



Oversight and Governance

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HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 11 February 2026
2.00 pm
Warspite Room, Council House

Members:

Councillor Finn, Chair

Councillor Gilmour, Vice Chair

Councillors Allison, Coker, Cuddihee, Dingle, Freeman, P.Nicholson, 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 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. Chair's Urgent Business

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

4. Minutes

(Pages 1 - 20)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2025.

5. Community Safety:

(Pages 21 - 30)

6. Community Cohesion:

(Pages 31 - 36)

7. Community Empowerment Programme (Thriving Communities):

(Pages 37 - 58)

8. Renters Rights Bill:

(Pages 59 - 66)

9. Work Programme

(Pages 67 - 70)

The Panel will be invited to add items to the Work Programme.

10. Action Log

(Pages 71 - 74)

For the Panel to review the progress of the Tracking Decisions Log.

Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday 10 December 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Gilmour, in the Chair.

Councillor Coker, Vice Chair.

Councillors Allison, Penrose, Poyser, Ricketts (Substitute for Councillor P.Nicholson), Simpson (Substitute for Councillor Dingle), and Stevens.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Cuddihee, Dingle, Finn, Freeman and P.Nicholson.

Also in attendance: Councillor Tom Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change), Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Experience, Sport, Leisure & HR, and OD), Councillor Chirs Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities), Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning), David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), Glenda Favor-Ankersen (Head of Elections and Democratic Support), Rhys Jones (Chief Executive, PAL), Caroline Marr (Senior Policy Advisor), Professor Steve Maddern (Director of Public Health), Andy Sharp (Interim Service Director, Street Scene and Waste), Ann Thorp (Facilities Manager, Soft Services), Gary Walbridge (Strategic Director for Adults, Health and Communities), Elliot Wearne-Gould (Principle Democratic, Governance and Scrutiny Officer), and Oliver Woodhams (Head of Finance).

The meeting started at 1.00 pm and finished at 3.20 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.

Appointment of a Vice-Chair

Due to the Chair's submission of apologies, Councillor Gilmour (Vice-Chair) Chaired this particular meeting.

The Panel agreed to appoint Councillor Coker as Vice-Chair for this particular meeting.

18. **Declarations of Interest**

There was one declaration of interest made:

Minute	Councillor	Interest	Description
21 – Plymouth Active Leisure	Poyser	Personal	Employee of YMCA

19. **Minutes**

The Panel agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2025 as a correct record.

20. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

21. **Plymouth Active Leisure (PAL)**

Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Experience, Sport, Leisure and HR and OD) introduced the PAL Contract Extension report and discussed:

- a) This was Councillor Dann's final report to Scrutiny as a Cabinet Member, and she was pleased to present it for pre-decision scrutiny;
- b) Plymouth Active Leisure Ltd (PAL) had been established in 2022 in extremely challenging circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic, opening with reduced visitor numbers at the same time as rapidly rising utility costs and inflation, which made the first year of operation particularly difficult;
- c) Councillor Dann had worked closely with Rhys Jones (Chief Executive of PAL) since 2023, undertaking significant work to stabilise and improve performance across the service;
- d) Despite a challenging start, PAL's current management arrangements had delivered a significant impact, with key performance highlights including:
 - i. memberships increasing by approximately 48%;
 - ii. growth in the swim school of around 31%;
 - iii. an increase in income of approximately 29%;
- e) The social impact of PAL's activities, measured using a recognised national social value tool, was estimated at around £11.7 million of added social impact for Plymouth's communities;
- f) The Life Centre alone welcomed over one million visits a year, with more than 50,000 unique users. PAL also operated other key facilities including the city's pools and outdoor leisure sites, demonstrating its reach beyond a single venue;
- g) In addition to sport and physical activity, PAL contributed to other Council priorities including tailored offers for looked after children and care leavers, and delivery of health-related programmes such as new "Active Referral" schemes for residents with long-term health conditions;

- h) PAL was due to receive national recognition from Swim England, with a memorandum of understanding due to be signed at the Life Centre, evidencing the quality and reputation of its swimming and aquatic offer;
- i) PAL formed part of the Council's "family of companies", which allowed a more commercial, flexible approach while retaining strategic control and alignment with corporate priorities;
- j) A new Chair had been appointed to the PAL Board in 2024 and, since that appointment, a full strategic review of PAL had been undertaken to address early issues, ensure financial sustainability, and position PAL to grow and move into its "next phase";
- k) The Strategic Plan underpinned PAL's contribution to "Thrive Active", including the ambition to make Plymouth the most physically active coastal city, and to support residents to live happier, healthier and more active lives;
- l) The Strategic Plan was built around three core pillars:
 - i. increasing participation and engagement;
 - ii. improving health and wellbeing;
 - iii. inspiring people in Plymouth, including supporting the development of talented swimmers and divers and running facilities to a consistently high standard;
- m) Sustainability was central to PAL's ambitions, both in terms of financial resilience and environmental responsibility, including work to reduce carbon emissions from facilities;
- n) PAL had developed an ambitious 20-year financial plan which would involve total investment of approximately £200 million over the lifetime of the contract. The scale of commitment was a key reason for bringing the proposal to scrutiny;
- o) Under the proposed business plan, the Council's annual management fee would reduce significantly over time, from around £700,000 per year to approximately £50,000 per year. By the end of the plan, the arrangement was forecast to generate a budget surplus;
- p) Due to the way PAL was structured, a proportion of the surpluses generated would be reinvested directly back into the Life Centre and other facilities to meet ongoing and historic maintenance needs, recognising that running large, complex leisure facilities, particularly pools, required substantial and sustained investment;
- q) PAL had taken out start-up loans at the point of its creation, and servicing and repaying these loans was built into the longer-term financial package and business plan presented to the Panel;

- r) To enable the scale of investment and to provide certainty, PAL was seeking a new 20-year contract with appropriate break clauses for both parties, allowing the development of a long-term investment plan while ensuring that both PAL and the Council could review progress and, if necessary, reconsider the arrangements at defined points;
- s) Council officers, led by the Director of Public Health and the Leisure Partnership Manager, had undertaken detailed due diligence on the proposals, supported by external consultants, and the detail of this work was set out in the written report;
- t) As part of the proposed extension, there would be a detailed suite of annual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), an annual business planning process, and strengthened governance arrangements, including a proposal for an annual report back to scrutiny;
- u) In Councillor Dann's view, setting up PAL had been the right decision. Over the last three years the company had become more successful each year, with ambitious plans that aligned strongly with the city's "Active Thrive" ambitions and the wider public health agenda;
- v) The proposals would place PAL on a long-term, sustainable footing, enabling it to be creative and innovative and to further develop links with the National Marine Park and the wider creative and leisure sectors in the city;
- w) From the Council's perspective, the proposal represented a financially beneficial option which would reduce liabilities over time, create the potential for future profit, and deliver significant social and health outcomes for residents, supported by a committed Chief Executive and a strengthened Board.

Oliver Woodhams (Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer) provided an overview of the financial modelling and risks and discussed:

- x) The existing £1.6 million working capital loan from the Council reflected the difficult post-COVID start-up period and remained owed by PAL;
- y) Although PAL was on a recovery trajectory, detailed financial modelling indicated that further working capital support of between approximately £0.7 million and £0.9 million would be required to maintain adequate working capital and provide an appropriate "cushion" to enable PAL to trade efficiently and effectively;
- z) The financial model underpinning the proposals was prudent and there was a strong track record of recent improvement alongside additional growth opportunities that had not yet been built into the model, representing potential "upside risk";

- aa) External consultants had independently reviewed and challenged the Council's assumptions and concluded that they were reasonable;
- bb) There was inevitably financial risk associated with the decision and it would be wrong to present it as risk-free, but further due diligence, sensitivity analysis and modelling would be carried out in advance of the Cabinet decision in February;
- cc) Governance measures, including financial KPIs, annual business planning, and strengthened oversight, were being developed to monitor ongoing performance and risk.

Rhys Jones (Chief Executive, Plymouth Active Leisure) addressed the Panel and discussed:

- dd) A detailed set of draft KPIs had been developed, in collaboration with the Director of Public Health, and would shortly be considered by the PAL Board;
- ee) The KPIs covered expected areas such as attendance, demographics, age profiles, financial performance and social outcomes, and were designed to be output and outcome-focused, reportable and of clear value to the Council;
- ff) The new Strategic Plan was explicitly Plymouth-focused, aligned with the Plymouth Plan and wider city priorities, and had been developed following engagement with Cabinet Members and officers across portfolios;
- gg) Governance arrangements within PAL had been significantly strengthened over the previous 12 months, including refreshed Board membership, the creation of relevant sub-groups and enhanced self-scrutiny, making the organisation "night and day" compared to its early years;
- hh) Rhys Jones viewed the current position as "ground zero" in terms of having the right governance, leadership, and plan in place, and that PAL now needed the opportunity to deliver what should have been achievable from day one;
- ii) The company had dealt with three extremely challenging years characterised by unprecedented increases in utility costs and above-inflation rises in the National Minimum Wage which could not have been predicted when PAL was created in 2021;
- jj) Despite these challenges, PAL had stabilised operations and developed a plan to repay historic debts and deliver additional benefits for residents;
- kk) There was substantial untapped potential in areas such as the swim school and diving programme, which were not yet back to their pre-COVID levels, giving confidence that additional growth was achievable;

- ll) A recent gym refurbishment at the Life Centre, funded through Council borrowing, had already out-performed its original business case, providing further evidence that PAL could deliver solid, realistic business plans;
- mm) Given the existing footfall (over one million visits a year to the Life Centre alone) and the breadth of new opportunities, Rhys was confident that PAL could deliver the growth and income required under the proposed plan.

Professor Steve Maddern (Director of Public Health) contributed on governance and contractual arrangements and discussed:

- nn) The proposed break clauses were a central feature of the contract extension and were designed to give assurance both to the Council and to PAL;
- oo) The first substantive break clause was proposed at around five years, allowing the Council to review whether the additional working capital support had delivered the expected improvements and to reconsider the contract if necessary;
- pp) Further break clauses would be built in over the term of the contract, providing additional checkpoints and flexibility;
- qq) The KPIs were scheduled to be finalised and agreed by the PAL Board within the month and were significantly more robust than those in place 12–14 months previously.

David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development) added:

- rr) As Chair of the PAL Board, he had legal duties under the Companies Act and that his fiduciary responsibility was to PAL rather than directly to the Council, which required him to be satisfied as to the financial resilience of the business before supporting the proposals;
- ss) The business was fundamentally sound but required two key things: sufficient working capital to address start-up and post-COVID pressures, and investment to deliver a growth plan capable of servicing its debts over the life of the contract;
- tt) Approximately £1.9 million in start-up costs was entirely predictable for a new business of this nature and the proposals would put PAL on a stable footing to manage these costs and future investment;
- uu) The plan would lever approximately £200 million over the term of the contract, reduce the management fee from around £700,000 to £50,000 within the first 10 years, and generate an estimated £4 million surplus by the end of the plan;
- vv) The plan would provide a £250,000 per annum facilities management budget and a further £4 million capital contribution to maintain and improve facilities,

while fully dealing with all loans and generating approximately £4.7 million of new income;

- ww) Extensive Board development, including three away days and a detailed governance review, had taken place. The Board collectively “owned” the vision and financial plan;
- xx) The culture within PAL was positive, with a high-quality Chief Executive, new appointments in finance and business roles, and strong staff commitment;

In response to questions, the Panel discussed:

- yy) Concerns about financial fragility, higher-than-anticipated costs and lower-than-expected savings, and whether the proposals were sufficiently robust rather than simply reflecting an aspiration for PAL to succeed;
- zz) The scale of the additional working capital request (up to approximately £0.9 million) on top of the existing £1.6 million loan, and the evidence that PAL would be able to repay both existing and new loans over the life of the contract;
- aaa) The importance of clearly defined, measurable KPIs and whether these had been fully drafted and agreed, noting that Members wished to see KPIs covering participation, demographics, health outcomes, financial performance and social value aligned to key city strategies such as the Plymouth Plan;
- bbb) The national context in which many leisure facilities and operators were under severe financial pressure and, in some cases, closing, and whether PAL’s assumptions about growth and surplus generation were realistic in that environment;
- ccc) PAL already benefitted from an exceptional asset base and very strong footfall at the Life Centre and other venues, which placed it in a different position to some national comparators, but ongoing monitoring of risk remained essential;
- ddd) The full range of strategic options that had been considered, including:
 - i. ceasing the service, which was deemed wholly unacceptable given over one million annual visits and the significant social and health impacts of the leisure offer;
 - ii. bringing the service fully in-house, which had been modelled but was assessed as significantly more expensive due to business rates, staff terms and pension liabilities, and would place a specialist commercial operation wholly within the Council’s structures;
 - iii. outsourcing to a national leisure operator, which had been tried previously and failed to align with Plymouth’s strategic objectives,

focusing on “facility management” rather than the broader health and community outcomes now sought;

- eee) Retaining PAL as a Teckal company within the Council’s family of companies allowed the Council to retain strategic control and influence over the business plan and health objectives, whilst benefitting from the tax, regulatory and commercial freedoms of a company model;
- fff) Whether protections existed for local community pools and facilities in the event that PAL did not meet income targets, and the reassurance that decisions on closing facilities were reserved matters for the Council as shareholder rather than decisions for the PAL Board alone;
- ggg) Examples such as Plympton Pool, which now operated profitably and Mount Wise Pools, which remaining free to local residents. This evidenced PAL’s commitment to maintaining a broad community offer, with no current intention to close facilities;
- hhh) Decisions on specific capital investment schemes would be subject to separate approval through the Council’s capital programme governance;
- iii) Financial modelling indicated that over the medium to long term, business growth would be sufficient to repay existing and new loans, reduce the management fee, and still generate surpluses that could be reinvested in facilities or released as savings to the Council;
- jjj) Recognition by officers that there was financial risk associated with the preferred option, balanced against the risks of alternative options such as “doing nothing”, not extending the contract, or withdrawing support, which could leave PAL vulnerable, threaten key assets and increase the likelihood of PAL defaulting on existing loans;
- kkk) The governance framework for PAL, including:
 - i. the presence of a public health consultant on the Board;
 - ii. the appointment of two experienced non-executive directors with substantial local authority leisure and commercial fitness sector backgrounds;
 - iii. the voluntary nature of Board roles;
 - iv. the exploration of additional mechanisms such as a finance sub-committee and enhanced performance reporting;
- lll) The perceived complexity of the Council’s relationship with PAL, and the implications of PAL being a Teckal company;
- mmm) Nervousness regarding the length of the proposed extension and the scale of the financial commitment, alongside strong support for the ambition to

provide high-quality, accessible leisure services and to maintain the Life Centre and other facilities as major assets for the city;

- nnn) The value of ongoing scrutiny in providing assurance, with members expressing a desire for regular, structured oversight of KPIs, financial performance, delivery against break-clause expectations and progress on loan repayment.

