

Public Document Pack



BARRY KEEL
Chief Executive
Floor 1 - Civic Centre
Plymouth
PL1 2AA

www.plymouth.gov.uk/democracy

Date 02/07/10 Telephone Enquiries 01752 304022 Fax 01752 304819
Please ask for Helen Rickman, Democratic Support Officer e-mail helen.rickman@plymouth.gov.uk

GROWTH AND PROSPERITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE: MONDAY 12 JULY 2010
TIME: 2.00 PM
PLACE: COUNCIL HOUSE, NEXT TO THE CIVIC CENTRE

Committee Members–

Councillor Nicholson - Chair
Councillor Nelder – Vice Chair
Councillors Berrow, K Foster, Martin Leaves, Roberts, Mrs Stephens, Wheeler and Wright

Substitutes–:

Any Member other than a Member of the Cabinet may act as a substitute member provided that they do not have a personal and prejudicial interest in the matter under review.

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

Members and Officers are requested to sign the attendance list at the meeting.

BARRY KEEL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

GROWTH AND PROSPERITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

PART 1 (PUBLIC PANEL)

1. APOLOGIES

To receive apologies for non-attendance by panel members.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect of items on this agenda.

3. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 8)

To confirm the minutes of the last meeting held on 14 June 2010.

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. TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD (Pages 9 - 16)

The Panel will monitor the progress of previous resolutions and receive any relevant feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

6. UPDATE ON GOVERNMENT POLICY CHANGES (Pages 17 - 18)

The Panel will be provided with an update on Government Policy changes.

7. COMMUNITY EVENTS AND ROAD CLOSURE POLICY (TO FOLLOW)

The Panel will be provided with an update on the Community Events and Road Closure Policy.

8. PORT OF PLYMOUTH STUDY (Pages 19 - 28)

The Panel will be provided with a briefing report on the Port of Plymouth study.

9. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING - REGULATORY SERVICES PEER CHALLENGE (Pages 29 - 50)

The Panel will be provided with an update on the private sector housing peer review improvement plan.

10. PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY HOMES - PRESENTATION

The Panel will be provided with a presentation on Plymouth Community Homes.

11. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 51 - 54)

To review the panels work programme 2010/11

12. EXEMPT BUSINESS

To consider passing a resolution under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

PART II (PRIVATE PANEL)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO NOTE

that under the law, the panel is entitled to consider certain items in private. Members of the public will be asked to leave the meeting when such items are discussed.

13. EASTERN CORRIDOR PROGRESS REPORT (E3)

Members of the Panel will receive a verbal update on the Eastern Corridor.

This page is intentionally left blank

Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Monday 14 June 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor Nicholson, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Nelder, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Beer, Berrow, K Foster, Roberts, Mrs Stephens, Wheeler and Wright.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Martin Leaves

Also in attendance: Gill Peele – Business Manager for Development and Regeneration, Nick Jones - Head of Street Scene Services, Anthony Payne - Director for Development and Regeneration, David Draffan - Assistant Director for Economic Development, Douglas Fletcher – Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership and Chris Grace – Head of Economic Development.

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.30 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.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Agreed that Councillor Nicholson was appointed as Chair and Councillor Nelder appointed as Vice Chair for this municipal year.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in accordance with the code of conduct.

3. MINUTES

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2010 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Gill Peele, the Business Manager for Development and Regeneration, informed the Panel that Community Services should be removed from Panel's terms of reference as the Housing Stock Transfer had now taken place.

Panel Members noted the terms of reference and recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that Council be asked to remove Community Services from the Panel's Terms of Reference due to the Housing Stock Transfer.

6. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

Gill Peele, the Business Manager for Development and Regeneration, updated Members on their Tracking Resolutions and feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and informed the Panel that –

- (i) the Hoe Foreshore Task and Finish Group had been added to the agenda to be discussed and finalised;
- (ii) Destination Southwest would be removed from the tracking document and added to the work programme associated with the tourism strategy;
- (iii) the item regarding Co-opted Representatives was added to the agenda and would be discussed at the meeting – this would subsequently be removed from the tracking resolutions document;
- (iv) questions stemming from the 19 February 2010 meeting on the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report had been answered and emailed to Panel Members – this would subsequently be removed from the tracking resolutions document;
- (v) the Plymouth City Council Housing Services recommendations from 3 March 2010 Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting would be discussed under the Work Programme item later on the agenda;
- (vi) questions stemming from the 'Growth and Regeneration Agenda' discussed at 22 March 2010 meeting had been answered and emailed to Panel Members – this would subsequently be removed from the tracking resolutions document;
- (vii) the accuracy of the 3 March 2010 Overview and Scrutiny Management Board minute 94a (c and d) had been checked – these minutes were approved on 31 March 2010 meeting therefore the resolution stands. This would subsequently be removed from the tracking resolutions document;
- (viii) the question regarding Milehouse Park and Ride had been answered and emailed to Panel Members – this would subsequently be removed from the tracking resolutions document;
- (ix) the Events Strategy was reallocated from the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel; Gill Peele, the Business Manager for Development and Regeneration, informed Members that

currently there wasn't an Events Strategy however there was an intention for this to be developed alongside the Visitors Strategy which was on the Panel's work programme;

- (x) the resolution from Plympton Area Committee regarding the Community Events and Road Closure Policy was referred from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 31 March 2010; Gill Peele, the Business Manager for Development and Regeneration, informed Members that a new strategy was currently being formulated. This item would be added to the Panel's work programme;
- (xi) the Tree Strategy was reallocated from the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel; Gill Peele, the Business Manager for Development and Regeneration, informed Members that this was in relation to the maintenance programme for trees. It was agreed that this was not appropriate to include in the work programme for the Growth & Prosperity OSP at this stage; as per the Hoe Foreshore Task and Finish Group, it would be highlighted to the Audit Committee if it became a concern.

Agreed that the tracking resolutions and feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be noted.

7. **APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES**

The Panel gave consideration to the possibility of appointing co-opted representatives to the Panel, however, decided not to at this time. Further consideration would be given to co-opting a representative as and when there was a need.

8. **HOE FORESHORE**

Nick Jones, Head of Street Scene Services, informed the Panel that a full risk assessment had been carried out on the Hoe Foreshore and £406,000 of remedial works had been completed; the red risk had now reduced to an amber risk.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (i) there were still a few minor repairs to the Hoe Foreshore that needed completion;
- (ii) it was not known how long the current risk was going to stay amber as remedial works on the Hoe Foreshore would be the result of a yearly inspection;
- (iii) it was not known if there was adequate budget to cover possible future remedial works as the yearly inspection for 2010 had not been completed;

- (iv) the recent remedial works to the Hoe Foreshore had slightly delayed the risk assessment which would normally take place in the Spring;
- (v) on page 35 of the agenda, the pool had to be filled in other than repaired as this was more cost efficient;

The Chair thanked Nick Jones and his staff for the work undertaken on the Hoe Foreshore. It was agreed that the work of the previous Task and Finish Group, which had been tasked to ensure that the Hoe Foreshore reduced from a red risk to an amber risk, had been completed therefore it was recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that the risk had reduced and this piece of scrutiny was now complete.

9. **DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION PRIORITIES.**

Anthony Payne, Director for Development and Regeneration, provided the Panel with a presentation upon Development and Regeneration priorities.

The Panel was informed that the Development and Regeneration department

- (i) was created over a year ago and covered the following areas - Economic Development, Planning, Strategic Housing and Transport;
- (ii) employed 352 staff, had an annual budget of £16.6m, generated £18.7m of income, attracted £127m grant funding and had a capital programme of £21.1m;
- (iii) had achieved 108 major planning applications and 1,496 planning applications in 2009/2010;
- (iv) had more adopted Area Action Plans than any other authority;
- (v) maintained 538 miles of roads and managed over 3500 car parking spaces, jointly owned and operated with Cornwall Council the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferries, subsidised 20 different bus services and operated 3 Park & Ride services;
- (vi) had a statutory duty to deliver a Local Transport Plan, directly managed 100 shops, 2 business parks and the City Market, jointly owned Tamar Science Park with the University of Plymouth, managed a £14m programme to encourage enterprise and achieved the UK's highest renewal mandate of 91% for the City Centre BID;
- (vii) dealt with planning applications, housing needs, CCTV, civil enforcement and the city market as part of its front line services;
- (viii) focused upon the following policy and strategy documents: Local Development Framework, Local Economic Strategy, Local Transport

Plan and the Local Housing Service;

(ix) had the following key challenges for 2010/2011:

- to develop a fit for purpose housing service in order to improve the quality of private sector housing and increase the supply and mix of housing and regeneration of key neighbourhoods;
- deliver the Local Transport Plan 3 by April 2011 and deliver major transport schemes;
- deliver the Local Economic Strategy
- position the city within emerging structures post general election

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (x) Ports were one of Plymouth's assets – the Atkins report had been received by the Council's Planning Service;
- (xi) the Transport Capital Programme had received a 25% reduction this year;
- (xii) there were no financial implications for the East End Community Scheme as funding had been committed and accounted for before 1 January 2010;

Agreed that the Development and Regeneration priorities were noted.

