

Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday 20 February 2013

PRESENT:

Councillor Nicholson, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Nelder, Vice-Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall, Damarell, Darcy, Fox, Michael Leaves, John Smith, Wheeler and Wigans.

Apology for absence: Councillor Martin Leaves.

Also in attendance: Anthony Payne, Director for Place, Councillor Evans, Leader, David Draffan, Assistant Director for Economic Development, Chris Grace, Head of Economy, Enterprise and Employment, Councillor Coker, Cabinet Member for Transport, Juli Wileman, Major Schemes Project Manager, Mike Artherton, Parking and CCTV Manager, Alex Hurth, Carbon Manager, Jane Hirons, Senior Property and Terrier Officer, Councillor Lowry, Cabinet Member for Finance, Paul Barnard, Assistant Director for Planning Services, Sue Eden, Lead Officer, and Katey Johns, Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 3 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.

57. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

58. **MINUTES**

Agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2012.

59. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

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

The Chair reported that the Subsidised Bus Routes and Through Ticketing task and finish group report had been considered by Cabinet and received very positive feedback, with the majority of its recommendations having been accepted.

61. **DIRECTORATE FOR PLACE - DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE**

The Director for Place updated the panel on progress with the directorate's restructure. Members were advised that the restructure, which had commenced over 12 months ago, had been undertaken in order to ensure that the directorate's service areas reflected changes made to the council's corporate management team. With the support of Human Resources, 80 per cent of the restructure was complete and the directorate now comprised the following four service areas –

- Economic Development
- Environmental Services
- Planning Services
- Transport and Infrastructure

With regard to –

(a) Economic Development,

- the restructure would be complete by 1 April 2013;
- there had been significant delayering of management with a reduction in the number of Heads of Service from 11 down to four;
- savings had been achieved in management capacity which had freed up funding to support front line services and would help bring forward the growth agenda;
- the changes had been implemented with the full engagement of staff;

(b) Environmental Services,

- the focus of the restructure had been to realign services so that they would work better together in order to add value;
- there had been a delayering of management through cross-department integration with the number of third tier managers having been reduced from six to four;
- significant savings had already been achieved across the service and the service was confident of achieving more moving forward into 2013/14;
- priorities in terms of staffing had been identified as (1) to reduce sickness levels from an average of 14 to 10 days per annum, (2) increase engagement with staff as there were a large number within this particular service area who did not have access to e-mail, and (3) delayering of management and increase efficiencies;

(c) Planning Services,

- the restructure had focussed on the need to support and deliver growth across the city;
- it had already established itself as one of the top-performing teams across the country;
- a new shared building control service with Cornwall Council was in

- the process of being established;
 - internal recruitment had commenced over the summer of 2012 and the formal implementation of the revised planning structure had come into effect on 1 November 2012;
 - the service had reduced its staffing levels by 7.6 full time equivalent posts and the removal of two tiers of management;
- (d) Transport and Infrastructure,
- the restructure was ongoing with the aim of increasing efficiencies within the service and contributing to council wide savings;
 - there had been a reduction in the number of senior management and staffing levels of six full time equivalent posts.

In response to questions raised, members were further informed that –

- (e) Waste Services now included Parks;
- (f) an updated version of the structure chart would be circulated to members upon completion of the Directorate for Place restructure;
- (g) the Director was confident he could achieve the budget savings identified for 2013/14 but he would like time for the new structure to bed-in before commenting on the possibility of achieving further savings beyond 2014.

The Chair welcomed the comprehensive update and commented that such an extensive restructure should be given time to settle down. He therefore hoped that no further re-structures would be initiated over, at least, the next 12 months and thanked Anthony Payne for his attendance.

62. **PLAN FOR JOBS**

Councillor Evans, Leader of the Council, David Draffan, Assistant Director for Economic Development and Chris Grace, Head of Economy, Enterprise and Employment, presented a report outlining the Plan for Jobs. The panel heard –

- (a) that the Plan for Jobs was a new innovative initiative for Plymouth which aimed to deliver 19 projects which in turn would create 2,000 jobs over the next two years;
- (b) how the Plan for Jobs had been developed, through the establishment of a task force comprising private, public and third sector organisations, into a focused and deliverable short term initiative;
- (c) how the plan would be delivered and monitored to ensure that it had a strong positive impact on reducing unemployment via the creation of jobs.

