



Oversight and Governance

Chief Executive's Department
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PERFORMANCE, FINANCE AND CUSTOMER FOCUS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 17 March 2021

2.30 pm

Virtual Meeting.

Members:

Councillor Jordan, Chair

Councillor Vincent, Vice Chair

Councillors Buchan, Corvid, Derrick, Hendy, Mrs Pengelly, Tuffin and Wigns.

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

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Tracey Lee

Chief Executive

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for non-attendance submitted by Councillors.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

3. Minutes - to follow

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2021.

4. Chair's Urgent Business

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

5. Policy Brief (Pages 1 - 10)

6. Grass Cutting Briefing (Pages 11 - 18)

7. Garden Waste - verbal update

8. Covid 19 Grant Funding (Pages 19 - 26)

9. Work Programme - to follow

POLICY BRIEF

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview Scrutiny Committee

17 March 2021



GOVERNMENT POLICY, LEGISLATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

Announcements of note to this committee over the last few weeks.

[Budget Speech 2021](#)

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has presented his Budget to Parliament. A briefing summarising key announcements is attached separately. All documents published alongside the budget can be found [here](#).

Covid -19

[New specialised support to help those living with obesity to lose weight](#)

Children, adults and families will be better supported to achieve and maintain a healthier weight through £100m of new government support. Sir Keith Mills has been appointed to advise on a new incentives and reward approach to encourage healthy behaviours. These measures are part of the obesity strategy published by the Prime Minister last July.

[Essential workers prioritised for COVID-19 testing](#) (Updated)

This guidance sets out the list of essential workers prioritised for PCR testing for coronavirus (COVID-19).

[All households with children of school aged to get rapid COVID-19 tests per person per week](#)

Whole families and households with primary school, secondary school and college age children, including childcare and support bubbles, will be able to test themselves twice every week from home as schools return from 08 March. Tests can easily be ordered and collected from local sites, or administered through workplace testing programmes.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Letter to businesses on workplace testing, February 2021](#) (New)

Letter from the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to all businesses registered in England about free COVID-19 tests for staff who cannot work from home.

Community

[£30 million investment to provide Changing Places toilets](#)

Funding will improve access for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets and their carers. Local authorities will soon be invited to “opt in” to receive a proportion of this funding, based on need, to install facilities in their communities.

[Free tablet devices to improve lives of thousands of people with learning disabilities](#) (New)

The government has set up a £2.5 million fund to provide devices, data and digital support to people with learning disabilities who can't afford to get online. The new Digital Lifeline scheme will fund 5,000 internet tablets, preloaded with data and free tech support for those facing digital exclusion.

Community Safety

[New laws to protect victims added to Domestic Abuse Bill](#)

New amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill will be presented this week, providing greater protections for victims and further clamping down on perpetrators. The proposals include making non-fatal strangulation a specific criminal offence, punishable by up to five years in prison. Controlling or coercive behaviour offence extended to include abuse where perpetrators and victims no longer live together. ‘Revenge porn’ offence widened to cover threats to share intimate images. They form a

series of amendments being tabled to the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill which enters Report Stage next week, with Royal Assent expected in the spring.

Elections


[New measures to allow proxy voting in local elections for those self-isolating with coronavirus](#) (New)

Individuals who need to self-isolate because of coronavirus will still be able to vote in the local elections through new emergency proxy voting measures.

[COVID-secure election campaigning will go ahead](#)

Individual activists will be able to campaign outdoors in a COVID-secure way from 8 March, ahead of the English local elections in May.

OPEN CONSULTATIONS

Date of publication	Committee/Department	 GOV
26 th Feb 2021	Home Office - seeking views on how the Protect Duty can make the public safer at publicly accessible locations . The government has (26 February) set out its proposals on a new Protect Duty; a legal requirement for public places to ensure preparedness for and protection from terrorist attacks.	2 July 2021
8 th Feb 2021	The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is seeking views about their proposals to amend certain food legislation in England. The proposed changes reflect the UK's new trading relationship with the EU and would ensure compliance with World Trade Organisation rules.	22 March 2021
10 Feb 2021	The Department for Education is inviting comments on their review of the high needs national funding formula (NFF) to local authorities for children and young people in England with special educational needs and disability (SEND) or who require alternative provision (AP).	24 March 2021

CHANCELLOR'S SPRING BUDGET BRIEFING 03 MARCH 2021



Introduction

The planned autumn Budget was cancelled in September 2020. The Spring 2021 Budget is the first since the UK entered a series of lockdowns and left the EU's Single Market and Customs Union. For the duration of the pandemic, the government has said it will continue to do whatever it takes to protect jobs and livelihoods across the UK. Government argues that the main themes for the budget are to: Continue doing whatever it takes to support the British people and businesses through this moment of crisis; Fix the public finances once on the road to recovery and to begin the work of building the future economy.

