



Oversight and Governance

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NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 10 September 2025
2.00 pm
Council House, Plymouth

Members:

Councillor Ricketts, Chair

Councillor Holloway, Vice Chair

Councillors Allen, Bannerman, Darcy, Goslin, McCarty, McLay, Raynsford, M.Smith and Sproston.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

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Tracey Lee

Chief Executive

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for non-attendance submitted by Councillors.

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 14)

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 09 July 2025.

4. Chair's Urgent Business

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

5. Skills (Economic Strategy Pillar 5): (Pages 15 - 26)

6. Work Programme: (Pages 27 - 32)

7. Action Log: (Pages 33 - 36)

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday 9 July 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Ricketts, in the Chair.

Councillor Holloway, Vice Chair.

Councillors Bannerman, Goslin, McCarty, McLay, Raynsford, M.Smith, Sproston and Stevens (substitute for Councillor Allen).

Apologies for absence: Councillors Allen and Darcy.

Also in attendance: Councillor Evans OBE, Councillor Penberthy, Paul Barnard (Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Julia Blaschke (Economic Development Manager - Partners), Nick Carter (Head of Housing & Regeneration), Hannah Chandler-Whiting (Democratic Advisor), Ian Cooper (Operations Director, PASD Freeport), Richard Davies (Vice Chancellor, University of Plymouth), David Draffan (Service Director, Economic Development), Matt Garrett (Service Director for Community Connections), John Green (Net Zero Delivery Manager), Neil Mawson (Housing Delivery Manager), Lauren Paton (Economic Development Officer), Nina Sarlaka (Inward Investment and Enterprise Manager, Economic Development) and Jan Ward CBE (Chair of the PASD Freeport Board).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 5.06 pm.

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

1. Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Reason	Interest
Councillor Raynsford	4	Husband sat on the New Towns Taskforce	Private
Councillor Goslin	6	Employed by University of Plymouth.	Private

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 02 April 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

During this item Councillor Ricketts expressed his thanks to Councillor Darcy for Chairing the Panel throughout 2025/26.

3. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

4. **Plan for Homes 4: Year 1 Progress Report**

Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Co-operative Development and Communities) introduced the report and highlighted:

- a) Since its launch in November 2013, more than 1,100 new homes had been built on Council-owned sites, under Plan for Homes;
- b) Over 64% of the 1,100 new homes had been affordable;
- c) The ambition was to deliver a minimum of 5,000 new homes in Plymouth over 5 years;
- d) Increased housing supply, with a focus on both social and affordable home ownership;
- e) Improved the private rented sector to ensure homes were decent, safe, and secure;
- f) Brought empty homes back into use to maximise existing stock;
- g) Enhanced the condition and energy efficiency of homes across all tenures, retrofitting and delivering low-carbon new homes;
- h) Supported estate regeneration and renewal to replace obsolete housing;
- i) Reduced homelessness and reliance on temporary accommodation and expanded supported and specialist housing options;
- j) Maximised inward investment through partnership working, including with Homes England;
- k) Maintained flexibility and innovation in response to emerging housing challenges such as people being priced out of the market and housing demands resulting from Section 21 evictions, VAWG (Violence against women and girls) and household break ups;
- l) There were more than 8,000 households in Plymouth awaiting homes for rent at an affordable price;
- m) Having a place to call home had a positive effect on people's health and wellbeing;
- n) Plan for Homes 4 had:

- i. Developed a pipeline of future housing sites and a new market recovery plan;
 - ii. Worked with investors and developers to establish a build-to-rent offer in Plymouth, that would capitalise the long-term investment in the dockyard and for people coming into Plymouth for dockyard employment;
 - iii. Prepared for the Renters' Rights Bill;
- o) The action plan reported across all 10 of the Plan for Homes 4 initiatives and was RAG-rated with commentary;
 - p) The Housing Taskforce would continue to meet quarterly;
 - q) Plan for Homes 4 was presented as a live, evolving strategy responsive to challenges.

In response to questions, supported by Paul Barnard (Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Nick Carter (Head of Housing & Regeneration), Neil Mawson (Housing Delivery Manager), John Green (Net Zero Delivery Manager) and Matt Garrett (Service Director for Community Connections), the following was discussed:

- r) Continued lobbying of government for the resources and powers to tackle the housing crisis in the city;
- s) Worked with PEC (Plymouth Energy Community) to support insulating homes;
- t) The Council was supporting not just homeowners to retrofit homes, but also landlords, which targeted fuel poverty and damp housing conditions;
 - i. £3 million had been secured from Government to retrofit approximately 206 homes in Plymouth;
 - ii. PCC (Plymouth City Council) had been very successful in previous retrofitting programmes and was in a good position to secure more funding if it became available;
- u) Estate regeneration included projects at North Prospect and Savage Road;
- v) Registered providers were encouraged to invest in existing housing stock as well as provision of supported and specialist housing;
- w) City centre housing plans considered infrastructure, service and amenity needs through a infrastructure needs assessment as well as strategic liaison meetings;

- x) Master planning was prioritised to ensure sustainable development and ensure that transport and community space needs were integrated into housing plans;
- y) The Renter's Rights Bill would require licenses for all rented properties;
- z) Whilst the Renter's Rights Bill would give the Council more powers, there were concerns about funding, which was yet to be confirmed, as there would be new burdens on the service;
- aa) All of the previous Plans for Homes had been completed ahead of schedule, and each consequential plan had been more ambitious;
- bb) Plymouth had some population increase, but this was not significant, and not all factors contributing to this were mentioned/analysed in Plan for Homes 4;
- cc) Asylum seekers were not on the housing waiting list, and the list was growing because there was not enough housing for the number of people in Plymouth;
- dd) The number of properties in the city for asylum seekers had been fixed for some time, and there had been no requests from Government to change this, so therefore it was not a pressure and was not included in Plan for Homes 4;
- ee) Rough sleeping numbers fluctuated throughout the year due to weather conditions, creating a peak in Plymouth in the summer months;
- ff) Planning permissions were granted for over 5000 dwellings but private sector delivery lagged;
- gg) In 2023/24, 282 additional homes were built in the city of which 189 were affordable;
- hh) Between 2014-2024, 6,798 dwellings had been built;
- ii) Efforts had been made to incentivise private sector investment and the aim was still to build 5,000 homes in the next 5 years;
- jj) The railway station project had stalled due to issues with network rail;
- kk) The Homeless Prevention Grant would be spent building on the expertise and skills already present in the city;

- ll) An update would be presented in 2026/27 on whether rents could be expected to increase or decrease as a result of the plan being delivered;
- mm) A consultation on Council's being able to use CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) powers to reclaim land from developers, who were not developing, had closed that week and the team were curious to see the outcomes;
- nn) Emergency accommodation differed due to a variety of factors including the number of people in the family unit, availability, and more;
- oo) The team was working to get people away from nightly paid accommodation;
- pp) The Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel received updates on homelessness throughout the year;
- qq) The supported and specialist housing needs assessment was being reviewed;
- rr) Building regulations determined the number of properties within housing schemes that needed to be accessible;
- ss) PCC did sometimes subsidise affordable homes;
- tt) Neurodiversity was being developed to be included within specialist housing needs assessments.