In response to questions raised, it was further reported that –

- (d) in the last 12 months the Economic Development service had helped to establish 150 new small businesses, eight of which being social enterprise businesses, and create 1,102 jobs and safeguard a further 426, including –
- 50 construction jobs on the Theatre Royal improvements project;
 - 79 jobs on the Bickleigh low carbon housing project;
 - 200 jobs through urban enterprise;
- (e) there would be 90 apprenticeships coming out of the ‘Making Waves’ project;
- (f) there had been national interest in the 1000 Club which now had over 100 members;
- (g) in terms of inward investment, discussions were currently ongoing with five companies looking to relocate to Plymouth with the possible creation of 700 jobs;
- (h) the redevelopment of North Prospect was part of a large scale project to increase the availability of social housing and the ‘Get Plymouth Building’ item featured later on the agenda would provide more information on that and affordable housing;
- (i) access to finance was one of the things that stopped business and the economy growing. Many people were still finding it impossible to obtain financial backing, particularly if they were viewed as a bad risk. The Frederick Foundation would look at whether it was a good business case and, if it was, help bring it forward;
- (j) whilst the 11.6 per cent year on year decrease in unemployment was good news, the fact that there was a rising trend in the long term unemployed was worrying. Work would be undertaken to try and understand why this was still happening and who these people were in order to develop programmes to help get them back into work;
- (k) it was important to spread word of the city’s successes so that more investors would be encouraged to visit with a view to entering into negotiations. The appointment of a Chief Executive for Destination Plymouth would play a key part in promoting the city’s credentials in addition to using partner networks and social media.

The Chair thanked Councillor Evans, David Draffan and Chris Grace for their informative report and attendance.

Agreed that the Plan for Jobs is added to the panel’s work programme in order that regular updates are received, progress against its implementation monitored, and to hear from project champions.

EVALUATION OF EAST END TRANSPORT SCHEME

Councillor Coker, Cabinet Member for Transport, and Juli Wileman, Major Schemes Project Manager, submitted the first of two reports updating members on the monitoring and evaluation work that had been undertaken in respect of the East End Transportation Scheme (EETS) which came into operation in November 2011. Members heard that some of the data required to evaluate the scheme had not yet been gathered and therefore a second report would be submitted to the panel's next meeting in May. In so far as this report was concerned, Members were informed of the changes in traffic flows around the East End and the impact this has had on air quality. The report concluded that –

- overall there had been a reduction in traffic travelling through the East End;
- there had been significant reductions in traffic on Embankment Road and Heles Terrace;
- there had been significant improvements in air quality along Embankment Road and Heles Terrace;
- unfortunately, whilst there had been a decline in air quality on some of the roads adjacent to Gdynia Way they still remained within safe limits;
- there had been an increase in traffic on Florence Place which was probably due to people continuing to use Embankment road rather than Gdynia Way to travel towards Plympton;
- noise levels along Gdynia Way and Embankment road had reduced due to the new road surface having noise-reducing properties and the introduction of the 30mph speed limit on Gdynia Way.

In response to questions raised, it was further reported that -

- (a) traffic at the east end of Grenville Road had increased significantly, as had traffic flow in Cathcart Avenue, however, there had been a decrease in traffic movements along Elliot Road;
- (b) noise levels had been monitored and there had been no overall increase since implementation of the new scheme. Information available indicated that at most locations it had decreased;
- (c) concerns had been raised about the new arrangements at Heles Terrace where two lanes merged into one and, whilst the situation would be monitored, there had been no accidents reported to date;
- (d) the next update to the panel would highlight the positive and negative aspects of the scheme and a fuller discussion in terms of its value could take place at that meeting;
- (e) the 12-month safety audit on the scheme had been delayed due to the works required to Laira Bridge, however, this would now be undertaken and the results included in the next report;

- (f) that a meeting of the Plymstock Transport Liaison Group would be arranged to discuss any recent developments on the Eastern Corridor.

