

Scrutiny Management Board

Thursday 27 March 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Stephens, in the Chair.

Councillors Allison, Blight, Finn, Freeman, Moore substitute for Councillor Holloway), Murphy, Ricketts, Simpson (substitute for Councillor Dingle) and Stevens (substitute for Councillor Reilly).

Apologies for absence: Councillors Reilly, Dingle, Holloway and Darcy.

Also in attendance: Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Events, Cemeteries and Crematoria), Councillor Coker (Cabinet Member for Transport), Councillor Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure, and HROD), Councillor Raynsford, Tracey Naismith (Head of Community Safety), Chris Squire (Service Director, HROD), Alison Mills (Head of HR), Greg Bridget (Devon and Cornwall Police), Emily Bullimore (BID Street Operations & Trading Manager), Philip Robinson (Service Director for Street Services), Helen Slater (Lead Accountancy Manager), Josh Longstaff (Democratic Advisor) and Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 9.30 am and finished at 11.49 am.

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.

42. **Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interest were made:

Name	Item	Description	Interest
Councillor Stevens	6	Employed by Devon and Cornwall Police	Personal

43. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

44. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 30 October 2024 and 15 January 2025 were agreed as an accurate record.

45. **Hybrid Working**

Chris Squire (Service Director, HROD) introduced the report and discussed:

- a) The impact of the COVID19 pandemic on working practises for organisations and individuals;
- b) Changes to working strategy employed by Plymouth City Council (PCC) following the end of the COVID19 pandemic lockdowns, which included reducing the office footprint;
- c) The differentiation between flexible, service based, and frontline/mobile workers;
- d) Recognition that not all roles were suited to hybrid or remote working, and that some tasks were best completed face to face.

Alison Mills (Head of HR) added:

- e) Changes in strategy during the COVID19 pandemic, including the closure of several office spaces, had encouraged employees to work from home;
- f) Since the COVID19 pandemic restrictions were eased, some departments and employees had already begun proactive discussions around where they worked best. For some, this had included returning to the office on certain days;
- g) It was important to begin discussions with departments around where services were best delivered.

Councillor Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure, and HROD) added:

- h) Proposals for future ways of working would be subject to staff and trade union consultation. It was therefore not appropriate to discuss further details publically at this stage.

In response to questions, the Board discussed:

- i) The meaning and accuracy of the phrase used within the report: “work is not somewhere you go”;
- j) The potential implications of remote working for new staff and apprentices;
- k) Carbon neutrality and ‘rationalising the footprint’ of employees, including the reduction in the quantity of corporate buildings;
- l) Employee productivity and capacity in various work settings;
- m) Perceptions of increased accountability when staff were present in office locations;

- n) The implications of working from home practices on the local economy and transport network;
- o) The implications of working policies on the recruitment and retention of staff;
- p) Important demographic considerations, including:
 - i. Approximately 50% of PCCs workforce were over the age of 50;
 - ii. Approximately 66% of PCC employees were female;
 - iii. The majority of caring responsibilities in the UK fell to women;
- q) Clarification that 66% of PCC employees were 'flexible workers'. This meant that they alternated working between home and office settings;
- r) The importance of quality and continuity of service, which should be delivered regardless of working location;
- s) The importance of staff engagement and consultation when shaping any future working policies and strategies.

The Board agreed to pass a resolution under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(Please note there is a confidential part to this minute)

Following a return to part 1, the Board agreed:

1. To note the work that had already taken place;
2. To recommend that the final draft of the Hybrid Working Policy was brought back to the Scrutiny Management Board for consideration, following consultation with the trade unions and staff, and integration with the 'Peoples Strategy', which was under development.

46. **Cycling in the City Centre**

Councillor Stephens (Chair) introduced the item, and highlighted:

- a) An increased number of complaints and concerns received by Councillors from members of the public regarding safety in the city centre, particularly related to cyclists and food delivery riders;
- b) The importance of ensuring a safe co-existence between riders and pedestrians;
- c) The changed landscape of the City Centre and food delivery trends over the past five years, which had resulted in increased cycling activity;
- d) The benefits of food delivery services, which delivered employment and public services;
- e) The need to ensure a safe coexistence in the City Centre, particularly during the ongoing transformation;
- f) The need to develop a greater understanding of the issues, responsibilities and potential solutions across multi-agency partners and organisations;
- g) A need to ensure both the safety of cyclists, and pedestrians in the City Centre;
- h) The variety of concerns raised, which including riding conduct, bike legality, and an enhanced impact for vulnerable residents;
- i) The need to ensure that good cycling standards were rewarded, while sub-standard behaviour was addressed appropriately.