The Chancellor announced a 3-part plan to protect jobs and livelihoods.

1. Support people and businesses through crisis
2. Begin fixing public finances
3. Begin building future economy.

I. PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES

Job retention scheme

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will be extended until the end of September. Businesses will be expected to contribute to 10% employees' furlough pay from July onwards and 20% in August and September.
 - Employees will continue to receive 80% of their current salary for hours not worked.
 - There will be no employer contributions beyond National Insurance contributions and pensions required in April, May and June.
 - From July, the government will introduce an employer contribution towards the cost of unworked hours of 10% in July, 20% in August and 20% in September, as the economy reopens.

Support for the self employed

- Extension of the UK-wide Self Employment Income Support scheme to September 2021.
 - New self-employed persons who opened a business in 2019/20 and produced accounts, if these were filed by 02 March 2021 will now be eligible to claim.
 - The 4th grant will cover February to April, worth 80% of average trading profits up to £7,500.
 - A 5th grant will be extended until September.

Support for businesses

- £5 billion for new Restart Grants has been announced.
 - One off cash grant of £6,000 per premises for non-essential retail businesses and up to £18,000 per premises for hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym businesses.
- The government is providing all local authorities in England with an additional £425 million of discretionary business grant funding, on top of the £1.6 billion already allocated.

- Extension to the VAT cut to 5% for hospitality, accommodation and attractions across the UK until the end of September, this will be followed by a 12.5% rate for a further six months until 31 March 2022.
- Business rates relief will be extended:
 - Eligible retail, hospitality and leisure businesses will pay no business rates for three months, with up to 66% relief for the rest of the year.
- A new UK-wide Recovery Loan Scheme to make available loans between £25,001 and £10 million, and asset and invoice finance between £1,000 and £10 million, to help businesses of all sizes through the next stage of recovery. Government to provide guarantee to lenders of 80%.
- Extension of the Film and TV Production Restart scheme in the UK, with an additional £300 million to support theatres, museums and other cultural organisations in England through the Culture Recovery Fund.
- £90 million funding to support our government-sponsored national museums in England due to the financial impact of Covid-19.
- £300 million for major spectator sports, supporting clubs and governing bodies in England as fans begin to return to stadia.

Apprenticeships

- Increase in support for traineeships and apprenticeships to help people looking for work.
 - Incentive payments for all new apprentice hires to be doubled to £3,000, alongside investing £126m of new money to triple the number of new traineeships.
 - £7 million for a new “flexi-job” apprenticeship programme in England that will enable apprentices to work with several employers in one sector.

Welfare

- Six-month extension of the £20 per week Universal Credit uplift and a one-off payment of £500 to eligible Working Tax Credit claimants across the UK.
 - Universal Credit surplus earnings threshold – the higher surplus earnings threshold of £2,500 for Universal Credit claimants will be maintained for a further year until April 2022, when the threshold will revert to £300.
 - The Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for self-employed Universal Credit claimants will continue until the end of July 2021. The MIF will be gradually reintroduced from August, but DWP work coaches will be given discretion on its application.
 - From April 2021 the period over which Universal Credit advances will be recovered will increase to 24 months. While the maximum rate at which deductions can be made from a Universal Credit award will reduce from 30% to 25% of the standard allowance. These measures were previously due to be implemented from October 2021.
 - From June 2021, care leavers up to the age of 25 and those under the age of 25 who have spent at least three months in a homeless hostel will be exempt from the SAR in Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. These measures were previously due to be implemented from October 2023.
- The National Living Wage will be increased from April to £8.91.

Housing

- A tapered extension of the stamp duty holiday on properties up to £500,000 continues until the end of June. It will be kept at double its standard level until the end of September, and then return to usual levels from 01 October. The mortgage guarantee scheme will also continue to encourage lenders to offer 95% mortgages.

- The nil rate band will be £250k until the end of September, returning to the usual rate of £125k on 01 October.
- Those with a 5% deposit will benefit from government backed 95% mortgages on properties costing up to £600,000.

