

REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 14 March 2024

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

COUNCILLOR EMMA MORSE- PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CITY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

1. Issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities
Number of major planning applications determined – the City Council decided on 29 major planning applications in 2023. Of these, 3 were refused.
Appeals won/lost – In 2023, 22 appeals were dismissed, 1 was part-allowed and 8 were allowed.
Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter – the City Council expects all new development to be of the highest quality, and we are committed to raising the standard of design. Officers have been working on a “Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter” which sets out several practical measures to achieve these objectives, including the promotion of design excellence through a collaborative planning process, prioritising sustainable development principles, enhancing community well-being by creating inclusive public spaces, and committing to continuous improvement and innovation in development practices. It encourages stakeholder engagement and accountability, ensuring that the development aligns with Exeter's Vision 2040 for a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban future.
CIL/S106 monies – since the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) introduction in 2013, CIL collection has amounted to £30.9m in CIL receipts. In 2022/23 alone, the city received £3.1 in CIL receipts. In the same period, the Council was able to spend £1.4m secured through the Section 106 process of affordable housing, outdoor sport and play, and other projects benefitting people who live, work and visit the city.

2. Update or commentary on any major ongoing programmes of work
Exeter Plan – Public consultation on a full draft of the Exeter Plan took place between October 2023 and January 2024. Consultation was held for 12 weeks, twice the statutory requirement, and series of 15 events, a community workshop and meetings with stakeholders were held to encourage engagement. The vision, Liveable Exeter principles and a series of draft policies in the full draft of the Exeter Plan cover place-shaping, the 2030 net zero ambition, biodiversity net gain and the importance of active travel. The draft also includes a series of proposed allocations to meet development needs. The Council has also worked with the County Council

<p>on the preparation of the local cycling and walking infrastructure plan which has now been adopted by DCC. These concepts continue to be central to the emerging planning policy for the city.</p>
<p>Article 4 Direction – Public consultation on the proposed changes to the Article 4 Direction and accompanying HMO supplementary planning document took place between May and July 2023. The revised Article 4 Direction has now been 'made' by the Council and will come into effect in December 2024. The accompanying supplementary planning document has been adopted.</p>
<p>Liveable Water Lane SPD – the Local Plans team has produced and consulted on the Liveable Water Lane SPD.</p>
<p>Householder's guide to extension design SPD – the Local Plans and Development Management teams have updated and consulted on the householders SPD.</p>
<p>Authority Monitoring Report – the Local Plans team has written and published the Authority Monitoring Report</p>
<p>Custom and Self-Build Register - the Local Plans team has updated the Custom and Self-Build Register</p>
<p>Brownfield Land Register - the Local Plans team has updated the Brownfield Land Register</p>
<p>Exeter, East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge Joint Strategy - the Exeter, East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge Joint Strategy has been approved.</p>
<p>CIL Review – the CIL charging schedule has been approved.</p>
<p>Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement has been approved.</p>
<p>CIL and s106 monitoring software – significant progress has been made in utilising new Exacom software.</p>
<p>Exeter Design Quality Partnership Charter – the Charter referred to above is due to be reported to the Executive and Full Council in March/April 2024. Subject to endorsement by the Council, pre-application charges for major applications will be introduced in May 2024.</p>
<p>European City of the Year – the team hosted the Academy of Urbanism, and Exeter was shortlisted for the European City of the Year.</p>

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

Recruitment – There are 36 establishment posts in City Development. Currently, there are six vacancies; where needed they are being covered by agency staff.

Economic impact – Building Control and Land Charges are reporting a reduction in case work, but there currently is no cause for concern about fee income. Planning application submissions are also showing signs of slowing down. Major applications, in particular, are being received at a lower level than previous years. The Service is reliant on the fees submitted for major applications. However, a recent national increase in the fees we are able to charge will offset the impact.

Building Control challenges - by 6 April 2024 Building Control officers are required to register with the new Building Safety Regulator (BSR); this is post-Grenfell initiative. However, the system of registration has broken down and there is a risk of a shortfall in certified and registered building control professionals. This scenario threatens the continuity of building control functions, potentially affecting ongoing construction projects due to the lack of inspections. The Local Authority Building Control organisation has appealed for a six-month delay in implementing the registration requirement aims to mitigate the risk of systemic collapse, underlining the urgent need for strategic planning to address potential service delivery disruptions, financial implications, and adjustments to future budgeting to accommodate this critical transition period. This situation underscores the necessity for the City Council to closely monitor developments, evaluate the potential impact on our services, and consider proactive measures to ensure continuity in building control functions within our jurisdiction.

Brownfield land challenges – the key focus of the Exeter Plan is the delivery of housing and other new development on brownfield land. Brownfield sites are strategically valuable but can be constrained by land treatment costs, the fragmentation of available plots, complex landownership, infrastructure costs and declining property values. Development can be complicated and more costly than on greenfield land. The City Council will need to work carefully and closely with developers to unlock the potential of brownfield land. This work requires particular expertise and resources that we currently do not have in City Development. The potential to rectify this will be explored in the context of the forthcoming senior management restructure.

4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered

Charging for pre-application enquiries – as discussed above we anticipate introducing pre-application charges for major applications in May. Depending on our experience we may consider proposing the introduction of charges for other types of application in due course.

Liveable Exeter Placemaking Charter – as referred to above, the Charter will be published in May subject to Full Council endorsement. The Charter includes a commitment to introduce a forum for those in the development industry involved in delivering major developments in the city. Officers are currently working on the format of this forum. The Charter also includes a commitment to monitor the ongoing success of completed developments. Officers are exploring the most effective way to do this.