LEVI). Funding is through Tier 1 LA's and is part of a collaborative county wide project.
- the South West Energy and Environment Group (SWEEDG) have helped with a solar survey assessing 13 Council properties for the installation of solar panels, thereby offering energy security and reduced energy bills.
- a proposed study to understand the costs of achieving Net Zero by 2030 across the organisation is being commissioned. The Council will require additional external funding from either private investment, Central Government or any other sources.
- the Portfolio Holder and the Net Zero Manager had visited Bristol City Council to share best practice in relation to Net Zero.
- £6.4 million funding had been secured from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund for the RAMM and the Riverside Leisure Centre, contractors have been commissioned to carry out the work.
- the Housing Team have been successful in achieving a Green Homes grant to continue to retrofit homes around the city.
- a bid for funding from Sport England in support of the energy efficiency of swimming pools was due to open soon.

The Service Lead Net Zero and Business responded to the following questions from Councillors Read and Moore which had been submitted in advance:-

#### Questions from Councillor Read

A Government grant of £1.49m via the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund has been secured for 2023 through to 2025. The funding award represents 43% of the estimated retrofit costs, with the remaining 57% of £1.998m funded by the City Council. Assuming this is all spent on retrofitting the Council housing stock, what percentage of the stock will then be successfully retrofitted after this money is all spent? Will it all be spent by end 2025?

#### **Response**

*A match funding grant from the City Council would enable a further 245 properties to be retrofitted. It was estimated that 20% of the housing stock would then have been fully retrofitted. It was a condition of the current grant award that the delivery window of April 2023 to March 2025 was met, with all of this allocation of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund grant being spent by then. However, the Council Housing retrofit programme will continue beyond 2025, funded by Housing Revenue Account resources and supplemented with other grant funding if this can be secured.*

Can we be sure that the new EV charging policy adopted will require all EV charging stations to be built out from the pavement and not restricting the pavements?

#### **Response**

*In respect of the Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy and funding, the City Council will be identifying suitable locations, but primarily they will be located in the Council's car parks across the city. On-street charging points are the responsibility of Devon County Council, discussions ongoing in regards to city and county wide locations.. She would speak to colleagues at Devon County Council about their location.*

*£238,435 has been spent from the £1m one off net zero budget. Budget has been committed for City Council Net Zero, which includes temporary staffing (two officers), SWEEG membership for an additional three years, feasibility studies, Carbon Literacy training and solar infrastructure maintenance"*

Why has so little of this budget been spent? How can the city reach Net Zero if the budget is not spent? What is the rest of the budget allocated for within the net zero project? Has this been scoped for? When will it be spent?

#### **Response**

*The one off £1m Net Zero budget is programmed to last four years, and the Council has just completed Year 1. The Net Zero team were constantly seeking external funding opportunities to support the delivery of the action plan, which on occasion, enables the one off budget not to be utilised. This enables the budget to last beyond the four years, or to deliver additional activity.*

In response to an additional question on the budget scope, it would be allocated for two temporary members of staff, for the next three years. The one off budget will also be used as an enabling fund to allow the team to seek additional external funding and utilise some of the budget for the delivery of small scale projects.

#### Questions from Councillor Moore

Direct emissions and removals from Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) - why are these excluded from the calculation given that many of the Council's parks are built on landfill sites and the methane off gassing has to be managed? Is the methane being measured.

## Response

*In calculating the City Council's carbon emissions, SWEED have not been made aware of any managed landfill sites or methane on any City Council owned land. If there are any, and the data is available, then of course it can be included – this will be looked into immediately.*

In terms of the report in relation to the District Heating Network Energy Indirect emissions from consumed energy imported through a physical network are excluded from the assessment - so does this mean that energy from any district heating won't be considered? If so why that is considered a mitigation in the Carbon Reduction Plan?

## Response

*There are no Exeter City Council properties currently fed by a District Heating Network. If in the future, there is the opportunity to connect to a District Heating Network, this will be investigated. .*

Are all the Council's corporate property ownership included? [as these will need to be upgraded to a C to comply with legislation]

## Response

*City Council commercial properties that are leased, are not currently included. As EPC rating data is available for commercial property, we will be able to include carbon emissions going forward. This is the same with the Council's housing stock.*

How is renewable energy considered an offset given that the electricity network is not going to be net zero until at least 2040.

## Response

*It is how the electricity generated by the City Council's solar panel is accounted for by the energy provider (off-taker).*

Why is tree planting work not considered an offset and are there any other nature based solutions on land or in water under the control of the Council that could be identified for offsetting?

