

Cabinet

Tuesday 12 January 2021

PRESENT:

Councillor Evans OBE, in the Chair.

Councillor Peter Smith, Vice Chair.

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

Apologies for absence: Councillors Penberthy

Also present: Rodney Anderson (former DEFRA director of fisheries and marine), David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development) Amanda MacDonald (Programme Manager), Kevin McKenzie (Policy and Intelligence Advisor), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive), Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor) and Matt Ward (Head of Strategic Development Projects).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 6.10 pm.

Note: The full discussion can be viewed on the webcast of the City Council meeting at 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.

80. **Declarations of Interest**

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

81. **Minutes**

Cabinet agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2020 are confirmed as a correct record.

82. **Questions from the Public**

The following question was submitted by Mr James Knight which was answered by Councillor Mark Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure).

Question: Despite assurances from Councillor Coker in the Cabinet meeting of 8 December the Waterfront gates to access the Gormley Statute remained locked on 1 January 2021. When was the licensee reminded of their obligation and what steps will PCC undertake to ensure the Equality Act 2010(S.149) is adhered to?

Answer: The Council spoke with the Licensee of the Waterfront on the 4 December and was assured that the matter would be resolved and disabled access to West Hoe Pier maintained. Following further complaints, the Council wrote to St Austell Brewery on Wednesday 6 January pointing out their obligations to maintain access under the terms of their lease of the Waterfront. It has now been agreed that one of the main gates will be left open to facilitate disabled access down to West Hoe Pier.

83. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

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

Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health) provided an update on Covid-19 which included –

- (a) on 5 January 2021, the third national lockdown had been implemented in response to the rapidly increasing new Covid cases across England;
- (b) Plymouth's current Covid rate was 303 per 100,000 per population which had seen a significant increase over the last week; this was expected during the early part of the lockdown period with rates reducing over time; Plymouth's figures compared well to the South West (398) and England (640); however there was still a significant problem in the city;
- (c) whilst it was really heartening to see the vaccination programme underway, there were still concerns with the significant number of people who were very poorly, those having to self-isolate and the impact this was having on the city, the hospital and care homes;
- (d) thanked the residents of Plymouth for getting tested when they had developed the symptoms of the virus and interacting with the national NHS track and trace system; the Council was following up some contacts that required extra support or had not been contacted by NHS track and trace; the engagement rate in the city was high compared to other areas;
- (e) access to the lateral flow tests would be broaden which was important in helping to reduce the number of cases; the virus was highly infectious and could be spread before any symptoms developed; the down side of these tests was that if the test was positive it probably meant that an individual had Covid, however if it was negative it did not mean that the individual did not have Covid and should continue to adhere to the restrictions in place;
- (f) the Government had announced it would be rolling out the lateral flow tests across England; however in the first instance these tests would be prioritised to those areas in the city with the most Covid cases;
- (g) the third national lockdown was very different to the November 2020 lockdown;

residents were urged to only go out if absolutely necessary, or if they had to go to work, not to go to other places, in order to help reduce the Covid cases in the city; enforcement action would be taken where the law was being broken; if people had any enforcement concerns they could email covid19@plymouth.gov.uk;

- (h) the roll out of the vaccination programme was being managed by NHS England and it was understood that more information would be available shortly regarding when people would receive their appointments, etc; there would be plenty of opportunity for individuals to be vaccinated in the city and not have to travel outside; vaccination sites were being run by the hospital, primary care networks and other sites would be confirmed; the roll out of the vaccination in Plymouth had been good and figures on the numbers of people who had received the vaccine were awaited;
- (i) there was great concern regarding the new Covid variant, as it was highly infectious; the current understanding was that the measures in place to protect people remained the same as normal Covid but people were asked to be vigilant and stay at home and keep physical distance;
- (j) this would be a difficult few weeks but hopefully the Covid rate would reduce due to the lockdown and there would be protection for the most vulnerable with the roll out of the vaccinations; the city had come together to tackle Covid and residents were thanked for the sacrifices they had made and were asked to continue to do so for a bit longer.

