



Oversight and Governance

Chief Executive's Department
Plymouth City Council
Ballard House
Plymouth PL1 3BJ

Please ask for Hannah Chandler-Whiting
T 01752 305155

E democraticservices@plymouth.gov.uk
www.plymouth.gov.uk

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MEMBERS' WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Friday 19 December 2025

Members' Written Questions

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QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR

Question submitted by: Councillor Mrs Terri Beer

To Cabinet Member: Councillor John Stephens

Question:

Thank you for replying to my last question regarding the breakdown of the costs of the Cot Hill Crossing. I don't like percentages and they don't mean that much so can I now request a full break down of the Cot Hill Crossing and associated works in monetary value ? Did South West Water contribute due to the drainage works? In monetary terms please? Was SWH the only contractor who submitted a bid for the cost of this work? There is confusion over the costs already quoted because as of 21st November the council statement issued states that the funding came from the former Sustrans £413,000 that leaves the question of the £17,000 difference so where did this funding come from? Was there any contribution from the Police to fund the Camera installation? If not who is funding this and from what budget. I hope this question is clear and you can provide a transparent reply.

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

Further to your enquiry please see below:

Item	(£k)	(%)
Site Setup & Compound	£19,000	4%
Traffic Management	£81,000	19%
Main Works	£209,000	49%
SWH Staff, HGV &/or Operatives	£32,000	7%
PCC Staff	£16,000	4%
Design/Supervision/Contract Management	£23,000	5%
Speed Camera	£ 29,000	7%
Misc (legal, comms, stats (in part))	£ 21,000	5%
<i>*Estimated outturn prior to final accounts</i>	£ 430,000	

Drains can be the responsibility of PCC or SWW.

- Where they belong to SWW e.g. the clanking manhole on Cot Hill, SWW undertook work to fix their asset at their cost. You will note that this no longer 'clanks' when traffic passes over it. We wouldn't know the monetary cost to SWW. This wasn't the only repair they undertook; they repaired their broken drain as per the image below at their own cost.



- Where they belong to PCC e.g. on Cot Hill where we installed a second gulley to help mitigate the issue of leaf fall and a single gulley becoming blocked during heavy rain. This is a 'main works' scheme cost.



Like many Local Authorities Plymouth City Council tenders a 'Term Maintenance Contract' for competitive bids. South West Highways won the Term Maintenance Contract and as a result we appointed them to undertake the construction of the scheme through this contract.

Sustrans funded the project for £398k. Towards the end of the project with some unspent external funding remaining we sought to resurface and improve the footpath on Marshall Road. As this was unaffordable within the £398k we sought to and secured an additional £15k from Walk Wheel Cycle Trust and up to £17k from our internal resurfacing budget to undertake these additional improvements.



The replacement of the camera was funded through the scheme budget.

I trust this provides the reassurances sought. Should you have any questions or queries please feel free to contact me.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simon Stephens". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dated: 8th December 2025

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QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR

Question submitted by: Councillor Ian Poyser

To Cabinet Member: Councillor John Stephens

Question:

As part of the preparatory work for developing the Plymouth-only Local Plan for 2026–2050, the council has initiated a ‘call for sites’ process to enable developers with interest in land in the city to can let the Council know of the land they wish to be considered for future development. Will Ward Cllrs be immediately informed when developers show an interest in land within their wards?

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

Whilst the Call for Sites officially ended on 23rd November 2025, we are leaving the platform open until the 31st December 2025 for any late submissions. The sites are intended to help form part of the evidence for the future Local Plan work. For clarity, it is important to remember that the submission of a site through the Call for Sites will help inform future plans, but it does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for housing, employment or any other form of development in the Local Plan.

The Government has recently published guidance ahead of the new Local Plan regulations likely to be coming into effect early next year and on the 16th December 2025 a consultation on a new NPPF was launched. This is relevant as updated information set out by the Government has been provided on the approach to undertaking Strategic Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA). In light of the recently published national guidance further consideration of how the Call for Sites information is going to be used and inform plan making will now be required.

