



Oversight and Governance

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HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 5 February 2025

2.00 pm

Warspite Room, Council House

Members:

Councillor Finn, Chair

Councillor Blight, Vice Chair

Councillors Allison, Cuddihee, Dingle, Goslin, Hendy, P.Nicholson, Poyser, Reilly and Stevens.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf. This meeting will be webcast and available on-line after the meeting. By entering the Warspite Room, Councillors are consenting to being filmed during the meeting and to the use of the recording for the webcast.

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Tracey Lee
Chief Executive

Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for non-attendance submitted by Councillors.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 8)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 04 December 2024.

4. Chair's Urgent Business

To receive reports on business which in the opinion of the Chair, should be brought forward for urgent consideration.

5. Improved Public Connectivity with Plymouth City Council: (Pages 9 - 18)

6. Customer Services Strategy Update: (Verbal Report)

7. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update Jan 2025: (Pages 19 - 34)

8. Work Programme: (Pages 35 - 38)

9. Tracking Decisions: (Pages 39 - 40)

Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday 4 December 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor Finn, in the Chair.

Councillor Blight, Vice Chair.

Councillors Allison, Dingle, Goslin, Hendy, P.Nicholson, Poyser and Reilly.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Stevens.

Also in attendance: Councillor Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change), Mike Artherton (Group Manager for Parking Marine Garage), Kathryn Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning), Ross Jago (Head of Governance Performance and Risk), Amanda Pannell (Petition Author) and, Philip Robinson (Service Director for Street Services).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.33 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.

17. **Declarations of Interest**

Name	Item	Reason	Interest
Councillor Ian Poyser	6	Member of the Chartered Institute of Waste Management	Private

18. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held 16 October 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

19. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

20. **Central Park Petition - Response Report**

Councillor Finn introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- a) The Ponds Project was the most recent project to come forward as part of the Central Park Improvement Plan;

- b) The Project was the third phase of the original Central Park Project;
- c) The business case for the project was approved on 21 January 2022 and the aim was to transform water from a problem, to a resource;
- d) The project involved re-landscaping the area of the park to provide a nature-based solution to flooding using sustainable drainage systems and to manage surface water and provide space for wildlife and the public;
- e) The petition submitted, which ran from 16 July 2024 to 31 August 2024, raised four key issues.

Amanda Pannell (petition author) added:

- f) The petition came about due to Plymouth City Council's (PCC) failure to communicate effectively and consider the needs of their residents;
- g) Over 3000 park users and residents signed the 'Fix Our Park' petition, and this would have been more but some members of the public were not comfortable with sharing their personal details;
- h) Regardless of Council Officers opinions and justifications for the way they had communicated, 3000 people felt misinformed and ignored;
- i) The public disputed some claims within the report, including that the Ponds Project had featured a significant level of public engagement before plans were finalised, and that a film was created to ensure the public could visualise the final scheme;
- j) Only two of the 3000 members of the public who signed the petition stated they had input on the plans, and that was due to their membership to the now defunct 'Friends of Central Park' group;
- k) The film that was created to ensure the public could see what the site would look like after the work was finished was not true to what the park now looked like;
- l) There was genuine anger from members of the public about the lack of information, and some blamed themselves for not taking the time to investigate and challenge the plans before they took place;
- m) From November 2022 to December 2023, park users were blocked from using large areas of the park whilst witnessing felled trees, enduring the noise from generators and heavy machinery and experiencing detours through muddy, unlit diversions;
- n) Incorrect information was given regarding when paths would open up again;

- o) From January 2024 no work was carried out for eight months, which created stagnant water, fly tipping, unwelcoming signs and overgrown paths;
- p) Members of the public lodged complaints online, over the phone and spoke to both local Councillors and MPs;
- q) The public felt the petition was the only way to gain the Council's attention and create accountability for the work done in the park;
- r) The petition authors had appreciated meeting with Council officers within the park;
- s) Resurfacing of paths at Barn Park had started without public warning which created confusion to regular users who could not utilise their normal route to work or school;
- t) Members of the public would like to see recommendations from the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel to improve PCC communication on the Pond Project.

Councillor Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change) added:

- u) The Central Park Improvement Project had been running since 2017 and was an example of cross party collaborative working, delivering on a key proposal in the Joint Local Plan;
- v) The aim of the project was to re-landscape an area of Central Park to provide a nature-based solution to flooding by using sustainable urban drainage systems;
- w) It was fully accepted that at the time of the petition, the project was not in a good state for various reasons, including the contractors withdrawing from the site due to wet weather over the winter and contractual issues meaning they did not return;
- x) Since the petition had been submitted, the situation in park had significantly improved and although the project was not finished, the look and feel of the park was better;
- y) Fenced off areas had been removed as much as was possible whilst the works continued;
- z) The coming months would include the completion of pitch works, reinstatement the fields, further tree planting and landscaping works;
- aa) PCC accepted and apologised for delays in the scheme, and could understand why the petition was launched;

