

Cooperative Scrutiny Board

Wednesday 4 September 2013

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair.

Councillors Ball, Bowie, Darcy, Philippa Davey, Sam Leaves, Murphy and Tuffin.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Bowyer and Casey.

Also in attendance: Paul Barnard (Assistant Director for Planning Services), Councillor Coker (Cabinet Member for Transport), Jayne Donovan (Assistant Director for Environmental Services), Councillor Evans (Council Leader), Mark Grimley (Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development), Tracey Lee (Chief Executive), David Northey (Head of Finance), Clive Perkin (Assistant Director for Transport and Infrastructure), Giles Perritt (Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships), Councillor Vincent (Cabinet Member for Environment) and Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 6.30 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.

54. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by councillors in accordance with the code of conduct.

55. **MINUTES**

The Board agreed that the minutes of the meetings held on 10 July, 24 July, 7 August and 21 August 2013 were a correct record.

56. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

57. **WORK PROGRAMMES**

The work programme of the Cooperative Scrutiny Board and the Ambitious Plymouth Panel were submitted for consideration and approval.

The Chair advised the Chairs of the panels that work programmes may need to be changed to accommodate new items such as the Plymouth Plan.

The Board agreed the work programmes for the Ambitious Plymouth Panel.

The Board further agreed its work programme subject to the inclusion of the Plymouth Plan.

58. **TRACKING DECISIONS**

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

59. **CABINET MEMBERS**

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Transport together with Jayne Donovan (Assistant Director for Environmental Services) and Paul Barnard (Assistant Director for Planning Services) who provided a brief overview of the current areas of work being undertaken, which included –

(a) the Environmental Services department which employed 550 members of staff and on a yearly basis undertook the following –

- cut six million metres of grass;
- maintained over 60,000 trees, 28 parks and 80 sports pitches;
- helped to dispose of over 128,000 tonnes of waste;
- Inspected over 1000 business and ensured compliance of over 32 pieces of legislation around food safety, health and safety and trading standards;
- made 170,000 collections each week for refuse and recycling;
- provided first class facilities for the disposal of waste at the Household Waste Recycling Centre at both Chelson Meadow and Weston Mill;

(b) major achievements of the Environmental Services department over the last few years, which included –

- successful roll out of pilot kerbside household glass collection service;
- successful 'Pickles Pot' bid of £4m to maintain weekly refuse collection service;
- a £980k investment in new minibuses and a £1.7m investment in plant and equipment;
- five star rating for Street Cleansing;
- gold medal for South West in Bloom and 44 neighbourhood awards;

(c) key performance trends which included the following -

- reduction in the amount of waste produced per household continued;
- the rate for recycling was over 34 per cent;
- the bin collection rate remained at 99.9 per cent completed the first time;

- (d) the Planning Services department undertook the following -
- the launch of Plymouth Energy Community;
 - approval of the plans for the completion of the fourth stand at Home Park and related development;
 - creation of a Green Space Trust;
 - the Plymouth Plan (one integrated plan for the city which will enable a rationalisation of over 130 existing plans and strategies);
 - continued monitoring of Section 106 agreements;
 - inspector's report on the Derriford Area Action Plan;
 - consideration of a forthcoming planning application for Seaton Neighbourhood which included 873 homes, employment space, community park and educational resource centre;
 - major developments including Sherford, Plymstock Quarry and Plymouth Argyle;
 - Derriford Area Action Plan, Seaton Neighbourhood, North West Quadrant Appeal, city Centre;

In response to questions raised by the Board, it was reported –

- (e) due to the topography of Plymouth, road closures and inconsiderate parking, it was not possible to collect 100 per cent of bins first time; local knowledge was invaluable and where possible a pool of agency staff were used (the service was always striving to achieve a 100 per cent collection rate);
- (f) several options had been investigated relating to the most suitable container/bag for the disposal of garden waste; members of staff were continually reminded to put the bags inside the bins where it was possible to do so;
- (g) during the hot weather members of staff had been encouraged to guard against the sun by ensuring that they were suitably dressed and had access to drinks;
- (h) currently there was no significant impact on the council relating to amenity funerals however, there was a worrying trend of people not making provision for their funerals and in the next five to 10 years there would be an impact;
- (i) an undertaking was made to provide the Board with information relating to the number of public funerals that had taken place;
- (j) the planning notices had been redesigned and made more user friendly;
- (k) the Secretary of State had dismissed the appeal relating to the North West Quadrant Appeal and in addition to this the council

had been awarded costs against the developer;

- (l) Devon County Council had consulted the planning department relating to the development of the Hemerdon Mine.