The Panel agreed to:

1. Note the report;
2. Endorse the team maximizing the impact of the South West Housing and Construction Conference, to promote development opportunities, overcome challenges to delivery and secure inward investment.

5. **Economic Insight and Intelligence**

David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development) and Lauren Paton (Economic Development Officer) gave a presentation and highlighted the following points:

- a) The labour market in Plymouth was tight with high job vacancies and moderate wage increases;
- b) The UK Modern Industrial Strategy had recently been published and had included Plymouth as a case study, highlighting the city's defence sector and

it's investment potential;

- c) Plymouth had been designated the UK's National Centre for Marine Autonomy;
- d) Economic activity stood at 77.5% with a claimant count of 3.5%, indicating near full employment;
- e) Job postings had increased to approximately 4,500 in May 2025;
- f) A projected gap between job demand and workforce availability was identified;
- g) Median weekly pay was below national and regional averages but had risen by 35% over ten years to approximately £570;
- h) Lower earners saw a 28.1% increase in wages compared to 1.8% for higher earners;
- i) Productivity in Plymouth was 81.1% of the UK average;
- j) Growth in productivity lagged behind national trends despite nominal increases due to labour constraints and a lack of skills;
- k) Key sectors identified included defence, clean tech, and advanced manufacturing and marine autonomy was highlighted as a strategic growth area;
 - i. Increasing employment numbers in these highly productive areas, presented an opportunity to increase productivity across the city and lower the gap with relative growth;
- l) Efforts were made to align the local economic strategy with national priorities;
- m) Workforce projections emphasised the need for intervention to meet future job demands.

The Panel agreed:

- I. To note the report.

6. **Productive Growth and High Value Jobs Update (Economic Strategy Pillar I)**

Councillor Evans OBE (Leader of the Council) introduce the report, supported by Julia Blaschke (Economic Development Manager - Partners), Richard Davies (Vice Chancellor, University of Plymouth), David Draffan (Service Director, Economic Development), Lauren Paton (Economic Development Officer) and Nina Sarlaka (Inward Investment and Enterprise Manager, Economic Development):

- a) The intention was to bring each of the five pillars of the economic strategy, one to each meeting of the Panel in 2025/26;
- b) This pillar focused on increasing productivity and wages to enhance prosperity;
- c) Plymouth was well positioned as a national opportunity with significant investment potential;
- d) £4.4 billion investment in the dockyard was expected to create 5,500 jobs;
- e) £3 billion investment in Derriford Hospital;
- f) The city centre had a £1 billion pipeline of regeneration projects;
- g) A Growth Alliance had been formed between the Council, Royal Navy, and Babcock which aimed to support innovation, creation of high value jobs, skills, and housing development;
- h) Plymouth had been designated the UK's National Centre for Marine Autonomy which showed the excellence of the companies who had already been attracted into in Plymouth, but opened up even more opportunity for the future;
- i) Homes England had partnered with the Council to build 10,000 homes, mostly in the city centre to create an exemplar of urban living;
- j) The industrial strategy had recognised Plymouth's marine and defence capabilities;
- k) Babcock had announced a defence dividend for Plymouth which planned to relocate 2,000 workers to the city centre, an integrated logistics and manufacturing facility was proposed in the Freeport, and a new centre for engineering nuclear skills;

- l) The city had a £10 billion investment pipeline, a strong business community, three universities, a highly skilled workforce, a Freeport and a science park;
- m) Universities played a key role in innovation and workforce development;
- n) The University of Plymouth (UoP) had held meetings with various representatives of governments from around the world due to interest in Plymouth's marine and defence sectors;
- o) UoP had led initiatives in cybersecurity and marine technology;
- p) Medical research and business incubation were supported by UoP facilities;
- q) Knowledge partnerships placed students in businesses to foster innovation;
- r) Skills development targeted both young and mature learners;
- s) An innovation task force had been established to coordinate efforts;
- t) 16 strategic projects were identified across investible themes: Defence sector and Devonport, the waterfront and maritime, the north of the city and the city centre;
 - i. These projects were not necessarily owned, funded or held by the Council;
 - ii. They would all significantly impact on high value jobs and productive growth;
 - iii. Projects included building Oceansgate Innovative Barns, Growing Smart Sound Plymouth and strengthening supply chains for University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust;
- u) Scrutiny Panel members were encouraged to visit www.investplymouth.co.uk to learn more.

In response to questions, the following was discussed:

- v) £50 million was needed to reopen a railway line to Tavistock and open a train station in Plympton, which The Leader was lobbying for in connection with the defence investment in Plymouth;
- w) Electric buses had recently launched in the city;

- x) There was consultation and discussions ongoing about improvements at Manadon interchange, and other congestion-busting road network areas;
- y) The Council were working with Babcock on green staff travel plans;
- z) There were plans to expand The George Park and Ride;
- aa) Approximately 30,000 people were of working age but were not working and part of the strategy was to get 6,000-10,000 of those people reskilled and into the workforce;
- bb) There was a need to encourage more graduates to remain in the city;
- cc) Another part of the strategy was to increase the aspirations of Plymouth's population going through the education system;
- dd) Marketing Plymouth was important to get people to relocate to the city;
- ee) The pace of the change in vacancies within specialist areas, increase in number of apprenticeships in the dockyard;
- ff) It could be argued that people had not previously seen the ability to build a long-term career, across multiple large employers in Plymouth before, but recent and future investment was changing this;
- gg) There were barriers for diversity in some industries, particularly for women, and it was important to create role models, work which was being done through the university;
- hh) UoP offered hands-on experiences different to other universities across the country in a variety of courses;
- ii) There was a need to engage with young people in Plymouth and use mentor and ambassador schemes to do so;
- jj) Leaders within the city were aligned on the vision for the future;
- kk) UoP wanted to be a strong civic contributor and recognised that partnership working led to more positive impact and better solutions.