10. **LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP - WEALTHY THEME GROUP ACTION PLANS**

David Draffan - Assistant Director for Economic Development, Douglas Fletcher – Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership and Chris Grace – Head of Economic Development provided the Panel with an update on action plans for the Wealthy Theme Group. The Panel was informed that –

- (i) the Local Economic Strategy (LES) was adopted in 2006 by the Council and was at the heart of the work of the Wealthy Theme Group (WTG);
- (ii) the LES worked towards the City Vision objective 'Developing a prosperous economy' and sought to realise the following aspirations:
- a highly competitive City, well recognised and branded on the global economic stage
 - a City with a balanced, diversified and knowledge intensive business base
 - a City Region with well connected and inclusive communities
 - a City with an adaptable and skilled workforce, constantly learning

- a City where strong stakeholders and agencies work effectively together to deliver shared priorities
 - a City where a genuine commitment to sustainable development reinforces a set of unique environmental assets
- (iii) membership of the WTG was to become private sector led and delivery focused; meetings would be based around the delivery of the five Local Economic Strategy themes:
- Skills
 - Business
 - Centres
 - Participation
 - Leadership
- (iv) the WTG would provide a forum for:
- holding organisations to account in delivering the economic agenda for Plymouth;
 - bringing together relevant organisations to ensure coordinated delivery;
 - identifying issues that needed addressing;
 - gaining input and experience of the business community;
- (v) the Local Strategic Partnership would hold all partners to account;
- (vi) the Wealthy Theme Group would create a unified approach to leadership;

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (vii) in terms of jobs, the economy was over dependent on the public sector however the University had driven growth and employment in recent months;
- (viii) the Wealthy Theme Group would ensure everything was on target through a monitoring process;
- (ix) Plymouth City Council officers had been visiting local businesses as part of a urban enterprise programme;

- (x) the Smith review provided an opportunity for growth whether it be in terms of housing/and or jobs;
- (xi) the Chair of the Wealthy Theme Group and the Assistant Director for Economic Development agreed that the minutes of the Wealthy Theme Group be a standing item on the Panel's agenda.

Agreed that the update on action points for the Wealthy Theme Group was noted.

11. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The following items were agreed by the Panel as also being incorporated to the Panel's existing draft Work programme –

- Section 106 Funding– an initial written report in September;
- Accessibility Planning – update after 6 month period;
- Community Events and Road Closures Policy – written report
- Eastern Corridor Update
- Tourism Strategy – written update in the Autumn
- Government Policy Changes – standing item on agenda
- PFI – Waste Management – written update(depending on timing of Joint Scrutiny with Torbay/Devon)
- Ports of Plymouth Development Plan – presentation
- Highway Maintenance - (Task and Finish Group with Councillors Berrow, Nicholson, Wright and Nelder)

12. **FUTURE DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS**

The Panel noted the dates and times of future Panel meetings.

13. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.

This page is intentionally left blank

TRACKING RESOLUTIONS
Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date / Minute number	Resolution	Explanation / Minute	Officer	Progress	Target date
26 Jan 2009 / 55b	It was <u>resolved</u> that a Task and Finish group, comprising of six Members (3 Conservative, 3 Labour) would be set up to investigate the two 'red' risk items highlighted by the Audit Committee.	<p>The Democratic Support Team Leader informed Members that on 18 December 2008 the Audit Committee had resolved to refer 2 'red' risk items (Operational Risk Management Update Report) to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. At the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 22 January 2009, the 'red' risk items were referred to this Panel for investigation; this item was tabled at the meeting.</p> <p>The Business Manager for Development raised an issue as to whether the two red risk items were within the Panel's terms of reference and was informed by the Democratic Support Team leader that this would be clarified. Only one Labour Group member wished to be a member of the Task and Finish Group so the Democratic Support Team Leader advised the Panel that non Sustainable Communities Members, if they had a particular interest or expertise in the issue, could be a part of the Task and Finish Group.</p>	Helen Rickman – Dem Support	<p>Councillors K Foster, Coker, Smith, McDonald, Roberts and Delbridge were selected for the Hoe Foreshore T+F group and a meeting to discuss the PID took place in March 09 with Gill Peele, Mike Hocking, Judith Shore, Nick Jones and Councillors K Foster and Coker in attendance.</p> <p>A meeting was set for the T+F group on 1 June 09 however this was postponed due to risk assessments not being completed. A T+F Group meeting took place on 3 July 2009; Councillor Viney replaced Councillor K Foster as chair. The minutes were attached to the Panel's 20 July 2009 agenda.</p> <p>It was resolved that a site visit would take place in August 2009 and members would report back to the Panel on 28 September. At its meeting on 20 July, the Panel agreed that the matter of the maintenance of parks and playgrounds environment should be re-activated until a satisfactory response was received. <u>At its 28 Sep 09 meeting, it was resolved under minute 19, Tracking Resolutions, that the Panel recommend to the Management Board that the Parks/Playgrounds Risk Assessment be transferred to the Customers and Communities OSP Panel for further consideration as it was now their new terms of reference. This was approved by the Management Board on 4 Nov 09.</u></p> <p>At its 19 Feb 09 Meeting, the Chair informed the Panel that a site visit for the Hoe Foreshore Task and Finish Group took place on 4 February 2010; the majority of red risks originally highlighted by the Audit Committee on 18 December 2008 had been rectified however it was expected that all remedial works would be completed by the end of February 2010. The diving board that was originally identified as a red risk had been dismantled. <u>The updated risk assessment had been received by the Democratic Support Officer and a final Task and Finish Group meeting would be arranged to aim to close this piece of scrutiny.</u></p>	June/July 2010

Date / Minute number	Resolution	Explanation / Minute	Officer	Progress	Target date
				<p>This matter was dealt with by the Growth and Prosperity Panel on 14 June 2010 where it was agreed that a recommendation be put to the O+S Management Board stating that the risk had been reduced from red to amber and that the task and finish group be signed off as complete.</p>	
20 July 2009 / 9	<p><u>Resolved</u> to request that the possibility of Councillor representation on Destination Southwest be looked into.</p>			<p>Waiting for a response from DSW.</p> <p>At its 28 Sep 09 meeting it was resolved under minute 19 – Tracking Resolutions that the Panel agreed to raise the issue of DSW funding and representation with the Director for Development and Regeneration and the Assistant Director for Economic Development at the next meeting (should they be able to attend). The Panel would then consider whether they wished to invite the Director of DSW to a future meeting.</p> <p>Tracking Resolutions, Destination Southwest would be an item on the next agenda. The Business Manager is to brief the Director/Assistant Director for Development & Regeneration on the issues surrounding funding and representation and will arrange for either a) attendance at the next meeting or b) a written response.</p> <p>At 7 December 09 meeting it was resolved that the AD for Development and Regeneration (Economic Development) be invited to attend a future meeting once the DSW strategy had been completed, in order to provide the panel with an update.</p> <p>At its 19 February 2010 meeting, the Business Manager for Development and Regeneration informed the Panel that Destination South West would not be added to the Panel's agenda until the tourism strategy had been completed. <u>On 22 March 2010 meeting, the Panel was informed that Destination South West would remain on the Panel's tracking resolutions until the Tourism Strategy had been completed.</u></p> <p>At 14 June 2010 meeting the Panel agreed for this item to be added to its work programme and removed from the tracking resolutions.</p>	End 2010?

Date / Minute number	Resolution	Explanation / Minute	Officer	Progress	Target date
19 Feb 2010 51	<p>Plymouth City Council Housing Services. <u>Recommended</u> that –</p> <p>1) the Panel explore and review key areas of strategic housing, specifically Choice Based Letting and the private renting sector in order to identify how both areas are working;</p> <p>2) the Panel host two presentations by Plymouth Community Homes on the delivery of the transfer promises;</p> <p>3) the Panel host a review of Plymouth Community Homes twice yearly;</p> <p>4) a monitoring report on Devon Choice Lettings be incorporated into the Panel's future work programme;</p> <p>5) the Panel receive a report from the Peer Challenge on private rental;</p> <p>6) the Panel lead the scrutiny engagement with all services that fall under strategic housing;</p> <p>7) the Strategic Review of Homelessness and Housing Advice services be incorporated into the Panel's future work programme;</p>	<p>The Assistant Director for Strategic Housing and the Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development provided the Panel with an update on Plymouth City Council's Housing Service (as set out in the agenda, pages 123-134).</p>		<p>On 3 March 2010 Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting it was resolved under minute 94a that:</p> <p>1. with regard to Growth & Prosperity OSP draft minute no. 51 – Plymouth City Council Housing Services –</p> <p>a. in line with the scrutiny terms of reference, it be confirmed that the Growth & Prosperity OSP is the main panel for considering strategic housing issues;</p> <p>b. officers be requested to liaise with the Monitoring Officer to establish what was formally agreed when the housing stock was transferred to Plymouth Community Homes regarding scrutiny of the service;</p> <p>c. the Support Services OSP join with the Growth & Prosperity OSP to help with scrutiny of homelessness and housing needs issues;</p> <p>d. the Growth & Prosperity OSP invite the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Support Services OSP to meet with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development to discuss how best to take scrutiny of housing issues forward;</p> <p><u>The above resolutions were reported to the Growth and Prosperity OSP Panel on 22 March meeting. The Panel was informed that the recommendations submitted to the Management Board regarding Plymouth Housing Services would be followed up at the first meeting of the new municipal year once membership for the Panel had been agreed.</u></p>	

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Date/min number	Resolution / Recommendation	Explanation / Minute	Response	Explanation
3 February 2010 Management Board. Minute 80a	<p><u>Resolved</u> that –</p> <p>1. The following recommendations be approved –</p> <p>Customers & Communities OSP recommendations from minutes 57, 58, 60 and 61.</p>	<p>25 January 2010 Customers and Communities OSP.</p> <p><u>Recommended</u> to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that –</p> <p>1. the lead for the Events Strategy – Coherent Marketing Strategy (joint task and finish group) is reallocated to the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel;</p> <p>2. Councillor McDonald represents the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the joint task and finish group.</p> <p>Explanation - The Customers and Communities OSP found that there was no events strategy and had some concerns about a possible lack of co-ordination in terms of the advertisement and marketing of events which take place in Plymouth, some investigation is required to find out whether or not there is an issue and whether or not an events strategy is necessary</p>	<p>At 14 June 2010 meeting, Gill Peele, the Business Manager for Development and Regeneration, informed Members that currently there wasn't an Events Strategy however there was an intention for this to be developed alongside the Visitors Strategy which was on the Panel's work programme.</p>	