The Panel agreed:

- I. To review, comment and endorse option 4.5 (as set out in the report) to retain the services of PAL and in doing so:
 - i. To provide further working capital support to PAL, and to agree revised repayment terms for existing loans;
 - ii. To endorse an extension to the existing 10-year contract with PAL (current end of term March 2032), with a break-clause at the point where all working capital loans are estimated to be repaid, noting that the revised contract will contain a number of performance indicators and other provisions to mitigate the Council's financial risk and ensure the delivery of outcomes;
 - iii. Note that to underpin the growth in income required to repay working capital loans, PAL will bring forward a number of capital investment projects which will be subject to approval through the Council's Capital Programme procedures and governance;
2. To recommend that a Plymouth Active Leisure performance update be presented to the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel prior to significant contractual milestones for the duration of the extended contract, in order to ensure robust monitoring of KPIs, financial and contract performance (including progress against loan repayments, management fee reductions and any break-clause triggers).

22. **Commemorations and Celebrations PCC Policy**

Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development, and Communities), Caroline Marr (Senior Policy Advisor) and Glenda Favor-Ankersen (Head of Elections and Democratic Services) introduced the Commemorations and Celebrations Policy and discussed:

- a) Plymouth City Council had a long-established civic tradition of marking special and significant days each year through civic events, lighting Council-owned buildings and flying flags, as well as opening books of condolence and organising moments of silence;
- b) The Council's existing flags protocol dated back to 2016, had never been a published document and largely repeated central Government guidance, providing no clear, transparent process for officers to follow when requests

were made, and no indication for members of the public about how, where or when to make requests;

- c) In recent years, the Council had experienced an increase in ad-hoc requests from residents and communities to light buildings or fly a flag in connection with particular illnesses, conditions, or traumatic experiences, often made at very short notice, which was disruptive and inconsistent;
- d) The current informal position meant that requests were often made directly to Cabinet Members on the basis of personal acquaintance. The intention of the new Policy was to democratise the process so that residents could submit requests via a clear public route rather than through personal contacts;
- e) The Council owned a significant number of flagpoles across its corporate estate, sitting under different service areas, budgets, and management arrangements. The draft Policy was the first of two papers intended to support wider asset management work by providing consistency in how flagpoles were used, regardless of which part of the Council managed them;
- f) The Policy was built on two core principles:
 - i. Political neutrality – the Council, as a corporate body, would not use flags or lighting to express support for particular political parties or political causes;
 - ii. Inclusivity and fostering community cohesion – ensuring that commemorations and celebrations supported, rather than undermined, relationships between communities in the city;
- g) The Policy summarised key points from Government guidance and relevant planning legislation, including the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2007, and clearly set out which flags were on the Government’s ‘pre-approved’ list so that both officers and the public understood the planning constraints;
- h) The draft Policy established locally agreed criteria for requests to:
 - i. fly a guest flag;
 - ii. light a Council-owned building (predominantly Smeaton’s Tower at this stage);
 - iii. hold a civic moment of silence;
 - iv. open a book of condolence;
- i) The Policy explicitly recognised “exceptional circumstances” in which the Council might reasonably wish to act at shorter notice, for example, to celebrate Plymouth Argyle reaching a significant stage in a cup competition,

or to mark the achievements of Olympians. Discretion was reserved for flag-flying and lighting outside normal notice periods, so that “special” moments that mattered to the city could still be marked appropriately;

- j) The policy was designed to ensure a clear, accessible and transparent process (including an online request route) for members of the public to request the flying of guest flags, particularly outside the Guildhall, and the lighting of Smeaton’s Tower, as the current arrangements were not open or widely understood;
- k) Pre-decision scrutiny was being undertaken prior to Cabinet’s consideration to enable the draft to be discussed in public, and to enable feedback from Members and the wider community to be reflected in the final version.

In response to questions, the Panel discussed:

- l) The absence of the flag of St Andrew from the list of Government-approved flags in the draft documentation, and the need to confirm whether this was an omission in the draft or reflected the current Government list;
- m) Confirmation that the Equalities Calendar was accessible under the equalities section of the Council’s website, and that whilst the Council often marked those days in a variety of ways, inclusion of events on the calendar did not guarantee that a building would be lit or a flag flown, as each request would still need to be considered against the Policy’s criteria;
- n) Clarification that an annex to the report set out a detailed list of all flagpoles owned by the Council, specifying which flags would ordinarily be flown at which locations, and on which occasions, so that practice was consistent and easy to understand;
- o) Perceptions among some residents that they might no longer be allowed to fly a flag “in their back garden”. Reassurance was provided that:
 - i. the Policy conferred no additional powers, controls, resources or enforcement capability on the Council in respect of flags flown by residents or businesses on their own premises;
 - ii. people remained free to fly flags on their property, provided they complied with existing planning rules and national guidance, which had not changed;
- p) Planning records, which indicated that 111 planning applications had been received incorporating the word “flag”, predominantly related to applications for flags on business premises or temporary flags for events;
- q) The importance of distinguishing between:
 - i. the Council’s internal process for considering requests to use Council-owned assets (buildings, flagpoles and civic functions);

- ii. the wholly separate national planning regime that applied to flags and advertisements on private land and buildings;
- r) Suggestions from Members that the section of the Policy dealing with residents' "liberty to fly flags" should be strengthened, providing clear signposting so that householders wishing to fly their national flag on a domestic flagpole could easily find out how to do so safely, legally and considerately, without inadvertently breaching planning rules or causing neighbour disputes;
- s) Assurance from officers that, in light of public comments and this discussion, the final Policy and associated materials would:
 - i. clearly state that planning advice would not be provided within the Policy itself;
 - ii. include prominent links, on both the introductory webpage and the online request form, to the national Planning Portal and to the Council's own planning guidance, so that residents seeking to fly flags on their own property could access the appropriate technical advice;
- t) The complexity of planning law around flags, including detailed exemptions and the consequent risk of the Council inadvertently giving incorrect advice if it tried to paraphrase planning regulations within the Policy;
- u) Potential tensions between the Policy's principles of ensuring that all communities felt represented and respected, and the principle of avoiding commemorations that could be seen as exclusive or inflammatory. It was explained that the Policy would enable officers the time and framework to consider the broader impact of a proposed commemoration and to avoid rushed or reactive decisions that might unintentionally cause harm, by:
 - i. consulting relevant community groups;
 - ii. engaging with the Council's own community safety and equalities teams;
 - iii. liaising, where appropriate, with partners such as the police;
- v) Clarification that the Council could, and did take enforcement action against advertising and signage (such as over-sized billboards) which breached planning rules, and that the Policy would reaffirm the Council's right to take action where appropriate, including in respect of flags or markings placed on Council-owned assets without consent;
- w) Confirmation that decisions about flags on street lighting columns sat under a different Cabinet portfolio (Highways) and were outside the scope of this Policy, which focused on civic and corporate estate assets;

- x) Suggestions that, where feasible, the Council should explore coordinating lighting arrangements for Smeaton's Tower with the Tamar Bridge, given historic requests for both landmarks to be lit in the same colours for particular causes or celebrations;
- y) Acknowledgement that online feedback and social media comments about the draft Policy had been mixed, with some remarks being inflammatory but others raising helpful points of clarification. These comments would be reviewed alongside scrutiny feedback when refining the final draft;
- z) Recognition across the Panel that many residents' primary association with the Policy would, in practice, be the lighting of Smeaton's Tower, given its popularity and visibility, and that the proposed open and transparent process for considering lighting requests would therefore be particularly important.

Action: Officers to verify whether the flag of St Andrew is correctly included on the Government's list of flags that may be flown without express consent, and to amend the draft Policy and appendices as necessary to ensure accuracy;

Action: Officers to clarify, within the final Policy and supporting documents, the relationship between the Council's Equalities Calendar and the Commemorations and Celebrations Policy, making clear that inclusion on the Equalities Calendar does not in itself guarantee that a building will be lit or a flag flown, but that such days may be considered against the Policy's criteria;

Action: Officers to liaise with the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry undertaking to explore opportunities to coordinate lighting requests for Smeaton's Tower and the Tamar Bridge where appropriate, and to reflect any operational limitations or differences in public-facing information;

Action: Officers to strengthen the clarity and accessibility of public guidance on flag-flying and lighting on private property.

The Panel agreed:

- I. To review and provide feedback on the draft Policy.

23. **Public Toilets Strategy Review**

Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) introduced the Public Toilets in Plymouth Briefing Report and discussed:

- a) Councillor Penberthy had been asked to undertake two related pieces of work: to review the Council's public toilet strategy and to develop an asset management strategy, noting that public toilets formed part of the wider corporate estate;
- b) As work progressed, it had become clear that the most useful immediate product was not a detailed stand-alone public toilet strategy for the existing

estate, but a clear set of principles to guide decisions about all toilets owned by the Council that were open to the public, whether or not they were classified as “public toilets”;

- c) These principles would be used to inform future planning and development work, including the next Joint Local Plan (JLP), proposals for a new town in the city centre, and other development opportunities, by setting out what the Council meant in practical terms when it said new developments should provide appropriate public toilet facilities and where those should be located;
- d) The briefing note contained high-level information about the current estate but was focused on establishing the key principles that officers and Members could apply consistently when planning, managing and investing in the corporate estate, rather than prescribing detailed changes to individual toilets at this stage;
- e) Having a clear, agreed framework of principles would make it easier to plan maintenance, prioritise investment and advise Members transparently on options and trade-offs;
- f) That the same set of principles was intended to be used across three major areas of work: the Strategic Asset Management Plan, the preparation of the new Local Plan, and work on the “new town” proposals in the city centre, so that decisions about toilets were consistent across planning, regeneration and estate management;
- g) That public toilets were a non-statutory service, funded from the same capital budgets that were required for other critical assets such as sea defences, corporate buildings, operational depots, scheduled monuments, memorials, and other office buildings, and therefore needed to be considered alongside over 1,000 other corporate assets;
- h) The principles proposed included ensuring public toilet provision at key transport interchanges, in areas of high visitor and tourist footfall such as the waterfront and Barbican, and in heavily used green and blue spaces, in order to support the city’s economy, tourism offer and residents’ health and wellbeing;
- i) Footfall data had been mapped against Council-managed public toilets, toilets available to the public in Council buildings and toilets provided by partners’
- j) Where future development created new areas of demand, the principles were intended to support the Council in seeking contributions from developers (for example, securing toilet provision as part of new schemes) rather than relying solely on limited Council capital budgets;
- k) The briefing note emphasised the role of partnership working, including with statutory partners and with organisations whose existing toilets already served as de facto public provision, and that the Council did not need to duplicate such facilities;

- l) While there had been a historic focus on “what to close and how” when budgets were under pressure, Councillor Penberthy was proud that, to date, no public toilets had been closed during his tenure, and that the proposed principles (including a stronger emphasis on key transport hubs) had already resulted in locations such as the St. Budeaux toilets being removed from previous closure lists;
- m) This work was being taken forward as part of the wider Strategic Asset Management Plan, and the intention was to bring the emerging asset management strategy, including the public toilets element, back to scrutiny in stages for comment and review;

Ann Thorp (Facilities Manager, Soft Services) added:

- n) The approach to repairs and maintenance of public toilets in the past had been largely ad-hoc and had not always taken into account wider considerations such as future changes in the local area, other nearby publicly accessible toilets, or anticipated changes to how residents and visitors would use the city;
- o) By embedding the new principles into the Strategic Asset Management Plan, officers would be able to review Council-managed public toilets alongside other publicly accessible toilets (for example, in libraries, museums, leisure centres and partner-managed sites), with a focus on value for money, lifetime cost and fitness for purpose;
- p) Examples such as the former public toilets next to the Museum and Library (now effectively replaced by public access to toilets at The Box) illustrated how, in some locations, the Council could reduce the number of small standalone toilet buildings without reducing overall access to facilities, provided that alternative provision was well publicised and genuinely accessible;
- q) There was ongoing work with partners to collate and publish information on all toilets that were accessible to the public, whether Council-managed or partner-provided, on the Council’s website. The intention was for the “Public Toilets” section of the website to evolve into a comprehensive directory of “toilets that are publicly accessible”;
- r) Once partners had formally agreed to be included, officers would be able to progress improved physical signposting and other communications so that residents and visitors could find facilities quickly when needed.

