

Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Monday 11 July 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor Nicholson, in the Chair.

Councillor Coker, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall (substitute), Berrow, Churchill, K Foster, Lock (substitute), Murphy, Dr. Salter, Wheeler, Williams and Wright.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Martin Leaves and Councillor Nelder.

Also in attendance: Gill Peele – Business Manager, Tom White - Head of Network Management, Duncan Malloch - Network Manager, Ian Ellis - Assistant Network Manager, Councillor Wiggins - Cabinet Member for Transport and Clive Turner – Chief Executive of Plymouth Community Homes.

The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 5.30 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.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was made by a Councillor in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Name	Minute No. and Subject	Reason	Interest
Councillor Mrs Aspinall	21. Plymouth Community Homes Presentation	Daughter works for Plymouth Community Homes	Personal

13. MINUTES

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2011 are approved as a correct record.

Under this item issues arising from the minutes were discussed. With regards to 13 June 2011 minute 4 'Minutes' it was clarified that Councillors accepted it was beneficial for reports to be sent out with the agenda in accordance with legal deadlines however the panel would prefer to have a late report sent out 'to follow' other than having no report at all – it was agreed that this issue would be managed by the Chair and Vice Chair.

It was also highlighted that minutes should be detailed and that minute 8, Draft Work Programme 2011/12, would be amended so that the Connectivity Issues item would be extended to include other forms of transport and not only trains.

14. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

15. **UPDATE ON GOVERNMENT POLICY CHANGES**

The panel welcomed the regular updates on Government policy changes however highlighted that more information should be provided on each update to give Members a basic understanding of emerging policies. It was noted that the current format of information provided directed Councillors to specific websites and enabled the panel to request for more information if necessary.

Agreed that where possible, interpretation and Assistant Director comments would be included in the policy changes update to ensure clarification.

16. **HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP PROGRESS REPORT**

Tom White, Head of Network Management, Duncan Malloch, Network Manager, Ian Ellis, Assistant Network Manager, and Councillor Wigens, Cabinet Member for Transport, provided the panel with an update on the Highways Maintenance Task and Finish Group report.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) the task and finish group made a significant difference to the following three main issues – service levels, value for money and the greater emphasis on Highways Maintenance in the Capital Programme.
- (b) Operation Upgrade was currently taking place across the city in which £1m of extra resources was being used to upgrade the road network;
- (c) positive feedback had been received regarding the standard of upgrade work done across the city;
- (d) roads in the worst condition were being targeted first as part of the upgrade programme;
- (e) two severe winters were pinpointed as being the main cause of the damage to the road network;
- (f) officers were currently working on the Invest to Save BID for pavement repairs, it was hoped that this would be submitted by September 2011;

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (g) risk assessments were required to take place before new service levels were adopted;
- (h) road surface patching repairs were continuing to take place as part of a programme of works;
- (i) Operation Upgrade was being advertised on the Council's website and detailed where resurfacing works were due to take place and when;
- (j) blocked drains were investigated as part of the panel's task and finish group however it was also highlighted that faulty pipe-work had a role to play in erosion;
- (k) officers would make efforts to develop closer working relationships with street scene and waste officers to improve work;

Agreed that –

- 1 a further update on the Invest to Save BID and Service Levels would be brought to the panel for discussion in October 2011.
- 2 officers would speak with the Street Cleansing department regarding gulley cleansing regimes;

Under this item the panel agreed that the task and finish group work was an excellent piece of scrutiny and welcomed officers comments regarding the road network repairs that would deliver positive results for the public.

17. **HIGHWAY COORDINATION**

Tom White, Head of Network Management, Duncan Malloch, Network Manager and Ian Ellis, Assistant Network Manager, provided the panel with an update on Highway Coordination.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) the definition for major work included works greater in duration than 10 days;
- (b) officers were trying to encourage utility companies to give 12 months prior notice to the Council for road works other than the statutory three months required;
- (c) the council had signed a performance agreement with local bus companies and held fortnightly meetings; it was the responsibility of utility companies to contact bus companies with planned road works;
- (d) officers would aim to inform Members when highways works were taking place in their ward;

- (e) the Council were in charge of road diversions when highway maintenance works were taking place; utility companies were required to submit an initial diversion route to the Council in which officers would drive the route to check it was correct.

