

Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 1 November 2017

PRESENT:

Councillor Bowie, in the Chair.

Councillor Ball, Vice Chair.

Councillors Carson, Churchill, Sam Davey, Fletcher, Fry, Mavin, Morris, Penberthy and Storer.

Paul Barnard (Assistant Director for Strategic Transport, Housing and Planning), Kaja Curry (Natural Infrastructure Officer), Councillor Downie (Cabinet Member for Safer Communities), Sally Farley (Strategic Transport Manager), Matt Garrett (Head of Community Connections), Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health), Gareth Harrison-Poole (Street Cleansing and Grounds Manager), Lou Hayward (Assistant Director for Street Scene), Nicola Horne (Environmental Health (Environmental Protection) Service Manager), Ross Jago (Lead Officer), Councillor Michael Leaves (Cabinet Member for Strategic Street Scene/Environment), Billy Moore (Natural Infrastructure Officer), Councillor Nicholson (Cabinet Member for Strategic Transport, Housing and Planning), Helen Prendergast (Democratic Adviser), Councillor Ricketts (Cabinet Member for Transport and Housing Delivery), Emma Rose (Strategic Development Manager), Dave Saunders (Strategic Development Manager) and Adrian Trim (Head of Highways, Parking and Marine Services).

The meeting started at 1.00 pm and finished at 4.10 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel 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. **Declarations of Interest**

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

22. **Minutes**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2017 are confirmed as a correct record.

23. **Chair's Urgent Business**

The Chair referred to the future decision regarding the increase environmental enforcement.

(In accordance with Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the Chair brought forward the above item for urgent consideration because of the need to inform Members).

24. **Homelessness Briefing**

Councillor Ricketts (Cabinet Member for Transport and Housing Delivery) and Matt Garrett (Head of Community Connections) presented this item.

The key areas of questioning related to –

- (a) what consideration had the Cabinet Member given to the changes regarding the routes to the pathway access to accommodation;
- (b) concerns that businesses had received negative feedback as they had been unaware of the changes; (Plymouth House had not been ready);
- (c) the lack of communication to ward councillors and communities regarding the changes in homelessness provision;
- (d) ensuring that local communities were aware of the block booking of bed and breakfast accommodation, as in some areas, this could have a cumulative impact;
- (e) when would the committee be able to scrutinise the homelessness delivery plan;
- (f) whether an action plan had been drafted to address the overspend;
- (g) what were the contributing factors to the overspend on bed and breakfast accommodation and the increase in costs per place per night;
- (h) what was the definition of a rough sleeper; the figures reported seemed to be low and the perception was that there were more people sleeping rough across the city than reported;
- (i) what measures were in place to prevent 16/17 year olds from being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation;
- (j) an assurance that measures to address the overspend would not affect the overall service provision;
- (k) what measures had been undertaken to prepare for the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which placed additional burdens on the local authority with no extra funding.

Agreed that once partners had signed off the homelessness delivery plan it would be scrutinised by the committee.

25. **Universal Credit - Housing Element**

Councillor Downie (Cabinet Member for Safer Communities) and Emma Rose (Strategic Development Manager) presented this item.

The key area of questioning related to –

- (a) the ability of social housing providers to provide ongoing community support and if able to continue this practice, the impact on their housing development programme due to Universal Credit being paid in arrears;
- (b) the willingness of private sector landlords to accept rent up to six weeks in arrears and the implications on the private rented sector and homelessness prevention if tenants were evicted or refused tenancies due to receiving payments in arrears;
- (c) the DWP's funding allocation for Plymouth relating to the Discretionary Housing Fund and was there provision within the fund for loan based payments;
- (d) the number of social housing landlords that were part of the DWPs Landlord Portal and when the opportunity for social sector landlords to become a Trusted Partner would be rolled out;
- (e) concerns that the Universal Credit Partnership agreement with the DWP including the assisted digital support would end in March 2018 and what support would be provided to customers beyond this date;
- (f) whether library staff had been trained to provide advice/support to claimants relating to Universal Credit;
- (g) concerns relating to the impact of Universal Credit on young people (aged 16 to 25 year olds) and how the Council would support this age group;
- (h) whether the Council had a contingency plan in respect of helping customers in financial need.

