

Condition of Pavements in Exeter City Centre

Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the establishment of a Public Realm Liaison Group with Exeter City Council as detailed in this report be welcomed.

1. Background

The March 2017 meeting of this Committee discussed an item regarding the condition of the paving surfaces in and around the City Centre, with a focus on Sidwell Street. It was agreed that the County Council work with Exeter City Council (and its City Centre Working Group) to develop a long term strategy and programme for the enhancement of the City Centre's pavements and walkways and any options for use of funds from the On-Street Parking Account be explored (subject to legal constraints on the use of the Account funds).

Following initial discussions with City Council officers the matter was raised at the Exeter City Council Place Scrutiny Committee meeting of 14 September 2017 attended by County Councillor Leadbetter and the County Council's Highway Asset Manager.

The objective of the Exeter City Council Place Scrutiny Committee was how best Exeter City Council (ECC) and Devon County Council (DCC) could share information (specifically footway maintenance works) in respect of the public realm and maintaining the integrity of the city centre and other sensitive areas within the boundary of the City given the resources available, and as a result a Public Realm Liaison Group was established.

2. Proposal

The first meeting of the Public Realm Liaison Group was held at County Hall on 27 November with officers from Devon County Council and Exeter City Council and the City Council Ward Councillor attending. (Councillors Leadbetter and Hughes were invited but unable to attend.)

This meeting set out the aims of the group, the core attendance and frequency of meetings. Copies of the County Council's footway programme were also issued for the 2017/18 footway programme and 2018/19 plus programme for consideration and discussion at future meetings. The next meeting is provisionally planned for February.

The aim of the group is for officers of Devon County Council and Exeter City Council to share and discuss works programmes scheduled within the City and other sensitive areas within the city and to collaborate more effectively over future planned works. Through early joint involvement the Group aims to avoid and mitigate any potential issues and to address any contentious matters with future planned maintenance works.

Through this collaborative approach the group will develop a long term strategy and programme for the enhancement of the City Centre's pavements and walkways and through this process explore and identify potential options for funding these enhancements.

3. Financial Considerations

Devon County Council will formulate its works programmes recommending proposed treatments based upon its own available resources and maintenance treatment policies. The group will discuss proposals for pavements and walkways and look at alternative enhanced solutions within the city centre and other sensitive areas within city boundary.

Where potential alternative treatments are proposed these will be considered by the group and reported up for consideration by senior officers and members and for identification of alternative funding options.

At the Exeter HATOC held in March 2017, it was requested that funding from the On-Street Parking account be considered. The manner in which income derived from parking may be spent is bound by legislation; Section 55, Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The Act is clear that monies may not be spent in respect of the maintenance of roads maintained at the public expense by local Authorities (with the exception of London). Therefore, monies from the On-Street Parking Account could not be utilised to maintain pavements.

4. Legal Considerations

Devon County Council will deliver works in accordance with its duty as the Highway Authority and its own internal policies and procedures. The Public Realm Liaison Group brief is to consider the works programmes, their impact and potential issues affecting the delivery of those works. The group will also assess potential additions and alternatives to the programme for further consideration and inclusion in long term strategy and programme for pavements and footways within the city centre and other sensitive locations within the city.

Devon County Council will continue to react to safety defects in accordance with its policy on the treatment and response to category 1 safety defects. This may from time to time result in temporary solutions to remedy the defect.

5. Risk Management Considerations

No specific risks have been identified for this group. Specific risks in terms of individual projects within the programmes of work will be discussed as appropriate within this group.

6. Reasons for Recommendations

The Public Realm Liaison Group will provide a mechanism that enables both authorities to contribute towards a future strategy and works programmes for the maintenance of pavements and walkways within the city centre and other specific areas within the boundary of the city.

By this collaborative approach it should be possible to identify and mitigate any potential issues and proposals which could impact on the delivery of the works.

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Electoral Divisions: All Exeter Divisions

Local Government Act 1972: No background papers.

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None

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