

# Public Document Pack



#plymcabinet



## **Democratic Support**

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Published 06 January 2014

## **CABINET**

Tuesday 14 January 2014

2pm

Council House (Next to the Civic Centre), Plymouth

### **Members:**

Councillor Evans, Chair

Councillor Peter Smith, Vice Chair

Councillors Coker, Lowry, McDonald, Penberthy, Vincent and Williams.

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

This agenda acts as notice that Cabinet will be considering business in private if items are included in Part II of the agenda.

This meeting will be broadcast live to the internet and will be capable of subsequent repeated viewing. By entering the Warspite Room and during the course of the meeting, Councillors are consenting to being filmed and to the use of those recordings for webcasting.

By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, the public are consenting to being filmed and to the use of those recordings for webcasting.

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**Tracey Lee**

Chief Executive

# CABINET

## AGENDA

### PART I (PUBLIC MEETING)

#### 1. APOLOGIES

To receive apologies for absence submitted by Cabinet Members.

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Pages 1 - 2)

Cabinet Members will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect of items on this agenda. A flowchart providing guidance on interests is attached to assist councillors.

#### 3. MINUTES (Pages 3 - 22)

To sign and confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2013 and to note the urgent decision to implement minute 71 immediately.

#### 4. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

To receive questions from the public in accordance with the Constitution.

Questions, of no longer than 50 words, can be submitted to the Democratic Support Unit, Plymouth City Council, Civic Centre, Plymouth, PL1 2AA, or email to [democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk). Any questions must be received at least five clear working days before the date of the meeting.

#### 5. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

To receive reports on business which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be brought forward for urgent consideration.

#### 6. REVISED COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME (Pages 23 - 38)

Councillor James (Chair of the Co-operative Scrutiny Board) has been invited to attend Cabinet to present the recommendations in the scrutiny report on the Council Tax (attachment of earnings) from the Co-operative Scrutiny Board.

The Assistant Director for Finance will submit a report reviewing the impact of the localised Council Tax Support Scheme for Plymouth and to make relevant recommendations for changes in 2014/15 following consideration of the scrutiny report.

**7. COUNCIL TAX BASE SETTING 2014/15 (Pages 39 - 44)**

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

**8. CONTRACT AWARD FOR THE REFURBISHMENT OF LAIRA RAIL BRIDGE (Pages 45 - 50)**

The Strategic Director for Place will submit a report on a scheme to restore the redundant Laira Rail Bridge, which crosses the River Plym, and to bring the bridge back into operation as a shared use pedestrian and cycle path, linking to the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 27 which passes through the Saltram Country Park, along with other local routes. Cabinet will be asked to award the contract for the refurbishment of the bridge.

See also agenda item 10 below.

**9. 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(s) of business on the grounds that it (they) involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000. At the time this agenda is published no representations have been made that this part of the meeting should be in public.

(Members of the public to note that, if agreed, you will be asked to leave the meeting).

**PART II (PRIVATE MEETING)**

**AGENDA**

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO NOTE**

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

**10. CONTRACT AWARD FOR THE REFURBISHMENT OF LAIRA RAIL BRIDGE (E3) (Pages 51 - 72)**

The Strategic Director for Place will submit a report on confidential details relating to the contract award for the refurbishment of Laira Rail Bridge. (Agenda item 8 refers).

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DECLARING INTERESTS – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

What matters are being discussed?

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Does the business relate to or is it likely to affect a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI)? This will include the interests of a spouse or civil partner (and co-habitees):

- any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation that they carry on for profit or gain
- any sponsorship that they receive including contributions to their expenses as a councillor or the councillor’s election expenses from a Trade Union
- any land licence or tenancy they have in Plymouth
- any current contracts leases or tenancies between the Council and them
- any current contracts leases or tenancies between the Council and any organisation with land in Plymouth in they are a partner, a paid Director, or have a relevant interest in its shares and securities
- any organisation which has land or a place of business in Plymouth and in which they have a relevant interest in its shares or its securities

No

Yes

Declare interest and leave (or obtain a dispensation)

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Does the business affect the well-being or financial position of (or relate to the approval, consent, licence or permission) for:

- a member of your family or
- any person with whom you have a close association; or
- any organisation of which you are a member or are involved in its management (whether or not appointed to that body by the council). This would include membership of a secret society and other similar organisations.

Yes      No      You can speak and vote

Will it confer an advantage or disadvantage on your family, close associate or an organisation where you have a private interest more than it affects other people living or working in the ward?

Yes      No      Declare the interest and speak and vote

Speak to Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting to avoid risk of allegations of corruption or bias

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Cabinet members must declare and give brief details about any conflict of interest\* relating to the matter to be decided and leave the room when the matter is being considered. Cabinet members may apply to the Monitoring Officer for a dispensation in respect of any conflict of interest.

\*A conflict of interest is a situation in which a councillor’s responsibility to act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit without bias may conflict with his/her personal interest in the situation or where s/he may profit personally from the decisions that s/he is about to take.

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## Cabinet

**Tuesday 10 December 2013**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillor Evans, in the Chair.

Councillor Peter Smith, Vice Chair.

Councillors Coker, Lowry, McDonald, Vincent and Williams.

Also in attendance: Tracey Lee (Chief Executive), Carole Burgoyne (Director for People), Anthony Payne (Director for Place), Les Allen (Transformation Programmes Manager) Julia Blaschke (EU and Funding Officer), Malcolm Coe (Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets), Catherine Dilloway (Project Manager), Jayne Donovan (Assistant Director for Environmental Services), David Draffan (Assistant Director for Economic Development), Ian Ellis (Network Policy Manager), Jayne Gorton (School Organisation Access and Services to Schools Manager), Chris Grace (Head of Economy), David James (Head of Strategic Development Projects), Amanda Lumley (Chief Executive, Destination Plymouth), Craig McArdle (Head of Joint Strategic Commissioning), David Northey (Head of Finance), Katy Shorten (Strategic Commissioning Manager), Alwyn Thomas (Senior Commercial Lawyer), Chris Trevitt (Head of Capital and Assets), Matt Ward, (Principal Surveyor), Jamie Yabsley (Visitor and Events Manager) and Nicola Kirby (Senior Democratic Support Officer (Cabinet)).

Apology for absence: Councillor Penberthy.

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.50 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.*

### 66. **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.

### 67. **MINUTES**

Agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2013.

### 68. **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from the public for this meeting.

## **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

### 69. **Poet Laureate**

The Chair reported that Mike Sullivan had been appointed as the city's first Poet Laureate which was an honorary role. He would undertake this role for a year and would be a critical friend on cultural and arts' issues.

### 70. **Future Accommodation Requirements**

The Chair reported that this item related to negotiated property deals and would be considered in private at the end of the meeting as it was likely that it would involve the 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. The decision was also an urgent key decision and would be implemented immediately after the meeting, with the consent of Councillor James (Chair of the Co-operative Scrutiny Board).

### 71. **CITY CELEBRATIONS AND EVENTS 2014**

Anthony Payne (Director for Place) submitted a report on the city celebrations and events in 2014, the benefits to the city of hosting these events and seeking approval of a financial commitment to facilitate these significant celebration events including the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary event of the Royal Marines on the Hoe in July 2014.

Councillor Peter Smith (Deputy Leader) introduced the proposals and indicated that the visitor economy was worth £307m to the city. In order to support the event for the Royal Marines, infrastructure would be required on the Hoe, costs for which would be covered through ticket and commercial sales. During the same week, it was proposed to hold a celebration music event to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City of Plymouth. The additional revenue budget required to deliver these events was £395k.

David Draffan (Assistant Director for Economic Development) reported that the programme of events demonstrated the city's commitment to culture and hoped that the public would support the events. Amanda Lumley (Chief Executive, Destination Plymouth) and Jamie Yabsley (Visitor and Events Manager) also attended the meeting for this item.

Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) also referred to the recent announcement that the city would be hosting a stopover for the sailing event La Solitaire du Figaro, which had received significant media coverage and could attract 10,000 visitors per day.

#### Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.



Agreed additional funding of £395,000 to support a major series of events in 2014 including the Royal Marines 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations and a major musical event to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City.

(Following the meeting, the Council was in discussion with a key third party promoter for the event who was insisting that in order to secure the national/ international promotion of the events they required the contracts signed by 18 December 2013. Accordingly, in the interests of the Council and the public, and with the consent of Councillor James (Chair of the Co-operative Scrutiny Board) and Councillor Evans (Council Leader), the decision was implemented on 16 December 2013).

72. **CITY DEAL BID**

Anthony Payne (Director for Place) reported on the current position of the City Deal bid and indicated that Councillor Evans (Council Leader) had led a delegation including representatives of Plymouth University to meet with four government ministers in early November 2013. He had presented the proposals which focussed on the marine sector (marine engineering and manufacturing) and included partnership working across Cornwall, Devon Somerset and Torbay. The bid had received support with regard to the business support and the skills agenda and a decision was expected shortly on funding requests and the proposal relating to South Yard.

Councillor Evans in particular highlighted the work of Patrick Hartop (Senior Policy, Performance and Partnerships Adviser) in progressing this bid and recognised the team effort in order to get to this position.

