

1. One Exeter Update

One Exeter was the council's organisational change programme and it has helped to deliver the council's strategic priority of leading a Well-Run Council.

The programme was structured around five work streams as set out below.

- Our People
- Our Technology
- Our Customers
- Our Services
- Our Governance

To reflect the strategic importance of the work, the programme was sponsored by the Chief Executive and owned by the SMB.

The future of the work programme:

Over the last year, and as part of the Senior Leadership Review, the programme of work has now been embedded within Directorates and the Executive Office. Continuous improvement and transformation are now part of the council's business as usual. There is no longer a requirement to have a standalone programme of work and it is proposed that the One Exeter Programme is now mainstreamed across the council.

Going forward, progress against this work will be reported through the regular meetings that are held with Portfolio Holders and through the committee reporting process where appropriate.

Year end update:

The **'One Council, One Team'** strapline of the One Exeter programme is embedded across the council and the organisational culture is shifting away from silo working to one of collaboration and joined up working. A summary of the progress that has been made over the last year is set out below.

Delivery of the Digital Customer Strategy

During 2024/25 the council continued to deliver the adopted Digital Customer Strategy and work with Strata our IT service solutions company on the enabler projects it identified in their Business Plan. As part of the Senior Leadership Restructure, a Digital and Data team was created, and a new Head of Service was recruited to manage this service and lead digital and data transformation projects. The team works closely with other services and members of the Extended Leadership Team (ELT).

The following work has been undertaken over the last year to deliver the ambitions of the Digital Customer Strategy:

- **My Account Introduction:** Launched in late-January 2025, the "My Account" platform, will provide a single digital front door for customers to contact the council and track their requests.
- **City Development Transformation Project:** Initiated a pilot project to explore digital solution improvements and centralised contact opportunities within the City Development service.
- **End User Computing:** Tested a new computing model which will enable users to work natively on their window laptop and remove the reliance of virtual desktops to work.

- **Rapid Impact Team:** A team was created to look at the Parks and Open Spaces and Waste Management services to determine the potential to reduce the current cost base through service improvement and digitalisation.
- **Resident's survey:** The council conducted a resident's survey and consulted on the budget plans for 2025/26. A new corporate Engagement Manager has been recruited to bring a corporate standard for consultations and how the council seeks feedback.
- **SharePoint:** A pilot in the council's digital team was conducted to store files in a standard that can be rolled out to the wider council. A lesson learnt exercise will be carried out before a full roll out takes place.
- **Telephony Migration:** Preparation was made to migrate users from Skype for Business to Teams, ensuring continuity ahead of Skype's end-of-life in October 2025.

Peer Review of Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

In June 2024, the Chief Executive invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a review of the council's work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and invited recommendations on how to make improvements.

Specifically, the review focused on:

- Does the organisation understand its duties under the Equality Act?
- What is the understanding and support from elected members?
- How does this understanding translate through service delivery?
- What does it feel like to apply for a job with and then work for the council for people from minoritised groups?
- What are we doing and what could we do in future to strengthen our links into communities?
- What do we need to do to address the gaps in our response to the Equality Act?
- What resources do we need to take this forward both in terms of designated EDI role and across the wider organisation within services?

The review took place over three days with four peer assessors from the Local Government Association. This "mini" Peer Review team made the following general observations.

The review identified that there was clear commitment to EDI from the Chief Executive and political leadership and that there were pockets of good practice that could be replicated across the organisation. The review recommended that further work was undertaken to embed EDI across the council, communicate positive EDI initiatives and increased collaboration with community groups to inform service delivery.

An EDI Taskforce has been created under the Lead Strategic Director for People and Communities and a detailed action plan has been developed.

Improved Corporate Governance Arrangements

The council's external auditors recommended that the council should review the alternative delivery models with which it is involved and assess if continuing with these arrangements if appropriate provides best value for money. In response to this recommendation, [a report](#) was brought to Executive in January 2025 and considered by full Council in February 2025. The report provides information concerning those entities connected to the council and the role of the council within those organisations. The report also recommended that the Chief Executive has delegated authority to appoint Directors, Client Leads and Shareholder representatives and that

a report is presented to Council every six months to update councillors on the performance of each company.

The council has also improved its arrangements for tracking and monitoring progress with Internal Audit reports and recommendations. Going forward, all Internal Audit reports with limited assurance will be reported to SMB and tracked via the new Audit Tracker tool. This will ensure that key audit recommendations are implemented and reported against.

In addition, corporate/cross-cutting Internal Audit reports such as the Corporate Governance Audit will be reported to Audit and Governance Committee to provide assurance to councillors that strategic audit recommendations are being actioned.

Completion of Senior Leadership Restructure

The new Senior Leadership Structure has been approved by Council and implemented. The new structure is designed to break down silos and ensure that the council can deliver on its priorities, implement its ambitious transformation programme, provide an excellent customer experience and lead a well-run Council.

The reason for the restructure was to create a more cohesive group of senior leadership, acting as a joint team to enable the delivery of the council's priorities through better balanced portfolios, a co-ordinated and corporate approach and an ability to drive transformation together.

Accommodation Review

The Council has been considering options for a number of years to free up the Civic Centre site and move to new premises. The site could provide much needed new homes and has been identified as part of the Eastgate Liveable Exeter strategic development opportunity, providing a new vibrant mixed-use quarter in the City Centre.

Work is continuing to identify a site for relocation.

Development of a new Corporate Plan

SMB have been working with members of the Executive to develop a new Corporate Plan for the council. The new Corporate Plan will demonstrate how the council will deliver its vision for a happy, healthy and fully engaged city in the future.

To deliver the key priorities, services will focus on setting targets and measuring performance. The Extended Leadership Team (ELT) have been working together to compile a series of meaningful measures that will help assess progress against the priorities.

The plan will adopt a straightforward and strategic approach with a greater emphasis on the outcomes councillors want to achieve for the city.

The outcomes will be delivered through four strategic priorities:

- Local economy
- Sustainable environment
- People
- Homes

These priorities can only be delivered by having a Well-Run Council.

Communication and Collaboration

Over the last year, there has been a focus on improving communication and collaboration across the council. The Chief Executive continues to publish a fortnightly message in the staff newsletter to keep everyone informed about the strategic work that has been taking place as well as personal highlights such as meeting and learning more about the front-line teams.

A series of All Staff Events took place in February 2025 to introduce the new ELT, hear about the council's focus and priorities over the year ahead, learn more about the plans to become a unitary council and to network and ask questions.

The ELT has continued to meet to discuss a number of strategic issues including the financial position, the Corporate Plan, the Strategic Performance Management Framework and the requirement for staff to return to the office base for 40% of their working week.

The Chief Executive now meets with new starters on a quarterly basis to welcome them to the council, talk about the priorities and focus of the council and how the council supports and develops its staff. Meetings are also held with staff to celebrate their long service awards with Strategic Directors and Heads of Service presenting the awards.

The Staff Sounding Board has also continued during 2024 and has offered invaluable feedback to the One Exeter programme. This included helping to inform the work that is currently underway to improve the current working arrangements in the Civic Centre.