The Panel agreed to:

- I. Note the report and the continued focus on Productive Growth and High Value Jobs, as a key element of the Plymouth Economic Strategy.

7. **Freeport Annual Update**

Councillor Evans OBE (Leader of the Council) introduce the report, David Draffan (Service Director, Economic Development), Ian Cooper (Operations Director, PASD Freeport) and Jan Ward CBE (Chair of the PASD Freeport Board), and highlighted:

- a) Freeports would transition into a industrial strategy zones under new government plans;
- b) The Plymouth and South Devon Freeport (PASDF) had contributed £1.3 million seed funding into the Council's £23 million investment partnership with Associated British Ports (ABP) to transform Millbay docks, providing new facilities to support export growth;
- c) PASDF had also supported the widening of Cattewater Harbour to attract larger, and greener, vessels;
- d) Planning permission had been secured for Oceansgate Innovation Barns and work on site was due to begin shortly;
- e) PASDF had provided funding to enable Princess Yachts to expand their South Yard operation;
- f) Direct development of Freeport in Beaumont Way was nearing completion;
- g) Sherford employment land had been secured by PASDF funding;
- h) Recent announcements on investment in defence in Plymouth, could lead to more opportunities for PASDF;
- i) The industrial strategy had identified eight key growth sectors which aligned with Freeport gateway sectors of defence, clean tech, advanced manufacturing, marine and space;
- j) PASDF worked with GAP partners, led by PCC, on the Government ask for a 10-year investment programme to develop new technologies and capabilities focused on marine autonomy;
- k) PASDF had also commissioned a marine autonomy research project in collaboration with PCC following the Government's designation of Plymouth as the UK's National Centre for Marine Autonomy;

- l) This supportive, mission-led approach was geographically focused on the three tax sites established at South Yard, Langage, and Sherford, plus the ports of Plymouth;
- m) £25 million in seed funding was matched by £47 million locally;
- n) Twelve seed capital projects were all initiated, with three completed and two nearing completion;
- o) Langage developments included spine roads to unlock employment land;
- p) PCC's direct development at Beaumont Way construction had made swift progress;
- q) Social value and engagement targets had been met and in some cases exceeded;
- r) Carlton Power had signed a contract for green hydrogen production at Langage;
- s) A demand study had identified the fast-moving consumer goods sector as the likely early adopter of green hydrogen, but also forecast demand from the marine and defence sectors from the mid 2030's;
- t) Sherford land had been secured for defence use with infrastructure improvements planned;
- u) Babcock had announced intentions to invest further in PASDF by establishing an integrated logistics hub and advanced manufacturing facility;
- v) Floating offshore wind opportunities were being explored in alignment with clean tech goals;
- w) In driving local growth, PASDF would provide advice and support, and had already supported talks between Freeport land owners to agree a joint venture that would create a development structure for Langage;
- x) PASDF was fairly unique in that its gateways aligned so well with Government priorities;
- y) Growth Alliance Plymouth (GAP) was important to ensure work was focused and didn't duplicate.

In response to questions, the following was discussed:

- z) PASDF supported SMEs through partnerships and skills programmes and more information would be circulated by officers following the meeting

ACTION;

- aa) Pre-letting of units indicated strong demand for industrial space;
- bb) Concerns about governance changes and the local government review were noted;
- cc) PASDF remained embedded in the city's growth agenda;
- dd) Future funding opportunities were anticipated through government strategies.

The Panel agreed to:

- I. Note the Freeport Annual Report.

8. **Work Programme**

The Panel discussed its work programme highlighting the following:

- a) Site visits were confirmed with logistical details to follow;
- b) Concerns over having time to effectively scrutinise each item on the agenda;
- c) It would be suggested that in future the papers were taken as read and time was used for questions.

The Panel noted the work programme.

9. **Action Log**

Hannah Chandler-Whiting (Democratic Advisor) advised that since publication:

- a) Three recommendations from an earlier meeting had been completed and had gone to a recent Cabinet meeting and received an official response which was available online, but would be shared with Panel members.

The Panel noted the action log.

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Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting: 10 September 2025

Title of Report: **Productive Growth and High Value Jobs Pillar Update**

Lead Member: Cllr Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships)

Lead Strategic Director: David Haley (Director for Children's Services)

Author: Tina Brinkworth (Head of Skills and Post 16)

Contact Email: Tina.Brinkworth@plymouth.gov.uk

Your Reference:

Key Decision: No

Confidentiality: Part 1

Purpose of Report

The Plymouth Economic Strategy has four pillars; Productive Growth and High Value Jobs, Sustainable Growth, Civic Pride and Regeneration and Inclusive Growth. These are all underpinned by the cross-cutting pillar of Skills.

This report and related presentation provide an update for the Skills Pillar.

Recommendations and Reasons

It is recommended that the Committee note this report and the continued focus on Skills as a key element of the Plymouth Economic Strategy.

Alternative options considered and rejected

This is purely an update report therefore alternate options are not applicable.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

This report supports:

- The Corporate Plan priority of jobs, skills and better education.
- The Plymouth Plan:
 - Theme of 'A welcoming City' where every young person has access to the opportunities, they need to gain skills for productive and fulfilling employment and every business investor/potential investor in the area is provided with the support and encouragement it needs to grow/invest.
 - Theme of 'A growing city' by improvements to the local economy, building on key sector strengths such as marine, defence, advanced manufacturing, medical and healthcare, addressing the city's low productivity, delivering higher value jobs and economic growth (Policy GRO1)

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

None.

Legal Implications

None.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendation.

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	Skills Pillar Update							

Background papers:**Add rows as required to box below*

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

None.


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	LS/000010 75/1/AC/2 /9/25	Mon Off	N/ A	HR	25.26.010	Assets	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Draffan


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



David Haley, DCS

Date agreed: 02/09/2025

Cabinet Member approval:



Date approved: 02 September 2025

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SKILLS PILLAR UPDATE



1. The Plymouth Economic Strategy

The ambitious Plymouth Economic Strategy incorporates four interlocking pillars of work. These are: Productive Growth and High Value Jobs, Inclusive Growth, Sustainable Growth and Civic Pride and Regeneration. Underpinning these is the key cross-cutting pillar of Skills, as shown in the diagram below.