73. **EU STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUND STRATEGY**

Anthony Payne (Director for Place) submitted a report on the EU Structural and Investment Fund Strategy (SIF) and detailed -

- (a) the potential funding available;
- (b) how and why the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was developing this strategy;
- (c) the assistance being given by the City Council;
- (d) the implications of the Local Enterprise Partnership's strategy on the City Council and the city as a whole;
- (e) the Council's overall response to the SIF development which stressed the need to enhance productivity and improve connectivity as key priorities of the city and the sub-region;
- (f) that applicants for EU funds within Plymouth (transition status area) would need to provide match funding of circa 40 per cent in order to access the funding.

Councillor Evans (Council Leader) introduced the item.

David Draffan (Assistant Director for Economic Development) indicated that the EU programme would support the city's ambitious programme for growth and jobs.

Chris Grace (Head of Economy) advised that the date for completion of the strategy was 31 January 2014 and that the SIF would sit alongside the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which was currently being developed. The SEP was the overarching document that would determine the LEP's aims and would be used to bid for the competitive part of the Local Growth Fund.

Julia Blaschke (EU and Funding Officer) also attended the meeting for this item.

### Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.

### Agreed –

- (1) the EU Structural and Investment Fund Strategy draft in its current form;
- (2) that the Leader will take the final decision on approving the final version of the Local Enterprise Partnership's EU Structural and Investment Fund Strategy ahead of its submission to Government.

## 74. **ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL OF LAND AT SEATON NEIGHBOURHOOD**

Anthony Payne (Director for Place) submitted a report seeking approval for a number of land transactions that would enable significant development in the north of Plymouth, including a new Seaton Neighbourhood, Forder Valley Link Road, Community Park and a new two form entry primary school.

A separate private report was also submitted which contained commercially sensitive information and was referred to in minute 83 below.

Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) introduced the proposals which had secured £4m of funding for the new school, included 873 new homes which would attract £8.3m of New Homes Bonus, new local shops, 275 construction jobs, Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy payments in addition to the link road and community park, totalling £21m.

Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) welcomed the proposal for a new school in particular.

Cabinet Members thanked Matt Ward (Principal Surveyor) and David James (Head of Strategic Development Projects) for their hard work and paid tribute to the whole team for their work on the proposals presented today.

### Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.

Agreed in accordance with the details provided in the report, –

- (1) that subject to planning consent being granted for either the Seaton Neighbourhood or a new primary school on the NHS site, the Council acquire the freehold of the NHS land, with the ability to grant a temporary licence to the NHS to allow possible continued use of the site for temporary car parking;
- (2) that the Council acquire the freehold of the Ministry of Defence land;
- (3) that the Council acquire a 999-year lease of the Community Park;
- (4) the Council enter a conditional sale agreement with KDR for the sale of the existing PCC land, the Ministry of Defence land and for the southern part of the NHS land;
- (5) that the Council enter into a Put and Call Option agreement with KDR for approximately 1.22 acres of land currently owned by the NHS;
- (6) that the Council enter into an option agreement with KDR for the land necessary for the construction of the Forder Valley Link Road;
- (7) that the Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance may agree any additional or supplementary legal and estates issues associated with this project that may arise prior to completion of the relevant legal documentation. This may include, but is not limited to, the agreement of revised consideration for the sale or acquisition of land due either to re-measurement or amendment of the extent of the land to be transferred or due to any amendments to the equalisation price, provided that they are supported by a formal valuation from the Council's external RICS valuer;
- (8) the acquisition of the NHS land and the associated use of a loan from the Council's Investment Fund of £2.170m, subject to Council approval.

Recommendations 1 – 6 are subject to a satisfactory report on title and all other necessary legal agreements being in place (including, but not limited to, agreements for the onward sale of land from KDR to Barratt Homes and its development partner or to an alternative developer (or developers) nominated by KDR).

Recommendations 2 – 6 are also subject to planning consent being granted for the Seaton Neighbourhood (including expiry of the judicial review period).

74a Recommendation to the City Council

The City Council is Recommended to include the acquisition of the NHS land detailed in the report and the associated use of a loan from the Council's Investment Fund of £2.170m in the Capital Programme 2013 - 2015.

75. **PRIMARY BASIC NEED 2014 - 2017**

Carole Burgoyne (Director for People) submitted a report on the rising numbers in primary schools and the progress of action to meet the demand for primary school places in the city, known as 'basic need' following the allocation of Targeted Basic Need Capital.

The report set out consultation proposals for in year expansion of the Planned Admission Numbers for reception age pupils at Widewell, Woodford, Holy Cross RC, Woodfield, Pennycross and St Peter's CE Primary Schools.

The report also sought approval of the funding to build a new two form entry (FE) school with early year's provision to replace current provision at Knowle Primary School and a new classroom at St Peter's CE Primary School.

Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) introduced the proposals which demonstrated the Council's commitment to investing in the school estate and had, in part, been drawn up following her visit to Knowle Primary School.

Jayne Gorton (School Organisation Access and Services to Schools Manager) indicated that unusually all the bids put forward for funding had been successful which had enabled the investment to be made.

Cabinet Members thanked the team who had drawn up the bids and looked forward to receiving progress reports.

Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.

Agreed –

- (1) the in-year expansion of Widewell, Woodford, Holy Cross RC, Woodfield, Pennycross and St Peter's CE Primary Schools' PANs for reception age pupils; and
  - (a) public consultation on the statutory proposals to expand the schools; and
  - (b) authority for the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, in consultation with the Director for People, to consider the outcomes and responses to any statutory notices, published as part of statutory school organisation processes, and in light of them to make a final determination on proposals.

- (2) the scheme to build a new 2FE school with early years' provision to replace the current provision on the Knowle Primary School site from September 2015, subject to Council approval of the funding;
- (3) the scheme to build a new classroom at St Peter's CE Primary School to enable the school to have sufficient space to allocate to their Planned Admission Number (PAN) and to increase their PAN from 25 to 30 from September 2014, subject to Council approval of the funding.

75a Recommendations to the City Council

The City Council is recommended to amend the Capital Programme to include the allocation of an additional -

- (4) £2.475 million to build a new 2FE school with early years' provision to replace the current provision on the Knowle Primary School site from September 2015;
- (5) £300,000 to build a new classroom at St Peter's CE Primary School to enable the school to have sufficient space to allocate to their Planned Admission Number (PAN) and to increase their PAN from 25 to 30 from September 2014.

76. **BARBICAN TOILETS**

Anthony Payne (Director for Place) submitted a report seeking approval of funding for a scheme to provide replacement toilets at Quay Point and Elphinstone Car Park, The Barbican, with the introduction of a 20p charge to offset some of the costs.

Councillor Vincent (Cabinet Member for the Environment) introduced the proposals and indicated that the officers were drawing up a rolling programme of refurbishment and modernisation for public conveniences for consideration.

Cabinet Members were also advised that the Armada Way toilets had won the Platinum award, attendant of the year award for the best kept toilet and a National Category winner for public toilets.

Jayne Donovan (Assistant Director for Environmental Services) and Catherine Dilloway (Project Manager) also attended the meeting.

Councillor Evans (Council Leader) advised councillors that this was Jayne's last meeting of Cabinet before her retirement and thanked her for her service to the city and the Council.

Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.

Agreed that the Capital Programme is amended to include £371,000 for a scheme to provide replacement toilets at Quay Point and Elphinstone Car Park, The Barbican, the funding to be met from capital receipts.

77. **AWARD OF STREET LIGHTING MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

Anthony Payne (Director for Place) submitted a report on the outcome of the procurement for the renewal of the maintenance contract for the inspection, maintenance, repair, modification, supply and installation of street lighting and illuminated road signs and recommended the appointment of the successful tenderer.

A separate private report was also submitted which contained commercially sensitive information and was referred to in minute 84 below.

Councillor Coker (Cabinet Member for Transport) introduced the proposals and indicated that the decision would need to be taken in private.

Ian Ellis (Network Policy Manager) reported on the potential savings from reduced maintenance costs and low energy street lighting luminaires.

(See minute 84 below)

78. **AWARD OF A CONTRACT FOR THE YOUNG PERSONS' (16-25) SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION SERVICE**

Carole Burgoyne (Director for People) submitted a report on the outcome of the tender process following approval, in March 2013, to Plymouth City Council's Young Persons' (Aged 16-25) Accommodation Commissioning Plan for the period 2013-2020 in order to remodel services and realign the accommodation pathway and recommends approval of the successful tenderer.

A separate private report was also submitted which contained commercially sensitive information and was referred to in minute 85 below.

Councillor McDonald (Cabinet Member for Public Health and Adult Social Care) introduced the proposals and indicated that they would provide a single point of access, a short term assessment centre and longer term support and accommodation where necessary for young people. If agreed, the commissioning would save £118k annually.

Craig McArdle (Head of Joint Strategic Commissioning) and Katy Shorten (Strategic Commissioning Manager) attended the meeting for this item and advised that the commitment for 56 units of accommodation would enable the Council to respond to young people in a crisis and the capital investment in the units would ensure high standards of accommodation for the young people.

Councillor Evans (Council Leader) congratulated the officers on their work and asked that any learning from the process was communicated to other areas in the Council.

Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.

Agreed to award a three year contract, containing an option to extend the contract for a further three years in annual increments, to the most economically advantageous tenderer, as detailed in the private report referred to in minute 85, for the management of a 'Young Person's (16-25) Accommodation Service in Plymouth.