- bb) Public safety was at the forefront of PCC's responsibilities, however they could not agree that an independent review would be advantageous or a good use of public money as the progress of the project had improved significantly since the petition was started.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- cc) The wider benefits of the project had been lost in the coverage of the scheme due to the understandable concerns raised;
- dd) The realities of climate change had increased extreme rainfall and storm events, and the project was an opportunity to improve flooding resilience in that part of Plymouth;
- ee) This scheme, and other similar schemes, would have a positive impact on the water quality in Plymouth Sound and there were bio-diversity benefits that came with creating a wetland habitat;
- ff) Southwest Water had recognised there was an issue with drainage at Home Park Park and Ride whereby water drained downhill and ended in the park;
- gg) Following the Water Quality Select Committee a Memorandum of Understanding with Southwest Water had been created to enhance future planning for the Home Park area. This meant that Central Park was flagged as a key area to ensure additional water didn't flow there;
- hh) One of the main issues the public had raised was a lack of communication from the Council, and it was suggested that monthly updates on the project would be a valuable solution;
- ii) An online FAQ page had been set up and would be better publicised;
- jj) Summer 2025 was the proposed end date to the project;
- kk) There were measures in place to address the communication issues surrounding the project;
- ll) The key aspects to finish the project included land drainage on the pitch field, including the field being topped and seeded, and the main risk to this was the weather.

The Panel agreed to the following:

1. To recommend developing a comprehensive communication plan to enhance communication for the park works project. This plan should include regular (at least monthly) updates via multiple channels, clear signage in affected areas, and an outline of the project plan so residents can understand the scheduled works and timelines;
2. The project will be added to the Panel's work programme for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

21. **Household Waste and Recycling**

Councillor Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change) introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) The year to date recycling rate was 37.5% which was lower than the national average;
- b) The recycling rate at the two recycling centres in Plymouth averaged at 63%;
- c) The Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP) had a target for most of Plymouth's waste to be recycled by 2030;
- d) Although recycling was important, PCC aimed to create awareness of reducing and reusing. This had resulted in several collaborations with local organisations including Little Camden Market, Cafco and the Devon and Cornwall Furniture Reuse Project;
- e) PCC had been running a recycling engagement campaign over the past 12 months;
- f) Work had been done around Green Community Hubs, including a partnership project with Generous Earth for community composting;
- g) A Councillor had been appointed as the Zero Waste Champion;
- h) An Executive Decision for £2 million had been approved to procure vehicles and bins ready to introduce food waste collection in Plymouth. This was mainly grant funded;
- i) There would be a push on recycling engagement over the 2024/25 festive period;
- j) The Street Services team had been restructured, and Recycling Officers would be introduced to work on provoking behavioural change and public engagement with regards to recycling;
- k) Work had been undertaken to understand the waste compositional analysis of residual waste containers.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- l) The benchmark for national recycling rates included food waste, which Plymouth did not yet have;
- m) MVV Energie had a Community Engagement team working to actively encourage members of the public to recycle;

- n) The initial capital investment for food waste collections was funded primarily by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to procure vehicles and caddies;
- o) Only 0.12% of waste collections were reported as missing;
- p) Although health and safety was not included in the report, a briefing note could be given to Members with this information;
- q) The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme would change the way packaging was developed, making it easier to recycle;
- r) Food waste would be processed through anaerobic digestion which would create compost material and renewable energy.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

22. **City Centre Car Parks**

Philip Robinson (Service Director for Street Services) introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) There were inherent challenges with car parking capacity in the city centre.

Mike Artherton (Group Manager for Parking Marine Garage) added:

- b) The report was a snapshot of the parking in the city centre and outlined how the parking was used, what the current challenges were and what next steps would be to mitigate these challenges;

In response to questions, it was explained:

- c) Interdepartmental discussions were taking place to mitigate parking issues related to housing in the city centre;
- d) Electric vehicle charging ports were being introduced throughout car parks in Plymouth in a way that considered the weight of electric vehicles in multi-storey car parks;
- e) Work had been carried out which gave PCC a baseline on current parking, how it was used and how it would change over the years;
- f) There would always be challenges both with car parking and real estate in the city centre.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

23. **Homelessness Position 2024, including Families, Statutory Homeless Single People and those Rough Sleeping**

The Panel agreed to note the update and to receive a full briefing in February 2025.

24. **Work Programme**

During discussion the following requests were made:

- a) Bus Shelter Contract.

The Panel agreed to note its Work Programme.

25. **Tracking Decisions**

The Panel agreed to note its Tracking Decisions.

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Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	05 February 2025
Title of Report:	Public Connectivity Review
Lead Member:	Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure and HR and OD)
Lead Strategic Director:	Jens Gemmel (Interim Chief Operating Officer)
Author:	Peter Honeywell
Contact Email:	Peter.honeywell@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To respond to the motion on notice from the Council Meeting in November 2023

Recommendations and Reasons

I. Your Recommendation

Scrutiny to review the data provided in response to the motion on notice and consider whether further actions are required.