The sites which have been submitted, as well as sites contained in the existing Joint Local Plan, and those considered in the previous SHLAA and identified from other sources, will all need to be considered as part of a future plan making process. It is therefore not intended that any submitted sites will be made available because they need to be subject to a comprehensive and proper strategic review ahead of any future formal statutory consultation on the next Plymouth Local Plan. Information on specific sites will not be shared publicly in advance of consultation on the new Local Plan. This is to ensure we get the sequencing right so that there is no pre-determining the process of allocating any specific sites which could raise community concerns on sites and areas which may or may not be allocated in a future Local Plan.

We will continue to engage with you as Members building on the initial Ward Workshops we held earlier in the Autumn this year. Information about sites will form part of that engagement prior to anything being made publicly available. We continue to work on the engagement

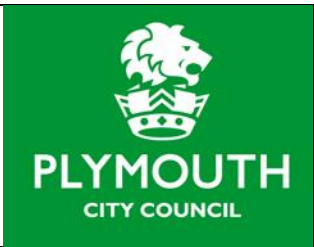
plan and will share more information about when Members and the community will be engaged in the plan making process in due course.

Signed:



Dated: 18th December 2025

QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR



Question submitted by: Councillor Charlotte Holloway


To Cabinet Member: Councillor John Stephens

Question:
Supplementary questions following items on the Plymouth Plan and Plymouth Local Plan at the last Growth and Natural Infrastructure Scrutiny committee meeting on 3rd December 2025 How many plans, strategies, or delivery documents does Plymouth City Council currently have live and published (including those where the Council is a principal partner)? Can a list of those be shared? How many of these plans will be included as part of the forthcoming Plymouth Plan, discussed at Growth and Natural Infrastructure scrutiny committee on 3rd December 2025? Is it possible to see a list of all boards, steering/advisory groups and taskforces that Plymouth City Council owns, chairs or acts as secretariat for?

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

Thank you for your supplementary question. As you are aware we are just embarking on the preparation work for the refresh of the Plymouth Plan. The delivery plans and Partnership Boards play a key role in the success of the Plymouth Plan, and as such Officers have undertaken work in the past to collate this information. As part of the refresh, we will be re-visiting this to ensure the lists and information are all up to date. I'm happy to share all the relevant information with you once it's updated in the New Year.

The delivery plans are more detailed in how they will help deliver the objectives set out in the Plymouth Plan. Most will stay relevant, so we don't anticipate scrapping all delivery plans once the Plymouth Plan is refreshed. The delivery Plans are on a review cycle with most lasting 3 – 5 years – they will be reviewed in line with the refreshed Plymouth Plan as they come to their natural end.

Signed:


Dated: 18th December 2025

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QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR

Question submitted by: Councillor Mrs Terri Beer

To Cabinet Member: Councillor Chris Penberthy

Question:

Please can you explain to me why the project of refurbishment of the Cities Guildhall has gone over budget and why we have no idea when completion is likely to take place? Once again this is a clear example of the Council allowing an open end cheque book to contractors. At home if I am quoted for a job that is what I will pay so why is this repeatedly happening in Plymouth?

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

Thank you for this question. As, under the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, corporate estate, facilities management and procurement fall within my portfolio I am answering rather than Cllr Dann to whom you addressed this.

As you are aware, I updated the Lord Mayor on the current situation with the Guildhall restoration and refurbishment at the last meeting of Council. My announcement read:

"The Guildhall was built between 1870 and 1874. It was reduced to a shell during bombing in 1941. The Council voted, by one vote, to save it in 1951 and it reopened in 1959.

It is a Grade 2 listed building, with the listing reflecting both the original shell and the 1950s insert. Effectively it is two buildings in one, both of which are old. There are no detailed drawings of the post war works. As anyone who has done any renovation work knows this can lead to all sorts of unknowns being discovered.

The project to undertake internal renovations began as a component of the proposal for the University to use part of the Civic Centre. The Guildhall would have supported a conferencing and events programme as well as public access. Since then, the plans for the Civic have changed and the Guildhall is not part of the requirement for Further Education uses.

Since 1959 there have been changes to building standards and fire safety requirements. When work began on the interior parts, the 1950s walls and panelling were removed for the first time since construction to allow for insertion of new ducting and wiring. A large void stretching from the foundation to the roof apex was found at one end of the Great Hall effectively acting as potential chimney and route for fire to spread. Further examination identified other voids within the construction. Other areas

of work being undertaken uncovered other structural issues that were not part of the recently undertaken external works.

