

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 4 June 2024

Present:

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)

Councillors Wright, Allcock, Asvachin, Foale, Vizard, Williams, R and Wood

Also present:

Councillor Jobson (as an opposition group Leader);

Councillor Moore (as an opposition group Leader); and

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

Also present:

Director Net Zero Exeter & City Management, Director of City Development, Director Finance, Service Lead Legal Services and Democratic Services Manager

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AGENDA UPDATE

The Leader advised that items 7, 10, 11 and 12 (Minute No's 62, 65, 66 and 67) were deferred to the next Executive Committee meeting scheduled for the 9 July 2024.

58

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2024, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

59

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

60

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 19

No questions from members of the public were received.

61

LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND (LAHF) ROUND 3 FUNDING

The Executive received the report on the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) round 3, in which the Council had been invited to bid for a national £450 million of funding to deliver high-quality temporary accommodation for homeless families and to provide housing to those on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

Particular reference was made to:-

- the housing of seven families under rounds one and two, with a further number of families waiting to move;
- the Council had been allocated nearly £600,000 to purchase four more homes and was using a matching process for the third round of funding;
- the Council would need to contribute a further £297,000, as part of the grant fund agreement and it was recommended that uncommitted Section 106 funding be used for this purpose;
- the recommendations would also support the Council in meeting its temporary accommodation needs without having to incur borrowing; and

- delegated authority was being sought to sign the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) to access the grant funding before the deadline to enable the Council to undertake the purchases.

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

Cllr Moore – thanked the officers for the work undertaken and enquired:-

- what was the reason for the delay in undertaking the matching process for the homes purchased under previous funding rounds; and
- why was the rent of the two bed properties proposed to be a higher than the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) level, given that housing and universal credit rent was based on the LHA level?

Cllr Mitchell – enquired on whether assurance could be given on whether the money was guaranteed, given the forthcoming General Election?

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- regardless of the election, the Council needed to proceed with accessing the grant funding;
- clarification was sought on the Council loans programme and options for Section 106 money to ensure there was enough to make the programme happen;
- was the council getting value for money?
- the outlay costs for maintenance and repairs appeared to be the same for both options, how were the figures made and did they reflect the costs of buying former council homes?
- the report highlighted Exeter being a welcoming city and beneficial to the Council's medium- and long-term housing provisions and the recommendations were supported in principle ;
- the positive impact within the equality impact assessment was welcomed; and
- the report and work undertaken in the report was welcomed.

In response to questions and points raised, the Director City Development advised that:-

- a written response to Councillor Moore's questions would be provided outside of the meeting;
- the money had already been agreed and the signing of the MOU would release the funding for use;
- the report provided full transparency on the land property and potential use of S106 funding and borrowing options;
- the Government calculated the amount of money awarded to a local authority through a median house price calculation, which for Exeter was £300,000;
- if the Council were looking to purchase new build homes on the open market it would increase the figure requiring more money to be added to the grants; and
- new build houses did not always meet the Council's requirements for electrical and gas appliances and required Council teams to enter the properties to fix the issues, which was an expensive endeavour.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Wright seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RECOMMENDED that Council agree option 2 at the Extraordinary meeting on 10 June as follows:-

- (1) to accept the full allocation of £594,000 in Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) grant funding;
- (2) the purchase of four properties off the open market;
- (3) that the Council's Capital contribution is funded through £297,000 of S106 funds;
- (4) the identification and purchase of suitable properties to let;
- (5) that the rents be set at affordable rates in accordance with the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding between DLUHC and Exeter City Council and the DLUHC recommended rental funding model Rent Standard – April 2023;
- (6) that the MOU (Appendix 1) be signed and returned to DLUHC by the 12th of June 2024 confirming the Council's participation in the programme; and
- (7) that delegated authority be granted to the Director of City Development and Housing and the relevant Portfolio Holder to proceed with the acquisitions and to amend the number of properties purchased in line with the above agreement. This is to include where additional government grants may become available (provided that no further capital contribution is required from Exeter City Council).

62

REVIEW OF THE CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

RESOLVED that the item be deferred.

63

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES PAID 2023/24

The Executive received the annual statutory report outlining the allowances and expenses paid to Members in 2023/24.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- there had been a productivity increase of 12.5% following the reduction in the number of Executive Committee Members; and
- Members commented on some of the expenses incurred during the year and noted that the Council was obliged to publish the allowances each year.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Wright seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RESOLVED that the allowances paid and the expenses claimed by Members in 2023/24 be noted.

64

EXETER PORT AUTHORITY: THE ROLE OF THE DUTY HOLDER

The Executive received the report which sought to establish the role of the Duty Holder for the Port of Exeter. The Council as the statutory Harbour Authority was responsible for ensuring that the organisation complies Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) and demonstrating best practice in harbour management.

Particular reference was made to:-

- the PMSC introduced two main roles - the Duty Holder and the Designated Person;
- the main responsibility of the Duty Holder was ensuring compliance with the PMSC and to act on recommendations made by the Designated Person; and

- in municipal ports it was common practice for the Duty Holder post being held by a committee of elected Members, rather than an individual.

The Leader clarified that the Executive were being recommended to become the Councils' Duty Holder and that Members would need to update their registerable interests accordingly.

Opposition group leaders spoke on the item and made the following points:-

- Cllr Moore – noted the onerous responsibility of the role and enquired on how Members would be advised on enabling compliance, and what would the extent of the indemnity provided would be for this role?
- Cllr Mitchell – sought further clarification on the Duty Holder's responsibility to ensure the Executive were compliant and if there was any legal responsibility to provide regular reports on the work undertaken?

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- the Executive would receive reports from the Designated Person in their role as the Duty Holder; and
- would the Duty Holder training be single or ongoing training?

The Portfolio Holder for City Management in commending the report, advised that establishing a Duty Holder was the next step in obtaining a Harbour Revision order.

The Leader advised on the points raised, that the Executive would be taking the role seriously and would undertake all required training to provide the strategic responsibilities entailed in the role. He also advised that the Executive would report back on work undertaken to a relevant committee to ensure full transparency.

The Service Lead Legal Services advised that that the Duty Holder would have a Designated Person providing advice and guidance to Members to ensure they complied with their obligations as the Duty Holder.

The Leader moved, and Councillor Wright seconded, the recommendations which were voted upon and CARRIED unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Executive undertake the role of the Duty Holder for the Port of Exeter in accordance with the Port Marine Safety Code and undertake the required training to fulfil the role.

65

PARKING TARIFFS 2024

RESOLVED that the item be deferred.

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KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS

RESOLVED that the item be deferred.

67

LAND AT PENDRAGON ROAD

RESOLVED that the item be deferred.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.02 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 16 July 2024.

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