

## Your Plymouth

**Monday 14 December 2015**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillor Jordan, in the Chair.

Councillor Morris, Vice Chair.

Councillors Churchill, Damarell, Michael Leaves (substitute for Councillor Martin Leaves), Sam Leaves, Rennie, Ricketts (substitute for Councillor Drean), Riley and Sparling.

Co-opted Representatives: Steve Meakin.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Drean, Martin Leaves and Kate Taylor.

Also in attendance: Pete Aley (Head of Neighbourhood and Community Services), Di Charlton (Lead Officer), Councillor Philippa Davey (Cabinet member for Safer and Stronger Communities), Matt Garrett (Head of Housing Services), Laura Griffiths (Financial & Social Inclusion Officer), Darin Halifax (City of Service Chief Officer), Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet member for Co-operatives and Housing), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive), Emma Rose (Strategic Development Manager (Customer Services)) and Lynn Young (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 5.58 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.*

### 21. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

The committee agreed to appoint Councillor Morris as Vice Chair for this particular meeting.

### 22. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the constitution, the following declarations of interest were made in respect of items under consideration at this meeting –

| <b>Name</b>          | <b>Minute</b>                     | <b>Reason</b>       | <b>Interest</b> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Mr Steve Meakin      | 24 – Corporate Performance Report | Landlord            | Personal        |
|                      | 25 – Problem debt review update   | Employed by the CAB | Personal        |
| Councillor Churchill | 24 – Corporate Performance        | Landlord            | Personal        |

|                           |                                   |          |          |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|
|                           | report                            |          |          |
| Councillor Michael Leaves | 24 – Corporate Performance report | Landlord | Personal |
| Councillor Sam Leaves     | 24 – Corporate Performance report | Landlord | Personal |
| Councillor Riley          | 24 – Corporate Performance report | Landlord | Personal |

23. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

24. **MINUTES**

Agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2015.

25. **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Councillor Philippa Davey (Cabinet member for Safer and Stronger Communities), Matt Garrett (Head of Housing Services), Darin Halifax (City of Service Chief Officer), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive) and Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet member for Co-operatives and Housing), were present for this item.

Comprehensive verbal updates (and one presentation) were provided by officers and councillors on the following key actions –

**K22 - Deliver the Housing Plan Objectives**

The Plymouth Plan incorporated the strategic objectives contained in the existing, published Housing Plan, and key actions were now contained within Policy 15 'meeting local housing needs'. There were several challenges surrounding this key action including –

- a high level of homeless people in the city;
- an increase in the number of rough sleepers;
- an urgent need for housing adaptations for Plymouth's rising population of elderly or disabled people;
- the introduction of Universal Credit in January 2016, combined with rising levels of debt could result in many households experiencing significant barriers in accessing and sustaining housing;

**K24 - Strengthen and support coordination and capacity building in the voluntary sector and reinvigorate volunteering**

It is estimated that approximately 21% of the adult population (almost 45,000) are currently formally volunteering at some level in the city. The true figure is likely to

be much higher with many people volunteering and not realising that they are and informal volunteering not being recorded.

In January 2016, a volunteering opportunity of the month for Plymouth City Council staff would be advertised on the 'Our Plymouth' website along with information on staffroom, Facebook and Twitter, along with the launch a time-banking model for Plymouth City Council staff. This pilot project was funded through the Department for Communities and Local Government.

**K25 - Lead agreement on and implementation of a new framework for working with citizens and communities for the city**

The new framework for working with citizens and communities would be delivered jointly as part of the upcoming service reviews within the People Directorate and Chief Executive's Office. A blueprint for community engagement had been developed to form the basis of discussion with partners and stakeholders. A workshop with internal stakeholders had also taken place to better understand the communication and engagement needs of the organisation. Community engagement activities continued to be undertaken across the city in support of Neighbourhood Plans, CEDTs and the Plymouth Plan Part 2.

**K52 - Develop a programme to improve the quality of private rented housing and take action against rogue landlords**

The creation of the Housing Charter Steering Group ensured -

- the quality and management of properties in the private rented sector including fair trading by business;
- the health and wellbeing of tenants;
- the availability of choice of and access to private rented housing;
- the ability of tenants to sustain tenancies in the long term;

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

- (a) the One Plymouth steering group;
- (b) the Better Together web portal;
- (c) opportunities for volunteers;
- (d) use of timebanks in Plymouth;
- (e) Council House/secure tenancies;
- (f) impact of Universal Credit on tenants;
- (g) rough sleepers in Plymouth;
- (h) training courses available for private landlords;

- (i) Charter/Plan for Private Rented Housing;
- (j) agencies/organisations available to provide help to tenants with housing/tenancy problems;
- (k) findings of the Fairness Commission report;
- (l) 'have your say' meetings.

The panel noted the report.

## 26. **PROBLEM DEBT REVIEW UPDATE**

Pete Aley (Head of Neighbourhood and Community Services), Laura Griffiths (Financial & Social Inclusion Officer), Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet member for Co-operatives and Housing) and Emma Rose (Strategic Development Manager (Customer Services)) provided members with an update on the Problem Debt Review.

The main highlights were –

- (a) there were 18 recommendations from the review, - 14 had been completed, 1 required no further action and 3 were still ongoing;
- (b) problem debt remained a concern for the residents of Plymouth - Stepchange reported that since 2012, there had been a 64% increase in calls for advice; a 75% increase in debt management plans; and a 30% reduction in unsecured debts. In the first 6 months of 2014-15, Advice Plymouth saw clients with over £3.8 m of debt;
- (c) low income families were a major concern;
- (d) Universal Credit could have a major impact on families when it was introduced;
- (e) it was possible that many families would go further in to debt as a result of the festive period.

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

- (f) the use of debt collection agencies and bailiffs, in particular their methods of obtaining money;
- (g) ongoing work with the University and other city colleges;
- (h) the feasibility of Plymouth City Council establishing an alternative to Bright House;
- (i) the prevalence of loan sharks in the city.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance at the meeting.

27. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS**

The panel noted the tracking resolutions schedule.

28. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel noted the work programme.

29. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.

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