The committee agreed to further scrutinise Universal Credit at a meeting to be arranged in November 2017 and to invite interested parties to provide evidence.

26. **Waste Services**

Councillor Michael Leaves (Cabinet Member for Strategic Street Scene/Environment), Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health), Gareth Harrison-Poole (Street Cleansing and Grounds Manager), Lou Hayward (Assistant Director for Street Scene), Nicola Horne (Environmental Health (Environmental Protection) Service Manager) and Dave Saunders (Strategic Development Manager) presented this item.

Key areas of questioning related to –

- (a) whether measures were being put in place to address the increase in the number of calls received in the contact centre, relating to waste services;
- (b) how were people being educated regarding contamination of green (recycling) bins;
- (c) the number of staff involved with the education programme;
- (d) what measures were being put in place to prevent the contamination of bins (not by the householder) that were located in public areas (flats/streets);
- (e) the reasons behind the increase in missed bins (both green and brown);
- (f) the number of green (recycling) bins that had been contaminated;
- (g) clarification on whether missed bins could be reported on the day of collection;
- (h) concerns relating to the tone used in the alternative weekly collection publicity campaign;
- (i) the lack of improvement regarding the levels of street litter;
- (j) the progress being undertaken to further interrogate the complaints data.

The committee agreed to –

- (1) include the call centre when further scrutinising waste services;
- (2) receive progress updates on the work being undertaken to interrogate the complaints data.

(Councillors Ball, Carson, Churchill, Fletcher, Fry and Storer were present for the remainder of the meeting).

27. **Transport Infrastructure (Presentation)**

Councillor Nicholson (Cabinet member for Strategic Transport, Housing and Planning), Paul Barnard (Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, Sally Farley (Strategic Transport Manager) and Adrian Trim (Head of Highways, Parking and Marine Services) presented this item.

The key areas of questioning related to –

- (a) whether the programmed works for the Derriford transport scheme would be completed on schedule despite discovering explosives on site;
- (b) whether the work taking place on Charles Cross Church would impede the planned traffic works;
- (c) the rights of the utility companies to undertake works on the highway network, how much notice had to be given to the local authority to undertake such works and how were these works communicated to residents;
- (d) the definition of a utility company and whether this included Sky and Virgin;
- (e) whether planning and highways worked together when considering both highway network works and construction works;
- (f) whether the Council had become more successful in bidding for funding, in order to undertake such a comprehensive programme of works;
- (g) the reasons for the failure of the temporary lights at Sandalls Way on four consecutive days;
- (h) whether public consultation events could be held in the evening, in order to provide an opportunity to those people that worked to attend.

The committee noted the report.

28. **Allotments**

Councillor Nicholson (Cabinet Member for Strategic Transport, Housing and Planning), Kaja Curry (Natural Infrastructure Officer) and Billy Moore (Natural Infrastructure Officer) presented this item.

The key areas of questioning related to –

- (a) the current demand for allotments;

- (b) how many allotment sites had formed Associations;
- (c) whether the allotment waiting list could be further interrogated to provide information by neighbourhood;
- (d) how proactive was the Council in filling the vacant allotment plots;
- (e) whether water charges were included within the fee.

The committee noted the report.

29. **Tracking Decisions**

The committee noted the progress of its decisions.

30. **Work Programme**

The committee agreed to include the following items on its work programme –

- (1) Universal Credit (November 2017);
- (2) Parking Strategy (January 2018);
- (3) Trade Waste (March 2018);
- (4) Mayflower 400 Update (January 2018);
- (5) Waste Services Update (including the Call Centre);
- (6) Homelessness Delivery Plan.

Clarification was sought as to the time of the committee's meetings. The Chair advised that the time of the meeting had been brought forward to 1pm during the winter months, although she would be willing to start the meetings at 2pm.