Naturally, skills and workforce development are a core element of achieving our ambitions with and for our residents and key to our growing economy. It is essential that the local training offer meets employer needs across our sectors. The Plymouth Economic Strategy is therefore closely aligned to and complements our key local skills strategies, including the Skills 4 Plymouth Plan, Local Skills Improvement Plan and the Plymouth and South Devon Freeport Skills Plan. As a result, we are committed to maintaining and growing investment in training local people for employment in these sectors. This includes those who live, work and learn within the city's travel to work area.

2. Growth Alliance Plymouth

Growth Alliance Plymouth (GAP) has been created to maximise the opportunity of significant defence investment and is key to driving sustainable and inclusive growth, encouraging innovation, and building far reaching opportunities.

The aims and outcomes of GAP:

Strong Foundations – the plan will be based on data and a strong evidence base. Team Plymouth Executive Management Board will share intelligence and insight to make good quality decisions.

Driving Economic Growth – the plan will deliver growth through partnerships with a focus on business innovation and technology that embraces Maritime Autonomy and AI. Supporting local people, graduates and veterans to take advantage of the high value jobs and new opportunities.

Regeneration and Attraction – the plan will deliver an enhanced living environment with 10,000 new homes, particularly in the City Centre, creating a safer town centre.

Breakdown Barriers to Opportunity – the plan has a clear focus on skills from pre-16 education through to post-16 skills. This will raise attainment and achievement amongst our school children while building skills to enable everyone to take advantage of the opportunities that growth will bring.

The scale of this opportunity is significant and has the potential to transform our city and realise our ambitions.

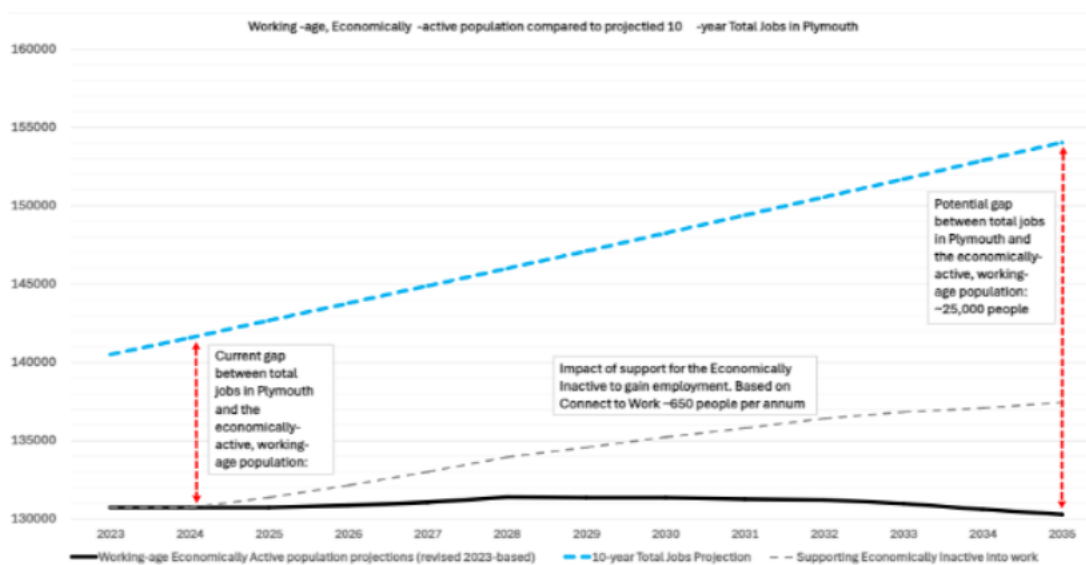
HMNB Devonport is the largest naval base in Western Europe and serves the nation. It is where the UK undertakes operational, training and maintenance activities for its naval fleet. An example of the scale of investment is Home of Continuous at Sea Deterrent (CASD) to receive £4.4 billion investment over 10 years. Therefore, Plymouth has an extensive skills requirement, a need for 5,500 people over the next 10 years, made up of 1,800 entry level jobs and 3,700 experienced workers for Babcock. In addition to this at least 2,000 construction workers (2,000 jobs min, profile raising to 4,250 in 2027) will be required to meet the scale of need and ambition. This represents a once in a

lifetime opportunity to transform the skills agenda, building on very strong foundations within our city.

At present, the city does not have sufficient skilled labour to meet the demands of this investment, due to legacy challenges of educational outcomes, poor health outcomes and skilled labour retention, as well as a lack of high-quality housing.

3. Skills Demand Data

Plymouth City Council forecasting, reinforced by commissioned research by Stantec, shows a growing gap between local jobs and the local workforce. This indicates that over the next 10 years, an extra 15,000 workers will be needed in the city to meet the growing number of jobs and subsequent labour demand.



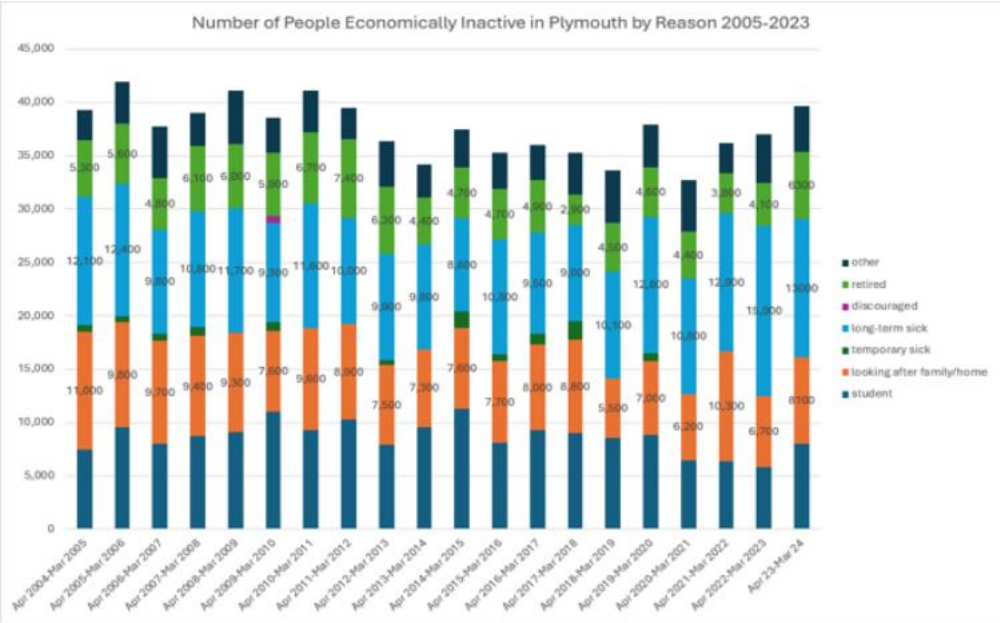
Our strategy for skills and work we undertake is demand-led, and demand informed. We know we have a very real need for skills in the city across many different sectors and industries including healthcare, construction, manufacturing and engineering, education, administration and defence. The opportunity to utilise this investment to go further and deeper is extensive and exciting. It also presents a real challenge as we can foresee specific skills challenges for many industries.

