

**Cabinet**

**Monday 8 January 2024**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Evans OBE, in the Chair.

Councillor Laing, Vice Chair.

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

Apologies for absence: Councillors Lowry and Aspinall.

Also in attendance: Councillor Darcy (via Teams), Matt Garrett (Service Director for Community Connections) (via Teams), David Haley (Director for Children’s Services), Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health) (via Teams), Graham Hooper (Senior Officer for Intelligence and Licensing), Nicola Horne (Environmental Health Manager), Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk), Tracey Lee (Chief Executive), David Northey (Interim Service Director for Finance), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive) and Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor).

The meeting started at 2.05 pm and finished at 3.14 pm.

81. **Declarations of Interest**

Name	Item Number	Reason	Interest
Councillor Mark Coker	12	Non-practicing License Holder.	Pecuniary.

82. **Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting held on 11 December 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

83. **Questions from the Public**

There were no questions from the public.

84. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There was no items of Chair’s urgent business.

85. **Budget Scrutiny Recommendations**

Councillor Darcy introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- a) All scrutiny chairs took a role in the process, and the membership of the Committee had reflected that of the Scrutiny Committees, in terms of proportionality;

- b) Expressed thanks to Cabinet and Council Officer for the quality of the papers received and the open conversations that took place;
- c) Highlighted recommendation 2, which requested a review of the adult social care funding model and recommendation 7 relating to home to school transport.

Cabinet thanked the members of the Budget Scrutiny Select Committee for their review of the Council's budget preparations for 2024-2025.

Cabinet agreed to note the recommendations from the Budget Scrutiny Select Committee and agreed to provide a response to the recommendations at the 12 February 2024 meeting of the Cabinet.

86. **Budget Engagement Highlight Report 2024/25**

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

- a) The annual budget engagement was initiated in November 2023, lasting for four weeks, and garnered 436 online responses;
- b) The top priorities outlined in the questionnaire were the Council's emphasis on collaborating with the NHS to enhance healthcare and dentistry services in the coming 12 months, addressing reducing the number of potholes and striving for cleaner, greener streets and transport;
- c) Over 90% of respondents had agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should protect local services;
- d) 50% of respondents had agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should avoid reducing or stopping services by increasing fees and charges by the rate of inflation;
- e) Over 50% of respondents had agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should help pay for rising demand for care services for the elderly and vulnerable;
- f) Over 50% of respondents had agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should help achieve the ambition for Plymouth to become a carbon neutral city by 2023 by using green energy sources wherever possible.

Cabinet agreed to note the report and consider the results in relation to the final budget recommendation to City Council.

87. **Budget update including the settlement**

David Northey (Service Director for Finance) gave the following updates:

- a) The settlement incorporated a reduction in the Services Grant, imposing new burdens on local authorities with an 84% cut within two years;

- b) The settlement was limited to one year only, given the impending General Election;
- c) Business Rates Compensation Grant had been confirmed in September at 6.7%;
- d) The Revenue Support Grant had increased by 6.7%;
- e) No new funding was allocated specifically for Children's Social Care; instead, it was integrated into the overarching Social Care Grant;
- f) Adult social care market sustainability and discharge funds both increased;
- g) Overall, grants had increased by £9.4 million.

88. **Council Tax Discounts and Premiums**

David Northey (Service Director for Finance) gave the following updates:

- a) In March 2023, a notice was unanimously approved at a City Council meeting to provide council tax payers with a minimum of 12 months' notice for any changes;
- b) Due to the delays the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill faced in Parliament and receiving Royal Assent in October, the council would have to reconfirm the commitment above, resulting in a new start date of 1 April 2025.

Cabinet agreed to recommend the following to City Council for approval:

1. From 1 April 2025 the current 100% premium for dwellings which were unoccupied and substantially unfurnished would be levied after a period of one year;
2. From 1 April 2025 a premium of 100% will be levied on all dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially furnished (second homes).