85. **Update from the Chief Executive on COVID-19 Reset/Response**

Tracey Lee, Chief Executive provided an update on Covid-19 reset/response which included the following –

- (a) the Council was currently in response mode rather than rest mode, since entering into the third national lockdown which was proving just as challenging as 2020;
- (b) over the Christmas period, Plymouth moved from Tier 2 to Tier 3 briefly, followed by the national lockdown on 5 January 2021; tribute was paid to those teams (in particular Public Health and Public Protection) that had worked tirelessly over the Christmas and New Year period in preparing and implementing the two sets of restrictions;
- (c) the operational emergency planning arrangements continued with internal, strategic and tactical command structures in place which were standard practice during emergency situations;
- (d) a review of the objectives had been undertaken; all objectives had remained the same -
 - preserve life and limit harm to the people of Plymouth;
 - maintain public services in line with the local outbreak management

plan, taking into account Government guidance and minimising risk to staff, customers and citizens;

- to provide visible and proactive community leadership;
 - promote the economic and social recovery of the city;
- (e) the majority of services were running as usual, with only a small number of services in the cultural and leisure areas that were closed in line with the Government restrictions; a small number of services had been altered, such as libraries, where Government guidance only allowed for certain activities to take place and not a full library service;
- (f) the wellbeing of the Council's workforce was paramount; 2020 had been a long year with a relentless pace of work which had not eased; in recognition of the pressure on individuals and teams, the support schemes in place had been reviewed and support provision increased;
- (g) a number of lockdown services had been stood back up during the third national lockdown which included Caring for Plymouth, shielding schemes, the good neighbour scheme and the business support grant scheme; the Council continued to work with its partners to make sure that all were acting as 'one team' whilst operating across agencies, co-ordinating work, supporting each other and co-ordinating comms to ensure key messages were clearly delivered; residents were urged to comply with the restrictions currently in place;
- (h) the Council continued to work closely with schools and provided support to care homes during this pandemic;
- (i) a total number of 712 staff had been vaccinated at the weekend which was in line with the priority list issued by the Government;
- (j) thanked all staff, Members, partners, residents and businesses for working together; this had once again demonstrated how well the city had pulled together during this challenging period.

86. **Leader's Announcements**

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

- (a) urged everyone to do all that they could to keep the virus from spreading, not just for the sake of the city but also for family and friends who were at risk if they caught this hideous virus and to follow the guidance stay at home, wash hands regularly, wear a face mask and keep social distance;
- (b) a letter had been written to the Chancellor highlighting -
- that whilst the Treasury's latest announcement on the business

support package to accompany this third lockdown was welcomed, the Council had some serious concerns about the lack of a long term strategy; whilst billions of pounds of support for businesses had been welcomed this had been last minute, piecemeal, short-term and retrospective; the Council was currently administering around 10 different grant and support schemes to various services with the guidance changing with each new announcement;

- together with the British Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses, the Council was calling on the Government to produce a National Business Continuity Strategy; a plan that provided businesses with a route map up to the end of 2021 and beyond; the short-term and temporary protections were making economic recovery far more difficult, businesses needed certainty to be able to plan and invest;
 - the Office for Budgetary Responsibility predicted that the UK economy would have shrunk by 11.3% in 2020; this would be the biggest decline in 300 years; unemployment was expected to peak at 9.7%; that would mean that the economic damage from Covid far outweighed the financial crash in 2008 and the scale and complexity of the challenge facing the Government this time was far greater but there was still no clear, long term plan;
 - Plymouth had been identified as one of the top 10 best cities to start a business, but small businesses and the self-employed had been the hardest hit during the pandemic; these entrepreneurs were the lifeblood of Plymouth's economy; these gaps needed to be urgently addressed and support put in place for those who were currently deemed ineligible;
 - the Council was working with businesses, business groups and academia to deliver the city's economic recovery plan, Resurgam;
- (c) update on business grants and new grants (up to 4 January 2021) -
- Plymouth had received £57.5m of grant funding from Government and the Council had paid out £51.3m of that funding since the start of the pandemic;
 - since April the Council has paid 6,699 individual business grant payments;
 - £54.2m of discretionary funding had been paid to 818 businesses;
 - 1,458 business had been paid a total of £2.265m in grants for the November 2020 lockdown;
 - 100 Plymouth 'wet pubs' had received £1000 one off Christmas

support payment grant;

- (d) 5 January 2021 (national lockdown) the Council was currently expecting guidance from the Government on the latest grant schemes; the Council had been advised that there would be three schemes available -
- grants to businesses who had been mandated to close;
 - grants to retail, leisure and hospitality businesses with a rateable value;
 - a top up to the existing discretionary grant scheme;
- (e) as soon as Government guidance had been received, the Council would launch the schemes and would ensure that these grants were in business accounts as soon as possible.

