

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: Thursday 14th March

COUNCILLOR Laura Wright, Lead Cllr for Arts & Culture and City Centre Strategy and Digital Transformation.

<p>1. Issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities</p> <p>Prosperous local economy;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• InExeter (Business Improvement District) new board and new CEX working very well and looking ahead to the Ballot in October to secure the next 5 years to work for businesses in the BID area.• Ongoing work to bring key stakeholders together for a City Centre Strategy to include the Night-Time Economy• ASB sub-group has been set up through the CSP to work collaboratively to address the ASB issue in the city centre
<p>2. Healthy and active city</p>
<p>3. Housing and building great neighbourhoods and communities: The Public Art Strategy came into being in the last year and this is having a positive impact on proposals for art works in the city.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is work ongoing to embed Culture into the vision of Liveable Exeter and a Culture sub-group of the Exeter Place Board is being created.
<p>4. Net zero carbon city:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decarbonisation grant Funding has been secured to install air-source heat pumps and further improvements to the RAMM to drastically reduce carbon output. This should also help to bring down costs of heating and cooling.
<p>5. Thriving culture and heritage</p> <p>Strong partnerships with the NPOs that ECC supports; Exeter Phoenix and Exeter Northcott Theatre in addition to our own RAMM and the Corn Exchange and our ECC designation for UNESCO City of Literature.</p> <p>Our Cultural Compact with the University has been praised by Arts Council England.</p> <p>Exeter Creative Arc (ECC and Exeter University) have facilitated grant funding from Arts Council England to Positive Lights 'Pelican Project' and Artist Noami Hart, both working with community groups to create fantastic art work which is in display in windows in Princesshay.</p>

Further grants (from UK Shared prosperity Fund) awarded to 'Lightbeare Lane' and 'Scratchworks' both to work with community groups on creative arts productions and activities.

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

1. NPO's progress and partnerships – Northcott Theatre are progressing brilliantly with their taking on the running and management of the Barnfield Theatre. Through regular meet ups and sharing of ideas, space in St Sidwells Point is now being utilised by dance and drama groups. The focus for the Barfield remains as a training ground for new and upcoming actors, writers, performers and tech crews.

2. Livestock Market – doing very well and creating good profits

3. Digital Transformation – work across ECC is progressing well and the Director's work with Strata and other councils is very positive. A strong focus is to improve the digital interactions with ECC for customers and clients and to make internal functions more efficient and easier to use. This will drastically improve cross-department working and tackle historic 'silo' working (due to outdated and non-aligned systems). A continued priority is to make sure that residents who need/want to communicate and undertake paperwork face to face or by telephone are able to do so much more effectively than at present.

4. Culture Strategy 2025 -consultation to be launched this year to include creative industries practitioners, community groups, members of the public, cultural venues.

5. RAMM: Decarbonisation fund proposed works. New management structure. Foot fall, benefit to economy of between £5-6 m per year

6. CCTV – new 'contact' boards, monitoring of two other towns, links to DCP and also to DCC for traffic monitoring.

7. Exeter Safe Space – was run by previous CEX of InExeter with one-off funding from Safer Streets which has now run out. Not an ECC responsibility but was initiated by InExeter through the Community Safety Partnership.

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

1. Proposed extension of supportive funding for our 5 NPO's in line with Arts Council England extension of funding by one year. This will mean committing for a further year (2026-27) as part of this current funding period. If we don't commit, the ACE Funding for the NPO's can't be given for the extended period.

2. Roof at the Barnfield theatre – ongoing issues with leaks which affect the use of the stage.

3. Work to create a team of city 'patrollers' is being undertaken by looking at re-working the current enforcement and car-park team structures. At present, it is looking positive for having a neutral budget implication but there <i>might</i> be some budget requirement.
4. The lift at the Corn Exchange has been out of operation for some time but the funds have been found and allocated for a replacement lift and this should be installed in a matter of weeks.
5. The Roman Wall – an important, visible and notable part of our heritage in Exeter. But...it's pretty old! Essential maintenance to ensure safety is carried out but some sections are now boarded off as we don't have funds for full repairs. The Heritage officer is currently exploring ways to apply for heritage grant funding.

6. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered
1.
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4.

7. Other matters the Portfolio Holder wishes to raise with the Scrutiny Committee
1. The Visit Exeter team (of 2) have exceeded expectations of generating income this year and have expanded membership of Visit Exeter which has a positive impact on tourism and therefore local economy.
2. The Corn Exchange has also done exceptionally well this year, as has the Livestock Market and the Underground Passages. A shared booking and ticketing system for RAMM, Corn Exchange, Northcott and Barnfield theatres and the Underground Passages has improved the booking systems for users – increasing ticket sales.
3. Scrutiny of the Police and Crime Commissioner and DCP through the Panel is largely effective but there are continuing issues with the response rate for 101 calls and recent reporting of sexual and domestic abuse cases not having been dealt with in the past. There is concern at the ongoing suspension of the Chief Constable although the acting CC, Jim Cowell attended the last panel meeting and gave an encouraging report to the members.
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