In response to questions, the Panel discussed:

- a) Frustrations among Members and residents about public toilet condition and availability, and the perception that, despite previous reviews and discussions, there had been little visible improvement on the ground over many years;

- b) Reassurance that while the report focused on principles, those principles were explicitly aimed at supporting the case for keeping toilets open and improving them over time, rather than planning closures because the Council could not afford to maintain them;
- c) Capital budgets for toilets were not ring-fenced, but combined with the budget for the entire corporate estate, meaning that investment decisions had to balance needs across sea defences, operational depots, civic buildings, scheduled monuments, memorials and other Council assets as well as public toilets;
- d) Feedback from Members that a clearer, more transparent framework could help the public understand how individual toilets were assessed, including criteria, scoring, and how decisions were reached about refurbishment, replacement or closure;
- e) Clarification that by applying the principles, the Council could phase investment in a fair and transparent way, and could also identify opportunities to integrate toilets into larger capital schemes;
- f) The example of Central Park, where public toilets, a café and the Life Centre all sat in close proximity, raising questions about whether this remained the most efficient configuration for providing public toilets and whether a more integrated approach might better serve users and reduce costs;
- g) Recognition that some Councillors and members of the public felt uncomfortable walking into buildings such as The Box purely to use the toilet without making a purchase, and that any strategy relying on “community toilet” or partner-based provision would need to address these cultural and perception issues through clear communication and signposting;
- h) The role of key transport hubs in the new principles, with Members noting that this had already influenced operational decisions (for example, the retention of toilets at St Budeaux as a key transport interchange), and welcoming the shift away from closure-driven lists towards a more proactive approach to where toilets were most needed;
- i) The timetable for the Strategic Asset Management Plan, with Members seeking assurance that scrutiny would be involved before final decisions were taken. It was confirmed that specific asset groups would be brought to scrutiny in stages as principles and options were developed;
- j) The importance of partnership working and existing examples where partner toilets already provided effective public coverage, such as Derriford Hospital and the toilets provided at Tamar Bridge and by the Torpoint Ferry, and the opportunity to replicate that model elsewhere in the city to broaden the reach of a non-statutory service as far as possible.

Action: Officers to continue working with partners to compile and publish comprehensive information on all toilets that were publicly accessible in the city

(including partner-provided facilities) on the Council's website, and to explore improved physical signposting once partner participation had been confirmed.

The Panel agreed:

1. To note the Public Toilets Briefing Report;
2. To note that detailed proposals regarding individual public toilet sites would be brought back to scrutiny as part of the wider Strategic Asset Management Strategy, rather than through a separate, stand-alone public toilet strategy.

24. **Central Park Ponds**

Councillor Tom Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change) introduced the Central Park Ponds Update Report and discussed:

- a) This was the third scrutiny update on the project within the year;
- b) The July 2025 report had included a bullet-pointed list of works scheduled for the summer, and each of those commitments had now been delivered;
- c) Soil movement from Barn Park Sports Pitch to Reservoir Field had been completed alongside levelling of the sports pitch, installation of pitch drainage, and levelling of Reservoir Field;
- d) Grass seeding across the affected areas had been undertaken and was now completed;
- e) Planting on the northern pond remained underway in accordance with the seasonal requirements for tree planting, with winter being the optimum planting period. Tree-planting works would continue over the coming month;
- f) Additional works beyond those originally listed had also been completed, including end-of-season maintenance at South Pond and improvements to fencing around Reservoir Field;
- g) The previous six months had been "incredibly productive" following earlier challenges, and officers were now providing the regular updates that scrutiny had previously requested.

In response to questions, the Panel discussed:

- h) Recognition of visible improvement on site, and welcomed confirmation of the completed phases of work;
- i) Recognition of residents concerns and frustrations. It was confirmed that the only remaining elements were tree planting, minor fencing adjustments and final asset checks, and that most delays related to protecting newly seeded ground. Temporary fencing remained in one section due to fresh grass seeding;

- j) Councillor Briars-Delve emphasised that removing the fencing prematurely would have resulted in trampling, mud, and the need for reseeded the following year;
- k) While no exact removal date could be given due to weather dependency, fencing would be removed as soon as the ground was stable enough to withstand footfall;
- l) Some fencing sections had partially fallen, giving the impression that fencing had been abandoned. It was confirmed that staff from the Green Communities Team, who were regularly on-site, would continue monitoring fencing with project team oversight during landscaping activity;
- m) Members were encouraged to report collapsed fencing as casework so it could be corrected immediately;
- n) Members sought reflections on learning from the project to inform future parks schemes. Councillor Briars-Delve highlighted the impact of climate change on rainfall intensity and frequency, referencing that August 2025 had seen the second-highest daily rainfall in Plymouth's recorded history;
- o) Sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) would need to feature more prominently in future projects across Council green spaces and in partnership schemes with organisations such as Plymouth Community Homes;
- p) Lessons from Central Park were already being applied to the Trefusis Park scheme in Lipson Vale, another SuDS-driven project affecting up to 150 properties, where improved communications, school visits, public engagement, monthly updates and contract management processes had directly drawn on Central Park experience;
- q) Members welcomed the positive progress at Trefusis Park and recognised the importance of resilience-based planning given predicted increases in rainfall.

Action: Officers to continue monitoring and maintaining temporary fencing and to respond promptly to reports of fallen sections.

The Panel agreed:

- I. To note the update on the Central Park Ponds Project.

25. **Work Programme**

Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor) introduced the Work Programme and discussed:

- a) The Panel's next meeting was scheduled for 11 February 2026;

b) A draft theme had been identified covering three linked areas: antisocial behaviour, community cohesion and community safety;

c) Members were invited to contribute further items to the work programme.

The Panel agreed to note the work programme.

26. **Action Log**

The Panel agreed to note the progress of the Tracking Decisions Log.

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Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	11 February 2026
Title of Report:	Community Safety Update
Lead Member:	Councillor Sally Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Events, Cemeteries & Crematoria)
Lead Strategic Director:	Gary Walbridge (Strategic Director for Adults, Health and Communities)
Author:	Matt Garrett, Service Director for Community Connections
Contact Email:	Matt.Garrett@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	n/a
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report is to provide Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel with a community safety update.

The report highlights operational work being undertaken by the Council's Community Safety team in addition to partnership work being undertaken with Devon and Cornwall Police to resolve crime, anti-social behaviour and disorder in Plymouth.

In addition, the report highlights ongoing work to improve community cohesion within the city, including through projects funded by the Community Recovery Fund.

Information is also included around Devon and Cornwall Police's approach to effective community engagement.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. For Scrutiny Panel to review, comment on, and note the updates in relation to ongoing partnership work to make Plymouth a safer city.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. Not applicable

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Our Corporate Plan highlights the Council's priorities to work with the Police to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and to keep children, adults and communities safe.

The Plymouth Plan highlights the Council's commitment to ensuring people live in happy, healthy, safe and aspiring communities.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

No financial implications from this report.

Financial Risks

No financial risks from this report.

Legal Implications

No legal implications from this report.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

No environmental implications from this report.

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.*

No other implications.

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	Community Safety Briefing Paper							
B	Community Cohesion Briefing Paper							

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
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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Matt Garrett

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

Date agreed: 28/01/2026

Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Sally Haydon, Approved by email on 28.01.26. Approved by Councillor Chris Penberthy by email on 30.01.26

Date approved: 30/01/2026

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COMMUNITY SAFETY BRIEFING PAPER

Community Connections (Community Safety)



1. Introduction

This briefing provides an annual overview of community safety activity in Plymouth and is intended to support Scrutiny Committee oversight of partnership delivery, governance, and emerging risks. It outlines key areas of work across anti-social behaviour, serious violence prevention, safeguarding within the evening and night-time economy, modern slavery, Prevent and Channel, and community engagement.

The report highlights how a focus on prevention, early intervention, and trauma-informed practice continues to shape local responses, supported by strong multiagency partnership working. It also sets out current pressures, including evolving risk profiles and funding challenges, and identifies areas of ongoing development and future focus.

2. Community Safety - PCC Performance and Delivery

In January 2025, Plymouth City Council (PCC) and key partners, including Devon and Cornwall Police, housing providers, and Plymouth Against Retail Crime (PARC), held an in person MoRiLE workshop to review anti-social behaviour (ASB) activity over the previous year. This provided an opportunity to assess demand, risk, and the effectiveness of current responses.

ASB continues to be reported at consistently high levels across the city. PCC data shows a slight increase in reports from **742 in 2023/24 to 755 in 2024/25**. Despite ongoing staffing pressures and vacancies, the Council has maintained enforcement activity, issuing **42 Community Protection Warnings during 2024/25**, an **increase of 18%** compared with the previous year. The Community Safety team's emphasis on early intervention, underpinned by a trauma informed approach, has reduced reliance on high-level enforcement measures such as Closure Orders. These measures can have significant cost implications and wider impacts on other service areas, including homelessness.

Victim focused practice remains a priority. **Twenty ASB Case Reviews** were completed in 2024/25, representing a **5% increase** on the previous year and demonstrating continued commitment to ensuring that victims' voices are central to multiagency responses.

The **Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)**, introduced on 12 November 2025, has been positively received by both PCC teams and the police. Significant work has been undertaken to improve safety and perceptions of safety within car parks, alongside a programme of engagement and education. A small number of individuals displaying persistent ASB have been identified for formal enforcement, with Community Protection Notice Warnings issued or in progress.

3. Community Safety – Partnership Performance and Delivery

3.1 Evening and Night-time Economy (ENTE)

In September 2025, Plymouth was awarded the **Purple Flag** accreditation for the sixth consecutive year, recognising the city's safe, vibrant, and diverse evening and night-time economy. This accreditation highlights effective partnerships, including the **Safe Bus, taxi marshals, CCTV, help points, Plymouth City Pastors, Pub Watch, and Best Bar None** accredited venues. A **citywide consultation** was launched in August 2025 to gather public views on safety within the evening and nighttime economy, including awareness and use of existing safety initiatives. This engagement will be complemented by a series of targeted focus groups, after which a report will be produced in March 2026 setting out key findings and recommendations to inform future improvements to Plymouth's response.

The **ENTE Predatory Behaviour Prevention Partnership** meets monthly to review intelligence gathered through Project Nighteye in relation to individuals whose behaviour raises concerns about predatory behaviour and the risk of sexual violence. This includes situations where behaviour causes victims to feel harassed, alarmed, or distressed, such as being followed home or subjected to unwanted sexual advances, but where the criminal threshold has not been met or evidential challenges limit formal enforcement. Through a preventative and trauma-informed approach, targeted engagement is undertaken to manage risk and intervene early. The Council's Serious Violence Prevention Officer leads engagement with identified individuals and, where appropriate, uses civil tools to disrupt harmful behaviour, including issuing Community Protection Warnings to restrict access to the ENTE area.

During 2025, **17 Community Protection Warnings** were issued in response to predatory behaviour within the ENTE. In addition, a number of individuals received informal interventions, such as words of advice, aimed at challenging behaviour, preventing escalation, and signposting to support where appropriate. In some cases, matters progressed through police-led criminal justice processes, including the pursuit of Sexual Risk Orders where relevant.

3.2 Street-attached Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction Partnership (SARP)

The **Street Attached Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction Partnership (SARP)** meets on a fortnightly basis to review shared intelligence relating to street attached individuals engaged in persistent antisocial behaviour, with a particular focus on the city centre. The partnership is chaired by PCC's Community Safety team and brings together a wide range of statutory and voluntary sector partners, including Housing, Devon and Cornwall Police, homelessness services, drug and alcohol treatment providers, rough sleeper outreach, and PARC. Partners collaboratively review intelligence and agree trauma-informed, multiagency action plans, identifying opportunities to address underlying needs associated with behaviour, such as substance misuse or homelessness. A support-led approach is prioritised wherever possible. Where engagement and support interventions are unsuccessful or risk remains high, proportionate enforcement action is used. In these circumstances, a number of individuals have been issued Community Protection Warnings, including exclusions from the city centre area, in response to persistent ASB. This partnership approach supports timely information sharing, coordinated decision making, and a consistent response to street-attached ASB, helping to manage risk and improve safety in the city centre.