Alternative options considered and rejected

I. Alternative options considered and rejected

Reopening the First Stop Shop on New George Street is no longer possible and the Library Service now offer face to face support.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The current mix of channels to access Plymouth City Council Services has been settled on as the best balance of providing quality public services and spending money wisely.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Any implications will be dependent upon the outcome of the discussions

Financial Risks

Any financial risks will be dependent upon the outcome of the discussions

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

There are no new recommendations in this report and therefore no carbon footprint implications unless the outcome of the discussions generates changes to our service provision.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council’s duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

The current service provision has carefully safeguarded the interests of those who might otherwise be digitally excluded, for any reason, by ensuring alternative channels to access PCC services are available.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

Background papers:

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
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Sign off:

Fin	N/A	Leg	N/A	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Assets	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Jens Gemmel (Interim Chief Operating Officer)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 24/01/2025											

Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure and HR and OD) (Via email)

Date approved: 24/01/2025

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Homes and Communities Scrutiny Panel

Improved Public Connectivity with Plymouth City Council

February 2025

Purpose and Agenda



Purpose: To explore the following questions following motion on notice at Council:

1. Investigate current phone line system
2. Council helpline is advertised in media/ Council literature.
3. Conduct an assessment of Council contact centres and promote 'walk ins'.
4. Utilise suitable accommodation wherein face to face Communication is possible.

The agenda for this session will consider how these services are currently set up and provide the panel with relevant data to explore the provision of service

Current phone system



Our Contact Centre answers calls to 668000

<u>Calls into the Customer Hub - 1st April 2024 – 31st December 2024</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Avg% Ans Calls</u>	<u>Avg Speed Ans (Minutes)</u>	<u>Avg Call Time (Minutes)</u>	<u>Average Wait (Minutes)</u>
Total calls received:	58,759	96.42%	0.64	4.52	0.7
Adult Social Care	18,673				
Children Social Care	10,708				
Homeless Foodbank	10,508				
Digital Inclusion - 194 Customers currently registered	10,216				
Electoral Services	4,883				
Payment Assistance	2,355				
Other lines	19,362				

The digital inclusion service has been shared with and is being promoted by PADAN to their members

Signposting and promotion of our number



We know that many of our customers look up our phone number from either our website or other sites on the internet.

www.Plymouth.gov.uk/contact-us provides this information:

Call us

Phone our Contact Centre on 01752 668000

- Monday: 9am to 5pm
- Tuesday: 9am to 5pm
- Wednesday: 9am to 5pm
- Thursday: 9am to 5pm
- Friday: 9am to 5pm
- Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays: closed

Council Tax and Housing Benefit is open from 10am to 4pm.

Signposting and promotion of our number



We use leaflets and other publications to put across key messages to avoid any danger of digital exclusion for universal and other popular services. We also publish contact details on social media posts where relevant.

Manage your Council Tax, set up a Direct Debit or sign up for paperless billing at
www.plymouth.gov.uk/myaccount

HOW TO PAY YOUR COUNCIL TAX

- 1) Pay online or set up a Direct Debit at www.plymouth.gov.uk/counciltax
- 2) Online Banking
 Sort code: 20-30-54 Account number: 43667596
 Account name: Plymouth City Council - Council Tax
 You'll need your payment reference (it's on the front of this bill)
- 3) By phone using our 24 hour payment line on 0300 456 0519 (normal landline rate)
- 4) Cash/Card - use the barcode on the front at any PayPoint/Post Office.



STRUGGLING TO PAY YOUR COUNCIL TAX?

You may be able to change your instalments from weekly to fortnightly or from 10 to 12 months (you will need to let us know by the 1st April). You may also be entitled to a discount or exemption. Visit our website www.plymouth.gov.uk/counciltax, write to us at Plymouth City Council, Customer Services, PO Box 293, Plymouth PL5 5BZ. Alternatively, you can call us on 01752 668000. ←

LOCAL DISCOUNTS

The council has the discretion to reduce Council Tax bills by way of a local discount. Any award made is paid for by local Council Tax payers. A separate Exceptional Hardship Fund is in place for those who qualify for a Council Tax reduction but still need additional help.

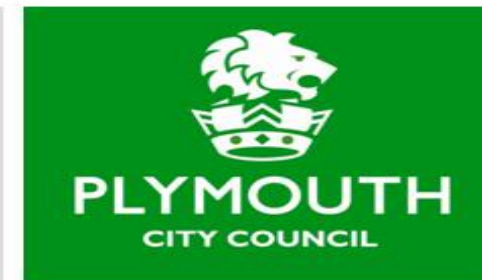
COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS

A property that has been unoccupied and unfurnished continuously for a period of more than one year will be subject to a Council Tax premium added to the bill. Certain exclusions apply.

If there are any changes to your circumstances, or that of your property, that may affect the amount of Council Tax you pay, you must notify the council within 21 days or you may face a penalty.

Taken from our annual Council Tax billing letter to all residents. Advise to go online followed by alternative to write or call including the 668000 number.

“Walk ins”



Since April this year we have offered customers the choice of a face to face meeting with staff to support customers in our libraries

<u>Pilot - Face to Face DA Service offer in Central Library</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Virtual 121 support</u>	<u>Total</u>
		<u>- Plymstock, Plympton and St Budeaux - pilot</u>	
Blue Badge face to face offer - 1st April 2024 – 31st December 2024	200	11	<u>211</u>
Bus Pass face to face offer - 1st April 2024 – 31st December 2024	422	3	<u>425</u>
Newly introduced general Digital Assistance live 18/11/24 - 10/01/2024	93	0	<u>93</u>

Feedback from customers suggests that they favour accessing face to face support in Central Library over their local community library. The data shows that community library visits account for around 2% of total face to face meetings.

Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	05 February 2025
Title of Report:	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update Jan 2025
Lead Member:	Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development, and Communities)
Lead Strategic Director:	Gary Walbridge (Strategic Director for Adults, Health and Communities)
Author:	Jackie Kings
Contact Email:	Jackie.Kings@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To provide an overview of the homelessness challenges in Plymouth and the coordinated response to address the challenges for the information and consideration of the Scrutiny Committee

Recommendations and Reasons

To note the report

Alternative options considered and rejected

N/A

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Plymouth Plan Policy HEA8 - "Focusing on the tackling and prevention of homelessness, including rough sleeping, and its wider impact."

Also relates to the following in the Corporate Plan: Minimise the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and build more homes – for social rent and affordable ownership.

Keep Young People, Children and Adults Protected/ Focus on Prevention and Early Intervention/
Reduced Health Inequalities and Helping People Feel Safe in Plymouth

Implications for the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The use of B&B and holiday lets to meet the Council's statutory homelessness duties continues to place financial pressure on revenue budgets. This has been managed within the MTFP and uplifted Grant will support this.

Financial Risks

An increase in demand for temporary accommodation by statutory homeless households could increase the use of expensive nightly paid accommodation and place additional financial pressure on revenue budgets

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council’s duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

Access to good quality and suitable temporary accommodation supports the health and wellbeing needs of homeless households and those rough sleeping

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

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		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a	Briefing Report: Homelessness and RS Update							

Background papers:

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Gary Walbridge (Strategic Director for Adults, Health and Communities)

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 28/01/2025

Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development, and Communities) by e mail

Date approved: 28/01/2025

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HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING UPDATE JAN 2025

Community Connections



I. INTRODUCTION

Nationally and locally homelessness has increased significantly over recent years. The continued impact of the cost-of-living crisis, rising inflation, oversubscribed health and wellbeing services, including the lack of affordable housing across all housing tenures has resulted in further demand for housing services and temporary accommodation.

The experience of homeless households currently attempting to access private rented accommodation is that there are more than 30 (often up to 100) applicants for every available property, with some being able to offer higher rent or several months' rent up front to secure the property, and/or landlords favouring other applicants.

The number of available social housing lets in Plymouth has declined by 36% over the last 5 years and this further exacerbates the challenges faced by homeless households and the length of time in temporary accommodation.

These factors impact the ability for homeless households to move on to an affordable home and means longer stays in all forms of temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast. This has resulted in many supported housing services becoming silted up.

The financial impact on Local Authorities in meeting statutory temporary accommodation duties under homelessness legislation has always been challenging however this has become more so in recent years putting significant additional pressure on council budgets.

Wider legislation changes also have an impact on the housing market. The current Government are taking forwards the Renters Rights Bill which started its journey under the previous Government and is now being considered by the House of Lords. This legislation is expected to end the use of section 21 "no fault" evictions. Section 21 remains the highest reason for households presenting as homeless. The legislation seeks to reduce no fault evictions and improve overall standards in the private rented sector. However, it is expected that there will be an increased proportion of landlords who will leave the sector as they are not able to meet the requirements and associated costs. This will place further pressure on the availability and affordability of the private rented sector.

The challenge is recognised nationally, with an increased focus on the development of affordable housing, as well as reform of the private sector and a higher level of Homelessness Prevention Grant via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Locally there is a relentless focus on tackling the housing crisis, exemplified through the establishment of the Plymouth City Council Housing Taskforce, co chaired by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities and the Chief Executive. The taskforce has overseen the launch of the Plan for Homes 4 which encompasses the desire to tackle homelessness and its causes with the provision of long term solutions as its focus.

The Homelessness Recovery Programme is delivering activity to prevent and relieve homelessness under the four pillars of Prevention, Intervention, Recovery and Systems Support.

Seven individual plans sit within this Programme: -

- Accommodation Development
- Rough sleeping and Single Homelessness Prevention
- Children and Young people Homelessness Prevention
- Supported Accommodation Review
- Families Homelessness Prevention
- Domestic abuse Safe Accommodation Plan
- System Support/Development

2. Plan for Homes 4

This dedicated plan builds upon the successful Plan for Homes programme which provides a housing delivery framework and was first launched in November 2013 and refreshed in March 2016. In March 2019 Plan for Homes 3 was updated and extended to 2024.

Plan for Homes 4 continues the programme and sets out our commitment to enable and directly provide increased delivery of quality new homes, and to support the regeneration, improvement, and energy efficiency of existing homes of all tenures. Working with a range of partners we aim to meet our key housing challenges and provide for a range of housing needs, particularly addressing the increase in homelessness and use of temporary accommodation.

Plan for Homes 4 sets out 6 themes of housing activity: affordable housing; market housing; private rented housing; supported and specialist housing; partnerships; with a cross-cutting theme of climate action.

Plan for Homes 4 also identifies 10 key strategic initiatives within these themes, which include a range of housing, planning, and wider corporate service activities to help meet identified housing needs, tackle homelessness, poor housing conditions, and reduce carbon emissions; exploring opportunities for increased delivery, greater innovation, and maximising investment for the homes the city needs.

