

# Cabinet

**Tuesday 10 November 2020**

## **PRESENT:**

Councillor Evans OBE, in the Chair.

Councillor P Smith, Vice Chair.

Councillors Haydon, Coker, Dann, Lowry, Penberthy, Jon Taylor, Laing and Kate Taylor.

Also in attendance: Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health), Tracey Lee (Chief Executive), Councillor Darren Winter (Chair of the Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive) and Kevin Mckenzie (Policy Advisor), Craig McArdle (Strategic Director for People), Alison Botham (Director of Children's Services), Amanda Ratsey (Head of Economy Enterprise and Employment), Councillor Jeremy Goslin (Assistant Cabinet Member) and Amanda MacDonald (Programme Manager) and Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 5.00 pm.

*Note: The full discussion can be viewed on the webcast of the City Council meeting at [www.plymouth.gov.uk](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk). At a future meeting, the Council 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.*

50. **Declarations of Interest**

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

51. **Minutes**

Members agreed the minutes of 10 November 2020 as an accurate record of the meeting.

52. **Questions from the Public**

The following question was submitted by Mr Alan Ramage and answered by Councillor Sue Dann, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene:

Question: At a Plymouth University event, the project manager for constructing South West Water's new treatment plant told me that a green roof was not installed to save on customers' bills. As the cost to each customer over the lifetime of the plant would be infinitesimal, and given SWW's recent handout of £20 per household, it is reasonable to assume the money could be found. A retrofit would reduce the visual impact of the plant in a sensitive area. SWW and PCC are proud of their green credentials. Will PCC press SWW to make this retrofit?

Answer: Plymouth City Council has a good working relationship with South West Water and works in partnership with the company to manage and reduce flood

risk and climate change impact in Plymouth. Plymouth City Council also works closely with neighbouring authorities to provide a consistent and regional wide strategy approach to flood risk management. Both South West Water and South Hams District Council share Plymouth City Council's commitment to following and implementing a Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategy (SUDS) hierarchy for new development, within which Green roofs are seen as effective measure to reduce surface water run off and provide Ecological benefits. Whilst the treatment works are located outside of the Plymouth administrative boundary, the Plymouth Lead Local Flood Authority have in response to the question raised, approached and invited both South West Water and South Hams District Council, to comment on the assessment and selection of SUDS solutions incorporated into the Water Treatment work design.

53. **Chair's Urgent Business**

To facilitate good meeting management Members agreed to move 12 before item 7 on the agenda.

54. **Update from the Director of Public Health on COVID-19**

Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health) gave an update on COVID-19 –

On the Plymouth City Council official Twitter and Facebook accounts we are sending out updates on the current rates of COVID-19 in the city. Plymouth had 170 cases per 100,000 and the South West overall was just slightly below at 160. The England average was 240.

The South West had a lower rate than the rest of the UK but in places that were more densely populated e.g. Torbay, Plymouth, and a higher population means a higher chance that you will come into contact with COVID-19. Urban deprivation and barriers to following guidance also contributed to why these spots are higher.

With regards to testing the government had increased the number available and there were 3 testing sites in Plymouth, regional drive-in as well as two walk-ins – the Guildhall and Marjons Car Park.

There was no evidence now that there was a strain on testing. Some people assume that because we were testing more people now, we would definitely see more cases, but that isn't strictly true. In the summer, testing increased, but cases didn't increase rapidly, whilst we acknowledge this was a factor though in case increases, it did not explain it entirely.

National data does show that there are more people in hospital now than when we went into the first lockdown. We also know there is a time lag, and so a second lockdown was needed because otherwise the NHS could become overwhelmed and not be able to serve other patients.

COVID-19 admissions to hospital were higher than the peak of flu admissions in 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, and it isn't flu season yet either, so important as well to try and keep numbers down for this reason as well.

