

Co-operative Scrutiny Board

Friday 19 February 2016

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Beer, Bowie, Mrs Bowyer, Jordan, Murphy, Ricketts, Stevens, Storer and Kate Taylor.

Apology for absence: Councillor Sam Davey.

Also in attendance: Mr Oliver Colvile (MP for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport), Ross Jago (Lead Officer), Mr Gary Streeter (MP for South West Constituency), (Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 4.00 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.

99. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

100. **MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FOR PLYMOUTH SUTTON AND DEVONPORT AND SOUTH WEST DEVON CONSTITUENCY**

Gary Streeter MP for the South West Constituency and Oliver Colvile MP for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport attended the meeting to provide their vision and key priorities for the City.

The Chair advised that Mr Mercer would be unable to attend this meeting due to parliamentary business which required him to be out of the City. It had been decided to use this date as at least two of the City's MPs were able to attend. Mr Mercer had offered another two dates to attend the Board and arrangements would be made to hold this meeting.

The Chair offered a warm welcome to Gary Streeter, MP and Oliver Colvile, MP.

In Mr Mercer's absence, a range of questions were put forward which related to the following –

- (a) his lack of engagement with the Plymouth Armed Forces Community covenant;
- (b) the veterans' organisations that he had engaged with in the City;
- (c) his non-attendance at the local HMS Heroes annual meeting;
- (d) an explanation as to why he voted for the Employment and Support Allowance Activity component which reduced the amount paid to ill or disabled people by £29.05 a week;

- (e) lobbying of the Health Secretary to ascertain the additional junior doctors and funding would be required to accommodate a seven day working week at Derriford Hospital.

The main areas of questioning from Members related to the following –

- (f) whether the elected mayoral model would have a favourable impact on the devolution agreement that Plymouth was currently involved with;
- (g) the need for urgent improvements in rail and air connectivity to the City (with the Mayflower 400 celebrations in 2020);
- (h) capacity issues within nurseries to be able to provide the full 30 hours of free child care (with additional children qualifying for this scheme there was lack of placements);
- (i) the slow release of information from Whitehall regarding the local government settlement which delayed the budget setting process and impeded the scrutiny function;
- (j) the views of the Members of Parliament relating to the forthcoming EU Referendum;
- (k) the lack of funding for those children (2-4 years old) entitled to free childcare for working parents;
- (l) what support would the MPs continue to give to the City;
- (m) what comparisons had been made regarding the support that Wandsworth Borough Council received from the government which led to the conclusion that it was more efficient than Plymouth (revenue support grant £23 per person more and the top up grant £81 per person more);
- (n) what work was being undertaken to secure the stay of the Royal Navy, Marines and Army in the City and that the replacement fleet was berthed in Plymouth;
- (o) the reasons why Plymouth seemed to be responsible for closing the deficit whilst other richer councils in England were not;
- (p) the funding gap relating to NHS services in Plymouth compared to Bristol (currently Bristol received £17.00 per person more than Plymouth);
- (q) the inequality of public health funding for the residents of Plymouth.

The panel received thorough and detailed responses from both of the MPs present to all of the questions. A webcast recording of the entire meeting is available on our website.

The Board agreed to send a letter for Mr Mercer MP regarding the above questions (outlined in points (a) to (e) above.

The Chair thanked the Members of Parliament for attending the meeting.

Please note: this meeting was webcast <http://council.webcast.vualto.com/plymouth-city-council/home?EventId=14076>