

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday 22 September 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Ball, Vice-Chair.

Councillors Browne, Nicholson, Ricketts, Stevens, Wildy and Williams.

Co-opted Representatives: Mr. D. Fletcher.

Apology for absence: Councillor Thompson.

Also in attendance: Councillor Fry, Deputy Leader, Councillor Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance, Barry Keel, Chief Executive, Malcolm Coe, Assistant Director for Finance, Assets, Efficiencies, Giles Perritt, Lead Officer, and Katey Johns, Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 2 p.m. and finished at 3.55 p.m.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee 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.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made in accordance with the Code of Conduct –

Name	Minute	Reason	Interest
Councillor Stevens	33	Devon and Cornwall Police Employee	Personal
Councillor Nicholson	33	Babcock Marine Employee	Personal

31. MINUTES

Agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July, 2010.

32. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

Co-opted Representative

The Chair sought the Board's opinion to the co-option of an independent member to represent young people in the City. Members agreed that it was a good idea and, having formerly represented youth on the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Jake Paget was suggested by Councillor Wildy as a suitable candidate.

Agreed that Jake Paget be invited to join the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as a co-opted member to represent young people.

(In accordance with Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Chair brought forward the above item of business because of the need to consult Members).

33. **LEADER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Deputy Leader and Chief Executive were in attendance to report on Council issues and respond to questions. The Board was advised that a lot had changed since scrutiny of the budget had taken place in February and, more recently, as a result of the change in government. Highlights of the report included that –

- (i) £4m of in-year reductions had been assessed as necessary as a result of Government action, this was in addition to the £6m already identified as being required from within Children's Services and Adult Social Care;
- (ii) if nothing was done to address the budget difficulties the Council would have a deficit of £30m by 2013;
- (iii) the Comprehensive Spending Review due in October was also expected to have a significant impact upon the Council's finances;
- (iv) the current economic climate already highlighted Plymouth as the 13th hardest hit City in the country and this position could significantly worsen should the Dockyard incur deep cuts or closure;
- (v) though facing troubling times, the Council was in a good starting position, a fact which had been highlighted through receipt of the Municipal Journal's 'Best Achieving Council of the Year' Award 2010;
- (vi) City and Council priorities were being reduced from 14 to four and, whilst they would continue to form the basis of performance management arrangements for the Council, they would also play a more significant role in resource allocation and represent a tighter focus for the improvement agenda in times of diminishing revenue and capital resources;
- (vii) there was already movement in the City towards integrated planning and service provision with health and police partners, this work would continue through the evolution of the Plymouth Report, a document which had been produced on which the Council and partner agencies could base service planning;
- (viii) future challenges ahead in respect of partnership working included –
 - establishment of Local Economic Partnerships
 - replacement of health and adult social care overview and scrutiny functions with Health and Wellbeing Boards
 - directly elected police commissioners
 - greater autonomy for schools
 - services provided by the Council were democratically driven whilst partner services were not

In response to questions raised, the Board heard further that –

- (ix) whilst the immediate focus remained on trying to address in-year pressures, the Council was also looking ahead to how it would deal with changing legislation, one example being the return of responsibility for public health to local authorities. Given the financial pressures faced by the health service and Derriford in particular, the Council would have many tough decisions to take and political maturity would be required;
- (x) a date for announcing the outcome of the Government's Strategic Defence and Security Review was not yet known but it was anticipated that it would be on or around 20 October, the same as the Treasury's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). The Leader had written to the Ministry of Defence to apply pressure on the City's behalf and a response to this letter was awaited;
- (xi) the Council had been accurate with its estimates in regard to previous Comprehensive Spending Reviews, however, this year was uncharted territory as running alongside the CSR was the Strategic Defence and Security Review. Whereas the NHS budget had a certain element of protection, any cuts to the defence budget would hit the City harder due to Plymouth's links to the Navy and Devonport Dockyard;
- (xii) the City was still open for business and projects such as the Life Centre and opening up of Millbay were progressing well, with £1.5m of reserves committed to the first phase of development alone. Other projects, however, such as the Eastern Corridor and Sherford could be affected;
- (xiii) it would take time to assess the impact of the CSR once the announcement had been made. At the first round of budget cuts in June it was initially thought that £1.8m had to be found, however, when this was unpicked it soon became clear that the Council was needing to identify savings of £4m plus;
- (xiv) a briefing paper would be circulated to members highlighting the impact of the CSR at the earliest opportunity and further discussion on the effects for the City would take place at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 24 November, 2010.

