

City Council

Friday 30 September 2022

PRESENT:

Lord Mayor, in the Chair.

Councillor Pauline Murphy, Vice Chair.

Councillors Allen, Mrs Aspinall, Bingley, Mrs Bowyer, Briars-Delve, Mrs Bridgeman, Carlyle, Churchill, Coker, Cree, Cresswell, Deacon, Drear, Evans OBE, Goslin, Harrison, Hendy, Holloway, Hulme, Kelly, Laing, Lugg, Dr Mahony, McDonald, Nicholson, Patel, Mrs Pengelly, Poyser, Rennie, Salmon, Shayer, Singh, Stevens, Stoneman, Tippetts, Tofan, Tuffin, Tuohy, Wakeham, Ms Watkin and Wheeler.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Mrs Beer, Burden, Collins, Darcy, Finn, Haydon, Loveridge, Lowry, Partridge, Penberthy, Reilly, Riley, Smith and Vincent.

The meeting started at 1.00 pm and finished at 1.58 pm.

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.

10. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

11. **Appointment of Interim Section 151 Officer (Head of Finance)**

The Appointment of David Northey (Head of Integrated Finance) as the Interim Section 151 Officer (Service Director for Finance) was proposed by The Leader and after contributions from Councillor Tudor Evans OBE (Shadow Leader) and Councillor Mark Shayer (Cabinet Member for Finance and Economy), the Council agreed to –

1. Confirm David Northey as the Council's Section 151 Officer with effect 3 October 2022 at midnight. The reason for this appointment is to meet statutory obligation under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 also requires that the post holder is a member of one of the CCAB accountancy bodies;
2. Thank Brendan Arnold, the outgoing Section 151 officer, for his contribution to the Council.

12. **Questions by Councillors**

	From	To	Subject
I	Councillor Sally Cresswell	Councillor Charlotte	Concern over the loss of 3 senior members of staff in Education and

		Carlyle	Children and Young People's Services, all of which are due to leave this term, and the speed at which the posts will be filled.
	<p>Response: No concern at present as the department is in the incredibly capable hands of Sharon Muldoon, and news of their replacements will be made in the coming months.</p> <p>Supplementary: With people being less likely to move for jobs, especially in the current economic climate, is there not concern about finding suitable replacements? Are there any packages that will be put together to try and overcome this issue?</p> <p>Response: The department is in good hands with Sharon Muldoon's leadership, and she is well connected. Packages are being looked into, but Plymouth, and the South-West, holds its own in terms of offer.</p>		
2	Councillor Mark Coker	Councillor Jonathan Drean	With the onset of Winter, and delays in Highways replacing broken and damaged street lighting, what plans are in place to make sure works take place on schedule? Are there any plans to cut street lighting?
	<p>Response: There are no plans to cut street lighting. Alternative measures are being looked at. Councillor Drean also advised that a report is imminent, which he would be willing to share.</p> <p>Sup: Why have some residents being waiting 4 months for a street light to be replaced?</p> <p>Response: Councillor Drean advised that there have been contractual failures, which are being looked into, as well as delays in getting parts from manufacturers. There are approximately 30 in the city out of 30,000 awaiting work, but he was happy to look into a specific location.</p>		
3	Councillor Eddie Rennie	The Leader	There have been several occasions over the summer where travellers have set up unauthorised encampments across the city, including in the Sutton and Mount Gould Ward. Can the Leader reassure that the Council and its partners are doing everything to ensure sites are managed?
	<p>Response: The Council has been clear that it must move swiftly to remove illegal encampments when ASB and environmental damage can be evidenced. Councillor Bingley explained they would be happy to look into specific examples with more detail.</p> <p>Supplementary: An issue with securing sites would be financial implications. Would funding be available to secure sites?</p>		

