

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 22 September 2021

PRESENT:

Councillor Penberthy, in the Chair.

Councillor Jordan, Vice Chair.

Councillors Collins, Dann, Derrick, James, Lowry, Stevens and Stoneman.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Burden.

Also in attendance: Councillor Jonathan Dreaan (Cabinet Member for Transport), Mike Artherton (Group Manager – Parking, Marine and Garage Services), Councillor Nick Kelly (The Leader), Brendan Arnold (Strategic Director for Finance), Andrew Loton (Head of Governance, Risk and Performance), Andy Ralphs (Strategic Director of Customer and Corporate Services) and Helen Rickman (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.35 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel 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.

11. **Declarations of Interest**

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

Member	Subject	Reason	Interest
Councillor Stoneman	Minute 15 – Controlled Parking Zones Update	His father is a Civil Enforcement Manager employed by Plymouth City Council	Personal

12. **Minutes**

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2021 are a correct record.

13. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

14. **Policy Brief**

Members were advised that no officer was in attendance for this item due to apologies submitted however any questions would be forwarded on as appropriate and responded to.

Members raised the following questions:

- had officers bid for the £1.6m of funding associated with the National Disability Strategy launched by the Government?
- had the council been involved in supporting bids between faith groups and the Government associated with the £1m Faith New Deal Pilot Fund?

Members noted the update provided in the agenda pack.

15. **Controlled Parking Zones Update - To Follow**

Councillor Jonathan Drear (Cabinet Member for Transport) and Mike Artherton (Group Manager – Parking, Marine and Garage Services) presented the Controlled Parking Zones Update and highlighted the following:

- (a) as contained within the report, the flow chart provided set out the process followed by officers when casework was raised regarding parking issues. Stage two of the flow chart was introduced in 2018 to allow the team to build historical data with parking records. Stages 1 – 5 was the listening, developing and proposal stages;
- (b) in current CPZ areas, healthcare assistants and business permits were available;
- (c) one of the challenges encountered with regards to CPZ was engagement from residents, specifically trying to get an outcome that everyone agreed upon. Sometimes the numbers needed to progress through the CPZ process were not met meaning plans could not be taken forward;
- (d) officers were still trying to assess the impact of Covid 19 with regards to people's habits, specifically were they working from home more/ commuting more – both having an impact on parking and controlled parking zones;
- (e) Plymouth had 54 CPZ with three legacy one hour zones, and three legacy two hour zones – the current policy introduced in 2018 introduced a minimum of three hour zones;
- (f) the report prepared set out the background to CPZ, the challenges identified alongside the background of support that the team had been able to provide over numerous wards as well as an outline suggestion of areas of discussion for the committee.

The Committee discussed the following key issues:

- (g) with regards to capacity, it was acknowledged that the team had worked in a different way in the last 18 months due to the pandemic, however there were still areas of the city that still experienced commuter parking issues. It was queried what was the capacity of the team to look at CPZ currently requested as well as new applications, especially considering different areas' parking issues may have changed during the pandemic;
- (h) when officers considered the implementation of CPZ, were they also looking at the potential overspill (displacement) of parking problems in neighbouring streets and the impact the CPZ may have overall and not just for the street/s applied for?
- (i) did the update take into consideration manifesto commitment 71 (*"we recognise that residential parking is an issue so we will provide funds and work with communities to create additional neighbourhood car parking spaces to be reconfigured in areas to allow diagonal and perpendicular parking"*) ? – had cost implications been considered? When would officers be in a position to commence and complete this manifesto commitment?
- (j) what sort of accountability and checking system was there with regards to the approval of business parking permits? It was considered by some Peverell ward residents that people were applying and being automatically approved for business parking permits who shouldn't be eligible, or for social/ leisure use?
- (k) it was questioned how manifesto commitment 62 (*"to assist residents living near the dockyard to park near their homes by encouraging Babcock and the Royal Navy to provide more onsite parking"*) was to be completed, how it fitted in with larger employers and their travel to work schemes, and that it didn't fit in with the Council's climate change agenda to reduce commuter parking and encourage the use of sustainable transport?
- (l) was there a commitment to look at the travel to work scheme of several large employers in the city to ease the pressure on residential parking issues in communities across the city?
- (m) how many motorcycles (2 wheels) were using residential parking permits and had paid for it? Were officers in a position to progress manifesto commitment 63 (*"we will exempt all motorcycles, 2 wheels, from having to have a residential parking permit, currently £30 per annum"*) as under the old system, vehicle types were not asked for on application. Was the new system, whereby vehicle type was specifically monitored, properly advertised on the Council's website? It was considered that this commitment couldn't be met until everyone with a permit under the old system, had applied under the new system – was there a timescale or costs for this? When could this manifesto commitment be implemented?

