

## **CARLISLE PARISH COUNCILS ASSOCIATION**

**Minutes a joint meeting between representatives of Parish Councils and the Executive of the Carlisle City Council held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2005 at the Village Hall, Great Orton.**

### **1. Present**

The Chair, Cllr J Holland and all those signatories to the attendance register attached to these minutes.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr D Rutherford (Irthington PC), Mrs E Auld (Dalston PC), Mrs K Johnson (Arthuret PC), Mr K Hind (Brampton PC), Ms M Mooney, Chief Executive, Carlisle City Council and Cllr E Firth, Deputy Leader Carlisle City Council.

### **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting between the City Council's Executive and representatives of Parish Councils held on 6th December 2004 were received and agreed.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

### **5. Quality Parish Initiative**

Mr Moth reported that two Parish Councils were assembling their applications for Quality Parish Status; that as a CALC Parish Development Officer he was visiting Local Councils to explain the initiative and encourage application. It was noted that Guy Richardson, Chief Officer of CALC was writing directly to District Council Chief Executives seeking high level commitment to the Initiative and especially Charter discussions.

### **6. Licensing Policy**

Mr B Sharrock (Licensing Officer) reported that 24<sup>th</sup> November 2005 had been announced as the start date for the new licensing arrangements. Slow progress was being made with regard to applications to register premises by 6<sup>th</sup> July in order that they retain 'grandfather rights' He encouraged all those responsible for the management of Village Halls to register as quickly as possible. Fees would be payable.

## **7. Housing Strategy**

Ms Connelly (Interim Executive Director) addressed the issue of continued funding for housing surveys. She said that while there no news yet in regard to a further tranche of money, funding had been extended beyond October on a temporary basis. This would enable survey information to inform the Housing Strategy. In answer to a question from Cllr Holland Ms Connelly said that the temp housing survey post would be reviewed when implementation of the Strategy was being considered. Cllr R Bloxham reminded the meeting that funding was sourced from the County Council's second home Council tax income. Cllr M Michleson said that this money was available for three years. The concern of parish Councils in regard an affordable housing strategy was noted.

## **8. Lamp posts and Litter bins**

Mr M Battersby, Head of Commercial and Technical Services, informed the meeting that an extra £40000 was available for street lighting and £20000 for Litter bins. This together with matched funding from the Carlisle Housing Association and distribution on a ratio of 70/30 in favour of the urban areas meant that about £18000 was available for rural areas. Bids had exceeded the budget for lighting but was matching it in respect of litter bins. Decisions to allocate funds would be made within the next few weeks.

Answering Cllr Holland Mr Battersby said that the strategy in regard to lighting was influenced by the Crime and Disorder Partnership and that there was year on year pressure for extra community safety funding.

## **9. Carlisle Renaissance**

Ms K Elliot, Head of Economic and Community Development, gave an update on progress and highlighted key ideas emerging in the aftermath of the storms and floods of early January.

The aim of the City Council, working with local partners, has been to return to normal as soon as possible and to restore confidence.

As well as addressing short-term needs, there was a real opportunity for Carlisle to think strategically and to think beyond the flood and the damaged areas. The City could stand back and take stock of where it is and where it wanted to be in 10-15 years – working in parallel with the immediate recovery programme.

Ms Elliot said that the key to achieving many of the objectives lay in supporting appropriate new mixed use development within the City Centre and its fringes (including new employment space). It can help to overcome some of the barriers, physical and perceived, between the centre and its southern fringes and housing areas. Similarly enabling the City to function more effectively with its hinterland, urban and rural, as a 'city region'. This will

enable Carlisle to contribute to and capitalise upon the opportunities in the government's Northern Way Growth Strategy.

The City Council would engage with National Agencies such as English Partnerships who normally operated in the big cities. The benefits would be felt in both urban and rural areas. The ODPM was looking to early August for a framework proposal.