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Environment together with the Assistant Director for Transport and Infrastructure who provided a brief overview of the current areas of working being undertaken, as follows -

- the commencement of the £2m highways investment scheme;
- the enforcement of the bus lanes had achieved a positive impact on the time keeping of bus services and punctuality; following concerns raised by both councillors and members of the public the bus lanes had now been clearly marked in red;
- the South West Peninsula Rail Task Force had produced a joint report pressing the Government for additional investment in the South West and seeking an update on the First Great Western rail franchise;
- Amey was continually being challenged to provide more coherent communications including ward reports and newsletters;
- there was disappointment that the city council had not been successful in securing funding for the city cycle deal, although other funding streams were being investigated;
- as a result of the major cuts in transport funding there would be less investment in transport projects the region.

In response to questions raised by the Board, it was reported that –

- (a) it was difficult to forecast whether the money generated from the bus lane reinforcement would need to be revised up or down; following the adjudication of the camera on Tavistock Road, the camera had been removed (for a period of eight weeks) to allow bus lanes to be clearly marked;
- (b) inspections were undertaken by Amey following any work carried out on the highway; if the work had not meet the specified standard then the contractors were required to re-do the work;
- (c) there had been an increase in enquiries for the provision of blue badges but at this stage it was less than anticipated;
- (e) the standardisation of car parking charges within the city centre had gone out to consultation; following the close of the consultation period at the end of October 2013, the responses would be fully analysed to ascertain if there was a way forward; it was important

to note that this was not a revenue driven exercise.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Transport and the Assistant Director for Transport and Infrastructure for attending.

60. **CORPORATE MONITORING REPORT**

The Head of Finance and the Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development presented the corporate monitoring report, which highlighted the following main areas –

- (a) the estimated revenue overspend forecast for the year end was £1.701m as at the end of July 2013;
- (b) the current estimated position showed an overspend of £1.184m within the People Directorate and an overspend of £0.517m within the Place Directorate;
- (c) there was an estimated net spend of £214.261m against a budget of £212.560m which was an adverse variance of 0.8 per cent;
- (d) the latest capital programme covering 2013/14 to 2015/16 stood at £122.670m which was approved by Cabinet on 21 May 2013 (£129,477m including the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry);
- (e) the forecast capital programme for 2013/14 to 2016/17 would be £160.044m;
- (f) the council was on target for a reduction in posts of 300 by the end of the financial year;
- (g) sixteen apprenticeship positions had been recruited for customer service frontline;
- (h) two departments (Joint Commissioning and Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care) were above the current threshold for sickness absence (a review of management actions and cases had been undertaken).

In response to questions raised by the Board, it was reported that –

- (i) the age group of the 16 newly recruited apprentices was mixed;
- (j) an undertaking was given to provide information relating to how many 16 to 19 year olds (apprentices) fell into the looked after children category;
- (k) measures had been taken to mitigate the impact of the continued reduction of the workforce, such as planning changes in advance and changing working practices to increase productivity;

- (l) the corporate sickness target had been set at a realistic level of 8.5 days per full time equivalent post; one of the factors taking into consideration when setting the target was the age profile of the workforce;
- (m) managers had been tasked with managing sickness absence effectively.

The Chair thanked the Head of Finance and Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development for attending the meeting.

Order of Business

With the permission of the Chair, the order of business on the agenda was amended, as set out below in the minutes.

