

## **INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2002 AT 10.00 AM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Rutherford (Chairman), Councillors Crookdake, S Fisher (substitute for Councillor Dodd), Glover, B Hodgson, E Mallinson and Mrs Parsons.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Firth, L Fisher and G Prest were also in attendance at the meeting.

### **IOS.78/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING DECLARATIONS OF "THE PARTY WHIP")**

Councillor E Mallinson declared a personal interest in accordance with the City Council's Code of Conduct for Members in respect of the item of business concerning the Off Street Parking Enforcement Review as she was a Member of the County Council which was considering a report on the matter that day.

Councillor S Fisher declared a personal interest in accordance with the City Council's Code of Conduct for Members in respect of the item of business concerning the Off Street Parking Enforcement Review as she lived in an area which was subject to a Residents Parking Scheme. Councillor S Fisher also declared a personal interest in respect of the item of business concerning the Tourism Best Value Action Plan as she had a business involved in the tourism industry.

### **IOS.79/02 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 15 and 24 July and 8 August 2002 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meetings.

### **IOS.80/02 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS**

**RESOLVED** – That it be noted that there were no matters which had been the subject of call-in.

### **IOS.81/02 ON STREET PARKING ENFORCEMENT REVIEW**

Councillors E Mallinson and S Fisher, having declared personal interests, remained in the meeting and spoke on the item.

The Director of Environment and Development submitted Report EN.93/02 which had been considered by the Executive on 2 September 2002 concerning a review into the operation of decriminalised parking enforcement. Minute EX.253/02 of the Executive detailing the decision taken on the report was also submitted.

The Executive had decided:-

1. That the existing enforcement policies, together with the actions for improvement, as set out in Report EN.93/02, be approved.

2. That the report be referred to the County Council's Carlisle Local Committee for comment and with specific reference to the issues relating to variations to traffic/parking regulations, business plan performance and the residents parking schemes.

3. That the Director of Environment and Development be requested to inform the County Council that the City Council do not wish for parking excess charges to be increased and also do not wish to see an administrative charge being levied on residents for the Residents Parking Schemes.

The Director of Environment and Development presented the report to the Committee.

Members were very concerned that this report had already been considered by the Executive and that an opportunity had been lost for this Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the report and submit views to the Executive before a decision was taken.

The Director indicated that the report had been produced to a tight timescale in order that views could be forwarded to the County's Carlisle Local Committee for consideration at their meeting on 12 September 2002. Unfortunately, on this occasion, it had not been possible to submit the report to a meeting of this Committee for comment prior to the Executive. The Chairman of the Committee had, however, been consulted as part of a small Member Group on the proposals.

Members considered that the differing timescales for Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Executive meetings continued to cause difficulties for the efficient flow of business and suggested that this needed to be addressed as part of any further review of the Constitution.

Members went on to discuss the report in detail with the Director of Environment and Development when the following issues were raised:-

(a) The position of other District Councils in Cumbria over the possible increase in parking charge notices as suggested by the County Council.

The Director indicated that, whilst all Districts had been consulted over possible increases in parking charge notices, the final decision rested with the County Council as Highway Authority. The City Council, along with the other District Councils in Cumbria, would be required to charge at whatever level was set by the County Council.

The Director indicated that the operation of decriminalised parking enforcement was self-financing and that the Executive could see no need for parking charge notices to increase in Carlisle at the present time.

(b) The position regarding disabled badge holders.

The Director indicated that disabled badges and their method of display was prescribed by law and the confusion over the display of badges had been brought to the attention of the Government. The majority of problems had occurred because badges were not being displayed the correct way round. In the vast majority of cases this was a genuine mistake on the part of the disabled driver and a more caring approach to the issuing of notices was now being taken. However, there had been occasions when photocopies of disabled badges had been displayed. This raised issues regarding other abuses of the disabled badge scheme which would need to be addressed at some point in the future.

(c) Whether a notice would be issued if a driver displayed a written note in their windscreen rather than the official disc.

The Director indicated that the official disc was designed to a national standard and considered that most drivers carried a parking disc in their car. It would be a matter for the individual judgement of the Traffic Wardens whether to issue a notice if an official disc was not being displayed.

The Director also indicated that he was investigating the production of a leaflet indicating where parking discs could be obtained locally.