Cllr Holland said that funding was only available to the urban area but the rural areas would benefit from the rolling effect of urban change. In regard to the recent exhibition she had been reassured that the Environment Agency would consider the impact on rural areas and consult widely on their proposals.

#### **10. Parish Council Precepts**

On the subject of the impact on Parish Council precepts, Mr J Egan, Head of Legal and Democratic services, undertook to obtain information as soon as possible.

#### **11. Emergency Planning**

Cllr Wendy Aldred (Vice Chair, Stanwix Rural PC) spoke of the need for future emergency planning. 84 houses had been affected in Crosby on Eden, prompting action by the Parish council to provide emergency supply boxes for village halls and begin developing a mini emergency plan. The council was holding focus groups in each village to gain ideas on what people wanted. The Parish Council was keen to share ideas with others.

Mr D Sheard, Area manager, Cumbria County Council said that it was apparent that a simple local plan would have helped local communities. A model plan was being discussed with CALC to apply county wide covering for example lengthy power cuts as well as floods. He agreed with Cllr Aldred that it was important for all agencies to work together.

Cllr D Jefferson (Carlisle City Council) referred to the need for an all inclusive plan sighting the MOD at Longtown as a particular hazard. Cllr J Geddes (City Council Executive) and Mr J Gooding, Executive Director gave assurances in respect of the MOD but acknowledged that representatives of nearby parishes should be involved in exercises and tests and that it was important to involve local residents wherever possible in discussions about emergency plans.

It was noted that the Association Executive Committee would discuss the way forward and advise parish councils.

#### **12. IT for Parish Councils**

Mr C Moth, (Secretary of the Association) said that at a recent meeting of parish council clerks there was considerable concern that the dial up e-mail and internet service had become very unreliable. He acknowledged the

damage to the service caused by the flood and that some attempt had been made to tell local councils about problems. However access had not been available on numerous occasions at evenings and weekends without warning despite departments in the City Council being told of interruptions. The situation now was that a number of Clerks were using personal email facilities for Parish Council business.

Mr Moth referred also to funding issues where it was not clear if an annual allocation of £3000 for IT support was still available.

Finally Mr Moth spoke of issues concerning the availability of Broadband; that some clerks were now subscribing to the service and that it appeared that the City Council was not at present in a position to consider Broadband despite pressures from City Councillors. He asked that Parish Councils be considered with any change in policy proposed for City Councillors.

Mr J Nutley, Head of Customer and Information Services, apologised for the poor level of dial up services. He said that Communication and IT services had been particularly badly hit during the flood. He said that Parish Councils would be now told when interruptions to service were expected.

In regard to funding Cllr M Mitchelson (Leader) confirmed that the £3000 continued to be available within the City Council's IT budget. Mr Nutley said that the money was available for initial IT hardware and software, officer support and the internet dial up service. There was however an issue with the funding of upgrades and he asked that Parish Councils consider budgeting for this.

Broadband had presented a number of technical problems. A solution for officers and City Councillors working from home would be rolled out soon and a pilot study undertaken. The new service would however be expensive. The present dial up service would continue for all non broadband users meantime.

It was agreed that the funding issue and the development of Broadband services for parish Councils would be discussed again in the future.

### **13. Committee Management Information Service**

Mr Egan described the City Council's new Committee Management Information System (CMIS) that would be launched on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2005. CMIS was featured on the City Council's Web site giving public and staff access to Agendas, Reports and Minutes as well as information about Councillors. Awareness training would be available to Clerks.

The launch of the new system would obviate the need for committee agendas and minutes to be mailed to Parish Councils. It was agreed that this hard copy service would cease from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2005. Parish Councils will be informed by letter in the next few weeks.



## 14. High Hedges

Mr C Bennett (Landscape Architect and Tree Officer) reported on the implications of new legislation.

He reported that on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2005 The Government enacted part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. This gives Local Authorities the powers to deal with complaints relating to high hedges, between a hedge owner and a neighbour. Provided all avenues, including discussing with the hedge owner the problems being experienced, and where a satisfactory outcome cannot be worked out, offering to try mediation, the person affected by the hedge will be able to take their complaint to the Local Authority. The Local Authority is the final port of call, and all other avenues must have been explored in an effort to resolve the dispute.