79. **THE PLUSS ORGANISATION**

Malcolm Coe (Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets) submitted a report -

- (a) stating that the PLUSS Organisation was a Local Authority owned provider of a range of employment and training programmes for people with disabilities, set up in 2005;
- (b) on a proposal by Plymouth City Council, together with its three partner authorities, Devon County Council, Torbay Council, and Somerset Council, to sell its interest in the PLUSS Organisation and transfer ownership to the national charity Turning Point;
- (c) indicating that Turning Point offered an ideal opportunity for PLUSS to achieve its aims and would help secure its long term future.

Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) introduced the proposals and emphasised that there would no impact from the proposal on service users, staff or existing loan repayments.

Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.

Agreed –

- (1) the sale of PLUSS to Turning Point upon the terms as outlined in the report;
- (2) that authority is delegated to the Cabinet Member for Finance, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, to deal with and approve any outstanding matters as part of the sale of PLUSS;
- (3) that Cabinet authorises the Monitoring Officer to enter into all necessary legal documentation to complete the sale of PLUSS to Turning Point.

80. **CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSIONING AND MARKET MANAGEMENT - A FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERING A BRILLIANT CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL**

Carole Burgoyne (Director for People) and David Trussler (Interim Director for Corporate Services) submitted a report providing a framework for co-operative commissioning and market management and setting out a number of overarching commissioning principles for approval.

Councillor Evans (Council Leader) introduced the proposals.

Craig McArdle (Head of Joint Strategic Commissioning) emphasised that the proposals provided an opportunity to transform commissioning with co-development, co-production and co-evaluation of services with the core values at the centre of commissioning.

The attention of Cabinet Members was also drawn to the appendices in the report which demonstrated that the Council had already started to work in this way.

Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.

Agreed that –

- (1) the Council adopts the co-operative commissioning principles as set out in the framework to be applied when planning, developing, delivering and monitoring services;
- (2) commissioners use the framework to create co-operative markets which are fair and sustainable;
- (3) the Council uses the framework to help deliver the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

81. **DELIVERING THE CO-OPERATIVE VISION WITHIN A THREE YEAR SUSTAINABLE BALANCED BUDGET (INCLUDING 2014/15 DRAFT BUDGET)**

Tracey Lee (Chief Executive) submitted a report on the indicative three year balanced budget for the period 2014/15 to 2016/17 to fulfil the Council's statutory responsibility of setting a robust and realistic annual budget. A correction to Figure 16 on page 27 of the report was also submitted.

Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) and Councillor Evans (Council Leader) introduced the proposals, highlighting the Council's ambitious transformation programme to help the Council become a brilliant co-operative council and deliver the priorities for the city despite the funding gap caused by government cuts, rising costs and increasing demand for some services. The programme included -



- (a) raising income by taking a proactive and fairer approach to fees and charges, following approval of the Fees, Charges and Concessions Policy, where fees and charges would be reviewed when appropriate instead of being part of the annual budget setting process;
- (b) redesigning a range of services and providing them in new ways. For example, the Education, Learning and Family Support service could become a co-operative to enable it to continue to provide high quality services while trading and generating income;
- (c) a smaller workforce with the proposals today anticipating a reduction of more than 300 posts during 2014/15 and 2015/6, where possible by managing vacancies and through a voluntary release scheme;
- (d) exploring ways of working in partnership such as setting up a shared ICT service and joint working with other public sector partners.

Cabinet Members were also advised that –

- (e) it was proposed to add £1.7m to the base budget by increasing the Council Tax by 1.99 per cent;
- (f) the budget position could change as the funding settlement for local government was not expected until the end of December 2013;
- (g) residents' views were being sought to influence how the projected shortfall could be achieved;
- (h) proposals were under consideration to amend the local Council Tax Support Scheme to reduce the amount that every one of working age was required to pay from at least 25 percent to 20 percent of their council tax bill, with effect from April 2014. This would be subject to a further Cabinet report.

The Corporate Management Team was thanked for producing the budget proposals and the Chief Executive undertook to raise the challenges that the Council faced with the city's Members of Parliament.

Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report.

Agreed that –

- (l) the proposed revenue target budget requirement for 2014/15 of £203m spend, and capital forecast of £205m is presented for full public scrutiny in January 2014;

- (2) members and officers continue to bring forward further solutions in order to close the existing £1.1m budget gap in 2014/15;
- (3) the proposed indicative revenue forecasts for 2015/16 and 2016/17 are also presented for full public scrutiny in January 2014;
- (4) the findings from the consultation, feedback from budget scrutiny and any material changes announced in the final settlement are considered by Cabinet, prior to a recommendation to the City Council in February 2014.

82. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

Agreed that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

83. **ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL OF LAND AT SEATON NEIGHBOURHOOD (E3)**

Further to minute 74 above, Anthony Payne (Director for Place) submitted a report on commercially sensitive details relating to acquisition and disposal of land at Seaton Neighbourhood.

84. **AWARD OF STREET LIGHTING MAINTENANCE CONTRACT (E3)**

Further to minute 77 above, Anthony Payne (Director for Place) submitted a report on commercially sensitive details following the procurement for the renewal of the maintenance contract for the inspection, maintenance, repair, modification, supply and installation of street lighting and illuminated road signs.

Alternative options considered and reasons for the decision –

As set out in the report referred to in minute 77 above.

Agreed that the contract for the Maintenance and Installation of Street Lighting and Illuminated Traffic Signs 2014 to 2018 is awarded to the most economically advantageous tenderer, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Council on blacklisting. In the event of non-compliance, then the contract is awarded to the most economically advantageous tenderer who complies with the requirements on blacklisting.

85. **AWARD OF A CONTRACT FOR THE YOUNG PERSON'S (16-25) SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION SERVICE (E3)**

Further to minute 78 above, Carole Burgoyne (Director for People) submitted a report on commercially sensitive details following the tender process for the Young Persons' (16 – 25) Supported Accommodation Service.

**CHAIR'S URGENT PRIVATE BUSINESS**

86. **FUTURE ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS (E3)**

With reference to minute 70 above, Carole Burgoyne (Director for People) and Anthony Payne (Director for Place) submitted a joint report seeking approval of two property transactions to facilitate the decant of staff and services from the Civic Centre.

The report indicated that the matter was urgent private business and the decision was an urgent key decision because it was impracticable to defer the decision until Cabinet on 14 January 2014 (with publication of the forward plan on 16 December 2013) as the Council needed to secure negotiated property deals in the market now to secure its accommodation requirements and a decision was required before this date. In the interest of the Council, immediate action was required to secure the best deals and it was therefore proposed to implement the decision immediately after Cabinet. Approval for the urgent Cabinet decision had been obtained from Councillor James, Chair of the Co-operative Scrutiny Board and the report would be submitted to the Co-operative Scrutiny Board.

Les Allen (Transformation Programmes Manager), Alwyn Thomas (Senior Commercial Lawyer) and Chris Trevitt (Head of Capital and Assets) attended the meeting and presented the proposals.

Further discussions were sought between the Cabinet Member for Finance and officers, to include the Head of Communications on a further report to Cabinet in due course.

Agreed the two property transactions as detailed in the report and that the decisions are implemented immediately.

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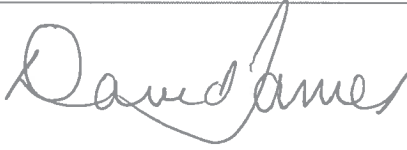

# URGENT CABINET DECISION

Democratic Support



Cabinet Decision	
1	<b>Title of Cabinet report: City Celebrations and Events 2014</b>
2	<b>Decision maker: Cabinet on the recommendation of Councillor Peter Smith (Deputy Leader)</b>
3	<b>Decision author:</b> Amanda Lumley, Chief Executive, Destination Plymouth City Council <b>contact details:</b> Tel: 01752 307268
4	<p><b>Decision taken:</b></p> <p><u>Agreed</u> additional funding of £395,000 to support a major series of events in 2014 including the Royal Marines 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations and a major musical event to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City.</p>
5	<p><b>Reasons for decision:</b></p> <p>This funding will need to be drawn down in 2013/14 and 2014/15 to enable contracts to be entered into and an artist or artists to be booked within the necessary timescales. This will be financed through a year-end review of reserves and provisions, combined with any 'Corporate Health Adjustments' linked to the final revenue outturn position</p> <p>These events will be made accessible to as broad an audience as possible across the Plymouth community engendering a sense of belonging and pride in their city as well as giving them aspirations and hope for their future;</p> <p>Film footage of these events will be shown internationally across numerous media channels and showcase the very best that the city has to offer;</p> <p>Confirm that Plymouth is an innovative and forward thinking city to do business and raise awareness of the opportunities within the city for business investment;</p> <p>Provide particular opportunities of benefit to the creative industries within the city;</p> <p>Position Plymouth as 'Britain's Ocean City' as a centre for music and culture, with a vibrant and thriving community, that will fast track awareness of Plymouth to visitors.</p> <p>Hosting these events will demonstrate the city's ability to deliver major national cultural events and will support the city's aspirations for Mayflower 400 and the legacy beyond.</p> <p>Local communities will have the opportunity to see world famous Royal Marines and Military bands and global quality musicians who will inspire and encourage pride in the city.</p> <p>The Royal Marines event will be a national event which will benefit from major media coverage that, broadcast nationally or internationally, will give significant reach to the 'Britain's Ocean City' brand for Plymouth.</p>

