

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday 24 November 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Ball, Vice Chair.

Councillors Browne, McDonald, Nicholson, Ricketts, Stevens, Thompson and Wildy.

Apologies for absence: Mr D. Fletcher and Mr J. Paget (Co-opted Representatives)

Also in attendance: Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance, Councillor Sam Leaves, Cabinet Member for Performance and Transformation, Barry Keel, Chief Executive, Ian Gallin, Assistant Chief Executive, Adam Broome, Director for Corporate Support, Phil Mitchell, Localities Manager for the north-west of the City, Mark Rich, Partnership Co-ordinator, Giles Perritt, Lead Officer and Ross Johnston, Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.50 pm.

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.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was made in accordance with the Code of Conduct –

Name	Minute No. and Subject	Reason	Interest
Councillor Thompson	59 – Joint Performance and Finance Report	Director of Plymouth Community Homes	Personal

59. JOINT PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Transformation, the Assistant Chief Executive and the Director for Corporate Support were in attendance to present the Joint Performance and Finance Report as submitted to Cabinet on 16 November 2010.

In response to questions raised, Members were informed that –

- (a) the concerns identified around the performance issues regarding

the Special Educational Needs Statements and the schools' Transport Policy were part of the budget scrutiny agenda, however, it could be beneficial for additional scrutiny to be undertaken by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel;

- (b) the Assistant Director for Street Services was currently working on a recycling programme which aimed to achieve the 36 per cent annual recycling target for the city;
- (c) year on year the amount of Council Tax debt being recovered was rising and the 96 per cent identified as the projected recovery of Council Tax debt for this financial year was a realistic target with the Council aiming to achieve a target of 98.5 per cent in future years;
- (d) staffing costs had been reduced over the last couple of years by aligning the Revenues and Benefits service with the Contact Centre, this, along with an increase in council tax and housing benefit applications, had led to the council being above the benchmark for processing applications. The council was now below the benchmark level in terms of value for money;
- (e) Panels were involved in the scrutinising delivery plans and budget monitoring through reviewing the highlighted key risk areas contained within the report;
- (f) following the decommissioning of the Regional Spatial Strategy, a strategy which assisted with economic growth, the authorities priorities had changed and there had been a need to use grant funding to cover the cost of some core service provision;
- (g) following the removal of National Indicators, discussions were on going with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) regarding developing indicators to measure Plymouth's priorities.

Agreed –

- (1) to request that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel look into the performance issues around Special Educational Needs Statements and the current review of the schools' Transport Policy at their meeting on 6 January 2010;
- (2) that the Cabinet Member for Community Services (Street Scene, Waste and Sustainability) is reminded of the benefits of publicising recycling services over the Christmas period;
- (3) to request that the Chief Executive provide an emailed response to Members of the Board advising them about what core services would be impacted on as a result of the loss of external funding to

some previously recurring grants.

(Councillor Thompson declared a personal interest in respect of the above item).

60. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2010 - 14**

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Transformation, the Assistant Chief Executive and the Director for Corporate Support were in attendance to present the Medium Term Financial Strategy as submitted to Cabinet on 16 November 2010.

In response to questions raised, Members were informed that –

- (a) the Council needs to match its resources with expenditure in order to meet the 28 per cent reduction in its budget over the next four years, this will result in the council reviewing and reducing its expenditure against its priorities;
- (b) nothing was being ruled out when the council reviews and reduces its expenditure against its priorities, however, there was a policy to protect front-line services where possible;
- (c) Invest to Save proposals were an important part of the 2010/11 budget setting process and the Accommodation Strategy provided a good example of how Invest to Save principles were being implemented;
- (d) new Invest to Save initiatives were being considered and the Management Board would continue to be engaged in these proposals in the future;
- (e) the Transformational Change Programme was moving quickly as illustrated by the implementation of the Accommodation Strategy which was an integral part of the programme;
- (f) Corporate Management Team were looking to take the Transformational Change Programme forward by, amongst other things, reviewing the Council's approach to communications and customer service;
- (g) with regard to Highways, the strategy would consider the benefits of delivering more maintenance work and paying less in insurance claims;
- (h) despite the challenge of earlier scrutiny dates in 2011 to enable further consultations, every effort would be made to meet the dispatch deadline for the January scrutiny meetings.