He further indicated that notices issued to visitors who could not speak/understand English were not pursued.

(d) Whether more efficient issuing of notices would lessen administration costs.

The Director indicated that the problems with notices being issued inaccurately had diminished to the extent that only 5 such notices had been issued in August 2002. The Council operated a rigorous appeals mechanism through the Council's corporate complaints procedure as well as a further right of appeal to the National Parking Adjudication Service which was independent of the City Council. People could also complain through the Local Government Ombudsman.

(e) Why there was such a variance in the number of notices issued by the various Wardens. At review, one Warden had issued 335 notices over a seven month period and another had issued 3,059.

The Director indicated that these figures highlighted the different areas where the Traffic Wardens operated with the majority of notices having been issued in the City Centre area. He was, however, taking steps to ascertain whether there were any national benchmarks for the work of Traffic Wardens, particularly in respect of the issuing of notices.

(f) Whether the 'hotline' for businesses to alert the City Council of emergency works was proving successful. Members were concerned that firms dealing with an emergency would not have time to contact the City Council.

The Director indicated that this service had recently been introduced and its use would be monitored. Should it not prove popular, then it would be discontinued.

(g) Whether the level of use of car parks out of the city centre were monitored.

The Director indicated that the review had been concerned with on street parking enforcement. However, he confirmed that information on the level of use of all City Council car parks was available through CCTV, Wardens' observations, income from ticket machines, etc. Parking capacity was currently just about at saturation point and a report reviewing car parking capacity was to be submitted to the Executive at their 30 September 2002 meeting.

(h) Would there be difficulties with residents believing they had paid for a parking space outside their home if an administration charge for residents' parking permits was introduced.

The Director considered that this may well be the case, although no-one could be

guaranteed a space on the public highway to park their car. He pointed out that the Executive were recommending to the County Council that administration charges should not be introduced in Carlisle.

A Member considered that estate agents should be encouraged to point out to buyers when houses were in residents parking scheme areas.

A Member referred to the composition of the Focus Group which had commented on parking enforcement and considered that a housewife with children should have been included on the Group.

RESOLVED – That the Director's report be noted.

N.B. Councillor Mrs Mallinson left the meeting during consideration of the above item of business.

### **IOS.82/02 TOURISM BEST VALUE ACTION PLAN**

The Head of Economic Development submitted report EDU.18/02 providing Members with an update on progress on the improvements required in the Action Plan resulting from the Tourism Best Value Review.

The Tourism Manager attended the meeting and presented the report. Members discussed the Action Plan in detail with the Tourism Manager when the following issues were raised:-

(a) Whether any progress was being made in developing a major joint funded Carlisle awareness raising campaign.

The Tourism Manager indicated that whilst the objective was to provide a tourism marketing consortium, this had not proved possible at present. A Working Group had been set up through the Communications Unit to bring education, tourism and industry together to see if there was support to hold a major nationwide campaign for Carlisle. There had, however, been insufficient financial support.

A number of joint funded marketing initiatives supported financially by the City Centre Business Group had been undertaken to raise the profile of Carlisle.

(b) A possible use of the Assembly Rooms as a Border Clans Room to attract visitors was suggested.

The Tourism Manager indicated that the City Council was not willing to put significant funding into developing the Assembly Rooms at present. An option for the Cumbria Institute of Art to use the Assembly Rooms as a permanent gallery for the display of paintings by Cumbrian artists was currently being investigated.

(c) Questions arose about the distribution of leaflets advertising Carlisle attractions and the fact that no Carlisle attraction featured in a "Best Ten Attractions in Cumbria" leaflet.

The Tourism Manager indicated that it may be that attractions have paid to be included in the "Best Ten Attractions in Cumbria" leaflet as he was sure that on visitor numbers, Tullie House would feature in the top ten. With regard to the distribution of leaflets, there was an extensive distribution network but that financial constraints made it impossible to ensure that every hotel and guest house was provided with leaflets.

- d. A question arose as to the success of the recently launched Ticketmaster facility at the Old Town Hall TIC.

The Tourism Manager indicated that this was proving to be a popular facility and helping to draw people into the visitor centre.

- (e) With regard to press and public relations, a Member asked whether it would be possible to use the expertise of the Cumbria Tourist Board more.

