

# Cabinet

**Tuesday 14 January 2014**

## **PRESENT:**

Councillor Peter Smith, Vice Chair in the Chair.  
Councillors Coker, Lowry, McDonald, Penberthy, Vincent and Williams.

Also in attendance: Carole Burgoyne (Strategic Director for People), Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place), Stephen Horsley (Interim Director of Public Health), Malcolm Coe (Assistant Director for Finance), David Northey (Head of Finance), Nathan Sanders (Project Manager) and Nicola Kirby (Democratic Support Officer).

Apologies for absence: Councillor Evans (Chair) and Tracey Lee (Chief Executive).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 2.15 pm.

*Note: At a future meeting, the Cabinet 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.*

## 87. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by councillors in accordance with the code of conduct in relation to items under consideration at this meeting.

## 88. **MINUTES**

The urgent decision to implement minute 71 immediately was noted.

Agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2013.

## 89. **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

One question was submitted by a member of the public for this meeting, in accordance with Part B, paragraph 11 of the Constitution.

In the absence of the questioner, a written response would be sent to him as set out below -

<b>Question No</b>	<b>Question By</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Subject</b>
5 (13/14)	Mr F E Sharpe	Councillor Peter Smith, Deputy Leader	Plymstock Swimming Pool update

Could there be a press statement regarding the latest news on a Plymstock swimming pool. Residents have waited years for one and it is needed now with more houses going up in Hooe, Turnchapel, and Oreston etc and on a site of their choice. How about the Downham School site?

**Response:**

There is no update on the situation with Plymstock Pool other than previously advised in several previous answers concerning Sherford. As stated in earlier replies, consultation on Sherford has occurred on several occasions and therefore a press statement is not necessary.

90. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

91. **REVISED COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME**

Cabinet received the scrutiny report on the Council Tax (attachment of earnings) and Malcolm Coe (Assistant Director for Finance) submitted a report reviewing the impact of the localised Council Tax Support Scheme for Plymouth and making recommendations for changes in 2014/15 following consideration of the scrutiny report.

Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) introduced the proposals and advised that a number of measures had been taken to assist those in financial difficulty including personal payment plans.

The Chair advised Cabinet Members that Councillor James (Chair of the Cooperative Scrutiny Board), had been invited to attend the meeting today to present the recommendations in the scrutiny report but was unable to attend today.

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Co-operatives and Communities) advised that the Council was unable to take payments direct from earnings without a Court order and indicated that the government should review this. He also reported that two schemes had already been introduced for saving with Credit Unions.

Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.

Agreed that -

- (I) the recommendations from the Co-operative Scrutiny Board are noted and adopted as follows –
  - the Board supported the proposals that Plymouth City Council should reduce the minimum contribution that working age people should pay towards their Council Tax bill from the current 25 per cent to 20 per cent; and

- the Board supported the proposals that Plymouth City Council should reduce the fee charged when the Council makes an application for a Council Tax Attachment of Earnings Order from £83 to £60;
- the Assistant Director for Finance to consider the benefits of introducing a 'tapered' repayment schedule for those in Council Tax arrears, where initial repayments are lower and gradually increase, and report back to the Board with his findings and recommendations within three months;
- the Assistant Director for Finance to take steps to ensure that the largest possible number of employers in the city provide the facility for the deduction and payment at source of Council Tax from employees' remuneration;
- the Assistant Director for Homes and Communities to engage with the city's landlords to ensure that prospective tenants are aware of Council Tax liabilities as part of the lettings process;
- the Assistant Director for Homes and Communities to engage with the Assistant Director for Finance to identify what financial incentives could be offered from the Council Tax exceptional hardship fund to those at risk from Council Tax arrears to begin saving with a Credit Union;
- the Assistant Director for Finance to review the language used in correspondence with those in Council Tax arrears and gain an independent verification of its accessibility;
- the Assistant Director for Finance to engage with the Head of Communications to ensure access to advice and support for those struggling to pay Council Tax through the Council's digital channels;
- the Assistant Director for Finance to consider the introduction of a free phone number for those needing advice about Council Tax arrears;

- (2) the cost levied by the Council for Liability Orders is reduced from £83 to £60 with effect from 1 April 2014.

### **91a Recommendation to the City Council**

The City Council is Recommended to approve that the 2013/14 Council Tax Support Scheme continues for the 2014/15 financial year and that all elements of the scheme remain the same except the requirement for minimum contribution for all working age residents reducing from 20 per cent to 25 per cent.

92. **COUNCIL TAX BASE SETTING 2014/15 Recommendation to the City Council**

Malcolm Coe (Assistant Director for Finance) submitted a report on the proposed Council Tax base for tax setting purposes in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012.

The report indicated that a tax base of 67,066 would a Council Tax requirement of £86,847,153.38, assuming a 1.99 per cent increase.

Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) introduced the proposal which would feed into revenue budget setting.

Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.

The City Council is Recommended to approve the Council Tax base for 2014/15 tax setting as 67,066 Band D equivalents, which is the tax base after allowing for an estimated collection rate of 97.5 per cent.

93. **CONTRACT AWARD FOR THE REFURBISHMENT OF LAIRA RAIL BRIDGE**

Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place) submitted a report on a scheme to restore the redundant Laira Rail Bridge, which crossed the River Plym, to bring the bridge back into operation as a shared use pedestrian and cycle path, linking to the National Cycle Network which passed through the Saltram Country Park, along with other local routes.

Cabinet were asked to award the contract for the refurbishment of the bridge.

A separate private report was also submitted which contained commercially sensitive information and was referred to in minute 95 below.

Councillor Coker (Cabinet Member for Transport) introduced the proposals and indicated that the £3.5m scheme would be due for completion in March 2015.

Cabinet Members welcomed the proposals in view of the planned housing development in Sherford and to secure the city's industrial heritage.

Agreed that the contract for the refurbishment of Laira Rail Bridge is awarded to South West Highways.

94. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

No representations had been made that this part of the meeting of should be in public.

Agreed that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public are excluded 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.

95. **CONTRACT AWARD FOR THE REFURBISHMENT OF LAIRA RAIL BRIDGE (E3)**

Further to minute 93 above, Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place) submitted a report on commercially sensitive details relating to the contract award for the refurbishment of Laira Rail Bridge.