

RESPONSE FROM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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

5 January 2012

Dear Cllr James

Just before Christmas, three Chamber directors (Tim Jones, Charles Evans and Ian Brokenshire) and I met with Malcolm Coe and David Northey who ran through the proposed PCC budget for 2012/13. At the meeting a number of points were made which I confirmed in my subsequent email to Malcolm and David.

In your capacity as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board I think it would be helpful for you to be aware of our comments and queries in advance of the Board sessions which are to be held over the next fortnight.

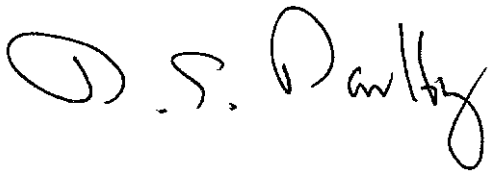
We appreciate the difficulties encountered in formulating this year's budget and hope that you will not hesitate in engaging further with the Chamber in coming to a satisfactory result. As discussed with Malcolm and David as a statutory consultee we would appreciate the following points being answered and/or commented on before the budget is finalised, as follows:

1. We are unclear as to what has become of the Invest to Save Fund that was established following the sale of Citybus. We understand that much of this fund has already been spent. We would like to know how the monies therein have been expended, by project and amount with an estimate of the return that has been/ will be achieved by these projects. We would also like to know what the planned expenditure of the remainder of the fund is to be, providing the same types of information as for the historical projects.
2. The slide pack given to us was at the highest level. It would be helpful to see a breakdown of the revenue and capital budget by service area and by project.
3. We would like to see a short description of how procurement has been improved and the plans going forward for other improvements. We are particularly keen to see a breakdown of PCC spend showing how much revenue and capital spend has been taken up by local businesses.
4. We note that many improvements to social and business life and a reduction in the call on adult and social services budgets can be made through preventative activity in respect of drug and alcohol abuse. The Better Together programme that the Chamber has been running in partnership with PCC for the past four years has been extraordinarily effective. We would like to see this continue, it being the only means by which the business community is actively engaged formally in community matters. This will require an allowance being made in the budget for its continued funding by PCC.
5. We would like to see an analysis of the effectiveness of the outsourcing arrangement with Plymouth Community Homes compared with that which was planned.

6. We recognise the importance of car parking to the Council's revenue account. However a sharing of information and your strategy in this area would greatly assist us to gain an understanding of the current usage (peaks and troughs) and to explore special marketing initiatives and how parking charges could be adjusted to coincide with these.
7. The Government are considering proposals for greater retention of Business Rates growth to support local initiatives. We suggest the formation of a small joint working group to react to this and be prepared for new opportunities arising.

I look forward to your response on these matters, noting that I will be attending in Doug Fletcher's stead for two of the sessions of the Scrutiny Board on 11 and 16 January. Please do not hesitate to call me before then should you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. S. Parlbay'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David Parlbay
Chief Executive

Copy: Doug Fletcher, Chairman