## Response

*The Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management, offered a response and will look at opportunities for tree planting on City Council land. He referred to Northbrook, and consideration at a planting scheme, which once agreed, can be used as an offset. Tree planting needs to reach maturity before it is useful as offsetting, and to offset the current level of carbon would need to cover many of our parks with trees. The Council are working with the Wildlife Trust to look at opportunities on Council sites to strike a balance between offering an amenity, protecting the biodiversity and carbon offsetting.*

The Portfolio Holder Climate and Ecological Crisis responded to the following Members' enquiries:-

- the launch of the Council's solar farm, which has 3,700 panels, generates 1.2mw of energy, and an additional 2mw of storage. This is used to charge

electric vehicles with unused energy sent back to the grid. It will support the rolling out of the electrification of the Council's fleet of refuse vehicles. The project has been shortlisted for three national awards.

- a recent visit to Bristol City Council with the Net Zero Project Manager was very successful. Bristol CC were working with Bristol City Leap and a renewable energy company called Ameresco to attract external funding. There had been an opportunity to talk to their officers and also City Council Portfolio Holders in her role.

The Service Lead Net Zero and Business responded to the following Members comments:-

- Members would be contacted over a proposed open day for the Solar Farm.
- the retrofitting of social housing aims to reduce the Council's carbon emissions. The Service Lead responsible will be submitting an article for the forthcoming Scrutiny Bulletin and provide more information on the work of the team. The Director also referred to the challenging financial constraint of retrofitting 5,000 properties and progression and completion of the project will be dependent on that. He agreed with a point raised by the Chair, in relation to the skills shortage and wider skills shortage of suitable staff across the country.
- Exeter College's Green Construction Advisory Panel were leading on training and skills development to support retrofit activity, the Service Lead was engaged with that work. She agreed with a Member's suggestion of taking any opportunities to share awareness of the work being carried out by neighbouring local authorities to retrofit their social housing stock.
- a figure of the City Council's carbon footprint as a contribution to the city was provided and is 7.7%. 2019 is the last city wide carbon emissions report that was produced, so this is the best year to do a comparable comparison. 2019 City wide carbon emissions – 476,221 co2 t and City Council carbon emissions – 37,095 co2 t.
- work was being commissioned to identify the total financial figure needed to achieve Net Zero 2030.
- the Net Zero team were looking at alternative funding sources to reduce carbon emissions in social housing through retrofitting. Other than through the Government, and would need to bring that forward to SMB and through the Committee process.
- she thanked a Member for the information relating to the Deep Green contact and they had contacted her to collect data on the energy generated from the data centre in the Civic Centre, and the energy consumed from the leisure centres and exploring the possibility of a data centre on location.

Due to the ongoing work and study that was about to be commissioned on identifying the costs of delivering Net Zero 2030, Members agreed to remove the last sentence of the fourth recommendation "From current resources available, Members debate the City Council's 2030 net target".

Strategic Scrutiny Committee noted the following:-

- (1) Members acknowledge progress made in the Carbon Reduction Plan, the results of the most recent carbon footprint report and the scale of the challenge ahead;
- (2) that the Carbon Reduction Plan is an evolving 'live' document, and continues to be reviewed on a six monthly basis to monitor progress, and evaluate actions needed to deliver net zero in what is a fast changing environment;

- (3) Members acknowledge the priority ranking of high, moderate and low that has been added to the Reduction Plan to reflect the greatest potential reduction towards the Net Zero goal; and
- (4) to deliver Net Zero for the City Council by 2030 will require a significant increase in financial investment and operational capacity internally, from Government at a regional and national level and potentially from private investment.

## 65 **Progress Report Shared Prosperity Fund - Update 3**

The Service Lead Net Zero & Business presented a six monthly update for Members on Exeter's Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocation, which supports Building Pride in Place and Increasing Life Chances in Exeter. The report included an update of the original allocation of £1.4 million awarded from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC). Shortlisting had taken place for a Project Manager for this Fund, the post being funded from the allocation awarded for administration and management. It was anticipated the post would be filled very soon.

A number of projects had been delayed as Year 1 funding was only signed off earlier in the summer, and DHLUC had agreed that a balance of the Year 1 award could be carried over. Projects were delivered in house, and contracted externally with appropriate service level agreements. Years 1 and 2 projects were noted:-

- a Year 1 project had focused on purchasing the digital CCTV cameras and body worn video cameras for the Council's civil enforcement officers, as part of the DHLUC intervention Design out Crime.
- Year 2 projects included a new level of Business Support which was due to be launched and a 'Greening Your Business' supporting a review of the energy approach by business.