	<p>The Royal Marines will [cover / reimburse] most of the costs of the infrastructure for this major event and it is proposed that while this infrastructure is on the Hoe the Council will make use it for a major music event for the city as part of the 100th anniversary of the city celebrations.</p> <p>When a major musical event of the nature envisaged was hosted in Manchester in 2012 it delivered an economic and media impact of over £12 million to the local economy.</p>		
6	<p><b>Alternative options considered and rejected:</b></p> <p><b>Royal Marines deliver their own event</b> This would be cost prohibitive for the RM due to the large amount of infrastructure required. The RM have explored other options at alternative locations which are smaller events, however, there preferred choice is Plymouth Hoe with PCC supporting in a partnership approach.</p> <p><b>PCC use RM infrastructure and promote own events</b> Costs too high and very high risk of not selling tickets</p> <p><b>PCC use RM infrastructure and 'rent' site to an external promoter</b> This option is still being explored, as a way to help offset the costs of the major music event, however, to date although there has been some interest there are no confirmed opportunities.</p>		
7	<p><b>Financial implications:</b></p> <p>The additional events for 2014 will require an additional net budget allocation of £395,000, the total estimated costs of £920,000 will be partially offset by estimated ticket and commercial income of £525,000. The net cost to Plymouth City Council may be reduced as further sponsorship and income generating opportunities are developed.</p> <p>It is requested that Plymouth City Council invests in these events for the benefit of the city and that this funding is allocated into the annual events budget for the financial years 2013/14 and 2014/15 for the core PCC events team to use for delivery.</p>		
8	<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	√ (if yes, complete sections below, tick as appropriate and complete section 10)
			√ resulting in the council spending or saving more than £500k or £2m if that is the total cost of the contract award?
			x significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards?
		<b>No</b>	(If ticked, proceed to section 11)
9	<b>Date of publication of the notice</b>	11 November 2013	
10	<b>Is the decision an urgent key decision?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	

11	Please specify how this decision is linked to the policy framework and/or budget:	These events will support the following city strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Plymouth Visitor Plan – 2011</li> <li>• Local Economic Strategy</li> <li>• Child Poverty matters strategy</li> <li>• Mayflower 2020</li> <li>• Vital Sparks – Cultural Strategy</li> <li>• City Centre Company Business Improvement District</li> <li>• Plymouth Waterfront Partnership Business Improvement District</li> </ul>		
12	Does the decision or background paper contain private information?	No	√	
13	Is the decision urgent and to be implemented immediately?	Yes	√	(if yes, ensure that section 15 is completed and that the Chair of the Co-operative Scrutiny Board signs the report at section 15b and the Leader signs the report at section 16 following the Cabinet decision )
No				
14	Date of publication of the notice			
15a	<b>Reason for urgency:</b> Following the decision of Cabinet on 10 December, the Council has been in discussion with a key third party promoter for the event who is insisting that in order to secure the national / international promotion of the events they require contracts signed by 18 December 2013. Accordingly, in the interests of the Council and the public, immediate action is required to sign the contract.			
15b	<b>Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	16 December 2013
	<b>Print Name</b>	Councillor James (Chair of the Co-operative Scrutiny Board) DAVID JAMES		
16	<b>Chair of Cabinet:</b> I confirm the Cabinet decision and that it is not contrary to the Council's policy and budget framework.			
16a	<b>Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	16 December 2013
	<b>Print Name</b>	Councillor Evans (Council Leader) TUDOR EVANS		







# URGENT CABINET DECISION

Democratic Support



**PLYMOUTH**  
CITY COUNCIL

Cabinet Decision			
1	Title of Cabinet report : Future Accommodation Requirements		
2	Decision maker: Cabinet on the recommendation of Councillor Lowry (Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance)		
3	Decision author: Les Allen contact details: <a href="mailto:les.allen@plymouth.gov.uk">les.allen@plymouth.gov.uk</a> Tel No. 01752 307421		
4	Decision to be taken: To complete two property transactions as detailed in the confidential report		
5	Reasons for decision: To facilitate a decant from the Civic Centre		
6	Alternative options considered and rejected: Remaining in the Civic Centre		
7	Financial implications: There will be a requirement for Capital investment in assets to achieve the occupancy levels required and further investment in ICT infrastructure to support decant and flexible operations in the future.		
8	Is the decision a Key Decision?	Yes	√ (if yes, complete sections below, tick as appropriate and complete section 10)
			√ resulting in the council spending or saving more than £500k or £2m if that is the total cost of the contract award?
			x significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards?
		No	(If ticked, proceed to section 11)
9	Date of publication of the notice	not included in a forward plan	
10	Is the decision an urgent key decision?	Yes	√ (if less than five clear days' notice before the Cabinet meeting the Chair of the Co-operative Scrutiny Board signs the report at section 15a and section 15b is completed; if there are more than five days, section 15b is completed )

11	Please specify how this decision is linked to the policy framework and/or budget:	The future locations of staff and services decanting from the Civic Centre will support the Pioneering and Caring priorities of the council by providing the essential customer services in the centre of the city. This moves the more process driven elements to other areas across the city reducing the cost of operating and limiting expenditure to essential sites thus freeing up finances for front line services and removing inequalities in access across public buildings.		
12	Does the decision or background paper contain private information?	Yes	√ paragraph 3 applies	If yes, ensure that section 15 is completed and that the Chair of the Co-operative Scrutiny Board signs the report at section 15b
		No		
13	Is the decision urgent and to be implemented immediately following the Cabinet decision?	Yes	√	(if yes, ensure that section 15 is completed and that the Chair of the Co-operative Scrutiny Board signs the report at section 15b and the Leader signs the report at section 16 following the Cabinet decision )
		No		
14	Date of publication of the notice			
15a	<p><b>Reason for urgency:</b></p> <p>The next forward plan will be published on 16 December 2013 and it is impracticable to defer the decision until the next Cabinet meeting on 14 January 2014 as the Council needs to secure negotiated property deals in the market now to secure its accommodation requirements and that means that a decision has to be taken before this date.</p> <p>In the interests of the Council, immediate action is required to secure the best deals and it is therefore proposed to implement the decision immediately after Cabinet.</p>			
15b	Signature			Date
	Print Name	Councillor James (Chair of the Co-operative Scrutiny Board)		
16	<p><b>Chair of Cabinet:</b></p> <p>I confirm the Cabinet decision and that it is not contrary to the Council's policy and budget framework.</p>			
16a	Signature			Date
	Print Name	Councillor Evans (Council Leader)		

**PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**

**Subject:** Revised Council Tax Support Scheme  
**Committee:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 14 January 2014  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Lowry  
**CMT Member:** Malcolm Coe (Assistant Director for Finance)  
**Author:** Malcolm Coe, Assistant Director for Finance  
**Contact details:** Tel: 01752 307878  
Email: malcolm.coe@plymouth.gov.uk  
**Ref:**  
**Key Decision:** No  
**Part:** I

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**Purpose of the report:**

The Government delegated funding and authority for local councils to implement localised Council Tax Support (CTS) schemes from April 2013. The level of funding passported from government represented a reduction to councils compared to the previous national based Council Tax benefit scheme. For Plymouth, this equated to a benefits budget cut of circa £2.6m per annum.

Plymouth City Council developed their local CTS scheme, along with other Devon Councils, on the basis of being cost neutral i.e. the level of benefits given to the public was within the affordability envelope of the budget provided by Government.

Under government rules, certain benefit claimants had to be protected under local CTS schemes, mainly pensioners and those claiming single person discount. The key impact of this was a real term cut to the working age council tax benefit claimant.

Some flexibility was offered to local councils to restrict the level of benefits given to those in higher value, (and banded), properties. Due to the city having a disproportionately high number of Band A and Band B properties, the only way that Plymouth was able to close a funding gap of £2.6m was to reduce the level of Council Tax benefit given to **all** claimants. Along with many other Devon Councils, we adopted a scheme that required everyone of working age having to pay at least 25% towards their Council Tax bill.

Following consultation with local residents, the 2013/14 Plymouth scheme was set up based on the following criteria:

- Disregards income from war disablement pension when determining levels of support;
- Takes into account savings of more than £6,000 for claimants of working age;
- Households in property Bands E and above are subject to a maximum level of support equivalent to Band E level only;
- Removes the Second Adult Rebate discount for working age residents;
- Requires all working age residents to contribute at least 25% towards their Council Tax bill.

The purpose of this report is to review the impact of the localised CTS for Plymouth and make relevant recommendations for changes in 2014/15, following consideration of the scrutiny report on the Council Tax (attachment of earnings) from the Co-operative Scrutiny Board.

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### **The Brilliant Co-operative Council Corporate Plan 2013/14 -2016/17:**

This report is fundamentally linked to delivering the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan. As well as allocating limited resources to key priorities to maximise the benefits to the residents of Plymouth, this amendment aligns with our "Caring" objective to be a fairer, more equal city.

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### **Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land:**

The localised CTS scheme introduced by Plymouth in 2013/14 contained certain assumptions in relation to the level of Council Tax collection rates. The new scheme resulted in circa 16,000 residents having to pay at least 25% of their Council Tax bill for the first time. As a result, we took a prudent view as to our ability to collect Council Tax income due.