The Tourism Manager indicated that the Cumbria Tourist Board was orientated towards promoting the central Lakes and places on the Lake District periphery such as Carlisle and Barrow suffered as a result. This was an ongoing issue which was regularly raised with the Cumbria Tourist Board. The City Council was represented at Cumbria Tourist Board meetings by Councillor Firth.

He indicated that the Communications Unit had a good record in obtaining coverage for events being promoted within Carlisle. Carlisle was also part of the Great British Cities consortium which included cities such as Newcastle and Manchester and which had a presence on the Internet and undertook joint marketing initiatives.

A Member asked how often the impact of marketing activity was measured.

The Tourism Manager indicated that enquiries from every initiative were monitored as were visitor numbers where possible. Surveys were undertaken into occupancy levels and the value of income from tourism in the area was also monitored. Members asked the Tourism Manager to make monitoring and information reports on tourism activities available for Members in the Group Offices on a regular basis and also make such reports available electronically for Members. The Economic Prosperity Portfolio Holder was present at the meeting and indicated that he would include information on tourism activities in his reports to the City Council.

A Member asked whether leaflets for attractions in the rural areas of Carlisle were produced.

The Tourism Manager indicated that both the urban and rural areas of Carlisle were well catered for in terms of promotional material and information was also available on the tourism website.

A Member asked how often goods on sale in the TIC's were reviewed.

The Tourism Manager indicated that they were reviewed on an ongoing weekly basis with an annual assessment upon the yearly stock take.

The Economic Prosperity Portfolio holder referred to the variety of activities promoted within the City Centre through the Tourism Section in recent months which had added to the vibrancy of the City Centre. He referred to the fact that approximately 140,000 people had visited the City over the recent Bank Holiday weekend at which the Continental Market had been in operation. This reflected well on the work of the Tourism Section in attracting an influx of visitors to the City and should be welcomed by existing City Centre stores.

RESOLVED – 1. That the report and progress against the Action Plan be noted.

2. That the Head of Economic Development be requested to submit a further progress

report to this Committee in six months time.

3. That the Head of Economic Development be requested to arrange for monitoring and information reports on tourism activities to be made available for Members in the Group Offices on a regular basis and also make such reports available electronically for Members.

### **IOS.83/02 THE FORWARD PLAN**

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer presented Report TC.180/02 highlighting the Forward Plan (1 September to 31 December 2002) issues which fell within the ambit of this Committee.

With regard to KD.032/02 on the City Centre Marketing Initiative, the Head of Economic Development indicated that an information report was to be submitted to the Executive on 30 September 2002, pending a more detailed report being prepared. This Committee would be given the opportunity to comment on the detailed report prior to its submission to the Executive.

A Member referred to KD.084/02 on the Cumbria Rural Action Zone and sought information on progress.

The Head of Economic Development indicated that the Cumbria Rural Action Zone initiative was to be delivered through a Rural Regeneration Company which was currently being set up and expected to be operational early in 2003. In the meantime, existing funding streams for rural initiatives would continue.

A Member referred to KD.067/02 on the United Utilities Sewerage Management Agreement and asked whether there were plans to improve the sewerage system in Carlisle as some effluent was going into rivers.

The Infrastructure, Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder was present at the meeting and indicated that KD.067/02 related to a decision of United Utilities to terminate the sewerage management agreement with the City Council. Improvements to the sewerage system in Carlisle was a matter for United Utilities.

RESOLVED – 1. That the issues contained within the Forward Plan (1 September to 31 December 2002) and which fell within the ambit of this Committee be noted.

2. That it is noted that this Committee would be given the opportunity to comment on the detailed report on the City Centre Marketing Initiative prior to its submission to the Executive.

### **IOS.84/02 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer presented an Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2002/03, which took into account matters scheduled to be dealt with by this Committee.

He indicated that arrangements had been made for the Chief Executive of the Cumbria Tourist Board to meet with the Committee at a special meeting on Friday 13 December 2002 at 10.00am on the Tourism Subject Review.

A Member referred to the Community Sports Development Plan item on the Community

Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme and considered that this may be a cross-cutting issue covering part of the remit of this Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer indicated that this Committee could feed views into any review which is conducted on this issue.

A Member referred to the LSVT item on the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme and indicated that he understood that there may be issues relating to land transfers which this Committee needed to be aware of. The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer undertook to investigate this point.