- (n) what safety measures were in place to prevent someone renewing a parking permit if they were no longer entitled?
- (o) when considering CPZ and the impact on residential parking and car use, were officers also reaching out to bus companies and employers to look at bus timetables and routes? It was considered that one reason why some residents weren't using buses was because the timetable meant that they would arrive 5 minutes later than their shift started – if this could be considered and amended then it would support more sustainable travel and the impact on CPZ in the city;
- (p) how did the profit and loss system currently work with regards to CPZ and what was being done to ensure its profitability or that operational costs were covered? Was the Cabinet aware of the full financial implications of the CPZ scheme? It was requested that information would be provided to Members regarding the impact of people working at home, and the number of manifesto commitments which had an impact on the scheme, should be reflected in the review;
- (q) would officers consider amalgamating controlled parking zones which were currently stretched or being shared? If there were gaps between these zones how quickly could these be dealt with? What resources were there available to make quick fixes?

The Committee agreed:

1. to request that that a written response would be provided to Members on the results of the review of the of the charging for CPZ and costs and timescales associated with it, as well as costings and timescales relating to parking manifesto pledges and the implications of those on the CPZ policy and budget;
2. to note the Controlled Parking Zones Update report.

Order of Business

The order of business on the agenda was changed in order to facilitate good meeting management.

16. **Tracking Decisions**

The Chair provided an update on recommendations linked to the previous meeting, from 21 July 2021.

An update to minute 8 'Policy Brief Update' was provided to Members via email and read:

1. figures regarding government funding received by the Council linked to the Move On Fund would be provided to Members; *Funding was received however the actual figure was not known as this went directly to the Social Housing*

provider;

2. clarification as to whether the Council had submitted a response to the 'Domestic Abuse support within a safe accommodation: statutory guidance and regulations consultation' by the close date of 27 July 2021 would be provided to Members. *The Council had submitted a response however the actual response was not available as it was submitted online.*

The Chair requested that in the future, Officers completing consultation responses should keep a copy of their response so these were available for consideration; this was especially important now that a lot of Government consultation sought an online return.

With regards to minute 6 'Finance Monitoring Report Month 2' which read:

'The Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the report and agreed to recommend that future financial reports would specifically include risks in the budget and what might cause them to happen in order to enable better scrutiny and promote transparency'

It was considered that this would be addressed later in the meeting during the Financial Monitoring Report July 2021 item.

17. **Finance Monitoring Report - July 2021**

Councillor Nick Kelly (The Leader), and Brendan Arnold (Strategic Director for Finance) presented the Finance Monitoring Report – July 2021 to Members.

Key points highlighted to Members included:

- (a) the figures within the report would fluctuate over the course of the remaining months however it was hoped that they would travel in the right direction to balance the budget which was the key objective;
- (b) overall, in terms of the variants total, the Council had moved from a £1.276m overspend to a £1.446m overspend – this was highlighted as going in the wrong direction. Within the CCS directorate (Corporate and Customer Services Directorate) it had moved from £1.382m overspend to a £1.498m overspend. The Business Support Review, which fell under this directorate, had slipped by one month due to the impact of covid and this had had an adverse effect upon the timings/ savings. Within the overspend, there were other savings targets likely to be delivered later than planned, and included a legacy of £949,000 and the facility management saving target of £550,000. The Management Team continued to monitor the savings targets closely and assurance was given that the directorate was moving in the right direction; the August finance report included a positive significant move in the figures provided;
- (c) Members were aware of the unprecedented financial pressures on the Council's finances due to the Covid 19 pandemic; those pressures still

remained as infection rates in the city were above the regional and national averages. There was a commitment to continue to show the position of the additional costs and income lost due to Covid 19 which was currently showing a drawdown against grants of approximately £15.5m; these were set out in section b of the report. A full disclosure of revenue savings targets was included in appendix a of the report;

- (d) against the directorate total savings target of £4.571m, there was £2.266m worth of savings on track which was just shy of the 50% target the Council was aspiring to achieve by the end of the year;
- (e) it was considered that the Council had now seen the peak of the element of forecast overspend described by the Leader. Officers were now preparing the period 5 financial report which would arrive for further discussion by scrutiny in the future. It was expected that there would be a very significant reduction in the variants described, and this followed on from the work linked to the management of the CCS finances. Officers were working hard with the directorate to mitigate the overspend identified.

Members raised the following key areas of questioning:

- (f) with regards to the Childrens Services Directorate and the addition to the department's budget of £3m raised at the Council's budget setting meeting, as well as the added one off payment of £7.914m covid relief grant from Government, what actions was the Leader taking to address the Childrens Services Budget? Could the Leader share if he had a plan b and what that was?
- (g) it was highlighted that Cabinet had completed 22 of the 86 manifesto commitments; how much had the completion of those pledges cost and where was this reflected in the budget?
- (h) it was considered that there was greater financial information included in the June financial report submitted to Council than the Finance Monitoring Report submitted to scrutiny. How did the Council have such an improved financial position in the Place directorate, yet still seem to demonstrate £1.5m of pressure?
- (i) did the Council have any action plans to mitigate the overspend and risk in both the People and Children's Directorates budgets?
- (j) in the spirit of openness and transparency, could future finance monitoring reports be jargon free, user friendly with information supplied in a format and with language used that would be clearly understood by the general public?
- (k) the report implied that £1.498m overspend in the budget was due to legacy targets not yet realised – it was questioned what impact the failure to make savings last year effected this year's budget and the ongoing effect for next year?