3. Annual Grant funding for Homelessness

Plymouth City Council receives a ring-fenced Homelessness Prevention Grant from central Government via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

In addition, there has been a Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) grant allocated to local authorities over recent years and is part of the government strategy to address homelessness and rough sleeping as well as to improve services for individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Plymouth City Council has been in receipt of RSI funding on an annual basis since first application in 2018 and collaborating with the Plymouth Alliance has worked to design and deliver a holistic response to the prevention and relief of homelessness and rough sleeping.

The service delivery has developed over the years of the funding with a consistent core response. Services have been able to develop and grow in line with the funding opportunities and in response to the growing challenge.

Furthermore, there has been an increased focus on preventing households who are at acute risk of homeless/ and or rough sleeping with additional Winter Pressures Funding awarded in November 2024 and January 2025

Funding Stream	24/25 Award £	25/26 Award £
Homelessness Prevention Grant	1, 452,661	2,176,530
Rough Sleeper Initiative *	1,959,279	1,976,631
Winter pressures	Tranche 1 89,000 Tranche 2 188,000	

*includes Accommodation for Ex offenders (AFEO), and Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP)

4. Homelessness Service Demand

Approaches to the Community Connections Housing Options Team has risen significantly post Covid.

There is always a slight fall in the number of households approaching the housing options team in December, and compared to previous years, this years' fall is in line with previous years.

2024-25 Monthly data	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of households approaching for housing advice	357	345	383	418	396	396	405	402	296
New Applications	169	152	132	148	155	131	107	98	110
Number of new prevention cases (households at risk of homelessness within 56 days)	63	53	50	56	82	66	71	68	47
Number of new relief cases (already homeless)	72	58	58	63	64	50	52	50	57
1st Dec 2024 Snapshot data									
Total number of current cases held - all duties	1078	1151	1194	1282	1248	1092	1047	990	950
Total number of prevention (homeless within 56 days) cases held	247	284	291	318	323	314	308	291	269
Total number of relief (homeless) cases held	217	239	248	234	195	160	143	150	156
Total number of main duty owed (duty decision taken) cases held	266	266	256	258	263	288	280	272	275

The Housing Options Team continues to support a high level of homelessness cases. The number of households approaching because they are at risk of homelessness has steadily decreased over the last seven months albeit higher than April 2024.

Despite the challenging climate, between April and Nov 2024, the team has successfully: -

Prevented 243 households from becoming homeless

Supported 217 households away from homelessness within 56 days of them becoming homeless

Accepted a main duty and supported 238 households out of homelessness.

4.1 Client feedback on the team and the service:

“Getting into temp and Housing Options supporting me to do this has saved my life and I couldn’t have imagined I would have ever been able to leave the awful situation I was in”

“Thank you so much for your continued support and professionalism through this very traumatic time in my life”

“You were so polite, so caring and a shining light in a very dark period of my life”

“Thank you for your kindness and compassion when discussing the daunting situation and homelessness process. You immediately put me at ease and treated me like a human being rather than a box to be ticked or someone to be judged. You are an absolute credit to the job”

5. Temporary Accommodation Demand

Where homelessness and priority need is established, there is a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation.

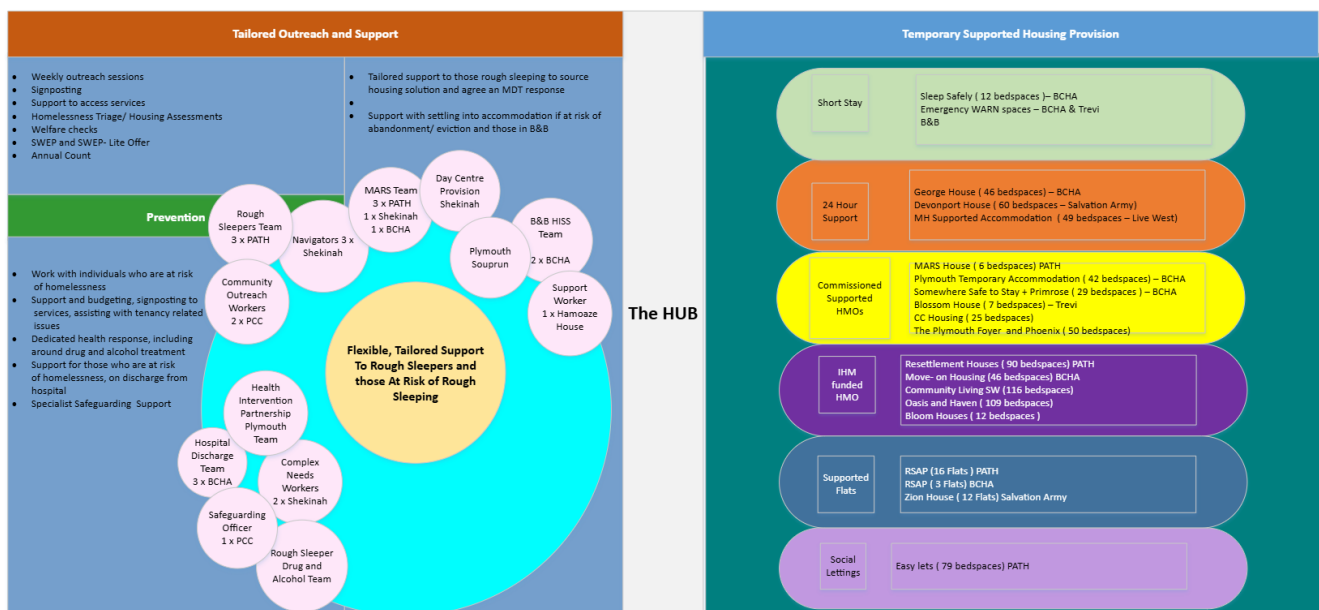
2024 Snapshot as at 1 st of month	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of households in temporary accommodation (all forms of temp)	354	360	367	379	365	347	358	357	370
Number of households with children/expected children in temporary accommodation	192	187	200	196	187	189	194	193	197
Total number of households in holiday lets/other nightly paid	45	43	41	39	37	37	36	34	42
Number of Households in B&B	187	185	194	200	173	162	174	176	166
Number of households with children/expected children in B&B	41	41	43	27	21	24	32	31	17
Number of households with children/ expected children in B&B_for MORE than 42 days	20	13	8	11	8	3	9	9	6

