

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday 25 July 2012

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, in the Chair.

Councillor Tuffin, Vice Chair.

Councillors Bowie, Bowyer, Mrs Bowyer, Churchill, Jarvis, Monahan, Murphy, Mrs Nelder, Mrs Pengelly and Tuffin.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Casey, Philippa Davey, James, Nicholson and Wiggins

Also in attendance: Jo Hambly (Financial and Social Inclusion Officer), Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member Cooperatives and Community Development), Bronwyn Prosser (Social Inclusion Manager) and Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 5.50 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.

15. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Councillors in accordance with the cost of conduct.

16. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2012 are confirmed as a correct record.

17. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

18. **TRACKING DECISIONS**

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

19. **CALL-INS**

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

20. **URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

There were no urgent executive decisions to consider at this meeting.

21. **FORWARD PLAN**

The Board noted the new additions to the Forward Plan, as follows –

- Theatre Royal regeneration project;
- residential/nursing care rates for 2012/13;
- mental health supported accommodation service;
- policy framework; three year review of the statement principles for the Gambling Act 2005.

22. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board endorsed and agreed the following recommendations –

Customers and Communities

- (1) (minute 6) persons with the relevant knowledge and expertise would be invited prior to commencement of task and finish groups and co-opted as and when appropriate;

Children and Young People

- (3) (minute 3) the appointment of co-opted representatives;
- (4) (minute 6) the changes to its terms of reference;

Health and Adult Social Care

- (5) (minute 4) the appointment of co-opted representatives;

Support Services

- (6) (minute 4) appointment of co-opted representatives.

23. **WELFARE REFORM**

The Director for People submitted a report on welfare reform, which highlighted the following main areas –

- (a) the Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced changes to the way in which welfare assistance was provided; these reforms were motivated by an aspiration for people to become socially mobile and to get back to work to stave off poverty in a sustainable way;
- (b) the report focused on five reforms that were key examples of the change and impact on customers –

- localisation of council tax benefit;
 - replacement of social fund;
 - housing benefit/local housing allowance reforms;
 - the benefit cap;
 - universal credit;
- (c) approximately 20 per cent of Plymouth's population would be affected by the reforms and other changes to benefits such as –
- working tax credit(s) for people over 50;
 - child benefit;
 - disability living allowance/personal independence payments;
 - incapacity benefit/employment and support allowance;
 - income support;
 - pension credit;
- (d) it was estimated that the income that would be lost to the city for 2012-13 would be between £13 and £27 million (which did not include changes associated with universal credit, council tax scheme, social fund replacement and other factors such as increasing levels of sanctions for those claiming work benefits;
- (e) the financial implications would be wide ranging and would include –
- increased customer demand at the front line for the delivery of services/benefits;
 - increased demand on discretionary pots of funding such as discretionary housing payments, Section 17 funding and the new social fund replacement;
 - supporting more customers who have got into financial difficulty via the council's financial including advice and information services;
- (f) the impact of the welfare reform changes on households and services were far reaching and varied; households would have reduced income and this reduction would be reflected in the council's ability to collect debts and generate income for services and an increase in crisis support services such as homelessness;
- (g) there would be an impact on demand for the council's front line services such as customer support, adult social care and children's social care.

The Social Inclusion Manager and the Financial and Social Inclusion Officer provided a presentation on the welfare reform 2012 – 17, which highlighted the following main areas –

- (h) reform overview (10 key areas) –

- localisation of council tax benefit
- localisation of the social fund
- housing benefit/local housing allowance
- benefit cap
- incapacity benefit/employment support allowance
- universal credit
- social care reform
- localisation of business rates
- cost of living increase

- (i) impact of the changes;
- (j) responding to change;
- (k) financial implications;
- (l) conclusion.

The following responses were provided to questions raised by Board members –

- at this stage, it was difficult to calculate the number of jobs that would be needed to grow the economy to offset the estimated loss of income to the city of £13 - £27 million;
- a communication strategy would published by autumn 2013;
- work had commenced in engaging with the council's partners to ascertain the impact that the reforms would have on the city;
- discussions had been held with the Credit Union to look at ways of teaching people to better manage their money which could be rolled out to schools and the wider community;
- work had already commenced to find a commercial vehicle that would help deliver much needed housing within the city;
- at this stage, the impact of on front line services was more difficult to identify and quantify.

The Chair thanked Cabinet Members and officers for attending.

24. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Board noted the amendments to the panels' terms of reference and recommended them to be submitted to the next city council meeting for approval.

25. **CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES**

The Chair put forward a suggestion of inviting a member of Plymouth Area Disability Action Network to observe two meeting of the Management Board with a view of co-opting a representative, if this proved to be of value.

Following discussions, the Board agreed to seek information as to how the council supported people with disabilities when seeking advice at First Stop.

26. **WORK PROGRAMMES**

The Chair advised that a separate meeting with the Chairs of the panels, lead officers and democratic support officers would be held to discuss and agree the work programmes for 2012/13.

27. **PROJECT INITIATION DOCUMENTS (PIDS)**

The Board considered and agreed the following project initiation documents –

- social fund replacement (the Department for Work and Pensions would hand partial funding to local authorities to design and deliver a localised welfare assistance scheme); membership of the task and finish group to comprise Councillors Ball, Damarell, P Davey, Ricketts and Tuffin;
- finance and performance reporting (to enable performance management rather than performance monitoring, focussing on key areas where improvements were necessary to achieve city priorities).

The library modernisation project initiation document is agreed but subject to a review of the objectives.

28. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There was no exempt business.