We need to make sure that our Guildhall is structurally sound and meets current building, fire and health and safety standards. We have found this is not the case. As a result of this, I have asked for further investigation to be undertaken in order that all necessary work is bought into scope aligned with a review of the overall project definition and vision. At the same time, we are undertaking other surveys to have a clear understanding of any future works that we can bring into consideration at the same time for purposes of cost effectiveness.

Given the change in usage plans and the broader environment I have also asked for a review of the business plan and business case to be undertaken in order that we deliver a Guildhall that will be fit for purpose for the next seventy years.

Lord Mayor, I am making this statement to ensure that it is clear to everyone that the current speculation about delays being contractual or about contractor issues are groundless. In fact, those who are spreading this are sharing misinformation, which is an irresponsible thing to do.

Lord Mayor, I look forward to being able to update you further in the early part of next year.

To make it clear. The procured works are within the agreed budget envelope. There are no concerns with our excellent local contractors, who do not have an open-ended cheque book. I will make announcements in due course about how we will be taking the project forward.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Pincher', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dated: 17th December 2025

MEMBER'S WRITTEN QUESTION



Member submitting the question: Charlotte Holloway

To the Cabinet Member for: sue.dann@plymouth.gov.uk

Question: Questions regarding the Team Plymouth Service Director appointment. Can the Cabinet Member confirm when the Service Director - Team Plymouth role will be advertised, and whether a timetable has been agreed? If the role is not being advertised immediately, what is the reason for the delay following Full Council approval on 24 November? Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the Council remains committed to a fully open, fair and competitive recruitment process for the permanent role? What steps will be taken to ensure that the recruitment process actively seeks the strongest possible candidate? Has the final job description and person specification been signed off, by whom, and can it be shared with councillors?

Answer:

The role of Service Director for Team Plymouth was approved at the meeting of Full Council on 24 November 2025. We need to fill the post as quickly as we can, so that we get maximum benefit from the partnership at an early stage. The appointment to the post will be on an interim basis and has been advertised internally. This has been done for other interim appointments, for example Service Director for Street Services.

The interim appointment will be for a period of 6-months and the permanent post will then be advertised externally. Interviews for the interim appointment take place on 19 December.

Signed:

Date: 18 December 2025

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MEMBER'S WRITTEN QUESTION



Member submitting the question: Councillor Mrs Terri Beer

To the Cabinet Member for: sally.cresswell@plymouth.gov.uk

Question: Today I have read in the local press that CaterEd are withdrawing their services to our Plymouth Schools and will no longer be providing school meals to the Cities young people. As you are aware some families rely on this one hot meal per day to feed their children. This also goes some way to support children living in poverty. What are your plans to resolve this situation and re-assure parents? Have you allocated a budget and from where? Do you agree with me that this has come about due to the Labours government squeezing small businesses.

Answer:

The supply and provision of school meals (meeting mandatory School Food Standards) is a statutory service which falls to school Governing Bodies. Funding for the school meals service comes from the school's delegated budgets.

While many schools in Plymouth are part of the CATERed cooperative company that provides school meals, they are free to choose how they provide meals. Some schools already use other providers.

In light of CATERed's financial challenges, Plymouth City Council has worked hard to support the cooperative company and has provided a support package to ensure that it can continue to provide its school meals service until the end of the academic year 2025/2026, or until schools make the switch to an alternative provider if that happens sooner. Unfortunately, due to the Council's own significant financial pressures, we will be unable to provide further additional financial support to subsidise school meals in the future.

With CATERed giving notice that it will stop providing school meals at the of the summer term, member schools now have time to find alternative providers – or decide to provide school meals themselves – before the next academic year.

This means children will still receive their school meals and there should be no gap in provision.

CATERed operated successfully for nearly a decade and all parties involved are sorry that its financial challenges have become insurmountable. With continually rising costs and the level of funding available for benefit-based free school meals (FSM) and Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM), CATERed as an organisation is no longer financially viable. In common with other school food providers across England, and the hospitality industry more generally, the last few years post-COVID has seen the company operate in an increasingly challenging financial environment due to the rising cost of food, energy and staffing.

Signed:

Date: 16 December 2005

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