The increase in numbers presenting over recent years has seen a 162% increase in temporary accommodation demand.

6. Temporary Accommodation Provision Development

In April 2019, the Plymouth Alliance was launched, and homelessness temporary accommodation and supported housing, advice and support services were commissioned as part of the ‘complex lives’ procurement including services such as substance misuse, and some mental health provision. Plymouth City Council is one of eight organisations within the Plymouth Alliance

Using a collaborative model, the focus is on creating systemic change: changes to culture, funding structures, commissioning and policy which support a new, more integrated way of working. The Plymouth Alliance and deliver a range of accommodation and support services that work with people who are homeless/at risk of homelessness, these include:



Additionally, there has been a cross departmental focus on increasing cost effective, affordable temporary accommodation provision. A cross- departmental Housing Development Action Plan has been implemented and is additionally reviewed and updated by the Alliance Accommodation Subgroup which is well attended by providers and other relevant stakeholders.

The following tables detail the number of units that have been delivered and those are expected to be ready to let within the next 15 months.

7. Temporary Housing Delivery: Homeless Families:

Number of new units delivered since May 2023
78

New temporary accommodation for homeless families	Forecasted number of units (Pipeline)
Royal Building Refurbishment	Minimum of 30 flats
BCHA, in partnership with a private landlord	20 homes (fully delivered)
BCHA acquired properties utilised the capital funding from the Local Authority Homes Fund (LAHF)	8 homes (to be delivered by March 2026)
Expression of Interest approved for submission to LAHF for additional funds for temporary accommodation family homes. Awaiting outcome from MHCLG	15 homes (to be delivered by March 2026)
Plymouth Community Homes Regen Stock	10- 20

The number of family temporary accommodation units is set to increase by a further 95 homes.

7.1 Temporary Housing Delivery: Homeless Individuals and Couples:

Number of new units delivered since October 2023
6 units

New temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and couples	9. Forecasted number of units (Pipeline)
Planning permission for the Night Shelter provision has been approved and is now open throughout the year	12 bed spaces
Successful bid to Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) funding stream is being utilised to set up new units of supported housing	Total of 118 new units (to be delivered by April 2025- July 2025)
	Path Housing - 2 x 5-6 bed houses for individuals and couples with medium to high support needs
	YMCA and Young Devon – 47 x self-contained supported flats for young people with support needs

	BCHA 11 x Accessible self-contained supported homes for people with support and mobility needs
	Young Devon 4 x flats for young people with medium to high support needs
PATH are leasing additional provision	44 bedspaces from March 2025

The number of temporary accommodation bedspaces and self-contained properties for single people and couples is expected to increase by 118 units within the next 9-10 months.

8. Devon Home Choice Register

All social housing in Plymouth is let through the Devon Home Choice scheme. Homeless households can access a higher number of properties as 50% of all properties are advertised with a preference to statutory homeless households

There has been an increase in the number of active applications from 6801 in May 2024 to 7799 at the beginning of January 2025. The use of 50% homelessness preferences is continuing to increase the number of allocations to homeless households.

Eligible Homeless households are assessed as Band B (High Housing Need).

The table below captures the Band B housing needs for social housing properties of all sizes. (this includes households who are Band B for reasons other than homelessness e.g. overcrowding, high health and well-being needs)

Plymouth Housing Need by Band and Bedroom (01/11/2024)

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	6 Bed	7 Bed	Total
Band A	2	5	1					8
Band B	708	424	214	123	61	10	1	1541
Band C	370	509	529	191	18	2		1619
Band D	2011	384	101	18	3			2517
Band E	1097	697	284	32	4			2114
Total	4188	2019	1129	364	86	12	1	7799

We are seeing month on month increases in the number of active applications from 6801 in May 2024 to 7799 at the beginning of January 2025.