The 2013/14 scheme also contained an element of financial contingency to accommodate an estimated increase in individuals claiming benefits due to the economic climate and impact on national welfare reform changes. In reality, the total number of benefit claimants throughout the last 12 months has remained fairly static at around 29,000.

A further contingency was created to facilitate an 'exceptional hardship fund' to make one-off payments to those who were struggling most to pay their council tax bills. Actual call against this fund has been much lower than anticipated in the first 9 months of this financial year.

Reviewing the relatively low call on contingency to date in 2013/14, the council wishes to ease the burden on those most struggling financially in the community. As such, we are proposing to reduce the minimum amount that working age residents have to contribute for their council tax from 25% to 20%. This would benefit the average CTS claimant by approx. £50 per year.

In addition, the number of individuals that are issued summonses, and subsequent Liability Orders, (LO), for non-payment of council tax has increased in recent years. This is a similar trend throughout many local authorities reflecting the difficult financial times. It is estimated that approx. 8,000 Plymouth residents will be charged £83 each for LOs in 2013/14. Whereas the £83 that the council charges is in line with Council average, (as per CIPFA benchmarking), and the charge has not risen for three years, again, reviewing the call against Council Tax contingency has enabled us to consider reducing this charge for the 2013/14 financial year to £60 per Liability Order to help those most in need.

As required, we have undertaken formal public consultation on the proposed changes to the existing CTS for 2014/15. We have also provided further detail to our Co-operative Scrutiny Board; the Board supports the the proposal that Plymouth City Council should reduce the minimum contribution that working age people should pay towards their council tax bill from the current 25 percent to 20 percent; the the Co-operative Scrutiny Board also supports the proposal 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 Board also made a number of further recommendations which are being considered. The scrutiny report is attached as an appendix to this report.

The proposed changes to the scheme now need to be formally adopted by Full Council by 31 January 2014 in order to be effective by 1 April 2014.

The net full year revenue cost of implementing the two proposed changes is circa £900k which has been factored into the overall proposed budget for 2014/15. Following the final settlement from government for the next financial year 2014/15, which confirmed the shortfall in council tax benefit funding does not exceed the £2.6m cut already enacted, the changes are affordable within the existing budget and earmarked revenue contingency.

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### **Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:**

The service undertakes annual benefit take up campaigns which are targeted to areas of greatest need. When introducing the new local CTS scheme in 2013/14, all 16,000 residents affected by the changes were contacted individually in advance of receiving their first bill. Through these phone calls, many were able to claim additional benefits to which they were entitled to.

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### **Equality and Diversity:**

An effective Revenues and Benefits service helps address inequalities through ensuring that the most vulnerable residents receive appropriate benefit entitlement. The proposed changes outlined in this report recognise the financial burden and strain on the most vulnerable people in our community and offers some financial assistance back to those residents.

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### **Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

1. Cabinet note and adopt the recommendations from the Co-operative Scrutiny Board;
2. recommend to Full Council for approval 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 25% to 20%;
3. Cabinet approve the cost levied by the Council for Liability Orders be reduced from £83 to £60 with effect from 1 April 2014.

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### **Alternative options considered and rejected:**

Make no changes to the 2013/14 CTS scheme. This would result in an unspent contingency that was earmarked specifically for the implementation of the localised Council Tax Support scheme. In effect, the scheme would not be running on a cost neutral basis, generating a surplus through unspent contingency.

Many other Devon councils are retaining the 25% minimum contribution rate, but applying the Council's values we should be 'fair' in how this funding is distributed to those most in need.

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**Published work / information:**

Council Tax Support scheme 2013/14

**Background papers:**

None

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**Sign off:**

Fin	DjnI 314. 28	Leg	1917 9/D VS	Mon Off	1917 9/D VS	HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: Malcolm Coe													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the content of the report? Yes													

# COUNCIL TAX (ATTACHMENT OF EARNINGS)



A report of the Cooperative Scrutiny Board Review group following a review of Council Tax (Attachment of Earnings)

## **CONTENTS**

1. Introduction
2. Scrutiny Approach
3. Findings
4. Conclusions
5. Recommendations
6. Acknowledgement



## I INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Council tax is an important part of the financing of local government and other local services. The money raised by council tax is used to make up the difference between funding supplied by central government and the money required by Plymouth City Council to supply all the services needed by the residents of Plymouth. It also contributes towards the cost of services provided by the Police and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Services. It was brought into effect on 1 April 1993 and replaced the community charge system.
- 1.2 The council tax pays for a large range of council services which include (for this year)
- - an average of 51,378 free school meals served a month
  - prevented more than 500 families from becoming homeless
  - collected 111,820 tonnes of waste (446kg for each resident)
  - looked after 5,061 children in the council's children's centres
  - looked after 950 hectares of parks, open spaces and woodland
  - helped over 11,000 older and vulnerable adults
  - used 1,300 tonnes of grit on roads during the winter period
- 1.3 Council tax was calculated on eight valuation bands which were based on the estimated value of residential properties as of 1 April 1991. Depending on an individual's income and circumstances they may be entitled to help with council tax in the form of council tax benefit, which if awarded reduced the council tax bill.
- 1.4 The introduction of changes to the welfare system by central government in April 2013 (Local Government Finance Act 2012), had resulted in local authorities reducing the amount of benefits issued to residents. Plymouth City Council approved a scheme which resulted in every-one of working age being required to pay at least 25 percent of their council tax bill. The introduction of the scheme had led to many vulnerable people having to pay council tax for the first time.
- 1.5 Council tax was a priority debt and as such should be paid before any non-priority debts such as credit debts, hire purchase agreements, unsecured bank loans, etc.
- 1.6 The most recent evidence published reported that 8.8 million people in the UK had 'problem debt' and out of this figure 2 million people were in receipt of benefits, whilst the remainder were in work, students or pensioners.
- 1.7 At a meeting of the Cooperative Scrutiny Board on 7 August 2013, the Cabinet Member for Finance raised concerns relating to evidence based information showing that residents were going into debt in order to pay council tax and costs incurred relating to debt recovery action.
- 1.8 This report summarises the findings of the cooperative review group and makes a number of recommendations to help improve the process.

## 2 SCRUTINY APPROACH

2.1 The Co-operative Scrutiny Management Board approved the establishment of the co-operative review to look at Council Tax (Attachment of Earnings) at its meeting on 7 August 2013.

### 2.2 Co-operative Review Aims and Objectives

2.2.1 The aims of the Council Tax (Attachment of Earnings) review were to –

- identify the impact on residents and the Council;
- analyse the reasons why people are going into debt (was this due to poor financial management);
- identify the support that the Council provides and also voluntary sector;
- have a better understanding of the process.

2.2.2 The objectives of the co-operative review were to clarify the financial impact on both working residents and residents receiving benefits of not paying council tax, the debt recovery process and whether any improvements could be implemented.

### 2.3 Co-operative Review Membership

2.3.1 The co-operative review group had cross-party membership comprising the following –

- Councillor James (Chair)
- Councillor Mrs Aspinall
- Councillor Bowyer
- Councillor Casey
- Councillor Tuffin

2.3.2 For the purposes of the review, the co-operative review group was supported by -

- Giles Perritt, Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships (Lead Officer)
- Helen Wright, Democratic Support Officer

### 2.4 Co-operative Review Methodology

2.4.1 The co-operative review group convened for one session, on 15 November 2013 to review the documentation submitted as evidence and to hear from a number of witnesses.

2.4.2 Witnesses -

- Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance)
- Jo Ryder (Council Tax Service Manager)
- Paul Dean (Court Officer)
- Steve Meakin (Advice Plymouth)
- Sarah McNiece (Advice Plymouth)

### 3 FINDINGS

- 3.1 As a result of the changes to the welfare system which had been implemented in April 2013, a total of 19,280 households in Plymouth had seen a reduction in council tax support of £4 per week.
- 3.2 In April 2013, 13,395 customers had not paid the first month's scheduled instalment compared to 6,184 in April 2012, which represented a 116 percent increase. This figure included 5,943 customers who were eligible to pay council tax for the first time. During the first quarter of 2013/14 customers wishing to discuss council tax arrears on a 'face to face' basis increased by 49.54 percent.
- 3.3 Currently 19,280 residents were eligible to pay council tax for the first time. For this group of residents (between April and September 2013), the following had been issued -
- 14,408 reminders
  - 6,224 summonses
  - 3,798 liability orders
  - 2,308 attachments to benefits
  - 54 attachments to earnings
- 3.4 **Debt Recovery Process**
- 3.4.1 The debt recovery process for non-payment of council tax, was set out below –
- the first reminder would be sent out when the payment was overdue by 14 days;
  - a summons was issued 21 days later;
  - a court hearing would take place 21 days later at which a Liability Order was obtained;
  - once a Liability Order was obtained an attachment to earnings or benefits could be set up (unless there was already an excessive amount being deducted)
  - bailiff action was taken as a last resort;
- 3.4.2 It was important to note that any stage of this, process customers were urged to contact the council at the earliest opportunity to avoid potential debt recovery action. The focus of the reminder notice sent to customers, prior to the court summons, had been changed to encourage payment and reflect the need to contact the council.
- 3.4.3 If a customer was experiencing difficulty in paying council tax or had fallen into arrears, there were a number of options that were considered, such as –
- lower payment instalments;
  - 12 monthly instalments;
  - weekly and fortnightly instalments
  - payment plan
  - Liability Order
- 3.4.4 An option to provide a lower payment arrangement had been introduced which enabled customers, who were in receipt of benefits and unable to meet their instalments, to begin to adapt to paying council tax for the first time and also ensure that they got into the habit of paying.

