

Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 15 September 2021

PRESENT:

Councillor Bingley, in the Chair.

Councillor Dr Buchan, Vice Chair.

Councillors Coker, Cree, Hendy, Jordan, Patel, Penberthy, Salmon and Wakeham.

Also in attendance: Paul Barnard (Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Julia Blaschke (Partnerships Manager), Kelly Blockley (Performance Advisor), Hannah Daw (Performance Advisor), David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), Councillor Jonathan Dreaan (Cabinet Member for Transport), Toby Hall (Economic Development Officer), Councillor Nick Kelly (Leader of the Council), David Northey (Head of Integrated Finance), Amanda Ratsey (Head of Economic Enterprise and Employment), Rosemary Starr (Sustainable Transport Manager), Mr Richard Stevens (Managing Director for Go South West), Sophie Tucker (Senior Support and Research Assistant).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 5.10 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.

12. **Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interest were made in accordance with the code of conduct -

Member	Subject	Reason	Interest
Councillor Dr Buchan	Item 7 Economic Intelligence Update	Husband employed by Plymouth College of Art Council Representative and Vice Chair of Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority Cattewater Harbour Commissioners (Board Member)	Personal
Councillor Jordan	Item 7 Economic Intelligence Update	Non-executive director of a community photographic studio	Personal

13. **Minutes**

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2021 are a correct record.

14. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

15. **Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Policy Update**

Sophie Tucker (Senior Support and Research Assistant) provided an update to the briefing that had been circulated with the agenda, which included –

(a) fishing -

- on 25 August 2021 the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme funding rounds had opened for applications; the funding rounds were for specific purposes which did not meet the Council's current needs; however, information on the grants had been circulated to relevant parties through the Fisheries Group;
- also in the last few days, the UK Government had announced the first investment from £100m UK Seafood Fund to boost innovation in the fishing industry; fishing businesses across the UK would now have access to £24m of investment to develop technology, trial new gear and support world-class research to improve the productivity and long-term sustainability for the industry; further details on how to bid for funding for both of these schemes will be announced in due course;

(b) European Settlement Scheme -

- the European Settlement Scheme was now closed for new applications; there were some exceptions for some particularly vulnerable groups; the Home Office was continuing to encourage those who were eligible to make a late application to the EU Settlement Scheme;
- the latest data available showed that there were a total of just over six million applications nationally and 10,820 applications in Plymouth;

(c) Boarder Control Posts -

- the Government had recently announced a revised timetable for introducing full import controls for goods being imported from the EU to UK; new controls and requirements due to be introduced from 1 October 2021 and 1 January 2022 had been delayed to 1 January 2022 and 1 July 2022;

full customs declarations and controls would be introduced on 1 January 2022 as previously announced, although safety and security declarations would now not be required until 1 July 2022;

- controls would be phased in across 2022 under the revised timetable;

(d) trade deals -

- whilst no new trade deals had been signed since the previous meeting, the UK and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) nations formally launched negotiations in June 2021; progress had been made with New Zealand, with both countries committed to concluding a free trade agreement and the sixth round of free-trade agreement negotiations taking place in July 2021;

(e) Bills going through Parliament/key dates -

- the National Insurance Contributions Bill was currently awaiting its second reading in the House of Lords;
- 1 October (extendable to July 2022) the deadline for determining whether UK meets the conditions for exchanging personal data (DNA profiles, fingerprint and vehicle registration data) under the Prüm framework;
- 1 October 2021 EU, EEA and Swiss citizens would require a passport to travel to the UK, rather than using national identity cards as an alternative.

The Committee –

- (f) raised whether the Council had plans to apply for a share of £30m Changing Places toilets (CPTs) fund administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; the fund was available to install life-enhancing changing places toilets in public places, tourist attractions and transport networks; CPTs were larger accessible toilets for people who could not use standard toilets; the closing date for applications was 26 September 2021;

response: a written response would be provided regarding whether the Council had applied for this funding;

- (g) sought clarification on how many trade deals were currently in place;

response: there were 67 trade deals in place but an update would be provided to the Committee outside of this forum.