87. **Cabinet Member Updates**

- (a) Councillor Peter Smith (Deputy Leader) made the following announcements -
- Plymouth's visitor economy -
 - it was estimated that Plymouth had lost £169.5m in visitor spend over the past nine months (53% of spend); it was therefore crucial that when restrictions were lifted, as much as possible was done to stimulate demand and drive bookings to support businesses;
 - to date there had been 10 cruise bookings for 2021 and a further 10 for 2022; these would be subject to the cruise sector re-opening but it was testament to the hard work of Destination Plymouth and the Council's marketing team, that demand remained high;
 - the initial feedback from working with Visit Britain in the US and Canada markets had been that many bookings would be rolled over to 2021 (there was still much interest in the delayed Mayflower 400 events);
 - the UK domestic market was also buoyant with high demand for summer bookings; Destination Plymouth had secured £158,000 of Discover England Funding, some of which would be used to promote UK marketing activity in late March 2021, to encourage summer and autumn bookings this year;

- there were three new Mayflower heritage trails and in particular the new Hoe Trail which should be commissioned in late spring; in addition, the Elizabethan House restoration was nearly complete and was still on target to be opened this summer;
- Elections -
 - some postal and proxy voters would receive letters this week asking for a fresh signature (this was required by law every five years);
 - currently waiting for confirmation on whether the May elections would be postponed;
- Mayflower -
 - despite the pandemic, the Mayflower 400 sports programme, led by Plymouth Argyle Community Trust, had engaged impressive numbers of residents during 2020 which included 3024 primary school children through the 'Sporting Voyage' programme;
 - the Mayflower 400 cultural project called 'Settlement', by Plymouth based Conscious Sisters and Native American artist Cannupa Luger was included in the 'Top Ten Native Art Events of 2020' by First American Art Magazine;
- HR -
 - all clinically vulnerable employees had been instructed to work from home; if they were in a community facing role they had been reallocated work suitable to their skillset;
- Civic Events -
 - Holocaust Memorial Day was on 27 January 2021; the Council would be marking the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp and remembering the six million Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust; the theme for the day was 'be the light in the darkness';
- Sport and Leisure -
 - all the Council's parks, nature reserves and play parks remained open, including the skate parks; in line with Government guidance the Council's tennis courts and multi-use game areas were closed;

- libraries -
 - following Government guidance, the library service was offering select and collect and also essential PC use and printing; all customers could also reserve books for collection at a nominated library.

- (b) Councillor Jemima Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) made the following announcements -
 - the Christmas Present Project for care leavers had been a great success; an ex member of the Care Leavers Team, Kat Gifford (independent social worker/worked at Adopt South West) had made a request across her Facebook friends and colleagues to raise funds which had received an incredible response in raising £950; Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) had matched funded this sum;

 - thanked Emma Hill, Jan Forshaw, Queen Mhlanga and Karen Blake who pulled this altogether and identified local retailers who could support the purchase of 250 gift sets and 250 boxes of chocolates (particular thanks was given to Boots in Drakes Circus in supporting this); 500 items were wrapped and left untouched for 72 hours to ensure they were Covid safe;

 - all out of county care leavers had their presents posted to them; face to face deliveries were made across the city with an incredible response from care leavers; Christmas lunch boxes from The Box were also delivered, if they had been requested;

 - Foster for Plymouth was a drive to increase the number of local fosterers in Plymouth; a dynamic website had been created with lots of helpful information and videos of fosterers (website details www.fosterforplymouth.co.uk);

 - a video of foster Grandad Roy was shown.

- (c) Councillor Kate Taylor (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care) made the following announcements -
 - there were 11 Covid outbreak settings across the city with one single case confirmed in four homes, one death had been confirmed in a care home (since the beginning of the New Year); there were currently 23 residents with confirmed Covid and 54 care home staff with suspected/confirmed Covid;