Date/min number	Resolution / Recommendation	Explanation / Minute	Response	Explanation
31 March 2010 Management Board	<u>Resolved</u> that the Plympton Area Committee draft minute 58, to approve the recommendation to add the scrutiny of the Community Events and Road Closure Policy to the Growth and Prosperity OSP work programme under CIP 11.	<p><u>Plympton Area Committee – 8 March 2010.</u></p> <p>Minute 58. The Committee received a written report regarding community events and road closures. Questions were raised regarding the current policy, the need for community hosts to take out insurance, health and safety checks and possible costs incurred.</p> <p><u>Recommended</u> Plympton Area Committee request that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board consider an appropriate panel to scrutinise the current Community Events and Road Closure Policy, specifically with regards to the cost of closing roads for charitable events.</p>	The resolution from Plympton Area Committee regarding the Community Events and Road Closure Policy was referred from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 31 March 2010; Gill Peele, the Business Manager for Development, informed Members that a new strategy was currently being formulated. This item would be added to the Panel's work programme;	This item has been added to the Panel's Work Programme – a written briefing has been scheduled for 12 July 2010 meeting.
31 March 2010 Management Board	<u>Resolved</u> that the Customers and Communities OSP recommendation draft minute 79, that the tree strategy is added to the Growth and Prosperity OSP work programme, is approved.	<p><u>29 March 2010 – Customers and Communities OSP</u></p> <p><u>Recommended</u> to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that the tree strategy is allocated to the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel and is removed from the (Customers and Communities) Panel's work programme.</p> <p>Explanation – the Customers and Communities OSP were concerned that there was a back log of work in relation to trees and that further consideration should be given as to whether or not a tree strategy is required</p>	At 14 June 2010 meeting, Gill Peele, the Business Manager for Development and Regeneration, informed Members that this was in relation to the maintenance programme for trees. It was agreed that this was not appropriate to include in the work programme for the Growth & Prosperity OSP at this stage; as per the Hoe Foreshore Task and Finish Group, it would be highlighted to the Audit Committee if it became a concern.	

Date/min number	Resolution / Recommendation	Explanation / Minute	Response	Explanation
14 June 2010 Growth and Prosperity OSP, minute 5	Panel Members noted the terms of reference and <u>recommended</u> to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that Council be asked to remove Community Services from the Panel's Terms of Reference due to the Housing Stock Transfer.	<p>Gill Peele, the Business Manager for Development and Regeneration, informed the Panel that Community Services should be removed from Panel's terms of reference as the Housing Stock Transfer had now taken place.</p> <p>Panel Members noted the terms of reference and recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that Council be asked to remove Community Services from the Panel's Terms of Reference due to the Housing Stock Transfer.</p>		

Date/min number	Resolution / Recommendation	Explanation / Minute	Response	Explanation
14 June 2010 Growth and Prosperity OSP, minute 8	The Chair thanked Nick Jones and his staff for the work undertaken on the Hoe Foreshore. It was agreed that the work of the previous Task and Finish Group, which had been tasked to ensure that the Hoe Foreshore reduced from a red risk to an amber risk, had been completed therefore it was recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that the risk had reduced and this piece of scrutiny was now complete.	<p>Nick Jones, Head of Street Scene Services, informed the Panel that a full risk assessment had been carried out on the Hoe Foreshore and £406,000 of remedial works had been completed; the red risk had now reduced to an amber risk.</p> <p>In response to questions raised it was reported that –</p> <p>(i) there were still a few minor repairs to the Hoe Foreshore that needed completion;</p> <p>(ii) it was not known how long the current risk was going to stay amber as remedial works on the Hoe Foreshore would be the result of a yearly inspection;</p> <p>(iii) it was not known if there was adequate budget to cover possible future remedial works as the yearly inspection for 2010 had not been completed;</p> <p>(iv) the recent remedial works to the Hoe Foreshore had slightly delayed the risk assessment which would normally take place in the Spring;</p> <p>(v) on page 35 of the agenda, the pool had to be filled in other than repaired as this was more cost efficient;</p> <p>The Chair thanked Nick Jones and his staff for the work undertaken on the Hoe Foreshore. It was agreed that the work of the previous Task and Finish Group, which had been tasked to ensure that the Hoe Foreshore reduced from a red risk to an amber risk, had been completed therefore it was recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that the risk had reduced and this piece of scrutiny was now complete.</p>		

Grey = Completed (once completed resolutions have been noted by the panel they will be removed from this document)

Red = Urgent – item not considered at last meeting or requires an urgent response

GROWTH & PROSPERITY OVERVIEW SCRUTINY PANEL**Briefing Note: Government Policy Changes****June 2010****1.Planning System reforms:**

- **Greater power to local people**
- **Planning policy to be streamlined**
- **Local plans more transparent**
- **Communities to help develop proposals for their neighbourhoods, rather than be consulted on options already prepared**

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/newsstories/planningandbuilding/1622534>

2.Abolition of Leader's Boards:

- **Dismantling of Leaders Boards**

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1617912>

3."Garden Grabbing" change to planning policy:

- **Proposals for gardens to be taken outside of Brownfield category**
- **Changes to density policies**
- **Planning Policy Statement 3 : Housing (PPS3) changes;**

The definition of previously developed land in Annex B now excludes private residential gardens

The national indicative minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare is deleted from para 47

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/newsstories/planningandbuilding/16102161>

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/corporate/pps3statement>

This page is intentionally left blank

PORT OF PLYMOUTH EVIDENCE BASE STUDY

Produced by Atkins Ltd for Plymouth City Council
June 2010

Executive Summary

as prepared by Kaja Curry, Coastal Planning Coordinator, Planning Services

Introduction

Atkins Ltd was commissioned in November 2009 by Plymouth City Council (PCC) and its partners Devon County Council and Cattewater Harbour Commission, with support from the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum, to undertake a study of the Port of Plymouth. The study aims to provide a robust evidence base which can be used to inform a range of future policies and plans in Plymouth and the South West region. Furthermore, should the decision be taken to prepare a masterplan for the Port of Plymouth, the study will provide a sound foundation from which the masterplan can be developed.

This summary provides the key points from the findings. However, the documents themselves go into far greater detail with over 200 pages of data and statistics.

Purpose of Study

Collectively, the four ports (Cattewater, Sutton Harbour, Millbay and Devonport) in Plymouth represent one of the South West's and UK's largest and most diverse ports. Whilst the ports all act independently they do have inter-related roles which have a significant combined impact on local, regional and national economic development and transport and, in the case of Devonport, also on our national defence capability.

The study aims to establish a robust evidence base of the four ports with a view to providing an important input into a number of key policies and initiatives including:

- Plymouth Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy Review and relevant Area Action Plans (AAPs);
- Local Economic Strategy Review;
- South West Delivering a Sustainable Transport Strategy (DaSTS)
- Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3).

Approach

The key components of the work were as follows:

Final Report: Volume 1:

Baseline Position

- Existing role and activities
- Port Infrastructure audit
- Key policy considerations
- Transport considerations
- Coastal Environment Considerations

Economic Significance of Port

Influencing Factors & SWOT

- Influencing factors & SWOT
- Future Scenarios
- Recommendations

Final Report: Volume 2 Appendices:

- Appendix A – Stakeholder consultations
- Appendix B – Plymouth’s Commercial Port Facilities
- Appendix C – Overview of South West Ports
- Appendix D – Policy Context
- Appendix E – Coastal Environment
- Appendix F – Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Devonport South Yard.

Stakeholders Consulted

Engagement with the key stakeholders in this subject matter was done through face to face meetings as well as through the stakeholder workshop.

The following were consulted with:

Cattewater Harbour Commission	Chamber of Trade and Commerce
Cattedown Wharf	Department of Communities
MoD	Devon County Council
NHNB Devonport	Environment Agency
Plymouth City Council	Marine and Fisheries Agency
Plymouth Yacht Haven	Maritime Plymouth
Pomphlett Wharf	Natural England
QHM	Network Rail
Queen Anne’s Battery Marina	Plymouth City Development Company
Sutton Harbour Company	Plymouth Chamber of
Sutton Harbour Marina	Commerce and Industry
Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum	Plymouth University
Victoria Wharf	Princess Yachts
Associated British Ports	Regen SW
	South West RDA

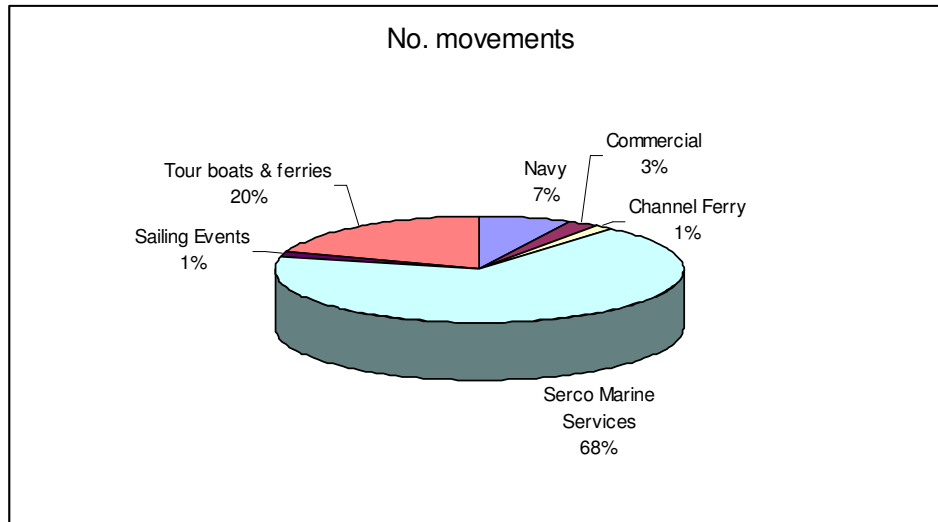
Key Findings**General Description**

The ‘Dockyard Port of Plymouth’ includes the two main elements of:

- The Royal Navy and Ministry of Defence (MoD) facilities, including Devonport Dockyards and other facilities and
- Commercial port activities including primarily Millbay (operated by by ABP Ports), Sutton Harbour and Cattewater Harbour Authority. Cattewater sees the bulk of commercial movements with vessels going to and from Cattedown Wharves, Victoria Wharf and Pomphlett Wharf.