Taking construction as an example, the latest Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) southwest report highlights the need for an additional 42,000 construction workers across the region in the next 4 years ([ctb1003_csn-rep_regional_south-west_aw2.pdf](#)). We know the city has a significant un-met skills requirement in construction that will only grow over the next decade, particularly as the extent of our ambition requires significant home building for a growing labour market.

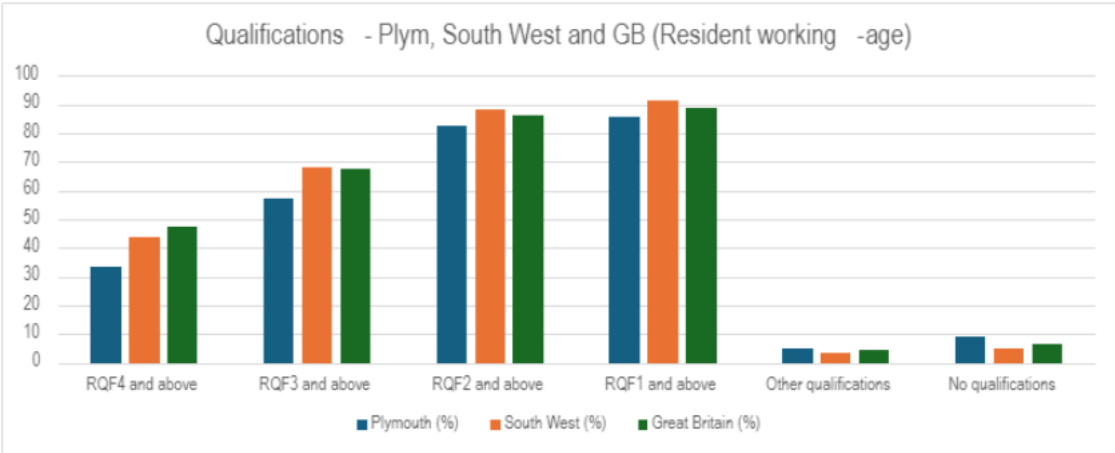
Plymouth has seen improvement in the unemployment rate over the last 5 years. Pre-Covid Pandemic, Plymouth had on average 1% higher unemployment rate than the national average. However, over the last 5 years we have seen this reverse, and Plymouth has consistently had a lower unemployment rate than nationally, by approximately 1%.

Plymouth has approximately 40,000+ people economically inactive, a rate of between 24% and 25%. Higher than 21% in Great Britain and 19% in the southwest. A significant proportion of these economically inactive people is due to long-term sickness, a specific issue in Plymouth (8.3% of working-age population compared to 5.3% for England). Economic inactivity is also a specific issue for

the over 50s. Therefore, our activity will continue to support these individuals back into work, within this wider context of real need and strong investment.

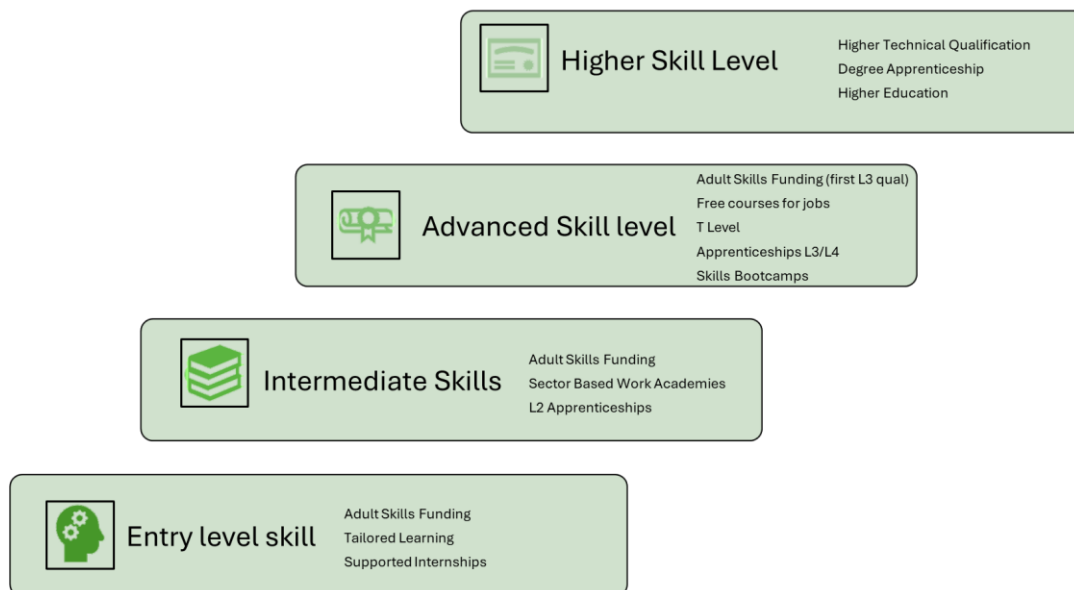


Overall skills levels, measured through qualification rates, are also low in Plymouth when compared to national and regional averages. The greatest gap between Plymouth and National is in the higher-level qualifications (RQF4+). Thirty-three percent of Plymouth residents have a qualification at this level compared to 47% nationally. More people in Plymouth have no qualifications (9.4% compared to 6.5% nationally).



These is, alongside the national challenges of youth unemployment, an aging workforce and relatively stagnant growth in the working age population.

