

**Oversight and Governance**

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HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 16 July 2025

2.00 pm

Council House, Plymouth

Members:

Councillor Finn, Chair

Councillor Gilmour, Vice Chair

Councillors Allison, Coker, Cuddihee, Dingle, Freeman, Loveridge, Penrose, Poyser 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 meeting room, Councillors are consenting to being filmed during the meeting and to the use of the recording for the webcast.

The Council is a data controller under the Data Protection Act. Data collected during this webcast will be retained in accordance with authority's published policy.

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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. Appointment of a Chair and Vice-Chair

To note the appointment of Councillor Finn as Chair and Councillor Gilmour as Vice-Chair for the 2025-26 Municipal Year.

3. Declarations of Interest

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

4. Minutes

(Pages 1 - 4)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2025.

5. Chair's Urgent Business

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

6. Grit Bin Policy Review:

(To Follow)

7. Central Park Ponds Project - Scrutiny Update Report:

(Pages 5 - 12)

8. Work Programme:

(Pages 13 - 16)

9. Action Log:

(Pages 17 - 18)

Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday 16 April 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Finn, in the Chair.
Councillor Blight, Vice Chair.
Councillors Cuddihee, Dingle, Goslin, Hendy, P.Nicholson, Poyser, Reilly and Stevens.

Also in attendance: Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities), Councillor Lawson (Building Bridges to Opportunity Champion), Councillor Penrose (Welcoming City Champion), Rosie Brookshaw (Democratic Advisor), Matt Garrett (Service Director for Community Connections), Sarah Gooding (Policy and Intelligence Advisor) and, Nick Shaw (Public Health Registrar).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.31 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.

34. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

35. **Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting held on 05 February 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

36. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

37. **Child Poverty Plan (Building Bridges to Opportunity)**

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) Cabinet approved in October 2024 that Plymouth City Council (PCC) would take a fresh approach to tackling poverty in Plymouth;
- b) The plan was to build a city approach to tackling poverty, beginning with PCC and expanding to existing partnerships. This would build on existing practices and principles such as co-production and asset based community

development, appreciate inquiry and trauma informed work;

- c) The economic strategy had a pillar on inclusive growth which would include work on tackling poverty;
- d) Building Bridges to Opportunity included tackling child poverty and the cost of living task force.

Nick Shaw (Public Health Registrar) added:

- e) The first stage of the work was to engage with people within PCC, within the wider communities working in organisations in Plymouth, people living in the community and partners in the voluntary and private sector to allow the framework to have a whole systems approach;
- f) The core aspect of the framework was to have an environment in Plymouth where the risk of falling into poverty was reduced and where people in poverty would be able to move themselves out;
- g) The principles guiding the development of the framework were around the whole systems approach, and focussed not on what PCC was doing for communities but how to work as a whole system, looking across the whole of the life course;
- h) Transport links would be optimised within the city so people who were living within local communities were able to access work, healthcare and opportunities;
- i) The next stage of the plan would be taking all information from previous work and understanding the core themes, alongside mapping strengths and areas of improvement within existing work.

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) added:

- j) PCC were awaiting the results of consultations on the Government's child poverty work.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- k) Child poverty had been removed as a statutory duty;
- l) There was a 21% difference in men's and women's hourly pay in Plymouth;
- m) In comparison to the National Living Wage Foundations rate of pay, women in Plymouth earned 50% less than the national average for women;
- n) PCC were providing 48 places of specialist housing for young people within the homelessness system which wasn't just a bed, but a self-contained flats;

- o) Building Bridges to Opportunity was not a public facing project and was focussed on partnerships to ensure the duplication of services was avoided;
- p) PCC were aware of the data being produced by the work Citizen's Advice and the University of Plymouth were undertaking;
- q) Skills and education from early years through to adulthood were key themes focussed on throughout the plan;
- r) The importance of Councillor Champions;
- s) The positive impact of partnership working;
- t) The final report would be brought back before the Scrutiny Panel prior to being presented to Cabinet.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

38. **Public Sector Equalities Duty Compliance**

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) A change in the approach to the Public Sector Equalities Duty Compliance was the focus;
- b) Staff networks were developing;
- c) The next action plan would be three years long, with a focus on the first year to make long-term decisions on how to ensure Public Sector Equalities was 'business as usual' for PCC;
- d) Funding from the Government post the riot on 05 August 2024 was channelled towards 42 community-based organisations to deliver change.

Councillor Penrose (Welcoming City Champion) added:

- e) PCC met with equality, diversity and inclusion institution firms from the University of Plymouth and the Hospital regularly;
- f) She had been involved with the organisation of the monthly international dinner.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- g) Encouraging others to include Care Experience as a protected characteristic was a focus for PCC.

The Panel agreed to note the covering report and the Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity document that had been received and approved by Cabinet on 10 March 2025.

39. **Work Programme**

During discussion the following requests were made to be added to the Work Programme:

- a) Central Park Communications Update.

The Panel agreed to note its Work Programme.