Rates in Plymouth were relatively low in comparison to similar sized cities elsewhere in the UK, however, they are important and significant enough to see people in the population getting ill with the virus and being admitted to hospital in some cases. COVID-19 admissions had risen to such an extent over the past month that they were now impacting the hospitals services.

We know a lockdown is difficult for everyone and we know these actions wouldn't be called for without good reason and that is has been called to get those levels of cases back under control and keep deaths to a minimum.

The Cabinet passed their best wishes onto Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health) and her team, you are all doing an amazing job in difficult circumstances to keep Plymouth safe.

The Cabinet noted the report.

#### 55. **Brexit Organisational Risk Report (To Follow)**

Councillor Darren Winter (Chair of the Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Exectuvie) and Kevin Mckenzie (Policy Advisor) presented the Brexit Organisational Risk Report and Scrutiny Recommendations to Cabinet –

The report provided an update for Cabinet about our Brexit related risks. Its content had been subject to pre scrutiny by the Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislation Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the recommendations are those made by that committee.

Cabinet were asked to review the report and the recommendations made by the Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Cabinet agreed to accept the following recommendations-

Cabinet should ask government to:

1. Lay out in detail what plans it has to mitigate the loss of EU funding to the city. (accepted)
2. Detail the priorities it has for the marine and maritime research sectors post-Brexit, and what will be done to mitigate the loss of EU funding in the sector. (accepted)
3. Explain why the government thinks that the South West fishing fleets will be adequately protected. (amended)
4. Encourage agricultural employers to improve the wage offer for agricultural labour so that it is a more attractive career path for young people through the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. (amended)

Cabinet should ensure:

5. That Plymouth City Council and our key suppliers review our business continuity arrangements against the negative impacts of Brexit as identified in the risk register,

and have robust plans in place to mitigate service delivery interruption. (accepted with qualification)

6. Consider the merits of reviewing large capital projects with contractors given capacity of project managers to engage contractors within the short timeline available. (amended as detailed in report)
7. We consider the budgetary impact of the identified risks on the Medium Term Financial Plan. (accepted)
8. We continue to make a proactive offer to any foreign based businesses that may be considering leaving the City due to Brexit impact. (accepted)
9. We are successfully locating and communicating with EU citizens in Plymouth who have not yet applied for settled status, and that; (accepted)
10. A needs assessment is conducted to identify vulnerable EU citizens and the support we can offer to assist them to apply for settled status. (accepted with qualification)

Cabinet should:

11. As far as reasonably practical, ensure Plymouth City Council is proactive in communicating Brexit information to the wider city to enable preparedness of organisations and businesses, and is positive where possible in its Brexit communications where opportunities have been identified. (accepted)
12. Consider whether the resources already deployed to support business e.g. account managers are able to respond to all enquiries via a single contact number. (Proposal amended as detailed in report)
13. Ensure that Plymouth City Council works with appropriate partners with a view to agreeing a planned schedule improving landing facilities at the fishing quay (Accepted)

The rationale for accepting these recommendations was given in the table in report.

56. **Update from the Chief Executive on COVID-19 Reset/Response** (Verbal Report)

Tracey Lee (Chief Executive) advised Members that since entering this second lockdown Plymouth City Council is very much in response mode be also in reset/recovery mode and so we are trying to do both. This does mean there is a huge call on capacity across the organisation.

We have reviewed our objectives:

1. Preserve life and limit harm to the people of Plymouth.
2. Maintain public services in line with the local outbreak management plan, taking into account government guidance and minimising risk to staff, customers and citizens.
3. To provide visible and proactive community leadership
4. Promote the economic and social recovery of the city

The majority of our services were continuing as they were before lockdown, there are very few that we have had to stop under the current government guidance. Unfortunately, however, this does include our Leisure Centres and The Box. We also have restricted services in the registration service and libraries. The majority of staff were also continuing to work from home.

Thanked all our employees for all the work they have done in such a difficult year that continues to be difficult as they continue to deliver services, support each other and their families.

