

CUMBRIA BRANCH OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cumbria Branch of the Local Government Association held on Friday 18 June 2004 at The Courts Carlisle at 11.00 am.

PRESENT

Mrs E Braithwaite – South Lakeland District Council (Chair)

Allerdale Borough Council

Mrs C McCarron-Holmes
Mr P Tibble

Barrow Borough Council

Mr B Joughin

Carlisle City Council

Mr R Bloxham
Mrs M Bowman
Mr M Mitchelson

Copeland Borough Council

Miss E Woodburn
Mr H Wormstrup

Cumbria County Council

Mr W Cameron
Mr J D Jefferson
Mr J R Richardson
Mr J R D Robinson
Mr N M Shaw
Mr L Short
Mr D E Southward
Mr W Smith
Mr K Wilkinson

Eden District Council

Mr I Graham
Mr D Natrass
Mr C Nineham

South Lakeland District Council

Mrs J Jenkinson

Also in Attendance:-

- Mr I Bruce – Chief Executive Eden District Council
- Mrs J Currie – Member Services, Cumbria County Council
- Mr J Harwood – Interim Chief Executive, Cumbria County Council
- Mr B Pointing – West Lakes Renaissance
- Dr J Stanforth – General Manager, Copeland Borough Council
- Mr P Stybelski – Chief Executive, Carlisle City Council

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED, that Mrs Braithwaite be elected as Chair of the Cumbria Branch of the LGA for the ensuing year.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED, that Mr Musgrave be elected as Vice-Chair of the Cumbria Branch of the LGA for the ensuing year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Ash (substitute Mr L Short), Mrs A Burns (substitute Mr W Smith), Mrs B Cannon (substitute Mr W Cameron), Mr J R Collier (substitute Mr J Robinson), Mrs J Ewing (substitute Mrs J Jenkinson), Mr E Firth (substitute Mrs M Bowman), Mr K J Lancaster, Mrs E Mallinson (substitute Mr J R Richardson), Mr D Moore, Mr J Musgrave (substitute Mr P Tibble), Mr D Pidduck, Mr A R M Toft (substitute Mr K Wilkinson), Mr T Waiting and Mr S F Young (substitute Mr N Shaw).

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest by any members in relation to any items on the agenda.

5. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED, that the press and public be admitted to the meeting for all items of business.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 17 March 2004 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Matters arising:-

Cumbria Concordat

The Cumbria Concordat had now been signed by all Local Authorities and Brian Hough, Media Officer for Cumbria County Council would be issuing a press release in the near future.

North West Objective 2 Programme

Members requested an update on the programme for the next meeting in September 2004.

7. CUMBRIA VISION

The Cumbria Branch received a presentation from Mr Bob Pointing, Chief Executive of the Cumbria Vision Board. Mr Pointing explained to members that he had been appointed following the resignation of Chris Torkington.

Cumbria Vision had been set up by the North West Development Agency to address Cumbria's declining economic position and to improve the economic performance of the County.

There were currently a number of different organisations all with their own integrating strategies and it was hoped they would in future be working to the Sub-Regional Strategy currently being developed by the Cumbria Strategic Partnership. The NWDA felt that there was currently a mismatch between funding and strategies and that there was spatial and sectoral duplication. The NWDA also felt that there was confused and overlapping governance arrangements between many of the current organisations involved in the economic development of Cumbria.

The Cumbria Vision Board included:-

Michael Hulme	West Lakes Renaissance
Charles Woodhouse	Rural Regeneration Cumbria
Jack Stopforth	Cumbria Inward Investment Agency
Chief Executive	Rural Regeneration Cumbria
Bob Pointing	West Lakes Renaissance
Chris Collier	Cumbria Tourist Board
Paul Ashley	Business Link
Elaine Woodburn	Copeland Borough Council
Rex Toft	Cumbria County Council
Steven Broomhead	North West Development Agency
Mick Farley	Cumbria Learning & Skills Council
Graham Lamont	Cumbria Chamber of Commerce

Mr Pointing explained that there was some gaps in representation on the CV Board especially from business and Local Authorities, but that these were interim arrangements and would possibly be subject to change.

