

# Plymouth City Council

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## Scrutiny Annual Report



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# Key information about Overview and Scrutiny

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## The operation of overview and scrutiny

1.1. In 2023/24 Scrutiny was undertaken by the

- **Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee** - Chaired by Councillor Ian Darcy.
- **Education and Children’s Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee** - Chaired by Councillor Zoe Reilly.
- **Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee** - Chaired by Councillor Pauline Murphy.
- **Growth an Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee** - Chaired by Councillor Richard Bingley.

1.2. Committees met regularly and were able to utilise the system of Select Committees with single item agendas.

1.3. Residents and stakeholders can get involved by:

- Attending public meetings;
- Giving evidence to one of the Panels or Boards; and
- Sending in comments about a review.

## Scrutiny’s Role

1.4. The aims of the Overview and Scrutiny process are to -

- Add value to Council business and decision-making;
- Hold the Cabinet to account;
- Monitor the budget and performance of services;
- Assist the Council in the development of policy and review the effectiveness of the implementation of Council policy;
- Review relevant Central Government policy development and legislation to assess
- The impact on the City and make recommendations to Cabinet<sup>1</sup>.

## Meetings

- Are open to the public to attend.
- Typically last 2-3 hours.
- Meet regularly (during the daytime and evenings).
- Have a formal structure, but are run in an accessible way.
- Papers are published on the [Council’s website](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Part D of the [Constitution](#)

## Snapshot of scrutiny in 2023/2024

### Focusing on the issues which matter

- 2.1. The Performance Finance and Customer Focus Committee have continued to receive regular reports on the Council's revenue and capital budgets, culminating in a select committee review in January. The committee has also regularly reviewed the Corporate Plan Performance Report and Risk Update and as a result of this reviewed risks such as the capacity of senior leadership. The Committee also considered a petition against changes implemented by the previous administration to parking in Plympton and key elements of the Corporate Plan such as the Council's response to homelessness.
- 2.2. The Education and Children's Social Care Committee closely monitored the performance of Children's Services both in terms of outcomes for children and the costs of the service. The committee have been closely involved with the Children's Social Care Improvement Plan, the Local Area SEND Inspection and issues referred to it by Council such as the Council Tax Exemption for Foster Carers.
- 2.3. The Health and Adult Social Care Committee continued to undertake its health scrutiny duty in the context of the NHS in crisis, providing oversight of health services in Plymouth and clinical services across the peninsula. The committee has a wide brief and has considered issues ranging from community defibrillators (Council referral), General Practice and the Future Hospitals Programme.
- 2.4. The Growth and Infrastructure committee has remained focused programmes such as the National Marine Park, Freeport, bus services, the Culture Plan, the Plan for Homes, the Armada Way project and the visitor economy.
- 2.5. A full list of the topics considered by scrutiny are available at appendix I.

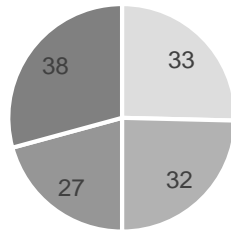
### Pre-Briefings and Work Planning

- 2.6. Monthly briefings have enabled better member engagement and more focussed debate and key lines of questioning. We are thankful to the Members and Officers that have taken part in briefings on –
  - Equality and Diversity
  - Mayflower Group of GP Practices Procurement
  - Cyber Security
  - Brickfields Project
  - Education in Plymouth
  - Modern Slavery
  - Performance Management Framework

# Overview and Scrutiny in Numbers 2023/2024

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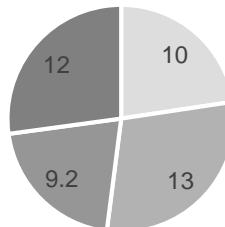
## Reports



- Performance, Finance and Customer Focus
- Health and Adult Social Care
- Growth and Infrastructure
- Education and Childrens Social Care

In total 130 reports have been provided to scrutiny from Council Officers and Partners.

## Hours



- Performance, Finance and Customer Focus
- Health and Adult Social Care
- Growth and Infrastructure
- Education and Childrens Social Care

Members have spent 44 hours at Scrutiny Business meetings, including call-in, with an additional working week spent in Select Committee reviews.