In 2009 nearly 60,000 vessel movements were recorded within the port limits of which 75% were defence related. Further breakdown in shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Vessel Movements in Plymouth 2009 (excluding Torpoint Ferry)



Naval Activity

Devonport is the largest Naval Base in Western Europe covering over 650 acres with 15 dry docks, four miles of waterfront, 25 tidal berths and 5 basins and accommodating approximately 5,000 naval vessel movements per year.

The key services that the naval port provides today is summarised as follows:

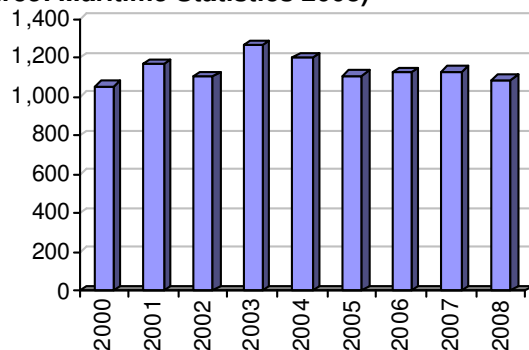
- Base port to many naval vessels including the largest, HMS Ocean at 21,000 tonnes, also fourteen frigates, seven Trafalgar class submarines, four of the five hydrographic survey ships and two amphibious assault ships.
- Only site in UK equipped to conduct nuclear submarine refits, including those of the Vanguard class.
- Surface ship refitting facilities.
- Home to Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) which trains officers of all surface ships, submarines and Royal Fleet Auxiliaries as well as offering training packages to other NATO countries.
- Home to Royal Navy Clearance Diving team from the Southern Diving Group covering Swangage round to Birkenhead.

Many MoD related services are now provided through contractors such as Babcock Marine and Serco.

Port Activity – commercial

Figure 2 shows that commercial ship arrivals (excluding naval) have stayed relatively stable during the period 2000 – 2008 with a peak of 1,262 in 2003.

Figure 2: Ship arrivals in Plymouth 2000-2008
(source: Maritime Statistics 2008)



The majority of the vessels arriving at Plymouth are relatively small with 82% less than 5,000 deadweight tonnes (dwt) reflecting the traditional short sea/coastal shipping orientation of the port. This is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Ship arrivals at Plymouth by type and deadweight 2008. (Maritime Statistics 2008)

Deadweight Tonnes	1 - 4,999	5,000 - 19,999	20,000 - 99,999	All
Tankers	57	155	3	215
Ro-Ro vessels	487	-	-	487
Fully cellular container vessels	13	2	-	15
Other dry cargo vessels	333	35	-	368
Total all vessels	890	192	3	1,085

Figure 4 gives the main trades and markets for goods passing through Cattewater and Millbay, which underline the regional and local significance of the Port providing goods for a relatively local market.

Figure 4: Summary of Port of Plymouth main trades & markets

Cargo Type	Direction	Market	Outlook
Liquid Bulk			
- Oil Products	Inward (coastal shipping)	Far South West (Cornwall & Devon)	Stable
Dry Bulk			
- Animal Feed	Inward (from Rotterdam)	Local/Regional	Stable; seasonal
- Fertiliser	Inward (from Rotterdam)	Local/Regional	Stable; seasonal
- Ball Clay	Outward	Europe (Spain)	Declining

- Stone	Outward	Channel Islands, SE England	Stable
- Stone	Inward (from Ireland)	Local/Regional	Stable
- Cement	Inward (from Germany)	Local/Regional	Stable
- Salt	Inward	Local/Regional	Growing
Fish	Inward	National	Declining
Ro-Ro HGV	Inward (mainly)	Regional/National	Stable

Economic Impact

Direct Employment: The marine and maritime sector in Plymouth accounts for approximately 13,500 jobs of which at least 8,500 are provided at Devonport (Babcock – 4,500; MoD – 800; Major on-site contractors – 2,500; others – 700). This is equivalent to approximately 12% of total employment in Plymouth city and 10% in the Plymouth Travel to Work Area (TTWA).

Indirect Employment: Indirectly the marine sector supports another 3,400 – 6,800 jobs in Plymouth's sub-region, thereby raising the sector's overall contribution to around 19% of Plymouth's employment and 14% in the Plymouth TTWA which is of equal significance as the education sector or the wholesale and retail sector. At least 50% of marine related employment is accounted for by Devonport.

Value: Atkins have estimated that the marine and related sector contributes £1.7 billion in terms of GDP and nearly £1 billion in terms of GVA representing around 25% of the city's total GVA.

SWOT Analysis

Following a review of the various influencing factors, the following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats were identified.

Strengths

- Well established and diverse port
- Relatively deep water & natural harbour
- Significant and strategic naval, commercial and ferry port.
- Major cluster of marine businesses - naval, boat building, R&D, fish market, marine services
- Devonport and naval heritage helps to define Plymouth both domestically and internationally.
- 12% Plymouth employment dependent on marine sector.
- Major centre for higher education and research and development in the marine sector.
- Major marina / waterside leisure location and important fish market.
- Naval presence means that maintenance work does not fall to commercial operators.
- Minimum and local coastal erosion / flood risk

Weaknesses

- Limited water depth at low tide & navigational constraints prevents larger vessels from using the port.
- Limited by its peripherality, it serves largely local and regional commercial markets.

- Limited mix of cargos - no containers and heavily dependant on liquid bulk oil (58% of the port tonnage).
- Low level of exports and outward traffic.
- Lack of single 'champion' for port interests – this is required to promote the Port and facilitate communication between the industry and external organisations as well as the general public.
- Rail - restricted loading gauge - limited intermodal container traffic
- Limited local rail freight facilities at the Port
- Loss of waterside land for higher-value uses

Opportunities

- High level of planned population & employment growth
- Expansion of oil-related cargoes
- Growing demand for marina / leisure based activity
- Strong policy support for sustainable freight transport (including short-sea shipping) with some grants being available.
- Growth in Northern European cruise market
- Need to accommodate requirements to service marine renewables sector
- Potential release of vital port infrastructure at Devonport could provide opportunities for commercial port activities
- 4 of the 8 priorities in the South West Economic Strategy are directly relevant to the port (marine, defence-related engineering, tourism and environmental technologies)
- Plymouth well placed to capitalise on marine renewables, research and development and marine education.
- Strategic planning provides the opportunity to further capitalise on the port sector.
- Feeder container facility for servicing local / regional market
- Wharfs and port facilities could be enlarged.

Threats

- Small / self-contained market with competition from other ports for limited cargoes
- Competition for cruise (e.g. Falmouth)
- Economic & supply-chain implications of Strategic Defence Review – Devonport
- Need for infrastructure investment at Devonport
- Devonport listed buildings could limit opportunities
- HSE Blast zone limits development
- Lack of public funding for ports development
- Loss of key waterside sites to non-port uses
- Modal transfer will require significant capital investment
- Limited expansion capacity at Cattewater & Sutton Harbour
- European Marine Site designation requires any development to ensure no significant environmental impact
- Rail access to Cattewater mothballed
- Port expansion constrained by local and regional transport networks
- Lack of single focal point for promoting the Port of Plymouth as a whole.

The SWOT analysis identifies some clear opportunities for the Port of Plymouth whilst also demonstrating the complexities of port operation and development.

Scenarios

Following analysis of the current operations, national and regional market trends, influencing factors and the SWOT analysis, five scenarios were identified in order to inform the development of a port master plan for Plymouth. These then formed the basis for discussion through the stakeholder workshop which was attended by 30 representatives from the sector.

Scenario 1: Safeguard existing position / business as usual

Safeguarding existing commercial port activities and facilities, retaining market share in bulk cargoes and petroleum products. No change in marina space (except Millbay). No significant change to Devonport. Relies on strong policy approach to safeguarding essential sites critical for port and marine operations.

Scenario 2 Targeted diversification

Scenario 1 plus targeted promotion of Plymouth towards the renewables sector and new cruise liner facility. Will require some release of land from Devonport and/or reuse of Turnchapel, investment in some port facilities and strong policy approach to safeguarding critical sites.

Scenario 3 Managed contraction of commercial port facilities & enhancement of leisure role

Subject to a decline in market demand for commercial wharfs and waterside facilities, build on existing advantages of Plymouth as marina location Disused commercial wharfs would be developed into new marinas and key landside sites would be redeveloped for non-port uses. Existing port cargoes would be handled through intensification of reduced number of commercial sites. Would require flexible policy approach to safeguarding sites in key waterside locations.

Scenario 4 Major step change / re-use of Devonport land and waterfront

Would be driven by substantial release of waterside infrastructure and land at Devonport and would involve Plymouth aggressively expanding it's role in commercial / leisure port activities. Could include container facility, increasing size of bulk cargo vessels accommodated, developing cruise liner facility and development of new marina and leisure facilities. Would require sufficient market demand, significant investment, and strong policy support for safeguarding essential sites.

