

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday 28 March 2012

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Nicholson, Vice-Chair.

Councillors Mrs Bowyer, Browne, Coker, Lowry, McDonald, Stark, Thompson and Wildy.

Co-opted Representative: Mr D Fletcher.

Apology for absence: Councillor Mrs Aspinall.

Also in attendance: Councillor Mrs Pengelly, Leader, Councillor Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People, Councillor Ricketts, Cabinet Member for Transformation, Performance and Governance, Adam Broome, Director for Corporate Services, Malcolm Coe, Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets, David Northey, Head of Finance, Patrick Hartop, Senior Policy, Performance and Partnership Advisor; Tim Howes, Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance, Judith Shore, Democratic and Member Support Manager, Giles Perritt, Lead Officer, and Katey Johns, Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 2 pm and finished at 4 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee 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.

106. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declaration of interest was made in accordance with the code of conduct –

Name	Minute No. and Subject Matter	Reason	Interest
Councillor Coker	Minute No. 113 – Devonport Regeneration Company Partnership (DRCP) Succession Strategy – Review of Succession Arrangements	Board Member of the Neighbourhood Board for Devonport	Personal

107. **MINUTES**

Agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2012.

108. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

Vote of Thanks

The Chair commented that, subject to receipt of any call-ins, this would be the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for the municipal year. He therefore asked that a vote of thanks be recorded to all members for their commitment to scrutiny throughout the year and highlighted some of the key achievements. Particular thanks was paid to –

- Giles Perritt, Lead Officer, and Katey Johns, Democratic Support Officer for their continued support and professionalism; and
- Councillor Wildy, who was retiring as a councillor at the forthcoming elections, for her dedication to Children and Young People's scrutiny. The Chair wished her all the very best for the future.

(In accordance with Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair brought forward the above item of business in order to inform Members).

109. **LEADER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Board welcomed the Leader and Director for Corporate Services who were in attendance to report on current City and Council issues. Members were advised that the Chief Executive had been unable to attend due to a conflicting engagement with the Prime Minister at Downing Street. Highlights of the verbal submission included –

- the recent opening of the Life Centre;
- amendment of the Capital Programme to include over £2.5m for waves three and four of the Basic Need Programme;
- commencement of a programme of building improvements to a number of primary schools in the City as well as increasing capacity in order to address the shortfall of places for reception age children;
- up to 80 per cent of the value of the £11.3m design and build contract for the All Saints Academy would be spent in Plymouth ensuring jobs for local trades as well as apprenticeship opportunities;
- establishment of growing relationships with colleagues in health through scrutiny work, including creation of a shadow Health and Wellbeing Board;
- approval of a Housing Plan based around the following four key housing themes –
 - growing the city
 - better homes – healthy lives
 - housing choices – smarter solutions
 - successful communities
- contributing £1m to the disabled facilities grant budget;
- adoption of a personal budget policy;
- investment in improving the customer experience.

The Board thanked the Leader and Director for Corporate Services for their attendance.

110. **CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY OF BUDGET PRIORITIES AND CORPORATE PLAN 2012/13**

Members considered Cabinet's response to the budget scrutiny recommendations and were pleased to note that out of the 62 recommendations submitted, only three had not been accepted.

111. **PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT**

The Board considered the third monitoring report for 2011/12 which outlined the performance and finance monitoring position of the Council, as at the end of December 2011, and included an update on the Capital Programme. The report advised that the Council was very close to its budget set for the year end and remained confident that the target would be achieved.

Members again voiced concerns about the delay in receiving the report and queried whether the information could be presented to them sooner. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People suggested that it may be worthwhile considering changing the date of Board meetings so that they were more closely aligned to Cabinet meetings.

Agreed -

- (1) the threshold for the level of financial information contained in the report should remain at £250k;
- (2) future dates of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board should be more closely aligned with those of Cabinet which are scheduled to consider the quarterly monitoring report.

