

IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY/LEGISLATION

9th November 2012 - Update



PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

Government Policy / Legislation	Impact	Response to date	Implications
<p>Welfare Reform Act 2012</p>	<p>This Act introduces fundamental changes to the way welfare assistance is provided. Whilst some of the direct impacts are apparent and can be calculated, such as reduction in benefit amounts, others are more difficult to identify and quantify and will take some time to filter through to our front line services.</p> <p>There are very clear financial implications for households with reduced incomes and the Local Authority will likely see this reduction reflected in its ability to collect debts and generate income for services and an increase in crisis support services such as homelessness.</p> <p>More subtle impacts are likely to show in demand for our front line services in areas such as customer support, adult social care and children's social care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council Tax Scheme to be agreed by Cabinet in January 2013 before going live in April 2013; ▪ Social Fund Development to be agreed at Cabinet in January 2013 in order to go live by April 2013; ▪ A rolling Benefits campaign starts in November 2012; ▪ Staff straining started October 2012; ▪ Welfare Reform has been identified as a strategic risk. 	<p>There are many implications that arise from the changing nature of benefit work Local Authorities are expected to carry. Some of these have very clear financial implications, for example the cut in budget for schemes such as the Council Tax and Social Fund replacement. In other areas it is less easy to estimate the costs associated with the rapid change that is occurring, e.g. the amount of training we need to deliver to ensure staff have awareness, specialist and technical competence to deliver services.</p> <p>Work in anticipation of welfare reform in Plymouth indicates that this is a significant risk which is likely to have a negative impact on the achievement of our citywide priorities - raising aspiration, reducing inequality, value for communities and growth - by increasing vulnerability and placing increased demands on already stretched services.</p> <p>A city wide review of the impact of the reforms to be organised in June 2013 to involve Health, Police, Job Centre Plus and advice service providers</p> <p>We will need to monitor trends closely over the coming year to ensure we are responding to this need and being proactive in preventing escalation of crisis for customers who will then need to access expensive intervention services.</p>

<p>Localism Act 2011</p>	<p>Five Key Measures:</p> <p>1. Community Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The public will be able to nominate assets maintained by the Council; ▪ Community Right to Challenge gives community and voluntary sector organisations and groups of council staff opportunity to put forward expressions of interest to run Council services. <p>2. Neighbourhood Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify Neighbourhood Area; ▪ Create a Neighbourhood Forum; ▪ Produce a Neighbourhood Plan. <p>3. Housing</p> <p>Councils can decide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ how to best manage homeless people; ▪ how to manage waiting lists; and ▪ the length of tenancy that best fits a households needs. <p>Councils will get back control of the revenue raised by council rent.</p> <p>4. Empowering Cities - City Deal</p> <p>Requires cities to demonstrate ‘strong, visible and accountable leadership and effective decision-making’, and taking on some of the risk (of the investment and returns). In return, the City Deal sets out a menu of powers, flexibilities and resource which government are prepared to devolve to empower cities to use to develop areas, improve services and increase competitiveness in order to promote economic growth and</p>	<p>1. Community Rights</p> <p>Managing the assets of community value has been identified as an administrative process. Residents will be signposted via the website to land charges team who will start the process.</p> <p>The process for Community Right to Challenge was presented at Cabinet on 16 October 2012.</p> <p>A local code of conduct has been developed and is available, a register of members interest is about to be available via the website and shortlisting has occurred for the independent reviewing of complaints about members.</p> <p>2. Neighbourhood Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Neighbourhood Planning Team leader is in post and a team will be in place by beginning of November 2012. ▪ A survey of the community and neighbourhood groups in Plymouth has been carried out; ▪ Community groups have completed an online survey about the opportunities the new changes will offer and what support they may need; ▪ ‘Planning Aid’ workshops have enabled local people to learn how to ‘do’ Neighbourhood Planning; ▪ Six expressions of interest have been received from groups who would like to Neighbourhood Plan and two of these are progressing; <p>3. Housing</p>	<p>1. Community Rights</p> <p>Community Right to Build presents a real opportunity for the council to support local communities in accessing funding to improve their area.</p> <p>One or more expressions of interest from staff groups or other organisations regarding Community Right to Challenge will divert significant resources from the local authority.</p> <p>2. Neighbourhood Planning</p> <p>We have a statutory requirement to support any Neighbourhood Plans and there is funding attached when these plans reach a particular stage. If a Neighbourhood Plan is approved it will hold statutory weight in the planning process, this will give local communities such as Barne Barton real opportunity to influence development of their area.</p> <p>3. Housing</p> <p>The ability to stimulate growth and develop in an area is pertinent to Social Housing Landlords, such as Plymouth Community Homes. Utilising the Partnership Forum and PCH services such as the Tenant Involvement Team will be an aid in delivering other key elements of the Localism Act (Right to buy/build/challenge).</p> <p>4. Empowering Cities - City Deal</p> <p>Need for consideration of wider implications for local/regional approaches to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ leadership and governance; ▪ local economic growth; and ▪ devolution of central powers and local decision making. <p>The City Deal will have a direct influence on how ‘localism’ is delivered locally in practice.</p> <p>5. General Power of Competence</p>
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	<p>to set their own distinct policies.</p> <p>5. General Power of Competence Provides Councils with the legal capacity to do anything an individual can do which isn't specifically prohibited.</p> <p>This replaces and build upon the wellbeing powers in the Local Government Act 2000 and specifically allows town and Parish councils and Local Authorities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ carry out any lawful activity; ▪ undertake any lawful works; ▪ operate any lawful business ; and ▪ enter into any lawful transaction. 	<p>Tenancy strategy due to release for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ consultation in January 2013. ▪ The council will utilise the new ability to discharge the homelessness duty to the private rented sector. ▪ The changes to the Devon Home choice policy which supports ex-service men is contained within the Housing Strategy. ▪ Right to buy receipts from Plymouth Community Homes, are being used to stimulate growth and develop area in building new homes. <p>4. Empowering Cities - City Deal Plymouth City Council, in partnership with other local agencies and neighbouring areas will develop creative solutions with which to cultivate City growth. Meetings are taking place with the Cabinet Office to put forward ideas for Plymouth with regard to enhanced devolution and local decision-making,</p> <p>5. General Power of Competence This new power still needs to be considered amongst the council's other powers and duties i.e. Planning. However where the Council wants to undertake activity we look to see if this new power will assist us.</p>	<p>The local authority will need to consider the impact that this new power may have as it become more widely used.</p> <p>If something in a neighbourhood, town or village needs to be changed i.e. providing missing services or to correct market / public service failures, the natural first port of call will no longer be central government but local authorities. In short, the powers will provide local authorities the ability to provide whatever it may be that local people want or lack and are prepared to pay for.</p> <p>There is real opportunity to undertake innovative activity to drive efficiency.</p>
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