The Councils role in these cases is to seek to strike a balance between the competing rights of neighbours to enjoy their respective properties and the rights of the community in general, and thereby formulate a proportionate response to the complaint.

A fee is payable by the complainant to the Local Authority for this service. The Local Authority has the discretion to set the fee at a level it deems appropriate. Undertaking the adjudication of high hedge disputes is not a public service, but effectively a service to individuals who cannot agree between themselves a satisfactory solution to their problem. The level of non returnable fee Carlisle City Council is considering charging is £135.00 the same as the householder-planning fee rate.

A hedge under the regulations is defined as *two or more evergreen or semi-evergreen trees or shrubs in a row*. Where the hedge is a mixture of evergreen and non-evergreen trees and shrubs it has to be predominantly composed of evergreen and semi-evergreens. Individual trees are not included neither are trees or shrubs that have gaps between them and could be considered as individuals.

Only problems caused by the height of the hedge can be considered, and it is important that both sides of the complaint are heard and taken into account when coming to a decision.

Where a decision is made that considers the height of the hedge is adversely affecting the complainants reasonable enjoyment of their property the Council can issue a remedial notice. Generally the a height of two metres will be the norm The remedial notice is also a land charge and remains on the property as long as the hedge is in existence, unless the notice is varied or revoked. Contravention of a remedial notice is a criminal offence and is enforceable through the Courts. The Council can also undertake the works, and then recover the costs from hedge owner if necessary.

## **15. Recycling**

Mr Battersby reported that following a successful funding bid the roadside waste scheme would be extended to another 4500 homes and together with newspaper collection services.

Plastic recycling centres were now available at ASDA, Morrison's, TESCO, Longtown Community Centre and the Civic Amenity site. 80 Neighbourhood recycling centres would be upgraded and the bulky items(white goods) collection scheme was being revised.

European regulations limited the amount of biodegradable material that can be taken to landfill sites – having a knock on effect on the amount that could be collected. Penalties could apply to transgressors.

In answer to a question from Cllr W Little (Orton PC) Mr Battersby acknowledged that signposting to official waste sites could be improved to avoid fly tipping; that known fly tipping locations could be targeted and that prosecutions could be brought against wrongdoers.

In answer to questions Mr Battersby confirmed that the cardboard collection service could be reintroduced, residents could pay for extra bins and that there were economic arguments against the extension of the roadside waste collection scheme to remote rural areas.

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## **16. Working with Neighbourhood Forums**

Mr Battersby reported the start of a twelve month pilot exercise joining City and County Councillors at the County Council Neighbourhood Forums. Senior City Councillors had been allocated to each of the forums and that technical services would be reorganised and integrated on the basis of 5 area teams.

Cllr Mitchelson confirmed that City and Country Councillors would work alongside each other. Mr Sheard said that grant amounts would be reviewed.

Cllr Holland said that whilst encouraged by the move she hoped that unevenness of performance between the Forums would be addressed and similarly the grant maxima that ranged from £250 to £1000.

At this point Mr Sheard announced that the County Council Area Committee had allocated a further £10000 to Village halls and was keen to see further joint meetings with the Association. This news was welcomed by all present.

In regard to Village hall Surveys Cllr Holland referred to the lack of funding for Village Hall surveys. The absence of a survey report meant that bids within the sustainable buildings initiative could not be evidenced by a survey and therefore would fail. Representatives from Nether Denton PC stated that it was vital for their Council and Village hall Committee to have a village hall survey providing the foundation for a 5 year plan of action of improvement.

**17. Criteria for the erection of roadside advertising boards for property sales**

In answer to a question from Cllr B Earp (Wetheral PC), Mr A Eales , Head of Planning Services said that current signs were complying with guidance. He agreed to circulate information giving greater detail of the advice to be followed.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm

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