Agreed that a full report on the Transformational Change Programme is provided at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in early 2011.

Recommended that –

- (1) the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance review the Insurance General Fund reserve provision for future years;
- (2) the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2010-14 is adopted by the City Council.

On behalf of the Members of the Board, the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Transformation, the Assistant Chief Executive and the Director for Corporate Support for their attendance.

61. **MINUTES**

Agreed to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2010 as a correct record.

62. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

63. **LEADER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chief Executive was in attendance to report on Council issues and respond to questions. Members were informed that the Leader and Deputy Leader were absent due to their unavoidable and necessary attendance at a Regional Leaders meeting reporting Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and a South West Council's Leaders meeting. Highlights of the report included the facts that:

- (a) the effects of the Comprehensive Spending Review were gradually becoming evident as the council received further detail regarding the 28 per cent reduction in budgets over the next four years; more details were expected on 2 December 2010, where it was hoped that an announcement on ring-fenced grants would be made;
- (b) budget delivery groups had been created to work through 11 cross-departmental budget delivery plans in order to assist in the council reviewing and reducing its expenditure against its priorities to meet the council's overall target of £30m savings;
- (c) there was a drive to create new invest to save initiatives, however, it was acknowledged that this would take time and it was more important to get the initiatives correct so as to ensure that service delivery was improved;
- (d) the council had to undertake change, this was inevitable, but

there was a policy to protect front-line services and minimise redundancies where possible by, amongst other things, negotiating with Trade Unions, managing recruitment and looking at transferring responsibilities of council services to other providers. Nothing had, however, been decided at present;

- (e) the briefing provided on the World Cup fact finding mission was comprehensive and had received positive comments from members;
- (f) with regard to the recent negative publicity on England's bid to host the 2018 World Cup bid, it was difficult to know if this had any direct impact on Plymouth being a host city. The announcement on the host nation would be made by FIFA on 2 December 2010;
- (g) Plymouth was instrumental in setting up an LEP in Devon and Cornwall, however, Cornwall Council had since pulled out. Somerset had shown an interest in joining the Devon LEP;
- (h) if Somerset joined the LEP, then Plymouth would want the LEP to focus on the following –
 - an urban led growth agenda that will provide opportunities to transform Devon and Somerset;
 - a low carbon theme, given the strengths shared in marine renewable energy and nuclear energy;
 - a strong tourism sector;
 - a strong agenda on creating jobs and re-balancing the economy through increasing entrepreneurial activity and addressing issues of worklessness;
 - a form on deprivation or inequalities;
- (i) there were issues that needed to be addressed before Somerset joined the LEP given that Somerset was a rural area and Plymouth an urban one;
- (j) European funding on creative industries was in limbo, but there was more information in the New Year.

On behalf of the Members of the Board, the Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his attendance.

64. **COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION - BUDSHEAD TRUST**

The Localities Manager for the north-west of the City and a Partnership Co-ordinator were in attendance to provide an update on the outcome of the Councillor Call for Action on Budshead Trust. Members were informed that –

- (a) the Budshead Trust were carrying out a strategic review of their organisation and had reduced staff hours in the aim of reducing costs;
- (b) the Trust had sought funding and resources from other avenues including –
 - an agreement by Plymouth Community Homes on a peppercorn rent at their current premises;
 - the allocation of Community Grant Scheme funding from local ward councillors;
 - an allocation of funding (up to £500) from the Community Safety Partnership;
 - liaison with the council's Children and Young People's Service, the Devon and Cornwall Police and the Drake Foundation, however, no funding was available from these organisations;
 - a potential offer from the Ballard Trust to meet the cost of a Youth Worker;
 - an offer for a student led piece of work from the University of Plymouth;
 - running and maintaining the university sports facilities;
- (c) the trust were aware and interested in accessing a government led 'Transition Fund' subject to eligibility criteria being met;
- (d) the Trust had begun working with Routeways and now had access to the Third Sector Consortium; this gave the Trust opportunities to undertake training exercises, capacity building and information sharing;
- (e) the Budshead Youth Forum had recently been awarded the Crime Reduction of the Year award at the recent Herald Youth Awards.