Local Authorities

- To help local authorities in England respond to the impacts of COVID-19 the government has provided £6.5 billion in 2020-21, on top of £1.6 billion awarded in 2019-20, bringing the total to date to over £8 billion.
- Local authorities are also expected to receive over £3 billion of further support for their COVID-19 pressures in 2021- 22, taking the total support provided to over £11 billion since March 2020.
- On Monday 22 February, the government announced a further £400 million funding in England for the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) from 01 April, taking total COMF support across 2020-21 and 2021-22 to £2 billion. This is to cover further public health activities in 2021- 22, and further details will be announced in due course.
- An additional £19 million to tackle domestic abuse in England and Wales, with funding for a network of 'Respite Rooms' to support homeless women and a programme to prevent reoffending.
- £10m to support veterans with mental health needs.
- The government will provide up to £475,000 to Armed Forces charities in 2021-22 to support the development of a digital and data strategy for the sector.
- Business Rates - the Chancellor is delaying a final report on a review of business rates to the autumn. One objective of the review is to address the imbalance between high street and online retailers.
- New £700 million plan laid out to help young people in England catch up on lost learning due to the pandemic. Focusing on an expansion of one-to-one and small group tutoring programmes, as well as supporting the development of disadvantaged children in early year's settings, and summer provision for those pupils who need it the most.

COVID -19

- An extra £1.65 billion for the Covid-19 vaccination roll-out in England.
 - £28 million to increase the UK's capacity for vaccine testing, support for clinical trials and improve the UK's ability to rapidly acquire samples of new variants of COVID-19.
 - £22 million for a world-leading study to test the effectiveness of combinations of different Covid-19 vaccines. This will also fund the world's first study assessing the effectiveness of a third dose of vaccine to improve the response against current and future variants of COVID-19.
 - A further £5 million on top of a previous £9 million investment in clinical-scale mRNA manufacturing, to create a 'library' of vaccines that will work against Covid-19 variants for possible rapid response deployment.
- Extending £500 Test and Trace support payments in England until the summer.

2. BEGIN FIXING PUBLIC FINANCES

- Increase the rate of Corporation Tax to 25%, which will remain the lowest rate in the G7. In order to support the recovery, the increase will not take effect until 2023. Businesses with profits of £50,000 or less, around 70% of actively trading companies, will continue to be taxed at 19% and a taper above £50,000 will be introduced so that only businesses with profits greater than £250,000 will be taxed at the full 25% rate.

- Capping the amount of SME payable R&D tax credit that a business can receive in any one year at £20,000 (plus three times the company's total PAYE and NICs liability).

3. BEGIN BUILDING FUTURE ECONOMY

Growth and Investments

- Eight new English Freeports will be based in East Midlands Airport, Felixstowe & Harwich, Humber, Liverpool City Region, **Plymouth**, Solent, Thames and Teesside.
 - This will create more than 1,000 new jobs in the first two years and up to 9,000 over the next 10 years with 50 new apprenticeships and 10 internships every year by 2027.
 - More than 70 local businesses will benefit from the scheme, which we forecast will bring in over £100m investment in the next six years.
 - Measurable outcomes include increase in export trade and foreign direct investment, increase in employment and average F/T earnings and increase in GVA through increasing high value economic activity and contribution to net zero research and innovation.
- Reforms to the immigration system will help ambitious UK businesses attract the brightest and best international talent.
- A new Help to Grow scheme to offer up to 130,000 companies across the UK a digital and management boost.
 - Help to Grow: Digital – the government will launch a new UK-wide scheme in the autumn to help 100,000 SMEs save time and money by adopting productivity-enhancing software, transforming the way they do business. This will combine a voucher covering up to half of the costs of approved software up to a maximum of £5,000, and free impartial advice, delivered through an online platform.
 - Small businesses will be offered free MBA-style management training to help them boost productivity growth, Under the "Help to Grow" scheme, the government will provide £520m into free online courses from top business schools. It will also fund 50% discounts on new productivity-enhancing software.
- The new UK Infrastructure Bank to be established, headquartered in Leeds. The bank will have £12bn of funding available in its first year of operation. Green projects will be supported through a green recovery bond.
- The £375 million UK-wide 'Future Fund: Breakthrough' will invest in highly innovative companies such as those working in life sciences, quantum computing, or clean tech, that are aiming to raise at least £20 million of funding.
- Over £1 billion funding for a further 45 towns in England through the Towns Fund, supporting their long-term economic and social regeneration as well as their immediate recovery from the impacts of COVID-19.
- £2.8 million to support a UK and Ireland bid to host the 2030 World Cup and £25 million investment in UK grassroots sports, enough for around 700 new pitches.
- Launching a review of Research & Development tax reliefs to make sure the UK remains a competitive location for cutting-edge research.
- £28 million to fund the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 2022, delivering a major celebration for the UK.