- the care hotel opened on 4 January 2021; the Council had been working with colleagues across the city's health and social care sector, to setup a new care facility for people who were ready to leave hospital but needed extra support before going home; the care hotel would be at the Hearts Together Hospital Hotel near Derriford Hospital; the Council wanted to ease the pressure on its colleagues at Derriford;
 - the Council had been working with its NHS colleagues to co-ordinate the roll out of vaccinations to frontline social care staff; this weekend 712 staff received their vaccinations, these staff were from the Council's in-house services including Independence at Home Community Outreach, Adults and Children's Social Care; vaccinations were also delivered to the Council's Vines and Colwill staff; work continued with NHS colleagues to co-ordinate vaccinations offered to all Social Care staff across the city including Dom Care, Supported Living, Day Services, Alliance partners which was in line with Government guidance;
 - following the return of the national lockdown the Council had re-launched its Caring for Plymouth initiative to ensure that those who were shielding had support during the coming weeks;
 - ten homes across the city had now received the first resident vaccination over Christmas and the New Year period; this week the five Primary Care Networks (PCN) were piloting one care home in each PCN area.
- (d) Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for the Environment and Street Scene) made the following announcements -
- last week the Council published its 2021 Climate Emergency Action Plan containing 89 new actions that it would deliver this year; the Council also published its Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan which sets out the 24 actions it would take as a City Council to decarbonise its own activities; the five original key areas of focus remained the same including buildings, mobility, power and heat, waste and engagement and responsibility;
 - 2021 was a pivotal year as the Council moved from the emergency response phase of its climate change actions to the transitional phase, where it needed to be ramping up actions still further, embedding new ways of working and inspiring local action by communities and individuals;
 - the actions being planned for the year included -
 - improving the energy efficiency of over 300 homes;
 - developing Plymouth's largest community owned solar farm;

- delivering a £96m programme of sustainable transport initiatives with new walking and cycling facilities across the city;
 - in November 2021, the UK would host the UN COP26 summit in Glasgow; it was vital if 'we' were to meet the objectives set out by the Paris Agreement, and were to make meaningful reductions in global emissions, that this summit agreed real tangible actions; the Council would therefore be writing to the COP26 President to set out the Council's views on the key issues and the role of local government and local communities in helping to reach net zero;
 - the Council could not do this alone and the action plans invited everyone to consider what they could do to help; it was pleasing to see that the Climate Change Committee's report 'Policies for the Sixth Carbon Budget and Net Zero' published in December 2020 contained specific recommendations to the Government on delivering net zero at local level, including the need to support local authorities to deliver climate action through increased funding and new powers;
 - although it had been difficult due to the impacts of the pandemic, the vast majority of the 114 actions contained within the first actions plans had been delivered;
 - the 2021 actions plans would be presented to the Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee this week for consideration.
- (e) Councillor Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure) made the following announcement -
- a bid had been submitted for an OLEV grant of £225,000, for the installation of 50 on-street electric vehicle charge points which had been successful;
 - during 2020/21 more than 16 kilometres of new and improved traffic free facilities on the strategic cycle network alongside major roads and through green spaces had been delivered and 600 m of new on road cycle lane provision;
 - £500,000 had been secured from the Department of Transport's Access Fund to continue Plymotion behaviour change programme until November 2021;
 - secured funding of £945,000 for local walking and cycling measures through the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund.

- (f) Councillor Sally Haydon (Cabinet Member for Customer Focus and Community Safety) made the following announcements -
- despite the latest lockdown, Customer Services remained fully available across the Council's website www.Plymouth.gov.uk and the Contact Centre;
 - staff in Customer Services were once again supporting the Covid Caring for Plymouth Service and were making outbound calls to complete welfare checks for shielding customers, making sure the most vulnerable got the support they needed;
 - Covid secure birth registration service continued at Building 1, Derriford, with death registration being dealt with over the phone;
 - the Council was also offering wedding ceremonies in limited and urgent circumstances.
- (g) Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) made the following announcements -
- following the announcement of the third national lockdown, all schools had moved to online learning, until at least half term in February 2021; schools would remain open to vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers; early years, special schools and alternative provider settings would remain open during this lockdown;
 - took this opportunity to thank everyone working in an education setting for the work they had done over the Christmas period, in order to prepare for the new academic year; they had responded heroically to sometime unrealistic and confusing demands from the Government;
 - it was important to recognise that there was support available through the schools and the Council for parents having to balance home schooling and work;
 - the mass Covid testing in Plymouth's secondary schools and academies was proceeding as planned; testing would be important to enable schools to reopen, as soon as possible; volunteers were currently being recruited and testing areas set up; the Council was supporting educational establishments with this process;

