

Cabinet

Tuesday 11 January 2022

PRESENT:

Councillor Kelly, in the Chair.

Councillor Nicholson, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Bridgeman, Deacon, Downie, Drean, Mrs Pengelly and Riley.

Note: The full discussion can be viewed on the webcast of the City Council meeting at www.plymouth.gov.uk. At a future meeting, the Council will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

217. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made by cabinet members.

218. **Minutes (To Follow)**

The minutes from 21 December 2021 were signed as a true and accurate record.

219. **Questions from the Public**

There were no public questions received.

220. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business from the Chair.

221. **COVID 19 Update (Verbal Report)**

Dr Ruth Harrell, Director of Public Health in Plymouth gave an update to members and highlighted the following key points:

- (a) Omicron was the most dominant strand with 90% of cases;
- (b) Rates of COVID-19 in Plymouth had been high and had been recorded at 1485 cases per 100,000. It was recognised that although below the England average of 1665, recorded cases were very high and had doubled since the previous cabinet meeting which took place on 21 December 2021;
- (c) Hospital admissions had increased with over 100 people being admitted for COVID-19 and current numbers almost reaching the previous peak in January 2021. 50,000 people across England had been admitted to hospital. Dr Harrell advised members that although it had been reported that this strain was milder, for many that was not the case;
- (d) In the previous four to five months there had been 12% increase in excess

deaths, 50% were directly caused from COVID and the other 50% had been due to the impact of the pandemic in accessing services;

- (e) Vaccination uptake across the city had been good with many outreach clinics providing boosters and vaccinations;
- (f) South Africa had seen a sharp increase from their pandemic before this drastically reduced. It was recognised that England has an older population compared to South Africa and it was the winter season, this could see a change in the way the population behaves as well as the virus.

Members discussed:

- a) Derriford Hospital declared a critical incident which had been due to the number of COVID-19 cases and the levels of staff sickness relating to the infection. Rates of hospitalisations had been increasing and culminated in a very high admission rate on the weekend of 8 January 2021. Due to the infection being very infectious this meant extra measures had been put in place for the COVID wards which had included keeping spaces empty. This had been difficult for the NHS and locally they had been feeling the pressure although were doing their best to manage COVID cases and those requiring other forms of treatment;
- b) Plymouth City Council did not keep records of staff that had a booster as this was only pertinent to staffs own medical records. As an organisation Plymouth City Council had been doing relatively well which had been due to government guidelines under Plan B requiring office staff to work from home where possible. Sickness rates in the Council had not been high and was not impacting frontline services.

222. **Leader's Announcements**

Councillor Nick Kelly, Leader of the Council announced the following:

- (a) had now appointed an interim chief executive for our National Marine Park.
- (b) Elaine Hayes was an environmentalist with a brilliant track record of leading nature and conservation organisations, and brought with her a vast wealth of knowledge and experience;
- (c) We have some really exciting times ahead with a lot of different ambitions and projects to deliver in this sector. We want to plan for a more sustainable future but also inspire and enthuse our residents.
- (d) had been working closely with Shekinah, which was a charity organisation in Plymouth that provides opportunities for people who were experiencing all forms of homelessness and other challenges. They help people to make meaningful changes in

their lives with specialist support to address health issues, getting a home and learning new skills to lead to employment.

- (e) With them we were hoping to turn the empty Stonehouse Community Centre at Stonehouse Creek into a new type of community centre, bringing all types of services into one, safe space. The new venture would include offering:
- Skills training;
 - Health promotion;
 - Education;
 - Employment services;
 - Housing advice;
 - Mental health support;
 - Counselling.
- (a) Shekinah had an incredible track record of changing lives of many Plymouth people and we are keen to support them in any way possible. This move would bring a new lease of life to a current vacant building, but it also means we could continue with our long term goal to regenerate Millbay. The new boulevard has really opened up the area, and with a new hotel being built, means this is all good news for the city, the economy and residents;
- (b) Plymouth hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses that had been impacted by Covid-19 would now be able to apply for further financial support through the Council. The Government announced the new Omicron Hospitality and Leisure grant on 21 December to help support businesses in this sector that had been impacted over the Christmas and New Year period;
- (c) The team here had worked quickly to get this latest business grant scheme up and running. We were now working on plans for the discretionary grant scheme as we want to make sure we understand where the support is really needed most and how we could make sure the funding available has the best impact;
- (d) Had received the news that Historic England were giving us an increase to the existing High Street Heritage Action Zone Grant. We would be getting an extra £130k for the historic enhancements projects within Old Town Street and New George Street. This was excellent news to help with the delivery of this important project within our town centre.