The use of 50% homelessness preferences is continuing to increase the number of allocations to homeless households:

Number of DHC Plymouth properties advertised in December	63
Number of DHC Plymouth properties advertised with a preference to homeless applicants in December	37

Number of DHC lets to Plymouth based applicants in December*	69
Number of DHC lets to Plymouth homeless clients in December*	31

*Please note that the lets in the December figures include homes that were advertised in November or before.

There continues to be a lack of social housing supply in Plymouth, which is illustrated by the overall number of Devon Home Choice lets. There has been a significant drop in available social housing since the Covid pandemic:

Lets to Plymouth based households	Total Lets	Monthly average
April 19 to March 20	1160	97
April 23 to March 24	874	73

The most recent monthly lets for December 2024:

Overall, no of lets to Plymouth based households	69
No of lets to Plymouth homeless households	31

9. Rough Sleeping

Rough Sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and the reasons for rough sleeping are diverse. The number of people rough sleeping with multiple needs and risks is increasing and there are limited suitable housing options and provision for this cohort.

Single Night Snapshot 2024	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of Rough Sleepers	37	34	34	44	42	26	29	40 *	25

*This was the Official Annual Rough Sleeper Count when there are an increased number of teams searching across the City

The PATH Rough Sleeper Team carry out a monthly snapshot of the number of rough sleepers seen on a single night. Long term rough sleeping, with complex lives has increased and is a reflection of the increased homelessness demand and the challenges people are facing.

Included in these figures are those with no recourse to public funds and those with no local connection. While these numbers are relatively low, teams work with individuals to sign post to relevant support and reconnect, where appropriate to their local authority area.

- In the last quarter 13 rough sleepers evidenced did not have a local connection and a further 9 rough sleepers did not have recourse to public funds.

The Council's Homelessness service works closely with all organisations delivering services to rough sleepers. Two dedicated Community Outreach Workers and the Rough Sleeper Team meet with rough sleepers in a range of locations and co-ordinate a multi-agency response.

PATH and BCHA will have a total of 23 units of new supported housing provision funded through the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme specifically for those experiencing rough sleeping available to let from April 2025.

The additional Winter Pressures Funding will support bespoke individual plans for those who are facing the most challenges to move away from the streets.

9.1 Winter arrangements for those Rough Sleeping

An all-year Night Shelter called Sleep Safely based at Hamoaze reopened in November 2024 following planning permission being granted and is now open all year round and accommodates 12 individuals nightly.

During very adverse weather where there is an amber weather warning, and/ or three consecutive days of below zero degrees, PATH and PCC lead on the delivery of SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) with organisations working with rough sleepers. During periods of SWEP, the approach is to ensure that each rough sleeper has an offer of accommodation.

- Devonport House can accommodate an additional eight individuals and George House an additional ten individuals.
- Cold weather provision is also delivered where the weather may affect wellbeing but there has been no weather warning or low temperatures forecast
- Where there is a yellow weather warning there may be additional provision offered to those rough sleepers that are particularly vulnerable due to their location or other complexities that make them a greater risk due to the weather conditions

10. Homelessness Recovery Programme Plans

Within the Homelessness Recovery Programme, the Accommodation delivery strand sits directly within the Plan 4 Homes and is part of the broader holistic strategic plan responding to housing needs and development in the City.

The purpose of the Homelessness Recovery Board has been to:

Have a continued, focused and co-ordinated multi-agency response to manage costs, benefits, risks and dependencies across the Homelessness Recovery Programme
 Deliver on the recommendations to reduce homelessness from the PCC Housing Task Force
 Develop and sign-off business cases and decision reports to deliver projects within the Homelessness Recovery Programme.

The Strategic Homelessness Programme brings together dedicated workstreams to drive the implementation of a robust response to the prevention of homelessness as well as the delivery of housing and related specialist services to those who are homeless in Plymouth

Our approach is to work in partnership with the Plymouth Alliance and other local organisations in the delivery of the actions within each of the plans.

For example, there is a key partnership with Plymouth Community Homes which has resulted in a number of successful initiatives including :-

- 260 households moved on from Temporary Accommodation since April 24, including 40 households in December 24, as a result
- An initial 10 units of temporary accommodation within regeneration stock with a possibility of more

The plans within the Programme are set out in seven dedicated action plans :-

Homelessness Delivery Plans	Key Objectives / Activities
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Children and Young People (CYP) Delivery Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of additional CYP specific supported accommodation with new Youth Hub placement arrangements • Updating the Joint Protocol around CYP Homelessness • Joint initiatives with stakeholders to reduce homelessness e.g. PCH and PCC collaboration around implementing training flats
Rough Sleeping and Single Homeless Delivery Plan	<p>Deliver Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) - to meet the need of single homeless and rough sleepers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PATH Houses for those with medium to high needs • BCHA self-contained accessible homes with individuals with accessibility needs and support needs <p>Deliver suitable additional temporary accommodation to meet needs of those who are Single Homeless / Rough Sleeping</p> <p>Develop innovative approaches to reduce long-term rough sleeping</p>
Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation and Whole Housing Response Plan	<p>Meeting all duties under safe Accommodation - Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Part 4 Duty)</p> <p>Deliver suitable additional temporary accommodation and support by ensuring that Homeless Families provision meets the Safe Accommodation legal definition</p>
Homeless Families Delivery Plan	<p>Actively working with providers to increase the supply of temporary, supported housing</p> <p>PCC Housing Acquisition Programme delivered by utilising: 10million service borrowing and up to £5 million Homes England funding to provide supported family temporary accommodation to reduce the need for expensive nightly paid accommodation</p> <p>Deliver suitable additional temporary accommodation using a short-term leasing model</p>
Accommodation Development Plan (contained within Plan for Homes 4)	<p>Increase affordable housing supply in Plymouth</p>
Supported Accommodation Review Plan	<p>Improve local supported housing standards and pivoting supported provision to need</p>
System Development and Support Plan	<p>Cross-departmental priorities and tasks to advance continuous improvement and performance management across the Homelessness System</p>