Craig McArdle (Strategic Director for People) –

- Kept our day centres open to ensure carers were getting support and respite, although numbers were limited but assigned on level of need. We also have a mix of face to face and virtual interactions;
- provided a winter plan to government and we have been proactive in issuing the infection control fund;
- continued to issue PPE across the city and thank you to the staff doing this. Had now issued 1.7 million items of PPE to our providers since the pandemic began. We were continuing to support our care homes who were still facing pressures, and are supporting and helping to provide rapid testing.

Alison Botham (Director of Children's Services) -

- This time, for Children's Services and our partners it was not the same as the first lockdown and was much better for lots of children and young people, e.g. schools are open, but there were continued challenges as they face incidents at different schools at different times. It was a credit to the schools in the city how they have been managing in this incredibly difficult term.
- Our frontline staff in education and children's social care have continued to work in response and recovery. Last time most of the work we were undertaking was virtually, but we are now able to provide more direct contact where needed. They are making risk based decisions on where this is needed and safe.
- We are facing an increased demand as children's social care; in September 2020 we were working with 2,004 children compared to 1,820 at the same time in 2019. Since the beginning of April, we have seen an increase to September of 46 children in care. It had been a real credit to our staff and all of our partners that moral is as good as it could be and the approach is always how can they provide the best service to the children and young people in the city.

This pandemic has brought about so many firsts and last week Councillor Tudor Evans OBE (Leader) and Tracey Lee (Chief Executive) had their first virtual royal visit with the Earl and Countess of Wessex explaining to them what was happening in the city – what was tough but also the amazing examples of how our city came together.

Cabinet noted the update.

57. **Leader's Announcements** (Verbal Report)

Councillor Evans OBE (Leader) highlighted the following in his announcements –

- Updated the Cabinet on the work Plymouth City Council had been doing on our COVID economic response plan - Resurgam. We were in the midst of the second wave of this global pandemic which was both a health emergency and an unprecedented economic shock;
- This was a time when local government really matters. Our plan remained incredibly simple: to protect jobs and address the immediate threats to lives and livelihoods, but also to reset the local economy to address structural inequalities in our city and place a fairer and greener future at the heart of our recovery;
- When we set up Resurgam during the first wave we were well aware of the possible risks of a second wave and/ or further lockdowns. We set it up to be agile knowing that there was a possibility that we would need to move back into a response phase, but also knowing that we could provide an emergency response and work on recovery simultaneously;
- Officers have therefore been busy preparing to launch the latest rounds of business grants. had been awarded £4m for those business that have had to close and this scheme will launch next week. We have also been awarded £5m for a discretionary scheme however we will wait to launch these scheme until we better understand the gaps in demand;
- Pleased that calls to extend the Furlough scheme and to prevent the October cliff edge have been listened to and that the Furlough scheme had been extended. This had been essential to support many of our residents during these unprecedented times. However there was still more that needs to be done to support those who fall outside the Furlough scheme and those who were accessing the benefits systems including the latest figures of 11,000 people in Plymouth claiming Universal Credit/ Job Seekers Allowance. This included 2,380 people under 25. We are very concerned how this data would change in the coming weeks when the impact of a second wave hits harder;
- Our Resurgam programmes objective remains focussed on protect existing jobs and create as many new opportunities for our residents as we can during these difficult times. We are doing this by supporting our key sectors, helping our people and using the spending power of the Council to kick-start the local economy;

Amanda Ratsey (Head of Economy Enterprise and Employment) gave an update –

Plymouth was lucky to have a significant bedrock industrial sectors. We have a large teaching hospital and the largest naval base in Western Europe. Between the defence and health sector they employ over 25% of the city. These sectors were continuing to recruit

and had ambitious building development pipelines (£2 billion) including new hospital building and reconfigure the naval base. However sectors such as fishing are really suffering. The price of fish is determined by a buoyant restaurant trade and exports. Tourism and hospitality in Plymouth like other areas had been hard hit, but for Plymouth it was doubly painful as the City was hoping to reinvent itself and give this sector a significant boost through Mayflower 2020.