16. **Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021**

Councillor Jonathan Drea (Cabinet Member for Transport), Paul Barnard (Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Rosemary Starr (Sustainable Transport Manager) and Mr Richard Stevens (Managing Director for Go South West) presented this report which highlighted the following key points –

- (a) on 15 March 2021, the Government published the National Bus Strategy for England ‘Bus Back Better’; the strategy sets out an ambitious vision to dramatically improve bus services across England (outside London) to first reverse the long-term decline in the number of journeys made by bus and secondly to encourage passengers back to the bus, post the Covid19 pandemic; it was intended that the strategy would deliver cheaper, more frequent and more reliable bus services for passengers; the strategy required the establishment of a formal partnership arrangement, led by the City Council as the Local Transport Authority, for all local bus services operated within the city boundary;
- (b) all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) outside of London were required to enter into a formal partnership arrangement with local bus operators; entering into a formal partnership was necessary in order for the LTAs and bus operators to be eligible for any future Government funding; the partnership arrangement could either be a franchise or an Enhanced Partnership; the City Council approved the development of an Enhanced Partnership with the city’s bus operators and published a Notice of Intent on 25 June 2021;
- (c) the National Bus Strategy also required the City Council, as the LTA to lead the preparation of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for submission for the Department of Transport (DfT) by the end of October 2021; the BSIP had to set out what the partnership would deliver, in order to make buses easier cheaper and more convenient to use; the final stage in the process would be the publication of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme; this had to be achieved by 31 March 2022.

The Committee discussed the following key issues –

- (d) whether the passenger numbers had improved following the ending of the Covid restrictions;
- (e) raised concerns –
 - on the accessibility of bus services (residents who lived on North Road West had to walk to Union Street, in order to catch a bus);
 - on the ease of planning commutes and journeys; the provision of cross ticketing in the city and matching the provision of bus

services to the ferry services offered;

- at the perceived lack of pace with regard to the long target dates contained within the report and the age of the fleet in 2030;
 - that whilst the investment in buses was welcomed (improved frequency and upgraded buses), this did not address either the environmental or equitable issues;
 - as to whether there would be sufficient funding available, in order to improve both environmental and equitable issues within the Plan;
 - whether the Council's plan would be strong enough to meet the eligible criteria (Manchester had a heavily subsidised transport scheme); it was considered that the Council needed to ask the Government for a larger subsidy for the provision of bus services in Plymouth (it was cheaper for a family of four to use a car rather than a bus and also not be restricted by a timetable);
 - the length of time that bus services (on the eastern side of the city) took to travel to the hospital (Sherford to the Derriford could often take an hour) which had a direct impact on the elderly residents of the city;
 - that an opportunity had been missed in reviewing the bus routes in the city, in order to improve the service;
 - relating to the lack of bus service provision for commuters (such as those wishing to travel to Langage);
 - at the lack of bus provision in certain areas of the city such as Plymstock to Derriford; accessibility to bus services was having an adverse impact on the elderly residents of the city who relied on this service; there was a need, going forward, to review this situation;
- (f) whether consideration had been given to alternatives to the 'radial route' model currently used in the city (such as the grid model) in order to improve the bus service offer for the whole of the city;
- (g) sought clarification -
- on whether there would be greater focus within the plan on the bus challenged communities of the city;
 - on the percentage of buses that would either be electric or run on alternative fuels in the next five years;

- on whether the ‘lapsed’ bus users had been identified, in order to establish the reasons why they were not using the bus and to also encourage them to do so;
 - on whether any work had been undertaken to encourage people from outside the city’s boundaries to travel in by bus (such as those people commuting from Ivybridge);
 - on whether an engagement exercise would be undertaken in order to increase bus usage and if so, whether Councillors could be kept updated;
 - with regard to the equalities impact assessment on how the focus groups had been set up, how the data had been interrogated and collected, and how the data was disaggregated demographically; (it was of concern that the equalities impact assessment did not show any difference between the accessibility of men and women when using bus routes, as transport research had shown that there were significant differences);
 - on whether there was a ‘plan b’ if funding was not available to purchase new buses in order to be carbon neutral by 2030, and whether Government funding would be available;
- (h) whether consideration had been given to comparing bus journeys across the city, in order to help to promote the use of buses as an attractive option.

The Committee requested -

- (i) that a map was made available detailing the bus routes in the city, colour-coded to identify the frequency of the services in order to compare the bus services in the city centre to those on the outskirts;
- (j) that the bus user engagement reports were made available to the Committee.

The Committee agreed to –

- (1) note the timescales for completion of the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 and the requirement to subsequently publish an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme;
- (2) endorse the ambitions of the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 and the aspiration to make Plymouth’ buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper;

- (3) endorse the thematic proposals of the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021, as a comprehensive suite of measures which support the policies of the Plymouth Plan and the needs of Plymouth's current and future bus users.

The Committee requested that the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 included timelines and more ambitious target dates (current target dates were two and nine years).

Note: Councillor Coker voted against the above recommendations.