40. **Tracking Decisions**

The Panel agreed to note its Tracking Decisions document.

Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel



| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Date of meeting: | 16 July 2025 |
| Title of Report: | Central Park Ponds Project – Scrutiny Update Report |
| Lead Member: | Councillor Tom Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change) |
| Lead Strategic Director: | Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth) |
| Author: | Kathryn Deeney |
| Contact Email: | Kathryn.deeney@plymouth.gov.uk |
| Your Reference: | 250716 Central Park Ponds Project – Scrutiny Update Report |
| Key Decision: | No |
| Confidentiality: | Part I - Official |

Purpose of Report

In December 2024 a report was submitted to the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel in response to a public petition about the Central Park Ponds project. As a result of the scrutiny session the Scrutiny 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 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.

This report provides an update on the project since the December 2024 committee meeting. It includes an update on the physical works to the park but also on the linked communications plan.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. Note the report and update on the project.
Reason: The report updates Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Committee on the project including how the committee's recommendations have been progressed.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. Not provide an update and progression with meeting the committee recommendations – rejected.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Central Park is an allocation in the Joint Local Plan PLY19.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

No new implications as the project has an approved business plan and we are not proposing any changes to the delivery plans as a result of meeting the committees recommendations.

Financial Risks

No new risks

Legal Implications

None from the update on the project and communications plan.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

The projects is to deliver a Sustainable Urban Drainage system to help the city respond to the challenges of climate change, particularly increased rainfall, and improve the biodiversity value of this part of the park. The project will therefore have a positive impact on the environment.

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.*

None.

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 | 250716 Central Park Ponds Project – Scrutiny | | | | | | | |

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:

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|------------|-----|----|-----|--------|-----|---------------|-----|
| Fin | N/A | Leg | N/A | Mon Off | N/A | HR | N/A | Assets | N/A | Strat Proc | N/A |
| Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Philip Robinson | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 04/07/2025 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Tom Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change) <i>approved by email.</i> Date approved: 03/07/2025 | | | | | | | | | | | |

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CENTRAL PARK PONDS PROJECT – SCRUTNY UPDATE REPORT



SUMMARY

In December 2024 a report was submitted to the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel in response to a public petition about the Central Park Ponds project. There were five parts to the petition and the report answered each in turn. As a result of the scrutiny session the Scrutiny 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 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.

This report provides an update on the project since the December 2024 committee meeting. It includes an update on the physical works to the park but also on the linked communications plan.

CENTRAL PARK PONDS PROJECT – UPDATE

Since the December 2024 Committee meeting further works continued in delivering the landscaping elements of the project around the southern pond. A summary of the work completed since December 2024 are detailed below:

- Work was carried out around the south pond that had been suggested by park users. This included repositioning the wooden fencing above the swale that runs parallel to Coronation Avenue and removed the fencing from around Mawson's Field, allowing access to a large area for the first time in over a year.
- New steps from the stepping stones into Mawson's Field from Coronation Avenue were completed to make the muddy approach to the stepping stones more accessible.
- All of the shrub and tree planting around the south pond area was also completed and new permanent hooped fencing was installed.
- Areas of resurfacing were completed.
- A new handrail was fitted to the stepping stones to allow better access to Mawson's Field as requested by Park users.

It should be noted that the landscaping works were extracted from the main works contract and have been delivered by a separate contractor.

The main area of remaining work is the installation of the new playing pitches north of the ponds and the landscaping of Reservoir field.

DELAYS

The landscaping works around the site have been completed as planned around the southern pond but works stalled on the playing pitch works. When the report was presented to Committee in December 2024, we had assurance from the contractor that they would return to site in spring 2025 once the weather improved and there was an agreed return to site date in April. However, due to conflicting interpretation of the contract, the contractor chose not to return to site as agreed. Whilst we remain confident of our position following legal advice, discussions continue to resolve the matter and prevent a lengthy and costly formal dispute. In the meantime, we commenced the process of procuring an alternative contractor. Alternative contractors were identified, but we had to go through a compliant procurement process that took time to complete. The contract was awarded to a company who had previously worked on the site (through sub-contract) and so were familiar with the site and the park. They were able to mobilise quickly and can deliver the remaining works at pace.

FINAL PHASE OF WORKS

Work commenced on 23 June 2025 and includes:

- Moving soil from Barn Park sports pitch to Reservoir Field.
- Levelling the sports pitch
- Installing pitch drainage
- Levelling Reservoir Field
- Sowing the grass and completing the planting on the northern pond.

These works have required a diversion around a closed section in the park. This is required from a safety perspective as heavy machinery will be moving soil between different parts of the site. The works are estimated as taking 12 weeks, subject to weather conditions.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

One of the recommendations from the previous scrutiny meeting was to develop a comprehensive communications plan for the project going forward. The Communications Team developed a communications plan following the scrutiny session, but the communication plan is reliant on a project delivery programme, that in this case due to the dispute with the contractors, at certain

points didn't deliver as planned. Regular communication was maintained with the community as follows:

- Monthly updates to Ward Councillors.
- Monthly updates on the Central Park webpages.