The Chair thanked Councillor Coker and Juli Wileman for their attendance and commented that he looked forward to receiving the next panel update in May.

64. **ON STREET PARKING REVIEW**

Councillor Coker, Cabinet Member for Transport, and Mike Artherton, Parking and CCTV Manager, submitted an update on the 'On Street Parking Review'. Members heard that the review had been undertaken in response to growing pressures with on street parking and had been centred around establishing what worked well, what didn't and where there were opportunities to deliver improvements.

In response to questions raised, Members were advised that -

- (a) no issues had been raised in respect of disabled parking during the course of the review, however, the use of disabled bays by valid blue badge holders was being looked at separately;
- (b) remodelling was currently under way to determine on an area by area basis the impact of standardising and simplifying the restrictions of Controlled Parking Zones. It was acknowledged that one size would not fit all;
- (c) full details of the review and its proposals would be published in April following which there would be a period of consultation to include ward councillors, members of the public, businesses and public transport providers;
- (d) it was acknowledged that houses in multiple occupation could place added pressure on parking but legislation on this had recently changed and planning permission was now required for properties with three or more separate tenants.

The Chair thanked Councillor Coker and Mike Artherton for their attendance and encouraged members to engage during the consultation process.

65. **STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING**

Councillor Coker, Cabinet Member for Transport, Alex Hurth, Carbon Manager, and Jane Hirons, Senior Property and Terrier Officer, were in attendance to inform members of the correct process and procedures for carrying out the council's statutory street naming and number function. Members heard that –

- (a) the policy, which outlined the council's legal powers and delegation process and set out guidelines for developers and members of the public, formalised what had been in place for some time;
- (b) developers had a right to propose a name but authority to approve that

name rested with the cabinet member with responsibility for street naming and numbering;

- (c) ward members would be consulted on street naming proposals but the final decision would ultimately rest with the cabinet member with responsibility for street naming and numbering;
- (d) a copy of the policy would be circulated to panel members and their comments would be welcomed by either the cabinet member or officers within the next two weeks.

The Chair welcomed the report and thanked Councillor Coker, Alex Hurth and Jane Hirons for their attendance.

66. **GET PLYMOUTH BUILDING**

Councillor Lowry, Cabinet Member for Finance, and Paul Barnard, Assistant Director for Planning Services, were in attendance to update the panel on the 'Get Plymouth Building' scheme. Members heard that with regard to each of the eight initiatives –

Stalled Sites

- there were 96 stalled sites in the city, with planning permission for 5,179 homes;
- work with developers and agents to fast track reserved matters applications and speedily discharge pre-commencement conditions had so far resulted in developments commencing on a number of sites including 132 units at Notte Street, 130 units at Unity Park, Efford, 85 units at St. Augustine's, Mutley, and 58 homes at the Vision site in Devonport;
- discussions had also taken place with landowners and developers with a view to removing barriers to development including reviewing the density of schemes, mix of uses, timing of S106 payments and the constraints associated with utilities;

Lapsed Sites

- there were 33 lapsed sites across the city with planning permission for 489 dwellings;
- the council was committed to getting tough on unsightly building sites;
- the council was open to allowing temporary uses on such sites, if appropriate, whilst new development proposals were being worked up;
- the three largest lapsed sites in the city were at Colin Campbell Court, Millbay Marina and the former Crescent Cars;

Area Action Plan Sites

- Plymouth had six adopted Area Action Plans (AAPs) with a seventh (Derriford and Seaton) having just been submitted for examination;

- all of the proposals identified in the AAPs were being reviewed;
- detailed pre-application discussions had commenced on a number of sites;

Call for New Sites

- a disappointing response had been received to the call to bring forward new sites made on 19 November 2012;
- by working with proactive developers like Plymouth Community Homes, Barratts, Mount Wise (Devon) Limited, Devon and Cornwall Housing, and Redrow over 350 homes had been completed in the city last year with a further 705 dwellings on sites under construction;
- a further 414 homes were currently at pre-application stage and it was anticipated that these would have planning permission by the end of 2013;
- the council had approved the largest commercially viable Code 6 zero-carbon housing scheme in Europe at Bickleigh;