58. **Cabinet Member Updates** (Verbal Report)

Councillor Peter Smith (Deputy Leader) made the following announcements –

- The city of Plymouth was unable to commemorate this event outside at the Hoe this year due to the need to limit the spread of COVID19. Whilst this year was different to usual, they were able to remember from home. Remembering from Home came from two civic officers, one of whom based in Plymouth. A unique service was streamed online from St Andrews for people to watch from home, which is still available on the Council website;
- The Lord Mayor of Plymouth, Naval Base Commander and representatives from the Tenancy and Commonwealth War Graves Commission privately laid wreaths at the Naval Memorial on the morning of Remembrance Sunday. They also laid wreaths at the Belvedere. The Deputy Lord Mayor led organisations in privately laying wreaths at the Civilian Memorial. 6,000 people have watched the live stream so far. Comments online have been really positive;
- Plymouth was one of 4 locations chosen by Commonwealth War Graves Commission to take part in a unique act of remembrance. A searchlight would be shone into the sky from the Naval War Memorial to remember and pay tribute to the 1.7 million Commonwealth war dead. The light will be visible from miles around and best viewed from a distance to everyone is asked to enjoy this from their homes and also asked to take a moment to step outside to look at the stars and remember the fallen;

Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families) made the following announcements –

- Care Leavers Week - A number of care leavers shared their stories and they were really touching and I want to thank them for sharing these stories which young people face due to adverse child experiences they live with. We hear how they overcome these experiences and the importance of trusted relationships and support so they can achieve. These stories would also form the basis of a report being put together by the participation team;
- We have asked our 236 care leavers what was important to them for the Bright Sports survey which was important to help us understand the service and provide the right support. I have also attended the unveiling of a new graffiti wall created by our care leavers as part of Care Leavers Week. We know over 21's asking for support increased over this week.

Councillor Kate Taylor (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care) made the following announcements –

- There were currently 11 care homes in outbreak status and 1 with a single case, which affects 15 residents and 26 members of staff. We were staying in touch with all care homes and providing support. We are supporting care homes with making decisions around visitors to try and encourage safe visits where possible;
- Workshops with the Health and Wellbeing board – COVID-19 and Mental Health;
- We understand that the pandemic is affecting people's mental health and this would continue until after the pandemic. We are taking this seriously and have written some clear actions to ensure that people can access the help they need, formal or informal, in a timely manner. Everyone was in the same ocean, but we aren't all in the same boat; everyone is experiencing different challenges due to the pandemic;
- To support the clinically most vulnerable who don't have established support networks in this second lockdown. Some people have now established support networks from the last lockdown, and we hope people will be able to call on these groups for this lockdown but we will be focusing on those residents who don't have this support. I would like to thank our partners and PCC staff for making this happen again so quickly and efficiently;
- Proud to Care - recruitment drive launched at the end of October 2020 which was being delivered through a virtual health careers fair this week. We were working with our partners in the city to make care a career that people want to come into and to increase their skills.

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing and Co-operative Development) made the following announcements –

- Thanked everyone who was helping in Plymouth and the good neighbour scheme which hasn't stopped since the last lockdown, but was ramping up again and we are asking everyone to look out for their neighbours and people in their community that might be lonely;
- Would be meeting with food aid groups about the situation in Plymouth and to discuss how we are going to work together to ensure we were meeting the needs of those in Plymouth;
- pleased to announce we were giving our first round of COVID-19 related emergency food aid grants to 16 Plymouth based food aid organisations of £64,000 between them. This would allow them to provide longer opening hours and more food. We would be announcing a second round shortly;
- working with FairShares based in Bristol to bring a warehouse operation to Plymouth to ensure there was a pipeline of affordable surplus supermarket food in Plymouth;