# Snapshot of some Key Achievements 2023/2024

## 3. Future Hospitals Plymouth Update

- 3.1. The Health and Social Care Committee scrutinised the [new hospital plans for University Hospitals Plymouth](#). Having previously considered plans the Committee was asked by NHS partners to agree that no further public consultation was required to ensure the build could commence within timescales.
- 3.2. The Committee Chair wrote a letter to University Hospitals Trust Plymouth in support of the vital and long overdue development. The letter also identified members concerns about potential disruption with particular regard to car parking and accessibility.
- 3.3. The Committee also identified that whilst buildings are important, their purpose can only be realised when adequately staffed with an appropriately trained, well-supported workforce.

## 4. Defibrillator Motion on Notice

- 4.1. The Health and Social Care Committee also evaluated health benefits/ costs and practicalities for defibrillator provision. The Committee recommended that the Council support and promote 'Restart a Heart Day'. The Committee also recommended defibrillators be installed at Southway library and St Budeaux Library and are now being installed having secured match funding.

## 5. End of Life Care

- 5.1. The Health and Social Care Committee also scrutinised the provision of end of life care. These sessions involving a range of healthcare organisations who provided evidence to the Committee. Several areas were identified for improvement, and the committee undertook to further review this issue in the future to evaluate performance against the improvement programme.
- 5.2. The Committee also recommended faster diagnosis times, and greater relative/family involvement in the planning process for care.

## 6. National Marine Park Update and Horizon Bid Stage 2 Submission

- 6.1. The Growth and Infrastructure Committee reviewed the National Marine Park and the Horizon Bid Stage two submission. The Leader attended the Committee and provided evidence as to the key achievements of the programme so far and details of the stage two bid submission.
- 6.2. Following this session the Committee was able to endorse the approach and supported the submission of the bid in 2023.

## 7. Plymouth Culture Plan

- 7.1. The Deputy Leader, Cllr Jemima Laing attended the Growth and infrastructure Committee along with James Mackenzie-Blackman CEO and Executive Producer of the Theatre Royal. The Committee heard of the benefits a thriving cultural sector can provide to the city alongside the impact of the pandemic and cost of living crisis on cultural activities.
- 7.2. The Committee noted the reporting and resolved to write the relevant minister to demand more support for the cultural sector in the face of rising costs.

## **8. Risk Management**

- 8.1. In line with recommendations at the Audit and Governance Committee, Scrutiny Committees have maintained a regular overview of keys risks facing the city council at every business meeting.
- 8.2. This has ensured that scrutiny is able to keep under review strategic risks through consideration of the risks and mitigation as part of their ongoing work programme.
- 8.3. This approach has further strengthened our overall risk approach and is progressing the Corporate Peer Challenge recommendation to Promote and embed risk awareness across the organisation and continue to address and report progress against key financial risks and external audit requirements.

# Select Committees

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Two Select Committees were delivered in the 2022/23 municipal year. These concerned –

- Budget Scrutiny (see section 4.1)
- Water Quality Select Committee

## 9. Budget Scrutiny

9.1. This Select Committee was undertaken in December 2023, this enabled members of the Committee to bring to the attention of the Cabinet issues for consideration well in advance of the Council's consideration of the budget in February. The Committee received evidence from Cabinet Members and Officers and were provided with detailed budget information

- Draft 2024-25 Budget
- Approved Capital Programme and Capital Programme Pipeline
- Treasury Management Strategy
- Capital Financing Strategy
- Savings update
- Establishment Information

9.2. The Committee considered whether the Cabinet had an effective plan for the implementation of the budget for the 2024/25 financial year, focusing on organisational priorities, and made recommendations to Cabinet as a result.

9.3. The Committee focused on the priority areas for the Council which included Adult Social Care, Childrens Services, Homelessness and the Cost of Living and universal council services in the context of -

- Reductions in Government grant funding without matching reductions and responsibility for related services provision
- Uncertainty to future funding due to the delay in 100% Business Rates Retention.
- Uncertainty about any future Fair Funding Review.
- A continuing range of increasing costs in order to meet the demands on the Council and maintain key services, particularly in Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Homelessness. Increased costs of meeting new initiatives.
- General inflation relating to external spend and contracts.