The Chairman indicated that both she and the Vice-Chairman would be absent for the next scheduled meeting on 31 October 2002. It was agreed that the next meeting should be re-scheduled for 23 October 2002 at 10am.

The Economic Prosperity Portfolio Holder was present at the meeting and referred to the practice of including the portfolio holder's name against work programme items. He asked whether portfolio holders were expected to be present at Overview and Scrutiny meetings when their items were considered. No formal invitations were sent out.

The Chairman considered that she found it helpful if portfolio holders were present to update the Committee on issues under discussion. The Committee asked that the portfolio holder's query should be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for clarification.

**RESOLVED – 1.** That the work programme be noted.

**2.** That the arrangements for a special meeting of this Committee to be held on Friday 13 December 2002 at 10.00am on the Tourism Review be approved.

**3.** That the next ordinary meeting of this Committee be re-scheduled to 23 October 2002 at 10.00am.

**4.** That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be requested to clarify the position regarding the participation of portfolio holders in meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

## **IOS.85/02 CONSIDERATION OF DEVELOPMENT BRIEFS**

A copy of Minute EX.267/02 of the Executive of 2 September 2002 was submitted indicating that the Infrastructure Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder would make arrangements to ensure that this Committee is consulted on draft Development Briefs.

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer indicated that, in future, he would include any draft Development Briefs on the work programme for this Committee so that Members could identify those which they wished to consider in detail.

The Economic Prosperity portfolio holder was present at the meeting and referred to the apology he had given at the Executive on 2 September 2002 for the misunderstanding over the role of the Policy and Performance Management portfolio holder at the recent call-in meeting. He also referred to the Chairman of this Committee's report to the last City Council meeting which contained a criticism that he had left the call-in meeting part way

through. He indicated that he had been present at the call-in meeting allowing one hour to answer questions. As the Committee had spent 45 minutes deciding upon how the call-in would be dealt with, he considered that the Chairman's criticism was unjust.

The Chairman indicated that her report to the City Council had not been intended to criticise the portfolio holder. She acknowledged that, as Chairman, she was at fault for not establishing properly the role of Executive Members and Officers present at the start of the meeting. She indicated that there had been a number of useful lessons learnt from the call-in meeting to improve procedures for future meetings.

RESOLVED – That the Minute from the Executive be noted.

### **IOS.86/02 STREETWORKS REVIEW – BACKGROUND REPORT**

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer submitted Report TC.183/02 providing background information and seeking the Committee's instructions on the scope of the Streetworks Review.

He submitted the following suggestions for aspects of the review:-

Work carried out by utility companies and/or road maintenance work;

Public dissatisfaction with the disruption caused to road users;

The level of co-ordination of streetworks;

The standard of repair;

The information made available about when and where works will be taking place;

The consideration shown to particular users whilst work is being carried out (e.g. disabled people, pedestrians).

The level of co-operation between Capita**dbs**, Cumbria County Council and Carlisle City Council on these matters;

To examine developing best practice in the arrangement and carrying out of streetworks;

Investigating the issue of 'lane rental' by utility firms.

Members agreed to the above suggestions for areas to review, and asked the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer to invite the Head of Design Services to attend the next meeting of this Committee to discuss the various issues with Members.

Members also agreed that, at a subsequent meeting, discussions should take place with representatives of Capita**dbs** and Cumbria County Council as the responsible authority for much of the traffic management issues and road maintenance matters in Carlisle. It was noted that the City Council had "claimed rights" to maintain all unclassified roads within the area with funding provided by the County Council.

In discussing this item Members raised the following additional issues:-

There were some 140 statutory utilities with authority to carry out streetworks making co-



ordination a particular problem. The system for the chain of communication between the various statutory utilities should be investigated.

Whilst the City Council had made a bid for maintenance funding of £858,000 in 2002/03 for "claimed rights" maintenance, the County Council had allocated £28,000.

Problems caused by the grass on road verges not being cut often enough causing grass to grow over roads and drainage gulleys was highlighted.

Problems caused by lorry drivers pulling onto grass verges in scenic areas for breaks was highlighted.

With regard to standards and regulations, a Member considered that the Committee should look at where shortfalls and poor standards were occurring so that the responsible organisations could be identified with a view to standards being improved.

RESOLVED – That the arrangements for undertaking this review, as detailed above, be agreed.