Posters with the QR codes remained in the park so users could scan them and reach the pages quickly to get the latest update. The use of QR codes were recommended by the organisers of the petition.

At each update point, the communication was clear on what work had been completed but also updated on expected work and timelines. Initially the updates included expected start dates for the final works and then when this didn't happen the communications explained the issue with the contractor.

Since the new contractor has been appointed a detailed communication plan has been produced. This could not have been produced until a contractor programme was available. To date communications have included:

- Updates on Plymouth City Council News channels.
- Updates on the Central Park web pages.
- Announcements in Cabinet.
- New signage in the Park, including the QR code so users can find information on the works easily.

Planned communication going forward will include the following which will be published across social media and on the website:

- Key project milestones
- Completion of groundworks contractor announcement
- Start of Landscaping works

Update of signage in the park to explain that the fencing will remain in place until the grass is established.

- Spring update on landscaping establishment.
- Fences removed and project complete announcement.

The detailed communications plan was only possible once the new contractor had been secured to provide the programme detail to share with the public. As soon as the contractor was appointed Scrutiny's recommendation was fully implemented.

SUMMARY

Since the Central Park Pond project was presented to Scrutiny in December 2024, there have been unfortunate delays, which have been largely out of our control. This has meant implementing the Scrutiny recommendation in full has not been possible, until the last few weeks when a new contractor was appointed. Communications continued with monthly updates through social media and the website, which was linked to the QR codes in the park. However, a comprehensive communication plan was only possible once a contractor programme was available. This is all now in place so we can ensure we can keep park users up to date about progress during the final stage of the project.

Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel
 Work Programme 2025/26


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 Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor).

| Date of Meeting | Agenda Item | Prioritisation Score | Reason for Consideration | Responsible Cabinet Member/Lead Officer |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|--|
| 16 July 2025 | Grit Bin Policy Review | 3 | Following planned changes to Grit Bin provision / policy | Councillor Stephens/Philip Robinson |
| | Central Park Ponds Project | 4 | Amanda Pannell (petition author) has emailed to say the actions haven't been completed. Item was added to work programme for re-consideration in the last municipal year. | Kat Deeney |
| 22 October 2025 | Plymouth Active Leisure | 3 | Pre-decision scrutiny | Councillor Dann/Liz Slater |
| | Building Bridges to Opportunity | (4) | Report to be brought back to Scrutiny prior to being presented to Cabinet | Councillor Penberthy/Steve Maddern |
| | Homelessness Services Update - Planned savings in homelessness services | | | Jackie Kings |
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|---|-----------------------------------|-----|--|--------------------------------------|
| 10 December 2025 | | | | |
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| 11 February 2026 | | | | |
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| | | | | |
| Items to be scheduled for 2025/26 | | | | |
| 2025/26 | Public Toilets Strategy Review | (3) | Motion on Notice from 19 January 2024 meeting of City Council | Councillor Penberthy/Ann Thorp |
| 2025/26 | Bus Shelter Contract | (4) | Identified for consideration at the December 2024 Scrutiny Panel Meeting | Councillor Stephens |
| 2025/26 | Renters Rights Bill | | Changes in renters rights through new bill/law | Gary Walbridge |
| Items to be scheduled for 2026/27 | | | | |
| 2026/27 | | | | |
| 2026/27 | | | | |
| Items Identified for Select Committee Reviews | | | | |
| | | | | |

Scrutiny Prioritisation Tool

| | | Yes (=1) | Evidence |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| P ublic Interest | Is it an issue of concern to partners, stakeholders and/or the community? | | |
| A bility | Could Scrutiny have an influence? | | |
| P erformance | Is this an area of underperformance? | | |
| E xtent | Does the topic affect people living, working, or studying in more than one electoral ward of Plymouth? | | |
| R eplication | 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 – Action Log 2025/26

| 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 In Progress: Formal request made, data due December 2024. Chased by Matt Garrett April and 12 June 2025. |
| Improved Public Connectivity with Plymouth City Council 05 February 2025 | Request from Panel Members to receive the Contact Centre data from the past five years. | Due Date: ASAP Officer: Peter Honeywell In Progress: Data being compiled. Chased 08 April 2025. |
| Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update Jan 2025 05 February 2025 | Request from Panel Members to receive an overview and definition of 'local connection' in line with national guidance. | Due Date: ASAP Officer: Ruth Tune-Holmes In Progress: Request made 05 February 2025. Chased 08 April 2025. Gave advice on cascading the information on 24 April 2025. |

Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Action Log 2025/26

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|--|---|--|
| Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update Jan 2025 05 February 2025 | Request from Panel Members to receive information from Plymouth Community Homes regarding the breakdown of social housing statistics. | Due Date: ASAP Officer: Phil Burgoyne (Interim Head of Neighbourhoods, Homes and Communities, Plymouth Community Homes) Progress: Complete. Information shared with Panel Members 08 July 2025. |
|--|---|--|