9.4. Following two days of evidence the committee agreed to –

- **Congratulate the Cabinet on**
  - Additional Funding provided in the budget for Grass Cutting;
  - The commitment to a new Living Streets programme;
  - Increased involvement of Ward Councillors in discussion related to Section 106 Monies;
  - Commitment to not implementing Car Park charges where they are not currently in place;
  - The new Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- **Recommend to Cabinet**



- That work is undertaken to assess the impact upon all council budgets of dealing with unauthorised encampments (UE) and consider a centralised budget to deal with costs so that service budgets are not impacted by UE;
- Welcome continuation of current Community Grant Scheme and recommend an increased back to £5,000 per member;
- Re-profile the Capital programme to ensure that the programme is affordable for the revenue budget;
- Recommend an expansion of the housing programme for Care Leavers;
- Recommend that a cross party working group is established to consider contractual arrangements for major projects and the methodology for procurement.
- **Requests of Government**
  - Request a multi-year finance settlement for the Council against demand-led costs;
  - Request appropriate financial uplifts to deal with the Living Wage and inflation;
  - Request a review of Adult Social Care Funding, so that funding is allocated on need/demand rather than the ability of Councils to raise Council Tax;
  - Along-term strategic funding solution for Homelessness;  
Welcome an increase in Local Housing Allowance and request that the calculation of the 30th percentile of market value is undertaken in April 2024;
  - Request continuation of the Household Support Fund;
  - Reconsider recently announced changes to immigration rules given the significant impact this is likely to bring to bear on the Social Care workforce;
  - Review home to school transport eligibility and additional options which could mitigate costs to the Local Authority;
  - Highlight that the additional funding for highway maintenance (£366k in 23/24 and 24/25) is insufficient for current requirements.

## 10. Water Quality Select Committee

10.1. This select committee took place to better understand water quality in Plymouth, the issues faced and the opportunities for improvement, by inviting key stakeholders to present evidence and information to the Committee.

10.2. Across two sessions the Select Committee heard from a range of stakeholders including –

- The Environment Agency
- South West Water
- Tamar Catchment Partnership
- Local Sea Swimming Groups
- National Marine Park
- Youth Representative.

10.3. The Committee unanimously agreed to:

- Accepted the conclusion in the report that the issues and challenges with water quality were complex, would increase with predicted climate change and needed an enhanced and urgent approach to delivery;

- Supported the collaboration set out in the provided Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), for a long term delivery focused relationship of Plymouth City Council with the Environment Agency and South West Water;
- **Recommend to South West Water**
  - That they ensure existing investment identified for drainage infrastructure of the city is delivered in line with the ambition of the MoU where there were no legal constraints;
- **Recommended to the Environment Agency:**
  - That sampling data from Firestone Bay is available to the public at the earliest opportunity;
  - That winter pilots are carried out in the 3 bathing areas to improve water quality data, and make this available to the public;
  - Requested that trading standards to provide Committee Members with information on environmental enforcement in Plymouth.
- **In addition, the Committee recommend to Cabinet that:**
  - Signage was increased and improved at the sea fronts when storm drains discharge;
  - SWW and EA work with PCC officers to increase education across the city on what communities can do to improve water quality;
  - The National Marine Park school engagement programme included education on improving water quality;
  - A Water Ambassador Programme was developed with the National Marine Park;
  - The MoU was more specific on how other stakeholders would be engaged with when improving water quality;
  - Government is lobbied to ensure Plymouth is a pilot for an area of water quality improvement;
  - Facilities/infrastructure for sea swimmers is improved, such as life rings, defibrillators, hot showers and bins, in consultation with local sea swimming groups;
  - Green jobs and growth opportunities in Plymouth for future generations are promoted;
  - Cabinet writes to the relevant minister to ask when schedule 3 to The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 is going to be enacted;
  - Cabinet writes to the relevant minister to ask them to update bathing legislation.

# Call-in of decisions

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11. There were no call-ins in the 2023/2024 municipal year.

# Community involvement

12. The Overview and Scrutiny Boards and Panels engage with a wide selection of groups, organisations and individuals. We welcome the opportunity to hear from members of the public at our meetings and your input is important in understanding the concerns and needs from our communities.

13. The scrutiny committees have welcomed contributions from –

- Healthwatch Devon
- Plymouth Youth Parliament
- Sea Swimming Groups
- Health Partners
- Theatre Royal
- The Environment Agency

## How to get involved in overview and scrutiny

- **Attend meetings** – our scrutiny meetings are open to the public and you are welcome to come along and listen to the debate and discussion. *Please note that reports may be considered in private if they contain confidential information.*
- **Ask a question** – if you would like make a representation at a meeting, please email [democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk) least 5 complete days before the meeting so that we can let the Chairman know in advance. It is helpful to know what you would like to raise in order for it to be considered at the appropriate time during the discussions.
- **Request a review** – if there is something you think scrutiny could look at, then let us know [via this online form](#).
- **Consultation and participation** – you could be asked for your views on an issue or be invited to provide specialist knowledge you might have by being a witness in a scrutiny review.

