

Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday 16 April 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Finn, in the Chair.
Councillor Blight, Vice Chair.
Councillors Cuddihee, Dingle, Goslin, Hendy, P.Nicholson, Poyser, Reilly and Stevens.

Also in attendance: Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities), Councillor Lawson (Building Bridges to Opportunity Champion), Councillor Penrose (Welcoming City Champion), Rosie Brookshaw (Democratic Advisor), Matt Garrett (Service Director for Community Connections), Sarah Gooding (Policy and Intelligence Advisor) and, Nick Shaw (Public Health Registrar).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.31 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel 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.

34. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

35. **Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting held on 05 February 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

36. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

37. **Child Poverty Plan (Building Bridges to Opportunity)**

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) Cabinet approved in October 2024 that Plymouth City Council (PCC) would take a fresh approach to tackling poverty in Plymouth;
- b) The plan was to build a city approach to tackling poverty, beginning with PCC and expanding to existing partnerships. This would build on existing practices and principles such as co-production and asset based community

development, appreciate inquiry and trauma informed work;

- c) The economic strategy had a pillar on inclusive growth which would include work on tackling poverty;
- d) Building Bridges to Opportunity included tackling child poverty and the cost of living task force.

Nick Shaw (Public Health Registrar) added:

- e) The first stage of the work was to engage with people within PCC, within the wider communities working in organisations in Plymouth, people living in the community and partners in the voluntary and private sector to allow the framework to have a whole systems approach;
- f) The core aspect of the framework was to have an environment in Plymouth where the risk of falling into poverty was reduced and where people in poverty would be able to move themselves out;
- g) The principles guiding the development of the framework were around the whole systems approach, and focussed not on what PCC was doing for communities but how to work as a whole system, looking across the whole of the life course;
- h) Transport links would be optimised within the city so people who were living within local communities were able to access work, healthcare and opportunities;
- i) The next stage of the plan would be taking all information from previous work and understanding the core themes, alongside mapping strengths and areas of improvement within existing work.

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

- j) PCC were awaiting the results of consultations on the Government's child poverty work.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- k) Child poverty had been removed as a statutory duty;
- l) There was a 21% difference in men's and women's hourly pay in Plymouth;
- m) In comparison to the National Living Wage Foundations rate of pay, women in Plymouth earned 50% less than the national average for women;
- n) PCC were providing 48 places of specialist housing for young people within the homelessness system which wasn't just a bed, but a self-contained flats;

- o) Building Bridges to Opportunity was not a public facing project and was focussed on partnerships to ensure the duplication of services was avoided;
- p) PCC were aware of the data being produced by the work Citizen's Advice and the University of Plymouth were undertaking;
- q) Skills and education from early years through to adulthood were key themes focussed on throughout the plan;
- r) The importance of Councillor Champions;
- s) The positive impact of partnership working;
- t) The final report would be brought back before the Scrutiny Panel prior to being presented to Cabinet.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

38. **Public Sector Equalities Duty Compliance**

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) A change in the approach to the Public Sector Equalities Duty Compliance was the focus;
- b) Staff networks were developing;
- c) The next action plan would be three years long, with a focus on the first year to make long-term decisions on how to ensure Public Sector Equalities was 'business as usual' for PCC;
- d) Funding from the Government post the riot on 05 August 2024 was channelled towards 42 community-based organisations to deliver change.

Councillor Penrose (Welcoming City Champion) added:

- e) PCC met with equality, diversity and inclusion institution firms from the University of Plymouth and the Hospital regularly;
- f) She had been involved with the organisation of the monthly international dinner.

In response to questions, it was explained:

- g) Encouraging others to include Care Experience as a protected characteristic was a focus for PCC.

The Panel agreed to note the covering report and the Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity document that had been received and approved by Cabinet on 10 March 2025.

39. **Work Programme**

During discussion the following requests were made to be added to the Work Programme:

- a) Central Park Communications Update.

The Panel agreed to note its Work Programme.

40. **Tracking Decisions**

The Panel agreed to note its Tracking Decisions document.