Climate change

- £20 million to fund a UK-wide competition to develop floating offshore wind demonstrators and help support the government's aim to generate enough electricity from offshore wind to power every home by 2030.

- £68 million to fund a UK-wide competition to deliver first-of-a-kind long-duration energy storage prototypes that will reduce the cost of net zero by storing excess low carbon energy over longer periods.
- £4 million for a biomass feedstocks programme in the UK to identify ways to increase the production of green energy crops and forest products that can be used for energy.
- A green retail National Savings and Investment product will be offered in the summer of 2021 to allow UK savers to take part in tackling climate change.
- Plans for at least £15 billion of green gilt (green bond) issuance in the coming financial year, to help finance critical projects to tackle climate change and other environmental challenges, fund important infrastructure investment, and create green jobs across the UK.
- A new £10 million [Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund](#) will provide grants of up to £100,000 to help charities, local authorities and businesses develop nature projects in England to attract private investment.

Brexit

- A new £20 million Brexit Support Fund will help small businesses understand changes to rules governing trade with the EU. Grants of up to £2,000 will be available to pay for practical support.
- Ability to claim 130% of business investment tax relief will incentivise to invest funds they had delayed due to uncertainty about the likely outcome of trade negotiations.
- UK infrastructure bank will help offset the loss of access to the European Investment Bank
- Visa reform - high skilled visa applications.

Policy Announcements

- Publication of the government's '[Build Back Better: our plan for growth](#)'. A publication setting out the government's plans to support economic growth through significant investment in infrastructure, skills and innovation. Build Back Better is the Government plan to promote economic growth post COVID-19. It focuses on three pillars of investment to build the economy: economic growth, boosting productivity and competitiveness. The plan aims to unite and 'level up' the country and ensure that every region and nation of the UK has at least one globally competitive city while seeking to strengthen the Union. The plan covers the following themes:

Infrastructure:

- Stimulate economic activity and deliver long term productivity improvements via investment in broadband, roads, rail and cities worth £100 billion next year.
- Connect people to opportunity via the UK-wide Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Towns Fund and High Street Fund.
- Help achieve net zero via £12 billion of funding for projects through the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.
- Support investment through the new UK Infrastructure Bank. This will invest in local authority and private sector infrastructure projects, as well as providing an advisory function to help with the development and delivery of projects.

Skills:

- Support productivity growth through high-quality skills and training: transforming Further Education through additional investment and reforming technical education to align the post 16 technical education system with employer demand.
- Introduce the Lifetime Skills Guarantee through free fully funded Level 3 courses, rolling out skills bootcamps and introducing the Lifelong Loan Entitlement.

- The Government aims that the UK's research base will be boosted by the uplift in R&D investment and the creation of the Advanced Research & Innovation Agency to fund high risk high reward research.
- Continue to focus on the quality of apprenticeships and continue to improve the apprenticeship system for employers through enabling the transfer of unspent levy funds.

Innovation:

- Support and incentivise the development of the creative ideas and technologies that will shape the UK's future high-growth, sustainable and secure economy.
- Support access to finance to help unleash innovation.
- Develop the regulatory system in a way that supports innovation.
- Attract the brightest and best people, boosting growth and driving the international competitiveness of the UK's high-growth, innovative businesses.
- Support our small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow through two new schemes to boost productivity: Help to Grow: Management, a new management training offer, and Help to Grow: Digital, a new scheme to help 100,000 SMEs save time and money by adopting productivity-enhancing software.

Level up the whole of the UK:

- Regenerate struggling towns in all parts of the UK via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the UK-wide Levelling Up Fund.
- Realise the long-term vision for every region and nation to have at least one globally competitive city at its heart to help drive prosperity.
- Catalyse centres of excellence, supporting individuals across the country to access jobs and opportunities by ensuring digital and transport connectivity, by establishing a new UK Infrastructure Bank in the North of England and by relocating 22,000 Civil Service roles out of London.
- Strengthen the Union, creating Freeports across the country – including in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – and delivering the Union Connectivity Review, reviewing options to improve our sea, air and land-links across the four nations.