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Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Work Programme 2024/25



Please note that the work programme is a 'live' document and subject to change at short notice. The information in this work programme is intended to be of strategic relevance.

For general enquiries relating to the Council's Scrutiny function, including this Committee's work programme, please contact Rosie Brookshaw (Democratic Advisor) on 01752 305155.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for Consideration	Cabinet Member/Lead Officer
26 July 2024	Serious Violence Duty Action Plan & Funding Proposal	(3)	Deferred from the meeting on 21 February 2024.	Councillor Haydon/Tracey Naismith
	Plan for Public Toilets Review	(3)	Identified for consideration at a work programming meeting on 10 July 2024.	Councillor Penberthy/Ann Thorp
16 October 2024	Bereavement Services Update	(5)	Identified for Consideration at the 30 November 2022 meeting. A detailed report would be provided to scrutiny upon the transition to opening and the future of the Western Mill and Efford sites.	Councillor Haydon/Graham Smith
	General Update from Street Services Performance	(3)	Identified during a work programming session in July 2024.	Councillor Briars-Delve/Philip Robinson
4 December 2024	Housing and Homelessness (Verbal Update)	(4)	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	Councillor Penberthy/Matt Garrett/Jackie Kings
	City Centre Parking	TBC	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	Councillor Coker/Mike Artherton
	Household Waste and Recycling (to	TBC	Identified for consideration in 2022/23	Councillor Briars-Delve/Philip Robinson

	include Reuse and Food Waste)			
5 February 2025	Housing and Homelessness	(4)	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	Councillor Penberthy/Matt Garrett/Jackie Kings
	Introduction from the Chief Operating Officer	N/A	Identified at a work programming meeting on 10 July 2024	Jens Gemmel
	Customer Services Strategy	(4)	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	Councillor Dann/Jens Gemmel
	Improved Public Connectivity with City Council	(5)	Motion on Notice from 20 November 2023 meeting of City Council.	Councillor Dann/Pete Honeywell
TBC April 2025	Public Toilets Strategy Review	TBC	Motion on Notice from 29 January 2024 meeting of City Council.	Councillor Penberthy/Ann Thorp
	Grit Bin Policy Review	TBC	Identified for consideration at the October 2024 meeting.	Councillor Coker/Philip Robinson
Items to be scheduled for 2024/25				
2024/25	Child Poverty Plan	TBC	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	TBC
2024/25	Cost of Living Taskforce	TBC	Identified at Work Programme meeting on 10 June 2024.	TBC
2024/25	Public Sector Equalities Duty Compliance	TBC	Identified for consideration at the July 2024 meeting.	Councillor Penberthy/Kevin McKenzie
Items to be scheduled for 2025/26				
2024/25	Bus Shelter Contract	TBC		Councillor Coker/TBC
Items Identified for Select Committee Reviews				

Scrutiny Prioritisation Tool (P-Score)

Criteria	Explanation	Yes (=1)	Evidence	
Public Interest	Is it an issue of concern to partners, stakeholders and/or the community?			
Ability	Could Scrutiny have an influence?			
Performance	Is this an area of underperformance?			
Extent	Does the topic affect people living, working, or studying in more than one electoral ward of Plymouth?			
Replication	Will this be the only opportunity for public scrutiny?			
	Is the topic due planned to be the subject of an Executive Decision?			
Total:			High/Medium/Low	

Priority	Score
High	5-6
Medium	3-4
Low	1-2

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Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Tracking Decisions 2024/25

Minute No.	Recommendation/Action	Target Date, Officer Responsible and Progress
Minute 7 Serious Violence Duty Action Plan & Funding Proposal 26 July 2024	The Panel would be provided with the Annual Strategic Crime Data which would detail the priorities for the Community Safety Partnership for the following 12 months.	Date Due: December 2024. Officer: Tracey Naismith/ Devon and Cornwall Police Progress: Formal request made, data due December 2024.
Minute 9 Work Programme 26 July 2024	Request from a Cabinet Member to hold a task and finish group 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. Democratic Support to confirm if it was in the remit of the Panel and if so, organise session.	Date Due: 16 August 2024 Officer: Rosie Brookshaw/Ross Jago Progress: Late July 2024, confirmed as under the remit of this panel.
Minute 9 Work Programme 26 July 2024	Request from Panel Members that the relevant Cabinet Members provide them with a list of projects that would be of interest to scrutiny for this municipal year.	Date Due: 14 August 2024 Officer: Rosie Brookshaw Progress: Formal request made 31 July 2024. Chased 04 September 2024.

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