112. **REVENUES AND BENEFITS ACTION PLAN**

Further to minute 97(7), the Assistant Director for Finance, Technology, Assets and Efficiencies was in attendance to report on the Revenues and Benefits Action Plan. Members were advised that –

- (a) the cost of the revenues and benefits service to the authority was unacceptable and the restructure of the service had been a major part of the change agenda;
- (b) the backlog for processing claims as at November 2011 had been over 2,000, however, this had now reduced to 300 and it was anticipated that it would be cleared entirely by the end of April 2012. In addition, staff were working hard to improve accuracy;
- (c) the number of days taken to process claims was currently 24 working towards a target of 15, compared to a unitary average of 12/13;
- (d) officers were confident that the right structure and framework were now in place to drive the service forward.

In response to questions raised, Members were advised that –

- (e) there would be another opportunity to review the plan and its progress in six months' time;
- (f) it had been hoped to clear the backlog by the end of March but, unfortunately, this had not been possible due to a number of staff being poached by other authorities. However, despite this, it had still managed to reduce the backlog from 2,000 to 300, in addition to successfully running a take-up campaign and dealing with the resulting increased take-up.

The Board noted the update with thanks.

113. **DEVONPORT REGENERATION COMPANY PARTNERSHIP (DRCP)
SUCCESSION STRATEGY - REVIEW OF SUCCESSION ARRANGEMENTS**

The Board received a briefing paper outlining the succession arrangements in respect of the Devonport Regeneration Company. The report provided details of how the New Deal for Communities money was continuing to be delivered and supported in Devonport.

Members expressed concern that there appeared to be a lack of ownership to the strategy and queried how its progression would be monitored.

Agreed that the Director for Place be requested to nominate a responsible officer and that a further more detailed update be submitted to the Board in six months' time.

114. **CALL-INS**

There were no call-ins for consideration at this meeting.

115. **TRACKING DECISIONS**

The Board considered the schedule of decisions made and noted the latest position.

116. **FORWARD PLAN**

The Board noted that there had been four new additions to the Forward Plan as follows –

- North Prospect Library Proposed Relocation to Community Hub, North Prospect Road, North Prospect, Plymouth – Acquisition of Lease
- Schools Revenue Budget 2012/13
- Policy Framework Item: Housing Plan 2012-2017
- Policy Framework Item: Local Development Framework: Submission of the Derriford and Seaton Area Action Plan

117. **TASK AND FINISH UPDATES / REPORTS**

The Board considered the following Task and Finish Group reports –

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults
- Lord Mayoralty Function

Agreed –

- (1) the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Task and Finish Group report, subject to inclusion of the following to R12 –

“and that appropriate and proper resources are made available to enable the second part of this scrutiny to be carried out”;

- (2) the Lord Mayoralty Function Task and Finish Group Report, subject to the inclusion of two additional recommendations as follows –

R6 that the relevant Lord Mayor pages on the Council’s website are updated so that the automated response to invitations submitted online advised that an acknowledgement receipt will be sent within 10 working days, followed by a final decision as soon as possible. Should anyone not hear after the 10 days, they should contact the Lord Mayor’s Parlour on the telephone number given;

R7 that the report is submitted to a future meeting of the Constitutional Working Group for consideration prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

118. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board endorsed and agreed the following recommendations –

Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- (1) inclusion of ‘the relationship of Plymouth Community Homes with ward councillors’ on the work programme for 2012/13;

Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- (2) inclusion of the following items to the work programme for 2012/13 –

- Free schools;
- Joint commissioning (transition into adulthood);
- Children and Young People’s Trust;
- Buy back of services and consequences;
- Child poverty plan;

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- (3) amendment of the Constitution to allow minutes to be considered at the start of the meeting;

Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- (4) Cabinet be requested to consider how future 'invest to save' schemes supported by robust business cases are to be financed;
- (5) inclusion of a review of the Shared Services programme to the work programme for 2012/13;
- (6) a task and finish group to undertake a review of the value for money ethos across the council.

119. **WORK PROGRAMMES**

The work programmes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and scrutiny panels were noted and approved as submitted. With regard to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Wildy expressed her sincere thanks to Amelia Boulter, Democratic Support Officer, for her support to the Panel and to Councillor Stark, Vice-Chair.

With regard to the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Thompson raised the issue of social media and expressed concern that it had now disappeared off the radar of both his panel and that of Support Services. He advised that he would be re-introducing the matter to the Customer and Communities Work Programme for 2012/13.

With regard to the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel, the Chair thanked her Democratic Support Officer, Ross Jago, and Councillor McDonald, Vice-Chair.

120. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.