

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Friday 5 April 2013

PRESENT:

Councillor Tuffin, Vice Chair, in the Chair.

Councillors Bowyer, Casey, Monahan, Mrs Nelder, Nicholson and Tuffin

Apologies for absence: Councillors Mrs Aspinall, Bowie, Philippa Davey, James, Murphy and Wigen.

Also in attendance: Giles Perritt (Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships), Alison Seabeck (MP for Plymouth Moor View) and Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 2.20 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.

123. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

124. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

125. **MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR PLYMOUTH MOOR VIEW**

The Chair welcomed Alison Seabeck MP for Plymouth Moor View to the meeting. The Chair advised that following the success of the first meeting with the city's MPs, it was hoped that regular meetings could be held, to continue the joined up work at both local and national level. The Chair reported that Oliver Colvile MP for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport and Gary Streeter MP for South West Devon had sent their apologies for today's meeting.

- (a) Alison Seabeck, MP for Plymouth Moor View, provided an overview of current issues, which included –
 - the introduction of the welfare reforms and the phased implementation of Universal Credit;
 - the current situation in North Korea;
- (b) Parliament was currently in recess for Easter (26 March to 15 April 2013);

- (c) the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin MP, would be visiting Exeter in May 2013 to look at the transport issues affecting the region;
- (d) work was progressing with both the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Transport on resolving the flooding issues on the rail line at Cowley Bridge.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that –

- (e) an engineering option had been put forward by the Environment Agency to construct a dam; however, this was not a feasible solution as this would close the rail line which was not acceptable;
- (f) Network Rail would be leading on the flooding solution for Cowley Bridge, in consultation with the Environment Agency; a number of options had been put forward however, concerns had been expressed by the Environment Agency regarding the displacement of water;
- (g) the Secretary of State for Transport had recently announced funding for specific schemes; however the scheme for Cowley Bridge had not been included; additional funding was available which could be allocated to the scheme, although at this stage the actual cost of such a project was unknown;
- (h) individuals, local authorities and businesses were encouraged to apply pressure to both Network Rail and the Environment Agency to achieve a workable solution to the flooding problems at Cowley Bridge;
- (i) it was considered a real achievement that there were no planned fire station closures as a result of the impact of the budget cuts for the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service; however, concerns were raised that future budget pressures would potentially impact service delivery in the city;
- (j) there was disappointment in the Government's decision not to introduce smaller fire tenders; the smaller appliances were more fuel efficient and would have reduced the running costs of the fleet;
- (k) the Chief Fire Officer had given an assurance that if there were a major incident within the city, neighbouring services would be called in to assist;
- (l) the city's MPs fully supported the Council's application for Plymouth's City Deal; MPs had lobbied Ministers and had also raised this matter at question time in the House of Commons;

- (m) the Growth and Infrastructure Bill had its third reading in the House of Lords; at this stage, amendments could be put forward regarding the permitted development rights;
- (n) the proposal to amend the terms of reference for the Low Pay Commission to allow it to either freeze or reduce the minimum wage would have a detrimental effect as it would take money out of the local economy;
- (o) the practical effect of the welfare reform for under occupation of social housing (dubbed the bedroom tax) had yet to be experienced; a number of amendments to the bill had been made which included a sum of £25m in Discretionary Housing payments that would be specifically targeted at disabled people who lived in significantly adapted properties.

The Chair thanked Alison Seabeck MP for attending the meeting.

126. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.