

# Cooperative Scrutiny Board

**Wednesday 18 December 2013**

## **PRESENT:**

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Beer, Bowie, Casey, Darcy, Philippa Davey, Sam Leaves, Murphy and Kate Taylor (substitute for Councillor Tuffin).

Apology for absence: Councillor Tuffin

Also in attendance: Malcolm Coe (Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets), Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Co-operatives and Community Development), Giles Perritt (Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships) and Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 6.00 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.*

## 99. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declaration of interest was made, in accordance with the code of conduct –

<b>Name</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Interes</b>
Councillor Sam Leaves	Private Sector Landlord	Private

## 100. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2013 are confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendment 'Councillor Philippa Davey - Regional Support Official, University and College Union'.

## 101. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair informed the Board that there had been the following urgent decisions –

- city celebrations and events 2014;
- future accommodation requirements (refer to minute 111);
- Royal Marines 350<sup>th</sup> celebration event 2014.

The Board noted the urgent decisions.

102. **WORK PROGRAMMES**

The work programme for the Co-operative Scrutiny Board was submitted and agreed.

103. **TRACKING DECISIONS 2013/14**

The Board considered its schedule of decisions and noted the latest position.

The Board agreed that minute 77 (budget scrutiny) had been completed and therefore could be shaded as such.

104. **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS AND PRIVATE BUSINESS**

The Board considered the following executive key decisions in the Forward Plan which were scheduled to be discussed at the Cabinet meeting on 14 January 2014 –

- Plymouth and South West Peninsula City Deal;
- Laira Rail Bridge Refurbishment: Award of Contract;
- Council Tax Base Setting 2014/15.

Concerns were raised relating information, specifically regarding the Park and Ride Bus Service Review report and the Forward Plan, being circulated at short notice. This situation did not afford councillors the opportunity to fully read the information and as such unable to make informed decisions.

A discussion took place relating to the specific reasons as to why the reports and information were provided as 'to follow items'. Whilst every effort was made to circulate information in a timely manner, there were occasions when this was not always possible to achieve.

The Board had previously raised concerns relating to the difficulty of undertaking pre-decision scrutiny due to the publication of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and Private Business 28 days prior to the Cabinet meeting.

The Board agreed that a formal request is made to Cabinet to re-adopt a four month forward plan of key decisions and private business, in order to facilitate effective pre decision scrutiny

105. **FEES, CHARGES AND CONCESSIONS POLICY**

The Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets provided an overview of the Fees, Charges and Concessions Policy –

- (a) the purpose of the policy was to provide a clear statement of the Council's corporate approach to fees and charges incorporating concessions;
- (b) the policy was driven by the Council's co-operative values and by adopting this policy it would commit to ensuring a consistent

approach to how it charged individual customers and community groups for discretionary services and goods that were provided;

- (c) the policy outlined the principles that the Council would use when levying a charge for services that it provided and why it was doing so; the authority would ensure that a consistent and fair approach was adopted to fees and charges that they were used to deliver the Council's overall objectives whilst protecting, wherever possible, the most vulnerable residents of Plymouth. The policy also set a direction of travel about the principles to be used when waiving charges and the conditions that would be applied in these circumstances;
- (d) fees and charges included –
  - statutory charges;
  - discretionary charges;
  - setting fees and charges;
  - subsidised services;
- (e) discretionary concessions may be applied to fees and charges to certain individuals, or groups, based on criteria that supported the Council's corporate priorities and complied with the key principles in the policy.

The Board noted the report.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets for providing this overview.

106. **CABINET MEMBER**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Penberthy, Cabinet Member for Co-operatives and Community Development, who provided an overview of the current areas of work, which included the following key areas –

- (a) Plymouth Energy Community -
  - an independent residents' co-operative had been established in June 2013 which was working to combat fuel bill rises through its community switching scheme and keeping people's homes warmer through its insulation programmes;
- (b) co-operative housing -
  - a 'Self-Build Champion' had been identified who had contacted a number of households who were keen to develop self-build housing and who were identifying Council sites to support self-build homes in the City;

- (c) social enterprise development -
- the Council had achieved Social Enterprise City status in October 2013 (one of the first to do so in the country);
  - two major social enterprises had helped to secure over £9m of funding (Ocean Studios and the Millfields Trust);
- (d) new Community Economic Development Trust -
- a CEDT steering group had been formed in October 2013 which comprised of 11 residents, four councillors and one business and held its first meeting in December 2013;
  - an option appraisal of 10 assets for the CEDT to inform income generation and investment opportunities had been completed;
- (e) community use of assets –
- a new Community Asset Transfer Policy had been adopted by Council on 10 June 2013, which outlined how the Council's co-operative values could be imparted across communities by encouraging community groups or organisations to acquire Council owned buildings under asset transfer;
- (f) communities and community cohesion –
- the implementation of the new Community Covenant had secured approximately £350m funding for community projects;
  - the newly opened credit union shop in Frankfort Gate had seen an increase in footfall of 40 per cent;
- (g) child poverty –
- a learning, skills and employability group had been set up to challenge youth unemployment and the rising number of not in education, employment or training (NEETs) within the City;
  - the Children's Partnership and the Children's Clinical Commissioning Partnership had commenced a review of the mental health services due to their known impact on employability;
- (h) community safety and anti-social behaviour –
- a range of community safety initiatives had been launched such as the designated driver (pledge 17);
  - closure of the first crack house on owner occupied premises;
- (i) housing options and homelessness -

- the commissioning of an on-site provision in the housing options service that offered advice and support on welfare rights, debts and budgeting skills;
  - the successful implementation of 'no second night out' initiative for rough sleepers;
- (j) private sector housing and housing renewals -
- the waiting times had been reduced by 50 per cent for the Disabled Facilities Grant (10 months reduced to five months on average);
  - working in partnership with the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and landlords to increase the level of provision of mains powered smoke detectors;
- (k) neighbourhood regeneration –
- service provider and resident listening events had been organised in Barne Barton; a resident led neighbourhood forum had been set up to progress the neighbourhood plan;
  - a resident led Big Local steering group had been set up in Whitleigh to oversee the Lottery £1m Big Local programme.

The Chair thanked Councillor Penberthy for his comprehensive overview of his portfolio.

107. **CALL-INS**

There were no call-ins to consider.

108. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were no recommendations to consider.

109. **COOPERATIVE REVIEW(S)**

The Board agreed to recommend to Cabinet the recommendations as outlined in the following reports –

- (1) Narrowing the Gap in Schools;
- (2) Council Tax (Attachment of Earnings).

Following a lengthy discussion relating to recommendation one contained in the Park and Ride Bus Service Review (the feasibility of charging for parking at all three Park and Ride sites is investigated with the intention of covering the operating costs of the site) a vote was recorded –

*Vote: seven councillors in favour of recommendation one and three against (Councillors Mrs Beer, Darcy and Sam Leaves).*

The Board agreed to recommend to Cabinet the recommendations as outlined in the Park and Ride Bus Service Review.

110. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

Agreed that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

111. **URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (E3)**

The Board noted the urgent Cabinet decision relating to the future accommodation requirements.