We tackle this head on through targeted action to improve the skills base of our residents to help people transition into employment or into higher skilled, higher paid employment, effectively creating a skills escalator (see diagram below). We are ensuring people have the right skills they need now and, in the future, so they can access employment and progress in their career. Supporting and investing in training and further education with our anchor Further Education and Higher Education Institutions alongside our Independent Training Providers remains critical to accelerate skilled workers into industries with skills shortages.

Skills Escalator:**4. Further Education (including independent training providers).**

There are over 50 training providers in the south west delivering:

- over 600 routes to apprenticeships (in foundation apprenticeships, apprenticeships, supported apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships)
- over 24 different T levels
- Internships
- Supported Internships
- GCSEs
- foundation courses
- skills boot camps
- vocational training
- adult and community learning.

There are approx. 2,000 apprenticeship starts in the city per year, 16% of school and college leavers enter into an apprenticeship compared to 10% nationally

City College Plymouth has more than:

- 4,000 fulltime students
- 8,000 part-time students
- 500 apprenticeship starts per year
- A wide breath of skills training providing of 100 different courses, tutors with industry experience, high quality / high tech teaching spaces.
- The green/blue skills hub (Civic Centre) will support the development of over 60 new courses, delivered to 2,000 students.
- OCSW (Plymouth City Councils in-house provider support over 7,000 learners, has a growing apprenticeship and supported internship offer.

5. Skills Pillar – Plymouth Economic Strategy Delivery Plan Projects

Below is a breakdown of the projects in the Plymouth Economic Strategy Delivery Plan that are primarily aligned to the Skills Pillar, these range across several project areas. Marked in grey are the projects focus on pre-16 education elements:

Project Area	Project Name	Lead Orgainsation
Reinforcing our pre-16 education system to meet future workforce needs	Accelerating the local belonging framework	Plymouth City Council
	Investing in Early Help	Plymouth City Council
Supporting and building the capacity of our post-16 provider	Levering existing resources to address skills priorities	City College Plymouth
	Building providers capacity	City College Plymouth
Supporting and developing the current and future workforce	Developing skills brokerage	Plymouth City Council
	Enhancing cultural education	Plymouth Culture
	Increasing the number and quality of work experience	Plymouth City Council
Talent Retention	Retaining graduates	University of Plymouth
	Retaining veterans	Plymouth City Council
	Building recruitment events	University of Plymouth
Support for economically inactive people and NEET young people	Supporting those furthest from the labour market	Plymouth City Council
Construction and aligned skills	Establishing a Construction Taskforce	Homes England
	Adopting new modes of construction	Building Plymouth

Approach to Monitoring:

The Plymouth Economic Strategy will be monitored through the pillar approach as outlined above. The intention is to keep this both light touch and outcome focused around the 10-year aspirations in the Plymouth Economic Strategy rather than trying to measure individual / cumulative outputs.

The monitoring will have two levels:

- Quarterly review of progress using a RAG rating system to cover: progress, barriers/issues, funding etc.
- Annual review of baseline data to report on cumulative progress, leading to annual update of Driving Growth brochure

The PCC Officer Lead for each Pillar, will gather the individual project RAG reports and liaise with the Political Pillar Lead and the External Pillar Lead on progress reporting.

6. Progress in Education and Skills

Several initiatives have been developed, and significant progress has been made in addressing skills challenges in Plymouth. We have also seen city-wide improvements in some skills measures because of these programmes and improved alignment:

A vital part of this has been the continued growth of Skills Launchpad Plymouth (SLP), with over 60,000 unique visitors to the online website (since it was developed in 2022). Since its creation in 2020, SLP have supported 989 young people and 911 adults furthest from the labour market, of which 484 have entered employment and 351 into training (This rate is above the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) target of 30% into Education, Employment or Training). This has had a direct positive impact to the residents of Plymouth and worked to grow the supply of skilled labour to support economic growth. As well as the development of numerous sector skills partnerships such as Building Plymouth and Caring Plymouth, where we work alongside Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the private sector to fill critical job vacancies in key sectors.

Furthermore, to support the previously high level of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), we established the Unlocking Plymouth Potential, young people Seeking Employment, Education or Training (SEET) plan. This change in our language and how we measure young people moving from NEET to SEET to Employment, Education and Training (EET), and the interventions and support in place has been helpful in recognising positive steps towards education, employment and training and offering our young people a sense of progress and steps forward. The work here has been extensive, and we have established a SEND employment panel, multi-agency NEET panels to enable and ensure a detailed understanding of the interventions and support to young people and the steps towards improved outcomes.

A key contributor to this achievement is our work with our local training providers. In January 2023, we had one provider delivering 9 Supported Internships. As of July 25, we have four providers delivering 67 Supported Internships. This will grow to seven providers, with an aspiration of delivering 100 Supported Internships during the 2025/2026 academic year.

We have grown the SEN provision for post-16 students in mainstream settings by 37% in a year, to enable greater access to skills provision.

One of our aims has been to close the gap between Plymouth and England-average in both GCSEs and A level attainment rates, which has been achieved.

Furthermore, the place based working group has been established and is recognised by the regional Department for Education (DFE) as an effective way to deliver improvements across the city in the school's education system, and has had discernible impact on reducing suspensions and exclusions in our city.

Several partnerships have been established across the city and wider region following the Building Plymouth model. These include Caring Plymouth and Welcoming Plymouth, as well as a talent retention programme.

Impact:

With wider city alignment, improvement have also been seen across several key skills measures which include:

Plymouths Unemployment Rate: Over the last 5 years, Plymouth has seen significant improvement in its unemployment rate. Pre-Covid Pandemic, Plymouth had on average 1% higher unemployment rate than the national average. However, over the last 5 years we have seen this reverse, and Plymouth has consistently had a lower unemployment rate than nationally, by approximately 1%.

Plymouth NEETs: The development and introduction of Unlocking Plymouths Potential 2023-2025 plan has introduced direct action around those NEET young people in the City. The numbers of NEET young people were a particular challenge for the city and through this targeted action we have seen the rate drop from 10% to 4% over the last few years. In addition to this we have seen the rate of young people with a Special Education Need or Disability in Employment, Education or Training significantly increase from 72% January 2023 to 92% in July 2025.