Tracey Naismith (Head of Community Safety), Greg Bridget (Devon and Cornwall Police), Emily Bullimore (BID Street Operations & Trading Manager), Councillor Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Events, Cemeteries and Crematoria), Philip Robinson (Service Director for Street Services) and Councillor Coker (Cabinet Member for Transport) added:

- a) In 2022, Devon and Cornwall Police (D&CP), in collaboration with Plymouth City Council (PCC), had conducted proactive enforcement action of delivery riders/drivers when their conduct was not to the expected standards;
- b) Through engagement with riders and their representatives, PCC had worked to instigate 'Safe Delivery Zones' in the City, allowing riders and drivers to gather in designated zones, away from significant pedestrian activity;

- c) Safer Delivery Zones were signposted, illuminated, and covered by CCTV, providing riders/drivers and pedestrians security;
- d) Approximately 70% of the City Centre business was now conducted via deliveries;
- e) Earlier engagement work had highlighted that the majority of food delivery riders/drivers operated on minimum wage, and were disproportionately non-British, leading to some language barriers with engagement;
- f) There was a lack of legislation to support addressing conduct issues;
- g) Six education and engagement events had been held with PCC and D&CP, engaging companies, pedestrians and rider/drivers in the City Centre;
- h) While an earlier balance had been achieved, changes to e-bike specifications, food delivery demand and city centre footfall had altered the dynamics in the City Centre;
- i) A 'Pedal Cycle' was required to be limited to 15mph and have a maximum power output of 150 watts. Above these thresholds, the vehicle required insurance, registration, a driving licence, and adherence with the Road Traffic Act;
- j) Police held powers under the Road Traffic Act to stop an e-bike at any time to ensure its compliance with regulations;
- k) There had been a rising number of youths using e-bikes in an antisocial manner in the City Centre;
- l) The police had conducted an education event in the City Centre, prior to conducting enforcement action. On 8 February 2025, 15 e-bikes were stopped, and seven were seized for non-compliance with the Road Traffic Act;
- m) Consideration of vehicle and deliver access to the City Centre was ongoing as part of the City Centre re-development programme;
- n) The issue was shared nationally, and conversations with other authorities were ongoing to learn best practise;
- o) The aim was to ensure a peaceful and safe co-existence between riders and pedestrians, as well as mutually supportive responsibilities between relevant agencies.

In response to questions, the Board discussed:

- p) Identification challenges between delivery riders, leisure riders and anti-social youths. This had the potential to lead to the false attribution of blame;

- q) The 'self-employed' status of the majority of food delivery riders/drivers, which meant they were personally responsible for their own compliance and safety;
- r) The need for further research into potential remedial measures, such as the introduction of by-laws to mandate safe cycling conduct and enable enforcement by organisations other than the police;
- s) The potential to lobby national government for the introduction of laws to support the enforcement of safe cycling conduct and pedestrian co-existence;
- t) The impact of cyclists in the City Centre for disabled, elderly and vulnerable groups;
- u) The potential for cycling conduct and safety training to be provided to retail outlets and riders;
- v) Ongoing work conducted by the Local Government Association (LGA) to assess best practice;
- w) The potential for a training and accreditation scheme to be implemented for riders and City Centre outlets.

The Board agreed to recommend:

1. To support the ongoing education and enforcement operations undertaken by Devon and Cornwall Police in relation to e-bikes and food delivery riders in the City Centre;
2. That a Select Committee of the Scrutiny Management Board was arranged to explore further the issues of e-bikes, food delivery and cycling in the city centre;
3. That the Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board engaged with members of the City Centre Company, along with representatives from food outlets, businesses, and delivery riders, to encourage their attendance at a future select committee;
4. That the Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board, in partnership with the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, lobbied members of Parliament to investigate current progress, and lobbied for the introduction of safer measures to facilitate safe cycling in the city centre, particularly relating to food delivery and e-bikes.