	Response: The Leader explained that some activity in this area may need to be paused due to the current financial position of the Council, but specific situations can be looked into.		
4	Councillor Tudor Evans OBE	The Leader	How many Council meetings did The Leader attend in 5 week absence from the city over the summer? Sup: How many meetings have had to be cancelled and meetings with potential invested?
	<p>Response: The Leader informed Councillor Evans OBE that he had not been absent from the city for 5 weeks.</p> <p>Supplementary: Councillor Evans OBE then asked how many meetings had to be cancelled in the 5 week period because The Leader could not attend?</p> <p>Response: The Leader explained that he did not know of any meetings that had been cancelled as his leave was pre-arranged.</p>		
5	Councillor Sarah Allen	Councillor Jonathan Drean	What plans are to make the city centre ready for Christmas with lights and to help small local businesses?
	Response: The strategic planning and infrastructure team have been liaising with businesses and the City Centre Company, and the lights will be going up as normal. Work is being done with contractors working to make a better experience prior to Christmas, although some may need to continue after, but it will be made safe during the Christmas period. Councillor Drean he was happy to provide more details on Christmas lighting in the future.		
6	Councillor Mary Aspinall	The Leader	At the Health and Wellbeing Board, held on 29 September 2022, a report on the cost of living task force was presented and included some innovative ideas, but few people know about it. Could reassurance be given that it will be shared between members so everyone knows about it?
	<p>Response: Yes and The Leader added that members of the public could access information online at www.plymouthonlinedirectory.com/costoflivingsupport and asked Members to promote the page.</p> <p>Supplementary: Councillor Aspinall asked for further reassurance that the findings of the taskforce would feed into the data from the Child Poverty Working Group, as there was some suggestion that child poverty in Plymouth was falling but that trend could change in the coming months.</p>		

	Response: The Leader explained that his administration were committed in this unprecedented financial crisis to put the right interventions in to mitigate these issues.		
7	Councillor Jemima Laing	The Leader	Councillor Laing noted that Councillor Collins and Councillor Burden, who lived in Gloucestershire, were not in attendance and asked how The Leader had been satisfied that they had been properly serving their communities, and what it would take to determine their roles untenable?
	<p>Response: The Leader responded by saying that levels of casework and participation in meetings internally and externally is considered, and the situation is not unprecedented.</p> <p>Supplementary: Councillor Laing asked what advice, as Leader, he would give to Councillors Burden and Collins with regards to remaining in their roles.</p> <p>Response: Conversations have taken place, but will remain private, as in any organisation. It is for elected individuals to decide how to perform their duties.</p>		
8	Councillor Stephen Hulme	Councillor Jonathan Drean	Councillor Hume explained that there were ongoing issues with pavement parking with cars being totally on the pavement in Ham Ward and asked if there was any movement on Council powers to tackle the issue.
	Response: Councillor Drean explained that other Councillors had also been in touch with regards to this issue. He added that he was not aware of any legislation having been passed yet, but would check with the team and update Councillor Hulme.		
9	Councillor Dylan Tippetts	Councillor Pat Patel	Councillor Tippetts reported that there had been an increase of muggings of young women in the Mutley area since the return of university students and asked why was a plan not enacted to prevent this?
	<p>Response: Councillor Patel explained that before Fresher's week, the board met to discuss measures to be put in place, right up to Halloween, which included additional buses and a Police presence in the City Centre. Councillor Patel added that he was not aware of an increase in incidents.</p> <p>Supplementary: Councillor Tippetts explained it seemed that everyone in his class knew someone who had been mugged since the beginning of term and asked if Councillor Patel and other Cabinet Members would be willing to hold an open forum to listen to the experiences of university students.</p>		

	Response: Councillor Patel highlighted the importance of reporting incidents to the Police and explained that the University has a process in place for reporting incidents and causes of concern to the Council.		
10	Councillor Nick Kelly	The Leader	Councillor Kelly explained that whilst he was delighted that Plymouth had successfully bid for an Enterprise Zone, connectivity remains an issue with the airport being closed and asked if The Leader would be prepared to bring a full report to the next City Council meeting?
	<p>Response: The Leader agreed to provide a report and explained that it is the intention of his administration to acquire the land and have it used for aviation purposes.</p> <p>Supplementary: Councillor Kelly asked The Leader to confirm what the value of the airport was on Plymouth City Council's assets.</p> <p>Response: The Leader declined to answer as that information was privileged due to an ongoing legal process.</p>		
11	Councillor Bill Stevens	Councillor Pat Patel	Councillor Stevens asked when it would be announced that Devonport Library would be open for more than the current 2 days a week.
	<p>Response: Councillor Stevens explained that the Council did not have resources to keep it open more than the current 2 days, but if volunteers could be found, this could change.</p> <p>Supplementary: Councillor Stevens asked when Councillor Patel would find resource to keep Devonport Library open for longer to provide a deprived area of Plymouth with better access to books, computers and heat.</p> <p>Response: Councillor Patel explained that the financial crisis is affecting organisations such as the Council and there are not enough resources to keep all libraries open all of the time. He added that Livewell are looking into warm venues that can be provided, and more would be announced on this when it was known.</p>		
12	Councillor George Wheeler	The Leader	Councillor Wheeler asked The Leader how he felt with regards to the government's current position on the financial crisis and its current policies potential effects on the people of Plymouth and on Plymouth City Council.
	Response: The Leader explained that Councillors are part of their communities and they too feel the effects of inflation and explained some of the policies put in place to help people and reiterated the		