3.3 Youth Anti-Social Behaviour

During the summer months of 2025, an **increase in youth related antisocial behaviour** was identified across the waterfront area. In response, a coordinated partnership approach was implemented to identify the young people involved and intervene. Partners involved included Devon and Cornwall Police (Child Centred and Neighbourhood Policing teams), the Harbour Master, Youth Justice Service, PCC Community Youth Service (including detached youth workers), Community Safety, Children's Social Care, and the Plymouth Waterfront Partnership. The response focused on identifying individuals, undertaking home visits, and offering appropriate support and diversionary interventions.

In a small number of cases where behaviour or risk remained high, proportionate enforcement action was taken. This was complemented by increased high visibility presence from detached youth workers and police officers in the area, alongside reassurance and engagement with local businesses. Learning from this activity has informed early planning for summer 2026. Partnership meetings have already taken place to strengthen preventative measures and ensure a more proactive response ahead of the peak period.

4. Safer Plymouth (Community Safety Partnership)

Safer Plymouth continues to provide the strategic framework for multi-agency community safety delivery in the city. Over the past year, the Partnership has brought together statutory partners, voluntary and community organisations, and wider stakeholders to align priorities, share intelligence, and coordinate activity across prevention, enforcement, and recovery. Safer Plymouth is in the process of setting priorities within its **Strategic Crime Assessment** for the upcoming year.

The Partnership is operating within a changing national policy context. This includes the publication of **Freedom from Violence and Abuse: A Cross Government Strategy to Build a Safer Society for Women and Girls**, which places increased emphasis on prevention, early intervention, perpetrator focused approaches, and whole system responsibility. Safer Plymouth and the DASV Strategic Board will consider how local delivery aligns with this national direction.

The Partnership is also preparing for anticipated reform to the policing and community safety landscape, including proposals expected within the forthcoming **Policing White Paper** and the **Crime and Policing Bill**. Once national direction is confirmed, partnership governance and accountability arrangements will be reviewed to ensure continued effectiveness and strong leadership.

Funding remains a challenge for the Partnership, as there are no centralised funding arrangements and no direct financial contributions from statutory partners. Rising costs, including an **increase in Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs)**, continue to place financial and resource pressures on the Council, which has a statutory duty to undertake this work. There is also ongoing uncertainty regarding future grant funding, with a number of initiatives currently supported through Serious Violence funding and no confirmation at this stage that this funding will continue beyond existing allocations. These financial challenges will be explored further during 2026 to understand sustainability and potential mitigation options.

Looking ahead, Safer Plymouth will continue to prioritise effective governance, alignment across safeguarding and prevention activity, and a systems based, intersectional approach that recognises how multiple disadvantages shape experiences of harm and safety.

5. Preventing Crime and Serious Violence

Delivery under the Serious Violence Duty continues to support a whole system response. Partnership activity over the past year has included:

- **Primary prevention**, including the delivery of workshops within schools, city-wide workforce development in areas such as Prevent and domestic abuse, and targeted projects designed to challenge harmful and misogynistic attitudes and behaviours, including initiatives such as Man Culture.
- **Secondary prevention**, including targeted activity within the evening and night-time economy to prevent sexual violence, delivery of the Stop It Now campaign, progression of Project Guardrail, and the establishment of a dedicated Serious Violence Prevention Officer role within the Council.
- **Tertiary prevention**, including programmes aimed at behaviour change, such as AHIMSA and the pilot of MATAAC, alongside support provided to victims of serious violence.

A 'Preventing Crime' MoRiLE assessment was undertaken in early 2026 to inform understanding of current and emerging crime risks. These findings will inform the next Strategic Crime Assessment and support prioritisation across the Partnership. The assessment confirms that shoplifting remains a priority risk for Plymouth. While individual incidents typically involve low harm, the sustained volume of offending has a cumulative impact on businesses, local environments, and public confidence. Knife crime and the possession of offensive weapons have also been identified as emerging risks. Although current volumes remain relatively low, the potential harm associated with knife enabled violence is significant, reinforcing the importance of early intervention and preventative approaches.

Preparation is currently underway for Plymouth's hosting of the **Knife Angel** from 2–30 March 2026. The installation forms a key part of the city's approach to the prevention of serious violence, supporting awareness raising, early intervention, and community engagement around the risks and impacts of knife crime. The programme will include schools, community and public engagement activity throughout March, followed by evaluation to inform future preventative work.

6. Modern Slavery and Exploitation

Considerable progress has been made in strengthening Plymouth's response to modern slavery. Local practice has been aligned with national standards through engagement with other local authority leads and sharing of best practice.

A comprehensive rewrite of the **Modern Slavery Toolkit** has been completed and is awaiting final signoff. This provides clear, practical guidance for frontline practitioners. Supporting flowcharts have been developed to improve consistency and confidence in decision-making.

A new **Antislavery Partnership** has been established for the city, comprising over 25 agencies and attracting strong attendance at in person meetings. Work is underway to introduce a monthly **Slavery and Exploitation Risk Assessment Conference (SERAC)** to review National Referral Mechanism

submissions, improve shared awareness, and coordinate victim support. A citywide training programme will commence in March 2026.

7. Prevent and Channel

Prevent is a key strand of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy and aims to safeguard individuals from being drawn into terrorism or extremist ideologies. Locally, delivery of Prevent focuses on early intervention, partnership working, and building resilience within communities, ensuring that concerns are identified and addressed proportionately and in line with statutory duties.

The local Prevent offer has been strengthened through a **fully revised Prevent Delivery Plan and updated risk assessment**. Governance has been enhanced through the reinstatement of the **Education and Young Person Subgroup** and expanded Prevent Partnership meetings.

Engagement with national and regional partners has increased, and work is underway to map progress against national Prevent Benchmarking criteria. A structured **12-month training programme** is being developed, alongside new policies to strengthen communications, embed Prevent into staff induction, and guide the use of public spaces.

Channel is the multiagency safeguarding process that sits within the Prevent duty and provides early support to individuals identified as being susceptible to radicalisation. Plymouth City Council chairs the local Channel Panel. In recent months, there has been an increase in referrals meeting the Channel threshold, reflecting changes in national practice following the Prevent Learning Reviews arising from the Southport and Sir David Amess cases. The primary risk identified locally relates to **extreme far right radicalisation**. A significant proportion of referrals continue to involve **children and young people with complex and overlapping needs**, including neurodiversity. The Channel Panel is well attended and includes representation from a broad range of statutory partners, supporting effective information sharing, robust decision making, and appropriate oversight.

8. Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) & Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV)

The statutory PCC VAWG Team and the statutory DASV Partnership Board continue to coordinate multi- agency work across the city. Key developments include progress toward Coordinated Community Response accreditation by June 2026, involvement in the SafeLives Whole Picture pilot, and continuation of trauma stabilisation training into 2026/27. Activity across operational groups remains extensive: the Communications Group delivered a strong 16 Days of Activism programme, while DA & Children's work has progressed regional and national good practice, advanced the JTAI action plan, and developed a business case for specialist co- located workers and implementation of the Safe & Together model. Workforce Development remains a major strength with 31 trainings delivered to 2,157 attendees in 2025, alongside high- impact city- wide sessions such as Homicide Timeline training reaching over 1,200 participants. Commissioning activity is also significant, including procurement of safe accommodation (ongoing), the new community DA and behaviour change service commencing April 2026, and the imminent launch of the new sexual violence therapeutic service in February 2026. Additionally, the second round of VAWG Community Funding in partnership with the Devon Community Foundation will launch in February, with a total funding pot of £74k including matched funding to be allocated to community projects to tackle VAWG.

Despite this strong progress, system capacity to respond to domestic abuse remains a core concern across Plymouth. Rising volumes of domestic abuse are placing sustained pressure on multi- agency

forums including Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs), MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference for high-risk victims of domestic abuse) and MATAC (Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination for high-risk/high-harm repeat perpetrators) with MARAC experiencing 35% rise in referrals in 2025 and incomplete recording of protected characteristics and insufficient responsiveness to multiple disadvantage cases. Critical operational issues include delays caused by insufficient feedback loops, lack of adequate authority among agency representatives, and limited perpetrator- focused interventions. To address these pressures, upcoming priorities include finalising the needs assessment process, completing procurement for workforce development, progressing the DA & Children business case, completing Lot 1 of DA commissioning (safe accommodation), mobilising Lot 2 (community-based DA services) and launching the MANTA case management system to enable the shift to weekly MARACs. Safer Plymouth have been asked to make key decisions on MATAC continuation post June 2026 (pending) and the city's position on self- swabbing (agreed), with a further update on the future of Plymouth SARC expected in February.

9. Police Community Engagement

Local Policing Teams (LPP) continue to deliver a broad and proactive programme of community engagement across the city. This includes regular **Coffee with Cops** sessions at pre-advertised locations, giving informal opportunities for residents to speak directly with officers, alongside **Have Your Say** meetings that enable the public and local councillors to discuss local issues and community safety concerns. The **DC Alert system** is routinely used to share timely updates on incidents and community information, supported by **high visibility foot patrols** in hotspot areas to increase visibility and face-to-face engagement. LPP teams also use **social and traditional media**, including the **Herald and local radio**, to share updates and promote safety messages, and maintain a strong presence at **community events, schools, faith centres, family hubs, and community hubs**. **Police Cadets** further contribute to local visibility and engagement through their involvement in community activities.

COMMUNITY SAFETY: COMMUNITY COHESION BRIEFING

Community Connections (Community Safety)



1. Introduction

This briefing provides an overview of community cohesion and hate crime in Plymouth from a Community Safety perspective. It summarises recent trends and emerging risks, and outlines the Council's partnership-led response through Safer Plymouth. The paper also details activity supported by the Community Recovery Fund, including engagement with communities most affected by hate crime and the reassurance work undertaken during periods of heightened tension. In addition, it highlights early learning from community engagement activity and the Appreciative Enquiry, setting out how this insight will shape future priorities and support the longer-term sustainability of cohesion and hate crime prevention work beyond the current funding period.

2. Current Context

Over the past year, Plymouth, in common with many cities, has experienced periods of heightened community tension. These have been influenced by a combination of local incidents alongside national and global events. The combined impact of these factors, alongside the spread of misinformation, disinformation and divisive narratives, has contributed to some communities feeling less safe, less visible and less confident in public spaces. These experiences can also have a wider effect on perceptions of safety and belonging across the city. During this period, there has been an increase in recorded hate crime reported to Devon and Cornwall Police.

This context reinforces the importance of a strong, partnership led approach to tackling hate crime and supporting community cohesion, ensuring that activity is preventative, responsive and shaped by engagement with affected communities.

3. The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 extended statutory protection across nine 'protected characteristics'. The Act recognised new forms of discrimination and introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). As an organisation, Plymouth City Council are expected to demonstrate 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty to:

- **eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation** and other conduct prohibited by the act.
- advance **equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The Council also made a commitment to treat **care experience** as a protected characteristic in March 2023. The Equality Act says that Councils must exercise due regard to equality when they make decisions, in a way that is reasonable and proportionate to the decision being taken. To discharge this duty, the Council remain firmly committed to conducting **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)** on

all member decisions taken in the context of the Leader's scheme of delegation. This is done to ensure decisions do not adversely impact our different communities.

4. Plymouth City Council's Equality Objectives

The Council is committed to treating everyone with respect and dignity and working towards creating a fairer city. Under the PSED, the Council must publish one or more equality objectives every four years. The most recent **equality objectives were set in 2024**. These equality objectives correspond to the three main strands of the general equality duty. This provides a strong link and solid evidence to demonstrate that the Council is discharging its duty and making progress towards the aims of the Equality Act 2010. Furthermore, the Council have chosen equality objectives to reflect the concerns of a broad spectrum of protected characteristics to avoid establishing a hierarchy of discrimination, whilst also reflecting the particular challenges faced by the city's local diverse communities.

1. Plymouth is a **Welcoming City** where we will work in partnership to:
 - promote equality, diversity and inclusion
 - facilitate community cohesion
 - support people with different backgrounds and lived experiences to get on well together
2. Plymouth City Council will give specific consideration to **care experienced people** in our decision-making to raise aspirations, increase opportunities and seek to improve their life outcomes, including access to training, employment and housing, and will encourage other organisations to do the same.
3. Plymouth City Council will continue to **build and develop a diverse workforce** that represents the community and citizens it serves. We will learn from our communities and other organisations so that we get this right and we will encourage other employers to do the same.
4. Plymouth will **support diverse communities** so they feel confident to seek support and advice, **report crime and anti-social behaviour**, including hate crime and hate incidents, and work with partners to ensure Plymouth is a city where everybody feels safe and welcome.

A 3-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2025 – 2028 has been developed to demonstrate how the Council will work towards the delivery of the current equality objectives up to 2028.

5. Safer Plymouth

Hate crime and community cohesion are established **priorities for Safer Plymouth** and will continue to be core areas of focus over the coming year. A recent MoRiLE workshop identified hate crime as a **high-harm area**, reflecting its significant and lasting impact on individuals, families, communities and wider perceptions of safety and belonging. The impact of hate crime is felt disproportionately by people with protected characteristics, reinforcing the need for an inclusive, community led and preventative response.

The Safer Plymouth sub-group, **Safer Communities**, meets on a bi-monthly basis and provides a structured forum for partners to share data, intelligence and insight relating to hate crime and community cohesion. This enables emerging themes and trends to be identified at an early stage and supports the timely development of mitigation actions or coordinated responses where required.