Scenario 5 Radical restructure

Assuming that Yonderbury Jetty would no longer be required, then this would involve relocation of existing liquid bulk from Cattedown, bulk services relocated to South Yard and development of leisure and cruise facilities. Would require extremely high levels of investment.

Scenario Evaluation

At the stakeholder workshop, each scenario was evaluated against the following key criteria:

- Economic and social implications for Plymouth and wider sub-region
- Commercial viability
- Transport implications
- Environmental impact
- Implications for land-use planning and policy
- Key strengths and weaknesses

As a result no single preferred scenario was identified as being the outright optimal way forward for strategy development. However, Scenarios 1, 3 and 5 were largely discounted.

Scenario 2 was considered the most realistic basis for strategy development over the next few years although stakeholders were keen to ensure that a diversification approach as seen in **Scenario 4** was also investigated.

Progress to a full Masterplan / integrated plan – options

The purpose of this report was to provide a comprehensive evidence base for the Port of Plymouth with a view to providing inputs into future spatial, land-use, transport and economic development plans, policies and initiatives. The question of how best this information should be packaged together needs to be addressed and particularly whether this should be as a single Port Masterplan, whether it should be more aligned to the spatial planning process or some other option needs to be agreed.

The report does identify that a single document could fulfil the following:

- Provide a strong basis for promoting the Port and the wider city of Plymouth;
- Provide a solid framework for prioritising potential investment in the port and associated infrastructure;
- Enable a more strategic and coherent approach to the planning and development of the Port of Plymouth as a whole;
- Provide recommendations for optimising administrative arrangements to support the diverse range of activities undertaken in Plymouth
- Provide links to the proposed marine plans which will be developed by the Marine Management Organisation as set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009,

In delivering this a number of options on how best to proceed were identified as:

- Take no further action - an opportunity missed
- PCC driven and funded Masterplan – discounted as recognised that this would need to be jointly owned by the harbour authorities.
- Private sector funded Masterplan – discounted as recognised that this would also need to be jointly owned by the local authority.
- Develop a Coastal/Marine Supplementary Planning Document as a de facto plan for the port and the surrounding maritime environment.

The report recommends that the merits of each of these options be more fully evaluated relative to the benefits of a port master plan.

Recommendations and Next Steps

1. **Masterplan/Coastal Action Plan / Supplementary Planning Document Preparation:** – identify which is the best way forward.
2. **Safeguarding Marine Employment Sites:** Further refine the way in which the 'Marine Employment Site' policy is applied using the criteria identified in the report.
3. **Coherently Raising the Profile of the Port - a 'Champion':** Raise the profile given to the marine and maritime sector in all spatial development and promotional plans for Plymouth and its sub-regions through the identification of a dedicated 'Champion'.
4. **Cruise Market Feasibility/Action Plan:** work to include the production of a market study and action plan which identifies the most appropriate location for a new cruise facility in Plymouth.

5. **Skills and Training Investment & Sector Support:** delivering integrated training programmes which are targeted on meeting existing and emerging market needs with more employer-led training initiatives.
6. **Planning for Climate Change:** evaluating the potential effects of sea level changes on the port and marine operations.
7. **Safeguarding Cattewater Branch Line Track Bed & protecting transport links:** safeguard the line from change of use and ensure effective transport links to the port.

This page is intentionally left blank

Growth & Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

12 July 2010

Private Sector Housing - Regulatory Services Peer Challenge

Summary:

The Private Sector Housing Team, part of the Council's Housing Service, has undertaken a Peer Challenge Self Assessment and this work forms part of the Growth & Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel's work programme for 2010/11. The Peer Challenge process involved a self assessment against a framework of excellence and the development of a Draft Improvement Plan, followed by a visit by a Peer Challenge Team comprised of external Members and Officers expert in the field of work. The outcome is to develop a Final Improvement Plan which will help to improve the services we provide for all our customers. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to comment on the Revised Improvement Plan and to consider future actions.

Introduction:

1.1 This paper provides an update on the Peer Challenge self assessment of the council's Private Sector Housing team, which includes the work of the Private Rented team (focusing on improving the private rented sector, Houses in Multiple Occupation and reactive complaints work) together with the Renewals team (improving owner-occupied housing, Disabled Facilities Grants, Decent Homes loans).

2. The Peer Challenge Process:

2.1 The objective of the Peer Challenge process is to identify service improvements from within the service itself and to ensure that they are implemented. The Peer Challenge process consists of 2 key elements:

- Self assessment against a framework of excellence in regulatory services. The framework challenges Services to identify what they are good at and what needs to be improved. Having identified strengths and potential areas for improvement, the Service then develops a draft improvement plan.
- An external review and challenge of the effectiveness of that self-assessment by a team of peers

2.2 The self assessment focused on 4 key themes – (i) leadership, strategies and collaboration; (ii) focus on and engagement with customers; (iii) resource, activity and people management; and, (iv) achieving outcomes effectively and sustainably.

2.3 A self assessment team was drawn together from a cross-section of staff within the Private Sector Housing team together with an external critical friend (the Manager of the Care& Repair Home Improvement Agency). The self

assessment work took place over the period 23 November to 14 December 2009. Evidence collected by the team was further challenged and consolidated at a consensus day on 21 December 2009 resulting in the preparation of a Draft Feedback Report which set out strengths and areas for improvement. Further consideration, involving the Assistant Director, Strategic Housing, took place during January leading to the prioritisation of improvements and the preparation of a Draft Improvement Plan. This information was then sent to the Peer Challenge Team on 5 February 2010.

- 2.4 The Peer Challenge Team comprised of four team members: Richard Drew (Peer Challenge Team Lead), formally Environmental Health Manager at Westminster City Council with specific responsibility for housing; Councillor Paul Ellis from the London Borough of Wandsworth; Ian Dick, Housing Service Standards Strategic Manager from the London Borough of Newham; and Andrew Wilson, Bristol City Council, Trading Standards.
- 2.5 The Peer Challenge Team visited Plymouth on 9 and 10 March 2010, meeting or speaking with Councillor Fry (Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development); Councillor Viney (Chair of Growth & Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel); Councillor Wildy (Shadow Member with responsibility for Strategic Housing); Ian Gallin, Assistant Chief Executive; Anthony Payne, Director for Development & Regeneration; Stuart Palmer, Assistant Director, Strategic Housing, the Housing Advice Team Leader together with the Self Assessment Team members; a 10 strong staff focus group; and, external stakeholders including representatives from Plymouth University, South West Landlords Association, the private Rented Forum, Plymouth Access to Housing and Shelter. A Draft Team Report was prepared leading to the final Peer Challenge Team Report, dated 27 April 2010.

3. The Peer Challenge Team Report:

- 3.1 The Peer Challenge Team Report (copy attached) provides a summary of its findings; comments on the Draft Improvement Plan; suggests next steps; and, highlights further opportunities for improvement.
- 3.2 In relation to the '*self assessment process*', the Peer Challenge Team felt that it had been challenging and robust, was well completed and within the target period. It noted that staff had been consulted; that there was an excellent choice of critical friend; that sufficient evidence had been found in most areas to support conclusions and challenge performance; that the self assessment report accurately brought all the evidence together; that the service appears to know largely who its customers are; and, that the service is very highly thought of amongst councillors, stakeholders and external partners. It was also felt that the process was management heavy and that staff consultation was not sufficiently in-depth with a surprising absence of staff related areas of improvement. The Peer Challenge Team commented that the Private Sector Housing teams appear to have a very heavy workload; that more work needs to be done with staff to increase their understanding of and contribution to the overall aims of the council; that staff need to feel more valued within the council; and, that staff came across as enthusiastic, committed and keen to improve and enhance the service.

- 3.3 On the '*Draft Improvement Plan*', the Peer Challenge Team raised concerns about the achievability of all the aims feeling it was too ambitious both in the number of areas of improvement identified for action and the timescales set out to resolve them. The Peer Challenge Team suggested that some areas for improvement be dropped or be combined with others to make it more realisable; that the goals and measurement be made clearer; that the resultant plan be discussed with a wider audience; that completion of the Improvement Plan feature as part of Business and Team Plans; that there should be a comprehensive review of service standards; that the website should be developed; that staff training needs should be reviewed; and, that benchmarking with other councils should take place.
- 3.4 In relation to '*next steps*' and '*further opportunities for improvement*' the Peer Challenge Team commented that as a result of the comprehensive and challenging approach there were very few additional areas for service improvement that could be suggested. The Peer Challenge Team did highlight the opportunity to better target existing resources and suggested that there would appear to be an opportunity for an accreditation system. The Peer Challenge Team also advocated benchmarking with other councils with similar private rented stock stating that whilst this was challenging they felt this would show Plymouth in a very favourable light. The team also questioned whether the impact of the formation of Plymouth Community Homes will need to be considered in respect of how it could affect the Private Sector Housing service, e.g. an increasing number of complaints from tenants.

