

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **COMMUNITY**

#### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**March, 2012**

**The Panel has met twice since the last report.**

**At the meeting in January, a significant part of the agenda was devoted to matters relating to young people. The Panel was interested to hear from the Chief Executive of the Carlisle Zone about its first year in operation and the plans for the coming year. Assurances of progress were sought on the activities relating to children living in the rural areas and the links being made with other youth clubs as well as Carlisle College and the University of Cumbria.**

**Examination was made of a report outlining the new ways of working the City Council is developing in order to support young people not in education, employment or training. We had the opportunity to delve into the subject of youth worklessness by questioning the Area Manager of Connexions on the challenges facing its contribution to the need to support school leavers in signing up for training opportunities, apprenticeships and other schemes, that enable them to enter the world of work. This is a subject I expect to remain on the Community Panel's agenda as we monitor the work of the various partners in this field which is of concern to all members.**

**At both January and February's meetings scrutiny continued on the developing plans for the Shaddon Gateway Resource Centre and the Panel took the opportunity to question the contribution the Centre can make to the alleviation of youth homelessness.**

**The Panel welcomed the success of Carlisle's first Healthy City week and the opportunity the Healthy City project provides for embedding improving the health of our citizens into the Council's policies and strategies.**

**Following an update on the situation in regard to the future of the CDRP, the Panel confirmed its desire to see the MARAC and domestic abuse projects continue and questioned the Chair of the CDRP on that subject and on the preventative measures that identify people at risk.**

**The Panel welcomed the detailed response from the Executive to the recommendations made in the Task and Finish Group's Disabled Facilities Grant Scheme report but requested that the response be drawn up into an action plan in order that the Panel can examine the outcomes.**

**The Annual Equalities Report spoke of real steps forward in this area of Council's responsibility but the Panel wish to monitor the timetable of objectives that will be set in order to comply with the Equality Duty Act that came into force in April last year. A further report on those objectives will be received by the Panel at the March meeting.**

**At the February meeting, the Riverside Partnership Agreement with the City Council was the subject of a lengthy scrutiny with particular regard to vulnerable people and their needs both now and in the future. The Panel's questions elicited a range of information on the ongoing work being carried out to address the challenges for the partners in this area of responsibility. This has given the Panel knowledge of what work the Partnership will be conducting and therefore the areas where scrutiny will be required.**

**The Panel were presented with an overview report on the progress of the Revenue and Benefits Shared Service. Concern was expressed at the problems that had arisen in the first six months. Assurances were given in regard to the surmounting of these problems and the better running of the service in the second half of its first year.**

**The main concern for the Panel was the possibility of delays for service users particularly in regard to the Welfare changes that are planned for later in the year but they were informed that as the three partners are now working with the same IT systems, the changes should be easier to address. This may be a subject the Panel would wish to scrutinise in the next municipal year.**

**It was agreed by the Panel that its Lead Member on the**

**Neighbourhood Working Task and Finish Group should meet with the Health and Well Being Manager to discuss a number of issues relating to the update report received by the Panel. A report that sets out the work programme drawn up following the Group's recommendations.**

**Questions were raised on the Third Quarter Performance Report in regard to the RAG rating that showed that the Revenue and Benefits Shared Service was on target which contradicted the earlier report which showed a drop in performance. However, this matter was clarified later by the Policy and Performance Officer who explained that the earlier report was on the whole service whereas his report referred only to the Carlisle element.**

**The final item for the February meeting was an update on the Council's Transformation Programme. This is a useful report for the Panel, keeping them informed regularly of the changes and giving the opportunity for members to have clarification on any matters relating to it that they wish to discuss.**

**Olwyn Luckley**