

EXECUTIVE

Monday 22 January 2024

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)

Councillors Wright, Denning, Foale, Morse, Parkhouse, Pearce and Wood

Also present:

Councillor Jobson (as an opposition group Leader); and

Councillor M. Mitchell (as an opposition group Leader).

Apologies:

Councillors Williams, R and Councillor Moore (as an opposition group Leader).

Also present:

Chief Executive, Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Service Lead - Environmental Health & Community Safety, Service Lead - Active & Healthy People and Democratic Services Manager

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

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SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Executive received the report on the adoption of the revised Safeguarding Policy, which had been updated to ensure it reflected best practice in safeguarding and incorporated recent updates to legislation and statutory guidance. This report was previously presented to, and deferred by the Executive on 9 January 2024, to address the removal of the central record for safeguarding.

Members were advised that there were two registers held separately for operational purposes but could be accessed at any time. This process had been in place for a number of years, but the policy changes had been made to reflect current practices.

Councillor M. Mitchell, as an opposition group leader, enquired on the two registers and how the information was updated on each.

Executive Members debated the report and made the following points:-

- whether the Safeguarding policy was in line with other local authorities; and
- the Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management had confirmed that any requested information on the central registers would be made available.

In response to questions raised by Members, the Environmental Health & Community Safety, Service Lead advised:-

- both registers were continuously kept up to date and could be viewed at any time; and
- the contents of the registers were regularly discussed at the safeguarding representative's group and the Council was also part of the Devon Safeguarding group which shared best practices with other authorities.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the revised Safeguarding Policy.

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME PROPOSAL 24/25

The Executive received the report which set out the proposals for the Community Grants Programme for 2024/25 and how it could be funded using the Neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (NHCIL).

The Exeter Community Grants Programme had been agreed in July 2019 and a Wellbeing Exeter Strategic Development Review was published in February 2023. This was followed by the launch of the Wellbeing Exeter sustainable funding campaign, which formed the basis of the recommendations in the report presented at the meeting.

Members were advised that the grants enhanced the way the Council helped communities, and the report provided clarity on Wellbeing Exeter and work to date had provided significant support to residents during a period of uncertainty. Particular reference was made to the budget planning taking place on an annual basis with regular reviews undertaken throughout the year, with an update report to be presented to Members in 12 months.

The Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism commended the detailed report and expressed his thanks to the Director and officers involved. He also advised Members that diagram on page 42 of the report for the community connectors was in the wrong colour but clarified the report text was correct.

The Leader moved and Councillor Wright seconded two amendments to the recommendations to read as follows:-

- (1) Under recommendation 2.1 - to amend recommendation 10 of 8.6 in the report to say:-
 - It is proposed to use an earmarked reserve in the General Fund which is no longer required for its original purpose to provide a one-off grant of £75,000 to CAB. This will allow officers work with CAB on transitional arrangements.
- (2) Recommendation 2.6 - to Allocate the remaining £760,000 to a general budget under the Community Grants programme and delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder and the Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism to allocate the additional, available funding from the NHCIL reserve to fund Wellbeing Exeter Enhanced Model to continue community building within Pinhoe and St. James wards which are the areas in the City subject to the greatest housing development.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities & Homelessness Prevention spoke to the amendments and welcomed the continued funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) which added an annual £4million value to local communities and was almost double that of other authorities. He also highlighted that the importance of including the Pinhoe and St. James communities which had seen a significant growth in recent years. It was hoped that Teignbridge would eventually partner with Wellbeing Exeter in relation to their developments on the south western area of the city.

Councillor M. Mitchell, as an opposition group leader, welcomed the detailed report and considered the various levels of the report would an ideal topic for Scrutiny Committee at the proper time.

Councillor Jobson, as an opposition group leader, welcomed the report and also supported a future scrutiny report on the progress of work.

Executive Members debated the report and made the following points:-

- the report authors were thanked for the detail in the report and the recommendations as amended, were supported;
- the Citizens Advice Bureau was an important resource that needed to be supported;
- clarification was sought on where the earmarked reserve funding had been found from?
- the report highlighted the challenges involved with developing and supporting local communities in relation to funding cuts;
- the funding to small community groups living on estates had made a big difference to residents; and
- ward grants also supported local traders in enhancing the local economy.

Portfolio Holder for Communities & Homelessness Prevention in commending the report noted that many organisations had benefited from small ward grants and had invested in local communities. He welcomed the clear audit trail in relation to the investments and the £155,000 investment into community grants next year. He further advised that Wellbeing Exeter funding was not being reduced and welcomed the continued investment from Sport England into the city.

The Leader in responding to a question raised by a Member advised that the earmarked reserve funding had been set aside a number of years ago from the New Homes Bonus and had been repurposed from an allocation for work at Northbrook.

That Executive RECOMMEND that the officer recommendations to Council be amended as follows to approve:-

(1) the 11 recommendations relating to the Community Grants Programme as set out in, section 8.6 of the report and as amended at the meeting .

(2) the five recommendations relating to Wellbeing Exeter as set out in section 8.8 of the report.

(3) the allocation of £154,000 from the NHCIL reserve, to fund the proposed 2024/25 Community Grants programme.

(4) the allocation of £30,970 from the NHCIL reserve, to fund the staffing costs of administering the programme.

(5) the allocation of £275,563 from the NHCIL reserve, to fund the new core Wellbeing Exeter programme in 2024/25.

(6) the allocation of the remaining £760,000 to a general budget under the Community Grants programme and to grant delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder and the Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism to allocate the additional, available funding from the NHCIL reserve to fund Wellbeing Exeter Enhanced Model to continue community building within Pinhoe and St. James wards which are the areas in the City subject to the greatest housing development.

(7) the allocation of £70,000 of the ring-fenced Wellbeing Exeter reserve to aid the transition to the new core model in 2024/25 and to provide a baseline for other funders to match.

(8) that delegate authority be granted to the Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism to commission a Lead Organisation to take over from Devon Community Foundation and the co-ordinator of Wellbeing Exeter

(9) that the Portfolio Holder and Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism be required to update the Executive on the progress of the transition of Wellbeing Exeter and the Community Programme and bring forward recommendations for priorities and spending in 2025/26 by September 2024.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.00 pm)

Chair

The decisions indicated will normally come into force 5 working days after publication of the Statement of Decisions unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. Decisions regarding the policy framework or corporate objectives or otherwise outside the remit of the Executive will be considered by Council on 20 February 2024.