6. Community Recovery Funding (CRF)

Following the violent disorder in August 2024, the Government awarded Plymouth City Council **£600,000 Community Recovery Funding** to support communities affected. Plymouth City Council invited applications from individuals and community groups, with funding subsequently awarded to **42 projects**. This included over £80,000 allocated to six projects working collaboratively to deliver a range of activities for children, young people and schools. A **learning event** is being planned for 2026 to share learning and outcomes from funded activity and to maintain and strengthen partnerships between funding recipients and statutory services.

6.1 Community Engagement Officer

CRF funding was used to create a **Community Engagement Officer (CEO)** post for 2 years, delivered collaboratively by Plymouth City Council's Community Safety team and Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council (PDREC). The purpose of the role is to build stronger relationships with the city's ethnically diverse communities, increase understanding of community tensions, and identify actions that can strengthen community cohesion.

The CEO has been in post since April 2025 and has undertaken a range of activity, including:

- Working with the Police Diverse Community Team and **third-party reporting centres** to build relationships, improve reporting processes and explore opportunities to expand the number of reporting locations.
- Delivering two **listening events** with ethnically diverse communities focused on anti-social behaviour and hate crime, with reports produced to summarise key themes to inform future work
- Delivering **Refugee Awareness training** within the Council and to external partners
- Supporting the organisation of the **Respect Festival**, a key city centre event celebrating equality, diversity and community cohesion.
- Providing **operational support** to the Community Safety team in relation to hate crime and incident based casework.
- **Supporting ethnically diverse communities**, including in response to recent city centre protests and marches, ensuring signposting to appropriate support services.

Over the past year, the primary focus of the role has been on building trust, understanding and relationships with ethnically diverse communities. Over the next 12 months, the CEO will support the Council's response to learning emerging from the listening events and the Appreciative Enquiry.

6.2 Appreciative Enquiry

The Appreciative Enquiry, commissioned through Community Recovery Funding, is examining the impact of the August 2024 riots across a range of communities. Initial findings have been presented in an interim report; however, the enquiry is still ongoing and will now progress into its second phase. The Council will review and apply learning from the findings once the final report for both phases has been completed.

7. City Survey

City survey data show that **community cohesion is declining further** compared to national levels. Views differ significantly between the majority white and ethnic minority communities, indicating that ethnicity is a key factor in perceptions of 'other backgrounds.' Geographic and economic disparities may also contribute. The strong link between cohesion and local trust suggests **extreme political narratives are influencing public sentiment**. Addressing this issue is challenging for the local authority alone, as we lack sufficient resources and influence to make a large-scale impact.

The fourth City Survey took place between March and April 2025. 1,403 responses were received overall. We benchmarked the results where possible against an appropriate national data set, e.g. the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Community Life Survey (CLS) (December 2024).

The standard cohesion question, which has been in wide use for many years requires respondents to indicate whether they agree, strongly agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree with the statement, **“My local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together”**. Alternatively, they can say don't know or decline to answer at all.

In the 2025 City Survey: -

- 39% agreed their local area is welcoming to people from different backgrounds; 19% disagreed.
- Disagreement was higher among 'Any other ethnic group' respondents (30%) than 'White' respondents (18%).
- Agreement was lower among Armed Forces veterans (32%) compared to non-veterans (40%).
- Agreement ranged by ward from 26% in Ham to 51% in Peverell, which was the only ward where more than half agreed.
- Egguckland, Ham, and St Budeaux had significantly lower agreement than most other wards.

In addition to straightforward analysis the responses are used to create a **cohesion rate**, following a formula that has been in consistent use since 2005. This is the ratio between all those who express a positive view to those who express a view at all whether positive or negative. Plymouth has always lagged well behind the national average on this measure. **This year we scored 67%, which represents a 10% fall from the 77% we scored in 2022**. It leaves us **14% below the national average** figure of 81% recorded in December 2024 which itself had fallen by 3% since 2021/22.

Comparing cohesion data with data about trust between people in local areas there is a strong correlation across most demographic and geographic data sets suggesting common factors are driving these results.

8. Responses to recent city events

During 2025, a range of events across the city had an adverse effect on ethnically diverse communities. This was reflected in increased reports of people feeling unsafe, unwelcome or excluded, linked to issues such as the display of **flags** on lampposts, incidents of **flyposting**, **criminal damage** to street furniture and roundabouts, and a number of **protests** taking place in the city centre.

During these periods, Plymouth City Council's Community Safety team worked in collaboration with partner agencies and local communities to understand both the emerging intelligence and the impact on affected communities. The team undertook **reassurance activity** and provided advice on accessing support, including visiting businesses along march routes to offer reassurance and practical support.

Written communications were also distributed to provide contact details and information on how further support could be accessed.

9. Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, Safer Plymouth will reflect on how hate crime prevention and community cohesion activity can be sustained and strengthened beyond the current funding period. This will include a review of governance and delivery arrangements for the next financial year, ensuring that partnership structures and priorities remain aligned to emerging risks and community need.

Learning arising from the Appreciative Enquiry and community listening events will be reviewed and considered in line with the Council's current capacity and available resources. The Community Engagement Officer role will be used to support the delivery of agreed actions where appropriate.

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Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	11 February 2026
Title of Report:	Thriving Communities Framework 2026-2030
Lead Member:	Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development, and Communities)
Lead Strategic Director:	Professor Steve Maddern (Director of Public Health)
Author:	Zoe Sydenham
Contact Email:	Zoe.sydenham@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	N/A
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report offers Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel Members the opportunity to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on the 'Thriving Communities Framework 2026-2030. This is an update to the current Community Empowerment Programme adopted in 2021 and sets out the Council's key delivery programmes for working with individuals, communities and organisations to make Plymouth a Fairer, Greener and Healthier City.

Recommendations and Reasons

The Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel is recommended to review the proposed framework and make any recommendations for consideration in advance of the final draft being prepared for Cabinet approval in March.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Community Engagement is a corporate priority and the option to not take forward the programme was not considered. There is a strong need and appetite to ensure that we are effectively engaging and working with residents, communities and businesses across the city to achieve better outcomes for all.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The framework supports the implementation of the Plymouth Plan in which the city is committed to making Plymouth a fairer city where everyone does their bit. The Corporate Plan commits the Council to being democratic, providing strong leadership and involving communities in decisions that affect them, which is the underlying aim of Thriving Communities. It also supports the Council's commitment to Fairness and Cooperation Council in treating everyone with respect and working together with communities to create the city we all want to see.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The programme draws on several strands of work that are taking place across the Council including Equality and Diversity, the development of an Engagement Framework, City Help and Support, Building

Bridges to Opportunity and others, whilst creating an overarching framework in which these work streams can be integrated into a common vision and approach to working with communities.

The aim is for the approach to become business as usual, through a programme of workforce development and sharing of best practice and targeting of existing resources to communities where the need is greatest.

Financial Risks

Public Health lead on the delivery of the framework and programme management is covered by the Public Health grant. Funding for specific programmes for Year 1 is covered by external funding including the NHS and we will seek additional external funding for development of future initiatives.

Legal Implications

None

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

The programme will work with individuals, communities and organisations to promote the aims of the Net Zero programme.

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.*

Following discussion at the Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel a full Equalities Impact Assessment will be worked up in addition to any implications relating to health and safety, risk management or child poverty. This will ensure that these assessments are informed by the any issues identified by the members of the Scrutiny Panel

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	Thriving Communities Framework 2026-2030							

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: Professor Steve Maddern (Director of Public Health)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 30/01/2026											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Chris Penberthy Date approved: 30/01/2026											

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Plymouth City Council Thriving Communities Delivery Framework 2026-2030

(Led by Community Empowerment, ODPH)



Thriving Communities is an updated delivery framework under the ODPH Community Empowerment Programme. Originally developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and approved by Cabinet in 2021, the programme aims to work collectively with communities to create conditions that realise the potential of everyone, improve wellbeing, and shape a thriving, inclusive city, drawing together resources from across the Council under a common framework.

Over the last four years, we have delivered some exemplar work together with residents, their communities and partner organisations. This includes resourcing a team of Community Builders who have engaged with 1000s of residents to take action in their local area to support community cohesion and tackle social isolation; promoting citywide volunteering opportunities and supporting over 700 people to volunteer with the Council; developing our Wellbeing Hub network from 5 to 12 locations across the city, reaching over 42,000 residents in the last 6 months alone; coordinating an outreach programme to address the cost of living and build financial resilience and access to affordable healthy food supporting over 1500 households facing economic hardship in 24/25; working with partners to deliver support and opportunities for the armed forces community through the Armed Forces Covenant.

This has been a cross departmental effort and a shared endeavour with diverse organisations from the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector (VCFSE) and local residents.

Whilst the original vision still stands, the new framework for 2026-2030 builds on strengths and reflects our learning. It also aims to address gaps and respond to changing national context, local need and new technology. Key updates include:

- Reframing the delivery plan under 'Thriving Communities', recognising it as a core part of the Thrive Plymouth citywide approach to tackling health inequalities
- A renewed emphasis on programmes that support prevention and build community and household resilience with responsibility for oversight of DWP's Crisis and Resilience Funda total of £12.5m over 3 years (2026-2029)
- Prioritising and resourcing high quality community engagement to support effective locally led decision making through Local Government Reorganisation and planned, large investment into the City's growth including Pride in Place
- Alignment with the NHS 10-year plan to co-design local health solutions with local communities, preventing and managing long term health conditions and tackling the wider determinants of health

This framework sets out 5 key delivery programmes and an action plan that will be renewed and reported on annually. The framework will be supported by an internal steering group and community of practice. The Cabinet member with responsibility will be the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Co-operative Development and Communities (or equivalent). Annual reports will be made to both the Cabinet and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Delivery Framework 2026-2030

VISION

Plymouth as a place where we work collectively with communities to create conditions that realise the potential of everyone, improve wellbeing, and shape a thriving, inclusive city.

PROGRAMMES AND OBJECTIVES

1. Community Engagement - Prioritise Community Voice and Influence

- An improved approach to community engagement and consultation for PCC set out in a Community Engagement Framework, building internal capacity through new tools and resources, training and networks and sharing of best practice
- Work cross-council to support regular community conversations and co-production of services with diverse voices to develop insight, sustain relationships and ensure local voices shape local decisions, policy making and delivery of the City's Growth including initiatives such as City Centre Living and Pride in Place

2. Community Building - Invest in Community Strengths to foster Cohesion

- Developing citywide capacity in Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approaches to identify and mobilize local assets (skills, spaces, networks), tackle discrimination and promote intergenerational and intercultural collaboration in line with our Equalities Framework and Armed Forces Covenant.
- Use Community Building to support grassroots initiatives and community-led activities, networks, asset transfer and enterprises in partnership with statutory, VCFSE and business sectors

3. Household Resilience - Prevent Problems Before They Escalate

- In line with PCC's City Help and Support programme, shift focus from crisis response to early intervention, bolstering the local-level support landscape, working cross-departmentally with Housing, Children's Services and Adult Social Care and in partnership with a range of stakeholders including Health and the VCFSE
- Build community resilience and individual health and wellbeing through promotion and delivery of programmes which evidence a reduction in isolation, improve sense of belonging, and support financial and food security.

4. Community Health and Wellbeing - Take a place-based approach

- Support collaborative and locally led health and wellbeing initiatives, with a 'no wrong door' approach, working closely with Wellbeing and Family Hubs, Libraries, Education and other community and natural infrastructure
- Support the health care system to develop a neighbourhood approach to preventing and managing long term health conditions, reducing inequalities and supporting healthier lives.

5. Volunteering for Change - Build a city of service

- Convene partnerships between public services, business and volunteers, collaborating to develop initiatives, share learning and measure social impact
- Facilitate networking, training and collaboration to ensure quality and breadth of volunteering opportunities for residents citywide, that build skills, networks and employability

Corporate Priority	Thriving Communities Contribution
Local Government Reorganisation	High quality, Council wide community engagement through delivering training, resources and communities of practice; Supporting communities and VCFSE to engage in local decision making as LGR evolves
Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour	Community-led safety initiatives working with schools, young people and VCFSE; Supporting delivery of the Welcoming City
Cleaner, greener streets	Promoting stewardship, community events and activities in the public realm
Build more homes	Working in partnership with social housing providers; Supporting quality community engagement in city planning and Local Government Reorganisation
Green investment and skills	Contributing to inclusive growth; Digital inclusion; Good Food Local; National Marine Park, Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest and Green Communities
Better access to health and care	Supporting wider systems transformation, contributing to the development of a local eco-system of community-based support around multi-disciplinary Integrated Neighbourhood Teams
Keeping communities safe	Trauma-informed Wellbeing and Family hubs, safeguarding partnerships, community safety initiatives, vibrant community action in public realm that supports delivery of the EDI Plan
Prevention (City Help & Support; Building Bridges to Opportunity)	Delivering targeted resilience programmes that tackle the root causes of poverty, working in partnership with Housing, Children’s Services, Adult Social Care and NHS

The Thriving Communities Programme directly supports delivery of the Healthy Communities petal of Thrive Plymouth, the Council’s approach to tackling health inequalities. This is alongside supporting delivery of key policies from the Plymouth Plan:

- HEA 4 – Playing an active role in the community
- HEA 5 – Delivering strong and safe communities and healthy neighbourhoods
- INT 8 – Celebrating diverse communities

Guiding Principles

- **Enabling:** Recognises the key role of PCC as a convenor, supporter, enabler, and systems steward.
- **Prevention First:** Focus on root causes and changing context, not treating symptoms.
- **Public Health Lens:** Address health inequalities and promote wellbeing.
- **ABCD Approach:** Start with what's strong, not what's wrong.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Providing appropriate measures to enable the inclusion of marginalized voices.
- **Human Learning Systems approach:** Acknowledge the complexity of health inequalities and the need for joined-up, adaptive solutions that value relationships and learning
- **Co-production:** Use of the principles to ensure design with, not for, communities.

