

Cabinet

Monday 11 September 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor Evans OBE, in the Chair.

Councillor Laing, Vice Chair.

Councillors Aspinall, Briars-Delve, Coker, Cresswell, Dann, Haydon and Penberthy.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Lowry.

Also in attendance: Paul Barnard (Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Tina Brinkworth (Head of Skills and Post 16), Chris Burton (Manager, Mount Edgcumbe), Nicola Bridge (Head of Ocean Advocacy and Engagement, Ocean Conservation Trust), Emma Crowther (Interim Head of Commissioning), Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning), David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), Elaine Hayes (Interim CEO, National Marine Park), David Haley (Director of Children's Services), Rhys Jones (Chief Operating Officer, Plymouth Active Leisure), Alex King (Centre Manager, Mount Batten Watersports and Activities Centre), Tracey Lee (Chief Executive), Sharon Mercer (Head of Strategic Programmes), David Northey (Interim Section 151 Officer), Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor) and Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 2.02 pm and finished at 4.45 pm.

Note: The full discussion can be viewed on the webcast. At a future meeting, the Cabinet 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.

37. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

38. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

39. **Questions from the Public**

There was one question from a member of the public:

The following question was received from Mr Stephen Dart and answered by The Leader:

Question: What checks and balances are in place to check that the £2.75 million Council funding agreed by the Cabinet in March 2023 for the Brickfields redevelopment is spent on capital projects and not as revenue e.g.

Answer: Thank you to Mr Dart for his question.

Before I answer the question I think it's worth noting the progress that has already been made on this project over

new players?	<p>recent weeks. At the end of August Plymouth Argyle Community Trust took over the management of the site, ahead of the refurbishment works that they are due to complete on the existing sports centre over the coming months. And those works will just be the first step of a much wider £21m investment in the Brickfields site.</p> <p>That investment that will not only transform Brickfields, it will also transform opportunities for the Devonport community, for sport in the City and also, of course, our professional sports clubs.</p> <p>This project is the result of an amazing and long term partnership between the Council, Plymouth Argyle, the Argyle Community Trust, Plymouth Albion, Devonport Community Leisure Ltd and existing users of the site.</p> <p>This deal is about massive investment in new facilities and making the most of the Brickfields site. It is clearly also a significant inward investment - in particular from Argyle who are themselves investing £18m across the club and the community trust. But for me this deal is about ambition for our communities, it is about better health outcomes for the people of Devonport and it is about better access to facilities for our local residents.</p> <p>The question we've received from Mr Dart asks what checks and balances are in place to check that the £2.75 million Council funding agreed by the Cabinet in March 2023 for the Brickfields redevelopment is spent on capital projects and not as revenue e.g. new players. I can confirm to Mr Dart that only around 20% of the funding approved will be paid as grant funding to Plymouth Argyle anyway and that all of this will support capital works such as new walkways through the site and</p>
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	<p>improved public spaces. The Council will, of course, be monitoring these works and will employ an external surveyor to ensure that all grant funding claims are supported by evidence of works completed.</p> <p>I would also like to add that we are ensuring that the site is protected for sports and community uses in perpetuity. And we have placed the community at the forefront of the governance, underpinned by a set of community promises and an ongoing role for ward councillors and Devonport Community Leisure Ltd.</p> <p>I want to commend Councillor Mark Coker for his work in this space, who has represented his community, extraordinarily over the past few months.</p>
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40. **Chair's Urgent Business**

The Leader invited Councillor Mary Aspinall (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care) to give an update on NHS Dentistry. She highlighted the following points:

- a) The problems of access to NHS dentistry in Plymouth were well-known, long-standing, and had been discussed on numerous occasions through Scrutiny meetings and at meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Board;
- b) All age groups and populations were at risk of poor oral health, even though it was largely preventable, but oral health problems were concentrated in vulnerable and socially disadvantaged groups;
- c) The lack of free or affordable dental care had huge impacts on people such as;
 1. The pain driving people to try and remove their own teeth;
 2. Painful teeth leading to poor diets or soft food that often lacked nutritional value;
 3. Changes in appearance was stigmatising and often reduced people's confidence and led to feelings of isolation;
 4. If a child was impacted, it could often have a life-long impact;

- d) Over 600 children per year had to have teeth extracted under general anaesthetic in Plymouth – an operation that required medical resources, but was avoidable;
- e) Plymouth City Council had set up a cross-party, multi-agency Dental Task Force to urgently address the issue and they had engaged with NHS Devon, who had recently become the commissioners of NHS dental services, and asked them to take urgent action to address the dental health needs of Plymouth residents, especially for the over 20,000 people on the waiting list;
- f) The NHS had said that 50% of the population should be able to access NHS dentistry, but in Plymouth only 25% could, meaning that there were 68,000 people who should have been able to access NHS dentistry, but could not;
- g) £7-9 million of NHS funding that was set aside for dentistry in 2023/24 would not be spent in Plymouth based on NHS Devon's plans;
- h) She then reiterated the ask that NHS Devon ICB urgently took action to address the dental health needs of all Plymouth residents, specifically in relation to the 21,729 on the waiting list (May 2023 data), whilst being aware there were tens of thousands more who were not on the waiting list and this could be done by:
 - 1. Ensuring that a significant amount of the annual 'claw-back' (of high street NHS dental underspend) was ring-fenced to be spent on NHS dental provision in Plymouth;
 - 2. Encouraging NHS Devon ICB to work with the Council's Dental Task Force to use the annual 'claw-back' to support alternative and innovative solutions to provide more NHS dental capacity in the city through the development of flexible commissioning models.

The Leader added:

- i) The Cabinet had been shocked to learn how much funding had been unspent in Plymouth because they couldn't find dentists to spend it with;
- j) It did not seem right that the Government wanted the funding back, rather than allowing the NHS to use it to encourage NHS dentistry providers into the city.

Councillor Mary Aspinall (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care) then added:

- k) The next meeting of the taskforce was 15 September 2023 and she was hopeful for an update;
- l) The dental needs of Plymouth had been assessed in 2019, when there were under 10,000 people on the waiting list, but there had been no movement to improve since then.

Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture, Events and Communications) added:

- m) She had been hearing anecdotally from women who had recently given birth, who were entitled to free dentistry post-partum, that they were not able to access NHS dentistry.

The Cabinet agreed to ask NHS Devon ICB to urgently take action to:

1. Ensure that a significant amount of the annual 'claw-back' (of high street NHS dental underspend) was ring-fenced to be spent on NHS dental provision in Plymouth;
2. Encourage NHS Devon ICB to work with the Council's Dental Task Force to use the annual 'claw-back' to support alternative and innovative solutions to provide more NHS dental capacity in the city through the development of flexible commissioning models.

(Please note that Councillor Sally Cresswell and Tracey Lee joined the meeting during this item)

41. **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader made the following announcements:

- a) Brittany Ferries were expecting shore power in place within two years, which would mean that the diesel engines would not need to be run in port, but it would mean that the company would need to convert their ferries;
- b) The Cabinet would be putting pressure on Government to take action with regards to the 'social dumping' that had been done by P&O, to discourage this behaviour and make it clear it was not welcome in British ports;
- c) New investment by the Council had been made on Embankment Road to bring a new hotel to the city;
- d) It was important to remember that whilst Plymouth was resilient it had been impacted significantly by the COVID19 pandemic, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis as well as the worsening of the Council's own resources;
- e) Plymouth had some of the most experienced people, nationally, in Local Government in its Cabinet and had good access to influence policy makers through working with the Local Government Association;
- f) There were 5 priorities for the Cabinet which included:
- g) Green Investment, Jobs and Skills – this included maximising any opportunities to come from the Celtic Array project;
- h) Build more homes – Plymouth needed to attract workers to the city and provide them with somewhere to live;
- i) Fewer potholes and cleaner, and greener, streets;