Agreed that –

- 1 major works to be communicated in advance to Members by Ward;
- 2 Members support officers initiative to seek 12 months notice for major works on the road network;
- 3 the panel recommend that officers pursue national leverage with other local authorities to extend notice and to achieve greater power to veto.

18. **WINTER MAINTENANCE PREPARATION**

Tom White, Head of Network Management, Duncan Malloch, Network Manager and Ian Ellis, Assistant Network Manager, provided the panel with an update on Winter Maintenance Preparation.

The panel was informed that –

- a) winter 2010 the Council were advised by the Government to grit primary roads as a priority;
- b) there were 426 grit bins across the city;
- c) asset management tools were used to map the grit bins – this list was on the Council's website and was listed in the agenda pack;
- d) it was considered that the winter service operation service plan needed looking into;
- e) the grit bin list provided to the panel was updated last season however several grit bins had been stolen and were missing;
- f) all grit bins missing would be replaced by October 2011;
- g) officers would aim to re produce the grit bin list in ward sequence;

Agreed that –

- 1 the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that the panel set up a task and finish group to review the assessment criteria and location for gritting rounds and grit bins. As part of this the location of grit bins will be brought up to date and include not on HMPE land;

2 the task and finish group will comprise of Councillors Berrow, Salter, Murphy, Wright, K Foster, Coker, Nicholson and Williams;

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

The panel noted previous tracking resolutions and was informed by the Chair that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board accepted the work programme items put forward.

20. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel noted its work programme and agreed to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that the following items be included:

- (a) connectivity (road/rail/digital) as part of Growth Report in September 2011;
- (b) subsidised bus routes/ ticketing - position paper for September 2011 meeting;

21. **PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY HOMES PRESENTATION**

Clive Turner, Chief Executive of Plymouth Community Homes, provided the panel, and other members of the Council, with an update on Plymouth Community Homes (PCH).

Clive Turner informed Members that –

- (a) £250m capital investment has been confirmed for PCH;
- (b) work had been taking place on the major re-generation of North Prospect which was one of the biggest regeneration projects in South England;
- (c) £22.1m had been spent on Decent Homes which included installing new windows, kitchens and bathrooms;
- (d) £135m HCA funding had been confirmed by the Government;
- (e) 65 of 125 promises had been met;
- (f) £1.6m had been spent on environmental works such as playgrounds and fencing;
- (g) office hours had been extended and PCH were focused on customer satisfaction and delivery of services;
- (h) customer satisfaction had increased in 2011 however was still considered to be 'average' so more work was needed to improve this;
- (i) subject to planning consent several homes were to be demolished in North Prospect as part of the long term plan;

- (j) £3m was to be spent on a new community hub in North Prospect;
- (k) of the overall percentage of Plymouth Community Homes customers 35% are retired, 94% are white British householders, 66% are on housing benefit, 24% have incomes under £300 per month, 24% are permanently sick or disabled and 60% have health problems or a long term illness;

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (l) approximately £30,000 was spent on regenerating each property;
- (m) Clive Turner would inform Members of the promises that PCH was hoping to meet next year once further information had been obtained;
- (n) in North Prospect 1100 properties were rented and 800 were owned;
- (o) fixed price contracts would ensure that regeneration budgets were kept on track;
- (p) thermal insulation, relatively new heating systems and kitchens and bathrooms less than 20 years old constituted the Decent Home Standard; a programme of works would be distributed to Councillors;
- (q) the tree surgeon contract for PCH works was still held by the Council for the next 12 months;
- (r) PCH officers attended neighbourhood meetings when available to do so;
- (s) the single point of contact for PCH enabled the monitoring of calls however it was understood that communication needed to be improved between PCH and Councillors;

(Councillor Mrs Aspinall declared a personal interest in this item.)

22. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.