The following responses were given to Members' comments:-

- some residual budget from a previous year support a number of roles in the project.
- in comparison to former European funding streams, she advised that funding levels compared with European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) and from the European Social Fund (ESF) was considerably less. Funding was a competitive process and required a particular skills set.
- of the £1.4 million, 4% was allocated for administration.
- invitation for bids for the Shared Prosperity Fund to support delivering the levelling up agenda for Exeter was made during three consultation sessions which took place on line during Covid. A number of organisations across the city were invited to submit bids. The funding criteria from DHLUC is very prescriptive but any underspend from this year would be used to approach unsuccessful bids. Although not confirmed, if there will be a further SPF programme, it was more likely to form part of the Devolution deal around Devon and be administrated through the County Council/Combined Authority.
- she would check in relation to the information collected on carbon and social inclusion as such outcomes were part of the Service Level Agreement detail to be reported to DHLUC.

Strategic Scrutiny Committee noted the progress made in delivering Exeter's Shared Prosperity Fund in Exeter and for a further report to be made in six months' time.

## **Annual Scrutiny Report**

The Chair, in the absence of the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board, presented the report which offered an annual update in respect of the progress and work of Scrutiny over the municipal year for 2022 – 2023. It was important to ensure there was the opportunity for Members of Scrutiny to set the work programme which could be done through the submission of scrutiny proposals (scrutiny proforma). The administrative process of the proformas received would continue to be forwarded to SMB for comment, with a review by the Scrutiny Programme Board to ensure timely programming.

Members made the following comments:-

- the Annual report should be considered as a live document rather than just a record of the activity. Further information such as the work and outcomes of any Task and Finish or working groups should be included as a separate entry or detailed in an appendix to see the scope of work carried out. The Homelessness Review was a particularly successful example of such work.
- the outcome of three historic scrutiny proposals on the subjects of Healthy Homes, Local Plan and aspects of the Air Quality Action Plan was raised. The importance of a transparent monitoring process with feedback given to the proposer was discussed. (The Member was advised that an update at future Scrutiny Committees would be made on the Healthy Homes and Local Plan topics. The Member was invited to review the proposals relating to Air Quality).
- that the connective external bodies and partners of the individual Scrutiny Committee should be reviewed on at least an annual basis to ensure they were still appropriate and operating.

Strategic Scrutiny Committee noted the Annual Scrutiny Report 2022-2023 which would be presented to Executive to note and to recommend to Council to approve.

## **Scrutiny Work Plan and Forward Plan of Business**

Members discussed the Forward Plan and updated business on the draft Scrutiny Work Plan with notable changes being the Live and Move Strategy to the November meeting. An invitation was also extended to the Portfolio Holder for Climate and Ecological Crisis to attend the November meeting.

Councillor Moore wished to propose a working group to discuss a draft terms of reference document that she had put together to bring back to the Scrutiny Committee in respect of a Climate Change Sub Committee. She commended the work of the Service Lead Net Zero and her team and stressed that the discussion should centre on consideration of the city wide work and options for resourcing and not of the City Council's work.

The Chair referred to the status of the Standing Overview Group which had been proposed at a previous meeting of this Scrutiny Committee, and referred to it as a model more commonly used by the County Council as a limited information gathering group. She suggested that following an impending report to the Executive on the demise of Exeter City Futures that the Portfolio Holder for Climate and Ecological Crisis be asked to attend the November Scrutiny meeting to discuss the merits of a city wide scrutiny of net zero work with other partners.

Members had a rigorous discussion on the status of the Standing Overview Group and of the proposals to re-engage this discussion.

Councillor Mitchell suggested that the Standing Overview Group was in effect a Sub Committee, but that the direction of the Council had changed in the intervening time particularly with the end of Exeter City Futures. It was important for the City Council to take a leadership role and provide a forum and draw the discussion on Exeter together.

Councillor Mitchell moved the following to have an in principle agreement of setting up a Sub Committee to act as a city wide forum to bring together partners with the aim of Exeter being Carbon Neutral by 2030, and a meeting be held as soon as possible with the Portfolio Holder for Climate and Ecological Crisis, the Chair and Deputy Chair of this Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Moore as the original proposer, and the Chief Executive to discuss matters including a proposed terms of reference.

Advice would be sought on the route through the Committee process as some aspects of the proposal may be included in the forthcoming report to the Executive on Exeter City Futures and to ensure that this request accords with the Executive's approach on this matter.

The motion was seconded, voted upon and carried.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted, and

**RECOMMENDED** to Council that in principle a Climate Change Sub Committee be set up to act as a city wide forum to bring together partners with the aim of Exeter achieving Carbon Neutral status by 2030. The arrangements should include a meeting at the earliest opportunity to discuss the way forward including the Portfolio Holder for Climate and Ecological Crisis, the Chair and Deputy Chair of this Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Moore as the original proposer, and the Chief Executive to discuss matters, including a terms of reference and the route through the Committee process.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.15 pm

Chair