17. **Economic Intelligence Update**

Councillor Nick Kelly (Leader of the Council), Amanda Ratsey (Head of Economic Enterprise and Employment), Julia Blaschke (Partnerships Manager) and Toby Hall (Economic Development Officer) presented the report together with a presentation which highlighted the following key points –

- (a) the aim of this report was to provide the latest economic data and trends for Plymouth; a range of economic statistics that were of relevance to Plymouth's economy and related to the Plymouth Plan objectives of a Healthy, Growing and International city; the report detailed Plymouth's performance on these measures and its strengths and weaknesses; the report also demonstrated how the Economic Development department was addressing these issues through various projects;
- (b) Plymouth's economy (GVA) had grown over the last decade; the city had seen particular growth in high value sectors, such as marine, health and life sciences and advanced manufacturing;
- (c) in terms of unemployment, after an initial jump in the claimant count in March/April 2020, it had slowly decreased and the Plymouth claimant count was now below the UK average; yet while Plymouth's growth rate exceeded national trends, it had not yet closed the gap in productivity;
- (d) the city was performing poorly, in terms of business density, start up and survival rates when comparing it to the South West and UK averages; Economic Development had supported growth in the city through a variety of projects; the National Marine Park would not only create jobs but would also increase the attractiveness of the city, bringing improvements to the waterfront and also support health and wellbeing;
- (e) the city had been successful in bidding to become a Freeport (one of only eight across the country); this would bring up to 9000 jobs, supporting the marine sector and businesses in the city and attract new investment and new businesses to Plymouth;

- (e) the city's recovery programme consisted of six different work streams and covered a plethora of actions; in addition Economic Development had worked with colleagues from across the Council to deliver the Government funded business support grants during the pandemic; over £92m was distributed to 7,440 businesses in the city, in less than 20 months;
- (f) the Council would also be supporting businesses through a series of commissioned support programmes; these programmes would help to start up new businesses including social enterprises and increased entrepreneurship, support businesses to adopt new digital solutions and enable digital transformation and support business transition to net zero.

The Committee –

- (g) sought clarification -
 - on how the Council would support the creation of jobs in those areas on the outskirts of the city and the measures it would be taking to support businesses to become carbon neutral by 2030;
 - on the measures the Council would undertake to encourage start-up businesses, particularly on the outskirts of the city (as it was important that these businesses were not just located in the city centre);
 - on whether there was any narrative as to why there had been a significant increase in part-time work in the city (was this as a result of the lack of full-time work and people having to work multiple jobs);
 - on whether the scope for the marine sector could be broadened to include other elements, such as the ports, fishing, research and leisure and how the Council would support the development of this sector;
 - on whether there were any unemployment statistics available for the past five years;
 - on the reasons why there had been a significant decrease in the number of apprenticeships in the city in 2017 (a reduction of 50%);
- (h) raised concerns -
 - that the National Marine Park had only been referred to under tourism and hospitality (in the sector action plans) and requested that consideration be given to promoting the

sustainable use of the marine environment, as it would be disappointing for its potential not to be realised;

- relating to the skills shortages, in a number of sectors, where the majority of people were self-employed (such as plumbers, electricians and builders);
 - that the city may need an import of high-skilled people to fulfil the high paid jobs in the city which would result in local people maintaining the low paid work (this situation would not address the Council's ambition for inclusive growth); it was important to ensure that the city's low paid economy was being skilled, in order to move from low paid work to better paid jobs and enable those people claiming Universal Credit to come off the benefit and thus become less dependent on the welfare system;
- (i) whilst the focus of the creative and cultural industries was on tourism and events, there were other elements to this sector (together with some cross-over with digital creativity); however, it was considered that the Council was missing an opportunity to support jobs growth in the city for those people attending higher education (from more deprived backgrounds), in order to ensure that there were job opportunities for these people in Plymouth.

The following information would be provided to the Committee (outside of this forum) –

- (j) whether the increase in growth of part-time work had reduced the opportunities of full-time work in the city;
- (k) the unemployment statistics for the past five years.

The Committee agreed that -

- (1) it notes the report;
- (2) it takes into account the economic evidence base when considering future decisions.

(Councillor Cree left the meeting and was not present for the remainder of the meeting).

18. **Finance Monitoring July 2021**

David Northey (Head of Integrated Finance) presented the finance monitoring July 2021 which highlighted the following key points with regard to the Place Directorate –

- (a) the net budget (2021/22) for the directorate was £25,069m with a forecast of £28,204m which was offset by Covid related costs of £3,093m;
- (b) the directorate was reporting £0.042m pressure against revenue due to borrowing charges applied to Street Services; this had reduced since the last month;
- (c) there were concerns regarding the ability to meet the Regeneration Property Fund target and the directorate continued to pursue methods of offsetting in year pressures of £0.250m;
- (d) the savings target for 2021/22 for the directorate was £1.035m; 50% of the savings target had been delivered or were due to be delivered (four months in to the new financial year).

