

Your Plymouth Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Minute 6 of 9 June 2014



The following minute of the scrutiny panel was supported by the Co-operative Scrutiny Board on 25 June 2014.

A FRAMEWORK FOR WORKING WITH OUR CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES

The panel received a report setting out a proposal for a new framework for working with citizens and communities. In attendance to present the report were Councillor Peter Smith, Deputy Leader, Stuart Palmer, Assistant Director for Homes and Communities, and Hannah Daw, Policy and Business Planning Officer.

The report informed members that a need had been identified for Plymouth to create a new relationship with its citizens who felt removed from the decision making process and faced barriers to community involvement. This went against the Council's vision for the City to be a place where 'people could have a say about what is important to them and where they could change what happened in their area'.

By working with partners such as the Police, Health, Plymouth Community Homes, and the voluntary sector and sharing resources and responsibilities, the Council hoped to be able to respond to customers and communities in a more flexible way and the framework was the start of a journey towards empowering communities to take control.

In addition, the report looked at the role of local councillors and how support would be needed in order to help members 'channel shift' towards becoming local leaders in their communities and set out a series of work streams for when the framework was agreed in order to move forward.

In response to questions raised, Members were advised that –

- (a) a return to the Area Committee style model was not possible and changes in staffing, restructuring and transformation within the Council meant that it was no longer possible to support the current model of community/neighbourhood engagement either. Resources needed to be focussed and structured differently;
- (b) it was acknowledged that one size model would not suit all and buy-in from partners was essential. Conversations with partners to date had been positive and a pilot project in Barne Barton was demonstrating positive results; with a further two possible pilots in the pipeline. In addition, where there were already well-established groups who were working well, lessons would be learned and those foundations would be built upon;
- (c) it was acknowledged that if people didn't feel listened too they wouldn't engage so other ways of capturing feedback and consultation methods were being explored such as use of social media.

Members were concerned that the framework was lacking in detail and felt that it would benefit from pre-decision scrutiny in the form of a co-operative review.

The panel therefore recommends that –

- (1) Cabinet delays consideration of the Framework for Working with Citizens and Communities on 15 July 2014 and defers it to its next meeting;
- (2) pre-decision scrutiny in the form of a co-operative review takes place to –
 - explore using community organisations, for example existing community economic development trusts (CEDTs), to hold and deploy neighbourhood budgets and commission services such as youth services and health projects;
 - explore incorporating public health funding into devolved neighbourhood budgets so that communities can commission services projects and initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of their neighbourhoods and tackle highly localised public health issues.