

## Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Wednesday 25 November 2020**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillor Jordan, in the Chair.

Councillor Vincent, Vice Chair.

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

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.45 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.*

### 102. **Declarations of Interest**

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

<b>Name</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Interest</b>
Councillor Jordan	Item 8	Director Charities in the city and some have received government grants for Covid-19 and some are bidding for top up grants now	Personal
Councillor Vincent	Item 8	Hamoaze Trustee	Personal
Councillor Buchan	Item 8	Tamar Bridge & Torpoint Ferry Member	Personal
Councillor Derrick	Item 9	Assistant Cabinet Member	Personal
Councillor Corvid	Item 8	Sits on the board of several Charities	Personal
Councillor Tuffin	Item 8	Millfield Trust and Millfield Inspired Member	Personal

### 103. **Minutes**

Agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 7 October 2020.

### 104. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

## 105. **Policy Update**

Alan Knott (Policy Advisor) Provided the Performance, Finance and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the latest national picture in respect of policy announcements and legislation relating to this committee.

The Committee noted the report.

## 106. **Libraries**

Councillor Pete Smith (Deputy Leader) and Faye Hambleton (Service Director for Customer Services and Service Centre) presented this item.

The Library Charter was launched on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 alongside the opening of the new St Budeaux Library.

During the seven week period following the launch of the Charter on 27 January 2020, compared to the same period in 2019:

- New membership increased by 26 percent;
- Rhymetime attendance increased by six percent;
- Basic IT session attendance increased by 11 percent.

Since March 2020 the Library Service had followed Government guidelines and had closed, and reintroduced services as and when possible. The Library Service referred to the *Library Service Recovery Toolkit* when preparing to reopen. The Toolkit was published by Libraries Connected, with input from the Health and Safety Executive and Public Health England.

Library staff were redeployed to support essential services elsewhere in the Council during lockdown. Eight worked full-time at Bereavement Services; eight worked in various Covid-related roles, including PPE distribution; 13 worked as marshals at Chelson Meadow; and five helped clean Tinside Lido.

The Library service was valued more than ever, and was seen as far more than a book lending service. This was demonstrated by the feedback received, while operating solely via social media and then more so in person when we reintroduced the browsing and digital offerings.

Key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- whether e-reading was going to be long term, or would this change again once we were out of the COVID19 period?
- how the council was reaching out to families, especially with young children, and what the uptake of this was?
- how was the school library service dealt with during this period?
- how did the Council submit figures to Central Government on library use and how did e-books tie into this?

The Committee noted the update.

## 107. **Work Force Report**

Councillor Pete Smith (Deputy Leader) and Kim Brown (Service Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented this item to the Committee –

The People Strategy (<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/peoplestrategy>) underpins the work of Human Resources and Organisational Development, enabling the workforce to be adaptable and agile for the challenges of the future –

The Council:

- Employs people on a number of national local government terms and conditions;
- Participates in national collective bargaining for pay;
- Adopts the principles of the Foundation Living Wage.

The Council's management team (CMT) consider workforce reports on a monthly basis to monitor the composition of the workforce and spend. Departmental managers receive sickness absence reports on a monthly basis, providing them with the information to ensure that sickness absence is managed appropriately.

Recruitment panels consisting of representatives of CMT are held weekly to consider and approve any requests to advertise vacancies.

The Council monitors sickness absence levels on a monthly basis and this was reported to management teams to enable action to be taken as required.

The Council had previously been awarded the National Wellbeing Charter, sponsored by Public Health England. This no longer exists, but a new local scheme for the city has been developed by Livewell South West, called Wellbeing at Work.

Key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- how were members of staff made aware of mental health first aiders and how to contact them?
- what was required to achieve a silver wellbeing award?
- was there any feedback on wellbeing measures that had been put in place?
- in terms of diversity groups for protected characteristics, had covid impacted that?
- with regards to the gender split, and whether the panel could get a break down of how this broke down in terms of seniority and equal pay etc?
- today it had been announced there was another public sector pay freeze, how did this affect the market sector supplements?
- some other local authorities had awarded front line staff an extra days leave. Had the Council been looking into this?
- how were staff coping with COVID19 and working from home?
- regarding voluntary release – more detail was requested on this scheme and what the Council was doing to fill the gaps of skills left behind and the length of service of those who have been successful?
- a breakdown of vacancies and what structure the Council was aiming for in the future?
- the Council had had two rounds of EVRS in the last 2 years and there didn't seem to be any vision for what we want the organisation to look like in the future. Would this be available in the future?

The committee noted the report and requested a breakdown of sickness figures by department.

## 108. **Capital and Revenue Monitoring Report 20/21 - Quarter 2**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), Andrew Hardingham (Service Director for Finance) and Paul Looby (Head of Financial Reporting and Planning) presented this item to the Committee –

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

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

Key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- how were Council Tax increases (2%) going to impact residents, especially those who had struggled with the impacts of the pandemic?
- what was the money invested in the Plymstock/ Plympton going to change?
- regarding The Hub at Colin Campbell Court – when would this be online and would it be useful in the immediate pandemic response?
- there were lots of one off savings for this year, but what was the total deficit predicted for next year currently?

The committee recommended that –

1. The Health and Adult Social Care Committee reviewed the Health Hubs.
2. The Savings plans were made available to Budget Scrutiny Select Committee.

## 109. **Accommodation Framework 2020-23**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), Pete Honeywell (Transformation Architecture Manager) and Nathan Sanders (Programme Manager) presented this item to the Committee –

Over recent years, the Council's Accommodation Strategy had sought to identify future options for the corporate estate, particularly with a view to reducing costs associated with running and maintaining a significant number of buildings across the city. Since the Accommodation Strategy was last agreed there had been a number of significant changes and principles that now need to be incorporated within an Accommodation Framework.

The Accommodation Framework as set out would build on the principles and outcomes agreed by the Council, including the Climate Emergency Action Plan and the Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan that aims to make Plymouth carbon neutral by 2030, the significant increase in digital working and flexible working, and that Ballard House was now part of the Corporate Estate. The Framework also sets out how PCC's corporate office accommodation could be reduced by at least one building, rationalising the corporate estate, and providing opportunities to make progress towards the zero carbon by 2030 target and redevelopment in the north of Plymouth. The Framework approach rather than a Strategy approach reflected that a one size all approach to the corporate estate is not appropriate, but instead there are overarching principles that connect the management of all the Council's assets.

The Committee noted the report.

110. **Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Work Programme.