	importance of directing residents to the online cost of living hub for support.		
13	Councillor Mark Coker	Councillor Bill Wakeham	Councillor Coker asked what was being done to tackle the issue of overflowing public bins.
	<p>Response: Councillor Wakeham explained that a new waste vehicle has been ordered. There were maintenance issues with vehicles repetitively breaking, so a new vehicle was ordered and is on its way.</p> <p>Supplementary: Councillor Coker asked why Councillors were receiving casework responses explaining that ‘everything would be back to normal’ by September, if the new machinery has not arrived?</p> <p>Response: Councillor Wakeham explained that it had been due to arrive in September but due to delays related to the COVID19 pandemic, it would now be October. Councillor Wakeham offered to contact Councillor Coker with an update as soon as there was more information.</p>		
14	Councillor Tudor Evans OBE	The Leader	<p>Councillor Evans OBE asked if The Leader supported the government’s recent announcement of tax cuts for people earning over £150,000 a year?</p> <p>Sup: OBR offered to produce a report for the</p> <p>Do you support the tax cut for the richest in this country?</p> <p>Individual who is Chancellor. Cannot tell if the right or wrong thing has been done until years after.</p>
	<p>Response: The Leader explained that it was hard to pass judgement on the decision of a new Chancellor so early in their tenure.</p> <p>Supplementary: Councillor Evans OBE asked if The Leader supported the Chancellor’s tax cut for the richest 625,000 people in the country with a 1% tax cut for the remainder.</p> <p>Response: The Leader explained he would delay judgement on the decision as it was a national question and it would be likely that it would not be deemed right or wrong until years after the economic crisis.</p>		
15	Councillor Chip Tofan	Councillor Bill Wakeham	Councillor Tofan explained that there had been issues in previous months in Crownhill village and thanked team for

			their support. He added. However, that the current solutions did not seem sustainable and asked in Councillor Wakeham would be happy to meet to find a sustainable resolution for the problem on site?	
Response: Councillor Wakeham agreed to meet Councillor Tofan on site at a mutually agreeable time.				
16	Councillor Eddie Rennie	Councillor James Stoneman	Councillor Rennie asked when the lanes in and around St Jude's would be cleared of weeds as he had not received a reply to his email to Councillor Stoneman?	I have chased this up and will keep on it and keep you updated with progress.
Response: Councillor Stoneman apologised for not updating Councillor Rennie but explained that he had been chasing this issue and would do so again and update Councillor Rennie and Ward Councillors.				
17	Councillor Bill Stevens	Councillor Pat Patel	Councillor Stevens asked Councillor Patel to confirm if there were any discussions taking place to remove the telephone element from the Council's Contact Centre.	
Response: Councillor Patel explained that the Council is looking to move to a more digital service, but full details were not available to him yet, but confirmed there were no plans to cut telephone services altogether.				
Supplementary: Councillor Stevens asked Councillor Patel to confirm that there would be consultation with Councillors across the Chamber to ensure Councillors would be fully informed and so views could be taken into account in any plans.				
Response: Councillor Patel explained that a consultation on the issue had already taken place for Councillors and residents.				
18	Councillor Nick Kelly	Councillor Mark Shayer	Councillor Kelly explained that in February 2022, a number of Councillors voted against a budget which proposed the lowest Council Tax increase in 6 years and an alternative budget was put forward. Councillor Kelly asked if an update could be provided on whether the savings were being achieved, if they were realistic and if there were further implications on Council services because of it.	

	Response: Councillor Shayer explained that the global economic crisis had caused changes to be made to the budgets and revenues within the Council and that significant efforts were being made to make savings to close the overspend gap.
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Please note that questions, answers, supplementary questions and supplementary answers have been summarised.