- j) Better access to healthcare;
- k) Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour;
- l) Investment had been unlocked for Derriford Hospital improvements;
- m) Factories would be built as part of the next phase of Oceansgate through a £6.5 million investment;
- n) A Port Strategy was being developed for the first time with Brittany Ferries looking to encourage more freight and Cattewater Harbour Trust were looking at ways they could expand their operations;
- o) Investment had been made in Colin Campbell Court, and the temporary buildings would be on site shortly;
- p) Brunel Plaza's first phase had been completed, with more underway, with the University of Plymouth investing £40 million of the total £80 million in the site;
- q) There was significant investment of £1.5-2 billion in the dockyards underway and talks were being had about how the city would benefit as a whole;
- r) There had been significant national press coverage over the summer on events at The Box and the National Firework Championships.

42. **Cabinet Member Updates**

Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure and HR & OD) provided the following updates:

- a) Over the summer, free or low cost holiday clubs had been offered to local children on a variety of subjects such as water sports, science, sports, dance and theatre, as well as a forest school;
- b) 10 new holiday club providers had been worked with and 8 special educational needs specific holiday clubs were run;
- c) Full, fit and fed programs had been delivered, and over 4 park events, over 2,500 lunches were handed out;
- d) The council had worked with Melanoma UK to provide free sun safety and protection to families;
- e) The council had also worked with Fair Share to provide takeaway bags on Friday evenings to some older young people;
- f) Budget friendly cooking workshops had been provided;

- g) At events, cost of living leaflets were shared to signpost people who might need support;
- h) Plymouth Active Leisure had had a cost of living summer program with free and low-cost taster sessions;
- i) Over 420 people attended the Mount Wise pools for a family fun night, organised by Ward Councillors and Plymouth Active Leisure;
- j) People could visit [Cost of living | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/cost-of-living) for support with the cost of living.

Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture, Events and Communications) gave the following updates:

- k) Bonfire Night 2023 would take place on The Hoe, which was a centrepiece of a free fun campaign, part of the Cost of Living Action Plan, to ensure there were activities that families could enjoy without worrying about additional costs;
- l) It had been important to bring back Bonfire Night as it was an event that brought communities together to enjoy the evening, around 25,000 people in attendance.

Councillor Sally Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Cemeteries and Crematoria) updated Cabinet on the following:

- m) Freshers Week was approaching, and street marshals would be starting on 8 September 2023 to provide additional support to students, and would be linked up with the CCTV system to enable them to be deployed to the areas where they were most needed and would also be linked in with the Police, Street Pastors and the night bus, all funded through Safer Streets funding awarded to the University of Plymouth;
- n) The first Time for Change conference had been held in Plymouth, which explored the role of masculinity for a better future;
- o) There had been an increase of 23% in engagement with the summer reading challenge through Plymouth Libraries, library visits were up by 19% and Rhyme Time was up 49.64%.

Councillor Tom Brairs-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change) provided the following update:

- p) The previously unused top deck of the Theatre Royal Car Park now housed a large solar array and was powering the car park, with surplus energy being exported back into the local grid, with the possibility of using this additional energy to power heat pumps at the Guildhall and Council House being explored.

Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) provided the following updates:

- q) Westwood were developing a site in Plympton into 5 bungalows, 2 of which would be affordable home-ownership, and the other 3 for social rent;
- r) Moses Close in Southway development was underway on 13 affordable homes for rent;
- s) 10 new eco-friendly homes were nearing completion in Plymstock, invested in by Plymouth City Council, with the profits from the project going into the investment fund for homes to support more affordable homes in the city, and a tree would be planted in the village green at the site with a plaque in memory of the late Alderwoman Councillor Vivien Pengelly, who had been involved in the project.

Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) provided the following updates:

- t) Plymouth City Council had been proactive in communicating with school leaders on the use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in schools buildings, with surveys being undertaken since 2018 in all 14 council maintained schools and none were found to contain it;
- u) Academies and Trusts were responsible for their own school buildings and had been contacted by the Department for Education earlier in the year and it had been understood none contained RAAC. The education team did contact the chief executives of academics to confirm relevant checks had been undertaken and offer support if needed;
- v) The Area SEND Inspection of Plymouth Local Area Partnership took place from 16-30 June 2023 and the report was published on 22 August 2023 and the council have fully accepted OFSTED's findings;
- w) Five areas of priority action had been identified, one in particular relating to vulnerable children living in residential special schools and children's homes at a distance and children receiving short breaks, was addressed immediately to ensure reassurance about their safety;
- x) Cross partnership work was underway to communicate about the report and get engagement in developing and implementing an action plan for improvement which would be published on 29 September 2023;
- y) The Short Breaks Innovation Grant programme was designed to support young people with additional needs to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to transition to adulthood, securely, and in a way that maximised life chances, and a 3rd round of funding was being applied for to enable 200 young people aged 14-25 to access the program, which was running in partnership with a number of providers across the city;
- z) A school attendance campaign had been launched at the beginning of September as attendance levels had become a national issue following the COVID19 pandemic, increasing in Plymouth from 4.9% pre-pandemic to 8.8% post-pandemic, and the campaign was working with schools and MATs to help them to support their parents

and carers, which had received largely positive feedback, had been covered by ITV Westcountry News, and would enter its second phase later in the year.

43. **National Marine Park Horizons Project**

The Leader introduced the item and highlighted:

- a) The National Lottery would receive the Round Two submission for the National Marine Park that week;
- b) It was important to celebrate the landscape, but it was unusual in that most of it was under the water and hidden from view so it was important to reconnect the people of Plymouth with the ocean, and Plymouth could be used as a blueprint for future National Marine Parks;
- c) It was important that projects of such significance in the city were cross-party to survive changes of political administration;
- d) It was a £22 million project and the bid was asking the National Lottery for £11.6 million;
- e) 10,000 people had been listened to in the development of the project with partners across the city, and schools would be engaged with to embed an NMP champion into every school in the city;
- f) A digital park would be created for those who would not be able to access the water, or who might not want to;
- g) A number of neglected buildings would be brought back into use across the foreshore.

Councillor Tom Brairs-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change) added:

- h) Thanked the team for their hard work on the submission and said it had been a pleasure working with them;
- i) There would be a nature boost programme to restore mudflats, sea grass and estuaries to bring back seahorses, sand eels, rare birds and fish;
- j) Community Grants would be available to science and nature projects.

At this point in the meeting, the video at this link was played: [National Marine Park funding bid to be submitted - YouTube](#)

In response to questions Elaine Hayes (Interim CEO, National Marine Park), Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning), David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), Chris Burton (Manager, Mount Edgcumbe), Rhys Jones (Chief Operating Officer, Plymouth Active Leisure), Alex King (Centre Manager, Mount Batten Watersports and Activities Centre) and Nicola Bridge (Head of Ocean Advocacy and Engagement, Ocean

Conservation Trust) explained:

- k) The team were most excited about the investment in nature was going to be transformative, the way partners had worked together on the bid and would continue to as the project progressed, the positive impact on water safety and sea swimming and would encourage more people to engage with the water, how engagement with local children and schools would improve, how it aimed to remove barriers for all people in accessing the water, and improvements to the buildings on the foreshore and better engagement with heritage.

The Leader then reiterated:

- l) The importance of having the first National Marine Park in Plymouth, and the importance of the designation of the first National Park in 1951 and the work that had been done to preserve areas across the country;
- m) His thanks to the team for their hard work is getting the bid ready for submission.