These cases were closely monitored and could be re-negotiated in order to provide time to manage incomes and negotiate payments with other debtors such as credit cards, loans, etc.

- 3.4.5 In addition to the introduction of 12 monthly instalments, customers were also given the opportunity to pay either on a weekly or fortnightly basis.
- 3.4.6 It was noted that bailiff action would only be considered as a last resort, in order to avoid additional costs being incurred (the average cost of bailiff action was £300). However, it was important that recovery action was taken for non-payment to avoid the burden falling on the remaining council tax payers. The number of bailiff instructions made in Plymouth in 2012 was 7,894 (this figure included actions for car parking enforcement) which equated to a bailiff visiting one in 14 households within the city.
- 3.4.7 The council was also able to apply to a Magistrates' Court for a Liability Order against the customer. If the court granted the Liability Order, the council had a number of options to recover the debt. One option considered was a council tax attachment of earnings order. The cost of the Liability Order was currently £83 (which included the cost of the Order together with the council's associated costs). It was reported that the Magistrates' Court charged £3 per Liability Order issued. The group raised concerns as to whether the council's associated costs of £80, were actually proportionate and reasonable and whether the most vulnerable customers should have to pay for the overheads of the overall recovery process, including the cost of late payers who paid before court action.
- 3.4.8 Where a customer was in receipt of benefits, or employed and their employment details were held, an attachment order was made following the court hearing. The amounts that were deducted were set by legislation and were unable to be altered by the council (as referred to below) –

<b>Net Weekly Earnings</b>	<b>Deduction Rate %</b>
Up to £75.00	0
Exceeding £75.00 but not £135	3
Exceeding £135 but not £185	5
Exceeding £185 but not £225	7
Exceeding £225 but not £355	12
Exceeding £335 but not £505	17
Over £505	17 % for the first £505 and then 50% for the remainder
Customers in receipt of benefits	£3.60 deducted per week

- 3.4.9 A request was sent to either the Department of Work and Pensions or the employer advising of the deduction amount. Confirmation of the deduction was sent to the customer. If the customer's source of income was unknown, a notice was sent informing the customer that a Liability Order had been obtained and requesting details of their income. On receipt of this information a decision was made on the most appropriate way to recover the debt.

## 3.5 Impact of Council Tax Arrears on Both Residents and the Council's Budget

- 3.5.1 There was a close association between mental health issues and debt. One in two British adults with a problem debt also had a mental health problem. Such mental health problems affected the way in which people thought, felt or behaved and could have a negative impact on their lives and their family and friends. One in six adults had a mental health problem such as depression, anxiety, panic disorder, etc. (It was important to note that Advice Plymouth employed one mental health advocate on a part time basis).
- 3.5.2 In the majority of cases those customers in arrears were unaware of the severe implications of not paying their council tax bills. With the threat of bailiff action or imprisonment this directly impacted on any children in the household and could have the effect of pushing them in to poverty. Customers faced with extreme hardship were forced to make difficult financial decisions such as taking out loans from door to door lenders or pay day loans which attracted extremely high interest rates.
- 3.5.3 Whilst there was no clear evidence that the requirement to pay council tax was increasing the number of people in debt there is nonetheless an impact on those who already have problem debts.
- 3.5.4 However, council tax was a significant source of the council's core funding which equated to over 40 percent of its total resources available to provide services to the public. In setting the council's budget an allowance was included for the non-collection of council tax (currently 2.5 percent). However, if less council tax was collected than budgeted for, this could result in difficult decisions being made to address the deficit, such as cuts to services or an increase in the level of council tax charged.

## 3.6 Support Provided to Customers

- 3.6.1 In recognition of the impact of the Welfare Reforms the council had adapted its recovery strategy to a more proactive and supportive approach. A more proactive approach had been adopted in contacting customers to discuss non payment with specific focus on payment options and frequency, payment plans, financial management and also signposting customers to other organisations who could help. Customers' circumstances were reviewed to ensure that the appropriate discounts and benefits were in place.
- 3.6.2 Advice Plymouth was a formal consortium of not for profit advice agencies, commissioned by the council to deliver a co-ordinated advice and information service for the people of Plymouth. The consortium included the following organisations –
- Plymouth Citizen's Advice Bureau
  - Age UK Plymouth
  - Routeways Ltd
  - Plymouth Guild
- 3.6.3 Advice Plymouth provided advice and information on the following areas –
- benefits
  - consumer
  - employment

- housing
- legal
- money and utilities
- relationships
- tax and tax credits
- water debt gateway

3.6.4 Customers approaching Advice Plymouth for support relating specifically to council tax arrears were made aware of their responsibility to pay this debt and the implications of not doing so. Customers were advised of all the facts in order to be able to make informed lifestyle changes. Support was provided by investing key issues, such as –

- maximising income streams (increasing hours of work);
- looking for a job
- reviewing entitlement to benefits;
- contributions by independents living at home;
- budgeting skills (reduce energy costs, food expenditure, etc)

3.6.5 Advice Plymouth found that in many instances customers in arrears did not engage at an early stage and as such these cases were particularly challenging to resolve. Early intervention with customers was crucial, although this had been difficult to achieve. It was considered that customers' perceptions needed to be changed relating to the service provided by the council (customers were fearful of contacting the council as they thought they would receive a negative response).

3.6.6 It was important to be able to assess customers' needs when the initial approach was made to Advice Plymouth. This enabled the right level of support to be provided to customers, thus better utilising the limited resources available.

3.6.7 Staff dealing with the collection of council tax were trained to take a holistic view of the customers' situation. Staff were able to signpost customers to various support groups including Advice Plymouth and provide information on the council's hardship funds.

3.6.8 The council had several discretionary 'pots' of money which offered financial support to eligible residents, such as the –

- Emergency and Welfare fund (used in the case of a crisis or resettlement)
- Discretionary Housing Payment fund (providing support for those who are unable to afford rent or removals costs)
- Council Tax Exceptional Hardship fund (provided for those struggling to pay council tax);
- Homeless Prevention Fund

3.6.9 As take up of the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship fund was currently low, council staff were actively encouraging residents who faced extreme hardship to apply for this fund. A trial was currently taking place as to the best way to contact customers, ie either by telephone or completing a form.

3.6.10 The council had produced a 'Money Advice' booklet to help residents better understand the changes following Welfare Reforms and also worked closely with the local Credit Union (City of Plymouth Credit Union) to encourage residents to save and to access affordable borrowing.

### 3.7 **Consultation on Proposed Changes to Council Tax Support Scheme**

3.7.1 Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) informed the group that following Government changes to the welfare system the council approved a local Council Tax Support Scheme in April 2013, which resulted in everyone of working age being required to pay at least 25 percent of their council tax bill. It was proposed to reduce this to 20 percent from April 2014. There was a further proposal to reduce the cost of a Liability Order from £83 to £60 also from April 2014.

## 4 **CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 In view of the evidence provided, the group was in full support of the proposal to reduce the minimum contribution that working age people should pay toward their council tax bill from the current 25 percent to 20 percent and also the reduction in the cost of a Liability Order from £83 to £60.
- 4.2 Lower instalment payments had been introduced in order to assist customers to pay their council tax bills. The group felt that a further option should be considered whereby a 'tapered' repayment schedule was introduced for those in council tax arrears (the initial repayments would be lower and would gradually increase).
- 4.3 Whilst staff employed by the council had the option for their council tax to be deducted from their salaries, this facility was not currently available from other employers based in the city. The group thought that this was good practice and as such should be further investigated to ascertain whether this option could be offered by other employers.
- 4.4 The group considered that in order to promote better financial management, tenants should be made aware of any council tax liabilities as part of the letting process. Tenants would be able to make informed financial decisions prior to renting a property.
- 4.5 The group heard from Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), that there had been a low take up of the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship fund and suggested that monies from this fund could be made available to encourage customers to open a bank/savings account with a Credit Union which would help them to better manage their finances and assist them to pay their bills. The group considered that this matter should be further investigated.
- 4.6 There were a number of reasons why customers in arrears were not engaging with the council, at an early stage. Some customers found the wording and the complexity of the correspondence extremely confusing. The group thought that a review should be undertaken to specifically focus on the language used in the correspondence sent to those in council tax arrears.

- 4.7 Information provided on the council’s website relating specifically to council tax arrears was not easily accessible. The group considered that the website’s home page should contain an icon which directed customers to information and advice relating to arrears.
- 4.8 Currently customers contacting the council to discuss council tax arrears did so by using the council’s main switchboard number. These conversations could be lengthy due to the complexities of the customers’ circumstances. The group considered that these customers were already facing extreme hardship and by paying for these telephone calls would have a further detrimental effect on their circumstances. It was considered that the feasibility of providing a ‘freephone’ number for council tax arrears enquiries should be investigated.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The co-operative review group recommend that –

1	the Co-operative Scrutiny Board supports the proposal that Plymouth City Council should reduce the minimum contribution that working age people should pay towards their council tax bill from the current 25 percent to 20 percent;
2	the Co-operative Scrutiny Board supports the proposal 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;
3	the Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets should 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;
4	the Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets should 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;
5	the Assistant Director for Homes and Communities should engage with the city’s landlords to ensure that prospective tenants are aware of council tax liabilities as part of the lettings process;
6	the Assistant Director for Homes and Communities should engage with the Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets 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;



7	the Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets should review the language used in correspondence with those in council tax arrears and gain an independent verification of its accessibility;
8	the Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets should 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;
9	the Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets should consider the introduction of a freephone number for those needing advice about council tax arrears.

