

Exeter Civic University Agreement

Community Panel Meeting & Celebratory event

Monday 19th February, 6-8pm, Exeter Innovation Hub, Dix's Field, Princesshay

Introductions

Welcome from the Vice Chancellor

- The VC voiced her appreciation of the Panel's commitment to attending regular Panel meetings and the contribution they have made over the last 18 months, noting the importance of gaining valuable feedback on the activities being delivered as part of the CUA.
- She noted that today is an opportunity to celebrate 2 years of the agreement and reflect on priorities moving forward.

Summary of CUA achievements to date

The Divisional Director, Exeter Innovation, provided an overview of the CUA and highlights to date:

- The CUAs are based on a mutual understanding of local needs.
- Back in 2020, we ran a survey, focus groups, and community gatherings to understand the perceived issues.
- This evidence base was underpinned by conversations with anchor partner colleagues.
- The consultation led to the development of the five missions.
- We reviewed the Agreement in 2023 and made recommendations to the board in October.
- We recognise we can do more by working together with the other big institutions in the city to make the most of opportunities and assets.
- The Community Panel is a really important touch point for us in terms of engaging with the wider community.

Sustainable and green growth of city

- The Innovation Hub is the University's first city centre presence, which has been enabled through collaboration with Exeter City Council.
- The hub will provide access to services and business and also a drop-in space for teams such as the University's employability services and degree apprenticeships team.
- We hope that it is a visible sign that the university is accessible to the community.
- Since the closure of Exeter City Futures, the city council have agreed to lead the City's Net Zero journey.
- The university has launched the new Green Futures Solutions – in addition to the Green Futures Network, which provides access to tools to help organisations to develop net zero strategies.

City of aspiration and opportunity

- We have been working with other education providers to create an Education Alliance, and working with Ted Wragg Trust to explore the concept of Community Hubs which could be replicated elsewhere.
- We are now looking to broaden the Alliance out across Devon, with a focus on Social Mobility, looking at disadvantage and attainment, and how we can address inequalities.

Our Culture and Tourism Offer

- We continue to work very closely with the Council on initiatives such as Exeter City of Literature and Creative Arc.

Health and Wellbeing

- Successful collaborative bids with the RDUH have led to a new Biomedical Research Centre and a HealthTech Centre.

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Reflections from the Board Members

- It was noted that Exeter is working with the community in a unique way, and the partnership has been recognised nationally.
- The CUA has brought a focus and an aim, but it is important to stop and reflect.
- For example, last year, the schools in Exeter had their best ever results, and were amongst the best performing schools in the country.

Reflections from the Panel Members

- While it was noted that the Innovation Hub is a space where people can hold meetings and events, it does not feel accessible to community organisations.
- If we want a space that is reflective and inclusive of the community, we need to use accessible language and be clearer about intent e.g. around innovation.
- It was recognised that there is a tension between presenting a business focus and balancing that with the fact that this doesn't reflect everyone's priorities in the city.
- We need a shared understanding of what communities the university is trying to reach and what we mean by the term "community".
 - o perhaps the Panel could help with this.
- If we want to welcome communities to the Hub, we could:
 - o Look elsewhere for examples of welcoming spaces;
 - o Invite people to the space to understand what skills they have and encourage them to bring their own innovations;
 - o Share tangible case studies of what could be achieved.

Moving Forwards - What are the priorities for 2024?

The panel identified the following priorities they would like to explore:

Friends of Hoopern Valley Association

- Following the consultation and decision to make the Valley more accessible to the community, we are talking with the University's Sustainability and Estates Teams about the possibility of a Friends of Hoopern Valley Association.

Greater support for the city's Voluntary Sector

- It was noted that stability of available space is of real concern and the panel are keen to explore how the University could provide greater support for the sector.

Student & Staff Volunteering

- It was noted that there have been changes in the way that the Student Guild manage and communicate volunteering opportunities and there is lack of clarity around how to approach the University about volunteering opportunities.
- The Regional Engagement Manager and Community Liaison Manager will look into this and feed back to the panel.

Supporting Cycling in the city

Opportunities include:

- Providing bicycle maintenance skills to enable more people to cycle in the city.
- Offering bike hire on campus.
- More encouragement for students to bring bicycles and not cars to Exeter.

Making University Research more accessible

- Curating regular talks to help people access University knowledge, expertise and research could have a transformative impact on the city.
- For example, a public event for the 20 scientists who attended COP to feedback to local people.

Support for International Members of Staff moving to Exeter

- Many international students and members of staff come to live in Exeter with their families and find it difficult to settle in.
- This is a particular challenge when registering with schools as University Term starts later than the school term.
- Could the Universities do more e.g.
 - o More engagement with local schools
 - o Changing information that is shared through the University's International onboarding system, encouraging families to engage with the schools at an earlier stage
 - o More support for local communities

Community Fund

- We will continue to seek Panel input on applications to the Community Fund.
- It was suggested we could hold a Pitch Event, where community organisations pitch their ideas for funding.

How can we get a broader Community Perspective in the CUA?

We have pledged to embed the broader community voice in the CUA and strive to reduce inequalities and make a difference to the most disadvantaged in society.

- How can we work with our CUA partners to reduce inequalities and make Exeter Greener, Fairer and Healthier for everyone in the city?
- How can we work with the panel to reach out to, engage with and listen to the broader community across the city and embed this in the work we do?

The following suggestions were made:

- While we have increased the cultural diversity of the panel recently, it was noted that most members live in the wards closest to the University and it would be good to increase the geographical spread of members.
- Panel members could reach out to their own communities and help break down the barriers.
- We could work through Inclusive Exeter to reach a broader community.
- We could reach out to Primary schools

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Communication

- The university could improve the way that it engages with communities.
- ECC's "*The Citizen*" reaches all households in the city and could be a good way to reach local residents about CUA initiatives
- Panel members expressed their gratitude for the efforts being made by the University to listen to and respond to the community.