44. **Cost of Living Action Plan**

Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure and HR & OD) introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- a) It was not a standalone project, instead influencing the way the city tackled poverty moving forward, and the plan would transform into a long-term plan;
- b) Cost of things such as food and energy bills had stalled, but were not decreasing, and government support was not the same as it was in the winter of 2022/23, and for most people, wages were virtually stagnant;
- c) The cost of living crisis was causing people to enter financial crisis, who had never been in that situation before;
- d) Gambling and gambling debt was increasing, and this would be added into aspects of the plan moving forward.

Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health) added:

- e) The was developed with partners across the city, who would continue to be involved as the plan took a dynamic approach moving forward;
- f) There were four main themes within the plan:
- g) Offers and discounts available and promoted on the cost of living hub;
- h) Making money go further;
- i) Crisis support (financial support and mental health support);

- j) Asks for Government;
- k) The hub online had the plan itself as well as lots of helpful links to information and support, with support from partners across the city in helping other people access it if they can't themselves, or haven't heard of it;
- l) As winter approached it was especially important to consider the dangers of cold homes and how to support people in keeping warm, as well as helping them with Christmas, a time that could fill people with dread due to the cost.

Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) added:

- m) Feedback at Plymstock school had been very positive,

Councillor Sue Dann then added:

- n) Leaflets had been distributed to all well-being hubs, libraries, 60 churches, the job centre, PEC advisors, schools and midwives as well as handed out at events;
- o) In August, there had been over 2,000 hits on the cost of living hub, most on the 'free things to do in Plymouth' area and this would continue to be updated for October half term and the Christmas period;
- p) Since it launched, it had had over 200,000 visits and over 7,000 engagements;
- q) It was especially important to ensure that people did not feel stigmatised;
- r) Work in October would be done with banks and the Citizen's Advice Bureau, to help people before they get into financial trouble;
- s) Plymouth Charter involved over 330 businesses and had nearly 700 LinkedIn members and have agreed to look as employers at whether they are paying their staff fairly and more to add to encouragement to get other people back into work;
- t) Advice would be provided on how people could make their money go further at Christmas, for example buying some items at a charity shop;
- u) The hub could be accessed at: [Cost of living | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK;](https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/cost-of-living)
- v) Partners across the city would be sent comms packs to help them share the same messaging on their social media sites.
- w) In response to a question, it was explained:
- x) PADAN and Improving Lives were involved in the work and Councillor Dann would be attending an Improving Lives event in October to talk more about what the Council was doing in the cost of living crisis.

- y) The Leader of the Council thanked:
- z) The team involved at the Council putting the plan together and the extensive list of organisations involved in developing and sharing the information.
- aa) The Cabinet agreed to note the Cost of Living Action Plan.

45. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 - 2027/28**

In Councillor Mark Lowry's absence, Councillor Chris Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) introduced the item:

- a) The document provided the strategic framework that linked the Council's revenue budget, capital program, treasury management strategy and the capital strategy for the following 5 years;
- b) The LGA, CIPFA and LGIU would all recommend that each administration took such a plan to Council for approval, but the last one had been by the previous Labour administration in 2018;
- c) The plan considered that the budget had already been set for 2023/24 and that the latter years were provided for illustrative purposes;
- d) The strategy set out the financial principles and objectives, whilst working to deliver the priorities of the corporate plan;
- e) The report showed a forecasted £11.2 million funding gap for 2024/25 that would need to be closed as part of the budget process, and over 5 years there was a £185 million gap;
- f) Inflation, increase fuel costs and the cost of living crisis were impacting the council as well as additional pressures in adult social care, children's social care and support for the homeless;
- g) It was unknown what action Government would take to deliver reform to local government funding as there had been a change in the majority of funding no longer coming from Government, but instead from local taxation;
- h) The budget included an additional £2.6 million to honour the commitment to pay social care providers the living wage rather than national minimum wage, as well as £1.5 million of one-off allocations used to balance the 2023/24 budget which needed to be covered;
- i) There was a need to find new ways to provide services, to work with partners wherever possible, to do things more efficiently, to make the most of the Council's assets, focus and clarity on organisational purpose to reform the Children's directorate;
- j) The Place directorate would continue to prioritise growth to ensure the delivery of frontline services to meet the needs of residents across the city by maximising

income;