- Self-Isolation Support Payments- similar to other parts of the country, the demand for the discretionary scheme was outstripping demand from eligible applications for the mandatory scheme, contrary to the way the government allocated the funding and thought it would be needed. Plymouth does not have enough funding to keep the discretionary fund going until the end of January which was concerning as low paid local residents who have been asked to self-isolate would lose vital funds if they do the right thing to protect others. We need Government to expand the offering for the discretionary scheme;
- Annual Social Enterprise Festival - our Social Enterprises have continued to support each other and their communities throughout the pandemic and created an ethical business model here in Plymouth. It was 7 years since we became the first social enterprise city in the country. There were now 200 social enterprises across the city in a variety of different sectors, collectively employing 9000 people and bring income of over £580million. The festival would be online this year but as interesting and fun as ever and their theme is education the economy.

Councillor Dann (Cabinet Member for Environment and Streetscene) made the following announcements –

- £1.3 million from PCC and Foreign Commission to plant new trees and be able to have an action plan to manage ash die back across the city;
- had received a £3.3 million grant to improve energy efficiency in hundreds of Plymouth homes;
- Garden Waste and Streets and Waste Team - 20,000 residents have already registered for a new garden waste wheelie bin;
- thanked the Streets and Waste team for stepping up this year, and for continuing their work through this second lockdown. I would also like thanked residents for supporting our public service workers who are out on the front line.

Councillor Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure) made the following announcements –

- In the last week we have launched our green grants to local businesses which was a capital grant of up to £25,000 for sustainable transport improvements for their workforce. These grants form part of the PCC productive Plymouth programme. We know that business are stretched at the moment, but these grants would help them to deliver a sustainable transport initiative going forward. We would ask that any businesses that are interested to apply, the closing date is 15 Jan 2021 and more details can be found on the PCC website;
- Wished Penny Cross school the best of luck with the national award they were up for, the Plymotion Bike it to School scheme and the changes they have made.

Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Customer Focus and Community Safety) made the following announcements –

- special thanks to our registration team. When the government announced the second lockdown it stopped many couples from being able to go ahead with getting married as planned. The team rang round and married 2 couples in 2 days and worked later in the evenings to fit all of this in. Our staff go above and beyond to help people. The Contact Centre have been fantastic in providing extra support during this second lockdown as well.
- Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) made the following announcements –
  - In October, there was an increase in schools reporting cases of COVID-19 but we didn't have any full school closures and they were all using their risk management strategies well. In November, following risk assessment and contact tracing, one school has had to close for a full clean. Given the numbers of schools that are affected, we have round 400 students at any one time self-isolating and this number has remained consistent, but of course it was very disruptive for those students and their families.
  - Special schools had been most affected by partial closures. All were following Public Health advice and their risk assessments;
  - I would like to thank all the school staff for the fantastic work they are doing to keep schools open. Attendance remains relatively high across schools despite the pandemic, and Primary Schools were at 93%-95% and are above the regional and national average.
  - There were more children leaving school to be home educated, which was a concern and something we need to watch closely, although they could return after the pandemic.

The Leader, Councillor Tudor Evans OBE thanked Cabinet for their updates.

59. **Free School Meals Update** (Verbal Report)

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Transformation and Skills) gave an update on Free School Meals -

Demand for food had been raising rapidly across the city in recent months, due to the economic impact of the pandemic. Eligibility had risen by 15% in the past 7 months. We were likely to see the need grow further in the coming months.

When Government rejected to support Free School Meals over half term, at Plymouth City Council we knew we needed to act quickly to ensure children didn't go hungry. An incredible effort created this programme in 4 hours from officers across the Council.

Families completed an application form and if eligible they were paid £11 per child and we were able to back date it. 9000 children on free school meals with more applying every day.

We received 2700 applications for Half Term, with just under 4000 children were supported during Half Term, and the numbers show it was needed. It has cost PCC around £40,000. 45% of eligible families applied, thanks to the Communications team making sure people knew about the scheme. It has made a real difference to families across the city.