Support the transition to Net Zero:

- Invest in net zero to create new opportunities for economic growth and jobs across the country.
- Grow current net zero industries and encourage new ones to emerge.

Support the Global Britain vision:

- Cooperate with partners to inspire and shape international action.
- Role-model openness to free and fair trade.
- Develop a new export strategy to align our support for exporters with our plan for growth and sectoral priorities, opening UK Government trade hubs.

- Publication of the prospectus for the £4.8 billion UK-wide [Levelling Up Fund](#), providing guidance for local areas on how to submit bids for the first round of funding starting in 21-22. The Levelling Up Fund (£4.8bn up to 2024/25) will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities. Key Themes include:
 - Transport investments including (but not limited to) public transport, active travel, bridge repairs, bus priority lanes, local road improvements and major structural maintenance, and accessibility improvements.

- Regeneration and town centre investment, building on the Towns Fund framework to upgrade eyesore buildings and dated infrastructure, acquire and regenerate brownfield sites, invest in secure community infrastructure and crime reduction, and bring public services and safe community spaces into town and city centres.
 - Cultural investment maintaining, regenerating, or creatively repurposing museums, galleries, visitor attractions (and associated green spaces) and heritage assets as well as creating new community-owned spaces to support the arts and serve as cultural spaces.
 - The government is taking a targeted approach through a predetermined index of places, prioritised by government (1-3, 1 being most in need). **Plymouth** is category 2, deadline for bids is 18 June 2021.
- [Establishing a Community Ownership Fund](#) £150m ‘to help communities buy community assets.’ The UK government has launched a new £150 million Community Ownership Fund to help ensure that communities can support and continue benefiting from the local facilities, community assets and amenities most important to them:
 - This fund aims to empower communities to protect vital community assets in their area by providing funding to take ownership over them, in support of the social wellbeing of local communities.
 - Community groups will be able to bid for up to £250,000 matched-funding to help them buy or take over local community assets at risk of being lost, to run as community-owned businesses.
 - The first bidding round for the Community Ownership Fund will open by June 2021. A full bidding prospectus will be published alongside this.
 - The UK government is providing an additional £220 million funding through [The UK Community Renewal Fund](#) to help local areas prepare for the launch of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2022:
 - Aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches and will invest in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people into employment.
 - Offers an opportunity to establish a new way of working between UK government and places. The Government have stated that they want to work directly with local partners in each nation across the UK.
 - To ensure that funding reaches the places most in need, the government has identified 100 priority places based on an index of economic resilience to receive capacity funding to help them co-ordinate their applications. Plymouth has not been identified.
 - The UK Community Renewal Fund will be a competitive process with no pre-set eligibility.

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Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	17 March 2021
Title of Report:	Grass cutting briefing
Lead Member:	Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Environment and Streetscene)
Lead Strategic Director:	Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place)
Author:	Katrina Houghton (Head of Service Street Scene and Waste)
Contact Email:	Katrina.Houghton@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	KH202103
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

A report requested by Scrutiny to provide a briefing on the city's grass cutting service

Recommendations and Reasons

Scrutiny to note the report and make recommendations to be considered by the Strategic Director.

Alternative options considered and rejected

N/A

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Corporate Plan set out a priority for a green, sustainable city that cares about the environment

JLP policy "HEA7 - Optimising the health and wellbeing benefits of the natural environment"

JLP policy "INT6 - Enhancing Plymouth's 'green city' credentials"

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Implications for the MTFP have been considered and there are no negative implications from this report

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

This briefing is linked to

- a) the Climate Emergency Action Plan which is developing the journey of the council to be carbon neutral specifically investing in tree planting and rewilding corridors
- b) the Council’s Carbon Reduction Plan which specifically looks for new approaches to managing the city’s green infrastructure which reduce the need for machinery and increase carbon capture

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

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council’s duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

Implications for the MTFP have been considered and there are no negative implications from this report in terms of the approved budget allocation

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Grass Cutting Scrutiny Briefing							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment (if applicable)							

Background papers:

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	djn.2 0.21. 265	Leg	lt/363 17/0 9032 1	Mon Off		HR		Asset s		Strat Proc	
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Philip Robinson, Service Director Street Services											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 09/03/2021											
Cabinet Member approval: Approved by Cllr Sue Dann verbally Date approved: 08/03/2021											