- the Council was currently looking at the categories of learners that could still attend school; vulnerable children were still expected to attend school on a full time basis and ensuring that these children had a school place was top priority; therefore the expectation was for vulnerable children to be offered a school place; parents classed as critical workers should notify the school if they required onsite provision;
- the Council's Education Department had undertaken a survey across 89 schools and the initial feedback had been that there was capacity to accommodate both these groups of children; however this situation may change given the pressure on schools and the high number of children requiring onsite learning; this situation would be regularly reviewed;
- given the short notice, schools had responded extremely well in delivering remote online lessons; the Department for Education had set out remote learning expectations for the third Covid lockdown which would be reviewed by Ofsted; the Department of Education had set out a minimum amount of remote education which must be provided for each Key Stage; it was important that learning was of a high quality and the Council would be monitoring this locally and liaising with Government, whilst supporting parents in delivering remote learning;
- there had been support for families with disabled children which had been maintained throughout the pandemic; the short break providers were still delivery essential support across the city; overnight residential support also continued; Routeways Centre Ltd had supported families, where special schools had not been able to provide education, for periods of time (particularly during the early part of the pandemic);
- the Government had announced that Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs had been cancelled for this year, including reading and maths; an update on the early years assessments was awaited;
- students who were due to sit exams in the summer would receive grades determined by teachers; the Department of Education and The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) would be consulting on the approach for alternative arrangements which would allow students to progress fairly; it was hoped that lessons from last year had been learnt and that these would not be repeated;
- vocational/technical exams could continue in January 2021 where the school or college judged that the exams could proceed; the Government had left the decision to individual educational establishments and some had chosen to cancel the exams;

students were urged to check with their education provider to find out whether their exams were proceeding or whether they had been cancelled;

- there would be a new campaign for the Skills Launchpad in January 2021; a refresh of the contents of the website would take place with more functionality included (the referrals form had now been added); this would allow an individual's employment journey to be tracked and monitored which would provide important information that would help to continually improve this service.
- took this opportunity to pay tribute to those working in the early years sector, who were on the frontline for the care and education of young children; this sector had no access to testing, had lack of PPE in the early part of this pandemic and faced specific funding issues; the current funding arrangements for early years care was based per head; with the third national lockdown children were not attending early year settings which was threatening the sustainability of these providers in the city; this issue needed to be urgently addressed by the Government.

88. **Completed Pledge Report**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) presented the completed pledges report.

The administration continued with its four year programme to deliver against the 100 pledges by March 2022, for a better greener and fairer Plymouth. Following completion of pledge 11 in December 2020, the total number of pledges completed was 82 of the 100.

Pledge 11 related to 'not enough work had been done on the economic impact of Brexit, both positive and negative on the City Council and Plymouth in general. We will make sure that research is undertaken and is made available to the public'.

Councillor Tudor Evans, OBE (Leader) advised that –

- (a) when this administration had been re-elected it saw Brexit as an issue that it could not hide from, even if it was politically uncomfortable; it wanted Plymouth's citizens to be able to be well informed about the impacts Brexit would have on the City Council and the local economy;
- (b) the Brexit scrutiny arrangements were established, to ensure as much as possible of the evidence that the Council considered about the impacts, was heard in public from the people who provided it;

- (c) the Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 17 occasions between 6 June 2018 and 2 December 2020 to consider 23 reports, providing evidence to members of the Committee about Brexit related risks and opportunities; the written evidence to the Committee had been supplemented by evidence from 19 expert witnesses;
- (d) in December 2020, the Cabinet received a comprehensive report setting out all the evidence that the Committee had gathered and a current assessment of the preparedness of the city's business community for the changing situation.

The Cabinet noted the completion of pledge 11.

89. **Future High Street Fund**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) and Matt Ward (Head of Strategic Development Projects) provided a verbal report on the Future High Streets Fund which highlighted the following key points –

- (a) the City Council had been working with its key partners Urban Splash and the University of Plymouth to refurbish the Civic Centre, in order to provide an international conference facility, a creative hub for University of Plymouth and 144 apartments;
- (b) there was a lack of conference facilities within the city and it was estimated that the proposed facilities would attract 46,000 new visitors to the city and have an economic benefit in excess of £5m with an additional 25,000 hotel beds being used on an annual basis;
- (c) the Council had been successful in securing funding of £12m as part of the Future High Streets Fund (a Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government grant); the funding bid had been for £25m;
- (d) part of this funding would also be used to make improvements to the Guildhall which included the main entrance, internal spaces, IT infrastructure and quality of sound and lighting in the main hall; the building would also be used as a conference facility;
- (e) members of the public were reassured that the much loved Guildhall would still be available for community use and that the proposed works to restore and re-imagine the building would secure it for future generations;
- (f) the timetable for the works was as follows –
 - £12m awarded in December 2020;
 - 31 March 2021 the final decision from the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government would be made;
 - 2022 work would commence on the Guildhall and Civic Centre;
 - 2023 completion of Guildhall works;