Since half term, with the continued pressure from Marcus Rashford and the Labour Party, National Government had made a U-turn and hopefully over the Christmas period there would be more support. We are asking eligible families to get in touch by 9<sup>th</sup> December so we can contact them with support once we have information and the scheme is open for the Christmas holidays.

Cabinet noted the update.

60. **Completed Pledges (To Follow)**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) and Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing and Co-operative Development) presented the completed pledges report –

The administration continued with its four year programme to deliver against the 100 pledges, by March 22, for a better, greener and fairer Plymouth.

Following the completion of pledges 60 and 63 in October, the total number of pledges completed is 81 of the 100. A “pledge on a page” overview had been prepared for pledges:

**Pledge 60:** In 2012 we took on Wonga, and in 2016 we introduced Fair For You to Plymouth. High street banks have disappeared from many neighbourhoods and many low earners are denied access to bank accounts altogether. So, it is important that we continue to fight for affordable access to financial services through continued support for the City of Plymouth Credit Union and Fair For You.

**Pledge 63:** The refusal of the government to pause and fix Universal Credit means a faulty system is being rolled out in Plymouth causing misery for many people. We will work with advice agencies and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure that people in the city get the support they need to navigate this complex and broken system.

To see a full list of pledges completed please visit our on-line pledge board.

Cabinet noted the completion of pledges 60 and 63 in October 2020, bringing the total number of completed pledges to 81.

61. **Capital and Revenue Monitoring Report 2020/21 – Quarter 2 (To Follow)**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) presented the Capital and Revenue Monitoring Report 2020/21 – Quarter 2 –

Outlined the capital and revenue finance monitoring position of the Council as at the end of September 2020;

Set out the capital budget 2020-25, taking into account changes to the capital programme and adjustments to income assumptions as a result of the pandemic.

The forecast revenue outturn after the application of COVID grants and council mitigating actions was shown in Table I.

Cabinet thanked Andrew Hardingham (Service Director for Finance) for all his hard work and advice during his time at Plymouth City Council and wished him well in his retirement.

Cabinet agreed to -

1. Note the current capital and revenue monitoring position;
2. Recommend that the Council approved the Capital Budget 2020-2025 as revised to £621.182m (as shown in appendix I).

62. **Corporate Plan Performance Report 2020/21 - Quarter 2** (To Follow)

This item was deferred and would be considered at a future Cabinet meeting.

63. **Digital Inclusion** (Verbal Report)

Councillor Jeremy Goslin (Assistant Cabinet Member) and Amanda MacDonald (Programme Manager) gave a presentation on Digital Inclusion –

The digital divide had been made more prominent during the COVID-19 crisis and many people had found themselves unable to access services they need to go through their everyday life. With the internet being so central in modern society and those who had been digitally excluded not using it, it can be very hard to find and identify these people.

The aim was to find out who had been excluded and why on a local level. We were bringing together 50 partner organisations from across Plymouth to connect those who need help with people who can provide this help. The aim was to get a further 2000 people online and connect them with opportunities, skills and people.

Nationally 9 million people struggle to use the internet independently and so fixing the digital divide is to reduce this figure so more people could benefit from being online.

Research has shown economic benefit to being online. In the next 5 years, 90% of all jobs will require digital skills and we need to support people in Plymouth so they are prepared for future job opportunities.

The pandemic had highlighted educational benefits to being online, but lots of children don't have this access. In terms of financial benefits, each of us can save £340 saved on utilities alone if we can search for the best deals online and pay via direct debit. There was better information and access to health and wellbeing information online. Digital is also quite often the key to being able to live independently and so suffering from social exclusion. The team

estimate that there are approximately 21,000 people in Plymouth who were digitally excluded currently.

The presentation covered the reasons for digital exclusion, the impact of COVID-19 and what the response was from the team during the pandemic for the people in Plymouth, feedback on some of the teams work and plans for the future.

Cabinet noted the Digital Inclusion update.