### **IOS.87/02 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – PROPORTION OF NEW HOUSING ON BROWNFIELD LAND – DRAFT ACTION PLAN**

Referring to Minute IOS.76/02 of the last meeting, the Director of Environment and Development submitted report EN.98/02 providing Members with a draft Action Plan in relation to Best Value Indicator BV106, which was defined as the percentage of new homes built on previously developed land.

The Head of Planning Services was present at the meeting and presented the report and Action Plan indicating:-

- (a) The review of Urban Capacity Study which had just been completed, would assist in identifying potential sites for residential development on brownfield land. An allowance, based on past rates of development, would also be made in respect of the potential supply from 'flats over shops' and the subdivision of larger properties;
- b. Any allocation of greenfield land for development would be phased in accordance with advice in PPG3 (Housing) in order to ensure that not all the land on such sites comes forward at the start of the Plan period thereby ensuring a balance between greenfield and brownfield land development throughout the Plan period;
- (c) All existing Local Plan policies which encourage and permit brownfield development would be reviewed, strengthened if necessary and retained in the reviewed Plan;
- (d) Should it become apparent that sites allocated in the Local Plan for housing or mixed-use development were not being brought forward for residential development, the Council could consider whether it was expedient to exercise its Compulsory Purchase powers to bring forward such sites;
- (e) Policy H5 (Housing in Rural Villages) was currently being reviewed in advance of the Local Plan Review as too much development was being permitted in rural areas on

greenfield sites and the position needed to be rectified prior to the review of the Local Plan.

The Head of Planning Services detailed the time scale for implementing the Action Plan and indicated that it was anticipated that the City Council would be able to meet the 50% target for brownfield development required by the draft Regional Planning Guidance by 2003/04. Once the redevelopment of Raffles began, the City Council should be able to maintain the target for a number of years.

Progress against the target would be monitored as part of the routine monitoring of housing land availability and completions.

A Member asked whether the use of compulsory purchase powers to release brownfield land for residential development was seriously achievable given the financial constraints on Local Authorities and the fact that some brownfield sites were in shared ownership.

The Head of Planning Services indicated that it was a realistic option to pursue a "back to back" deal with a developer when using compulsory purchase powers to release brownfield land. He acknowledged that sites in shared ownership would be more difficult to deal with.

A Member referred to particular difficulties being faced by farmers wishing to develop redundant farm buildings as this was classed as greenfield development.

The Head of Planning Services indicated that the Government currently defined development at operational farm buildings as greenfield development. However, there had been recent cases where farmers had sold land which was no longer operational and this had then been classed as brownfield land.

With regard to the release of the Urban Capacity Study as a public document, the Head of Planning Services indicated that the document was not in a particularly user friendly format at present. He was investigating transferring the document onto a computer database to improve presentation. Members suggested that a summary could be made available for the public to look at alongside the full document.

On monitoring progress against the target, the Head of Planning Services indicated that this was normally done in April and October each year, staff resources permitting. He undertook to submit a monitoring report to this Committee on a twice yearly basis. Members considered that it would also be important to monitor development on greenfield sites as part of the overall monitoring process.

The Head of Planning Services also pointed out that the Government target related solely to residential development on brownfield land and did not recognise that brownfield sites could also be developed for employment, retail, leisure and educational uses. The Government was not, therefore, getting a true picture of a Council's success or otherwise in achieving development on brownfield sites.

**RESOLVED** – That the Action Plan be noted and a further monitoring report be submitted to this Committee in six months time.

## **IOS.88/02 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer submitted report TC.184/02 providing the Committee with background information in relation to the City Council's performance in dealing with planning applications which had declined since 2000/01.

The Head of Planning Services was present at the meeting and indicated that the performance had declined as a result of an increase in the number of, and complexity of, planning applications submitted over recent years.

The Executive had considered the position and authorised the appointment of two additional Development Control Officers. Advertisements had been placed in the local and national press and four applications had been received. Interviews would take place over the next two to three weeks.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Planning Services indicated that the number of planning applications received in 2002 was showing a 30% increase over last year and this demonstrated the high level of economic activity in the City. He considered that this level of economic activity was likely to continue in the immediate future. Nationally, the number of planning applications being lodged with Planning Authorities was increasing by 10% yearly.