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GRASS CUTTING BRIEFING

Street Scene and Waste and Strategic Planning and Infrastructure



PRE 2020 GRASS CUTTING REGIME

Plymouth manages over 560 hectares of grass

Grassland types include sports pitches, amenity, verges and meadows

85% of grassland managed as amenity grassland for recreation (regular close mowing)

15% managed for nature with long grass or wildflowers (annual cut and bale)

Regular close mowing during the growing season is dependent on ground and weather conditions

Closely mown grass supports less pollinators, insects and other invertebrates

Cuttings increase soil nutrients creating rapid growth of limited dominant species

ENVIRONMENT AND BIO-DIVERSITY

On 18 March 2019 City of Plymouth councillors voted unanimously to declare a climate emergency

The Climate Emergency Action Plan is developing the journey of the council to be carbon neutral specifically investing in tree planting and rewilding corridors

The Council's Carbon Reduction Plan specifically looks for new approaches to managing the city's green infrastructure which reduce the need for machinery and increase carbon capture

Before the climate emergency clear reasons to adapt how we manage our green estate are set out within the;

- Corporate Plan - sets out a priority for a green, sustainable city that cares about the environment
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 states that local authorities must show regard for conserving biodiversity in all their actions
- Making Space for Nature (2010) report evidenced the need to better link up existing areas managed for nature in a bid to create stepping stones and stronger ecological networks
- JLP policy "HEA7 - Optimising the health and wellbeing benefits of the natural environment"
- JLP policy "INT6 - Enhancing Plymouth's 'green city' credentials"

2020 – A TRIAL REGIME

Covid19 expanded a planned trial of a more 21st Century climate conscious approach to managing parts of the green estate

Public health restrictions and pressures on critical services saw 75% of Local Authorities stop or reduce their grass cutting regime

Staff were deployed to support critical services and the cutting regime was adjusted

Lockdown supercharged the National Trust "No Mow May" campaign with only the priority amenity areas having one cut during the month to maintain condition and access for the public

Regular cuts of grassland important for people spending time outdoors/exercising were prioritised

Capacity released from fewer grass cuts meant other essential green estate work was undertaken including ensuring that the Local Nature Reserves were given more care and attention.

Managed edge cutting to 900 areas commenced in July (short back and sides and informal paths)

Full cuts began in August and by the end of October all grass and meadows had final cuts for winter

Improved communications reached over 67,000 digitally including a [short video explainer](#)

Significant reduction in reports for grass cutting issues received in 2020 compared with 2018-19

OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

The 2020 regime equated to;

- 40% of grassland managed for nature a 266% increase in areas to connect with nature
- 33% less fuel in grass cutting operations
- Plymouth study shows twice the species diversity in both plants and insects in grassland areas managed as meadow
- Recognition from partners National Trust, Buglife and Devon Wildlife Trust
- More capacity for works in woodlands and Local Nature Reserves

2021 GRASS CUTTING REGIME

As lockdown measures ease and vaccinations expand further, 2021 hopefully will be smoother!

The growing season and grass cutting gets underway during March and runs through to October

Grassland mapped and broken down to a neighbourhood level to help publish the cutting regime

Regime adjusted listening to 2020 feedback where use of spaces for amenity was unknown

Working with nature means that exact start dates and the timetable of the regime will always be determined by ground and weather conditions

60% of grassland will be maintained for people, for amenity and recreation (regular close mowing)

40% of grassland will be maintained for nature, in places that are of more use to nature than us, like verges and steep banks as well as meadows and wildflower sites (annual cut and bale)

Maintaining for nature will involve managed edges with a mown 1m strip

Signage/markers will be developed and installed during the year

Land use	Cutting regime	Example
Sports pitches and greens	Ensure playing surface standards met	Central Park Sports Plateau
Formal play areas	Ensure play standards met (avg 4 weekly)	Tothill Park play area
High intensity amenity	Maintain suitable grass height for public use (avg 4 weekly)	Plymouth Hoe Park
Highway verges <2 metres	Maintain safety/visibility (avg 4 weekly)	Very narrow sections on residential streets

Highway verges >2 metres	Annual cut with managed edges 1-2m to maintain safety	Western Approach
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LOOKING FORWARD

Develop image bank for cutting regime to support published information

Develop digital systems with mapping capability, not only for operations, but with view to improved visual representations to publish for the public

Develop consistent campaign and materials including managed meadow site signage

Further recovery and improvement in condition for people and wildlife of grassland

Investing in equipment to increase baling of cuttings to ensure best practice management

Investing in seed harvesting equipment to create a local seed bank to be used to enhance city sites

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Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	17 March 2021
Title of Report:	Covid-19 Grant Funding
Lead Member:	Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance)
Lead Strategic Director:	Brendan Arnold (Service Director for Finance)
Author:	Melanie Haymes
Contact Email:	Melanie.haymes@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	MH 03.03.2021
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic has had an unprecedented impact upon the country. Local government being at the forefront of the response to the pandemic, rising to the challenge and to ensure vital services have been maintained, grants allocated to local businesses and financial support provided to the most vulnerable members of our society. As part of this response the Government has provided a variety of funding streams to support this response.