Enablers of Success

- **Local Leadership Development:** Convening cross-departmental and system wide leadership in this space.
- **Data and Insight:** Use local intelligence to guide action and promoting reflection and iterative learning that values qualitative and quantitative evidence, indirect and direct outcomes
- **Partnerships:** Joining up with wider strategic plans and initiatives; Collaboration and relationship building with residents, community groups, associations, networks, collectives, sectors and services
- **Funding and Resources:** Use external funding to develop activity and support partner organisations to access grants and build capacity.
- **Effective communication:** Use clear and inclusive means of communication via a range of media including a new online PCC Community Engagement hub, ensuring transparency around decision making
- **Digital Inclusion:** Ensure all residents can engage online and provide alternatives where possible

Resourcing

There are no budget implications for the Council. A core team will be resourced from the Department for Health and Social Care's Public Health grant. Other activities will depend on external grants secured in line with the Framework themes, on an annual basis and allocated and reported on as agreed with the funders.

Funding Confirmed

Year	Total	Breakdown
2026/7	£5,172,186	£136,353 Public Health grant £800,000 Fairshares funding, NHS £35,833 Adult Social Care £4.2m DWP Crisis Resilience Fund
2027/8	£4,200,000	DWP Crisis Resilience Fund
2028/9	£4,100,000	DWP Crisis Resilience Fund

1 - Community Engagement

2 - Household Resilience

3 - Community Building

4 - Community Health and Wellbeing

5 - Volunteering for Change

To lead a process of culture change that supports effective and meaningful community engagement and co-production across the Council, to support more effective service delivery, in partnership with Statutory partners, Business and the VCFSE.

Delivery Mechanisms:

- **Community Engagement Framework:** Rollout and implementation of the new charter and framework to ensure accessible, culturally competent, and diverse engagement and consultation methods across the Council (digital and face-to-face), providing training and support in partnership with the VCFSE and an internal community of practice who champion the approach
- **Community Research and Decision making:** Regular engagement with local councillors, VCFSE, residents and identified diverse groups to gather insights to inform programmes, policies and strategies which feed into community decision making bodies in line with Local Government Reorganisation, Public Health priorities and strategic growth investment including Pride in Place and City Centre Living
- **Co-Production Initiatives:** Work in partnership with Commissioning, Economic Development, Health and VCFSE and local councillors to embed co-production principles, tools and practice where residents (including children and young people) service users, and professionals co-design local services and solutions.
- **Build partnerships and share learning:** Coordination of the VCFSE and Thrive Plymouth networks to promote collaboration and test-and-learn approaches to addressing health inequalities that are action-led, value reflection and shared learning and build long term relationships with Statutory and VCFSE partners, residents and communities – evidencing social value and continuous service improvement.

Highlights 24/25:

- Engaged with 489 residents face to face in the Big Community Conversation as part of Local Government Reorganisation proposal
- Developed a new Community Engagement and Consultation Guide for staff and set up an online information and training hub, committing to resourcing a new Consultation and Advisory role and training programme in 2026.
- Launched a co-production commissioning toolkit developed by Changing Futures
- Successful relaunch of the Thrive Plymouth network and coordination of a monthly online VCFSE network of over 120 members

Community Engagement Delivery Plan 26/27

Aims/Objectives	Key deliverables - Projects	Outcomes	Indicators of Change
<p>Ensuring a shared understanding and consistent high quality Council approach to engagement, consultation and co-production amongst employees, Members and stakeholders</p> <p>Encouraging customers, partners, staff and councillors to feel involved in how services are delivered</p> <p>Changing the relationship between the Council and residents</p> <p>Working with partners to help communities and councillors engage, find information and access the best resources to meet their needs</p> <p>Making PCC easier to navigate by the community by consistency in approach, removing duplication and barriers and identifying opportunities to join up</p> <p>Build a better understanding of the VCFSE amongst PCC staff and stakeholders</p>	<p>New online internal hub with up-to-date resources, best practice and lessons learned</p> <p>New online external hub with information and reports on consultation and engagement activity</p> <p>Programme of training and cultural change</p> <p>Active Community of Practice representing all departments to share knowledge, expertise and best practice with peer support</p> <p>Delivery of Big Community Conversations as part of LGR</p> <p>Coordinate a VCFSE network and link into the Thrive network to address health inequalities</p>	<p>Residents more engaged in decision making for key city issues</p> <p>Employees improve knowledge and skills in consultation/engagement</p> <p>Improved connections, relationships, collaboration between VCFSE, PCC and other Services</p> <p>Improved decision making as a result of community involvement</p> <p>Improved trust between residents and Council</p>	<p>Increase in number and diversity of residents engaging in consultation</p> <p>Increase in examples of co-production to inform service delivery</p> <p>Positive feedback from residents participating in consultation through evaluation of the process</p> <p>Number of employees active in PCC Community of Practice</p> <p>Number of employees and members participating in training</p> <p>Feedback from training participants on impact of training</p> <p>Number of users of the online hubs</p> <p>Active participation by VCFSE in the networks</p>

To foster strong, resilient, and connected neighbourhoods where people feel a sense of belonging, mutual support, and shared responsibility, supported by a collaborative and networked VCFSE sector.

Delivery Mechanisms:

- **Community Builders Programme:** Practitioners embedded in specified deprived neighbourhoods and communities of identity to connect people; map assets; support local groups/networks; spark initiatives; build trust and belonging across diverse communities and with local services; support the delivery of community research around key city challenges
- **Asset Based Community Development:** Develop network of practitioners, training, tools, best practice, case studies and a culture of ABCD approaches across the city with partners, evidencing the impact on delivery
- **Community Networks/Associational Life:** Supporting resident networks and grassroots organisations that build community spirit, skills and capacity for hyperlocal initiatives and community led decision making in neighbourhoods including opportunities for micro-commissioning and small grants
- **Armed Forces Covenant:** Coordination and reporting progress of the Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan with key stakeholders, to deliver support and opportunities for the armed forces community within our locality, ensuring fair treatment and promoting integration into civic life.
- **VCSFE capacity building:** Advocacy and awareness raising of role of VCSE; supporting funding into the sector; supporting training, advice and guidance and impact reporting

Highlights 24/25:

- 952 residents were supported by a Community Builder to take local action
- Community Builders collected 300 stories from residents to bring lived experience insight in the Ageing Well Plan; Safer Communities; Sexual Health Prevention Framework
- Trained 90 professionals in ABCD practices, setting up a citywide peer-led network
- Supported 5 neighbourhood networks in Stoke, Efford, Devonport, Ernesettle and Barne Barton/St Budeaux and set up networks in Mutley/Greenbank and Plymstock distributing £20,000 worth of small grants across the networks on activities determined by members

Community Building Page 50

Delivery Plan 26/27

Aims/Objectives	Key deliverables - Projects	Outcomes	Indicators of Change
<p>Build community led activities in local neighbourhoods</p> <p>Build trust and belonging in diverse communities and the armed forces community</p> <p>Improved understanding of the needs and experiences of local communities to support service design and to address key city challenges</p> <p>Build VCFSE capacity through facilitation of partnerships, networking and joint training/funding bids</p>	<p>Manage the strategic delivery of the Community Builders Programme</p> <p>Coordinate the development of Asset Based Community Development approaches</p> <p>Support the development of community networks</p> <p>Support delivery of the EDI plan</p> <p>Bringing together cross sector collaborations for social innovation</p> <p>Coordinate the Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan</p>	<p>Residents are more aware of community resources and how to access them</p> <p>Residents are more engaged and active in their local community</p> <p>Increase in active neighbourhood networks</p> <p>Increase in funding into the VCFSE sector</p>	<p>Increase in community led activities in identified communities</p> <p>Increase in active membership of ABCD network and case studies of the impact of the practice</p> <p>Increased participation in neighbourhood networks</p> <p>Case studies of hyperlocal activities led by residents/associations</p> <p>Case studies demonstrating how community research has informed policy and strategy development</p> <p>Increase in successful joint funding bids</p>

Household Resilience

To support residents to thrive by delivering crisis and resilience support that improves financial resilience, food security, and fuel poverty.

Delivery Mechanisms:

- **Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) Programme:** Design, deliver and evaluate a programme of interventions resourced by DWP's CRF to both support households in crisis and build resilience through prevention work, in partnership with Housing, Children's Services, Revenues and Benefits and external partners.
- **Low Income Families Tracker Platform:** Maximise use of the LIFT platform and associated tools to design and track the impact of targeted campaigns/support and advice initiatives that support residents to access benefits, reduce debt, manage budgets, address housing issues and reduce fuel poverty at citywide outreach locations.
- **Food Security:** Collaboration with the VCFSE and Economic Development to ensure affordable local food access and education around cooking, growing and healthy choices - working towards Sustainable Food Places Gold Award.
- **Inclusive education, training, employment and skills:** Raising community awareness and participation in apprenticeships, internships and wider employment initiatives such as Connect to work, supporting young people, women furthest from the labour market and care leavers in particular and linking in with Wellbeing Hubs and Community Economic Development Trusts

Highlights 24/25:

- We supported over 1500 people in our outreach programme to access financial advice and support and food initiatives to address the cost of living.
- Trialled use of the LIFT platform in 2024/5, working with Citizens Advice Plymouth, Plymouth Energy Community and Plymouth Community Homes, to run a campaign to support low-income pension age households to access pension credit and other relevant benefits. Of 525 households targeted, 172 each gained an average annual income of £3420 of benefits that would have otherwise gone unclaimed.
- Set up 10 Food Coops and 2 Social Supermarkets to provide access to local, affordable healthy food

Household Resilience Page 52

Delivery Plan 26/27

Aims/Objectives	Key deliverables - Projects	Outcomes	Indicators of Change
<p>Improving resilience in communities to address their priority needs e.g. financial wellbeing/food security/fuel poverty</p> <p>Facilitate collaboration with internal and external partners to support a 'no wrong door' approach</p> <p>Providing targeted support to communities that need it maximizing use of data and intelligence</p> <p>Providing timely support so that people can manage pressures, maintain control and avoid being pushed into crisis or prevent crises from escalating.</p> <p>Supporting ageing well, reducing social isolation and frailty for the over 65s</p>	<p>Project management of the DWP Crisis Resilience Fund with internal and external partners</p> <p>Coordinate an outreach programme making use of community assets to engage with residents</p> <p>Facilitate joined up working to ensure residents receive a holistic offer</p>	<p>Reduced experiences of material deprivation</p> <p>Reduced need for emergency food parcels and increased access to affordable food</p> <p>Increased access to appropriate and quality advice services</p> <p>Reduction in priority debt</p> <p>Increase savings</p> <p>Maximisation of individuals' incomes</p>	<p>No. people accessing financial, food and fuel support</p> <p>Increase in household income and reduction in debts</p> <p>Number of food access initiatives</p> <p>Number of food access initiatives</p> <p>Increase in numbers of Food Coops and engagement in Social Supermarkets</p> <p>Improved reported HWB</p> <p>Evidence of increased collaboration between services to support impact</p>

Community Health and Wellbeing

To embed health and wellbeing into the heart of every neighbourhood, creating an ecosystem of VCFSE, health and community initiatives that prioritise prevention and early intervention, support the health care system in preventing and managing long term health conditions, reducing inequalities and supporting healthier lives.

Delivery Mechanisms:

- **Neighbourhood Health Initiatives:** Support collaboration, capacity building and innovation with Public Health, NHS Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, Community Pharmacies, GPs, VCFSE, residents, and other statutory services to co-design local health solutions that reflect local need, building on learning from Changing Futures.
- **Wellbeing Hub Network Development:** Provide strategic coordination around the development of the network of Wellbeing Hubs as local venues for co-located services delivered by a range of partners in multi-disciplinary teams, working together with Family Hubs, Library Services and other community locations.
- **Community and Natural Assets:** Facilitate partnerships between Health, VCFSE, Culture, Youth, Environmental, Climate and Community Associations to bring in specialist advice, and advocate for community stewardship of local assets.

