

## PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 27 March 2025

### COUNCILLOR WILLIAMS – LEAD COUNCILLOR FOR PLACE AND CITY MANAGEMENT

1. Issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities
<p><b>1. Fleet and Plant availability / costs</b> – there are significant delays in being able to obtain certain specialised fleet and plant due to demands in the market for all fuel types. Electric version of fleet and plant are not being developed by suppliers in some areas and where they are costs can be up to 50% more expensive than their fossil fuel alternatives.</p>
<p><b>2. Recruitment</b> – is currently problematic as a result of ongoing national skill shortages, with specialised roles in Environmental Health, Engineering, Waterways and Arboriculture remaining vacant. This is not only recruiting to permanent positions, which are being advertised on a rolling recruitment until successfully filled, but also in trying to source temporary staff through specialist agencies. This subsequently has an impact on those specialist areas and the progression of work as priority has to be given to key statutory duties.</p>
<p><b>3. Vehicle off road rates</b> – councils' contractors have had difficulty in carrying out effective repairs to specialist mechanical sweeping fleet. This resulted in a high-level of vehicle off road hours with two mechanical sweepers off road for 3 months each respectively. This caused considerable disruption to mechanical sweeping operations. This has now been resolved, with maintenance of the specialist vehicles moving back to the manufacturer improving the efficacy of repairs, reducing supply-chain delays, and improving the productivity of the mechanical fleet.</p>
<p><b>4. Play Programme</b> – The play area development programme has been paused temporarily until the new financial year. This is to allow a contract tender exercise to take place for a play installation contract, in compliance with procurement regulations. Tender timelines are still pending; however, post contract formation works are anticipated at Wyvern Lane, Horseguards, Kings Heath, Harrington Lane, and Summerway, with additional minor works across other small sites. Remedial maintenance and minor repair programmes remain unimpacted.</p>

<p><b>2. Update or commentary on any major ongoing programmes of work</b></p>
<p><b>1. Food waste</b> has now been rolled out to just over 22,000 properties in the city. During the 2023/24 financial year 3.9% (1436 tonnes) of waste arising was diverted to anaerobic digestion.</p> <p>Following works being undertaken at the depot, further roll out will commence again on 7 April 2025 which will see a further 2 food waste vehicles collecting food waste by the end of 2025.</p>
<p><b>2. MRF / Site development project</b> – we are currently in the process of procuring the overall project management which should be completed in April.</p>
<p><b>3. Licensing Committee</b> – the licensing committee is currently progressing well with working groups around the revision of the Licensing Act 2003 policy and the policy around Hackney Carriage and Private Hire.</p>
<p><b>4. Air Quality</b> – I attended the Exeter HATOC to raise awareness of air quality and encourage that any future projects and road schemes consider the impact on air quality.</p> <p>We are currently in the process of analysing the 2024 air quality data and the annual status report will be submitted to DEFRA in the summer and presented to committee once the DEFRA appraisal and commentary has been received in the autumn.</p>
<p><b>5. Heavitree Paddling Pool Development:</b> Heavitree Paddling pool contract tender was unsuccessful. A market evaluation has been subsequently completed to review scope and feasibility of designs. A secondary public consultation on site designs will take place at the beginning of the new financial year.</p>
<p><b>6. KGV/ Countess Wear Road retaining wall remedial work:</b> Works have broken ground and dependent on site and weather considerations the work is due for completion by end of the financial year.</p>
<p><b>7. Bromham's farm</b> – Works have been completed, and the site fencing is due to be dismantled once the newly seeded grass is well established.</p>
<p><b>8. Ash Die Back:</b> 2024/25 condition surveys are in progress. These inspections will inform levels of remedial works required over the next financial year. ADB progression remains slow but ongoing, with new specimens being identified with the disease annually, and works being triaged to minimise losses where practicable. National guidance on the prevalence of ADB remains the same with the expectation that 80% of Ash will succumb to the disease.</p>
<p><b>9. Harbour Revision Order:</b> The application has been accepted by the Marine Management Organisation and the Council is now waiting for the MMO to publicly consult on the HRO application. This is now anticipated to be in the new financial year.</p>

<b>3. Issues that may impact: services delivery/financial performance/future budget requirements</b>
1. <b>Inflationary increases:</b> supplies, materials, and commercial rates have continued to rise significantly this has seen prices increase substantially and will put strain on revenue budgets over the next financial year.
2. <b>Availability of contractors / suppliers</b> – major projects such as the MRF/site development project are reliant on the availability of specialised contractors/suppliers. Therefore, availability of these contractors/supplier to conduct the work and manufacture specialised equipment could have an impact on the timescales involved in the project.

<b>4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered</b>
1. <b>Waste legislation</b> – whilst the government has made a number of key announcements relating to changes in waste management, key details regarding Extended Producer Responsibility and the Deposit Return scheme have yet to be published. Staff from Waste Operations are engaged in ongoing conversations with DEFRA, in particular with respect to Exeter's unique position of running its own Materials Reclamation Facility.

<b>5. Other matters the Portfolio Holder wishes to raise with the Scrutiny Committee</b>
1. <b>Licensing Committee</b> – the Licensing Committee is having a busy time with a high number of sub committees across its remit. I wanted to highlight the work that this committee does and thank the members involved for being flexible with their availability to ensure that these sub committees are covered with the required 3 councillors.
2. <b>Belle Isle Relocation:</b> Alternative sites are still being considered but no alternatives having been identified to date.
3. <b>Food Hygiene</b> – over 99% of food businesses in Exeter remain broadly compliant with food hygiene law. You can look up the ratings of a food business in Exeter or anywhere else in the country by going to <a href="http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings">www.food.gov.uk/ratings</a>