This report provides details of the funding Plymouth City Council has received from Central Government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and provides information on how this has been distributed.

Recommendations and Reasons

To note the contents of the attached appendix.

Alternative options considered and rejected

N/A.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Co-operative - We have worked together with our partners to serve the city and its communities by ensuring funding has reached those who are in need in a timely manner.

Fair - We have been open and transparent in how we have distributed grant funding to the businesses and residents of the City, and at all times acted in accordance with funding conditions.

Responsible - We have made every effort to distribute funding to those in need promptly, as we understand the financial pressures and implications that Covid-19 has had on the City and its residents.



Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

As shown in the attached Appendix, the finance team are working with the relevant departments to monitor the grant receipts, spend and commitments.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

N/A

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

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

N/A

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Covid-19 Grant Summary – February 2021							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



Sign off:

Fin	ba.20. 21.26 3	Leg	MS/2/ 08.03. 21	Mon Off	N/A	HR	0803 2021k ab	Asset s	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Brendan Arnold

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 08/03/2021

Cabinet Member approval: Mark Lowry approved by email

Date approved: 08/03/2021

COVID-19 GRANT FUNDING

March 2021



Background

The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic has had an unprecedented impact upon the country. Local government is at the forefront of the response to the pandemic, rising to the challenge and ensuring vital services have been maintained, grants allocated to local businesses and financial support provided to the most vulnerable members of our society. As part of this response the Government has provided a variety of funding streams to support the economy.

The funding streams allocated to local government are varied with additional and increased grants being announced on a regular basis. The grants cover a huge spectrum of need, ranging from direct support to business by way of grant payments, payments to individuals who are suffering financial hardship, funding to support measures to control the spread of Covid-19, funding to support schools and pupils wellbeing, funding for care homes to manage infection control and many others.

Local data

The detail of the grants received and distributed by Plymouth City Council are shown in Appendix A, which is updated on a 4 weekly cycle and published on the Plymouth City Council website. Given the nature Appendix A, this shows a snap shot in time and so the 4 weekly update helps to ensure this information as current as possible, given the fast moving nature of the funding.

The tables in Appendix A give a breakdown of all grants received, summarised into categories - providing details of the value of funding that has been distributed.

As at 08 February 2021 there had been a total of 34 different grants received into the local authority, totalling £122m. Of this £122m, £107m, or 88% has been spent, pass-ported or committed as at 8 March 2021.

Whilst the majority of the grants are for the period up to 31 March 2021, some grants conditions explicitly state that the funding has been awarded to include support for the period up to 31 March 2022 and therefore not all funding should be fully allocated.

There are many grants that have been fully distributed and this is evidenced in Appendix A. For those grants that have not been fully distributed, the reasons differ, with further detail provided below:

- Local Restrictions Support Grant is funding that is awarded to business that are forced to close through government restrictions. Appendix A shows that 68% of this funding has been paid to local businesses, with £3.4m still to be allocated. It is important to be aware that £6m of this funding was awarded on 15 January 2021 and was updated due to lockdown#3, therefore time is needed to fully allocate this funding to businesses in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of the grant.
- Additional Restrictions Grant has been allocated in two tranches, the first in mid-November, with the second coming through on 15 January 2021. This funding is expected to cover the period up to 31 March 2022 and therefore local guidelines have been put in place to ensure that

this funding is distributed to local businesses over a longer period. This will ensure that financial support is made available in accordance with the Terms and Conditions. This supports the evidence in appendix A that shows that 23% had been paid out as at 5 February 2021.