47. **Monitoring Reports**

Helen Slater (Lead accountancy Manager) introduced the report and discussed:

- a) As of month ten, there had been an improvement in the overspend position of £267,000;
- b) There were continued pressures for children's social care and on the Adult, Health and Communities directorate, with pressure increases of £246,000 and £249,000 respectively. These costs had been offset by further release of the minimum revenue provision;
- c) There was ongoing work to be done to offset budget pressures;
- d) There had been a significant increase in developer contributions due primarily to the Woolwell to the George project, and Plan for Homes.

The Board agreed to note:

- 1. The forecast revenue monitoring position at Period 10 as set out in this report, which was an adverse variance of £1.575m
- 2. That Senior Officers would continue to work with Cabinet to reduce the forecast overspend;
- 3. The Capital Budget 2024-2029 was revised to £399.298 million.

48. **Budget Scrutiny Recommendations**

Helen Slater (Lead Accountancy Manager) introduced the report and discussed:

- a) Recommendation one and two related to 'reserves and balances'. A report would be presented to the relevant portfolio holder by the end of April and therefore, this action was in progress;
- b) Recommendation three regarded 'multi-year finding settlements'. It had been confirmed that these were intended to be introduced in 2026/27, and thus this recommendation would be deferred until this time;
- c) Recommendation four regarded 'capital schemes'. This action was with the Capital Programme Officers Group (CPOG) for consideration, and was therefore in progress;
- d) Recommendation five regarded 'council tax for service personnel'. It had since been confirmed that Armed Forces personnel were able to claim relief through the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and therefore, this recommendation could be marked 'resolved satisfactorily';
- e) Recommendation six regarding 'pressures with homelessness'. This would be added to the work programme of the appropriate scrutiny panel;
- f) Recommendation seven related to 'asset management plans'. This would be included in the Prevention First Transformation Programme;

- g) Recommendation eight related to the 'communications strategy', which had been actioned;
- h) Recommendation nine related to the 'Victory in Europe' and 'Victory in Japan' commemorations. £10 thousand had been allocated in the 2025-26 budget for these events;
- i) Recommendation 10 related to 'communication at 'The Park' which had been part completed, with work ongoing;
- j) Recommendation 11 related to 'Adult Social Care demand management processes'. This would form part of regular budget and performance monitoring, and would be added to the work programme of the appropriate scrutiny panel;
- k) Recommendation 12 related to 'Delt Connectivity', which had been actioned;
- l) Recommendations 13 and 14 would be added to the work programme of the appropriate scrutiny committee;
- m) Recommendation 15 related to the 'funding model for SEND transport' had been actioned;
- n) Recommendation 16 regarding 'home school transport' would be investigated for progress;
- o) Recommendation 17 related to the 'effectiveness of Children's Services demand management processes' would form part of regular budget and performance monitoring, and would be added to the work programme of the relevant scrutiny panel;
- p) Recommendation 18 related to a 'robust monitoring framework for SEND capital', which would be added to the work programme of the relevant scrutiny panel;
- q) Recommendation 19 related to the 'request for notification of public health grant before 31 December'. Government announcements had indicated an intention to reform local finance, and this could form part of the changes for 2026-27. In 2025-26, a significant uplift to the public Health Grant had been received.

The Board agreed to note the responses received from Cabinet as set out in the report.

49. **Update from Committee Chairs and Work Programmes**

Councillor Finn (Chair of Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel) provided the following updates:

- a) The 'Public Toilets Review' agenda item had been postponed twice and therefore, the date for completion would be later than expected;
- b) The 'Grit Bin Review' agenda item had also been set back, but was expected to be heard in July 2025;
- c) An additional meeting had been timetabled in April to help address a backlog on the work programme, including the 'Child Poverty Plan' and 'Public Sector Equalities Duty Compliance'.

Councillor Murphy (Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel) gave the following updates:

- d) A Motion on Notice had been agreed at City Council regarding 'End of Life' care. The Health Scrutiny Panel had previously conducted three challenging session on the topic, but would schedule an update in the new Municipal Year.

The Board agreed to:

- 1. Request that Panel Chair's submitted a written report detailing updates to their work programmes when they were not able to attend the Management Board;
- 2. Note the updates.

50. **Work Programme**

The Board agreed to schedule the following items for the new municipal year:

- a) Hybrid Working Report (Following consultation with staff and trade unions);
- b) Cycling/Food Delivery in the City Centre, Select Committee;
- c) Asset management presentation;
- d) Work programming session after May 2025.

Councillor Stephens added:

- e) Training for scrutiny panel members would be arranged for the new municipal year.

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