223. **Cabinet Member Updates**

Councillor Jonathan Drean (Cabinet Member for Transport) made the following announcements:

- (a) work had been completed on resurfacing of Millford Lane, St Peters Road phase A

and B, 50% of Drake circus roundabout and the footways around it. Eight footbridges had been refurbished, some of them were Outland Road, Roborough, Pennycomequick, two at Gdynia Way and Prince Rock;

- (b) the Winter Service continued and to date had been out seven times gritting the main roads. Vaccination and testing centres had also been gritted and covered 333 kilometres per night. To date only 130 tonnes of rock salt had been used;
- (c) the Fasola Road artificial intelligence had been ordered. The training on the system was going to commence next month. It was a satellite digitalized service to survey the roads and pavements for defects underneath that the eye couldn't see;
- (d) lighting and CCTV upgrades were continuing, especially in the Keyham and City Centre areas, and we're engaging with local communities following additional funding being received from Central Government by the Safer Streets and the Safer Keyham projects;
- (e) in terms of Councillor casework, all the numbers have come down over the last few months; in October we were at 90 cases and on the 11 January this year we were down to 14 – highways officers were congratulated for their concerted efforts;
- (f) Plymouth City Council had started an exciting venture to increase the use of electric vehicles in the city. While the majority of people may find it easy to plug in EV vehicles, it may be difficult for someone who has a mobility issue or was disabled. The parking team recognised this and as of the 24 January a trial was starting in the Theatre Royal car park on assisted electric vehicle charging;
- (g) the Morlaix Drive Access Improvement scheme, originally scheduled for 2020, but delayed because of the pandemic, would start on 24 January, and would be finished by the end of the year; as part of the scheme it would be widened to allow for the flow of a two way traffic system including buses and the upgrade of the existing narrow foot way to a shared pedestrian and cycle path;
- (h) 50 specimen trees were also being planted as well as ornamental plantings and bat and insect boxes along Morlaix Drive.

Councillor Vivien Pengelly (Cabinet Member for Homes and Communities) made the following announcements:

- (i) the housing delivery team who formed part of a strategic planning and infrastructure department were working proactively to help meet the serious challenges we were facing on homelessness as well as to address the urgent need for more affordable housing in Plymouth. So far the team have been successful in securing more than £2.2 million of land released funding from the Government to deliver 325 new affordable homes on 13 council owned sites over the next two to three years. We have also recently bid for another £220,000 of land released funding to build a further 12 community led affordable homes, and we expect to hear if these funds are also approved over the next few weeks;

- (j) these projects were being promoted under the council's nationally recognised Plan for Homes programme which made public land and other forms of capital subsidy available to housing association partners to help meet priority housing needs in the city. For example, groups such as service veterans, older people, those with physical and learning disabilities, homeless families and those who simply could not afford private accommodation of their own were already benefiting from this initiative and would now continue to do so.

Councillor Mark Deacon (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Culture, Leisure & Sport) made the following announcements:

- (k) the registration service continued to see a high demand for new citizens and the Council was seeing increased revenue as a result. The service would be attending Plymouth Wedding Fair at the Guildhall at the weekend to promote the Council House as the chosen venue for Plymouth residents and to improve the relationship with local businesses and the wedding community;
- (l) one of the Council's registrars took on the amazing honour of conducting the marriage of her daughter and her new son in law at the historic Duke of Cornwall Hotel on the 27 December 2021;
- (m) the Green Tavern Suite at Plymouth Argyle would become officially licensed for ceremonies at Home Park this month. We are really looking forward to seeing couples say I do overlooking the pitch;
- (n) the schools library service was pleased to report that over the Christmas and New Year period, 600 topic boxes were collected from schools and a further 400 topic boxes were delivered. Each of these topic boxes contained a collection of 25 books on a related topic that school staff used to enhance learning. In total, the FLS staff based at Burrington Way collected and distributed 25,000 books over three weeks in what remained difficult circumstances. As well as schools and public library related stock, staff at Burrington Way have for the past month been designated a principle distribution centre of lateral flow tests to the public. The library service typically handed out in the region of 2000 test packs each week;
- (o) in line with the Council's green agenda, the library service promoted brand new digital library cards available through the library app; anyone with a smartphone could now have as an option a digital library card as a replacement for what had traditionally been plastic library cards. In addition, on Saturday the 12 February 2022 Plympton Library would celebrate its 10th birthday. The library was built on the site of the former library that was destroyed by fire. The occasion would be marked with events and activities.

