

Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Friday 26 July 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor Finn, in the Chair.

Councillor Blight, Vice Chair.

Councillors Allison, Freeman, Goslin, Hendy, Krizanac, P.Nicholson, Penrose, Poyser and Sproston (Substitute for Councillor Dingle).

Apologies for absence: Councillors Cuddihee, Dingle and Stephens.

Also in attendance: Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Events, Cemeteries and Crematoria), Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Co-Operative Development and Communities), Rosie Brookshaw (Democratic Advisor (Observing), Hannah Chandler-Whiting (Democratic Advisor), Tracey Naismith (Head of Community Safety), and Ann Thorp (Facilities Manager (Soft Services) (Virtual)).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.46 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

1. To note the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2024/25

The Panel agreed to note the appointment for Councillor Lee Finn as Chair, and Councillor Tess Blight as Vice-Chair, for the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for 2024/25.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Scrutiny Panel Responsibilities

The Panel agreed to note the responsibilities of the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 February 2024, were agreed as an accurate record.

5. Chair's Urgent Business

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

6. **Serious Violence Duty Action Plan & Funding Proposal**

Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Events, Cemeteries and Crematoria) introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) In January 2023 the Government announced a new duty that required local areas to work in partnership to prevent and reduce serious violence;
- b) Plymouth had been awarded £125,000 in funding from the Home Office which had been shared across several projects and interventions;
- c) The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) had played a role in delivering the Duty;
- d) Reports would be sent to the OPCC quarterly in line with the national measures which were as follows:
 - i) To see a reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with knives or sharpened objects;
 - ii) Reduction in crime type recorded by the police and;
 - iii) Reduction in homicides recorded by the Police;
- e) Plymouth had agreed several additional local indicators:
 - i) Improvement of the feeling of safety;
 - ii) Reduction in recording of violent crimes;
 - iii) Reduction in the number of children entering the criminal justice system;
 - iv) Reduction in the reoffending of violent crimes;
 - v) Reduction of the number of children excluded from school, and;
 - vi) Reduction in the number of 16 and 17 year olds not in education, employment or training.

Tracey Naismith (Head of Community Safety) added:

- f) The Government had identified the police, the National Probation Service and the Fire and Rescue and Health Authority as five authorities who had a legal duty to deliver the Duty Action Plan. The Government also recognised the importance of education, institutions, prison and youth custodial

establishments and communities in the voluntary sector;

- g) Plymouth adopted a public health approach which had helped highlight determinants that could cause serious violence;
- h) A Strategic Needs Assessment was published and had used data from various sources. It has highlighted that certain communities felt more impacted by violence than others;
- i) The underlying message was that violence was preventable and everybody had a role in doing so;
- j) There was an emphasis on putting a trauma responsive approach into practice, and on sharing the responsibility for supporting victims and those who caused harm;
- k) The Purple Flag accreditation ensured the city were working together to keep people safe in the night-time economy;
- l) 'MAN Culture' was made up of a group of men from a number of organisations who created the Male Allyship Network who recognised that the voice of men was needed to prevent violence against women and girls;
- m) Pathfinder had been working with young people who were violent, offering them interventions to help prevent them stepping into the criminal sphere;
- n) The NSPCC and partners including Plymouth City Council (PCC) had been looking for evidence and local understanding into how they could work with those who had harmful thoughts around children and whether the city was ready for that approach.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- o) The Community Safety Partnership would run a series of Management of Risk in Law Enforcement (MoRILE) workshops;
- p) The speech and language element of the Duty had been dropped due to there not being access to personnel to deliver the work;
- q) A speech and language therapist was embedded into the Impact programme at Plymouth Criminal Youth Justice;
- r) Only 70 cities in the UK and Ireland had received Purple Flag accreditation;
- s) The Purple Flag accreditation brought partners together such as Best Bar None, Pub Watch and the Street Pastors and Taxi Marshalls;
- t) There had been a delay in receiving the funding;

- u) A letter would be written to the OPCC to express the importance of releasing funding on time to ensure projects were correctly funded;
- v) Diverse communities were being represented through various partners;
- w) The Strategic Needs Assessment had comparators to similar family groups to give context to the data found in Plymouth;
- x) The number of reports of crime had increased, but this was due to the advertisement of how people can report in different ways;
- y) There would potentially be a spike in report of violence against women and girls as it had been highlighted on the national news;
- z) Hate crime was still vastly under reported;
- aa) An analyst from Devon and Cornwall Police would attend the MoRILE workshops to explain any spikes in the data.

The Committee agreed to the following recommendations:

1. That the Committee endorse the Reduction of Violence Action Plan, and;
2. The Committee would write a letter to the Police and Crime Commissioner asking that funding that was distributed through their office was passed onto authorities as soon as possible and prior to the project start dated in future to reduce delays to projects, following a delay for the Reducing Serious Violence Plymouth Project.

7. **Plan for Public Toilets Review**

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Co-operative Development and Communities) introduced the reports and highlighted the following points:

- a) This report was due to be brought to scrutiny in January 2025 however was delayed due to changes in staff;
- b) Robust budget monitoring had been introduced in the past six months;
- c) The work on the public toilets at St Budeaux had been progressing and would soon be completed;
- d) A Public Toilets Champion would be announced later in the year;
- e) Budgets for the public toilets would be visible to the public.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- f) The public toilets by Tinside Lido were no longer owned by the Council;

- g) Public toilets had a large part to play in Plymouth's tourist economy;
- h) The budget was around £300,000 a year for public toilet provision;
- i) PCC would most likely not go out to public consultation for public toilets;
- j) Communities across Plymouth wanted public toilets where there were currently none, however this could only be done by totally changing the model.
- k) The public needed to be aware that the current situation was to best spend the resources PCC to support the economy through public toilets.

8. **Work Programme**

During discussion the following requests were made:

- a) The Bereavement Services update included the finances on The Park;
- b) Panel Members asked that the relevant Cabinet Members provide them with a list of projects that would be of interest to scrutiny for this municipal year;
- c) Panel Members asked for the link to the Forward Plan to be shared with them;
- d) Public Sector Equalities Duty compliance to be added to the work programme;
- e) There had been a request from Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Co-operative Development and Communities) to hold a task and finish group or additional meeting in November 2024 to discuss changes to the Council Tax Relief Scheme, as Panel dates did not line up with the timeline for the changes. Hannah Chandler-Whiting (Democratic Advisor) explained Democratic Support would confirm dates of a meeting as soon as possible;
- f) The Housing and Homelessness Update would include winter resilience;
- g) An informal meeting would be held after the October scrutiny meeting to discuss points Panel Members would like included in the Housing and Homelessness Update;
- h) Panel Members asked for waste reduction and reuse to be included in the Household Waste and Recycling update.

The Committee agreed to note its Work Programme.

9. **Tracking Decisions**

The Committee agreed to note its tracking decisions document.