(Councillors Stevens and Nicholson declared personal interests in respect of the above item).

34. **CABINET PROGRESS UPDATE ON BUDGET SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board considered the progress update from Cabinet submitted in response to the recommendations arising from scrutiny of the Budget and Corporate Plan which took place on 15 and 17 February, 2010. In attendance to respond to questions were the Deputy Leader and Chief Executive. Members of the Board were advised that –

- (i) the Council had not agreed with all of the points raised by Ofsted as a result of its inspection of Children's Services, however, it had

undertaken significant since and now had the second best performing Children's Services in the country;

- (ii) although Local Area Agreements had disappeared, the Council would continue to measure performance against targets;
- (iii) whilst the Plymouth City Development Company had now ceased operating, it had achieved a number of positive outcomes and the Council would be working with the Chamber of Commerce to see how these could be picked up;
- (iv) the Council had recently approved the next phase of the Accommodation Strategy and would now be focusing on three core office accommodation bases at the Civic Centre, Windsor House and Midland House. Implementing this phase of the Strategy would require a capital investment and a 'one-off' revenue cost which would generate ongoing revenue savings of £1.5m per annum (the first 'invest to save' initiative to be put into place to address the revenue budgetary pressures);
- (v) Cabinet appreciated the role of scrutiny and recognised its ability to impact upon services and service provision e.g. monitoring progress of the Accommodation Strategy and undertaking a review into Teenage Pregnancy.

In response to questions raised, the Board was further advised that -

- (vi) local authorities were under pressure to recycle more and, as a result, landfill taxes were rising. Whilst Torbay had taken the decision to completely revamp its collection service in order to recycle more products the question to be asked was ultimately one of cost. The cost of increasing the amount of recycled produce, its collection and the cost of separation, had to be balanced against the cost of collection and disposal to landfill. Any changes to Plymouth's collection services and recycling targets would be a political decision;
- (vii) a business case was being prepared in regard to provision of a kerbside glass collection, again this would very much depend on the costs involved;
- (viii) establishment of a waste-to-energy plant in the City would help address reducing the Council's reliance on landfill, however, this was still some time away and, unfortunately, the process could not be brought forward any quicker.

With regard to questions raised in respect of –

- (ix) the number of properties within Council ownership that were not DDA compliant and the amount it would cost to make them so; and
- (x) the increase in landfill tax;

responses would be sought and provided in writing.

On behalf of the members of the Board, the Chair thanked the Deputy Leader and Chief Executive for their attendance.

35. **JOINT PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT**

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance and the Assistant Director for Finance, Assets and Efficiencies were in attendance to present the Joint Performance and Finance Report and respond to questions. The Assistant Director commented that things had moved on since the report had been produced for the end of the first quarter (June 2010), highlighted the challenges faced across departments and identified the areas of focus for further savings. This included within –

Services for Children and Young People

- Transport
- School Catering
- Care Packages
- Deletion of posts within Admin/Policy and Performance

Community Services

- Learning Disability
- Dependency on Residential Services (Drugs and Alcohol)
- Care Packages (Older People)

Development and Regeneration

- Car Parking Income Generation
- Homelessness Prevention

Corporate Support

- Single Point of Contact (SPOC)
- Accommodation Strategy
- Reducing Staff Costs
- Contract negotiation
- Audit Fee reduction

Members were advised that a lot of work was being done by officers throughout the Council to not only balance the books at the end of the year (i.e. addressing the £10m spending pressure) but to look at the bigger picture, ahead to 2013 and beyond.