- 2024 completion of Civic Centre works;
- (f) as part of the recent funding bids to the Future High Streets Fund, 15 places had received the full funding amount applied for, with 57 places (including Plymouth) receiving a provisional funding offer, for a reduced amount.

(A presentation was also given to Cabinet).

Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene) advised that these projects showed the ambition of the city and the investment the Council was making by installing an underground heating system which would be used by both these buildings. By having a joined up approach Plymouth would be recognised as a clean, green city.

Cabinet noted the report.

90. **City Centre Update**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) and Matt Ward (Head of Strategic Development Projects) provided a verbal update and a presentation on the city centre which highlighted the following key points –

- (a) due to people's shopping habits changing to more online purchases, it was inevitably that the high street had seen a decline over the past few years; this had also been highlighted with the number of high profile shop closures; the Council had been working hard with its partners to deliver a number of projects that would diversify the city centre; it should be noted that Plymouth had a shopping centre the same size as Liverpool but with a third of the population;
- (b) the city centre needed not only shops but pubs, restaurants, hotels, conference facilities and accommodation; the Council was making a huge financial commitment by investing £0.5 billion into the city centre over the next few years, in order to ensure it was vibrant and thriving;
- (c) a presentation was provided which included -
- new hotels;
 - new names on the high street;
 - major development pipeline;
 - public realm improvements
 - jobs;
 - Plymouth City Council funding;
 - external funding and investment.

The Cabinet noted the update.

91. **Council Tax Base Setting and Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) presented the 2021/22 Council Tax Base to Council, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012.

The report highlighted –

- (a) for the year commencing 1 April 2021, the major precepting authorities would be Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority;
- (b) the Council must determine its Council Tax Base for 2021/22 during period 1 December 2020 to 31 January 2021; the Council Tax Base was the measure of the taxable capacity of an area, for the purpose of calculating an authority's Council Tax; it represented the estimated Council Tax collection rate; the level of Council Tax subsequently set must be determined using the Council Tax Base figure;
- (c) the calculation of the Council Tax Base allowed for discounts under the Council Tax Support Scheme.

For the reasons set out in the report the Cabinet agreed to recommend to Council the approval of –

- (1) the Council Tax Base for 2021/22 of 73,115 equivalent B and D dwellings (as set out in the report);
- (2) the continuation of the current Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021/22 with the following updates -
 - Recommendation 1: to allow the Council to increase the levels of incomes within each Band to allow for any changes made by Government to other benefits;
 - Recommendation 2: to allow the Council to suspend the use of Minimum Income Floor for the Self Employed in exceptional circumstances;
 - Recommendation 3: to align the current non-dependant deductions with the lowest non-dependant deductions in the pension age scheme;
 - Recommendation 4: to amend the scheme to allow for Shared Parental Bereavement Leave and the Grenfell Tower Residents' Discretionary Fund.

92. **Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry 2021/22 Revenue Estimates and Capital Programme**

Councillor Mark Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure) presented the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry 2021/22 revenue estimates and capital programme.

The Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry were operated, maintained and improved jointly by Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council on a 'user pays' principle, being funded by toll income using powers derived from the Tamar Bridge Act. The crossings were governed by the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee (TBTFJC) which comprised of five councillors from each of the parent authorities.

The finances of the joint undertaking were effectively ring-fenced by the Tamar Bridge Act and it was operated as self-financing business. TBTFJC's revenue and capital expenditure was funded entirely from bridge and ferry toll income and did not affect the budgets of either Plymouth City Council or Cornwall Council. TBTFJC's terms of reference required the Cabinets of the joint authorities to recommend TBTFJC's budgets to their respective Full Councils.

In discussions with the Department of Transport an offer had been made, by the Minister, for Highways England to maintain the road on the Tamar Bridge (given that the road either side of the Bridge was a strategic transport link and the responsibility of Highways England).

