

PORTFOLIO:

COMMUNITIES & HOUSING

Report of
Portfolio Holder:

**COUNCILLOR
JESSICA RIDDLE**

HOUSING

Disabled Facility Grants (DFG's) – Integrated Pilot

These are mandatory grants for the provision of disabled adaptations to those in need to enable clients to live independently in their own home. The integrated DFG pilot project is taking place initially across two financial years, 2011/12 and 2012/13 being led by Carlisle, with the support of the County Council, it seeks to identify working practices which can be applied throughout Cumbria.

The pilot aims to develop a preferred model for the delivery of disabled adaptations and involves looking at health, social care and housing to map current processes and identify good practice in order to become more efficient and responsive to clients. A working group aims to provide a range of options by October this year.

Affordable Homes Programme

This is a programme for the development of affordable housing between 2011 and 2015 under the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The programme has secured £2.4 million to enable the delivery of 109 units. As well as these identified developments additional units of housing should be delivered.

Empty Homes Project

£250,000 of external funding has been secured to help tackle empty properties in Carlisle; £200,000 from the Homes and Communities Agency to tackle empty properties specifically in Castle ward and £50,000 from the Cumbria Infrastructure Fund to be spent across the authority area.

In addition, other funding up to £500,000 is anticipated and an update will be provided in due course.

As the strategic lead the authority will be undertaking the co-ordination, technical assessment and monitoring of the works to bring the empty properties back into use.

Homelessness, Prevention and Accommodation Services

Accommodation and Support Services

The accommodation and support services have undergone a transitional period in which the Housing related support element (funded by Cumbria County Council) at John Street Hostel has been transferred to Impact Housing Association from 2nd April 2012. Carlisle City Council will continue to directly manage and staff the provision with visiting support services modelled and delivered by Impact housing association within Shaddon Gateway Centre.

The accommodation and support services team have arranged and facilitated a number of events and activities at both the men and women and family accommodation schemes including:

- Fishing trips
- Volunteer work placements for residents with partner agencies
- Get into Reading group
- Carlisle Cooks cookery groups
- Jubilee tea party and BBQ – residents baking and cooking group members were supported by staff to make the food for the Jubilee Party – enjoyed by all!

Homelessness Services

From 1st April to 1st June 2012 55 decisions were made on homeless applications of which 24 were accepted as being owed a homeless duty. 129 households in total approached for housing advice in this period and 10 households were prevented from becoming homeless.

The newly appointed Homeless Prevention officer is now in post and will be working towards maximising opportunities and initiatives to prevent homelessness, working towards our target of increasing the number of reported prevention cases in 2012/13 by 50%.

Shaddon Gateway Centre & Dispersed Foyer Services

The lease and management agreement between Carlisle City Council and Carlisle YMCA is now signed. The contract arrangements are in place from 1st April 2012 for a period of 10 years, to be renegotiated after five years.

Carlisle YMCA is continuing to assert its local position within the City and pursuing all business leads and opportunities. Promotional literature is

currently being developed which will then be sent out to stakeholders and business links.

An official opening event is being planned for the end of the summer.

Welfare Advice Service

The Welfare Advice Service is working with officers and partners to ensure a collaborative approach is taken to support customers through changes as a result of Welfare Reform changes in order to ensure that the impact of these can be reduced.

Total Benefit gains for the period 1st April 2012 to 1st June 2012 is **£222,100**.

Revenues and Benefits Service

Carlisle City Council is the employing authority for all staff in the Revenues & Benefits Shared Service. The team is based at offices in Carlisle, Workington and Whitehaven. The Council takes responsibility for all its staff very seriously and is particularly concerned that those who work away from Carlisle feel supported and involved. This includes regular site visits from the Chief Executive to deliver his staff briefings, delivery of the work place health development day sessions at locations easily accessible to all staff and joint social activities.

A key issue in ensuring equity and fairness across the service has now been resolved. Since the Service was established there have been some variations in salaries across the three locations where staff have been doing the same or very similar jobs. These anomalies have now been resolved and are being implemented with effect from 1 July 2012. This will ensure that all staff within the Revenues & Benefits Shared Service move to the same salary and grading structure applicable to all other Carlisle CC employees.

Crime and Disorder Update Report

Carlisle and Eden CDRP (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership) has and continues to be a successful catalyst for the multi-agency working to address crime and disorder. Its annual plan was approved by Executive on 2 July 2012.

Performance

Performance figures for North Cumbria for the period ending 30th April 2012 are outlined below. The figures are compared to the same period the previous year.

Overall Crime

- Overall crime figures across North Cumbria fell by 14%, a reduction of 306 less crimes, from 808 – 696.

Anti-Social Behaviour

- We continue to see reductions in anti social behaviour. Incidents have fallen by 16% compared to the same period in 2011.

Criminal Damage

- Incidents of Criminal Damage have reduced by 73 incidents, from 367 incidents down to 294.

Assaults

- Carlisle has seen a reduction of 19% in incidents of ABH, which represents 40 less victims over the 12 month period.
- Carlisle has seen a consistent reduction in ABH offences over the last 12 months which is a testament to the initiatives and interventions being deployed within the night time economy.
- More serious offences (GBH and wounding) have increased by 17% across Carlisle which amounts to 5 incidents.

Problem Solving Groups

The PSG (Problem Solving Group) is an operational and delivery focussed group. Its key aims are to develop early interventions and provide intelligence led targeted services at a local level.

The City West Problem Solving Group was launched in April 2011. Since its launch over 100 different issues have been discussed and reviewed by the group. When the Carlisle East PSG was launched in March 2012 a decision was made to formalise the Problem Solving Group process and implement performance measures to ensure both the groups remained focussed and continued to be effective.

PSG Performance Monitoring	City West	Carlisle East
Total number of actions	8	30
Actions dealt with / completed within 6 wks	4	26
% of actions dealt with / completed within 6 wks	50%	87%

Councillor Jessica Riddle
Communities & Housing Portfolio Holder