The objectives of the Cumbria Vision Board included:-

- To ensure there was a coherent strategy in place for economic development
- To provide effective representation
- To deploy funding in accordance with the strategy
- To create appropriate and effective structures for delivery

The Cumbria Vision Board would be meeting six times per annum and would have a three year investment programme, Mr Pointing stressed that it was not an organisation, would not manage any resources directly and would not duplicate current delivery arrangements.

Mr Pointing explained that there were a number of issues to be addressed by the Cumbria Vision Board including:-

- Interface with the Cumbria Strategic Partnership
- Relationships with Local Authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships
- Re-distributing or enlarging the Cumbria pot
- Whether Cumbria would remain after local government reorganisation was obviously an issue that NWDA and the sub regional partnership would have to face in the future.

Member asked how the CV Board would address the issue of bidding for funding against/with Voluntary Organisations. Mr Pointing explained that Cumbria Vision would be undertaking to plot all funding coming into Cumbria, including via the Voluntary Sector and the Health Service.

Members raised the problem of funding for Cumbria Tourist Board and how this was allocated. Mr Pointing recognised this and felt it was a fundamental problem which needed to be addressed.

The CBLGA discussed the problem of the exodus of young people from the area with Mr Pointing, and he felt this to be one of the biggest problems Cumbria would have to face in the near future. Sir Brian Fender would be attending the next meeting of the Cumbria Vision Board.

Members felt there were gaps in representation on the Cumbria Vision Board especially in relation to Local Authority representation from the East of Cumbria, and Mr Pointing recognised this fact, but felt the current interim arrangements would be in place until October 2004.

RESOLVED, that the Cumbria Branch of the Local Government Association writes to the North West Development Agency to request a further place on the Cumbria Vision Board for the Local Authorities within Cumbria.

The Chair thanked Mr Pointing for his presentation.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION MATTERS

Papers had previously been circulated to branch members for information.

Indices of Deprivation

Mr Wormstrup raised the fact that none of the areas of Cumbria appeared on the Indices of Deprivation list. The County Council agreed to investigate this issue.

LGA (London Office)

Mrs Braithwaite reported that the Chief Exec, Sir Brian Brisco had issued a statement following the 10 June elections regarding changes in political balance of the LGA, which continued 'hung', and therefore continued working by consensus across all groups.

Renewable Energy

At the last meeting of the CBLGA there had been a report on "Renewable Energy Through Wind Farms – Is it Sustainable?" Mr Natrass reported that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had failed to respond to the comments raised by Eden District Council, and he suggested that another Local Authority may wish to raise the issue with their MP. Carlisle City members agreed to liaise with Eden to try to resolve this.

Housing

Members felt that there may be problems with housing allocation figures and suggested writing to Sir Brian Brisco to ask him to raise this with the Housing Executive of the LGA.

RESOLVED, that

- (1) the County Council investigates why none of the areas of Cumbria appear on the Indices of Deprivation list
- (2) Carlisle City Council and Eden District Council liaise to contact relevant MP's re: Renewable Energy
- (3) individual members of the Branch to write to Sir Brian Brisco with any concerns they have about housing allocation figures;
- (4) the papers be received and noted.

9. ACHIEVING CUMBRIA EXCELLENCE (ACE)

The Cumbria Branch of the Local Government Association considered a report by the Chief Executive, Carlisle City Council which outlined the details of the partnership of the six District Councils, the County Council and the Lake District National Park, the aim of which was to develop a concerted and co-ordinated approach to public sector improvement. This partnership was supported by the IdeA, the Audit Commission and the ODPM through the Government Office.