In 2024, Plymouth has seen the GCSE attainment exceed national averages alongside continued improvement in A-level attainment rates. The overall attainment-8 score (GCSE) in Plymouth is now 47.0 (up from 45.3 in 2023) compared to 45.9 nationally, attainment-8 score for the disadvantaged cohort is also significantly above national average 40.0 compared to 34.5. Plymouth's A-level average point score in 2024 was 33.3, an increase of 0.4 from 2023, compared to 35.5 nationally. However, we can see the gap between Plymouth and National results continues to close.

The Place Based Working Group has implemented and continue to develop a citywide approach to share information and improve support for children at key transition points through the early years into primary and primary into secondary transition portals. All schools have engaged with this process meaning that many more children have their needs identified at entry to primary or secondary school. Evaluate the effectiveness of the enhanced transitions project in preventing suspensions and permanent exclusions to build on areas of best practice.

Skills Launchpad Plymouth delivery of focused support to specific cohorts through DWP funded contracts has seen significant numbers of residents supported into education, employment and training over the last 5 years. Coordinators are delivering support to Health and Care, Visitor Economy and Construction sectors alongside a specific provision for young people through the Youth Hub.

Additionally, the UK Shared Prosperity Funded Skilling Up Plymouth project activities focus on working to support adults, armed-forces, veterans and their families. This is alongside a Mentoring Programme Coordinator working from YMCA Plymouth to support young people. Over the first year of delivery, the project engaged 410 economically inactive people and provided sustainable support and services to 250. These individuals were provided tailored support across several areas such as participating in education, gaining qualifications, work experience programmes, life skills and job searching, with many engaged in employment, education or training as a result.

7. What next:

An additional supporting context is our delivery of the Families First for Children, social care reforms, and specifically the “front door” to Children’s Services which enables children, young people and families as well as professionals to have early conversations with multi-disciplinary practitioners available to wrap around issues children and young people may be facing, that can cause barriers to attainment and development of skills, helping these barriers to be overcome. Where other local authorities have adopted and implemented this model, this has been key in establishing a culture of early help and prevention, which is key to a robust system that supports personal skills and growth and a dynamic labour economy through supporting all family members. It is too early to measure impact at this stage. However, we anticipate this will help earlier action to support the education, training and skills agenda, alongside the wider reforms.

Connect to Work

Formerly known as Supported Employment, Connect to Work is a new workforce programme announced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), delivered by clusters of Local Authorities. Plymouth is part of the Delivery Area which consists of Torbay Council and Plymouth City Council with Devon County Council as the Lead Accountable Body. Devon County Council will therefore need to work in partnership with Plymouth and Torbay to design and deliver the programme.

Connect to Work is part of the wider Getting Britain Working initiative, it focuses on enabling local areas to stand up plans to tackle economic inactivity and expand employment opportunities for those

outside the workforce and facing greater labour market disadvantages. Specifically, the programme will support disabled people, those with health conditions and people with complex barriers to employment, to find sustainable work, by offering them voluntary support based on high fidelity supported employment.

Connect to Work has seen some revisions to the national budget and profiles, these have impacted on the targets for the Devon, Plymouth & Torbay delivery area. The final budget allocation and outcome target for the entire delivery area is to support approximately 5,900 participants over the full 5 years of the programme.

The Plymouth allocation of funding will support approximately 2,100 participants over the 5 years of the programme. This allocation is not a flat yearly profile but instead follows a 'ramping-up and ramping-down' approach, with year 3 (2027/28), the peak delivery year of the programme. At peak, Plymouth will be supporting 700 participants to start the programme during the year.

The total value of the Connect to Work allocation for the entire Devon, Plymouth and Torbay delivery area is approximately £22.7m over the 5-year programme. Plymouth City Council have worked with Devon County Council and Torbay Council to design this delivery and have planned to deliver £6.8m of this allocation in the city.

Delivery Team

To ensure integration across PCC and the city, we have explored different delivery models i.e. locality working, multi-functional case workers (Employment Specialists) and building specialist teams. Following a review, we have decided to move forward with specialist teams and case workers. This approach will help to create an integrated system approach; case workers will be integrated into teams ensuring a singular referral point. This will also ensure that case workers and team leads can effectively manage key relationships and can respond both effectively and with agility to meet the needs of the service and participants. Allowing effective working across PCC, health and wider community groups, so that the right support is provided at the right time.

To ensure we can maximise community outreach, we have established a new physical presence for both the Connect to Work team and other Skills teams in Plymouth City Centre.

We will also be establishing supportive working structures and patterns. These will include the teams co-locating on agreed upon days and different teams joining key meetings to identify barriers to moving residents into paid employment.

We will ensure the programme delivery is informed by the experienced teams already operating within Plymouth City Council. This, alongside the above approach, will help us to support some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents to become financially independent whilst reducing financial pressure on public services.

Natural Infrastructure and Growth 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 Hannah Chandler-Whiting (Democratic Advisor) on 01752 305155.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for Consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member/Lead Officer
09 July 2025	Plan for Homes 4: Year 1 Progress Report	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Penberthy/Matt Garrett/Nick Carter/Neil Mawson
	Economic Intelligence and Insight	Standing Item	Standing Item	David Draffan/Amanda Ratsey/Lauren Paton
	Productive Growth and High Value Jobs (Economic Strategy Pillar 1)	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Evans OBE/David Draffan/Amanda Ratsey/Richard Davies
	Freeport Annual Update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Evans OBE/Richard May/Ian Cooper
Site Visit 15 August 2025	Naval Base Tour			
10 September 2025	Skills (Economic Strategy Pillar 5)	4	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Cresswell/David Draffan/Tina Brinkworth/Amanda Davis
Site Visit September 2025 (Date TBC)	Tinside Tour			

15 October 2025	Inclusive Growth (Economic Strategy Pillar 2) Aiming for 2pm	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Penberthy/Anna Peachey/Amanda Ratsey/Lindsey Hall
	Port Strategy	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Evans/Amanda Ratsey
	Plymouth Plan Annual Report	3	Added for 2025/26	Sarah Gooding/Jonathan Bell
	The Box Annual Update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Laing/Victoria Pomery/Rebecca Bridgman
03 December 2025	Economic Intelligence and Insight	Standing Item	Standing Item	David Draffan/Amanda Ratsey/Lauren Paton
	Sustainable Growth (Economic Strategy Pillar 3)	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Briars-Delve/Amanda Ratsey/Richard Stevens
	National Marine Park Annual Update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Evans/Cllr Briars-Delve/Elaine Hayes/Kat Deeney
	Plymouth Plan Review	3	Added for 2025/26	Paul Barnard/Jonathan Bell/Rebecca Miller/Sarah Gooding
	Plymouth Local Plan: Next Steps and Timetable	3	Added for 2025/26	Paul/Barnard/Jonathan Bell/Rebecca Miller
04 February 2026	Civic Pride and Regeneration (Economic Strategy Pillar 4)	4	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Evans/Matt Ward/Victoria Pomery/Chris Duggan/Sheila Nethercott