Members expressed reservations over the possible use of private sector planners to assist with application backlogs, citing possible problems over consistency of dealing with applications and problems with the appeals process.

The Head of Planning Services indicated that outsourcing planning work had mainly been done by the larger metropolitan Councils and related to simple householder applications which were unlikely to be contentious or lead to appeals. Such work was often contracted to former Local Government Planning Officers. He did, however, share Members' concerns if larger firms of Planning Consultants were used, as issues of consistency and possible conflicts of interests were likely to arise. The principal of outsourcing planning application work was an issue which would need to be addressed as part of any future Planning Services Best Value Review.

The Infrastructure, Environment and Transport portfolio holder was present at the meeting and indicated that there was no backlog of applications to deal with in Carlisle at present and he hoped that the current dip in performance could be addressed by the successful appointment of additional Planning Officers. He shared the Committee's concerns over outsourcing planning application work.

Discussion arose on recruitment problems and whether foreign students would be an option to train in the Planning Section. The Head of Planning Services indicated that there were less students taking courses in town and country planning and the majority of students were interested in Local Plan work rather than planning application work. Advertisements offering placements for students within the City Council were placed at UK Universities. The Head of Planning Services considered that foreign students would not be conversant with the UK planning system and so be unsuitable for placements.

A Member referred to the practice in Carlisle whereby applications were often not refused outright by Committee but deferred for further discussions with applicants to see if revised proposals which may be acceptable to the Committee could be found. Some Authorities refused applications outright, thereby keeping their performance indicator figures high although not providing a good service for applicants. Members considered that performance indicator figures were, therefore, often not comparing like with like. Members supported the way in which the City Council dealt with applications.

The Head of Planning Services was asked whether there were any other factors which affected performance. He indicated that there was a greater awareness on the part of the public of their rights to object and submit corporate complaints or ombudsman complaints

and which took up Officer time which could be spent on processing planning applications.

He further reported that there were instances where applicants submitted poor plans and requests for better plans and supplementary information were not complied with promptly. There had also been problems in gaining prompt responses from consultees, particularly on highway issues.

Members asked whether performance and best practice could be explored through the benchmarking groups. The Head of Planning Service indicated that there had been discussions on planning issues with the Historic Cities Benchmarking Group but not for approximately 18 months. He would investigate raising these issues with this Group.

Members referred to the fact that the Government had made extra funding available for good performing Planning Authorities and asked how the City Council's current performance would affect funding in Carlisle. Members were concerned that the City Council could be penalised for having recruitment difficulties and an increasing workload above the national average.

The Head of Planning Services indicated that he had written to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to seek clarification on how the above average increase in workload would be taken into account when allocating additional funding.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted and, should the current recruitment efforts prove to be unsuccessful, the Head of Planning Services be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of this Committee with a draft Action Plan to improve the City Council's performance in dealing with planning applications.

### **IOS.89/02 AN INTRODUCTION TO COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS**

The Corporate Best Value Officer presented Report TC.136/02 containing details of a development of Best Value policy in which the Government, supported by the Audit Commission, had introduced a new inspection regime entitled "Comprehensive Performance Assessments" (CPA). The aim of CPA is to remove a perceived weakness of Best Value where inspections were at a service level, and introduce a corporate governance aspect to the inspections where political and managerial effectiveness are measured also. The report provided an introduction to the CPA and described its intentions and methodology, as well as recommending practical actions which would help the organisation prepare for its inspection.

The Executive had appointed Councillor Firth as lead Member and the Town Clerk and Chief Executive lead Officer for the CPA process.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees could assist the process by ensuring that Best Value Reviews were conducted rigorously and demonstrate real improvements for the people of Carlisle. Action Plans needed to ensure that improvements were measurable in identifying clearly actions required and what was trying to be achieved.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive and Corporate Best Value Officer were acting as 'critical friends' to Allerdale District Council who were currently going through the CPA process.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and the recommendations, which had been approved by the Executive, be endorsed.

## **IOS.90/02 REGENERATION BEST VALUE REVIEW - UPDATE**

The Head of Economic Development provided Members with an update on the Regeneration Best Value Review. She reminded Members that the Best Value Inspectors had recently carried out a first stage inspection of work on this Review and advised that the City Council needed to reassess the direction of the Review which should have a greater focus and involve partners.