Mr Stybelski reported that the partnership had a number of key agreed outcomes including:-

- authorities in Cumbria working together to improve performance on cross-cutting issues.
- to support members in their role in providing leadership at local, county and regional level
- Members and managers across Cumbria to have access to information about good practice from inside and outside the County, and for this to have resulted in improvements to the way that services were provided.
- for strong and sustainable networks to be developed at member and officer level to support the drive for improvement

Mr Stybelski said the Cumbrian Authorities had agreed that the ACE programme should, in the first instance, aim to address the following shared priorities:-

- Member development
- Action Learning Sets for accelerated improvement
- Learning from best practice – sharing experience and expertise within Cumbria and with Councils outside of Cumbria
- Local delivery of national capacity building programmes

RESOLVED, that

- (1) the Cumbria Branch of the Local Government Association support the delivery of the ACE programme
- (2) the CBLGA agree to ensure that appropriate ownership and participation is achieved within each authority.

The Chair thanked Mr Stybelski for the report.

10. PROPOSED POWERS OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN ENGLAND

The Branch considered a report from the Chief Executive of Carlisle City Council on proposed powers of Regional Government in England. The Government had announced it would publish a draft Bill in late July 2004, to set out the powers of an elected Regional Assembly, and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had embarked upon a consultation exercise about what these powers might include. The Cumbria Branch of the LGA were asked if they wished to express a view as part of the ODPM consultation on these proposed powers.

The Chair felt the paper should be forwarded to the North West Regional Assembly for consideration at their meeting on 16 July 2004.

Mr Stybelski explained that there would be a need for more joined up working in the future, and a need for contingency planning to ensure that records and non-personal information was up to date, compliant and in a suitable format. Mr Stybelski felt that through their Chief Executives all Districts and the County Council should nominate a Liaison Officer to join a Task Group to meet before October/November to scope the information needs for the future.

RESOLVED, that

- (1) a paper be forwarded by Mr Stybelski on behalf of the CBLGA to the North West Regional Assembly's Chief Executive, Steve Machin for possible consideration at the meetings to be held on 15/16 July 2004 in Runcorn;
- (2) each District Council and the County Council nominate, through their Chief Executives, a Liaison Officer to join a Task Group.

The Chair thanked Mr Stybelski for the report.

11. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS FOR SECOND HOMES

The Chair invited Members to highlight the position and proposals for spending the funds raised from council tax discounts for second homes.

- Allerdale - within Allerdale the money had been used to help deliver a programme of affordable housing (£8m)
- Barrow - not applicable
- Carlisle - all funds had been earmarked for regeneration, both in rural and urban areas of Carlisle. The money would be spend in conjunction with the LSPs.
- Copeland - similar to all other positions, the money would be spent in conjunction with LSPs.
- County - the funds are being devolved to the Local Committees to be allocated to highways works. All funds raised within a specific District Council area would be allocated to the County Council Local Committee for that area.
- Eden - the money had currently been used in conjunction with the LSPs to fund an LSP Project Officer and two Housing Officers. They would be responsible for addressing the problems of affordable housing within the Eden area.
- South Lakeland - the money raised during the current year would all be re-allocated to housing in one form or another.

The Chair thanked Members for the update.

12. SUBSCRIPTIONS

A report by the County Council's Head of Member Services asked the Cumbria Branch to consider meeting the costs of the Secretary for the forthcoming year.

In accordance with the working arrangements all constituent Councils pay a subscription to the Branch. In 1999/2000 these were £2,000 for Districts and £6,000 for the County Council. Since the initial demand it had been agreed that no subscriptions be levied given the amount of unallocated resources. As at 31 March 2004 the unallocated resources stood at £5,517.81, it was therefore felt that once again subscriptions should not be levied.

RESOLVED, that

- (1) no subscriptions be levied for 2004/05;

- (2) the expenses incurred by the Secretary for the cost of postage and consumables be met for the forthcoming year.

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 27 September 2004 in Allerdale.

The meeting closed at 12.40 pm.