## Appendix I

### Topic List

- **Performance Finance and Customer Focus**
  - Corporate Plan performance Reports
  - Capital and Revenue outturn and monitoring Reports
  - Senior Staff Recruitment
  - Petition - Plympton District Car Parks
  - Homelessness
  - HR & Organisational Development Priorities & Update
  
- **Health and Adult Social Care**
  - Quarterly Performance, Finance and Risk Report for H&ASC
  - No Right to Reside performance monitoring
  - Better Care Fund Plan
  - Future Hospitals Plymouth Update
  - Community Diagnostic Centre
  - Defibrillator Motion on Notice
  - Local Government Ombudsman Recommendations
  - Commissioning of Domiciliary Care
  - Winter Preparedness and Planning
  - General Practice
  - Outcomes from the Health System 100 Day Plan
  - Pharmacy
  - Adult Social Care CQC Assurance and self-assessment
  - End of Life Care
  
- **Education and Children's' Social Care**
  - Children's Social Care Improvement Plan
  - Local Area Partnership SEND Improvement Plan
  - Council Tax Exemption for Plymouth City Council Foster Carers
  - Child Exploitation
  - Educational perspectives on Emotional Health and Wellbeing
  - Domestic Abuse and Children as Survivors
  - Unregistered Placements
  
- **Growth and Infrastructure**
  - Net Zero Action Plan
  - Plymouth Cultural Strategy / Plan
  - National Marine Park
  - City Centre Regeneration
  - Plymouth and South Devon Freeport Mobilisation
  - Culture Plan
  - Visitor Plan
  - Horizons Fund Activity Plan
  - Net Zero Action Plan

## **Select Committee**

- Budget Scrutiny Select Committee
- Water Quality Select Committee

## **Key Recommendation Digest**

### **Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee Recommendations**

#### 13 September 2023

- Write to the relevant minister to ask for more support for organisations in the cultural sector, following significant increases in utility costs.

#### 8 November 2023

- Write a letter to the Naval Base Commander to encourage them to work with the National Museum of the Royal Navy to have a naval heritage centre.
- Agreed to establish a Select Committee by March 2024 focused solely on Water Quality, inviting key stakeholders and user groups to provide evidence for consideration and review.

#### 22 January 2024

In relation to the Armada Way Regeneration Project:

- The City Centre Public Realm Board included cross-party membership;
- The provision of waste bins should be of the combined litter and recycling type;
- Further consideration should be given to the provision of outdoor gym equipment in the play area;
- Further consideration should be given to how to improve community engagement in the project (e.g. community painting event for bird boxes);
- The Cabinet would use best endeavours to ensure that the project was completed on time and within budget;
- Cabinet should give consideration on how to assess overall economic impact of the project and to report back to an appropriate meeting of the Growth and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee;
- Further consideration should be given to improving the 1:1 replacement ratios for failed translocated trees;
- Consideration of inclusion of braille on the plaques placed under trees.

### **Water Quality Select Committee Review - 22 February 2024**

The Committee unanimously:

- Accepted the conclusion in the report that the issues and challenges with water quality were complex, would increase with predicted climate change and needed an enhanced and urgent approach to delivery;
- Supported the collaboration set out in the MoU, for a long-term delivery focused relationship of Plymouth City Council with the Environment Agency and South West Water;

Recommended to Southwest Water

- That they ensure existing investment identified for drainage infrastructure of the city is delivered in line with the ambition of the MoU where there were no legal constraints;

Recommended to the Environment Agency:

- That they make sampling data from Firestone Bay taken over the winter available to the public at the earliest opportunity.
- That they carry out winter pilots in the 3 bathing areas to improve water quality data, and make this available to the public;

Requested:

- That trading standards to provide Committee Members with information on environmental enforcement in Plymouth.
- In addition, the Committee recommend to Cabinet that:
  - Signage was increased and improved at the sea fronts when storm drains discharge;
  - SWW and EA work with PCC officers to increase education across the city on what communities can do to improve water quality;
  - The National Marine Park school engagement programme included education on improving water quality;
  - A water ambassador programme was developed with the National Marine Park;
  - The MoU was more specific on how other stakeholders would be engaged with when improving water quality;
  - They lobby government for Plymouth be a pilot for an area of water quality improvement;
  - They improve and increase facilities/infrastructure for sea swimmers, such as life rings, defibrillators, hot showers and bins, in consultation with local sea swimming groups;
  - Green jobs and growth opportunities in Plymouth for future generations are promoted;
  - The Cabinet writes to the relevant minister to ask when schedule 3 to The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 is going to be enacted;
  - The Cabinet writes to the relevant minister to ask them to update bathing legislation.