Highlights 24/25:

- Launched Wellbeing Services at 3 new locations at Foulston Park, YMCA Plymouth and Efford Library
- Initiated a neighbourhood health pilot with health and social care partners and VCFSE in PL5 with the Four Greens Wellbeing and Family Hub
- Developed the Wellbeing Hub Network data dashboard evidencing over 90,000 individuals accessing activities in the Hubs across 8 wards in the first 6 months
- Launched the Creative Health Network in partnership with Plymouth Culture
- Supported a Community Asset Transfer for the ELM Wellbeing Hub at Estover

Community Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan 26/27

Aims/Objectives	Key deliverables - Projects	Outcomes	Indicators of Change
<p>Support delivery of neighbourhood health initiatives</p> <p>Provide strategic coordination for the development of Wellbeing Hub Network</p>	<p>Strategic Coordination of the Wellbeing Hub Network development and delivery</p> <p>Support the development of the NHS Integrated Neighbourhood teams</p> <p>More deprived neighbourhoods have access to a high quality HWB offer</p> <p>Co-production and design initiatives for delivery of HWB services in the community</p>	<p>Improved access to preventative health services</p> <p>People with long-term conditions feel supported to manage their condition (NHSOF)</p> <p>Reduced loneliness and isolation</p> <p>Reduced visits to the GP and Emergency Department</p> <p>Stronger community role in shaping local health priorities</p> <p>Stronger local ownership and sustainability of initiatives.</p>	<p>Number of effective multi-disciplinary teams embedded in Wellbeing Hubs</p> <p>Increase in number and diversity of community participation in prevention activities delivered by Wellbeing Hubs</p> <p>Increase in range of services and activities delivered by Wellbeing Hubs</p> <p>Cases studies evidencing impact on residents' wellbeing, social connection and reduction in isolation amongst vulnerable groups</p> <p>Increased use of other community assets in neighbourhoods (including Libraries, Family Hubs, community centres) to support health and wellbeing</p>

To grow a vibrant, inclusive culture of volunteering that recognises the role of volunteering to help address the city's challenges and support community wellbeing, civic pride, and local resilience.

Delivery Mechanisms:

- **Building a City of Service:** Facilitate networking, training and collaboration to ensure quality and breadth of volunteering opportunities for residents citywide; Strengthen strategic links to the Civic Engagement Agreement with the local Anchor organisations and Team Plymouth
- **Skills for Service:** Training and recognition for the contribution of volunteers with specific links to employability and connections with Connect to Work; providing opportunities to come together and celebrate. Training and recognition for the contribution of volunteer co-ordinators/managers.
- **Convening for Strategic Impact:** Enabling partnerships between public services and volunteers and collaborating to develop initiatives, share learning and measure social impact.
- **Targeted Programmes:** Coordinate and develop volunteering opportunities within PCC (including Culture, Environment, Education, Libraries)

Highlights 24/25:

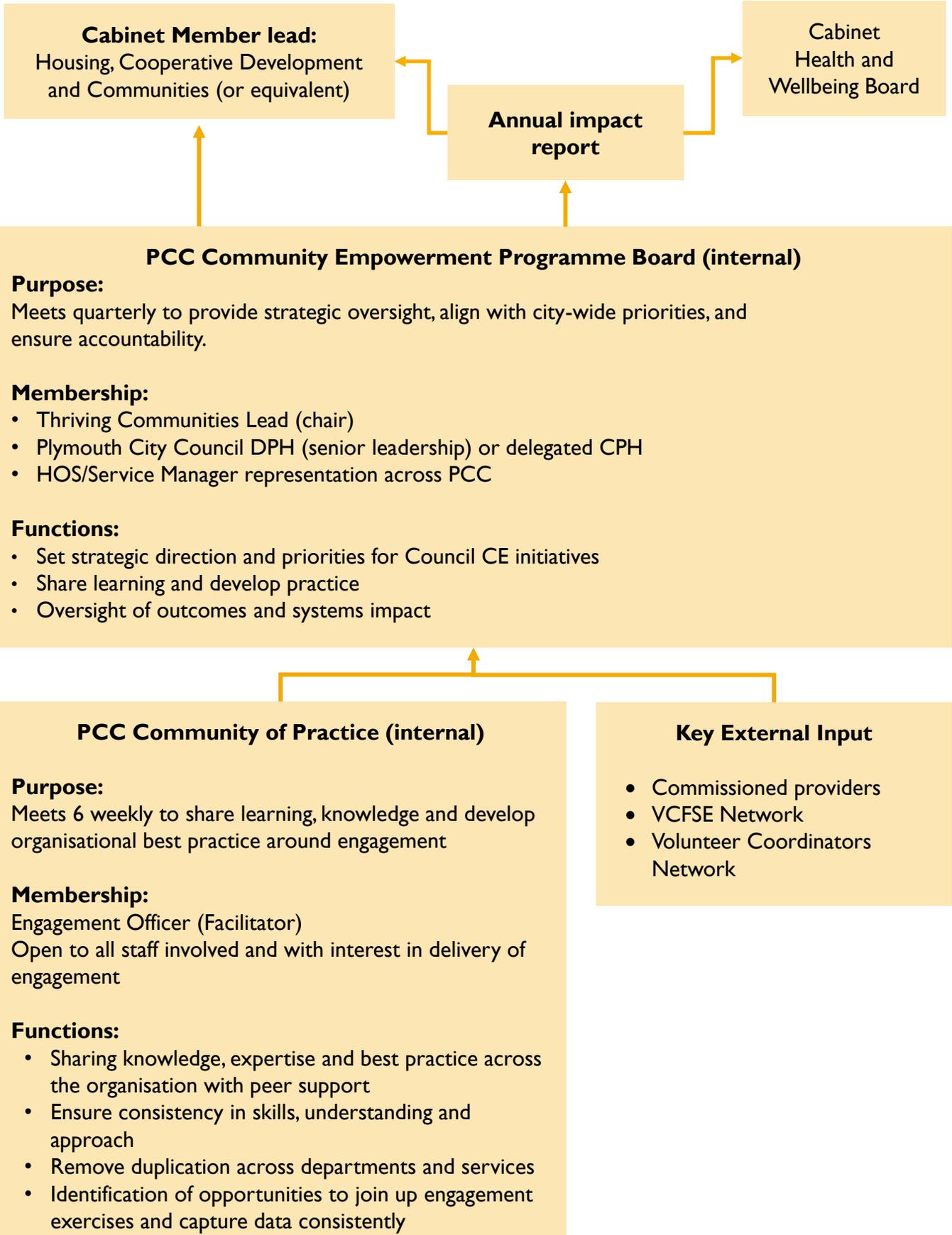
- Over 700 people volunteered with Plymouth City Council projects, including National Marine Park, The Box and at citywide events, convening at an annual celebration event.
- We created a digital badge accreditation for new volunteers and supported 5 placements for volunteers with experience of multiple disadvantage through Changing Futures.
- We supported 67 Volunteer Coordinators across the city in regular networking to sharing best practice and identify training needs.

Volunteering for Change

Delivery Plan 26/27

Aims/Objectives	Key deliverables - Projects	Outcomes	Indicators of Change
<p>Increasing the number of people who take action within communities of geography or interest to support a thriving community</p> <p>Develop and increase volunteering opportunities within PCC</p> <p>Support volunteering opportunities for staff to build understanding, relationships and support HWB</p>	<p>Develop and manage targeted volunteer programmes including Good Neighbours Scheme; Digital Inclusion; Age Positive; PCC volunteering</p> <p>Support collaboration, shared resources, training, recognition and impact measurement around volunteering with the VCFSE</p> <p>Understand the Local Authority's requirements for volunteers and support best practice</p> <p>Annual events and awards that support celebration and recognition of volunteering</p>	<p>Diverse opportunities for local people to be active citizens</p> <p>More residents engaged in high quality volunteering opportunities to address city challenges</p> <p>Increased awareness of the value of volunteering</p>	<p>Increase in numbers, diversity and quality of volunteering opportunities in targeted programmes</p> <p>Increase in number and diversity of residents volunteering with PCC</p> <p>Increase in number of staff using their annual volunteering day with evidence of impact</p> <p>Improved quality of volunteering coordination across the VCFSE</p> <p>Evidence of improved HWB from volunteers and participants</p>

Governance Structure



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Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	11 February 2026
Title of Report:	Renters' Rights Act 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:	David Irving
Contact Email:	David.Irving@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	RRA 25
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To respond to a request from the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for an update on the Council's preparedness for the Renters' Rights Act 2025 and any implications.

Recommendations and Reasons

- I. That the Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

- I. No other options have been considered as this is an update report for the Committee.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

This report relates to the Plymouth Plan Policy HEA8 – 'Targeting intervention and resources to improve the standard, quality and management of private sector housing'.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

New Burdens Funding has been utilised to cover costs already incurred. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 stipulates that money received from civil penalties will be ringfenced and retained by the council. It is intended that ringfenced money will be used to fund members of the team going forward.

Financial Risks

It is not currently anticipated that the proposed actions will cause negative financial impacts, however there is a risk that enforcement costs will exceed income from grant funding and penalties. This will be kept under review during the transition period.

Legal Implications

The Act introduces statutory duties which Plymouth City Council must be compliant with.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

It is not anticipated that the proposed actions will cause negative environmental impacts.

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.

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

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	OW.2 5.26.12 6	Leg	CM 30.01.2 026 5254	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Asset s	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Matt Garrett											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 29/01/2026											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Chris Penberthy, by email											
Date approved: 30/01/2026											

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE SCRUTINY PANEL - RENTERS' RIGHTS ACT BRIEFING PAPER

Community Connections

Introduction and Background

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 represents the most significant reform of the private rented sector (PRS) in a generation, aiming to strengthen protections for tenants while placing clearer, more enforceable obligations on landlords. The Act developed from the earlier Renters' (Reform) Bill gained Royal Assent on 22 October 2025 and was enacted on 27 October 2025. It establishes a new statutory framework focused on security of tenure, transparency, improved housing conditions, and enhanced local authority enforcement powers.

For Plymouth City Council, the Act brings substantial new duties, reporting requirements, and expectations of early, consistent enforcement. These duties commence from **1 May 2026**, with phased implementation running throughout 2026 and beyond.

- **Phase 1** – Tenancy Reform and new enforcement actions (**01 May 2026**)
- **Phase 2** – Private Rented Sector Database and Ombudsman (**Late 2026**)
- **Phase 3** – Introduction of Awaab's Law and New Decent Home Standard (**TBC – pending consultation**)

This paper is an update to the paper provided to the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel on 22 October 2025 which can be found [here](#).

Renters' Rights Act 2025 - Update Overview

Implications

The Act places significant new responsibilities on local authorities, resulting in a substantial increase in demand for resources dedicated to regulating and managing the Private Rented Sector (PRS). Based on early assessments, there is concern that the level of staffing required to meet statutory duties exceeds current capacity. The resource requirements to manage the PRS were highlighted in the Phase 1 progress table within previous paper.

To manage the PRS, particularly Phases 1 and 2, the minimum number of officers required has been assessed as 3. This is beyond existing service budgets and funding envelopes. There remains uncertainty surrounding additional New Burdens Funding and the proportion PCC will receive from the Private Rented Sector Database. A further review of the expansion of the workforce and management of the PRS will therefore occur when further clarity is provided regarding future funding.

New Burdens Funding

New Burdens Funding is being made available, based upon the size of the Private Rented Sector within Plymouth and in November 2025 the grant determination for 2025/2026 was confirmed.

PCC has been allocated **£98,286.96** for 2025/26. This has been utilised to offset against costs already incurred in preparing for the new statutory duties in line with the conditions of the grant. Further New Burdens Funding for 2026/27 has yet to be confirmed.

Action Plan

Community Connections Housing Standards team are leading the way in preparing for the Act and have developed an action plan for the readiness and implementation of the Act.

The action plan outlines the key workstreams, tasks, and progress updates required to ensure Plymouth City Council is fully prepared for the phased implementation of the Act, as detailed in the table below. However, completion dates have not been set as we await further guidance in relation to future phases.

Workstream	Task	Update
IT Assessment	Audit existing IT systems for compatibility, compliance gaps and mandatory reporting requirements (of the 65 required reporting fields current assessments show only 6 are recorded in a reportable way currently).	Ongoing – System readiness is being managed throughout the Delta reporting pilot.
	Identify system updates, changes or replacements needed.	Initial findings are that systems can be updated to meet phase I of reporting. Consideration to an updated CRM is required for full roll out of statutory reporting.
Resource Planning & Budgeting	Define wider resource requirements. Gold standard has been set at 1 x Private Rented Sector Officer per 800 relevant properties. This equates to 34.4 officers, or 850% growth on the current operational resources focused on the management of the Private Rented Sector. We do not believe the current PCC budget, short term new burdens, and increased enforcement will see our resourcing figure achieve anything close to this level.	2025/2026 Recruited 1 x SCCO to take the enforcement lead around the Act. Start date confirmed as 02/02/2026. 2026 and beyond – Awaiting confirmation of further New burdens Funding and income from Civil Penalties & PRS Database.
	Consider new burdens allocation and Civil Penalty income, against resource requirements, training and new IT systems.	2025-26 new burdens utilised to offset against work already done in preparing for new duties under the Act. Further income will be considered for further requirements and work to maintain new duties.
Training	Develop role-specific training programs to address regulatory requirements.	Complete.
	Use a mix of e-learning, specific external training, and workshops, whilst working with neighbouring authorities to ensure regional consistency and shared costs.	Ongoing – PCC have access to training resources and materials through Operation Jigsaw, which is being disseminated across the teams. Further training will be required when different aspects of the Act are phased in.
	Utilise existing external platforms to provide updates and seek feedback such as Staff Room, South West	Comms to go out over a few months prior to Phase I.