She indicated that an Officer Team had now been established and would work with external partners. A full needs analysis had been drawn up and a re-scoping exercise for this Review would be necessary.

Action was being taken to draft a project plan and information was being gathered from key partners on their work on regeneration.

The Policy and Research Officer indicated that much of the background work to provide information for the needs analysis had been undertaken within the Corporate Policy and Information Unit but the Officer who had researched the information had now resigned. With regard to the possibility of delaying the Regeneration Review until new Census information became available, the Policy and Research Officer indicated that whilst certain basic information from the Census would be available at the end of September 2002, detailed information would be released over the forthcoming 12 months. It was, therefore, impractical to defer the Review.

The Corporate Best Value Officer indicated that the timescale for completing the Review had not been defined by the Best Value Inspectors. It was important for Members to have all relevant information available to enable a re-scoping exercise to be undertaken for the Review.

**RESOLVED – 1.** That the Head of Economic Development, in consultation with the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, be requested to submit a report to the meeting of this Committee on 5 December 2002 identifying options for the re-scoping of the Regeneration Best Value Review.

**2.** That the meeting of this Committee on 5 December 2002 be an all day meeting with a buffet lunch provided in order that the afternoon session can be devoted to the re-scoping of the Regeneration Best Value Review.

## **IOS.91/02 MANAGING RURAL POLICY**

The Head of Economic Development and Director of Environment and Development submitted a joint report providing an overview of the Economic Prosperity and Infrastructure, Environment and Transport elements of the Rural Strategy. The Head of Economic Development indicated that representatives of the Carlisle Parish Councils Association had been invited to attend the meeting and had been forwarded a copy of the report. They had declined, indicating that they wished to discuss the report at their Executive meeting but may wish to participate in future meetings on this issue.

The Head of Economic Development indicated that a Rural Development Company was being created to manage and deliver a programme of economic and community regeneration for rural Cumbria valued at £275m over the next five years. The City Council's Rural Policy would be revised to reflect how the various initiatives would go through that structure.

Members raised a number of points regarding the report:-

(a) There was little reference to transport for the rural areas.

The Head of Economic Development agreed that this was a gap in the strategy and would be addressed and included in a future strategy.

(b) What control was there to ensure that stalls on farmers' markets were available to local farmers?

The Head of Economic Development indicated that there was no hard and fast definition of 'local' but priority was given to local producers within the Carlisle area on the farmers' markets.

(c) Could wholesale producers be contacted and encouraged to buy from local producers?

The Head of Economic Development indicated that Distinctly Cumbria were working with the Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency to encourage a good district network for food distribution in Cumbria. The City Council was part of this initiative.

(d) A Member considered that the Continental Market had caused a lot of aggravation as french cheeses were on sale. She pointed out that the French would not take British beef or lamb and considered that the Government should be lobbied to ensure the French took our produce.

(e) A Member considered that the routes into Carlisle from Durdar and Dalston Road were poorly signed and their appearance left a lot to be desired. From Durdar, manhole covers were not level with the road surface, the bridge was in need of painting and there were litter problems.

(f) A Member asked how the Regeneration Best Value Review would fit into the work of the Rural Development Company.

The Head of Economic Development indicated that the Regeneration Best Value Review would investigate area renewal whereas the Rural Development Company would be seeking to promote regeneration in the whole of the rural area of Cumbria.

(g) A Member referred to the fact that there were no sources of business start up support available in rural (or urban) Carlisle other than programmes that were available nationally or Countywide. Whilst all other Districts in Cumbria had local schemes in place, were these effective?

The Head of Economic Development indicated that there was no information available on the effectiveness of these schemes.

(h) With regard to farmers' markets, a Member asked how they fitted in with the food co-operatives which had been introduced in various parts of the City.

The Head of Economic Development indicated that this was a good example of providing a link between rural and urban regeneration. It was understood that this system was operating in West Cumbria and could be looked at for Carlisle.

(i) A Member asked whether there was any timescale for developing the farmers' markets in the City Centre.

The Head of Economic Development indicated that there was no definite timescale but that discussions were taking place with Distinctly Cumbria over developing a longer term strategy for the farmers' markets in Carlisle.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and a further monitoring report be submitted to this Committee in six months time.

(The meeting ended at 1.17pm)