The Committee –

- (e) sought clarification relating to the narrative for the savings for Weston Mill, bulky and trade waste of £208k; there was no information as to how this pressure would be relieved;
- (f) requested that future finance monitoring reports included the capital programme as this Scrutiny Committee had responsibility to scrutinise this programme;
- (g) raised whether the Covid off set plans were being allocated to the true cost of Covid for each directorate, or whether they were being divided up for each directorate (so the directorates were allocated nearly all of the monies they required).

A written response would be provided regarding the narrative relating to the saving target for Weston Mill, bulky and trade waste.

The Committee agreed to –

- (1) note the current revenue monitoring position;
- (2) request that the capital programme was included in future finance monitoring reports.

19. **Corporate Plan Performance Report Quarter One 2021/22**

Kelly Blockley (Performance Advisor) and Hannah Daw (Performance Advisor) presented the report which highlighted the following key issues –

- (a) the report -

- detailed how the Council was performing against its priority performance indicators that had been agreed at the inception of the Plan; it provided an analysis of performance as at the end of June 2021, against the Council's key performance indicators (KPIs), providing a detailed performance update against the Plan's priorities;
- formed part of the Council's Delivery and Performance Framework; a key part of its aim was to achieve a 'golden thread' from the Plan and its KPIs and delivery plans, through to service and team level business plans and ultimately to individual objectives.

The Committee –

(b) sought clarification -

- on the percentage of Councillors and employees that had completed the e-learning training programme on climate change;
- on how many of the 690 poor quality affordable homes that had been demolished had been replaced in the areas referred to in the Plan;
- on whether the volunteering data included informal volunteering;
- on whether the latest performance (89.3%) on the streets graded at an acceptable level for overall street cleanliness and grounds maintenance was benchmarked by the Office for National Statistics or other sources;
- as to where the data originated from and the process for identifying the indicators that the Council wished to measure its performance against;

(c) raised concerns relating to the low percentage (33.7%) of respondents that were aware of how they could get involved in decisions in their local area;

(d) with regard to the description of key performance indicators, under the -

- 'green sustainable city that cares about the environment', there had been no reference to the marine environment or the National Marine Park which was considered to be a serious omission;
- 'vibrant economy developing quality jobs and skills', this should

include performance indicators on how growth was occurring in the city’;

- ‘efficient, sustainable transport network’, there were no indicators relating to a highly efficient well used public transport system, or a net zero public transport system or reference to buses within the Plan (in light of the discussion regarding the Bus Improvement Plan);

- (e) it would be helpful, if additional narrative could be included with the indicators, as this would assist the Committee to better understand the background issues (such as the inclusive growth earnings gap).

A discussion took place with regard to the relevance of a number of key performance indicators contained within the report, whether additional indicators needed to be included, the need for additional narrative and the need to undertake a formal review. This was considered important to enable the Committee to better scrutinise the Corporate Plan (relevant to the Committee’s areas of responsibilities).

Members were encouraged to email the Chair of the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Penberthy) with any issues relating to the Committee’s areas of responsibility in the Plan.

Officers welcomed the feedback provided by the Committee and the importance of including the right performance indicators.

Information would be provided to the Committee (outside of this forum) relating to –

- (f) the percentage of Councillors and employees that had completed the e-learning training programme on climate change;
- (g) the number of quality affordable homes that had been replaced.

The Committee agreed –

- (1) to note the Corporate Plan quarter one performance report and consider the implications;
- (2) that through the Chair of the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Penberthy), the issue of the relevance of a number of the key performance indicators would be raised at the forthcoming Scrutiny Management Board meeting in October 2021.

20. **Work Programme**

A discussion took place regarding the Committee’s heavy work programme and whether specific issues could be considered as Select Committee reviews.

Councillor Coker considered that the work programme did not include the delivery of major infrastructure or the monitoring/evaluation of the South West Highways contract.

The Committee discussed its work programme for 2021/22 and agreed to include an item on adult employment in the city (including part-time, self-employed, low paid jobs etc) and to receive, as part of the finance monitoring report, the capital programme.

The Committee also agreed that at future meetings the Cabinet Member/Lead Officer would be asked to provide a brief overview of the issue being considered (no more than 10 minutes), as this would allow sufficient time to robustly scrutinise the issue and to also ask questions.

21. **Tracking Decisions**

The Committee noted the progress made with regard to the tracking decisions.