For reasons set out in the report Cabinet agreed to recommend TBTFJC's 2020/21 revenue estimates and capital programme to Council for approval.

Councillor Mark Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure) proposed an additional recommendation that the Joint Chairs of TBTFJC continue to press the Government to deliver on its offer, made by the Minister, that Highways England maintain the road on the Tamar Bridge.

The Cabinet agreed to recommend to Council that the Joint Chairs of TBTFJC continue to press the Government to deliver on its offer for Highways England to maintain the road on the Tamar Bridge.

93. **2021/22 Draft Budget**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) presented the draft budget 2021/22 which provided an update on the progress of its development. Under the Council's Constitution, the Cabinet was required to recommend the 2021/22 Budget to Council for approval.

The report highlighted –

- (a) that the report sets out the latest information available for 9 February 2021 Cabinet, to enable it to consider what recommendations to make to Council in respect of the 2021/22 Budget;

- (b) the budget complemented the overarching vision, values and priorities set out in the Council's Corporate plan;
- (c) the draft budget had been prepared during a period of national uncertainty arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and before the country moved into the current national lockdown;
- (d) the Council was quick in its initial response to the pandemic and learned how agile it could be in adapting quickly to changing circumstances with strong political and managerial leadership and established patterns of partnership working;
- (e) the Cabinet endorsed the reset framework (at Appendix 6), in May 2020 which set out six priority areas of focus for renewal and recovery and which best summarised the areas of focus for the Council's strategic narrative; the budget built on these priorities.

For the reasons set out in the report the Cabinet agreed –

- (1) to note this report was based on the Provisional Settlement and subject to change in line with any Final Settlement adjustments;
- (2) to recommend the savings options (as set out in Appendix B) to Budget Scrutiny for review;
- (3) to recommend the use of limited local resources including a limited use of reserves;
- (4) to consider the level of Council Tax and Adult Social Care precept to be applied for 2022/22.

94. **Digital Plan 2020 - 23**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) and Amanda MacDonald (Programme Manager) presented the Digital Plan (2020-23) which sets out the Council's digital ambition for the next three years.

The report highlighted that -

- (a) this was an overarching strategy which provided a clear direction for the Council to –
 - meet the growing demands for seamless digital services;
 - use data and technology to ensure limited public resources were used wisely;
 - work with residents, businesses and partners to maximise the use of digital technology and data, creating innovative solutions for shared challenges;

- ensure everyone could benefit from digital technology and the internet;
- (b) the Council wanted to be ready for the future, embracing digital for the benefits of Plymouth's residents, businesses, students, visitors and its own workforce;
- (c) the authority's ambition needed to extend beyond the Council, if it wanted the city to thrive in the modern world; the Council aimed to collaborate and align its digital ambition with partners across the city and co-ordinate its approach, so it could use digital technologies and data to provide better outcomes for the people who lived, worked and studied in Plymouth.

(A presentation was also given to Cabinet).

For the reasons set out in the report Cabinet agreed -

- (1) to approve the Digital Plan (2020-23) due to digital being identified as a key enabler for delivering change and the following outcomes -
- a better and more consistent customer experience;
 - improved reputation in responding to raised expectations for ease of access and 24/7 online services;
 - more cost effective and efficient ways of working;
 - improved digital access, skills and opportunities across the city;
 - collaboration and identification of shared digital challenges, issues and opportunities across the city;
 - supporting business growth and infrastructure development;
 - improved resilience in light of an uncertain future (post Covid-19).

95. **Brexit End of Transition Arrangements Impact**

Councillor Evans, OBE (Leader), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive) and Kevin McKenzie (Policy and Intelligence Advisor) presented the report.

The report provided a summary and analysis of the key parts of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) negotiated between the UK and EU. Given the far reaching scope of this agreement, the report had been focussed to address those areas of the greatest interest to local stakeholders which included transport, fisheries and other arrangements.