61. THE BRILLIANT COOPERATIVE COUNCIL SUSTAINABLE THREE YEAR PLAN

Tracey Lee (Chief Executive) and Councillor Evans (Council Leader) presented a report that identified some of the key financial challenges that the Council faced over the coming three years, proposed a revised approach to financial planning over the medium term and sought approval for a council-wide transformation programme based on co-operative values to substantially reduce the operating costs of the Council and ensure the maximum possible investment in achieving the Corporate Plan objectives.

Since 2009/2010 the council had already reduced its expenditure by circa £30m through efficiency savings and service reductions. With the impact of the reduction in government funding, Welfare Reform, reductions in Revenue Support Grant and the localisation of the Council Tax benefit and Business Rates receipts and the increased demand for council services, the council faced an estimated funding gap over the next three years of circa £65m. The value of these savings equated to the complete shutdown of Exeter City Council for five years.

The proposed Transformation Programme would deliver a fundamental change in the way that the Council goes about its business, delivering significant savings in four key areas –

- economic growth initiatives that would provide financial dividends for the council, a more commercial approach to the way that the council runs its services and smarter procurement and commissioning;
- customer-led service design, transforming the way the council interacts with customers to meet their demands and preferences;
- creating an integrated approach to health, wellbeing and social care commissioning, working co-operatively across all local communities

and partners;

- smarter, evidence based decision-making for the council using co-operative principles and support services delivering against the Council's new organisational requirements.

To support the delivery and implementation of the Transformation Programme, the council would develop two 'enabling programmes' focused on –

- better use of the council's physical and technical infrastructure and assets to better service the needs of the organisation now and into the future;
- ensuring that Members and staff are engaged and supported through the Transformation Programme and that they have the necessary skills to deliver.

In response to questions raised by Members, it was reported that –

- (a) the cuts from Central Government were unprecedented and as such there would be reductions in council services although currently no decisions had been taken; however the three year plan outlined how this would be achieved;
- (b) engagement with the local community would continue as part of the scrutiny process;
- (c) this situation provided a good opportunity to undertake more effective working with neighbouring authorities (such as the council administering the Business Rates Scheme for the whole of Devon);
- (d) the Corporate Management Team was undertaking a series of road shows (73 in total) across the whole authority, to share the values, objectives and outlining the new Corporate Plan; members of staff would be asked to make a commitment to be open to change and not to dismiss it;
- (e) an undertaking was made to provide a detailed breakdown of the estimated funding gap of circa £65m.

The Chair thanked Tracey Lee and Councillor Evans for attending the meeting and for the transparency and openness with which they had shared the financial challenges facing the Council. The Chair also offered the Board's assistance in undertaking effective scrutiny, in order to add value to this process.

The Board agreed to endorse the recommendations to City Council, as follows –

- (I) adopt a longer term approach to addressing the reduction in funding available to the Council, planning for a balanced indicative budget in each of the coming three years;

- (2) support the implementation of a council-wide transformation programme, based on co-operative values, to substantially reduce the operating costs of the council and ensure the maximum possible investment in achieving the council's objectives;
- (3) agree that Cabinet review earmarked reserves and balances to ensure that the Transformation Programme reserve is adequate to cover cashflow requirements for the period of 2013/14 to 2016/17 (managing the overall costs incurred and savings achieved across each financial year);
- (4) a further report is presented by Tracey Lee (Chief Executive) and Councillor Evans (Council Leader) to the Co-operative Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 16 October 2013, setting out the Transformation Programme and its key elements, including the governance proposals, in more detail to enable effective scrutiny.

62. **BUDGET SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS (SIX MONTHLY REVIEW)**

The Board noted the current position regarding the budget recommendations.

63. **CALL-INS**

There were no call-ins to consider.

64. **URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

There were no urgent executive decisions to consider.

65. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board endorsed and agreed the recommendations of the Ambitious Plymouth Panel, as follows –

- (1) the Missing Young People's team present the 'Be-Wise to Sexual Exploitation' programme to the Youth Cabinet to receive feedback on the programme's content from young people prior to delivering any sessions in schools;
- (2) an update on the Missing Young People's team and the delivery of the 'Be-Wise to Sexual Exploitation' programme is provided to the panel in February 2014.

66. **COOPERATIVE REVIEW(S)**

There were no co-operative reviews to consider.

67. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.