

Cllr David James
Plymouth City Council
Civic Centre
Plymouth
PL1 2DA

23rd December 2010

Dear Councillor James

Priorities and Budgets Feedback for City Council Budget Scrutiny Panel 5th Jan 2011

As Chair of the Plymouth Third Sector Consortium I am writing on behalf of our members and Directors with feedback on the current City priorities and planned budgets.

We were invited to a meeting and workshop in the Council House on 7th December. We had presentations by City Council officers and an opportunity for feedback on the cities partnership priorities and the Draft Budget for Plymouth City Council 2011/12. Over 20 of our member organisations attended the meeting to take part in the workshop sessions. Following the meeting all our 140 member organisations, sector networks, Consortium Directors and partnership representatives were sent briefing notes and asked to give their feedback. We have now gathered all the comments, feedback and ideas to enable us to formally respond to the City Council Budget Scrutiny Panel.

Whilst we understand the need to make efficiency savings and reduce budgets, in times of funding cuts and change, we would like to highlight key areas for consideration. These are also key areas of work for Civil Society organisations in the city, areas where the sector feels it can contribute most and deliver priority outcomes. We have grouped the feedback into common areas that we received comment upon from members. This does not represent the total feedback but summarises and reflects the key points.

Equalities:

- Continue to support efforts focussing on equalities and work around cohesion issues.

- Support work that addresses inequalities within areas, as well as gaps between more and less affluent areas.
- Important to fund Asylum seeker and Refugee organisations and services.

Health and Social Care

- Community health services and child social care should be priorities.
- Social care and wellbeing services should address health inequalities, healthier and economically active people contribute to the local economy.
- Preventative health and wellbeing activities and services should be maintained.
- Mental health services including counselling are important, particularly with the potential increased demand due to current cuts, redundancies and financial problems.

Children and Young People

- Invest in the future, support for next generation by investing in services for the young.
- Ensure adequate resources are available for children and young peoples services, including, all areas of safeguarding, child protection, care leavers and vulnerable homeless.
- Preventative work with families and children who need additional support needs to be maintained.
- Advice and assessment services for 16+ young people should be maintained.
- Floating support services for homeless young people are important.

Highways Infrastructure

- Not to reduce road maintenance budgets including highways improvements, particularly when it impedes access which enables those with mobility issues to safely have independence.

Volunteering

- There needs to be a continuing commitment to involving diverse communities in the delivery of services to reduce inequalities, reduce crime and increase take up of health, education etc., through the use of volunteers.
- Build on existing services and other support for volunteer recruitment, training and specific projects.

Support services for frontline 3rd Sector Civil Society organisations

- Continue practical advice, training and support for 3rd sector organisations to develop and deliver services.
- Continue to support the engagement and involvement of 3rd sector organisations with planning, commissioning and monitoring of service delivery in the city.
- Develop strategic support for Social Enterprise to create new funding and income opportunities for the delivery of partnership priorities and outcomes.
- Explore and encourage new income streams and lever additional funds into the city through funding advice and business planning.

General cost savings also should be considered

- Apply logic and discipline to back room support, merge where possible HR departments and IT.
- Review and if necessary reallocate current budgets from inefficient providers
- Focus on efficiencies by reducing duplication and support much more joint partnership work with health, Plymouth City Council and Civil Society organisations.
- Commission local Civil Society organisations to provide local services
- Avoid reducing funds granted to organisations which directly deal with vulnerable people.

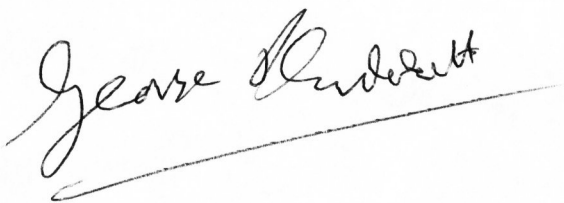
Overall the City Council and other statutory organisations should protect services to vulnerable people, especially in the light of welfare cuts and the effect those might have on the four strategic priorities which the city has set itself. It is possible that these can be delivered locally on a smaller scale and therefore be more relevant, timely and productive as well as more cost effective.

It is also important not to lose sight of the value of investing in preventative services which are often provided by Civil Society organisations, which when properly targeted actually save money by preventing the need for crisis intervention by statutory services.

Finally, it should be recognised what local civil society organisations already achieve through targeted delivery of frontline services.

Civil Society organisations and the Plymouth Third Sector Consortium will continue to work in partnership with the City Council through these difficult times to the benefit of Plymouths citizens.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "George Plenderleith". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature.

George Plenderleith, Chair
Plymouth Third Sector Consortium