The report highlighted that –

- (a) the Trade Cooperation Agreement (TCA) established zero tariffs or quotas on trade between the UK and the EU, where goods met the relevant rules of origin; this meant that as the UK left the Single Market and Customs Union, UK businesses and consumers would not have to face the economically damaging consequences of tariffs on 1 January 2021 that would have resulted from no-deal;
- (b) given that the Millbay Ferry terminal would recommence sailings in March 2021, it would be important that the Council picked up on operational experiences of other ports over the next three months, to ensure that the city was ready to meet the demands that were likely to arise, including potential requirement for HGV transit facilities;
- (c) the agreement extended the coverage of the World Trade Organisation Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA) to include sectors such as hospitality, telecoms, property and education; whilst GPA was seen as a measure to promote trade liberalisation, it imposed an additional administration burden on the public sector; the additional bureaucracy required served as a disincentive to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and limited the use of public procurement as a tool to stimulate the local economy;
- (d) whilst the TCA did include some important agreements on data and digital trade, it fundamentally changed the way in which the UK's services sector would be able to export into the EU; the sector would need to adapt rapidly to a country by country, service by service patchwork of market access requirements;
- (e) the UK had reclaimed some aspects of its sovereignty that it had shared with the EU for the last 40 years but in doing so the UK had weakened its trading links with its closest trading partners and this would have a significant negative impact on the country's future economic growth; economists' estimates ranged from around 5% over the next 10 years.

For the reasons set out in the report Cabinet agreed to endorse the asks of Government –

- (1) to explain how it would deliver on its promise to level up regional economies, setting out in detail how -
 - local businesses, especially SMEs, would be supported to adapt to new regulatory barriers to trade between EU and the UK now that the UK had left the Single Market;
 - Government policies around investment in the fishing fleet and quayside facilities would reflect developing economic link proposals ensuring sustainable economic benefits to the city's community and its fishing industry;

- the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other funding mechanisms would mitigate the loss of EU structural and other funds to the city, the Heart of South West LEP area and the wider South West peninsula.

96. **Brexit: Fisheries Update**

Councillor Tudor Evans, OBE (Leader). David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development) and Rodney Anderson (former DEFRA director of fisheries and marine) presented the Brexit fisheries update. The update summarised the implications of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on Plymouth's fishing sector.

The update highlighted that –

- (a) on 30 December 2020 an agreement was entered into between the EU and the European Atomic Energy Community and the UK and Northern Ireland; the UK had become responsible, as an independent sovereign state, for jointly managing about 100 shared fish stocks with the EU; this was unprecedented and unique internationally; additionally the UK would be negotiating access directly with Norway and the Faroes and had signed continuity agreements with both countries;
- (b) the Agreement provided for -
 - the UK to have a larger share of the quotas for about 100 stocks it shared with the EU; UK vessels would be able to catch more fish and EU vessels fewer fish in UK waters;
 - the increases would be phased in over five years from 2021; the Government had calculated that the total additional value to the UK at the end of this period would be £146m;
 - the Agreement contained detailed arrangements for setting annually the total allowable catch (TAC) of each of the shared fish stocks subject to quota; in many respects the process was similar to what happened when the UK was within the Common Fisheries Policy, except the UK would be negotiating with the EU as a third country;
 - until June 2026 the EU and UK would have reciprocal rights of access to catch the allowable quotas, after which there would be annual negotiations on access;
 - EU vessels that had a historic track record would be able to continue to fish in the 6nm to 12nm zone of parts of the UK's territorial waters, almost exclusively in English waters, for at least the next five and a half years and most likely indefinitely;
 - the UK had reclaimed considerably more policy and regulatory

autonomy but this was not unfettered; it had to act in accordance with the objectives and principles and follow the processes set out in the Agreement;

- in common with other areas of trade and services, there was to be a joint UK-EU specialised committee that would be able to consider and agree fisheries management issues, data sharing etc; the committee would be co-chaired by the UK and EU with a joint secretariat;
- if the UK deviated from the access or quota available to EU vessels under the terms of the Agreement, in the event of dispute, the EU could require the UK to pay compensation and could introduce tariffs, not just on fish products but also other goods and services imported into the EU by the UK; the EC had made it clear that it would seek to protect EU fishing communities.

Rodney Anderson (former DEFRA director of fisheries and marine) provided a comprehensive summary of the implications of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on Plymouth's fishing sector.

The following questions were raised –

- (c) what were the implications of EU vessels continuing to fish in the 6nm and 12nm zone of parts of the UK's territorial waters;
- (d) whether the Government's funding package of £100m for support for the fishing industrial would make a real difference for the Plymouth's fishing sector;
- (e) whether due to the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit, Plymouth's smaller fishing businesses would remain financially viable.

Councillor Tudor Evans, OBE (Leader) thanked Rodney Anderson (former DEFRA director of fisheries and marine) for his valuable contribution to this matter.