

Cooperative Scrutiny Board

Wednesday 24 July 2013

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair.

Councillors Ball, Bowie, Bowyer, Casey, Philippa Davey, Sam Leaves, Murphy and Tuffin.

Also in attendance: Malcolm Coe (Assistant Director for Finance, efficiencies, Technology and Assets), Clare Judd (Team Leader FETA), Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet member for Cooperative and Community Development), Giles Perritt (Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships), Jo Ryder (Senior Manager FETA) and Helen Wright (Democratic Support officer).

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 5.00 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

30. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were made, in accordance with the code of conduct –

Name	Reason	Interest
Councillor Mrs Aspinall	Access Plymouth (Member) Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support Council (Member) Plymouth Area Disability Action Network (Member) Pluss Organisation Limited (Member) South Devon and Cornwall Institution for the Blind (Member)	Private
Councillor Casey	Plymouth Citizen's Advice Bureau Trustee Board (Member) Plymouth Social Enterprise Network (Member) Pluss Organisation Limited (Member) Relate (Member)	Private
Councillor P Davey	Mount Batten Sailing and Water Sports Centre (Member)	Private
Councillor Tuffin	Pluss Organisation Ltd (Member) Brock House (Member)	Private

31. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair raised the issue of undertaking a review of the Council's procedures relating to unauthorised encampments.

The Board agreed that the Your Plymouth Panel undertake a cooperative review into the procedures used by the council when dealing with unauthorised encampments.

The Board further agreed to circulate the draft scrutiny handbook to members of the Board which contained information on how to place items on work programmes and request cooperative reviews.

(In accordance with Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the Chair brought forward the above item for urgent consideration because of the need for a decision from members.

32. **BUSINESS RATES - DISCRETIONARY RATES RELIEF**

Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Cooperatives and Community Development) together with the Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets, the Senior Manager and the Team Leader for Efficiencies, Technology and Assets, presented the business rates – discretionary rates relief report, which highlighted the following key areas –

- the rationale for change;
- the proposed approach for 2013/14 and beyond;
- benchmarking.

In response to questions raised by the Board, it was reported that –

- (a) with the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 and the Business Rates Retention Scheme, there was a need to review the current policy in relation to the discretionary rates relief and hardship; this review provided an opportunity to ensure that council resources were being made available to a wider range of organisations and also that it was contributing to the right ones;
- (b) funding would be provided for rate relief to organisations that were able to demonstrate that they could provide significant benefit to Plymouth; rate relief funding could be used as part of a package to encourage new investors/business to locate to Plymouth;
- (c) any changes made by the Council would need to give due regard to the Devon-wide Business Rate Retention Pool, as inconsistencies in discretionary relief provided by individual authorities would have a direct impact on the total revenue collectable and apportioned across the pool;

- (d) as a result of the Council adopting a new local Council Tax Support scheme, all Plymouth residents were now having to pay a minimum contribution of 25 per cent towards their Council Tax regardless of their circumstances; it was therefore recommended that all organisations contributed towards the cost of their business rates;
- (e) registered charities and community amateur sports club were eligible for mandatory rate relief.

Following discussions relating to the involvement of scrutiny in this process, the Board agreed to request that a business rate (discretionary rates relief) report is submitted to the annual budget scrutiny process in January 2014.

The Board agreed to endorse the recommendations being presented to Cabinet on 6 August 2013, subject to an amendment to recommendation (1) 'create a 'ring fenced' funding pot to provide *time limited* rate relief to a wider range of business'.

33. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Further to minute 27(1), the Board received a briefing paper from the Ambitious Plymouth Panel regarding the appointment of statutory and non-statutory representatives.

The Board agreed –

- (1) recommendations 1, 3 and 5 contained within the minutes (Ambitious Plymouth Panel's minute 3 referred);
- (2) recommendation 2 subject to the following amendment 'Democratic Support Officer approached the Lead Officer of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) to ask for nominations from *House A* to become co-opted representatives onto the Ambitious Plymouth Panel';
- (3) recommendation 4 subject to Alderman Pauline Purnell being co-opted onto cooperative reviews as and when required and not the panel;
- (4) the existing co-opted representatives should be invited to attend the panel meeting in August 2013 pending any revised nominations (there was some uncertainty whether the co-opted representatives would remain the same in the new academic year).