	Brand Strategy/Visitor Plan/Culture Plan Annual update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Laing/Hannah Harris/Amanda Lumley/James McKenzie Blackman/Paul Fieldsend-Danks
	Draft Net Zero Action Plan 2026-29 & Draft Net Zero Route Map	3	Added for 2025/26	Cllr Briars-Delve/Paul Barnard/Jonathan Bell
	Chelson Meadow Solar Farm	5	Agreed via recommendation at the March 2023 meeting that there would be an update. Officers confirmed June 2025 that there was an update.	Cllr Briars-Delve/Kat Deeney
Items to be scheduled for 2025/26				
2025/26	Civic Centre	5	Added following Cabinet action March 2025	Cllr Evans OBE/David Draffan
2025/26	City Centre Master-planning	4	Added following a work programming session with SMB in Aug 2025	Cllr Evans OBE/Stuart Wingfield/Emma Wilson
2025/26	Co-op Strategy	4	Added prior to pre meet on 10 June 2024.	Cllr Penberthy/Anna Peachey/Amanda Ratsey
2025/26	Commercial Estate	4	Identified for consideration by the Committee at the February 2022 meeting.	David Draffan
2025/26	Plymouth Plan Full Council Motion (To ensure that play was embedded into the plan and that it set a framework for a play delivery plan		Action from City Council 18 September 2023.	Jonathan Bell

	with targeted interventions)			
Items to be scheduled for 2026/27				
2026/27	Freeport Annual Update	3	Annual Update	Cllr Evans OBE/David Draffan/Ian Cooper
2026/27	Update on Plan for Homes inc modelling on long term impact new homes/jobs impact will have on rent	4	Action from 09 July 2025 Panel meeting	Cllr Penberthy/Paul Barnard/Nick Carter
2026/27	Strategic Heat Network Procurement	5	Identified for consideration at the October 2024 meeting.	Cllr Briars-Delve/John Green/Jonathan Selman
2026/27	Plan for Homes 4 Update		Identified for consideration at the July 2025 meeting. To include Min 4ll	Cllr Penberthy/Paul Barnard/Nick Carter
Items Identified for Select Committee Reviews				

Scrutiny Prioritisation Tool

		Yes (=1)	Evidence
P ublic Interest	Is it an issue of concern to partners, stakeholders and/or the community?		
A bility	Could Scrutiny have an influence?		
P erformance	Is this an area of underperformance?		
E xtent	Does the topic affect people living, working, or studying in more than one electoral ward of Plymouth?		
R eplication	Will this be the only opportunity for public scrutiny?		
	Is the topic due planned to be the subject of an Executive Decision?		
Total:			High/Medium/Low

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

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Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel – Action Log 2025/26

Key:	
	Complete
	In Progress
	Not Started
	On Hold

Minute No.	Resolution	Target Date, Officer Responsible and Progress
Minute 63 City Centre Update 10 October 2022	Full report regarding for the aborted start to the Old Town Street and New George Street project.	Date: On Hold Officer: David Draffan Progress: Agreed with Chair and Vice Chair at Agenda Setting meeting (31 October 2022) that committee would wait for conclusion of ongoing issues before report can be created. Conclusion expected by end of 2025.
Minute 90 Tracking Decisions 1 March 2023	Request for regular updates on the Habitat Banking Vehicle.	Date Due: Ongoing Officer: Chris Avent Progress: Agreement to provide updates to Committee Members via Democratic Support at suitable milestones for the project. Latest update shared with members February 2025. Asked for update 13 August 2025.
Minute 25 National Marine Park Update 11 December 2024	A site visit would be organised for panel members to Tinside.	Due Date: September 2025 Responsible Officer: Kat Deeney/Klara Friend Progress: Liaising with officers on a date in September 2025. Chased throughout July and August 2025. Last chased 02 September 2025.

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel – Action Log 2025/26

<p>Minute 34</p> <p>Draft NZAP 2025-2028</p> <p>12 February 2025</p>	<p>The Panel recommended developing a Climate Communications Plan to include making information more accessible via the Plymouth City Council Website.</p>	<p>Due Date: May 2025</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Christopher Parsons</p> <p>Progress: This recommendation is currently under active consideration by the Net Zero Delivery Team and the Corporate Communications Team. Update August 2025: Teams from Net Zero and Corporate Communication continue to work together closely on planning and executing communications around a number of important NZAP actions. Conversations on producing not just a plan, but also an overarching strategic narrative to determine how we talk about, include and engage our residents on net zero have been fruitful and the drafting is ongoing. Alongside this, and to ensure we get this right, we are engaging partners to ensure that any potential messaging resonates and can be effectively rolled out. Meanwhile, Climate Connections continues to be a busy online hub for Plymouth's climate endeavours and has been prolific in terms of raising awareness of and promoting pro-climate messaging from the Council and its partners.</p>
<p>Minute 34</p> <p>Draft NZAP 2025-2028</p> <p>12 February 2025</p>	<p>The Panel recommended that the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change seek to secure ratchet funding in future years and to ask Finance to review any future caps to ensure the money was set aside and could be added to.</p>	<p>Due Date: March 2026</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Paul Barnard/Emmanuelle Marshall</p> <p>Progress: This recommendation is currently under active consideration by the Net Zero Delivery Team and the Finance Department. Following the consideration of options, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change and Cabinet Member for Finance will review the position ahead of the 2026/2027 budget setting process.</p>

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel – Action Log 2025/26

Minute 7z Freeport Annual Update 09 July 2025	PASDF supported SMEs through partnerships and skills programs and more information would be circulated by officers following the meeting.	Due Date: 24 July 2025 Responsible Officer: Ian Cooper (PASDF) Progress: COMPLETE. Information circulated to Panel members via email 15 July 2025.
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