

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Written responses to questions raised at meeting
held on 7 September 2011



JOINT FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

- Q1 What is being done to improve the time taken to process new housing benefit claims?
A1 The department restructure process focused on driving improvement throughout the service. The implementation date for the new structure is 1 Nov '11 and we would expect improvement on this deliberately challenging target to start to 'kick in' from Jan '12.
- Q2 How are new schemes in the Capital programme are being funded?
A2 As discussed at the meeting, there are three main sources of funding available; specific grant funding; capital receipts; unsupported borrowing. In the current economic climate, capital receipts are under pressure and shortfalls are being supplemented by unsupported borrowing. Officers continue to monitor to effect the best funding available.
- Q3 Whether more imaginative ways of funding repairs and maintenance to the City's Victorian-style school buildings are being investigated?
A3 The responsibility for the maintenance of schools buildings is nationally delegated to schools and their Governing bodies. There is a weighting in Plymouth's formula funding that means that those schools that are of Victorian get an age weighted factor which offers them slightly more funding than newer properties. However it is true that all schools spend considerably less on repairs and maintenance than is recommended as an industry standard. The recommended level is £65/m² and the school average is £41/m².
- Schools have been able to undertake capital repairs using devolved capital funding, however this have been reduced by 81% in this years government allocations. This has made a big difference to the amount of work the schools can achieve. The Council has retained some funds for schools to bid into to supplement their funds to achieve larger scale repairs.
- Given the scale of capital funding available is now much less, it has been proposed to the premises sub group of Schools Forum that a pooled arrangement of funds held at local authority level would be more affective in dealing with repairs, allowing larger projects such as boiler replacement more major roof repairs to be undertaken at schools on a turn by turn basis. However this proposal was resisted in favour of the current delegated model.
- Q4 Clarification of the £0.234m forecast overspend in Environmental Services.
A4 Please see table below -

The net overspend is made up of the following major variations -

Service	Major Variations <i>(only major variations over £0.050m are shown so this will not add up)</i>	Variation £m	Net Variation £m
Waste Disposal	Employee savings via contracting activity at Weston Mill	-0.279	
	Landfill Tax Rebate	-0.395	
	Increased gate fees	0.300	
	Net Favourable Variation		-0.331
Parks	Foreshore repairs	0.039	
	Jennycliff Landslip R&M	0.089	
	Capital recharge savings	-0.072	
	Net Adverse Variation		0.018
Waste Collection & Street Scene	Transport costs (fuel and repairs)	0.712	
	Employee vacancy net of Pertemp	-0.162	
	Net Adverse Variation		0.543
Public Protection Services	Increased income	-0.251	
	Net Favourable Variation		-0.269
Fleet & Garage	Capital recharge savings	-0.118	
	Net Favourable Variation		-0.145
Total Adverse Variation			0.234

Capital recharge savings are for Prince Rock but appear in each service