

(Received by email 18.12.13)

Dear Councillor James,

Please find below comments on behalf of the Chamber following the Draft Budget Presentation on the 10 December 2013 given by Anthony Payne, Malcolm Coe and Carole Burgoyne.

1. We believe that priority should be given to the regeneration of the city centre, while maximising other opportunities that exist across the city. This is consistent with previous representations we have made in respect of AAPs. The city centre as a whole needs specific attention and we welcome proposals such as the History Centre coming forward. However attention to elements such as the West End of the City Centre need to be prioritised, recognising the complexity of issues that exist concerning ownership and tenure complexity. We support the intention to introduce a mix of residential, commercial and retail use in the City Centre and would like to see action in this vein accelerated.
2. Related to this and while appreciating the need for PCC to raise revenue, proposals cited in the press recently such as asking customers to pay for parking at Park & Ride sites need to be carefully considered and thought through such that they do not have a detrimental effect on the city centre.
3. While I understand that the appeals process for business rate reviews is not the responsibility of PCC, the plain fact is that businesses have gone under as a result of the long delays and uncertainty surrounding the appeals process. Some assistance from PCC in dealing with this issue would be helpful
4. Re procurement while good progress has been made on this in the past couple of years PCC should aim for a higher percentage of local spend – I suggest this should be 50%, not 30%.
5. I think there should be much more explicit mention of the opportunities afforded by technology to reduce PCC's cost base and improve service delivery. You might want to refer to Sheldon Ryan about the various projects that are on-going and could happen in the future.
6. Re schools, while I understood from the presentation that this is a “zero sum game”, do we really need 94 schools in Plymouth? This seems to be an awful lot and suggests that there could be significant underlying inefficiencies in the way education is provided. A smaller number of bigger schools could be less of a drain on the public purse.

Yours Sincerely

David Parlby
Chief Executive
Plymouth Chamber of Commerce