Communication & Engagement	Landlords Association, Facebook, X, to keep people informed.	Further comms will be published close to the time of Phases 2 & 3.
	Create a webpage on PCC website to outline the Act and the new duties for landlords with links to guidance.	Complete.
	Soliciting 2-way communication.	Review Firmstep forms & update or create new forms where necessary.
	Design an A5 flyer to be sent out to landlords across the city. Flyer to have a QR & link to webpage.	A review of how to distribute flyers to landlords across the city is being held and we are seeking to put leaflets in places not typically used to target landlords.
	Strengthen relations with tenant voice groups to understand the changes in the Private Rented Sector.	This will be developed with partners in line with emerging guidance and programme delivery.
	Work with MHCLG to ensure national communications are shared appropriately and tailored to local approach where required.	Ongoing talks are being held with MHCLG to align with national comms that can be tailored locally.
New and Updated Policy & Process Rollout	Adapt, update or where required create new policies and processes aligned to the legislative gap analysis.	The Civil Penalty policy and Electrical Safety policy reviews have been paused due to guidance around the RRA being released. They need to be reviewed again to consider guidance. JIGSAW are developing a working group to develop a national version - we will look at working on our own in the interim but may consider what is drafted via JIGSAW.
	Create clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) reflecting legislative updates.	New processes and procedures are being developed.
	Implement dashboards for real-time tracking and reporting.	Dashboards and real-time tracking will be implemented following the agreed Delta reporting.
	Build in policy and process review periods to ensure that intention has aligned with implementation, and to consider outcomes such as tribunal findings.	Regular reviews will be implemented
Process Change Implementation	Pilot new processes in controlled environments with teams prior to full rollout.	Ongoing – Taking part in pilots.
	Automate compliance checks and reporting where possible, utilising new technologies, AI and Power BI.	Ongoing – Initial discussion has been held with Performance team about embedding PowerBI into Flare.
Performance Monitoring & Compliance Audits	Redefine Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to align to new Delta requirements.	Delta data reporting points are currently being refined. As such, KPI realignment will not take place until the final reporting points are confirmed.
	Work with Devon Audit Partnership to complete compliance reviews.	Early engagement complete.
	Build in reviews to the service plan to ensure continual development.	Ongoing.

Progress to Date**Legislative Change Taskforce**

A Legislative Change Taskforce has been established, consisting of members from Housing Standards, Housing Solutions and Legal teams. The Taskforce has begun developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and processes for the cross-departmental work required to establish a strong, consistent, cross departmental approach. This will ensure that Plymouth City Council remains legally compliant with its responsibilities under the Act. Regular reviews of SOPs and processes will be undertaken to ensure effectiveness.

Recruitment

Housing Standards have successfully recruited 1x Senior Community Connections Officer who will initially focus on the enforcement against landlords who are in breach of Phase 1 of the Act's implementation.

Trading Standards

PCC and Trading Standards are in the final process of agreeing the work that Trading Standards will lead on under the Act and will have updated agreements and processes in place prior to the introduction of Phase 1. The proposal to Trading Standards is that they are best placed to lead on enforcement of breaches under the Renters' Rights Act related to amended Tenants' Fees Act (2019) (TFA). This is predominantly pre-tenancy breaches.

Training

Training needs have been identified across internal stakeholder groups, and a comprehensive training programme has been created. This will ensure all staff understand their new responsibilities and are able to carry out their duties effectively ahead of Phase 1 implementation.

As secondary legislation is introduced and Phases 2 and 3 come into effect, further training requirements will emerge. The training programme will therefore continue to be reviewed and updated to reflect these changes and maintain compliance.

Income

Income received from enforcement action will be ringfenced to the service along with further income derived from a portion of the Database registration fees from the Database provider. Income will be utilised to enable PCC to carry out their duties under the Act.

Local, Regional and National Engagement

Area	Update
Local	<p>Community Connections continue to work with South West Landlords Association and Plymouth Homes 4 Lets (PH4L) to ensure we are maximising our engagement with the leading accreditation programme group in the region. Information is being shared throughout their members and non-members in respect of the Act, what it means for landlords and to advertise training opportunities to ensure landlords are compliant.</p> <p>PCC hosted a Housing Breakfast Expo in November 2025 engaging with landlords across the PRS to educate them on their new duties under the Act, how to prevent and tackle damp and mould and prevent homes from becoming cold.</p> <p>Further communications with landlords and tenants will be published on PCC's social media accounts in due course.</p>

Regional	Plymouth and Torbay have agreed to co-chair the regional Operational Jigsaw meetings. The span is from Cornwall to the Forest of Dean. Community Connections are also a member of the Devon Private Rented Sector Forum bringing together key individuals from regions teams responsible for the PRS.
National	Community Connections are actively engaged with the working groups hosted by MHCLG which focus on the development of the PRS Database Data Collection Refinement and Rent Repayment Orders (RROs) processes.

Key Risks & Mitigation Strategies

The current Key risk is that we have a significant level of change pending in the management of the private rented sector however we have no defined budget or timeline to work towards, other than parts 1 and 4 are imminent.

Risk	Actions to Address Risk
Income uncertainty regarding New Burdens Funding and PRS Database	Continual requests have been made to understand New Burdens Funding for 2026/2027 and what proportion of the PRS Database costs PCC will receive.
Lack of clarity around implementation timeline	Continual requests to chairs of pilot schemes and to MHCLG around the introduction of statutory reporting, PRS database, PRS Ombudsman, Decent Home Standard and introduction of Awaab's Law.
Landlord resistance to change	Strong communication, stakeholder engagement, and leadership support.
Income	Continual review, produce a Civil Penalty Calculator, providing legal capacity where required to ensure fines are recovered, ensure landlords sign up to the PRS Database promptly.
Ineffective Training Programme	Early identification of training requirements, development of role specific training programme, ongoing support and training for staff to enable them to carry out their duties to the best of their ability and ensure PCC remain legally compliant.

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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	Cllr Stephens/Andy Sharp
	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 2024/25.	Cllr Tom Briars-Delve/Kat Deeney
22 October 2025	Building Bridges to Opportunity Update	4	Report to be brought back to Scrutiny prior to being presented to Cabinet	Cllr Penberthy/Steve Maddern
	Homelessness Services Update - Planned savings in homelessness services	3	Action from Budget Scrutiny	Councillor Penberthy/Jackie Kings
	City Centre Car Parking	3	Added at the 16 July 2025 meeting	Cllr Stephens/Mike Artherton
	Renters Rights Bill	3	Changes in renters rights	Cllr Penberthy/Matt

			through new bill/law	Garrett/Dave Ryland
10 December 2025	Plymouth Active Leisure	3	Pre-decision	Cllr Dann/Liz Slater
	Public Toilets Strategy Review	3	Motion on Notice from 19 January 2024 meeting of City Council	Cllr Penberthy/Ann Thorp
	Central Park Ponds	3	Requested a written update 22 October meeting following comms release of further delays.	Kat Deeney / Cllr Briars-Delve
	Commemorations and Celebrations PCC Policy	3	Pre-Decision of Commemorations and Celebrations PCC Policy	Glenda Favor-Ankersen/Cllr Chris Penberthy
11 February 2026	Anti-social Behaviour	3	Update on performance of ASB team.	Cllr Haydon Matt Garrett
	Community Cohesion	3	CRF funding. Updated data from the City Survey.	Matt Garrett Gary Walbridge Cllr Penberthy
	Community Safety	3	Partnership Update (annual update – priorities and delivery)	Cllr Haydon Matt Garrett D&C Police
	Community Empowerment Programme (Thriving Communities programme)	3	Progress Update. Outcomes and future.	Professor Steve Maddern Cllr Haydon Zoe Sydenham
	Renters Rights Bill	3	Brief update on latest developments of RRB and any implications for PCC	Matt Garrett Cllr Penberthy
Items to be scheduled for 2025/26				

2025/26	Building Bridges to Opportunity	(3)	Pre-decision scrutiny. Agreed to return prior to Cabinet Decision.	Councillor Penberthy
2025/26	Housing and Homelessness	(3)	Breakdown of households approaching the Council for housing advice. Geographic and demographic trends. Updates on the implications of the national budget for housing provision.	Councillor Penberthy
2025/26	Renters Rights Bill	(3)	Agreed to receive ongoing updates on progress, including any significant policy changes or implications for enforcement.	Councillor Penberthy
2025/26	Food Waste	3	Post-decision scrutiny of Food Waste collections and recycling.	Andy Sharp Councillor Tom Briars-Delve
2025/26	Allotments	(2)	Requested at 22 October meeting	Chris Avent Councillor Penberthy
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

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

Key:	
	Complete
	In Progress
	Not Started
	On Hold

Minute No.	Resolution	Target Date, Officer Responsible and Progress
Minute 21 Plymouth Active Leisure (PAL) 10 December 2025	To recommend that a Plymouth Active Leisure performance update be presented to the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel prior to significant contractual milestones for the duration of the extended contract, in order to ensure robust monitoring of KPIs, financial and contract performance (including progress against loan repayments, management fee reductions and any break clause triggers).	Responsible: Councillor Sue Dann, Professor Steve Maddern, David Draffan and Rhys Jones. Progress: Complete, but will remain in progress – Updates will be scheduled as requested. Cabinet 09 February 2026 approved the PAL contact extension - Cabinet Front Sheet - PAL 002 130226.pdf noting the following amendments – a. The drafting of new KPIs (appendix B) b. An annual performance update to the Housing Scrutiny Panel <i>Reason: Noting the feedback from the Scrutiny Committee held on 10 December 2025 to enhance the oversight and risk management of the contract and to ensure robust monitoring of KPIs, financial and contract performance.</i>
Minute 22 Commemorations and Celebrations Policy 10 December 2025	Action: Officers to verify whether the flag of St Andrew is correctly included on the Government’s list of flags that may be flown without express consent, and to amend the draft Policy and appendices as necessary to ensure accuracy; Action: Officers to clarify, within the final Policy and supporting documents, the relationship between the Council’s Equalities Calendar and	Responsible: Councillor Chris Penberthy and Caroline Marr. Progress: Complete - Update with responses circulated to members on 22 December 2025. Policy approved by Cabinet on 12 January 2026.

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

	<p>the Commemorations and Celebrations Policy, making clear that inclusion on the Equalities Calendar does not in itself guarantee that a building will be lit or a flag flown, but that such days may be considered against the Policy's criteria;</p> <p>Action: Officers to liaise with the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry undertaking to explore opportunities to coordinate lighting requests for Smeaton's Tower and the Tamar Bridge where appropriate, and to reflect any operational limitations or differences in public-facing information;</p> <p>Action: Officers to strengthen the clarity and accessibility of public guidance on flag-flying and lighting on private property.</p>	
<p>Minute 23</p> <p>Public Toilets Strategy Review</p> <p>10 December 2025</p>	<p>Officers to continue working with partners to compile and publish comprehensive information on all toilets that were publicly accessible in the city (including partner provided facilities) on the Council's website, and to explore improved physical signposting once partner participation had been confirmed.</p>	<p>Responsible: Councillor Chris Penberthy and Ann Thorp</p> <p>Progress: In progress. This work is ongoing. The asset management strategy will be brought to Scrutiny Management Board when ready.</p>
<p>Minute 15</p> <p>Renters Rights Bill</p> <p>22 October 2025</p>	<p>In relation to the Renters Rights Bill, agreed to receive ongoing updates on progress, including any significant policy changes or implications for enforcement.</p>	<p>Responsible: Councillor Chris Penberthy and Professor Steve Maddern (Director of Public Health).</p> <p>Progress: Complete, but will remain in progress – Update scheduled for the next Scrutiny meeting in February 2026. This action will remain in progress to enable further updates to be brought as appropriate.</p>
<p>Minute 13</p>	<p>Requested a future report providing a breakdown of households approaching the Council for housing advice, including geographic and demographic trends;</p>	<p>Responsible: Councillor Chris Penberthy & Jackie Kings.</p>

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

<p>Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update</p> <p>22 October 2025</p>	<p>As part of the above report, to receive updates on the implications of the upcoming national budget for housing provision at a future meeting.</p>	<p>Progress – Oh Hold - Item added to work programme for future consideration. Implications of the national budget on housing provision was considered during Budget Scrutiny 2026.</p>
<p>Minute 5</p> <p>Grit Bin Policy Review</p> <p>16 July 2025</p>	<p>The Panel recommended that the recommended actions within the report had the following <u>amendment</u>:</p> <p>4. Those grit bins where ownership is in question (Not HMPE land) will be resolved and retained or removed from the network as appropriate, <u>following consultation with Ward Councillors.</u></p>	<p>Due Date: 25 July 2025</p> <p>Officer: Kevin Northcott/Phil Bellamy</p> <p>Progress: In – Progress. Response received 09/20/2025:</p> <p>“We did not have enough time this year prior to the commencement of the Winter season on 01/10/2025 to review all of the grit bins where ownership is in question. For this season they have all been retained and are being refilled as we speak. The intention is to check ownership prior to next Winter season on 01/10/2026 and then consider if they are for Highways to maintain or if any adjustments need to be made. We will consult with the relevant ward councillors prior to any actions being taken. The details of these bin locations were included in the reports that went to all Ward Councillors as part of point 2 below.”</p>

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