- (l) the Home to School Transport Plan was previously reported in the last financial year as being on target to be delivered, however this was not yet delivered in this financial year – why had it not yet been delivered?
- (m) what was the cost impact on the budget of the manifesto commitments that were still to be delivered this financial year?

It was discussed that more detailed information relating to specific manifesto commitments may need to be considered at future scrutiny meetings in a part 2 (private) session due to their commercial sensitivity or confidentiality.

The Committee agreed –

1. that a written response detailing the breakdown of the financial information regarding how much the completion of 22 of the 86 manifesto commitments costed would be provided to Members;
2. a briefing note would be provided by the Service Director for Finance to detail the difference in financial pressures and projected overspend, specifically in the Place Directorate, between period 3 and period 4 of the financial monitoring reports;
3. that future finance monitoring reports provided would be jargon free, with a plain and simple narrative to enable them to be better understood;
4. a written response would be provided clarifying why the Home to School Transport Plan was not yet delivered in this financial year when it was previously reported that it was on target for delivery;
5. the next Finance Monitoring Report submitted to the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Panel would include reference to and details of risks in the budget, specifically with regards to the red and amber columns (plans worked on for delivery/ planned internal or external actions required to deliver), in order to allow scrutiny to better understand the extent of the risk and mitigating actions. Any increase in borrowing requirements and the impact on capital funds would also be specifically referred to;
6. a written response would be provided to Members detailing the cost, impact on the budget and potential mitigating actions of manifesto commitments still to be delivered in this financial year (2021/22);
7. risks associated with, and budget implications for manifesto commitments planned to be delivered in 2022/23, and 2023/24 (in order to inform the Medium Term Financial Plan) would be included as part of the budget scrutiny paperwork planned for January 2022;
8. to note the current revenue monitoring position in the Finance Monitoring Report – July 2021.

18. Corporate Plan Performance Report Quarter One 2021/22

Councillor Nick Kelly (The Leader) and Andrew Loton (Head of Governance, Risk and Performance) presented the Corporate Plan Performance Report Quarter One 2021/22 to Members.

The following key points were highlighted:

- (a) the report covered the period April to June 2021 and could be used by the committee to help develop their work programme by identifying areas for further scrutiny;
- (b) key areas of good performance included:
 - there was an improvement on the percentage of streets graded as acceptable identified by street audits carried out by the highways team;
 - the Council was continuing to improve target spend in the PL postcode including, in quarter one, the procurement of good and services from 1188 suppliers;
 - there was improved performance on new corporate indicator carriageway defects completed on time to 98.8%;
 - the Council was achieving its target for homelessness prevention however homelessness in general was still a persistent pressure with high numbers of households still in temporary bed and breakfast or temporary accommodation;
 - there was an improvement on the resolution of stage 1 complaints; in quarter one 93% were resolved within expected timescales;
 - the Council was achieving its target for the trajectory for collection of council tax;
- (c) key areas of performance challenges included:
 - an increase in the average number of rough sleepers each week;
 - sickness levels in quarter one had crept up however were now on target.

The following key areas of questioning and concerns were highlighted:

- (d) pressures in homelessness and rough sleepers were highlighted in the report, how and where did those pressures reflect in the risks in the current budget delivery – what was the effect on the current revenue budget?

- (e) page 15 and 16 of the agenda set out the performance data for children, young people and adults protected – these numbers were increasing month on month and failing to meet targets. The Council was looking after more children and they were feeling less safe and secure in the Council's service – this was of concern;
- (f) the current administration had made seven manifesto commitments about housing – in terms of performance of building new homes, how was the council going to deal with current issues associated with the supply of material and skilled labour?
- (g) could the Leader provide assurance that the Stoggy Lane project for housing would continue and be brought forward in a timely manner?
- (h) Plymouth City Council had recently won Council of the Year, therefore was it time to consider tougher targets so continuous development could be achieved?

The committee agreed –

1. to recommend that performance issues highlighted in the Corporate Plan Performance Report with an associated budget pressure should also appear in the Financial Monitoring Report;
2. to note the Corporate Plan Quarter One Performance Report.

19. **Work Programme**

The Committee considered their work programme and agreed the following:

- Trade Waste – to be a small task and finish group, potentially in part 2 (private) due to its commercially sensitive nature;
- Gambling Policy – to be a small task and finish group to discuss changes in the policy and the impact on Plymouth and the potential impact on mental health, addiction;
- Leisure Services – to be a small task and finish group starting in part 2 (private) with a selection of Councillors joining an officer group – then moving in to part 1 to discuss implications and delivery;
- Environment Bill Update – to be scheduled for December meeting to discuss how the Bill would affect the waste strategy and what financial impact it would have upon the Council;
- Business Support Review Update to move to March meeting;
- People Strategy Update – the strategy and update on the action plan to be circulated to Councillors, potential issues to be discussed at the following formal scrutiny meeting under 'work programme' if further scrutiny is

required;

- Member Development Update to be moved to March meeting;
- Equality and Diversity Update to be moved to March meeting;
- Bereavement Services Update to be considered at the December meeting.