

Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday 23 July 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Coker, in the Chair.

Councillor, Murphy Vice Chair.

Councillors Allison, Blight, Freeman, Holloway, Murphy, Poyser, Ricketts, Simpson and Stevens.

Also in attendance: Ian Trisk-Grove (Service Director for Finance), Pete Honeywell (Transformation Architecture Manager), Glenda Favor-Ankersen (Head of Electoral Services), Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor), Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Experience, Sport, Leisure, HR & OD) and Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.45 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.

1. Appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair 2025/26

The Board agreed to note the appointment of Councillor Coker as Chair, and Councillor Finn as Vice-Chair for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Due to the submission of apologies from Councillor Finn, the Board agreed to appoint Councillor Murphy as Vice-Chair for this particular meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 02 April 2025 as a correct record.

4. Chair's Urgent Business

The Chair highlighted that Board meetings had been moved to 5pm to enable greater engagement from Councillors with day-time commitments.

- I. The Board agreed to circulate a survey to Board members to ascertain the preferred start time.

5. **Leader's Forward Plan**

The report was taken as read.

In response to questions, Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor) added:

- a) There were monthly revisions published to the Leader's Forward Plan of Key Decisions however, this did not limit all decisions to one month of publication;
- b) The criteria for the Leader's Forward Plan of Key Decisions was set out in legislation. Decisions which met this criteria required a minimum of 28 days publication on the Forward Plan before implementation;
- c) The Forward Plan was not an exhaustive list of all upcoming decisions, and only included those which met the criteria specified by legislation and agreed by Council;
- d) There was a distinction between 'Key' decisions which were defined by legislation, and 'important' decisions which scrutiny panels may wish to consider;
- e) The Scrutiny Annual Report 2024-25 evidenced the range of pre-decision scrutiny undertaken by panels in the previous year;
- f) While there was no exhaustive list of all upcoming decisions, those of significance were raised with Chair's during agenda set meetings for work-programming;
- g) Scrutiny panels had often scrutinised the early strategic stages of decisions rather than their final implementation stages, where scrutiny was less effective;

The Board agreed:

- 1. To endorse that the Chair writes to the Leader and all Cabinet members, requesting them to share details of their upcoming decisions for next 12 months, to enable scrutiny to help shape and influence decisions before they were made;
- 2. To request clarity on the definition of 'significant effect' in the Key Decision threshold;
- 3. To note the Leader's Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

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

The Chair reminded members that a written report should be submitted when the Chair and Vice-Chair of a panel were unable to attend this meeting, to provide an update on work programmes.

Councillor Murphy provided an overview of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel, and discussed:

- a) The first meeting of the 2025-26 municipal year had been held last week, and had highlighted positive improvements in End of Life Care provision. Health organisations had made good progress against the previous recommendations of the Panel;
- b) There Panel had added 'Winter Pressures and Planning' to the work programme, as well as 'transitions to adult services', which would be considered in a joint select committee with the Children's scrutiny panel;
- c) The panel considered regular finance and performance monitoring reports for Health and Adult Social Care.

Councillor Ricketts provided an overview of the Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel, and discussed:

- d) The Panel had scheduled an additional meeting for the year to correspond each meeting to one of the five pillars of economic growth;
- e) The previous meeting had focussed on housing and the 'Plan for Homes', which had received considerable press coverage;
- f) The next meeting would focus on 'skills', and several site-visits had been scheduled;
- g) The Forward Plan of Key Decisions listed 'Strategic Investment Property Acquisitions', which would be discussed at the next agenda set to ascertain its readiness and suitability for the next panel meeting.

Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor) provided an overview of the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel and discussed:

- h) The meeting in July had scrutinised the 'Grit Bin Policy review' and 'Central Park Ponds Project';
- i) The Chair had contacted Cabinet members to ascertain which upcoming decisions relating to the panels terms of reference should be scheduled for pre-decision scrutiny;
- j) Items scheduled for the next meeting included pre-decision scrutiny on the 'Plymouth Active Leisure contract', 'Building Bridges to Opportunity' and an update on the 'Homelessness Service' following Budget Scrutiny.

The Board discussed:

- k) Inconsistencies in the workload and depth of scrutiny undertaken across panels, and the role of Scrutiny Management Board to ensure appropriate work programming and consistency;
- l) The SMB Chair would attend the next cycle of scrutiny panel meetings to observe proceedings, and bring any relevant learning back to this Board.

Councillor Blight provided an overview of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel and discussed:

- m) A number of items had been highlighted for work programming which spanned the remit of two scrutiny panels, and would therefore be heard at Joint Select Committees. These included 'School Playing Fields', 'Transitions to Adulthood', and 'AI use within Children's Services';
- n) Youth representatives had attended the meeting and engaged with Councillors and Officers.

The Board agreed to note the panels' work programmes.

7. **Work Programme**

The Board agreed to schedule the following items for the next board meeting, subject to their readiness:

- a) Hybrid Working Strategy (following consultation with Trade Unions and staff);
- b) Select Committee Review PID: Cycling in the City Centre.

The Board agreed:

- 1. To request that an informal work programming session was arranged to enable panel chairs to effectively work programme for the year ahead;
- 2. To note the work programme.