89. **Council Tax Base Setting and Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25**

David Northey (Service Director for Finance) gave the following updates

- a) The Council Tax Scheme would have no changes;

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) added:

- b) Changes to Council Tax Support could only be made once every 12 months;
- c) The government provided additional benefits for individuals in receipt of benefits, instructing the council to disregard them in housing benefit assessments but not providing the same guidance for council tax support assessments, leading to changes in some Council Tax Support due to the inclusion of these extra benefits;

- d) In the next 12 months, a proposed new rule would state that, as the additional benefits were part of a national programme, those payments would be disregarded in council tax support assessments;
- e) There would be major changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year beginning 2025.

Cabinet agreed to recommend to Council:

- 1. The Council Tax Base for 2024/25 of 75,389 equivalent Band D dwellings as set out in the report;
- 2. The continuation of the current Council Tax Support scheme and Exceptional Hardship Scheme for 2024/25 with the amendments as set out in Paragraph 4.

90. **Proposed amendments to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2022**

Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Cemeteries and Crematoria) introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) Residents of Plymouth had been struggling to get a taxi within the city;
- b) There would be a removal of the Knowledge test for Private Hire vehicles due to the fact they had a Sat-Nav;
- c) Due to the substantial financial burden imposed on drivers, the delivery requirements were eliminated and substituted with a mandate for door signage.

Cabinet agreed to:

- 1. Note the responses made to the proposed amendments to the Taxi Policy;
- 2. Recommend to City Council approval of proposals in the briefing paper to –
  - a. Remove livery requirements for vehicles;
  - b. The removal of requirements for the Knowledge of Plymouth test for private hire drivers.

*Councillor Coker left the meeting at 2.52 pm.*

91. **Licensing Act 2003 - Statement of Licensing Policy 2024 - 2029**

Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Cemeteries and Crematoria) introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) It was a statutory requirement to review the licensing policy every five years;

- b) Amendments that had been made since the COVID-19 outbreak included premises offering alcohol delivery services;
- c) In light of Martin's Law, all public venues would be held responsible for certain locations in the event of threat and terrorism and would implement appropriate measures if necessary;

Graham Hooper (Senior Officer for Intelligence and Licensing) added:

- d) Support for the Community Alcohol Partnership had been inserted into the policy, which would show the industry's commitment to responsible drinking.

Cabinet agreed to recommend to City Council:

- I. That the draft Licensing Statement of the Policy (contained in Appendix A) was adopted with effect from 31 March 2024.

92. **Leader's Announcements**

*Councillor Coker returned to the meeting at 2.57 pm.*

The Leader made the following announcements:

- a) Devon and Somerset Joint Committee had been dissolved from the 31 December 2023, following resolutions to withdraw from 12 of the 14 constituent authorities;
- b) The Plymouth and Devon Freeport would be securing the Sherford Employment Land;
- c) Carlton Power had secured £20 million funding for the Freeport Langage Green Hydrogen Plant, with a view to the plant being operational by 2026.

93. **Cabinet Member Updates**

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

- a) Thanks to public support and donations, all care experienced young people open to the care leavers team received a carefully chosen Christmas present in 2023;
- b) Key highlights on Plymouth Hoe in 2024 would include: the half marathon in April, Armed Forces Day and the rehabilitation triathlon in June plus the new Summer Sessions music festival and the British Firework Championship in August;
- c) The Box was mentioned in Country Life, Art Newspaper, The Guardian and House and Garden;

- d) Cultural Leaders James McKenzie Blackman and Victoria Pomery had been included in the Stages Top 100 Influential People list and the Art Lists Top 100 respectively.

94. **LGA Update**

The Leader introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- a) The Finance Settlement failed to provide adequate funding to address the rising costs and demand pressures;
- b) The accumulative effect of the cuts in the Plymouth economy that had happened over the past 14 years was almost quarter of a billion pounds;
- c) When Councils were defunded, communities and local economies were also defunded;
- d) Councils would have £64 billion to spend on local services with the assumption that they would charge the maximum on council tax;
- e) Councils were united in the view that Household Support Funding should continue after March 2024 and were lobbying the Chief Secretary of the Treasury for this outcome;
- f) Councillor Louise Gittins (Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board) had been lobbying for greater support across a range of issues including free child care hours;
- g) One in four children's care homes in England were backed by private equity;
- h) No additional funding was provided through the settlement for increased Children's Services costs.