Councillor David Downie (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People) made the following announcement:

- (p) in 2018/2019 the Government funded several pilot projects across the country to research how it could best support children eligible for benefits related free school meals during the school holidays. Plymouth City Council was lucky enough to be involved through its national partnership with Streetgames in 2018, and as one of

10 national local authority pilot projects in 2019. In 2020, following the huge success of these pilot projects, the Government had invested £220 million nationally to the holiday activity and Food Fund programme to reach disadvantaged children so they were able to access healthy food and take part in fun enriching activities over the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays. The Government had confirmed that this programme would continue and Plymouth City Council have been awarded £1,037,160; this year, on year investment would enable the council to extend and enhance the existing Fit and Fed programme and to further develop positive outcomes for all children and young people in the city.

Councillor John Riley (Cabinet Member for Governance, HR, IT and Community Safety) made the following announcement:

- (q) following the murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 a national conversation and increased awareness of the dangers faced by women was launched. Many women and girls reflected on and spoke out about their own personal experiences of violence across the UK. Locally we had our own tragedy with the murder of Bobby Ann MacLeod in November 2021. Following this tragic event, it was imperative that we assessed what more could be done at a local level to ensure women and girls felt safe and empowered to live without fear of harm, abuse or intimidation. The leader launched the Violence Against Women and Girls Commission with the first meeting having taken place at the end of 2021. The objectives of this Commission included shining a spotlight on the national issue of violence against women and girls, and to understand more about the issue for those living in Plymouth, taking a proactive stance to better understand a wide range of views and experiences, and consider what more needed to be done to tackle the issue, improve the perception and the lived experience of women and girls that Plymouth was a safe city. This was an opportunity to revisit and review local policies were appropriate, including the public health approach to addressing violence against women and girls, and to identify and seek to influence any areas of national policy that needed revising.

Councillor Patrick Nicholson (Deputy Leader) made the following announcement:

- (r) regarding Devon CCG's decision to abandon the procurement of services delivered by the Mayflower Medical Group; this would be discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board in a few weeks' time and the Devon CCG would be present. The intention at the Health Wellbeing Board was to have an open discussion on GP access in the city and a private discussion with the CCG in relation to the Mayflower Medical Group whose contract ends on the 31 March 2022 and the continuation of the services provided by those GP practices. Dialogue would continue so that patients had a fitting and proper service to GP services. Whilst there was capacity of Derriford to deal with all medical needs of the city as well as parts of Devon and southeast Cornwall, it was imperative that the GP provision in the city provided the first point of contact for many of those elements that we all have is as the population, and that they don't end, they don't start in the accident and emergency department.

Councillor Nick Kelly, The Leader of the Council introduced the Commitments report to Cabinet, this report provided progress on the remaining 43 commitments.

Cabinet noted the progress made on the remaining commitments in anticipation of further commitments being completed in the early part of 2022.

225. **Response to Scrutiny Recommendations**

Councillor Dr Pam Buchan, Vice Chair of the Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the report to members.

- (a) The four key priorities from the report and put before Cabinet included; endorsing the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2022 and to note that the Investment Fund is yet to be funded or established; To ensure that the Climate Emergency Action Plan is understandable to the public and to ensure that the document is easily readable, free from jargon; To write to local MP's to support the Climate Emergency Action plan; To develop the Council's portal so as to ensure the public are able to contribute to the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Councillor Mrs Maddi Bridgeman made the following points:

- (b) The administration had focussed on sectors that had been responsible for carbon emissions in both action plans. The administration had focussed on deliverable actions with Councillor Mrs Maddi Bridgeman updating scrutiny every 6 months to demonstrate the administration's commitment to taking climate change seriously.
- (c) Councillor Mrs Maddi Bridgeman took into account all four recommendations made by the Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee and recommended to Cabinet that those were all accepted.

Members discussed:

- (d) The Plymouth Highways team had been working to reduce their Carbon emissions and had partly achieved this through the white lining of roads;
- (e) The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the pace of delivering the Climate Emergency Action Plan however this still remained a top priority for the Council.
- (f) Members of the public had been encouraged to review the consultation of the taxi trade which had been attempting to tackle vehicle emissions over a period of time. Members of the public were also encouraged to comment appropriately on the consultation.

Cabinet agreed to:-

1. Support and endorse the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2022, noting that the Climate Emergency Investment Fund has yet to be funded or established;
2. Contextualise prior actions within the Climate Emergency Action Plan in 2022;

3. Support the Plymouth Climate Emergency Action Plan by asks to Government through local MPs and national channels;
4. Provide the public with a Plymouth Climate Emergency Action Plan website support tool by May 2022.

226. **Finance Monitoring Report November 2021**

Councillor Nick Kelly, Leader of the Council provided an update on month 8 of the Financial Monitoring Report

- (a) the Month 8 Finance Monitoring Report, which covered the revenue forecast position as at the end of November 2021;
- (b) an example of how the financial position would fluctuate as we move through the year, this month saw an improvement from the October position;
- (c) In October, it was reported an over spend position of £883,000. For November, this had improved to £744,000 over. A favourable movement of £139,000.