4. The Revised Improvement Plan:

- 4.1 In response to the Peer Challenge Team Report's findings, a Revised Improvement Plan has been prepared (copy attached). The total number of areas for improvement has been reduced from 25 to 12 and the actions amended to ensure that it is deliverable whilst reflecting the robust and challenging content of the Draft Improvement Plan. The Revised Improvement Plan targets realisable actions during 2010/11. It is proposed that delivery against the improvement plan be reviewed by the end of March 2011 in helping to develop a follow-on Improvement Plan for 2011/12. The headline areas for improvement in 2010/11 include:
- Raising the profile and understanding of private Sector Housing, crucially through a wide Housing Conference to take place in the Autumn
 - Assessing the Private Sector Housing Team's service delivery against the Audit Commission's 'Key Lines of Enquiry'
 - Targeted action, to include preparation of a Private Sector Housing Delivery Plan as part of the new Housing Strategy; reviewing the Assistance Policy; undertaking an assessment of the condition of private sector stock; investigating the viability of operating an Accreditation Scheme for the private rented sector; developing a training programme for landlords; and, developing a protocol for the funding of adaptations with Registered Social Landlords

- Improving the understanding of and engagement with customers, especially with 'hard to reach' customers
- Improving the response to customers
- Developing service standards setting out what customers can expect
- Benchmarking services with like councils to seeking to deliver value for money services
- Improving internal working to ensure better integration of private sector housing within the authority and the Housing service
- Improving the Private Sector Housing Team's understanding of council aims and embedding its core values
- Embedding equalities in all our work
- Promoting the Private Sector Housing Team's successes
- Improving conditions for and meeting the needs of staff, to include undertaking a local survey

5. Conclusion:

- 5.1 In delivering these areas for improvement in 2010/11, it is very apparent that we must be mindful of other pressures facing the Private Sector Housing Team and the Council, notably the pressures on public spending and the impact this might have on work areas and budgets. The full implications of the Government's Emergency Budget on 22 June are not clear at the present time and the full details of impacts on Government Department's will only become apparent as part of the Comprehensive Spending review announcement on 20 October 2010.
- 5.2 It is largely for the above reasons that at this stage an Improvement Plan has only been set for the current financial year, with a view to developing a follow-on Improvement Plan for 2011/12 by March 2011. The areas for improvement identified in the 2010/11 can all be delivered within the current known budgets and it is considered that they will help to greatly improve the service received by our customers, both internal and external.

6. Further Action by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- 6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the following actions:
1. To comment on the Revised Improvement Plan as part of wider consultation with staff and external partners. Comments received will be taken into account in preparing the Final Improvement Plan which is then sent to the Peer Challenge Team. The Final Improvement Plan will then be signed off by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development.
 2. Receive a further report on progress against delivery of the Revised Improvement Plan and plans for 2011/12 by the end of March 2011.
 3. Consider setting up a 'task and finish' group to monitor progress against 1 or more of the actions identified, e.g. the targeted interventions identified at 3. of the Revised Improvement Plan.

Plymouth Housing Service

Private Sector Housing – Peer Challenge Self Assessment

REVISED IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2010-11

	HEADLINE IMPROVEMENT	ACTION	WHEN (by end of)	WHO	MEASUREMENT
1	Raising the profile and understanding of private sector housing (PSH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a Housing Conference with a wide cross-sector audience at which challenges and priorities can be discussed and actions agreed • Ensure key strategies are considered at Local Strategic Partnership and other partner meetings • Ensure that PSH issues feature as part of the city's 'growth agenda' (via the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Programme Board) and other strategic initiatives and studies 	<p>Oct '10 (tbc)</p> <p>As required</p> <p>As required</p>	S,P,O	<p>Housing conference held</p> <p>Housing (PSH) issues addressed at LSP and other strategic meetings</p> <p>PSH representation on Programme Board</p>
2	Assessing the PSH Team's service delivery against the Audit Commission's 'Key Lines of Enquiry' (KLOE 9 – Private Sector Housing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-visit the findings of the December 2006 exercise and update as required • Undertake actions as part of continuous self improvement 	Aug '10	P,L,M	Review of KLOE 9 findings completed, actions initiated.

	HEADLINE IMPROVEMENT	ACTION	WHEN (by end of)	WHO	MEASUREMENT
3	Improving service delivery through targeted areas of work (as part of the 2010/11 Housing Service Business Plan and the PSH Team Plan)	<p>Targeted work to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the PSH Strategy in preparing a new PSH Delivery Plan as part of the wider Housing Strategy • Review the PSH Assistance Policy • Undertake an assessment of the condition of private sector stock • Investigate the viability of operating an Accreditation Scheme • Develop a training programme for landlords (in partnership with other Devon councils) • Develop a protocol for the funding of adaptations with Registered Social Landlords (in partnership with other Devon councils) 	<p>Dec '10</p> <p>Dec.'10 Sept '10</p> <p>Sept '10</p> <p>March '11</p> <p>March '11</p>	P,L,M,O	Targeted work areas form part of the 2010/11 PSH Team Plan.
4	Improving our understanding of and engagement with customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ways of working with 'hard to reach groups' including BME communities and vulnerable non-users, to include attendance at meetings and events • Appraise our existing means of engagement with customers and identify new ways, based on experience from other councils, external organisations, other council departments 	<p>July '10</p> <p>Aug '10</p>	P,L,M,O	<p>Paper on 'ways of working' prepared</p> <p>Appraisal undertaken</p>

	HEADLINE IMPROVEMENT	ACTION	WHEN (by end of)	WHO	MEASUREMENT
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraise our existing ways of testing customer satisfaction with PSH services and identify and introduce new ways, to include use of telephone feedback and other technologies Having identified stakeholder groups, hold meetings / focus groups and use other means to establish customers' views about the services we provide Promote and market key PSH services to targeted groups Update the website to inform customers of what they can expect 	<p>July '10</p> <p>Sept '10</p> <p>Dec '10</p> <p>March '11</p> <p>As required</p>		<p>Appraisal undertaken</p> <p>Customer engagement taken place</p> <p>Promotion of services undertaken</p> <p>Website updated</p>
5	Improving our response to customer feedback and how we make and record changes following complaint investigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify where and how we receive feedback from our customers Introduce telephone customer satisfaction surveys Agree appropriate ways of responding to demonstrate that customer feedback is valued and has been acted on Identify appropriate ways of acknowledging when and recording how changes are made for each complaint received Hold 'de-brief' meetings after complaints 	<p>July '10</p> <p>July '10</p> <p>Aug '10</p> <p>Aug '10</p> <p>As required</p>	P,L,M,O	<p>Customer feedback methods identified with clear response procedures in place</p> <p>De-brief meetings take place</p>

	HEADLINE IMPROVEMENT	ACTION	WHEN (by end of)	WHO	MEASUREMENT
6	Developing service standards setting out what customers can expect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing standards and how these are promoted Consider how other councils, external organisations and council departments have developed service standards Engage with customers Introduce new service standards 	<p>July '10</p> <p>Sept '10</p> <p>Oct '10</p> <p>March '11</p>	P,L,M,O	Existing / others methods analysed, customers involved and draft service standards in operation.
7	Benchmarking with 'like' councils in seeking value for money delivery of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify appropriate 'benchmarking' criteria for the PSH service Work with 'like' councils in reporting and monitoring agreed criteria Analyse where Plymouth is providing more or less value for money and take appropriate steps 	<p>July '10</p> <p>Sept '10</p> <p>March '11</p>	P,L,M,O	Benchmarking criteria established and data shared with like councils. Actions taken to improve value for money.
8	Improving internal working to ensure better integration of PSH within the authority and the Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key internal partners (such as planning, building control, env. health) and shared work areas Establish mutually agreed ways to better communicate and develop closer ways of working Organise quarterly meetings with other teams within Strategic Housing, to include housing advice, energy efficiency, empty homes Seek a move of the PSH team to Midland House ASAP so that it is better 	<p>June '10</p> <p>July '10</p> <p>June '10</p> <p>ASAP</p>	P,L,M	<p>Key internal partners identified with means of communicating in operation.</p> <p>Regular discussions with Property Management and need</p>

	HEADLINE IMPROVEMENT	ACTION	WHEN (by end of)	WHO	MEASUREMENT
		embedded with other Housing Service teams			raised at Departmental level.
9	Improving the PSH team's understanding of the council's aims and objectives and embedding its core values in all our work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold team session(s) to help embed the council's mission, objectives and core values, to include consideration of cultural, service delivery and structural 'transformation' • Team members to identify examples, with evidence, of how they are applying the core values in the work they do (to form part of competency based appraisals) 	<p>July '10</p> <p>As required</p>	P,L,M	<p>First team session held.</p> <p>Evidenced examples identified and form part of appraisals.</p>
10	Embedding equalities in all our work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken where required, are kept up to date and actions plans are undertaken • Encourage and support staff to attend relevant local training sessions • Provide PSH stand at next and future 'Respect' festivals to promote the services we can provide • Team members to identify examples, with evidence, of how they are applying the 'embraces equalities' competency as part of competency based appraisals 	<p>As required</p> <p>As required</p> <p>Oct '10</p> <p>As required</p>	P,L,M	<p>EIA's undertaken as required with existing ones updated and actions initiated. Training sessions attended. Respect festival attended.</p> <p>Evidenced examples identified and form part of appraisals.</p>

	HEADLINE IMPROVEMENT	ACTION	WHEN (by end of)	WHO	MEASUREMENT
11	Promoting the PSH team's successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify existing and new means of publicising and promoting work Utilise appropriate media to publicise and promote the work of the team to better publicise good news stories and to reward hard work 	July '10 As required	P,L,M	Existing and new publicity / promotion vehicles identified. Successes publicised.
12	Improving conditions for and meeting needs of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out a local staff survey (for the Strategic Housing service) to identify staff needs, including training Develop a programme to undertake actions arising from the survey where this is possible and provide feedback to teams 	Sept '10 Oct '10	S,P,O	Local staff survey carried out. Actions arising undertaken. Staff feedback provided.

WHO?

- S: Stuart Palmer (Assistant Director, Strategic Housing)
 P: Phil Mitchell (Private Sector Housing & Regeneration Manager)
 L: Linda Johns (Team Leader Private Rented)
 M: Malisa Collyer-Tomas (Team Leader Renewals)
 O: Other(s), e.g. Business Support

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

**STRATEGIC HOUSING
SERVICE – PRIVATE SECTOR
HOUSING**

**PEER CHALLENGE
TEAM REPORT**

27th April 2010



**Peer Challenge of Plymouth City Council's Strategic
Housing Service – Private Sector Housing
9th & 10th March 2010**

1. Introduction

This report provides feedback on the Peer Challenge of the Strategic Housing Service – private sector housing (to be referred to in this report as the Private Sector Housing Service) carried out on 9th & 10th March 2010. This is part of a national programme of challenges for Regulatory Services. The purpose of this programme is to challenge how well Services are performing and to help them identify improvements.