- k) The People directorate would continue to work on reducing demand for homelessness services through early intervention and prevention as well as improvements in access to health care and improvement of outcomes for those leaving hospital;
- l) Transformation and Customer Support Services would continue to play a key role in supporting demand-led services, with finance, legal, procurement and HR all due to review their own operating models;
- m) The plan contained a very clear ambition in the capital program to invest in and transform the city and thanked Councillor Lowry for his work on the plan.

David Northey (Interim Section 151 Officer) added:

- n) He had made a commitment to create a medium-term financial plan at Audit and Governance Committee, and it had been a recommendation from the last budget scrutiny meetings;
- o) The figures and information would change as the years progressed.

In response to questions it was explained:

- p) The plan should be reviewed in the mid-term of the following financial year as it would inform and update the plan;
- q) The council were trying to deliver the same services with less funding from Government, which is what was primarily causing increases in council tax and this was being picked up by national media, and similar issues were being experienced across the country;
- r) David Northey would be attending a DLUHC meeting later that week where they wanted to understand more about what was 'happening on the ground' and the team always took the opportunity to get local issues across;
- s) There was a national conversation to be had about how much funding local government got to provide children's social care services, as it had become a big issue that could no longer be solved locally;
- t) SIGOMA had made a recommendation that the distribution of funding should return to being done based on levels of deprivation, something the conservative government ceased in 2010, which had robbed local authorities of money they were using to try and eliminate poverty or to deal with the consequences of deprivation.

The Cabinet agreed to recommend the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2027/28 to City Council for approval.

Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) introduced the item and highlighted:

- a) 1 in 10 young people in Plymouth did not succeed in education and make a positive transition into adult life and the world of work and the plan had been developed in response to this;
- b) It was the first strategic plan committed to reducing high levels of young people not in education, employment or training, as it could be detrimental to both mental and physical health and could lead to unemployment, low pay, low quality work and less feelings of success;
- c) The plan recognised that the priority groups of young people would require some additional support and that no single agency could address the challenges in Plymouth and it would require a strong multi-agency approach at both a strategic and operational level to deliver early interventions and extensive support for those who needed it;
- d) The plan had been circulated widely through the diverse membership of the employment and skills board;
- e) The consultation process, along with wider stakeholder engagement, had shaped the priorities, and would continue to influence interventions moving forward.

Tina Brinkworth (Head of Skills and Post 16) added:

- f) The plan gave the opportunity to move to a more preventative model, whilst also support those young people who were currently not in employment, education or training;
- g) Only 1 in 5 care leavers made it into employment so creating opportunities was key;
- h) A pilot program working intensively with 4 young people with SEND had been successful with all four transitioning into employment, education or training.

David Haley (Director of Children's Services) added:

- i) The strategy focused on supporting specific vulnerable groups of young people;
- j) It looked at all the partnerships across the city to maximise support.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- k) DWP were involved with the work, along with approximately 80 other partners;
- l) The Skills Launchpad acted as a triage to seamlessly get them to the right support for them;
- m) SEND opportunities were being grown and more information shared with young people, their families and employers to raise awareness of additional funding available

to better support these young people in apprenticeship roles;

- n) The use of language was important and using 'SEET' (seeking education, employment or training) instead of 'NEET' (not in education, employment of training) when communicating with young people was very important.

The Leader added:

- o) It was important that the Council did more to provide supported placements and apprenticeships.

That Cabinet agreed to approve the Unlocking Plymouth's Potential strategic plan.

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