Agreed that –

- (1) the comments from the Cabinet report of 16 November 2010 be noted;

- (2) the Cabinet Member for Community Services (Safer and Stronger Communities and Leisure, Culture and Sport) be advised that the Neighbourhood Profiles should be a central element for consideration in all decision making including funding allocations.

On behalf of the Members of the Board, the Chair thanked the Localities Manager for the north-west of the City and the Partnership Co-ordinator for their work on this matter.

65. **TRACKING DECISIONS**

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

- (a) 52 – answers to the questions submitted regarding Insurance issues would be presented at the Highways Maintenance Task and Finish Group on 7 December 2010;
- (b) 53 – a PID was in the process of being drafted and the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would undertake a Task and Finish Group into the final sign off of the Devonport Regeneration Company Partnership Succession Strategy.

66. **FORWARD PLAN**

The Board noted the new additions to the Forward Plan and agreed that –

- (1) the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel's work programme be amended to reflect that the Children and Young People's Plan 2011 – 2014 would be scrutinised by the panel at their meeting of 24 February 2011;
- (2) with regard to the Cost and Volume Fostering Framework the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel request to be provided with a written update to a future meeting.

67. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The board considered panel recommendations, it was agreed -

- (1) that with regard to Audit Committee minute 50 15/11/10, the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel monitor and review the Revenues and Benefits Service and add this to its work programme;
- (2) that with regard to Audit Committee minute 53 15/11/10, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board monitor the Citybus review and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and add this to its work programme;

- (3) that with regard to Audit Committee minute 55 15/11/10, the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider the ICT related problems within the Devon Audit Partnership and add this to its work programme;
- (4) to approve the appointment of the nominated co-opted member to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel (minute 47 11/11/10 refers);
- (5) the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel be linked to the new Children and Young People Trust Theme Group (minute 53 11/11/10 refers);
- (6) to include the recommended items on to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme (minute 57 11/11/10 refers).

68. **WORK PROGRAMMES**

(a) To consider and approve work programmes for each of the panels, to include a progress update from each of the Chairs

The Management Board considered and approved the Panels' work programme's subject to the additional agreed items to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Agreed that all Members of the Board be emailed the recommendations from the Highways Maintenance Task and Finish Group report and that authority be delegated to the Lead Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to review the report.

(b) To receive an update from the non-chair Member working group

The non-chair members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board provided an update on the findings from their working group.

It was commented by Members that –

- (a) recommendation 4 should be formalised in a constitutional set up;
- (b) the Project Initiation Document (PID) and the subsequent Task and Finish Group should focus more on improving the working links between the Council's Communications Office and the scrutiny function.

After considering the recommendations submitted it was agreed that –

- (1) recommendation one be communicated to all producers of

reports and documents by Democratic Support Officers and Scrutiny Lead Officers;

- (2) recommendation two be adopted and further recommended to Cabinet;
- (3) recommendation three be communicated to all Officers attending scrutiny by Democratic Support Officers and Scrutiny Lead Officers;
- (4) recommendation four be further recommended to Cabinet and Corporate Management Team;
- (5) recommendation five be acknowledged and the function adopted by all scrutiny chairs;
- (6) recommendation six be acknowledged by all scrutiny chairs;
- (7) recommendation seven be amended to read "Panel Member's should be encouraged from each panel to attend the relevant partnership and theme group meetings as observers";
- (8) with regard to recommendation seven the Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships would seek to arrange discussions between Scrutiny Chair's and LSP Theme Group Chair's to foster better links;
- (9) with regard to recommendation eight the Chair's of the Scrutiny Panels who sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would form the membership of the Task and Finish Group to undertake a review about how the scrutiny function can better engage with the media; the Task and Finish Group would be held after January 2011;
- (10) prior to the Task and Finish Group commencing the Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships would seek to find out how many scrutiny led press releases had gone out over the past year.

On behalf of the Members of the Board, the Chair thanked the non-chair members, Lead Officer and Democratic Support for the time and effort put in to producing such a good piece of work.

69. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.