The peer challenge process has two key elements. Firstly, a self-assessment carried out against twelve criteria in a Regulatory Service-specific framework of excellence. Secondly, a follow-up peer challenge of that self-assessment, which examines its robustness and accuracy, and identifies any further improvements and good practices.

The Private Sector Housing Service undertook its self-assessment between November 2009 and February 2010. The output from that self-assessment was a report that summarised the key issues and identified, in detail, the Service's strengths and areas for improvement. A draft improvement plan based on this report was then developed.

This was followed by a peer challenge by a team of senior staff from other Regulatory Services, and a member of the Improvement and Development Agency's Peer Clearing House.

The team considered the self-assessment carried out and its outputs, and came to conclusions covering the self-assessment and its report; the draft improvement plan, further opportunities for improvement, and excellent or innovative practices that others could learn from.

This report contains details of the peer challenge process undertaken and the conclusions of the team.

2. Methodology

The peer challenge itself took place over the period 9th and 10th March. The team comprised:

Richard Drew:	Independent Environment Health Practitioner (recently retired from Westminster City Council).
Ian Dick:	Strategic Manager, Private Sector Housing Group, London Borough of Newham
Councillor Paul Ellis:	Chairman of the Environment & Leisure Scrutiny Committee, London Borough of Wandsworth
Andrew Wilson:	Senior Trading Standards officer, Bristol City Council

They undertook a series of meetings and interviews with staff, Members and other key stakeholders as follows:

Councillor Ted Fry - Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development

Councillor Mrs Nicky Wildy - Shadow Member with responsibility for Strategic Housing,

Councillor David Viney - Growth and Prosperity O & S Panel Chair,

Ian Gallin - Assistant Chief Executive

Anthony Payne - Director for Development & Regeneration

Stuart Palmer - Assistant Director for Strategic Housing

Phil Mitchell - Private Sector Housing & Regeneration Manager

Malissa Collyer-Tomas (Team Leader Renewals) and Linda Johns (Team Leader Private Rented)

Self Assessment team – Andrew Elvidge, Suzanne Hill, Carol Knapp and Carol Rowe

Staff Focus group: John Davies, Lee Mundell, Scott Carpenter, Matt Miller, Bradley Taylor-Jones, Peter Grimoldby, Jerry Pappin, Sarah Vincent, Peter Wade, Martyn Taylor

Critical Friend – Ian Hay (Manager, Care & Repair Home Improvement Agency).

External stakeholders:

- Marion Hayes - Student Accommodation Manager, University of Plymouth,
- Katerina Swain - South West Landlords Association
- Heather Crabb - Vice Chair Private Rented Forum
- Kate Medhurst - PATH (Plymouth Access to Housing)
- Jane Cookson – Housing Advice Team Leader
- Ann Holdsworth - Shelter

The team also examined relevant documentation both before the visit at a desk top review meeting on 19th February and during their site visit.

The challenge team wishes to extend its thanks to Phil Mitchell and Isobel Fisher for their excellent organisation and preparation for the visit and to everyone else in the Private Sector Housing Service and the Council for their courtesy, co-operation and assistance during the visit.

3. Summary of our Findings

3.1 The Self-assessment process and report.

The Peer Challenge team consider that the Service carried out a self-assessment process that was both challenging and robust. It was very well planned and completed within the target period agreed with the Peer Challenge team.

The Peer Challenge team however do have some concerns that the team chosen to carry out the initial self assessment was not only led by a senior manager but also contained 3 other managers, consequently there were only 3 members on the team representing staff. We understand that this was due to a lack of volunteers from non managerial staff but we worry that there is a risk that staff won't have confidence that the self assessment was inclusive.

We noted that staff not involved in the self assessment team confirmed that they were consulted during the process and have seen the self assessment report but we question if the consultation exercise could have been carried out in more depth.

We also note that there is a surprising absence of areas for improvement in connection with staff "needs" we feel this may partly be explained by the lack of staff involvement in the process. However, we would confirm that staff seem generally happy in their work and consider that they are well supported by their immediate managers. We would also confirm one of the strengths identified, regular annual appraisals, 1: 2: 1s and, as one member staff confirmed, managers also have an "open door" policy.

However, there was more of a mixed response regarding another identified area of strength, namely staff training. Some staff felt it was excellent whilst others considered that there wasn't enough professional training or they simply didn't have time for training. It may well be worth revisiting staff training through their Personal Development Plans (PDPs) to see if this aspect is sufficiently embedded across the service.

At this point we feel it is important to raise that during our discussions with staff and stakeholders the Private Sector teams appear to have a very heavy workload which we will return to later.

The self assessment team employed the manager of the Care & Repair Home Improvement Agency as their critical friend whom we consider proved an excellent choice adding value to the process. We understand that he would like to have a continuing involvement as the improvement plan is developed which we would encourage and support.

We believe that sufficient evidence was found in most areas to arrive at accurate conclusions, and this was used effectively to challenge how well the Service performs with respect to all four themes contained within the framework. The subsequent self-assessment report accurately brought all the

evidence together that both the self-assessment team and the Peer Challenge team identified.

We noted that the draft report was subsequently discussed at a meeting with the managers who had been part of the team together with the critical friend and the Assistant Director of Strategic Housing. In addition a member of the Council's Policy & Performance team was also asked to comment on the report but it is not clear to us the significance of this contribution. At the meeting it appears that some areas of improvement were grouped together for easier cross referencing and each of the subsequent list of improvements was prioritised using a series of measures.

The self-assessment identified that the Service has a clear sense of mission and direction but although we would agree with this it is not fully recognised by staff. More work needs to be done with staff to increase their understanding of, and contribution to, the overall aims, objectives and expressed mission of the council. This in turn should help alleviate a real concern expressed by staff around the lack of visibility to the senior management and the wider council. We are aware that this aspect has been recognised and has partly been addressed in the draft business plan for 2010/11.

The self assessment report rightly identified the use of the Scrutiny process for service and performance improvement. We consider that this is very positive as we believe that this will increase visibility at Member and senior officer level.

It is stated that the Service has, in the main, identified who its customers are but believes that more needs to be done to effectively engage with them to ensure service delivery is truly customer focussed by understanding and responding to their needs. We have some concerns over this area as from our evidence the service appears to know largely who its customers are. However, there remains a belief that there a significant number of "non users". We will come back to this when we discuss the outputs of the Improvement Plan but the Service needs to be clear what it wants from closer engagement with customers.

From the evidence gathered the Service is very highly thought of amongst councillors, stakeholders, and, external partners. Stakeholders in particular were very complimentary saying for example, "we have a good relationship with the service based on trust", "we find the staff supportive and helpful", and "they are active and easy to deal with"

In conclusion, we would reiterate that staff, notwithstanding a very demanding workload, came across as enthusiastic, committed and keen to improve and enhance the service. However, they clearly desire greater visibility and need to feel more valued by the whole Council and not just their peers but there is clearly a responsibility on the staff to engage with this process.

3.2 The Draft Improvement Plan

The draft improvement plan was drawn up by the same group of managers who had considered and finalised the self assessment feedback report. It contained all 36 areas for improvement that had been identified by the self assessment team, with no exceptions.

We understand the improvement plan was then revised in order to put a number of similar issues under the same heading, to make it more user friendly. The resulting areas for improvement were then prioritised according to the length of time it was considered it would take to resolve them. The Peer Challenge team noted that all the final 25 areas of improvement were to be completed in 1 year with a significant number being completed in the first 6 months. The team have concerns regarding the achievability of these aims.

We noted that staff had seen a copy of the draft Improvement plan and indeed one member of staff remarked that it was “more understandable than other documents he had seen”. However, we would reiterate our concerns expressed over the Self Assessment report that we did not think there had been sufficient staff engagement in the process. We would consider this is important in order that you encourage ongoing commitment and ownership of the process of implementation.

Leading Members showed clear understanding of, and a high level of support for, the service and its links to the wider strategic objectives of the Council. Commitment to involvement and improvement within service constraints was demonstrable.

We would suggest that the improvement plan is too ambitious both in the number of areas of improvement that have been identified for action but also the timescales set out to resolve them. We consider this is particularly true having regard to the small staff group available to engage with, and assist in, their resolution. Further, a significant number of the areas have been identified for resolution in the first 6 months. We believe that this probably reflects the need to have them completed before the Strategic Housing inspection but for the reasons already stated we suggest this timescale is too ambitious for all the items identified.

We do appreciate that the managers had very little time to complete the draft improvement plan before this Peer Challenge visit. We understand why some of the “actions” & “measurements” simply concerned setting up meetings or drafting reports; but as one stakeholder who had seen the report remarked “their goal was unclear as the plan lacked SMART outcomes”. We would agree.

We would therefore suggest that the improvement plan is revisited. The items on the improvement plan that simply end up with a meeting or writing a paper could be omitted, or a series of measured steps set out, to produce a tangible measure for improvement. For instance the Service wishes to improve its

profile at the LSP and a number of actions are identified to achieve this. We feel that the tangible benefit to service outcomes should be identified.

We believe that by really targeting your goals the Service will be able to reduce the number of areas for improvement by dropping some completely from the plan and by combining many more. Further by setting out a number of measurable steps the Service will be able to identify a number of “quick wins” together with medium and long term targets. It will also be able to identify how each item is progressing, demonstrating to staff, senior managers and leading members that the plan is on target for completion.