## **Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee Recommendations**

27 June 2023

- Recommended that the Chair of H&ASC write a letter of support on behalf of the H&ASC OSC, providing support for the New Hospitals scheme at Derriford;
- Agreed that the project did not require further public consultation in relation to health service provision however, statutory planning consultation would be required;
- Recommended that the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care commission defibrillators at the locations identified which included the Guildhall;
- Recommended to the Health and Wellbeing Board that –
  - PCC works with partners to promote ‘Restart a Heart Day’ which takes place on or around 16 October each year;
  - PCC works with partners to promote CPR training;



- All defibrillator owners across Plymouth are encouraged to register their defibrillators on The Circuit - the national defibrillator network;
- All defibrillator owners across Plymouth suitable for public access should consider whether access could be widened to 24/7, if not already;
- PCC promotes schemes to access funding for publicly accessible defibrillators amongst communities;
- PCC works with partners to provide defibrillators at St Budeaux library and Southway library.

### 26 October 2023

- Recommended that the Cabinet Member for H&ASC review the complaint response letter templates and approach, so that they are more personal and user-friendly, where appropriate;
- Recommended that the Cabinet Member for H&ASC has oversight of the LGO reports/recommendations pertinent to their portfolio;
- Recommended that councillors promote the ICB 'Comms plan', and Choose Well Campaign amongst their wards and residents.

### 13 December 2023

- Recommend that the Health and Wellbeing Board consider a supplementary statement to the PNA at the next Board meeting in January.

### 20 February 2024

Recommended that:

- NHS Devon and partners return to a future scrutiny session to bring an update on performance against the End of Life Care improvement Plan. This is to include delivery of the Palliative Care framework, findings of the Estover Pilot Project, and additional information on the below recommendations;
- NHS Devon and Partners take into account, and record peoples preferences for place of death. Collect figures in the hospital and report back into future scrutiny (as per rec 1);
- NHS Devon and partners return at a future time to report on falls prevention measures being undertaken and related performance;
- NHS Devon and partners work to reduce the delay in testing and diagnosis to enable maximum choice for patients spend their remaining time in the way/location that they wish;
- NHS Devon adopt processes to include patients' relatives in the planning and administration of care for their loved ones (where applicable, and consent given). This includes consultation in the development of a TEP;
- The Council, in partnership with City organisations and individuals, seek to promote and recognise St. Luke's communication of "Care in the community" and "the hospice coming to you", rather than the misconception of patients having to be admitted to a hospice.
- The Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities (Cllr Penberthy), ensures that the Housing Needs Assessment considers housing standards, and their appropriateness, for individuals with a variety of medical needs (Accessibility and quality).

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

### 26 July 2023

- The Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure and HR & OD would provide a written response to the Committee detailing the reasoning behind the increase in full time equivalent work days lost to staff sickness and what steps were being taken to tackle this issue;
- The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Cemeteries and Cremation would provide a written response to the Committee upon reasoning behind the downward trend of data linked to residents that felt safe during the day in the city;
- The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change would provide a written response to the Committee upon the reasoning behind the substantial decrease in the amount of household waste sent for recycling, reuse or composting; a response would also be provided as to why the Council's recycling rates were well below the median in comparison to other local authorities as well as an update on food composting and the Council's plans.

## **Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee Recommendations**

### 12 September 2023

- Write to MAT's to see how they were working towards the Plymouth Plan in driving towards a consistency across all schools and other area's in regard to SEMH.

### 7 September 2023

- Recommends to Cabinet that a Council Tax Exemption for foster carers was considered following the conclusion of the consultation on proposed new Support and Retention Offer to Our Foster Carers;
- Faith Groups and Voluntary Sector organisations to be part of the Plymouth Safeguarding Partnership Board;
- Child Exploitation would become a yearly report at the Education and Children's Overview Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### 28 February 2024

- The Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee would participate in a Youth Ascends meeting;
- The Committee recommended a Select Committee which would investigate the emotional health and wellbeing of children to examine issues of inclusion, persistent absence, child death, self-harm, SEND and EHCP's issues in the city.