## 6 Acknowledgement

The co-operative scrutiny review group wished to acknowledge the valuable work undertaken by staff employed within the council's revenues and benefits department and also the good quality advice and support provided by Advice Plymouth.

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**PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**

**Subject:** Council Tax Base Setting 2014/15

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 14 January 2014

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Lowry

**CMT Member:** Malcolm Coe (Assistant Director for Finance)

**Author:** Martine Collins, Strategic Manager Revenues and Benefits

**Contact:** Tel: 01752 304118  
E-mail: martine.collins@plymouth.gov.uk

**Ref:** REV/MC

**Key Decision:** No

**Part:** I

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**Purpose of the report:**

The report provides Members with a Council Tax-base for Tax Setting purposes in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012.

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**The Brilliant Co-operative Council Corporate Plan 2013/14 -2016/17:**

The correct calculation of the Council Tax base will ensure the Council maximises its financial resources to meet its corporate priorities.

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**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:  
Including finance, human, IT and land:**

A collection rate of 97.5% has been used in calculating the Council Tax-base. This Council Tax Base setting report together with Appendix A which details the tax base calculations, shows the tax base is 67,066 which will give us a Council Tax requirement of £86,847,153.38 assuming a 1.99% increase. This is in line with the resource modelling within the budget papers being presented to Council in February 2014.

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**Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:**

None – this report sets out the base for the Council Tax resource for 2014/15 and all implications from resource allocation are set out in the three year sustainable budget report.

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**Equality and Diversity:**

None.

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**Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

That Cabinet recommend to Council the approval of 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%.

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**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

Not applicable – calculation of the tax base is a statutory function.

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**Published work / information:**

None

**Background papers:**

None

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**Sign off:**

Fin	djn13 14.29	Leg	TH01 43	Mon Off	TH01 43	HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: Malcolm Coe													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the content of the report? Yes													

## **I INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 establishes arrangements for the setting of Council Taxes. The arrangements include the valuation of the Council Tax Base for tax setting for which a Council resolution is necessary. The result must be notified to the Police and Crime Commissioner and the combined Fire Authority by the 31 January.
- 1.2 Regulations require the Council to determine its Tax Base for Council Tax purposes for 2014/15 during the period 1 December 2013 to 31 January 2014 prior to the financial year within which it will be effective. The level of Council Tax subsequently set must use this base figure. A Tax Base calculation is provided in Appendix A for an appropriate decision to be made.
- 1.3 The calculation of the Tax Base includes the impact of the Council Tax Support Scheme which significantly reduces income from Council Tax which is then offset, in part, by a Council Tax Support Grant (which is included within the Revenue Support Grant).

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Cabinet with the calculation of the Council Tax Base of 67,066 for tax setting for the financial year 2014/15. For purposes of comparison, the Council Tax Base for tax setting in the financial year 2013/14 was 66,958.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 During 2013/14 there were significant changes in the components of the Tax Base and its calculation. These arose from changes to regulations in relation to exemptions and discounts and new legislation, specifically the introduction of a Council Tax Reduction scheme, known as Council Tax Support which replaced Council Tax Benefit.
- 3.2 The impact of these changes resulted in the reduction of the Tax Base and therefore a reduction the level of Council Tax income to the Council. This reduction is met in part by the Council Tax Support Grant.
- 3.3 The setting of the Tax Base for 2014/15 has been calculated based on changes to the regulations and new legislation.

## **4 TAX BASE CALCULATIONS**

- 4.1 The Council is required by 31<sup>st</sup> January to establish a base figure for the purpose of setting the level of Council Tax each year – the Tax Base. The calculation of this figure is prescribed by the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulation 2012.
- 4.2 The regulations require this calculation to be made between 1 December 2013 and 31 January 2014. For the year commencing 1 April 2014 the major precepting authorities will be Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority and Plymouth City Council.

- 4.3 Tax base figures are calculated by the billing authority as the aggregate of the "relevant amounts" calculated for each property valuation band (now including the impact from Council Tax Support scheme) multiplied by the estimated "collection rate" for the year.
- 4.4 Relevant amounts are:
- (a) The number of chargeable dwellings in that band shown in the valuation list as it stands on the relevant day.
  - (b) The number of discounts, disabled reductions and exemptions which apply to those dwellings on the relevant day;
  - (c) Estimated changes in (a) and (b) above between the relevant day and the last day of the charging period to which the estimate applies;
  - (d) Impact of the Council Tax Support scheme which is linked to claimants, is converted to an equivalent number of dwellings per band by dividing the estimated cost per band of the reductions by the estimated Council Tax for that band;
  - (e) The number of band D equivalents within each different band.
  - (f) The relevant day is 30 November in the financial year preceding that for which the relevant amounts are calculated.
- 4.5 The collection rate for the year is the Billing Authority's estimate of the total amounts of Council Tax which will ultimately be paid or transferred into the Collection Fund.
- 4.6 A summary of the actual calculation of the 2014/15 Council Tax Base for Plymouth is shown in the Appendices to this report. Appendix A shows the tax base calculation, Appendix B shows the tax base used for the previous three years for comparison.
- 4.7 This report assumes a collection rate for Council Tax of 97.5% after taking into account the continued impact of Welfare Reform.

## **6 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT GRANT**

- 6.1 From 2013/14, the Council receives a grant to fund a local Council Tax Support scheme. This grant reflects the funding reductions that the Government have set for Councils for the local scheme and is merged in to the Revenue Support Grant. An estimate of this has been included in the Council's budget proposals for 2014/15.

CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAXBASE - 2014/15

**Appendix A**

30th November 2013 - "Relevant date"

Plymouth COUNCIL			TAX BASE CALCULATION								2014/2015	
			BAND A <small>with disabled relief</small>	BAND A	BAND B	BAND C	BAND D	BAND E	BAND F	BAND G	BAND H	TOTAL
Number of dwellings in valuation list	(30/11/2013)		0	46,657	31,379	21,986	9,123	4,679	1,657	578	60	116,119
Number of exempt dwellings (incl demolished)				2,951	1,892	1,133	616	193	44	42	21	6,892
Reductions to lower band due to disabled relief :			0	(112)	(151)	(121)	(90)	(61)	(26)	(33)	(11)	(605)
Additions to band due to disabled relief :			112	151	121	90	61	26	33	11	0	605
<b>(H) CHARGEABLE DWELLINGS FOR BAND</b>			<b>112</b>	<b>43,745</b>	<b>29,457</b>	<b>20,822</b>	<b>8,478</b>	<b>4,451</b>	<b>1,620</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>109,227</b>
Total "appropriate %" discounts (8&9)	Single / disregard- 25%	25%	39	22,028	9,891	5,492	1,901	868	261	68	1	40,549
Total "appropriate %" discounts (10)	Disregard - 50%	50%	5	45	47	26	27	14	31	28	17	240
Total "appropriate %" discounts (11)	Second Homes	0%	-	293	179	111	78	77	28	15	-	781
	Class D (Major works)	50%	-	64	59	47	11	7	4	1	-	193
	Class C (Less than 1 month)	100%	-	872	397	215	63	70	16	6	1	
<b>(Q) Total Discounts</b>	<b>Formula</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>5,634</b>	<b>2,559</b>	<b>1,427</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10,490</b>
Long Term Empty Premium (15)	Premium	50%	-	133	24	16	5	-	1	2	-	181
<b>(E) Long Term Empty Premium</b>	<b>Formula to give value</b>			<b>67</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>91</b>
Estimated number of dwellings not listed but which will be listed in the band for the whole or any part of financial year		2014/2015	0	102	112	74	95	65	0	1	1	450
Estimated number of reductions to lower band due to successful appeals :			0	0	(9)	(2)	(1)	(4)	(3)	(1)	0	(20)
Estimated number of additions to lower band due to successful appeals :			0	9	2	1	4	3	1	0	0	20
<b>(J) Total Adjustments</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>450</b>
<b>(Z) Local Council Tax Scheme Reductions</b>			<b>68</b>	<b>11,503</b>	<b>3,937</b>	<b>1,278</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17,210</b>
<b>TOTAL DWELLINGS ((H+Q+E+J)-Z)</b>			<b>32</b>	<b>26,785</b>	<b>23,078</b>	<b>18,198</b>	<b>7,764</b>	<b>4,197</b>	<b>1,513</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>82,158</b>
<b>(F)</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	
<b>(G) Ratio to Band D</b>			<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	
<b>(A) RELEVANT AMOUNTS' for 2012/2013</b>		((H+Q+E+J)-Z) x (F divided by G)	<b>18</b>	<b>17,857</b>	<b>17,950</b>	<b>16,176</b>	<b>7,764</b>	<b>5,129</b>	<b>2,186</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>67,919</b>

[Section 4 (1) of The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012]