This process should make the plan more manageable although we consider that the completion of the work should be spread over a more realistic timescale than the proposed 1 year.

We also consider that it may be worthwhile discussing the resultant draft Improvement plan with a wider audience. One of the representatives on the Private Rented Sector forum expressed an interest in it being discussed at the next meeting, and we would suggest this would be a worthwhile exercise. Other stakeholders have also expressed a willingness to be involved and this may provide an opportunity for external contributions which can only strengthen the Plan.

We know that the Cabinet Member, Assistant Director and Director of Development and Regeneration were all aware of content and progress of the challenge and had seen, but not signed off, the draft improvement plan. This is entirely understandable because the Service was waiting for the visit of the Peer Challenge team to determine if changes would be made to the plan before requesting sign off. We recommend that once the final plan has been drawn up and agreed by the Service, the Cabinet Member and Chief Executive jointly sign off the plan. We believe the visible involvement of senior management and the Cabinet Member will provide additional credibility and priority to the process, as well as demonstrating to the staff the increased visibility of the service.

We would also recommend that the completion of the improvement plan is specifically stated in a service plan for both teams as this will again demonstrate support by senior managers. We recognise that completion of the Peer challenge process is identified in the draft Housing Services Business Plan.

3.3 Next Steps

As suggested and outlined above, the concern of the Challenge team relates to the central issue of how effectively the Service translates the Self Assessment report into an Improvement plan.

We note that some of the items of improvement have been combined to reduce the number of areas for improvement but we consider that there is scope for further reduction by combining some and omitting others.

For example we would suggest the following areas of improvement could be omitted because the Private Sector Housing Service cannot significantly influence them and any service improvement effects are likely to be marginal at best:

Item 3: Strengthen the role of PSH at the ‘Single Conversation’ with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)

Items 5(a): Develop a better understanding of the role of existing housing in supporting the local economy.

Item 13: Plan for the future, especially in responding to resource pressures.

In addition some areas for example, could be combined,

Items 1 & 2 These all concern increasing “visibility” of the service within the council

- Raise the profile of private sector housing (PSH) at Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) level.
- Strengthen the role of PSH within corporate agenda
- Develop stronger engagement with Members in helping to champion PSH housing issues.
- Achieve a better understanding of the Private Sector Housing team’s role (and Strategic Housing) by Members.

The Peer Challenge team would suggest that under this heading an additional item is included where more comprehensive service plans are developed for each of the Private Sector Housing services. These could either be stand alone documents or as attachment to the draft Business plan currently being developed. These service plans should be more comprehensive than those already written which appear just to contain a series of targets. They should include the Service’s aims and visions clearly showing how they contribute to the corporate vision – “The Golden Thread”. This will increase the visibility of the service to members. Further, staff can be consulted on an annual basis so that they have an opportunity to put forward projects that they consider worthwhile thereby getting better staff engagement.

In addition, the Peer Challenge team would support a comprehensive review of service standards with a view to getting them into a framework of best practice that can be published and reviewed.

Items 17 & 21 These all concern “better engagement with customers”

- Develop service standards setting out what customers can expect.
- Improve the follow-up of customer feedback
- Improve how we make and record changes following complaint investigations

The development of the website is particularly important in order that residents (and landlords) can be informed about what they can expect from the service.

Items 23, 24 & 25 These all concern internal staffing/management matters

- Review what we measure to make sure we're looking at the right things.
- Make better use of 'eperform' to raise corporate knowledge of PSH issues
- Make better use of ICT and new technologies to monitor the service.

It is suggested that staff training is reviewed under this heading particularly "professional training" and that a commitment is made to ensure annual completion of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and subsequent quarterly reviews to ensure that staff consider that they have equal access to training.

Prioritisation

The Peer Challenge would also suggest that the condensed plan is then prioritised not in terms of time to complete but in terms of which areas of improvement should be prioritised in order of importance. We recognise that the impending visit of the Audit Commission has meant that the Service has prioritised certain areas but we consider that this should be balanced with the needs of the service.

Having identified the condensed areas of improvement and then prioritised them. The goals and a series of measurable outcomes should then be identified for each one in order that the Service, managers and Members will be able recognise success and when it will be achieved

The Peer Challenge team consider that the timescales set out in the plan are not achievable particularly some of those set for 0 – 6 months, we also believe that the aim of completing the improvement plan in 12 months is extremely optimistic and this should be extended by up to a year i.e. a 2 year time scale .

Quick Wins

There may be an opportunity following this report for the service to develop a number of quick wins identifying those measured outcomes that can be completed in a short timescale.

Engagement

Following the restructuring and other amendments to the plan it is suggested that the self assessment team is reconvened and asked to reconsider it and to feed back their thoughts prior to the production of the final plan

Signing off and Ongoing Implementation

Once the Improvement plan has been re-structured with measurable outcomes and the self assessment team have had a chance to comment on it the Peer Challenge team believe that the final improvement plan should be jointly signed off by the Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Planning,

Strategic Housing and Economic Development. This will provide increased confidence to staff and increased “visibility” of the service.

The Peer Challenge team note that the completion of the Improvement Plan is already in the draft Business Plan but we consider it should also be included in the Service plans.

3.4 Further Opportunities for Improvement

As already identified, as a result of the comprehensive and challenging approach the Service has taken in this process there were very few additional areas for service improvement we could suggest.

However, there are two further opportunities for improvement that the Peer Challenge team have identified connected with the apparent heavy workload of the Private Rented team.

The Peer Challenge team would suggest that there may be opportunities to better target existing resources particularly in respect of HMO licensing. The Private Sector Housing service has developed a very successful Private Sector Housing Forum and there would appear to be an opportunity to develop an “accreditation” system which would allow the Service to focus resources on the worst problems whilst allowing a degree of self regulation for those landlords who have shown that they are reliable partners.

Secondly, we would advocate the use of benchmarking with other Authorities which we accept can be challenging particularly in getting agreement on measurements. But it should be possible to benchmark the number of HMOs being processed and monitored in comparison with the staff available. It will be important to ensure that the benchmarking is done against those Authorities with similar private rented stock but we believe that this would show Plymouth in a very favourable light.

Time did not allow us to meet senior police officers and representatives from NHS Plymouth so that we could not determine how the Private Sector Housing Service could assist in tackling anti-social behaviour and addressing the link between health and housing but we believe that there is scope to further develop these areas of work. This will have the added advantage of not only raising the Service’s profile at the LSP (and the four thematic groups) but it will also contribute to join targets with other Plymouth City Council services and external partners.

Linking internal Plymouth City Services will also have the benefit of enhancing the Council’s outcomes and recognising the important contribution of the Private Sector Housing Service in fulfilling many of the objectives identified above including; increasing effective service delivery, enhancing the profile of the service and better responding to customer and stakeholder needs.

The Peer Challenge team also question whether the impact of the formation of Plymouth City Homes (PCH) will need to be considered in respect of how it could affect the Private Sector Housing Service. As PCH is RSL led, the

service in future could be faced with increasing numbers of complaints from tenants that will need to be addressed.

We would suggest that in order to increase the visibility of the service “Open House” lunchtime sessions could be opened up to other Council staff and members could be approached before cabinet meetings. This will raise the service profile and encourage partnership working.

We would suggest that back to the floor initiatives such as the Cabinet Member & Director for Development & Regeneration go out with staff. This would assist the Cabinet Member and senior managers in gaining a better understanding of the valuable work carried out by staff whilst at the same time providing staff with greater visibility.

It was noted that whilst the Service had a very high satisfaction rate amongst customers there was a very low response rate. This is inherent with written customer response forms. It is suggested that other methods are trialled such as telephone surveys. By increasing the response, trends and service improvements can be more readily identified.

Consideration should also be made into the possibility of instigating staff rewards (not necessarily financial) where staff are rewarded for excellent work and that the awards are made at high profile ceremonies hosted by senior managers.

The LACORS peer challenge website contains examples of good practice identified during the peer challenge process, and you could consider looking at the website to identify if any other Services have been shown to be particularly effective in these areas, and learning from them.

3.5 Excellent and Innovative Practices Identified

Regrettably neither the Challenge team nor the Service were able to identify any projects that could be considered to be excellent or innovative but this should not be taken as an indication of a poor service as we believe the staff and managers provide a very good service to the residents and businesses of Plymouth.

3.6 Conclusions

Overall, the Peer Challenge team would like to congratulate the Service for its excellent delivery of its core service and for the way it has approached the Peer Challenge process.

The Peer Challenge team believe that senior managers should feel confident that they have an enthusiastic body of staff who are keen to play their part in taking the service forward and continue to contribute to the overall aims of the council.

The Service is now asked to:

Consider the issues described in paragraph 3.3 & 3.4 above in relation to the further development and implementation of the improvement plan

We would ask you to provide a response to these issues, including an amended improvement plan, within four weeks of the date of this report.

Richard Drew
Peer Challenge Team Leader
Date: 22nd March 2010



**Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny
Work Programme 2010/11**

Proposed work programme	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A
Growth & Regeneration											
Director briefing on priorities and delivery programmes	14										
Written update on Government Policy changes		12		13	18	8		10		7	4
Review of Sub regional Growth Governance arrangements and Programme Board delivery plans								10			
Strategic Housing											
Private Sector Housing Peer Review – Improvement Plan		12									
Twice Yearly Plymouth Community Homes – progress report on delivery of transfer promises.(GPOSP host presentation to all members of the council)		12				8					
Economic Development											
LSP Wealthy theme group minutes and updated themed action plans	14			13	18			10		7	
Transport & Highways											
LTP3 (15year Strategy and 3yr Implementation plan)				13							
Equality of opportunity planning and progress (new name for Accessibility Planning)				13							
Eastern Corridor Briefings		12		13		8		10		7	

This page is intentionally left blank