- Closed Business Lockdown Payments. This funding was awarded on 15 January 2021 and is specific to lockdown#3. Applications need to be received, checked, authorised and processed in accordance with the funding Terms and Conditions. The figure of 65% allocated by 5 February 2021 in Appendix A supports this requirement.
- Initiatives to support the City's response to Covid-19 includes a range of grants including the Contain Outbreak Management Fund and the Test and Trace Support grant. Appendix A is showing that 70% of this funding has been committed but it is important to note that both of these grants are to be managed over the period up to 31 March 2022.
- Reopening High Streets Safely and Active travel. This covers 2 funding streams and Appendix A shows that 49% of the funding has been spent. Due to the continued nature of the pandemic, the opening of the high streets and subsequently, the general movement of members of the public has been delayed from original expectations of summer 2020. Therefore this funding has been extended into 2021/22 with plans in place to ensure this is fully utilised to help the high street recover over the next 12 months.

Summary

As the pandemic progresses and the City continues its road to recovery, grants received from Government will continue to be managed and distributed to ensure they reach the businesses and residents as intended, to help support the most vulnerable members of our society, as well as providing wider support to the city's recovery to support the local economy.

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COVID-19 GRANT SUMMARY

Finance update 08 February 2021



- Total grant funding received in 2020/21 as at 08 February 2021 - £122.199m
- Number of different grants received – 34

Funding received and paid directly to Plymouth businesses:

	Total Received	Paid Out as at 15/01/2021	Paid out as at 05/02/2021	Expended in 4 week period	Percentage paid out	Balance to allocate
Small Business Grant Fund	£47.686m	£47.725m	£47.725m	£0.000m	>100%	(£0.039m)*
Local Restrictions Support Grant (all)	£10.678m	£2.978m	£7.230m	£4.252m	68%	£3.448m**
Additional Restrictions Grant (all)	£7.570m	£1.078m	£1.769m	£0.691m	23%	£5.801m**
Christmas Support Package	£0.109m	£0.112m	£0.117m	£0.005m	>100%	(£0.008m)*
Closed Business Lockdown Fund	£12.024m	£0.000m	£7.785m	£7.785m	65%	£4.239m
TOTAL	£78.067m	£51.892m	£64.626m	£12.733m	83%	£13.441m

*awaiting confirmation that this will be topped up

**Combined, these include funding of £20.366m received on 15 January 2021 linked to lockdown#3 – applications still being received

Funding received by PCC for support programmes:

Category of Funding (may be multiple grants)	Total Received	Spent / Committed (as at 15/1/2021)	Spent / Committed (as at 08/02/2021)	Expended in 4 week period	Percentage Spent / Committed	Balance to allocate
To support Individuals in times of hardship	£4.399m	£4.019m	£4.170m	£0.151m	95%	£0.229m ***
Initiatives to support the City's response to Covid	£4.504m	£3.063m	£3.157m	£0.094m	70%	£1.347m ****
To support LA covid pressures	£25.560m	£25.560m	£25.560m	£0.000m	100%	£0.000

Bus Services support	£0.349m	£0.349m	£0.349m	£0.000m	100%	£0.000
Reopening High Streets Safely and Active Travel	£0.566m	£0.268m	£0.279m	£0.011m	49%	£0.287m
School Transport Support	£0.699m	£0.458m	£0.699m	£0.241m	100%	£0.000m
Wellbeing support for Pupils	£0.034m	£0.034m	£0.034m	£0.000m	100%	£0.000m
Homelessness Funding	£0.396m	£0.396m	£0.396m	£0.000m	100%	£0.000m
TOTAL	£36.507	£34.146 m	£34.641m	£0.497m	95%	£1.863m

*** whilst this is currently un-allocated, there are plans in place to ensure that this is paid to individuals over the forthcoming months

**** Some of this funding was only awarded in mid-January, there is the expectation that this funding is carried into 2021/22 to support initiatives up until March 2022.

Funding received by PCC and pass-ported directly out to third party:

Category of Funding (may be multiple grants)	Total Received	Spent / Committed (as at 15/1/2021)	Spent / Committed (as at 08/02/2021)	Expended in 4 week period	Percentage Spent / Committed	Balance to allocate
To support maintained schools	£0.297m	£0.297m	£0.297m	£0.000m	100%	£0.000m
Support for BID's	£0.039m	£0.039m	£0.039m	£0.000m	100%	£0.000m
To support Infection control, workforce capacity and testing in Care Homes	£7.288m	£5.866m	£7.095m	£1.229m	97%	£0.193m
TOTAL	£7.624m	£6.202m	£7.431m	£1.229m	97%	£0.193m

Other funding streams that have been announced, not yet received and not captured above include:

Community Testing

Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021/22

These will be added to the above tables as more detail is confirmed.