8. **Action Log**

Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor) delivered an overview of the Action Log and discussed:

- a) The Select Committee PID for Cycling in the City Centre would be brought to the next meeting for discussion and finalisation;
- b) The previous Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board had undertaken positive engagement with City Centre businesses and food delivery organisations, and many had expressed their willingness to attend a select committee;

- c) All three actions were in progress, and a further update would be provided at the next meeting.

The Board agreed to note the Action Log.

9. **Budget Monitoring 2025-26**

Ian Trisk-Grove (Service Director for Finance) delivered the Month Two Budget Monitoring report and discussed:

- a) Although early in the year, the report showed a forecast closing spend position of £253.4 million, which was in-line with the budget;
- b) There was no adverse variance in the budget to date;
- c) Work was ongoing with Adult and Children's Social Care to reduce volume and cost risks, and departments were undertaking budget containment activities to ensure pressures were adequately and efficiently addressed;
- d) A number of Children's placements were currently going through panel. These would be continually monitored and cost pressures managed;
- e) Early risks had been identified within the Corporate and Customer Services Directorate, arising from additional spend for Facilities Management surveys.

In response to questions, the Board discussed:

- f) The frequency of budget monitoring reports across scrutiny panels and prioritisation for Cabinet Members to attend the Management Board for their relevant reports;
- g) There were no implications within the budget relating to pensions.

The Board agreed to:

- 1. Note the forecast revenue monitoring position at Month 2, is a nil variance but with risks highlighted;
- 2. Note that Senior Officers will continue to work with Cabinet to reduce budgetary risks.

10. **Risk Management Monitoring Report Q4 2024/25**

Ian Trisk-Grove (Service Director for Finance) introduced the Risk Management Monitoring Report Q4 2024/25 and discussed:

- a) There had been no change in the risk scoring within the quarter;
- b) Three Social Care risks had been consolidated into one 'Social Care Sustainability' risk;

- c) The 'Cyber-attack Vulnerability' risk and 'Keeping Data Secure' risk had been consolidated into a single 'Digital and Data Resilience' risk;
- d) The 'Carbon Reduction Targets' risk and 'Environmental' risks had been consolidated into the 'Climate Adaption and Resilience' risk;
- e) Three new risks had been added, which included:
 - (a) 'Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution';
 - (b) 'Scale of Legislative Change';
 - (c) Risk culture.
- f) There was ongoing work within the Council to develop risk culture and risk management. The Service Director for Finance was collaborating with the Devon Assurance Partnership to develop strategic risks, and was working with directorates to manage operational risks. Progress was being made to review the risk strategy, and updates would be brought back to the Management Board.

In response to questions, the Board discussed:

- g) Corporate risk would form a standing item on the Board's work programme to enable tracking and analysis of risk trends. The Quarter One Risk Monitoring Report for 2025/26 was currently being developed.

The Board agreed to note the report.

11. **Cyber Risk and Response Briefing**

Councillor Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Experience, Sport, Leisure & HR, and OD) and Pete Honeywell (Transformation Architect Manager) delivered the Cyber Risk and Response Briefing and discussed:

- a) Public awareness of cyber threats was growing due to recent significant attacks;
- b) Due to the extensive use of IT resources, cyber attacks posed a significant threat to organisations, including the council, and could disrupt business activities for extended periods of time;
- c) The recent utilisation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications by organisations posed further security risks, and work was ongoing within the Council to ensure sufficient protections, due diligence and safeguarding was in place;
- d) Human error was a recognised vulnerability in cyber security. It was important that Councillors and staff completed their necessary training and software updates in a timely manner;

- e) A new security protocol would be launched, requiring staff to update their laptops/computers within 30 days. Failure to comply would result in the devices being locked out.

In response to questions, the Board discussed:

- f) The potential of increased cyber risks for the Council due to Plymouth's military importance. The data did not indicate a correlation;
- g) Plymouth received security alerts from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the National Security Centre;
- h) When security alerts were received, a specialist team within Delt Shared Services provided an immediate response and carried out appropriate risk assessments and mitigations;
- i) Third party monitoring was undertaken of PCC's infrastructure to identify potential vulnerabilities;
- j) It was essential that staff and Councillors were trained and aware of cyber security risks, as staff could unintentionally provide access for security threats;
- k) There were some challenges reporting suspicious emails on mobile phones;
- l) The Council's email defences included a protection against spam. Around half of all emails sent to the Council were deflected as suspected spam and did not reach the end users;
- m) The team worked with Councillors and staff to ensure security was maintained when external applications were required;
- n) Support was provided by the Council to staff and Councillors who fell victim to cyber threats. These events had often proven valuable learning opportunities for the individuals affected, as well as the wider organisation.

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 3 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 (Public Meeting), the Board agreed:

1. To note the briefing;
2. To request that the Cabinet member worked with the Transformational Architecture Manager to review the process for reporting

suspicious/threatening emails across the range of staff electronic devices, to ensure they were consistent and effective;

3. To request that a written report on the above action was provided to the Scrutiny Management Board when complete;
4. To endorse the approach that Councillor cyber security policy, including training and security requirements, was delivered in line with that expected of staff.