In response to questions raised, the Board heard further that -

- (i) the increase in costs within Services for Children and Young People was largely due to the number of children taken into care which had risen year on year by 12 per cent;
- (ii) in the past other departments had suffered as a consequence of budgetary pressures within Children's Services, however, the Council had to focus on what was important to the City as a whole and now that

there were four priorities instead of 14 the £30m of cuts required over the next three years would carefully consider these priorities;

- (iii) the Council had spent more capital investment on schools in 2009/10 than it had ever done. There was a good working balance within the Capital Delivery Programme and this would be protected;
- (iv) the Transformational Change programme had been scaled down and the Corporate Management Team would be looking at what was required in moving forward to address the challenging budget position;
- (v) procurement was being looked at across the council as a whole under the invest to save policy;
- (vi) the Council had a £1m reserve to fund the cost of redundancies;
- (vii) the £350,000 allocated to the Plymouth City Development Company had been reabsorbed within the Development and Regeneration directorate;
- (viii) following the separation of the Council's housing element to Plymouth Community Homes, the entire cost of Prince Rock Depot now fell to Street Services. A review of the Council's vehicle fleet was under way under the invest to save scheme and it was hoped that the cost of fleet vehicles could be managed down;
- (ix) none of the monies received from the sale of Plymouth Citybus had yet been spent, it was all still in the bank earning interest.

The Chair highlighted the importance of the scorecards being received and scrutinised by individual panels.

The Board welcomed the format and presentation of the report which was now much easier to understand, wished the Assistant Director well on balancing the budget, and thanked him and the Cabinet Member for their attendance.

36. **TRACKING DECISIONS**

The Board considered a schedule of previous decisions made. It was reported that with regard to -

20 Proposed Legislative Changes

the workshop would not be taking place on 10 November as the event would conflict with a meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel. A new date would be identified and notified to members.

37. **URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Board noted the decision taken on the Accommodation Strategy Business Case and the reasons for urgency.

38. **FORWARD PLAN**

The Board noted the following new items from the Forward Plan relating to the Local Development Framework –

- Sustainable Neighbourhoods Development Plan Document
- Plymouth Urban Fringes Development Plan Document
- Consultation on Draft Shopping Centres Supplementary Planning Document

Councillor Nicholson commented that he would be discussing these matters with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development.

39. **QUARTERLY SCRUTINY REPORTS**

The quarterly scrutiny reports of the Management Board and panels were submitted for consideration. It was noted that –

- (i) at the request of the Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel, a revised version of their report was tabled which would supersede that which had been circulated with the agenda;
- (ii) reports were not consistent in the way that Members were addressed (this related to the section of the reports reflecting Members' attendance where sometimes councillors' initials were used and sometimes not and sometimes Mrs. was used and sometimes not).

Agreed that –

- (1) there should be consistency in the way Members were addressed across all reports;
- (2) the format and content of the quarterly reports be reviewed. Panel Chairs, in liaison with Lead Officers, to work toward developing a new and interesting format and style for future reports, examples of which to be trialled when the next quarterly updates were due.

40. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board considered recommendations from Cabinet and the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel and agreed that with regard to -

- (1) Cabinet Minute 36 (7) – Accommodation Strategy Business Case – the matter be referred to the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel as it was already included within its work programme;
- (2) Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Minute 30 – Reporting of Police Authority Meetings – the Chief Constable's report be submitted to future meetings of the Panel.

41. **WORK PROGRAMMES**

(a) To consider and approve work programmes for each of the Panels

The work programmes of the Management Board and scrutiny panels were submitted for consideration. It was noted and agreed that the format of the work programmes for Growth and Prosperity and Support Services were preferable to the others and that this style should be adopted by all.

(b) To agree Project Initiation Documents / Task and Finish Groups

Project Initiation Documents were submitted in respect of –

- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Compton Vale
- Young Carers in Plymouth

With regard to the PID on anti-social behaviour, concern was expressed that this was a matter of casework and, if approved, would set a precedent for members to bring casework, which they could not progress elsewhere, to scrutiny. In response, the Board was advised that this was a 'pilot' case where it was anticipated that the findings and lessons learned from this review could be shared across the City. In addition, this particular PID was submitted for the Board's information only as the decision to approve it had been delegated at the last meeting.

A query was also raised in regard to the number of task and finish groups which could be undertaken at a time. Members of the Board were advised that, due to resourcing, panels should only carry out one at a time.

Agreed the PID for Young Carers in Plymouth.

42. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.