<b>(B) COLLECTION RATE</b>												<b>97.5%</b>
<b>(A) x (B)</b>		[Section 3 (1) of The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012]	17	17,410	17,501	15,771	7,570	5,001	2,131	780	39	66,221
<b>Plus</b>		Plus adjustment for MOD equivalent										<b>845</b>
<b>Tax base</b>												<b>67,066</b>

**Tax Base and collection rates used for previous three years.**

**Appendix B**

Year	2013/2014			2012/2013			2011/2012		
Band	No. of properties	Estimated collection rate	Adjusted Band D equivalents	No. of properties	Estimated collection rate	Adjusted Band D equivalents	No. of properties	Estimated collection rate	Adjusted Band D equivalents
A	46,555	97.5%	17,611	46,363	98.5%	24,443	46,395	98.5%	24,500
B	31,134	97.5%	17,431	30,914	98.5%	19,901	30,600	98.5%	19,766
C	21,800	97.5%	15,637	21,734	98.5%	16,580	21,631	98.5%	16,553
D	8,922	97.5%	7,499	8,903	98.5%	7,683	8,823	98.5%	7,626
E	4,539	97.5%	4,891	4,493	98.5%	4,836	4,476	98.5%	4,838
F	1,673	97.5%	2,199	1,675	98.5%	2,192	1,665	98.5%	2,160
G	578	97.5%	798	567	98.5%	761	560	98.5%	759
H	59	97.5%	37	58	98.5%	32	58	98.5%	31
Totals	115,260		66,105	114,707		76,428	114,208		76,233
Plus adjustment for MOD Contribution			853			843			833
<b>TAX BASE TOTALS</b>			<b>66,958</b>			<b>77,271</b>			<b>77,066</b>



**PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**

<b>Subject:</b>	Contract award for the refurbishment of Laira Rail Bridge
<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	14 January 2014
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Coker
<b>CMT Member:</b>	Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place)
<b>Author:</b>	Nathan Sanders, Project Manager
<b>Contact details</b>	Tel: 01752 307780 email: nathan.sanders@plymouth.gov.uk
<b>Ref:</b>	01345-11
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Part:</b>	I

**Purpose of the report:**

To recommend that Cabinet awards the contract to refurbish Laira Rail Bridge, having regard to the information contained in the private reports referred to separately on the Cabinet agenda.

**The Brilliant Co-operative Council Corporate Plan 2013/14 -2016/17:****Pioneering Plymouth**

Laira Rail Bridge is an historic Plymouth landmark which has been lying derelict for over twenty years. Once refurbished to its former glory, it will provide an off-road link between the City and Plymstock, encouraging sustainable travel into and out of the City for commuting, business and recreational purposes.

**Growing Plymouth**

This project will contribute to this priority by creating an off-road link between the City and proposed new developments in Plymstock Quarry and beyond.

**Confident Plymouth**

Refurbishing this derelict Victorian asset into once again being a functional structure will engender civic pride in Plymouth's infrastructure and history.

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:  
Including finance, human, IT and land**

This project is in the approved Capital Programme 2012 – 15. The capital funding comprises a Plymouth Connect Local Sustainable Transport Fund capital grant, Local Transport Plan capital grant, capital contribution and Section 106 contributions. The main £750,000 Section 106 Contribution which is connected to the Saltram Meadow (Plymstock Quarry) development has not yet been received as it is due on first occupation of the new houses. This is expected during 2014/15. The risk of the funding not being received by the Council is considered to be low due to the significant investment already made by the developer.

Revenue costs estimated at £10,140 per annum equating to £152,100 over 15 years for ongoing maintenance can be met from within the Highway Maintenance revenue budget.

**Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:**

None

**Equality and Diversity**

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

**Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

To award the contract for the refurbishment of Laira Rail Bridge to South West Highways, following the outcome of the tender evaluation exercise held on 10 December 2013.

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

To not award the contract.

This would mean that the project could not proceed and a significant amount of central government funding would have to be returned, including money that has already been spent in developing the project.

**Published work / information:**

**Background papers:**

None

**Sign off:**

Fin	SG/Place FTC 1314003. 171213	Leg	SC/ 19138	Mon Off	DS/ 19152	HR	n/a	Assets	CJT/ 123/ 171213	IT	n/a	Strat Proc	NA/ SPU/ 343/ CP/ 1213
Originating SMT Member: Clive Perkin													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

## 1.0 Introduction

Plymouth is planning for large scale residential and employment growth along the Eastern Corridor, the two most significant sites are that of Saltram Meadow (formerly known as Plymstock Quarry) and Sherford New Community. Further employment is proposed at Langage Energy Park.

Development sites along the Eastern Corridor and in the city centre make up 52% of the proposed residential dwellings, 56% of employment space and 72% of retail space of the overall development for the whole city by 2026.

This planned growth will inevitably increase the demand for travel by public transport, walking and cycling and by private car. New and innovative transport solutions are therefore needed to facilitate this growth.

Part of the strategy for facilitating this growth is to provide high quality walking and cycling facilities linking the city centre and the eastern corridor with both on and off-road facilities which are of high quality, fast and convenient.

## 2.0 Physical Context

The bridge over the River Plym was completed in 1887 with the remainder of the line to Pomphlett not being completed until the following year.

The original function of Laira Rail Bridge was to carry a mineral railway but it was later converted to a branch line of the London and South Western Railway and was opened to passenger trains in 1892 forming an important river crossing between Plymouth and Plymstock. Passenger services ended in the 1950s although freight trains, principally serving the Billacombe Quarry and sidings at Pomphlett, continued to operate until the late 1980s.

Since its closure the bridge has fallen into a state of disrepair and over the years has largely lost its protective paintwork.

Despite its cosmetic appearance, the bridge remains in relatively good structural condition, although there are some isolated areas of significant corrosion present, particularly within the tidal areas of the bridge.

On the western side of the rail bridge, an existing off-road cycleway runs along the alignment of the former Turnchapel branch line. Parallel to this, a second branch line still in use as an active railway provides access for trains to the industrial area of Cattedown.

To the south of rail bridge, a second river crossing carries vehicular traffic over the River Plym along the A379. This is the second bridge located in this area to carry vehicular traffic over the River Plym, the first of which dating back to 1827 was demolished in the 1950's to make way for the current road bridge.

The remnants of the old Laira Road Bridge lay to the south of the rail bridge at the eastern end in the form of the original abutments and limestone facing, which have been left in situ along with a plaque commemorating the opening of the original road bridge. The remainder of the land in this area has been soft landscaped with grass.

At the eastern end of the bridge, the old railway embankment has been dissected by The Ride, which provides access for vehicular traffic to Chelson Meadow Recycling Centre and a gypsy/traveller site, a bus depot and a small number of light industrial units. The Ride also provides pedestrian and cycle access to the Saltram Country Park estate and links to the National Cycle Network (NCN) including the Plym Valley cycle trail.

### 3.0 Project Objectives

- Provide a high quality dedicated pedestrian and cycling facility utilising the redundant rail bridge.
- Improve walking and cycling connectivity in the area.
- Provide a high quality decorative lighting scheme to highlight key features of the bridge and capture people's imagination to encourage greater use.
- Enable a future bridge over The Ride to come forward at a later date.
- Preserve the heritage value of the existing bridge.

### 4.0 Project Details

The scheme will restore the redundant Laira Rail Bridge shown in

Figure below, which crosses the River Plym and has been disused for over twenty years since its closure in the late 1980s. This proposal will bring the bridge back into operation as a shared use pedestrian and cycle path, linking to the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 27 which passes through the Saltram Country Park, along with other local routes.



Figure 1 Laira Rail Bridge

The project requires the old rail bridge to be structurally and cosmetically restored and will require a new deck system for pedestrians and cyclists as indicated in Figure 2. The scheme will also provide appropriate street and feature lighting.



Figure 2 Artistic Impression of Refurbished Laira Rail Bridge

A new access ramp will be constructed on the eastern side to link the old rail bridge with the road level at The Ride as illustrated in Figure 3. The design of this ramp enables a new bridge to be constructed over The Ride at a later date, in order to continue the pedestrian/cycle path along the former railway line.

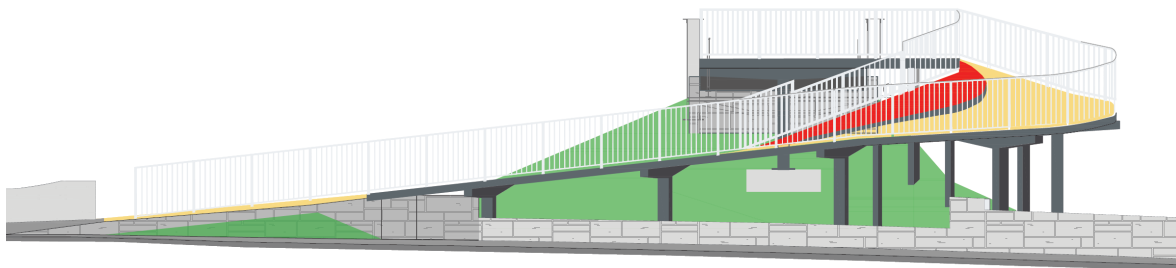


Figure 3 Artistic Impression of Proposed Ramp (View from The Ride)

The approach structure on the western side of the bridge will also be restored in order to link to the existing off-road pedestrian/cycle route which runs along the alignment of the former Turnchapel Branch railway line, to Lucas Terrace / Junction Gardens.

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