Self-Build Sites

- in the UK only 10 per cent of homes were self-build;
- the council had been working with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to access over £30 million of funding and five city council owned sites which could provide 22 self-build units had been identified;
- the council was supporting the Homes for Heroes project as part of its clear commitment to the Military Covenant;

Small Sites

- this initiative aimed to help smaller developers bring forward housing on sites with planning permission for less than 15 units;
- in total there were 498 dwellings approved on these sites;
- the council had been proactively working with agents to unblock any identified blockages on 34 sites with permission for between 3-15 units which, in total, could deliver 315 homes;
- since this initiative was launched 88 homes had been completed, 175 units were currently under construction and discussions were underway on sites that could deliver a further 105 homes;

City Council Sites

- recently identified ten sites surplus to requirements for which 38 proposals had been received;
- it was anticipated that development of those ten sites would deliver 616 homes, of which 264 would be affordable. At 43 per cent, this was well above the council's core strategy policy and what the market was currently delivering;
- 120 of those homes would be expected to be above current building regulations; achieving Code level 4;

- by identifying these sites, the council had secured £3.9m of HCA grant for the city and, when built, it was anticipated that the completed homes would generate £5.9m of New Homes Bonus;
- pre-application discussions had already commenced on some of the sites and it was expected that all of the sites would be the subject of planning applications by the end of 2013;
- it was estimated that over 200 jobs would be created by the development of these sites;

New Funding Mechanisms

- research had commenced into alternative funding mechanisms and models of delivery in order to explore a transformation of housing supply and tackle fundamental issues regarding the quantity and quality of new homes;
- the council was working with investors to develop new models of affordable housing delivery.

In conclusion, the 'Get Plymouth Building' initiatives would bring forward over 2000 homes and over 800 jobs in local construction and supply chains within the next two to three years.

In response to questions raised, Members heard further that -

- (a) it was still necessary for developers to re-apply for permissions which had expired;
- (b) consideration would be given to the concept of applying a form of 'land rate' in order to encourage owners to bring sites forward;
- (c) off-site S106 contributions could be used to bring forward affordable housing schemes elsewhere in the city;
- (d) the city council was at the forefront of implementing the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) with its CIL charging schedule having recently been approved by an inspector. Cabinet would ultimately decide how the money would be spent but neighbourhoods with plans in place could have up to 25 per cent. A report would be submitted to Cabinet in April;
- (e) it was anticipated that development of the ten sites identified as surplus to requirements would be complete within the next two years.

The Chair welcomed the update and thanked Councillor Lowry and Paul Barnard for their attendance.

67. **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2012**

Paul Barnard, Assistant Director for Planning Services presented for members' information the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report 2012.

The Chair thanked Paul Barnard for his attendance and commented that he looked forward to receiving an update on the Plymouth Plan at the next meeting.

68. **MINUTES OF THE GROWTH BOARD**

Noted the minutes of the Growth Board held on 17 December 2012.

69. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel discussed its work programme for 2012/13 and 2013/14.

Agreed that –

- (1) with reference to minute 62, monitoring progress against the Plan for Jobs is included in the panel's work programme for 2013/14;
- (2) a standing item on Youth Unemployment is added to the work programme for 2013/14;
- (3) 'Update on Government Policy Changes' would be removed from the work programme as these would now be communicated electronically as and when available.
- (4) the 'Bi-annual Scrutiny Report' item would be amended to reflect the fact that it would now be produced annually;
- (5) the 'Welfare Reform Pooling of Business Rates' item would be renamed 'Business Rate Reform' as this more accurately reflected the panel's interest;
- (6) the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would be requested to identify a lead panel to bring forward, before the end of the 2012/2013 academic year, the 'Youth Unemployment (young people with special educational needs and disabilities) Joint Task and Finish Group'.

70. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.