The improvements were:

- (d) The Corporate & Customer Services Directorate had recorded a further improvement of £37,000; the forecast was now an over spend of £618,000;
- (e) The Place Directorate was now forecasting a breakeven position from last month's over spend of £121,000; The pressures (arising from the impact on income targets following delegated decisions signed off by us in June 2021) had been set against savings from Treasury Management activity;
- (f) As a reminder, we continued to improve and were now more than 50% below the position of a forecast over spend of £1.514m at Quarter 2 in June;
- (g) full disclosure of our revenue savings targets and latest forecast of delivery was included at Appendix A;
- (h) It is worth noting that we are now reporting close to 80% of the savings targets as either already achieved or ready to be achieved being a total of £10.771m from the total £13.845m;
- (i) There were still £2.662m of savings marked as Red and at risk; these were all included in the forecast figures;
- (j) Officers and Members would work closely to manage the finances towards a balanced position by the end of the year.

Cabinet noted the report.

227. **Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Future Financing**

Councillor Jonathan Drean, Cabinet Member for Transport introduced the report to members and highlighted the following key points:

- (a) On 13 January 2022, the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee launched a consultation on proposals to address the financial shortfalls impacted by COVID-19 and the on-going reduced traffic levels for the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry's;
- (b) The Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry's carry 18 million vehicles a year, 16 million on the bridge at 40,000 a day and 2 million on the ferries which equated to 5,500 per day. Both gateways were strategic to the economies in the region;
- (c) Tamar Crossings receive no subsidies from Government nor from the two owners of the crossings, Plymouth City Council and Cornwall County Council. Tolling income was used to operate, maintain and improve the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferries from the 1957 Crossings Act;
- (d) Before the Coronavirus pandemic, tolls had not been expected to increase before 2023. This however, had been impacted by a reduction in traffic crossings and would be expected to remain for some years. A proposal to increase tolling in Autumn 2021 had been deferred in December 2020 following financial COVID support from government, this support had ended;
- (e) The Tamar Crossings reserves had been forecasted to be completely depleted in 2022 and Tamar Crossings had been facing an increased deficit unless there would be an intervention to increase the tolling. The forecasted figures indicated an annual funding gap of £3.2 million by March 2024. The Joint Committee had reviewed all areas of spending which had included; staffing, reduced service levels and a range of other options to address the financial shortfall;
- (f) Joint Chairs had written to government requesting National Highways, formally Highways England contribute to the cost of maintaining the bridge. The Minister did not support this request and there had been no prospect of further support from government, however the Joint Committee and two Councils would continue to lobby government for support.
- (g) After considering a number of proposals including a 35% increase for all users, the Joint Committee was consulting on a 30% increase on both cash and tag tolls for users and all classes of vehicles.
The toll income had been used to operate, maintain and improve the crossings. Tamar Crossings employed 100 staff to deliver the service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Despite the pandemic, Tamar Crossings had continued to deliver the service to users. Over the past few years, significant work had been carried out on the bridge and ferries and in total the bridge had injected £17 million for works and the introduction of contactless methods of payment for tolling.
- (h) It was highlighted that any deficit in the budget would be need to be fulfilled by

Plymouth City Council and Cornwall County Council.

Members discussed:

- a) Councillors would continue efforts to lobby government for fair financial support for the important strategic gateway between Cornwall and Devon.
- b) Members would set up a petition for users of the bridge as well as residents of Devon and Cornwall to sign and once 100,000 have signed this would trigger a formal ministerial response.

Cabinet agreed to:-

1. TBTFJC's preferred option for toll revision of uniform 30% toll increases on both Tag and cash tolls for all user classes be approved. Such approval to be subject to the Joint Committee making a decision whether or not to implement the preferred option following consideration of the public consultation responses. The Joint Committee being given the authority to make the implementation decision;
2. That Plymouth City Council, through the Portfolio Holders and Joint Chairs of the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee, continue to lobby Government and support a User's Campaign for a fair contribution towards maintaining the A38 across the Tamar Bridge to reduce the burden on the user

228. **Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry 2022-2023 Revenue and Capital Estimates**

Councillor Jonathan Drear (Cabinet Member for Transport) introduced the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry 2022-23 Revenue and Capital Estimates report to members and highlighted the projects that were required to be undertaken as well as maintenance works.

Future plans included the bridge protective coating phase three and the ferry refits which were scheduled for 2030.

Cabinet agreed to recommend the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee's Annual Business Plan and the 2022/23 Revenue Estimates and Capital Programme to Council for approval.